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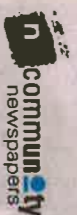
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MEMBER OF:



Short or long-term game

With hotly contested demand for stock, farmers and meat processors need to think carefully about their existing strategy and what it means for the industry in the long-term.

Federated Farmers meat and fibre industry group chairperson Rick Powdrell says rural New Zealand has been through a challenging climate in recent years, with many farmers still enduring the 'fallout' and adjusting their farm policies going forward, as they look to return to normal.

"Whether you have been through severe drought or destocked as a result of last season's perceived strong El Nino, you will be looking to restock to more normal numbers," he said.

"Severe drought areas will be affected longer as pastures need to be re-established, which will start as soon as farmers feel confident in the weather patterns. For many this is not evident yet and short-term crops will continue to be the backbone of feed supplies." Destocking was also

compounded by many dairy farmers choosing to remove their animals from grazing with sheep and beef operations. Many farmers were looking at restocking in late winter, due to excellent autumn growth and a mild start to winter in the North Island and pasture growth improvement in some areas of the South Island.

"For now, there will be increased demand for the limited supply which will last for a lengthy period. That is a certainty given the levels of destocking we have witnessed in recent years and a large portion of the country affected." As farmers attempt to purchase stock classes they can farm for future seasons, they are competing with meat companies who are aggressively sourcing stock.



Rick Powdrell — Federated Farmers meat and fibre industry group chairperson

"The question to meat processors would be, are they supplying pre-committed contracts or purely filling throughput?"

"To see breeding capable cows, heifers, ewes and hoggets heading to slaughter at a time farmers are looking at all avenues to restock is for them very disheartening.

"Given farmer demand to rebuild stock numbers, it's prudent our short-term actions don't produce unnecessary challenges for the long-term, which in my view means we retain breeding capable animals for future breeding. They must not be sent to slaughter or be live exported.

"Farmers understand meat companies face seasonality, climatic events, staffing issues and market factors, but it's important as industry players we all look at the big picture for the benefit of us all.

"Going forward I see the immediate challenge to the industry as whether we take a long-term view or do what we so often do and stay in the present.

"Ultimately without a long-term approach, we may be setting ourselves up for fallout at all levels of our industry, a situation none of us want to see."

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