

AWARD-WINNING FARMER

LEVI WESFORD did not grow up on a farm or get a university qualification – but it has not stopped him becoming one of the top young farmers in the country.

In March, Levi (20) was awarded the prestigious Waikato Dairy Trainee of the Year title, after finishing second last year. He is rightly proud to have taken out the competition.

“I am getting recognised that hard work does pay off and it has given me a big boost, not only in confidence but also in giving me opportunities in the industry, which is really rewarding,” says Levi.

Those opportunities include networking with rural professionals but also opening doors for Levi with potential employers before he runs his own business as a contract milker.

“We went through a skills day which included practical activities like fencing, changing a tyre on a quad bike, plus theory quizzes and questions on animal culling, plant identification and how to fill out an ASD form (animal status declaration), which is used when you send cows on a truck.

“The top six then were interviewed about career goals and future plans in the industry and more complex theory questions.”

Levi grew up on a lifestyle block outside Cambridge. He gained valuable experience relief milking on a 220 cow farm at Te Miro – where he is still based – during his time at Cambridge High School. He made the decision to leave school early after Year 11 and start some valuable training programmes.

“I decided I would be better off getting real farming experience rather than staying at school. I started Primary ITO training and achieved my NZ Certificate in Dairy levels 3 and 4.

“I always wanted to take a pathway through industry training, rather than going to university. I could see the benefit of that time at the start of my career to gain knowledge on farm, rather than spending four years getting a degree and a student loan.

“It really has helped to kick start my career. You learn so much from watching what is happening. The DairyNZ discussion groups held on local farms – and the tutors on my courses – were really good to gain knowledge from.”

What Levi loves most about working on farm is knowing that everything he does has real impact.



“I ALWAYS WANTED TO TAKE A PATHWAY THROUGH INDUSTRY TRAINING, RATHER THAN GOING TO UNIVERSITY.”

LEVI WESFORD

“It gives you a bit of purpose. You are not just there doing something for the sake of it. You actually have animals that are depending on you to show up and do a good job. I find that really rewarding.”

Levi is a big supporter of the Agribusiness in Schools programme that DairyNZ helped set up in 125 secondary schools to teach agriculture, horticulture and agribusiness.

“I think it is really good to have the opportunity to get an insight into how the business side of things works, so that going into a career in the industry you have a cushion of knowledge.

“It means you’re not going in having to learn business skills as you go. You have a base line to set some career goals and also manage your money better.”

KEY FACTS



- **LEVI WESFORD** WON THE PRESTIGIOUS 2026 WAIKATO DAIRY TRAINEE OF THE YEAR TITLE.
- HE IS A BIG SUPPORTER OF THE **AGRIBUSINESS IN SCHOOLS** PROGRAMME THAT **DAIRYNZ** HELPED TO SET UP.
- **LEVI** ACHIEVED HIS **NZ CERTIFICATE IN DAIRY LEVELS 3 AND 4** THROUGH **PRIMARY ITO** TRAINING.

ONLINE



For more information on **career opportunities** within the dairy industry, visit www.godairy.co.nz and for more information on the **Grassroots Dairy Graduate Management Programme**, visit www.dairygrads.co.nz