



Drone Technology is Flying

Drone technology has advanced to bring greater precision and cost-efficiency for farmers and growers to manage fertiliser and chemical sprays.

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FOR GROWERS AND FARMERS, accuracy matters. Whether you're targeting blackberry along riparian margins or applying a costly foliar spray across an orchard, every droplet counts. That's where drone technology, and in particular the new XAG P150 agricultural drone, is starting to transform how New Zealand producers approach spraying.

"It's the difference between a paint roller and an artist's brush," says Scott Horgan, Co-Founder of Airborne Solutions, the New Zealand distributor for XAG drones.

Scott and Co-Founder Bayden Neustroski, both from farming backgrounds and aerial spraying helicopter pilots, founded Airborne Solutions because they saw how drone technology was sweeping in to change the world of agricultural aerial and ground spraying.

Drone technology continues to advance and is becoming attractive to a wider range of farmers and growers, Scott says.

"We've gone from a 16-litre drone three years ago to a 70-litre one today, with the same price tag and 20 times the productivity," says Scott. "But it's not just capacity – it's the technology, the software, the accuracy. You can

apply fine droplets, slow to walking pace in a corner, and hit the mark exactly."

The XAG P150 is the latest generation of agricultural drone technology and it landed in New Zealand with a serious upgrade in capability. With a 70-litre spray tank, ultra-stable flight system and smart automation software, it's built for accurate, efficient aerial application.

The drone is highly automated, and it's easy for farmers to pick up and learn to operate the drone, Scott says.

"Drones are no longer just something cool – they're a viable, profitable part of a spraying business or farm system."

Operators can mark spray boundaries on a map, click to plan a job, and let the drone handle flow control, corners, and boundary runs with precision. Built-in systems adjust droplet size, flight speed, and application rate in real time – even slowing down in tight areas to prevent over-application.

The time savings is also another plus when investing in drone technology.

"In the field, we can do 7ha an hour in an apple orchard. And on fiddly little blackberry jobs, what might take a whole morning with a handgun, we can knock out in 10 minutes."



ABOVE L-R; Monique Horgan, Bayden Neustroski, Jamie Nyx, Scott Horgan.

While helicopters and planes still dominate in steep hill country, drones have now overtaken them in many flatland and orchard environments, Scott says. Drones are an excellent choice for orchards and farms close to residential areas, as they generate less interference for neighbours.

The drones are also built tough to stand up to everyday conditions out on a farm or orchard.

“They’re designed to be thrown on the back of the ute and strapped down.”

SCOTT HORGAN
CO-FOUNDER
AIRBORNE SOLUTIONS

“They’re designed to be thrown on the back of the ute and strapped down. They’re not something that you have to treat gingerly.”

What sets Airborne Solutions apart isn’t just that they sell drones – it’s that they fly them too. Scott and Bayden have a keen focus on enabling farmers and growers to uptake this technology and are on hand to support them.

“We’re not tech guys, we’re spray guys. Our phones are on at 5am because that’s when people are planning their day. If someone calls and has a

question, it’s probably something we’ve already dealt with ourselves.”

Airborne Solutions offer complete spray set-ups, including custom-built batching systems, field-mixing trailers, generators, and battery-charging systems – making it easy to refill, reload, and return to work with minimal downtime.

The company services clients across the country, many of them contractors themselves, often looking to add aerial application to their offering.

“It’s cool to see customers who started with a single drone, now running a proper business with it,” says Bayden. “We don’t just hand them a box and walk away. We help them get set up, get their Part 102 [certification] if needed, and stay in touch.”

One such contractor is Drone Spray, founded by Jono Scott in 2021, where Airborne Solutions have been an integral partner from the beginning. “It’s been great working with Scott and Bayden,” Jono says. “They have supplied a quality product and high-quality advice and experience to go with it.”

In 2025, Airborne Solutions has also expanded into other farm technology, including the tractor auto-steer system, priced at around \$6,000 and capable of guiding a tractor in dead-straight rows with 2cm accuracy. It retrofits easily to older machines, Scott says. ∞

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