

Answering the call for more young farmers

Primary Industries Trades Academy (PITA)

The Primary Industries Trades Academy (PITA) at Taratahi is answering the call from the Primary Industries sector for more skilled labour as New Zealand's primary production continues to boom. The PITA has been going since 2011 and has gone from offering 122 places to 200 places now across the country with its main campus in Wairarapa.

Taratahi is passionate about producing the farmers of the future and the Trades Academy is one of the ways to reach out to young people to encourage them into an agricultural career.

"Taratahi wants to give young New Zealanders the opportunity to develop the skills and gain the qualifications required to be part of this exciting industry" says Dr Donovan Wearing, CEO Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre.

There are a range of jobs and careers available in the Primary Industries from entry level through to highly qualified and sophisticated opportunities.

At Taratahi there is a strong focus on practical, hands-on training, while also completing nationally recognised qualifications. Graduates from Taratahi are sought after in employment.

The Primary Industries Trades Academy at Taratahi allows Year 11 and 12 students to come onto campus one day a week and learn on the job. Taratahi operates as a farming business and allows students to really feel like they are contributing as if in the work place. At the same time, their efforts and learning are contributing to them gaining NCEA Level 2 – without them buckling under the pressures of the classroom which often leads some students to drop out altogether. Attendance at the PITA is structured to minimise disruption to normal secondary school activities and to maximise tertiary and work placement opportunities.

Using the Vocational Pathways, students get a solid foundation but also the chance to either experience aspects of the industry or get the basics so they are ready for the next steps whether it be in further study or work. Students can learn a variety of skills such as animal health and safety, animal welfare or complete their drivers licence.

Students are also placed out on other farms which means they start developing their networks and see what working is like in the real world.

"This is about practical application and combining qualifications with skills. We encourage our students to see their destination as continuing their education into further study and employment and we inspire them to achieve this. It's as much about having the right attitude as well as aptitude. Farms become their classrooms and every placement becomes the opportunity for a future job," says Donovan Wearing.





Primary Industries

"We are trying to embed in our students that this is not about ticking the 'pass' box – it's about a pathway to employment. The Vocational Pathways helps the students see the relevance of their studies in a future job."

Hikurangi Hunt is a very determined 16 year old who as a youngster for his class in year 13 has his sights set on succeeding in the dairy industry. He is a resident student at Taratahi having started in a Primary Industries Vocational Pathway at the Trades Academy in year 11 when he was at Kuranui College in Greytown.

*I enjoy being outdoors
and working on the farm.
My path is Green.*

Hikurangi, who grew up in Featherston as an only child, and knew very little about farming, first visited a dairy farm when he went to help out his Mum's friend when he was 12 and loved it. He joined the Trades Academy at 14 and was placed on a dairy farm in the Wairarapa, waking at 2.30am to do the morning milk. This didn't put him off at all. Although he admits that it was 'harder than he thought!'. "But that's the great thing," says Hikurangi, "it allows you to try before you make a decision about your career."

Developing a pathway helped Hikurangi achieve his NCEA Level 2 qualification as he could use the credits from Taratahi. "It suited me better", says Hikurangi. "I loved being hands on and getting involved. My Mum was very happy about this but she wondered why I was so passionate as no one in our family farms! But I love nature, and cows and I am fascinated with milk production. The PITA was very encouraging and they helped me. They gave me the motivation I needed. But I still had to catch up on school work!" Hikurangi is very proud of his achievements, and he has big ambitions to be a successful share milker one day.

Work experience is half of it. "There is nothing like being on the farm, it really prepares you." says Josie Whaanga, Ag in Schools Manager at Taratahi.

"Time on-site doing practical learning helps keep the youth stay engaged in learning. The PITA also has a community feel and provides students with a solid foundation raising their confidence and preparing them for the pressure at a higher level."

Hikurangi now wakes at 4.30am, milks the cows, has a big breakfast, then loads the silage wagon with the tractor. He then fixes fences or does other jobs until it's time to do the afternoon milking. His sheer commitment and the hands on opportunity the PITA gave him to learn so much at such a young age means that Hikurangi is already on the path to success and to achieving his goal of being a share milker. Hikurangi is now studying full time as a residential student at Taratahi, working towards the Taratahi Certificate in Agriculture, Level 3.

More than 4,200 senior secondary schools students, from 264 schools are currently enrolled at a Trades Academy this year, in 22 Secondary-Tertiary Programmes throughout New Zealand. Using the Vocational Pathways, students can plan their options from learning to earning.

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