

Jade Chan joins the Meridian Ag Team



The Meridian Team is delighted to announce the recent appointment of Jade Chan as Graduate Pasture and Livestock Consultant.

Jade has recently graduated with an Ag Science degree with Honours from the University of Queensland and has a strong passion for research in agricultural production. Jade is based out of our Casterton office and is working closely on a number of research trials, assisting with client visits and other projects.

In addition, Jade is slowly getting used to the Victorian weather after moving from the Gold Coast! Jade can be contacted via our Casterton office on 03 5581 2826.

- Be used to review performance on a quarterly basis (budget vs actuals) and influence management decisions during the year.
- Provide early warning signs, but also highlight better than expected performance.

Upcoming Meridian Agriculture newsletters will include further articles on budgeting, including tips and tricks, comparing budget to actual figures, and sensitivity analysis. For more information on budgets contact Paul Blackshaw on 0427 546 643 or email pblackshaw@meridian-ag.com.au



Article by Paul Blackshaw

INFORMED DECISION MAKING – BUDGETS

As the end of the financial year ticks over, the financial performance of the farm often takes on more priority than which pastures to sow, or what the lambing percentages are. While it's a good time to reflect on the past year, it's also very important to look forward.

Informed decision making is a term we use a lot with farmers. It is important in the sense of practical "on the ground" decisions, but is also vital from a financial aspect. Being able to understand the likely financial impact of any change can provide clarity around the change, and may in fact, be the deciding factor if a change is implemented.

One of the most useful tools to assist is the cash flow budget. Research suggests that only about half of farmers use one, and then it's often only at the request of the bank. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the vast majority of successful, profitable farmers use a budget as an important business management tool. The budget can provide a valuable roadmap to the performance of the business for the next 12 months.

Budgets can:

- Identify cash flow issues in advance, allowing these to be planned for
- Allow fine tuning of the planned farming program
- Provide a good communication tool with lenders, accountants, family etc

EQUAL – FAIR – EQUITABLE

A fresh approach to the future of the family farm

In a paper titled Equal, Fair, Equitable – A fresh approach to the future of the family farm, Meridian Agriculture's succession specialist and senior Advisor Mike Stephens has questioned the meanings of equal, fair and equitable when approaching family succession.

The three terms, equal, fair and equitable, are used frequently in discussions relating to farm succession in Australia. The term equal can sometimes have an undisputed meaning, for example fifty divided by ten gives five equal shares. On other occasions, the concept of equality may be related to sentimental or artistic values. These values may vary depending on the individual.

Over the years we at Meridian Agriculture have developed many techniques which can assist in the journey to fairness and equality. To gain an understanding of the Meridian Ag approach to succession planning and for further insight into the realms of equal, fair and equitable, please download a copy of Mike's paper – Equal, Fair, Equitable – A fresh approach to the future of the family farm.

A hard copy can also be attained by contacting our office on 03 5341 6100 or by emailing info@meridian-ag.com.au

STAFF PROFILE: JADE CHAN



At University which subject did you find most interesting and why? It's quite hard to choose one, however the courses that really interested me were animal nutrition, pasture science, livestock science and production and agricultural economics. I found that all these courses worked together and gave me an in-depth understanding of certain aspects of production.

Tell us about your family and values that are important to your family life? I grew up in a family with one older sister – she works and lives in Melbourne while the parents are still up on the Gold Coast. I think communication is important and to keep in touch with family.

Where did you go to school? Secondary – Helensvale State High School & Tertiary – The University of Queensland.

What is the most important lesson you have learned in life? That even though you have reached the summit the journey is only halfway completed.

What is your favourite holiday destination? I have a long list of destinations but I think the next one would be either Tanzania or New Zealand – to climb Mt Kilimanjaro & trek Milford Sounds as well as climb Mt. Cook.

In your working career, what has given you the most satisfaction so far? I haven't put much thought into this but it'd have to be watching the foals that were bred, get started in the cart and then start their racing careers. Agriculture-wise would be having a Uni mate write her thesis with the data I collected in previous years with cattle nutrition deficiencies.

What do you do outside of work? I try to fit in hikes, rides (horse) and 4-WDing as much as I can.

Why did you choose to work for Meridian Agriculture? As a recent graduate, I was looking for a company that would suit my skills & experience as well as invest in growing me professionally. I stumbled on Meridian Ag in my job search and after some research and meetings with Ben, Andrew & Jim found that it was a company that is investing in its clients as much as its staff. After that, it was just a matter of packing the ute, loading the horse into the float and driving down to Casterton!

RECRUITING PRINCIPLES ARE THE SAME, BUT FARMING ACCOMMODATES!

After a work history recruiting for a large cross section of industries - blue and white collar positions in Manufacturing, Engineering, Retail & Customer Service businesses - I

really enjoy seeing people get into the right job and seeing businesses thrive with the right person on board.

Although I'm reasonably new to recruiting in the agricultural industry, I have identified that there are many key principles similar to recruiting for any other industry, but I believe the agricultural production sector offers some unique challenges and benefits for all.

Recruiting really is simple: The right person, in the right job, in the right business. The principles for ensuring this happens is really quite complex though, and is both an art and a science.

The right person will not only have the skill set required, but the right attitude and ability to perform in the work setting. The right job will be clearly defined, have set objectives in place and provide a sense of achievement for the person undertaking the role. The right business will consider the culture, rewards and conditions for an employee while also meeting its objectives. These aspects are relevant for all industries.

One thing that I believe agriculture has over other industries is the ability to offer a high quality lifestyle. Coming from a semi-rural community I know the benefits smaller communities can present to families and those working within; yet the farm business often provides a stable home, lifestyle and experience for the whole family. Compared to the majority of jobs in Australia, this is a rare opportunity (maybe along with caravan park operators and lighthouse operators) to be capitalised on.

It is important to consider the requirements of suitable accommodation for employees on farm businesses. A well presented home is selling point for positions vacant we deal with. As families and loved ones are involved with any new employment, a well presented home with modern amenities, gardens and local amenities gives that homely feeling which can eliminate the day to day rigours of work. While also making one potential employer stand out over another.

A few tips:

- Make sure the house is clean and presentable during interviews
- If it's the middle of winter, turn the heater on so when you enter to show them around, it feels warm
- If you plan to paint it for an employee, paint it beforehand. Don't make them use their imagination.
- Consider if the employee can assist with any renovations that do need to happen. Get them involved and engaged in the property's maintenance and value. Make sure all work is done as part of the work day, not their private time. It is your asset, not theirs.

To assist with your recruitment process, ensuring you are both promoting a vacancy well while also ensuring you attract the right candidates, call Ben on 03 5341 6100.

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