

A RURAL SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

Would I stop for this?

*Our audience isn't boring. So why is
our marketing?*



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START HERE

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit turns my Rural Connect Forum talk into things you can use this week: a checklist for every post, a calendar to plan around, and simple tests to find out what works.

I'm a dairy farmer at Paparimu, South Auckland, and director of Grass Roots Media. So I see your content from both sides of the fence: as the customer you're trying to reach, and as the marketer trying to reach them.

Rural people are funny, sharp, tough and social. Our marketing should be too. Print the checklist on page 3, stick it by your desk, and start with the three things on this page.

Amber Carpenter

INSIDE

- The "Would I stop for this?" checklist
- Map your customer's calendar
- Content pillars and post ideas
- Platform cheat sheet
- Treat social like a trial paddock
- Build trust, and AI rules
- 2026's big platform changes

YOUR TO-DO LIST

Three things to do this week

1

Map your customer's calendar

Use the template on page 4. Plan your next three months of content around their year, not your sales targets.

2

Find your best post from last month, and make three more like it

Same idea, different formats. Double down on what's already working.

3

Film something real this week

A customer, a team member, a job on farm. Use AI behind the gate only.



Before every post, ask: *would I stop for this?*

Run every post past these seven questions. If you can't say yes to most of them, rework it or don't post it.

1 **What's it for: to stop me, earn my trust, or get me to act?**

You can name the job in one line. If you can't, it has no job.

2 **Is it interesting, or is it just noise?**

Would a farmer mention it at the gate? "New stock just arrived" is noise.

3 **Does the first second work?**

A face, movement or a bold line up front. Most people decide in under two seconds.

4 **Is it real, and ours?**

Our people, our customers, our farms. No stock photos, no AI-made farmers.

5 **Does it sound like us, like our rep at the gate?**

Talking with farmers, not at them. No corporate speak, no lecturing.

6 **Would they send it to a mate?**

Funny, useful or true enough to share, or to send to the group chat.

7 **Is it the right time in their calendar?**

It fits what they're doing now, and goes out when they're on their phones: lunchtime, evenings and weekends.

Map your customer's calendar

Every sector has its own August: a season when they're flat out and won't listen, and a season when they have time to think, plan and buy.

Sector	Flat out	More time to listen
Dairy	Calving Jul–Sep, mating Oct–Dec	After drying off, May–Jun
Sheep and beef	Lambing and calving Aug–Oct, autumn sales	Mid-winter, mid-summer
Horticulture	Harvest (apples, kiwifruit, grapes) Feb–Jun	Late spring, before harvest
Arable	Harvest Jan–Mar, sowing autumn and spring	Winter

Typical timing. It varies by region and farm system.

Your customer's year

Flat-out months suit short, light, useful or funny content. Quieter months suit bigger stories, how-to and planning content.

Month	What my customer is doing	How busy?	Content idea
Jan			
Feb			
Mar			
Apr			
May			
Jun			
Jul			
Aug			
Sep			
Oct			
Nov			
Dec			

WHAT TO POST

Content pillars: stop me, earn my trust, get me to act

These came from the customer, not a textbook. In our client data, 14 of the 15 most-engaged posts this year weren't about a product.

1 · STOP ME

Personality, fun, something new

- A "caption this" photo
- A funny moment from the yard
- The team having a go at something

2 · EARN MY TRUST

The team, real stories, how-to

- Meet the rep who'll be at my gate
- A customer's story in their words
- A useful how-to

3 · GET ME TO ACT

My problem, solved

- A farmer who fixed a problem I have, and how
- A seasonal reminder with one clear action

For industry-good and government organisations, "act" means register, recycle, change practice or turn up.

WHERE TO POST

Same voice, different paddocks

There's no single rural platform. Pick by who you need to reach, then tell one story the way each platform works.

Platform	Who's there in NZ	Its job for rural brands	How to post
Facebook	Broadest ages; 24% are 55+	The rural crowd, and older farmers	The full story and photos. End with a question. Links in the comments.
Instagram	Mostly 25–34; 55% women	The next generation, partners, family	Short vertical Reel, captions on, a face early. Test with Trial Reels.
TikTok	73% under 35	Young farmers and future staff	Raw and quick. Made on a phone, not in a studio.
LinkedIn	Professionals, mostly 25–34	Bankers, advisers, the industry	The lesson for the industry, and your people behind it.
YouTube	Every age; the widest reach	Search and how-to that keeps working	The how-to farmers search for. Name the problem in the title.

DataReportal 2026 · NapoleonCat 2025–26 · NZ On Air, Where Are The Audiences 2026

Treat social like a trial paddock

You can't break it. Every post is a free trial, with results in 24 hours. Farmers already think this way: a trial strip of a new cultivar, a different rate in one paddock.

A flop isn't a failure

It might be the right idea in the wrong format. Try it again as a Reel, a carousel, a question, or at a different time.

A winner? Double down

Make three more like it, then put your boost budget behind the posts already working. Paid can't fix boring.

Change one thing at a time

Change the hook or the format, not both, or you won't know what worked.

Values fixed, format free

Your voice and honesty don't move. Templates and polish can. Try the thing that doesn't quite fit the guidelines.

Your trial log

Look at results after a week, not an hour.

Date	Idea	What I changed	Format and time	Reach	Comments and shares	Keep, tweak or drop?

Build trust in small deposits

Rural people find new things on social, but they trust rural papers and TV more (Nielsen Rural Survey 2025). So on social, trust is earned one small deposit at a time.

Show up all year, not just at Fielddays or when you've got something to sell.

Keep the same faces, so your rep and team become people farmers feel they know.

Reply, and own it. Answer the comments. Front up when something goes wrong.

Turn up in the hard seasons, with empathy before promotion.

Be useful before they need you, so when they do, you're who they think of.

Years of deposits can go in one post. AI is the newest way to lose them.

AI BEHIND THE GATE: USE IT

- Research and ideas
- First-draft captions
- Subtitles for every video
- Cutting one shoot into many posts
- Scheduling and reporting

AI IN FRONT OF THE GATE: NEVER

- Fake farmers or fake farms
- Fake voices
- Made-up testimonials
- AI pictures pretending to be rural life

The saving isn't the point. The time you get back to go and film real farmers is.

2026's big platform changes

The five big platforms logged about 400 updates between January and October 2026, more than one a day. You don't need to track them all. The ones that change who sees your posts all point the same way: original, human content that people share wins.

When	Platform	What changed	What it means for you
Oct 2026	YouTube	Shorts recommendations favour original content	Re-uploads with nothing added lose reach. Film your own.
Sep 2026	Facebook	Pages charged for link posts	Make the post work on its own; put the link in the comments.
Aug 2026	YouTube	Views count from the first frame; "engaged views" is the stricter measure	Watch engaged views, not the headline number.
Jul 2026	LinkedIn	"Seems like AI slop" button; flagged posts shown less	Generic AI posts now cost you reach.
Jun 2026	Instagram	People can pick their own topics in the main feed	Clear, specific content finds the right people.
May 2026	Facebook	Quality counts for more than follower count	Small pages can reach far with the right post.
Mar 2026	LinkedIn	Feed rebuilt with AI; recent activity counts more	Post consistently, not in bursts.
Feb 2026	YouTube	Fewer notifications to people who don't engage	Content people interact with keeps reaching them.
Jan 2026	Instagram	"Your Algorithm" lets people pick topics for Reels	Be clear what you're about.

Counts from public update trackers (SocialBee, HeyOrca, OutlierKit, air.io, Influent). No official tally exists, and many items are tests.

NEXT AUGUST, 6:30AM

I'll be back in the shed. What will you put in front of me?

SOURCES

Federated Farmers farm confidence survey, July 2026 (via RNZ / ODT)

Nielsen Rural Survey 2025

DataReportal Digital 2026 New Zealand · NapoleonCat 2025–26

NZ On Air, Where Are The Audiences 2026

SocialBee, HeyOrca, OutlierKit, air.io, ALM Corp and Influent platform update trackers, 2026

Grass Roots Media client data, 2026 (clients not named)



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