



Healthy crops : Healthy animals : Healthy business

Speech

Agcarm Vice-President Colin McKay to the Agcarm Summer Conference

Villa Maria, Mangere

9.00am, Wednesday 26 February 2014.

Some may think that I'm Mark Christie, because it's the second time I've delivered his speech. Some may even think Mark doesn't exist.

Mark would actually really like to be here today, but we think he had to go back to headquarters for reprogramming, in the guise of a journey across the ditch for very important business.

So the board has decided to cut his honorarium in half.

Anyone who has been on a board like Agcarm's will know that cutting an honorarium in half is like taking divisions of naught.

So in honor of Mark, we are going to talk about the future, especially in relation to health and safety. I'll tell you about some achievements, and that you are part of a growing and successful organisation.

First, I'd like to go back to this time last year and update you on some of the things we talked about then.

If you were here in 2013, you will recall we reflected on three major breakthroughs for our industry. These breakthroughs included completing the veterinary medicine group standard; the removal of the shelf life statement for stable agrichemicals; and last, but certainly not least, was the government agreeing to an increase in data protection. The changes allowed three years protection for some new agrichemicals and veterinary medicines.

Since then the feedback we have from members is that the veterinary medicine group standard is working very well and is being used to smooth the registration of new and existing products under the HSNO Act. The removal of the shelf life statement has also been successful with companies gradually removing this requirement from their labels.

Turning to data protection: We are making progress, but progress is once again slow. Probably our biggest success this year has been working with the Ministry for Primary Industries to convince them of the best approach to introduce data protection, and them responding favorably to our suggested approach. However, we are still waiting for Parliament to allow the required law change to be introduced in the House.

How long will that take?

How long is a piece of string? And we are in an election year.

That's only about new uses and reformulations.

Turning to new actives, we remain very optimistic that the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement will include 10 years data protection for new active agrichemicals.

When will the agreement be completed?

Same answer as before. This is out of our hands. Maybe President Obama can answer that one.

Turning to the period since our last meeting in July, we have seen a notable success for our animal health members. This was the first ever report on adverse events involving veterinary medicines, published by the Ministry for Primary Industries. The report summarises findings from 179 adverse events from August to October last year.

Members requested the report to encourage adverse event reporting and to identify trends in this area. The end goal is to reduce the number of adverse events.

This is another example of how, as a group, we can work with government for positive changes for industry.

Last year also saw completion of the Guide to Seed Treatment Stewardship. Agcarm released the guide promoting the safe handling and management of treated seeds in conjunction with the New Zealand Grain and Seed Trade Association. The 32-page guide was adapted from a United States version and covers best practice on planting, handling and disposing treated seed.

Another area we should be proud of, and that demonstrates our success as an organisation, is an increase in membership over the past year. This tells us that we're on the right track because I'm told that we haven't lost any members either.

A counter to this impressive membership growth is acquisitions and mergers. We've had two in the last year. This puts pressure on our income, and for that reason, we are reviewing the distributor subscription levels. We will likely be taking a recommendation at the annual meeting in July.

I'd like to now introduce our new members:

New members

Our new members are:

Manufacturer members: Etec Crop Solutions; Sinochem; and Glenmark Veterinary

Corporate associate members: Medicines New Zealand and Argenta

Individual associates members: Michael Tichon, Ross Shields, Barry Axon, Victor Strang; and Ben Vlaming.

More members give us a greater mandate and more resources to represent and advocate for you.

In effect, our benefits to members increase alongside our increase in membership.

And what is it that keeps our membership base alive?

It is value.

These are some of the benefits that we offer to members:

- Your voice in Wellington – engagement with government officials including regulators.
- Issues management – working to resolve issues with regulators or other stakeholders.
- Media relations – supporting and defending our industry in the media.
- Networking - days such as today present networking opportunities for members.
- Industry group committees – You are welcome to attend biannual crop protection, animal health and distributor meetings to discuss and plan issues of specific interest.
- Representation - Agcarm members are represented on industry-good initiatives, such as Agrecovery, Growsafe, National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee, National Mastitis Advisory Council, and resistance management committees.
- Sales audits - access to free or subsidised sales audits
- Codes of practice - Agcarm works with members to prepare codes of practice.
- Communications - this includes the bimonthly Goss newsletter, and biannual Input newsletter.
- Information - Agcarm provides distributors with a database of tracked trade name products, and we provide manufacturers with a database of approved handlers working in distribution outlets.
- Free use of the Haznote trademark on transport documents
- Agcarm also belongs and contributes to international organisations such as IFAH, Croplife, and VICH.

As we grow we push for more improvements and achieve more successes. So let us not stop here. Let's keep forging ahead.

We all play our part in achieving our goals, but moving forward is something I need to thank our members for because they continue to give Agcarm the critical mass to be effective.

So, to non-members here today, thanks for coming and I really hope you enjoy the day. We hope you consider joining our organisation because then you'll be able to attend these events for free.

Now, let us look ahead at what is in store for 2014.

Worker safety is a key issue for government in attempting to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries by at least a quarter over the next six years. We'll hear about the new crown agency designated with this work a bit later on today.

Agcarm has taken a proactive stance in health and safety and are working with the government on improved health and safety outcomes. One initiative which turned heads at the EPA was the implementation of a database of safety information, such as safety data sheets and Haznotes. This information is networked into New Zealand's largest agricultural retailers, allowing retailers to provide this information to purchasers of agrichemicals. This project was implemented in collaboration with one of our members, Agrimedia, and with the support of our distributors.

Similarly, we've been working on increasing the use of personal protective equipment in the agrichemical sector. This is by no means an easy fix. Obviously, users need to read product labels, understand them and follow the instructions.

Promoting training on using agrichemicals, ensuring labelling is clear and consistent as well as coming up with display posters and pamphlets for retailers is in the pipeline to improve the use of PPE by farmers.

As we speak, the EPA is in the throes of planning marketing material for distributor members to encourage the use of PPE. This gives purchasers of agrichemicals information on PPE while they have the opportunity to buy it.

Integral to all this is the introduction of WorkSafe New Zealand, a new health and safety agency which will set controls for the use of hazardous substances in the workplace. The sole focus of the new crown agency is workplace health and safety. One of its roles is overseeing the test certification of approved handlers and locations.

The approved handler qualification may end up as a casualty of changes to health and safety law. We think this is a backward step which should only happen if there is a suitable replacement.

As part of these changes, we will see amendments to the HSNO Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act replacing the Health and Safety in Employment Act in December.

On that note, our next speaker will discuss how changes to the HSNO Act will impact on the EPA. This is followed by a WorkSafe NZ Board member who will take us through the huge change in health and safety which has given us a third regulator to deal with – in case you thought two was bad enough.

Other topics for today include resistance management, intellectual property and food safety.

Remember it's election year. I think there is a 50/50 chance of a change of government. It's very important that we engage with potential future ministers, so I'm pleased to tell you that Labour's environment and science spokesperson, Moana Mackey, will be speaking at the end of the day.

I won't read out the full agenda because you have it in front of you. I'm sure you'll agree it's a very interesting line-up.

Just before I finish, I would like to thank the board for their hard work and members for their support. We have a record of 71 registrations here today. Thanks to all of you for attending.

I want you all to turn up to the annual conference on 24 July in Wellington, which is always a great event. It's an opportunity to network with regulators and other officials. With a fantastic dinner and quiz night. This year the conference is a one day event and we'd all like you to come. The conference will be just one day and evening out of your busy schedule.

Today, we wrap up at 4.40pm, after which will be a social hour and a prize draw for Clive Lind's book, 'Til the Cows Come Home'.

Enjoy the day and I look forward to talking with you.

Ends