About our research team

Dan Brier
General Manager, Farming Excellence

Dan grew up on sheep and beef properties in Coromandel and the Northern King Country before training as a veterinarian. He started his working career as a large animal vet in Te Awamutu, followed by a role in Gisborne as a sheep and beef veterinarian. After 6 years as a vet, Dan and his family began sheep and beef farming near Te Awamutu. In 2013, he started a role at Landcorp/Pāmu overseeing the organisation's northern and eastern North Island sheep and beef properties. Dan is B+LNZ Farming Excellence General Manager – a role which encompasses research, sector capability, the Future Farm programme, product development, extension design and farm planning.

Suzanne Keeling, PhD
Sector Science Strategy Manager

For the past 20 years, Suzi has worked across scientific disciplines contributing to the study of animal diseases, environmental health (soil and water), human health and food authenticity. Suzi started her science career studying novel microbes that could be used to remediate contaminated soils. She then continued her interest in applied science, completing a PhD investigating the safety of wastewater for the irrigation of dairy farm pasture in Victoria, Australia. Her work has helped support sector priorities, biosecurity, food integrity and market access. Suzi has also led and co-ordinated multidisciplinary teams, establishing productive partnerships both nationally and internationally, working alongside industry, government and academia in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. As B+LNZ Sector Science Strategy Manager, Suzi contributes to the scientific leadership of the research portfolio and identifies opportunities to maximise outcomes for sheep and beef hill country farmers. Her key focus is to deliver science that is robust, useful and can be adopted by farmers.

Mark Aspin
Consortium Manager, PGgRc

Mark grew up on a dairy farm on the Awhitu Peninsula near Auckland. He graduated with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from Massey University in 1984 and Managed Massey University and LambXL quarantine Sheep & Beef farms through until 1992; the latter being involved with the importation of five new breeds of sheep to NZ and the building up and distribution of them through an embryo transplant programme. Mark is the General manager of the Pastoral Greenhouse gas Research Consortium (PGgRc), the NZ pastoral industry vehicle for developing mitigation technologies for agricultural greenhouse gases – methane and nitrous oxide. The research consortium is a partnership investor between the pastoral sector and government and has been in place since 2002.

Mark has worked in these or similar roles at B+L NZ or its predecessors since 1992 and over that time had responsibility for much of the on-farm research and also the internationally renown Monitor farm programme from its inception until 2004; this programme developed the application of business planning skills across the sheep & beef sector to enhance the uptake and application of new knowledge.

Mhairi Sutherland, PhD
Senior Advisor, Research Programmes

Mhairi completed her Master's at Massey University where she studied methods to alleviate the pain caused by dehorning in calves and castration and tail docking in lambs. She then went on to do her doctorate at the University of Illinois (USA) where she studied the effects of breed on stress responsiveness and disease susceptibility in pigs. Mhairi then spent 3 years as a researcher and teacher at Texas Tech University where she focused on pig welfare issues such as painful husbandry procedures and transport. In 2009, she moved back to New Zealand where she worked as a scientist in the Animal Behaviour and Welfare team at AgResearch until moving to B+LNZ in 2020. Mhairi has extensive experience designing, leading and managing research projects of value and importance to farmers. As senior advisor, research programmes, she is primarily involved in managing the Hill Country Futures programme but also contributes to other research projects across the Research portfolio.

Cara Brosnahan, PhD

Senior Advisor, Research Programmes

Cara grew up on a sheep, beef and cropping farm in South Canterbury before studying biological sciences in Wellington. Prior to working for B+LNZ, she worked in the areas of marine bioactives, animal health, disease diagnostics, incursions and surveillance at the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research and Ministry for Primary Industries. During this time, she led and participated in multiple research projects in collaboration with industry and iwi and played lead roles in exotic disease incursions. Cara obtained her doctorate from the veterinary sciences school at Massey University where she investigated disease events in New Zealand salmon aquaculture. As senior advisor of research programmes, Cara manages a range of research projects across the Research portfolio with a focus on Facial Eczema and parasite management.

Gemma Jenkins, PhD

Genetics Programme Manager

In her role as Genetics Programme Manager of the Informing NZ Beef (INZB) programme, Gemma is focussed on driving industry engagement and overseeing the development of genetic tools unique to the New Zealand beef industry.

Gemma completed her PhD in sheep genetics through the University of Melbourne and subsequently worked for AgResearch, the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation and AbacusBio. She brings a wide range of experience in the biotech and food production industries, both private sectors and Crown Research Institutes, domestically and internationally in sheep, beef and dairy industries. At AbacusBio, some of her recent work was as Science and Technical Advisor for the New Zealand Medical Cannabis council, where she was involved in working with industry to help shape the research agenda, and working with DairyNZ to undertake a major review of the National Breeding Objective.

She believes that science delivers the most value when it combines forward thinking and innovative solutions with practical reality and industry input, something that she sees as key to the INZB programme.