Position Description: Senior Scientist – Forage and Farm Systems

Directly responsible to:

Head of Science & Research

Directly responsible for the functions:

- Leadership and delivery of forage and farm systems research directly aligned to priority areas for sheep and beef farmers (e.g. Resilient Pastures Programme with DairyNZ, AgYields, ForageMaster and animal health issues)
- Translation of science into practical on-farm guidance and tools
- Stakeholder engagement across farmers, industry partners, and research providers

Our Vision

Thriving sheep and beef farmers, now and into the future.

Strategic priorities:

Championing farming excellence – On-farm extension focused on enhancing productivity, productivity and sustainability; Investing in research and innovation to solve sector production challenges.

Advocacy – Championing farmers' interests; Shaping the future domestically and internationally.

Energising the sector – Leading, building trust, reputation and confidence; Proudly celebrating sheep and beef farming.

Position Purpose

To lead the design, integration, and delivery of forage and farm systems science that improves the productivity, resilience, and sustainability of sheep and beef farming systems in New Zealand. The role ensures that research is grounded in real farm systems, aligned with farmer priorities, and focused on delivering outcomes that can be readily applied in commercial settings.

This position requires a strong scientific foundation combined with a highly practical, outcome-oriented approach. The Senior Scientist will bridge the gap between research and on-farm application by translating science into clear, actionable tools, guidance, and insights that farmers and advisors can use with confidence. This includes supporting the development and uptake of decision-support tools, best practice forage strategies, and integrated system solutions.

The role works closely with farmers, industry partners, and researchers to co-develop and test solutions in real-world environments. It emphasises producing science that is not only robust and credible, but also relevant, simple to apply, and delivers measurable value on farm. Success is achieved through building trusted relationships, enabling practical decision-making, and ensuring research leads to tangible improvements in farm performance, risk management, and system resilience.

Key Accountabilities

Lead forage and farm systems research programmes aligned to farmer priorities **Translate science into practical tools, guidance and on-farm outcomes** **Build strong relationships across farmers, researchers, and industry partners**	**Reporting and tracking contract budgets** **Personal, Team & Project-Based Contribution** **Health & Safety**

Key Accountabilities	Job holder is successful when
1. Forage and Farm Systems Research Leadership • *Lead and coordinate delivery of forage and farm systems research related to Resilient Pastures, AgYields, ForageMaster, facial eczema, and parasites initiatives* • *Champion the sheep and beef perspective in cross-sector research*	• Programmes are delivered on time, within scope, and aligned with B+LNZ strategic priorities and farmer needs • Research reflects real sheep and beef system constraints, with strong integration across soil, pasture, and livestock components • The sheep and beef perspective is clearly represented and influences cross-sector programmes (e.g. with DairyNZ and partners) • Work programmes remain focused on practical outcomes, not just scientific outputs • Risks, trade-offs, and system implications are clearly understood and incorporated into programme design • Internal stakeholders have confidence in programme direction, scientific robustness, and practical relevance • Programmes adapt in response to new insights, farmer feedback, and emerging challenges
2. Delivering Impact for Farmers • *Translate research into practical, usable tools and best practice guidance*	• Research outputs are consistently translated into clear, practical, and usable guidance for farmers and advisors • Tools (e.g. AgYields, ForageMaster) and recommendations are widely adopted and actively used in farm decision-making

Key Accountabilities	Job holder is successful when
• *Support extension, education and farmer engagement activities* • *Ensure outputs are grounded in commercial farming realities*	• Farmers report that outputs are relevant, easy to apply, and improve on-farm outcomes • Tangible improvements are evident in farm performance (e.g. productivity, resilience, risk management) because of programme outputs • Complex science is simplified without losing integrity, enabling confident farmer uptake • Extension and engagement activities are well attended, valued, and lead to behaviour or practice change • Feedback loops from farmers are actively used to refine tools, guidance, and future research priorities
3. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement • *Build and maintain relationships with DairyNZ, researchers, seed companies, and industry partners* • *Work closely with internal teams to align programmes and priorities*	• Strong, trust-based relationships are built and maintained with farmers, researchers, DairyNZ, seed companies, and other partners • Collaboration leads to aligned, efficient, and non-duplicative programme delivery across the sector • Stakeholders see B+LNZ as a credible, practical, and farmer-focused science partner • Farmer engagement is genuine and continuous, with farmers actively contributing to programme design and evaluation • Cross-team collaboration within B+LNZ results in joined-up delivery across science, extension, and policy • Differences in priorities or perspectives are constructively managed to maintain progress and outcomes • Opportunities for co-investment, innovation, and scaling impact are actively identified and progressed.
4. Reporting and tracking contract budgets *Required to provide input into maintaining visibility over contracted research and tracking associated expenditure.*	• Clear visibility of contract milestones is maintained and contractors failing to meet delivery dates are followed up with in a timely manner. The Head of Science and Research and various programme managers are kept informed of any issues. • Input into reporting and project updates are clearly and honestly presented to ensure the Board and relevant Governance Groups are fully aware of progress, achievements, issues and risks. • Regular review of project actuals against budget is completed to ensure effective and efficient use of funds occur
5. Personal, Team & Project-Based Contribution *Contribute to their own professional development, and organisational and team projects as required, to meet the priorities and needs of the business.*	• Personal and professional development is proactively managed to meet the current and emerging capability needs of the role and the organisation, whilst supporting personal growth. • Where delegated, opportunities to represent the Research team in pan/cross-organisation projects or committees is undertaken. • Team mates, project leads and members and others value the contribution, expertise and professionalism. • Undertake other work as reasonably required by the Sector Science Strategy Manager.

Key Accountabilities	Job holder is successful when
6. Health & Safety ("H&S") *Proactively lead by example in all areas of health, safety and wellness policies and programmes of the organisation.*	• All contracts entered in to with third parties comply with B+LNZ policy and meet all legislative requirements as set out in the Health & Safety at Work Act. • Shows responsibility for own health, safety and wellbeing, is proactive in own actions to keep self and others safe and cooperates with local workplace safety management practices, policies and procedures that support a healthy, safe and well culture. • Report any accidents or incidents as soon as possible through Auditz, B+LNZ's safety management system, or to your manager.

Key relationships

Key external relationships

DairyNZ, Universities (e.g. Lincoln, Massey) CRI's (e.g. Bioeconomy Science Institute), TR Ellet Trust, Seed companies, Farmer Research Advisory Group (FRAG), Farmer Council, Wider farming community and Government agencies (e.g. MPI, MFE).

Key internal relationships

Farming Excellence and Extension team, Environment team, Insights and Policy

Location

Ideally North Island based (due to travel for Resilient Pastures Programme) but also near a B+LNZ office

Hours

Core business hours are Monday – Friday 8.30 – 5.00pm.

The incumbent may be required to work outside these ours from time to time.

DATED: June 2026

beef+lamb new zealand BY FARMERS. FOR FARMERS

PERSON SPECIFICATION: Senior Scientist – Forage and Farm Systems

Technical Knowledge + Expertise

- Strong applied knowledge of forage, pasture, and farm systems within sheep and beef farming
- Deep understanding of how soil, pasture, and livestock interact in commercial systems
- Ability to apply scientific principles to solve real farm problems - not just generate new knowledge
- Experience developing, adapting, or applying practical tools, models, or best practice guidance
- Proven ability to translate complex science into clear, actionable insights for farmers and advisors
- Working knowledge of key risks in pasture-based systems (e.g. climate variability, facial eczema, parasites)

Education + Experience

- Postgraduate qualification in agricultural science, animal science, agronomy, or related field preferred, but not essential if supported by strong applied experience
- At least 5 years demonstrated experience in applied research, extension, or farm systems development, ideally in sheep and beef systems
- Proven track record of working directly with farmers and understanding commercial drivers and constraints
- Experience operating across research and practical implementation (e.g. field trials, on-farm testing, tool development, extension programmes)
- Strong programme or project delivery experience, with a focus on achieving real-world outcomes
- Not purely academic: candidates must demonstrate experience delivering outcomes beyond publications (e.g. adoption, practice change, industry impact)

Communication, Collaboration + Relationships

- Builds trusted relationships with farmers, industry partners, and researchers; comfortable working on-farm and in practical settings
- Communicates technical information in a way that is simple, relevant, and actionable
- Listens to farmer needs and adapts approaches accordingly
- Able to challenge constructively and influence across science, industry, and farming audiences
- Strong facilitation skills in group settings (e.g. farmer groups, workshops, programme governance)

Customer Orientation

- Deep commitment to delivering value for farmers and the wider sector
- Understands what drives farmer decision-making (profitability, risk, practicality, system constraints)
- Focuses on solutions that are feasible and adoptable, not just technically optimal
- Ensures outputs are tested and validated in real farm environments

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PERSON SPECIFICATION: Senior Scientist – Forage and Farm Systems

Problem Solving + Decision Making

- Applies pragmatic judgement—balances scientific rigour with practical applicability
- Focuses on “what will work on farm” as well as “what is scientifically correct”
- Comfortable making decisions in complex, real-world systems with imperfect information
- Identifies opportunities to integrate across disciplines for better farm system outcomes

Personal Attributes

- Practical, grounded, and outcomes-focused with a strong sense of accountability
- Credible with both scientists and farmers—able to operate confidently in both worlds
- Curious and open-minded, but always focused on delivering impact rather than theory
- Strong collaborator who works across organisations and disciplines
- Committed to improving the performance, resilience, and sustainability of NZ sheep and beef farming
- Willingness to spend time on-farm and engage directly with farmers