

Week 7 – time out from the farm

10 August

With the farm being the home, occupation, business and way of life for farmers, there are always things to do. But while farmers' lives are filled with farming, taking time for relaxation with family, social activities or hobbies is critical to their wellbeing. When things hit a low on the farm, hobbies and social activities can still be enjoyed. This week, BCG asked Wimmera and Mallee farmers the following question:

Whether it's evenings, weekends or an annual getaway, taking time out from the farm is important. How do you spend your time out?



Ian Fisher – Quambatook

Ian and Prue Fisher live 11km south of Quambatook. Their soils are mostly red, with some black soil, plus Mallee soils on one paddock. The Fishers crop most of their country and run some cattle. Half is sown to cereals, and 25 percent to each of legumes and canola.

Time out: “To start with, we don't work on Sundays, so pretty well every Sunday is a family day. It's important to recharge yourself physically and spiritually.

I like to watch our girls play netball in the season but that only seems to happen about 50 percent of Saturdays because of sowing and maybe spraying.

We play tennis in the summer when we can work around the harvest, and we try to have a family holiday at least every second year. It usually involves camping.

I do find it hard to relax, because I'm always thinking about what I should be doing, and so the best way is to just get away from the farm to forget about it for a while.”



Nathan Gellatly – Lubeck

Nathan Gellatly farms with his wife, Jillinda, and parents, Graham and Kathryn, in the Lubeck and Minyip districts. Their 1400ha consists of Wimmera clays and southern Wimmera clays and loams. They crop and run 450 ewes for prime lamb production. The Gellatlys also run a lamb feedlot. About 20 percent of their farm is sown to each of wheat, barley, lentils and chickpeas, with the rest in faba beans, canola, oats for grazing or hay and pasture or fallow.

Time out: “When first asked to answer this question, my first reaction was I hope it does not take too much time! This reaction made me think! In today's broadacre cropping environment we, as farmer, are continually being pressed for time, as cropping is becoming more and more intensive, attention to detail is paramount, and timing is critical. Gone are the days of sowing a crop, closing the gate and coming back at harvest time. We are now constantly confronted with pest, weed and disease management in cereals and pulses, canopy management in cereals, and now a strong push for more in-crop applications of N. This all takes time, and if the time and conditions are right, we try to get the job done.

However, in saying all of that, I believe getting away from the farm is very healthy for the mind. We have an annual holiday and try to organise ourselves around that break.

I have also been lucky enough to participate in trips with the BCG and TopCrop, which are great because you get off the farm whilst still learning from other farmers.

Tennis in the summertime has also been a great way for us, as a family, to relax and take a break. We have a local club at Lubeck which is very social, and I have found this a fantastic way to wind down and enjoy the company of other local farmers and their families. This also keeps the community spirit up, which can sometimes be overwhelmed by the pressure of farmers being faced with less and less time.”



Roger Lehmann – Kinnabulla

Roger, Dianne and Linc Lehmann operate a mixed farm of 1500ha 25km northwest of Birchip. They have light to medium soils and grow 70 percent cereals and 30 percent legumes.

Time out: “I enjoy clay target shooting and try to get to a shoot somewhere most weekends.

I also like to go when I can to the football at Beulah, where Linc plays.

I look forward to the shooting at the weekends and time away from the farm.

Shooting allows me to relax, but at the same time allowing me to be home working at vital times during the year, eg. cropping, harvest, etc.

We also take two weeks holiday in January each year, mostly camping at Anglesea and catching up with friends we have met over the years.

Whilst away you relax, enjoy yourself and forget the farm and the pressures that can arise. Being a farmer you live at the workplace, so you must have a break regularly.

(All shoot days are good days!) ”



Pam & Daryn Clugston – Rainbow

Daryn and Pam Clugston have a mixed sheep and cropping property 12km east of Pullut. Their crops include 25 percent canola, 25 percent barley, 20 percent wheat, 5 percent peas, and the rest in vetch and fallow.

Time out: “Eighteen months ago we bought a six-seater outdoor spa. This is a great way to spend time out on an almost daily basis. Water is so soothing and we can soak alone, with company or with a good book. It is a fantastic way to chill out and get away from it all without actually going anywhere (you can even hear the phone ringing when the jets are operating).

We always plan an annual holiday and the September school holidays has been our preferred time to do this. However, with our eldest children now in Years 11 and 12, September is an important time for them to catch up on revision and begin preparation for exams.

Last year we all jumped in the Tarago in July and headed to Alice Springs and Ayers Rock for a ten-day break.

Summer – after harvest is also an important time to allow yourself to wind down. The last three years we have spent some time in Robe. We have found that lots of other local families also head for a beach fix in Robe and surrounding areas at this time.

Golf is another way we spend our time out. More frequently for me over the last couple of years, but not so often for Daryn. Not being a team sport, you can have time off when busy and go back again when you are able.”