



Graeme Martin

From the desk

As I write this newsletter in December and reflect on the past few months, I see a picture of difficult times. Over the past year the agricultural industry has faced a number of challenges. Many of these challenges are beyond the control of farmers and suppliers, which makes managing them more difficult, and predicting what is to come next even harder.

The weather continues to have the most significant impact on all of us. Too wet, too dry! One thing we can guarantee is that we will always be faced with change and it is change that we must all adapt to. It is no different whichever part of the business you are in.

However, one thing that has not changed is our focus on the operational safety of our pilots. As an industry, the Civil Aviation Authority regulates us. The rules they make set the minimum operating standard that we must adhere to. These rules are currently being rewritten with a primary focus on improved safety for pilots. Both airstrips and the operating environment will be included in this review. The new rules are to be passed through parliament and are expected to be completed by October 2011.

The other significant issue that is gaining momentum is the impact that our industry has, or can have, on the environment. As this issue grows it will impact on the way we manage our businesses together. More on that in this newsletter.

By the time this reaches your mailbox it will be February, so I do hope you had a safe holiday period and managed to have some well-earned time off-farm.

working with Rural Air Services. He drove for pilot Chris Iremonger for eight years on topdressing and pine forest-spraying contracts. He then spent time with Mike Keen and John Rika's King Country Air Services during the mid-80s, and then moved to Super Air when it was established in 1988.

Keith worked as a driver, organiser and field representative for Super Air. He also played a most valuable role in assisting, inducting and training most new Super Air drivers. Keith was a 'steady hand' out on the airstrips, helping out the younger new pilots while they were feeling their way during the vulnerable early stages of their careers. Keith died suddenly while working on his farm just north of Te Kuiti.

A service for Keith was held in the large Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre, which was packed to capacity with a wide cross-section of people from the region. Several people spoke of Keith, including a moving account from Keith's twin brother, David. Sir Colin Meads spoke highly of Keith's work with the IHC and recounted the successful fund-raising trips they had carried out together around many North Island centres.

Keith was also involved in a hands-on and administrative capacity with the Lions, local rugby and shearing competitions. He was the sort of chap who didn't just talk, but got stuck in and did the work to help things get moving and running smoothly. 'Pinetree' Meads pretty-well summed it up when he concluded his tribute with the words, 'It was a great day for the district when Keith moved to the King Country!'

Keith will be sorely missed by his family, friends and colleagues alike.



Keith Wilkie

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It is with sadness that we farewell Keith Wilkie, who passed away on 24 September 2010.

Many men have worked as loader-drivers in the aerial agricultural industry, but few have the sort of longevity and dedication demonstrated by Keith. He served nearly 40 years in the industry, working throughout the King Country.

Keith grew up in the Ohingaiti district and moved to Te Kuiti in 1960, where he drove trucks and got to know the rural people well. In 1970 he started

The environment

With the increasing focus on the preservation and protection of our environment, there will soon be an operational requirement for topdressing companies to get approval from local environment councils in order to be able to apply fertiliser by air.

This approval will depend in part on companies being able to demonstrate that their staff are appropriately trained. We must also have risk

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mitigation strategies in place to ensure we do not discharge fertiliser into significant waterways, or apply products to anywhere but the target areas.

As an industry, we currently have a Code of Practice and also operate by our own industry safety guidelines. In the future we will have to do more. That will involve a lot more discipline in terms of training, the use of GPS systems, and proof of placement. Most importantly, what we do has to be acceptable to the local environment councils.

The New Zealand Agricultural Aviation Association already has an accreditation scheme, which covers training, health and safety, fuel handling, the industry's Code of Practice, agrichemical handling and Spreadmark. The industry now proposes to incorporate environmental disciplines into this programme. The whole programme will be renamed and launched as an industry scheme called 'AIRCARE'.

AIRCARE will give our farmer-customers the assurance of having data that can be used in the management of on-farm operations for environmental compliance and auditing. We believe that environment councils will incorporate such schemes in their documents outlining acceptable activity relating to the agricultural sector.



Brandon Dewes

Introducing Brandon Dewes

Recently we welcomed Brandon Dewes into the Super Air team as a pilot in Te Kuiti, where he is working alongside Fraser Wilson.

Brandon has worked for Super Air since 2005, when he started out as a loader driver, first in Te Kuiti and then in Rotorua. He completed his agricultural pilot training last year in Masterton under experienced Super Air pilot and Wairarapa area manager, Robert Thurston.

Brought up on a farm near Taumarunui, Brandon dreamed of becoming an agricultural pilot from the age of eight, when he went for his first ride in a top-dressing plane. At age 16 he took the first step towards realising his dream, when he started working towards his private pilot licence. He went on to complete his commercial pilot licence, logging the necessary hours flying in Taumarunui and Taupo.

'It's great to be flying for Super Air,' says Brandon. 'Every day brings a new challenge. I can't imagine doing anything else and I'm really looking forward to my first full season of top-dressing for the farmers in my region.'

Storage of fertiliser on farm

Safe storage of product in your fertiliser bin is very much a contributing factor to the effective delivery of product into the aircraft, and then onto

your paddocks. Bins come in all shapes, sizes and designs, and it is important to know what features will benefit the safety of your driver and pilot.

Where the maintenance of fertiliser bins has been neglected, the price of application is likely to increase. If a loader driver has to work around the bin due to broken side walls or a rough floor, he can't load up the plane quickly, so the aircraft has to wait or take a less optimum load. Either way, it means a longer service time for the farmer, and a higher bill.

There are many bin designs available in the market and a wide range of prices. A good bin will save you money by helping the pilot's efficiency and by protecting that expensive fertiliser from weather damage. This is especially important if the application needs to be delayed for any reason.

The main points to consider when looking at fertiliser bin design or maintenance are:

1. A good, solid, concrete floor
2. Solid walls (side and back)
3. Covers suitable for the purpose, including protecting the contents during inclement weather
4. Bin size relative to the property, and ease of manoeuvring a loader
5. Appropriate placement for ease of access and proximity to the airstrip
6. A well-maintained loading area.

A well-constructed and well-maintained bin is a good investment for your business. Good storage conditions for your fertiliser or lime will mean you have a dry product. Fertiliser in good condition is not only safe to spread, but it spreads evenly, giving you better coverage of your farm.

If you're considering putting in a new bin, or you're looking at repair and maintenance of your existing bin, then you're welcome to contact us and ask our advice. Talk to your pilot in the first instance.



A well-designed and maintained bin saves time and money