

## **Eve McCallum**

We are real people, we are families, and we are intergenerational custodians of our land.

This is not just about us; it is about our children, and their children

We matter and we are not being listened to

### **Farmers speech**

I am lucky enough to be the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of my family to grow up and work on a farm. My family has farmed in Otago, Hawkes Bay, the King Country and Northland. My Great Grandfather Lewis White was killed in a farming accident when he was felling trees to clear the land for grass to be planted.

Being a country kid has given me so many experiences and life skills that you simply do not get in the city. Independence – from the age of 7 I had my first pony, I would go out riding around the farm by myself. Responsibility - by the age of 14 I had 4 ponies, they were my responsibility (not mum and dads) to exercise, feed, water and everything else, but I loved every minute of it. Resilience - the ponies had to be looked after rain hail or shine, sick or not sick. A broken femur from a riding accident at 13 taught me how to get back on the horse, literally, and keep going, even when things were hard.

Calf day is a great example of when the farming community would come together. As young kids we would all spend weeks teaching our pet calves to lead, brushing them and feeding them. Responsibility. We also spent a fair amount of time chasing after the calves when one got away in a very large paddock during leading practice. We all then gathered at the local primary school with our calves to show off all the hard work we had put in. Sometimes I think the parents were more disappointed than the kids when the purple champion ribbon wasn't tied around their calves' neck.

Signs such as “more cows = more milk = more climate change” hit directly at farmers. They show one side of the argument. They lack any actual understanding of what farming is about. It is more than just a job. It is about family. It is about community. It is about people. Real people. I credit most of who I am to my childhood, my childhood was not stolen. My childhood is the reason I am the person you see here today.

I challenge my generation to go and investigate, to find more stories of farming life like the ones I have told you. To learn that farmers are not monsters. To not be ignorant as to what is a huge part of New Zealand Society. To give us a chance.