

# Farming



## Who's who

### Johnny Jones

Johnny (John) Jones was a successful Sydney-born whaler and entrepreneur who purchased large blocks of land in North Otago from chief Tuhawaiki in 1838. He was instrumental in establishing sheep and crop-based agriculture in early Otago, and became the chief supplier of food to Dunedin's first settlers when they arrived in 1848.



## Local lingo

### Cockies

Southern farmers are sometimes known as 'cockies'. In the early days of settlement in New Zealand, farmers who owned their own land were referred to as 'small farmers' or 'settlers', but in Australia they were often called 'cockatoos', because they 'owned their own perch'. This word slipped into usage in colonial Otago, becoming shortened to 'cockie'.

**A green carpet of rich pastureland laid out across rolling hills... Sheep and cows dotted across the landscape like tiny chess pieces... The smells of hay, cattle, woolsheds and silage... Barbed wire fences, binder twine and no. 8 wire... Many Otago people strongly identify with the sights, sounds and smells of agriculture.**

Right from the beginning of European settlement, Otago was a province founded on farming. Just four years after the 1844 establishment of the Otago block, ex-whaler Johnny Jones had introduced both sheep and grains at Waikouaiti. By 1855 the 'pastoral invasion' had spread as far south as the Clutha. Land in Central Otago was also beginning to be taken up and broken in by squatters and settlers alike.

Wheat, oats and potatoes were grown in large crops early on, but sheep farming was by far the most profitable form of agriculture, as New Zealand wool fetched high prices in Australia and Great Britain. The advent of the frozen meat industry in the late 19th century secured the primacy of the sheep in the local agricultural sector, a position it retained for many years.

Today, sheep are by no means the sole breadwinner for the region. Otago's agricultural industries are some of the most diverse in the country, with the star performers being the horticultural, winegrowing and forestry industries. Otago is responsible for approximately 90% of New Zealand's summer fruit exports and our forests represent about 5% of the country's standing volume of timber. Two-thirds of this is located within the Clutha District alone. Otago farmers also contribute significantly towards New Zealand's venison exports, which are the largest in the world. Sheep are still farmed across Otago for their meat and wool, but increasing numbers of dairy farms have popped up where once only sheep farms stood.



Farm dogs – highly skilled and essential workers



Milking time on a dairy farm

