

Shepherdess

NĀ TE WĀHINE, MŌ TE WHENUA. FROM THE WOMEN, FOR THE LAND.

Shepherdess Magazine Celebrates Fifth Anniversary

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 17th March 2025

Shepherdess magazine marks a significant milestone this month — five years in print and the release of its twenty-first edition. In an era when independent and traditional media are facing constant challenges, Shepherdess continues to grow its audience, recently expanding beyond print with a television series and the Shepherdess Muster event – with more exciting projects on the horizon.

When publisher and founder of Shepherdess, Kristy McGregor, set out to create a magazine against a backdrop of major magazine closures and an unprecedented national lockdown in March 2020, it was with a conviction that there was room for a magazine that celebrated the untold voices of rural and provincial Aotearoa. Shepherdess has now documented twenty-one seasons of rural life, capturing life up the back roads and some of the most isolated communities across the motu.

“Shepherdess started from our kitchen table, in the old homestead on a family farm in the Horowhenua. After meeting a dairy farmer in outback Australia, I was soon thrown into the dairy farming life in New Zealand – a partner who worked sixteen-hour days, came home for a feed and fell asleep – and repeat. It was isolating, and I soon realised other women were feeling isolated too. I knew that when you share stories, it helps you feel a little less alone. And so, I set about making a magazine,” says Kristy.

More than just a magazine, Shepherdess has fostered a community of readers who connect deeply with the real, relatable, and authentic stories it shares. “From the heartfelt reception we receive from our audience and community, to the connections built between our rural and urban audience, Shepherdess has become a space where stories are not only told, but resonate. I like to think that readers can either recognise someone they know in the magazine, or see their experiences reflected in the stories we share,” Kristy says.

This commitment to storytelling has expanded beyond the pages, with a television series bringing these narratives to life and the Shepherdess Muster event creating an opportunity for in-person connection. Shepherdess made its screen debut – with season one of Shepherdess the TV Series, a six-part documentary series, airing on Sky Open in 2023 - and recently showing across the Tasman on SBS Australia. Kristy says, “For the series, we spent time in six rural communities for a week, with three women in each community. From Pōrangahau to Upper Moutere, and Tora, through the series we show a portrait of women’s lives in these communities – told in a cinematic way.”

The Shepherdess Muster is a three-day festival conceived by Shepherdess, and is delivered working in partnership with a local Committee. The Muster celebrates rural life and gives women a place to connect, celebrate and create; to escape the demands of family life; and to embrace out-of-the-box experiences in a rural setting, and head home more resilient, enthused - with a stash of tools in the toolbox. The inaugural festival was held in Mōtū Te Tairāwhiti, in February 2024, and will next take place in Tokanui, Murihiku Southland, from 6-8 March 2026.

The publication remains independent and is still run from a room in the old homestead on the farm, but five years on, the team has grown to include fourteen women working remotely from kitchen

Shepherdess

NĀ TE WĀHINE, MŌ TE WHENUA. FROM THE WOMEN, FOR THE LAND.

tables and farm offices across Aotearoa. Shepherdess has inadvertently positioned itself as a model for flexible working – proving what can be achieved remotely.

Kristy says, “We now have a team of strong, intelligent wāhine juggling work, life, intermittent internet connections and children – the lives of our team could be lifted from the pages of our magazine. Our stories are told by those that understand provincial Aotearoa; from the Chatham Islands to the small Central Otago village of Lauder; from a station in the Waimata Valley out of Gisborne, to a dairy farm in the Tararua, and the town of Whanganui. We work with freelance writers and photographers who are based across the motu and embedded in their local communities too, which has helped us to connect with and build our community,” Kristy says.

The twenty first edition of Shepherdess magazine features Catherine Mullooly (Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi, Ngāti Kahungunu), 35, on the cover - mother of two and women’s shearing champion, who has loved shearing from a young age, and is farming at Mātāwai, Tairāwhiti. “Catherine embodies the humble, hard-working and resilience of women in rural Aotearoa, where the woolshed is synonymous. She speaks candidly about the isolation of farm life and the many hats she wears — roles that we know our readers have experience of too,” says Kristy.

“As we celebrate this milestone, we look ahead with excitement and anticipation for what’s to come. The next five years are about growing our impact—continuing to share the voices of women and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand, and strengthening the connections that make Shepherdess more than just a publication.”

Shepherdess magazine is for the rural and rural at heart. The Ngahuru Autumn Edition 2025 is on shelves across the motu at dairies, supermarkets, and specialty book and design stores now, and online at www.shepherdess.co.nz.

----- ENDS -----

For interviews, photos or more information please contact Gabby Brunton.

E: gabby@shepherdess.co.nz

P: 022 090 7377

Shepherdess

NĀ TE WĀHINE, MŌ TE WHENUA. FROM THE WOMEN, FOR THE LAND.

ABOUT SHEPHERDESS

Shepherdess is an independent, locally-run quarterly magazine celebrating wāhine in provincial Aotearoa, through storytelling and community. Published in mid-March, mid-June, mid-September, and early December, it is stocked nationwide in major supermarkets, bookstores, and select cafes and boutiques.

Beyond print, Shepherdess extended its reach through Shepherdess the TV series, on Sky Go and NEON (New Zealand), and is currently airing on SBS and SBS On Demand (Australia). It also hosts The Shepherdess Muster, a not-for-profit event supporting rural women through the arts, wellbeing, and entrepreneurship. The inaugural 2024 event was a finalist in the NZ Events Association Awards.

As a social-impact initiative, Shepherdess fosters rural connection through community-building, storytelling, and events. It has received recognition through the Public Interest Journalism Fund (2022) and Webstar Media Magazine Awards (2021 & 2022). Founder Kristy has been nominated in the 2021 Stuff Women of Influence Awards and 2022 Primary Industries NZ Awards.

Learn more at www.shepherdess.co.nz and www.shepherdessmuster.co.nz. Follow Shepherdess on Facebook and Instagram [@shepherdess.nz](https://www.instagram.com/shepherdess.nz).