

## A SNIFF OF SPRING

FROM MIKE COONEY & THE KEEPERS OF THE VINE

SEPTEMBER 2008

I don't know about you, but we've had one of the wettest winters I can remember. The paddocks below our house had been underwater for months, and after the umpteenth rainy weekend in a row, I'd just about had enough! My kids were going stir crazy, the DVD player was worn out and the thought of spending another couple of days stuck inside again was a little *underwhelming!*

But I guess like most things, winter doesn't last forever. And if we're prepared to hang in there (do we have a choice?), spring is just around the corner ...

**S**o when the weather cleared, we took the next opportunity to head south and spend a weekend with some friends on their farm. My kids had a lot of pent-up energy that needed to be released, and I figured that two-and-a-half thousand acres was a good place to let them loose!

Lambing was in full swing when we arrived - a sure sign of spring! And the sunny weather was a welcome change from the past couple of months. Maybe the world wasn't such a bad place after all!

We had a great time catching up with our friends, and most importantly, the kids had plenty of opportunities to tire themselves out! We spent the time driving tractors, riding four-wheelers, feeding out silage and shifting stock. There were orphaned lambs to be fed, pregnant ewes to check and firewood to chop. All-in-all, a great couple of days to blow-off a little post-winter blues!

Just as we were leaving, a ewe was brought over to the house looking a little worse for wear. She'd started lambing, but was having some difficulty. The little lamb's swollen head was out, which meant it

had been in this position for some time, and it was going nowhere fast. Drawing the short straw, I went in to investigate ...

By now we had an audience, and my kids were taking the front-row seats! They'd all seen our sheep give birth before, but never with Dad lending a hand quite so literally. Let's just say they were *quite* engrossed! After a few minutes, I finally found the two front feet and managed to get them out with the head. A gentle pull later and we had a big-headed, but very much alive, lamb sitting on the grass next to its mum.

Unfortunately (for me and the ewe!), a final check found that this old girl was carrying twins! And once again, the lamb was in an awkward position. So after rolling the sleeves right up ... (use your imagination here!) ... we finally had number two lamb lying next to its mother - also alive and well!

A little while later, the two lambs had been cleaned up by mum and were having a feed ... and my kids went away having learnt more that day than a year in a classroom!

**S**pring is one of my favourite seasons - for a lot of reasons! The new buds on trees, the daffodils in the paddocks, the fresh growth of grass, and of course the new lambs! It's a time when things that are seemingly old, all of a sudden get a new lease of life, when nature bursts forth with renewed vigour!

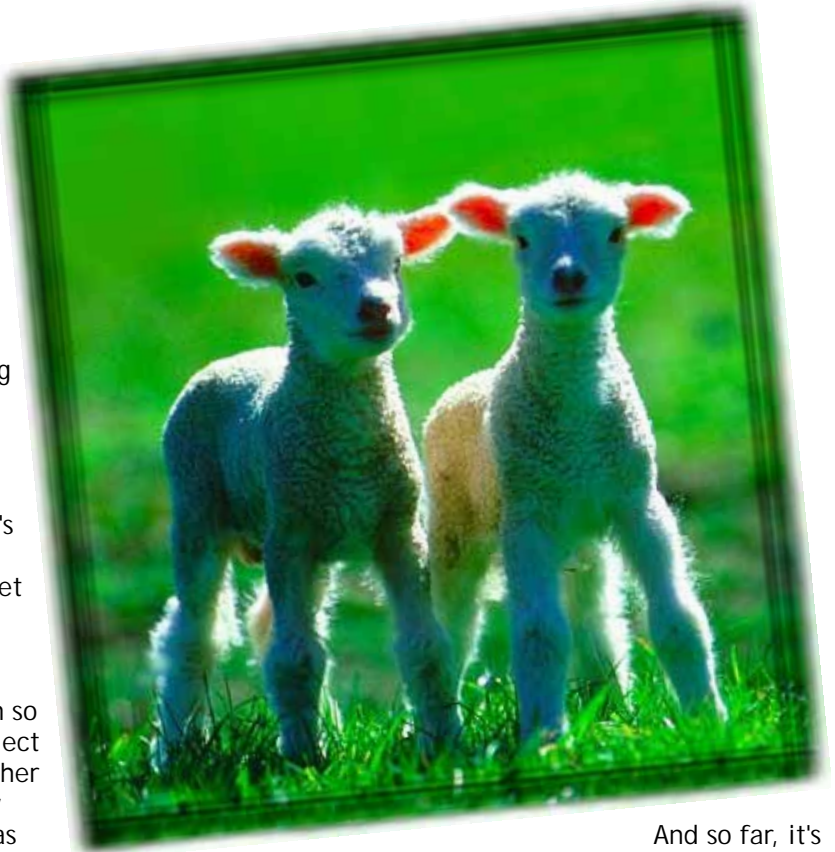
And let's face it - we *all* need reinvigorating at times, to be freshened up a little, to begin waking up on the *right* side of the bed! In nature it happens automatically - the seasons were put in place from the outset. Spring *will* arrive after winter, that's guaranteed! But occasionally, unlike the seasons, we need a little helping hand to get our 'spring' experience ... just like our two little lambs.

One of the things Grapevine does so well in so many homes around the country, is help inject a new lease of life into Kiwi families. Whether through a serious feature article or a funny quip down the side of a page, Grapevine has given a lift to thousands of people around New Zealand. Families who've gone through a tough 'winter' have found our little magazine that *breath of fresh air* they needed - that sniff of spring ...

And as I flick through the pages of our latest magazine, I know *for sure* that this will bring a change of season to many who pick it up. Its cover story **WEIRD! how to get a handle on teenagers** is one of the best interviews we've done on the subject. Period! And the advice in **AVOID RETIREMENT and stay alive!** is guaranteed to give people lots to think about!

**W**e've also realised that Grapevine isn't exempt from needing a taste of spring. We've had tough winters that have taken their toll on us, times when our cash-flow has looked dormant - almost lifeless! Times when we've seriously wondered if spring would ever come! And so far, it has - **largely thanks to people like you!** And God willing, it will continue to be a season that Grapevine experiences for a long time yet.

So ... you would've noticed over the last couple of months that we've launched a new sponsorship message in an effort to promote growth - ***to help bring spring to one million unlucky homes that are currently missing out on Grapevine.***



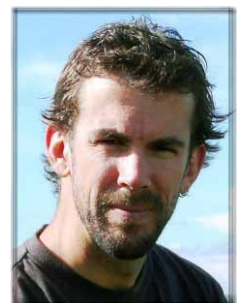
And so far, it's looking positive! More people are signing up to become Grapevine sponsors than ever. That's more magazines into homes, schools, libraries, churches, work-places and ultimately Kiwi families, than we've had for a long time!

But we've still got a long way to go, and we're determined to keep increasing our impact. So, with your help, we're asking if you'd join us in spreading a little more spring into Kiwi homes. **A generous September donation** would help us continue to grow our sponsorship message - that's more supporters ... and more magazines where they count.

And while we're at it, **why not consider becoming a Grapevine sponsor** to YOUR street (if you haven't already), or YOUR work-place, school, church, play-centre, club ... wherever!

For someone in your neighbourhood who's had a tough winter, it could mean so much ...

Have a great spring! And thanks for lending a hand.



Mike ...



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