

## farm life breeds innovation

The juggle of parenthood, farm life and all that rural living brings with it can be a stalwart on creativity and ventures outside of the domestic household. However, for Bex Hayman, the pursual of an idea that had been bubbling away for some time has opened up the door for a new career in jewellery and product design.

## **WORDS Lucinda Diack**

Bex Hayman will be familiar to many of you having forged a successful career as a singer, based out of Wanaka, and as one of the creative founders of online blog and forum Young Rural Ladies (YRL) and The Marketplace. Now she is taking the world by storm with another successful offering, Whistle & Pop – a beautifully curated collection of jewellery, accessories and products inspired by her rural life.

'It all started when my husband Tom and I got married,' shares Bex. 'I gave him a sterling silver dog whistle rather than a ring, which is where the "Whistle" of Whistle & Pop came about. "Pop" was inspired by the annual duck shoot and thinking about what I could do with the empties. Whilst I can't say I was very good at either, I loved (and still love) the idea of creating jewellery that was stylish and elegant.'

'Sarah [Douglas] and I launched YRL and The Marketplace as a space for rural women from around New Zealand to showcase their talents and sell their products and it was on here that I tested the market for my jewellery range.' With busy farm life and growing families forcing Sarah and Bex to reluctantly put a hold on YRL and The Marketplace, Bex made the decision to pursue Whistle & Pop full time, 'or as much as you can around the demands of a two-and-a-half-year-old (Isabella) and a 17-month-old (William)', she laughs. A decision that has seen her go from strength to strength over the last two years.

She now has a number of wholesalers across New Zealand and Australia stocking her products, a growing awareness of her own online store, and gained some well-deserved recognition at the 2019 NZI Rural Women NZ Business Awards, taking out the Creative Arts category.

Farming at the top of the Hakataramea Valley, Bex lives 30 minutes from the nearest post shop, which can add to



LEFT / Life in the rugged, remote landscape of the Hakataramea Valley provides constant inspiration for new products. **BELOW** / Featuring an illustration by Dana Johnston of Albert the stag and Gus the ram the limited edition silk scarf was designed to represent everything country in New Zealand. It is paired with another of Bex's iconic t-shirts. BOTTOM / The **Branding Collection allows** you to build on your collection with different pendant charms, rings and earrings.





the challenge of daily life, especially for those running an online business. Yet she wouldn't live anywhere else. 'Living on a farm breeds innovation,' she enthuses. 'I draw from this unique, rugged, remote place every day.

'Each of my pieces starts with an idea that is used on a day-to-day basis on-farm and is turned into an elegant piece of jewellery or accessory. Whether it be a cattle tag made of sterling silver that customers can engrave

with their pet cow or station name; or a sterling silver dog whistle, designed to make an everyday

item beautiful. The products must speak to local landscape, and speak to those who value our unique environment.'

While Bex designs the products herself, she collaborates with local photographer and designer Dana Johnston to perfect the imagery before turning it over to a trusted supplier to bring the design to life. 'Wherever possible I like to collaborate with people from my community to help me achieve what I do,' she comments.

Complementing her beautiful collection of jewellery and accessories, she now produces undies and T-shirts, hats, bags and even scarfs. 'The undies are going really well,' she laughs. 'Like the rest of my collection they are about telling the story of rural New Zealand. My aim is always to create products that are enduring and timeless. We are proud to be farmers, and we love our animals.' A concept that is particularly evident in her Branding Collection, a range of pendant charms, rings and stud earrings comprised of animals and iconic farming products, like that of wheat. 'This collection continues to grow with almost limitless sources of inspiration around the farm and rural life,' shares Bex.

With a growing business and a growing family, Bex has converted the garage into her home office and can often be found after little-people-bedtime packing and preparing orders ready for dispatch. 'My biggest challenge is finding a babysitter,' she laughs. 'But when you love something like I do Whistle & Pop, you make it work.'

124 latitudemagazine.co.nz