

Love wells up during farmer health scare for the New Year

JOYCE WYLLIE

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Jock Wyllie looks on while a friend helps out with the dagging.

OPINION: The events of the third day of January will undoubtedly change the way we see 2018.

Christmas was celebrated on a hot sunny day at Kaihoka with 32 friends and family gathered at a long, festively decorated table outside in the garden. A feast was enjoyed, followed by a competitive game of petanque handicapped by a hard, un-level-lawn playing field.

Summer is not a holiday period on the farm and we were still experiencing a worryingly long dry spell. Ewes and lambs were weaned early. Mobs were mustered, weighed, drafted, drenched and dipped. Wonderfully, it finally rained and on December 31 the rejoicing was more about welcome grass growing than the old year passing. Farm work continued as we celebrated the New Year.

The final mob needing sorting was up on Lunar. Jock mustered them then phoned from the top of the hill to say he wasn't feeling well and could I come up. That was about 6pm, and three hours later we were in Nelson Hospital intensive care ward after he had a stent put in.

It's very useful to know the symptoms of heart attack and please ensure you are well informed. Witnessing my husband experiencing them is not something to forget. Hot and clammy, he was showing discomfort across the chest, restlessness, sweating and increased pain.

Jock described it as like his heart was flapping frantically, wrapping around his collarbone.

There are two times when love wells up. One when something wonderful happens and you feel pride, joy, excitement and love. The other when something seriously bad happens. I felt that love kneeling beside Jock, monitoring his fast faint pulse, as he lay in recovery position on our lawn, waiting.

The 111 call quickly brought a first response unit with St John volunteers from Collingwood, followed half an hour later by the rescue helicopter with paramedics. Pain relief and medication made the patient more comfortable for the chopper trip, with me in the front seat. Delivered into wonderful emergency care and passed from the welcoming service of A and E, to the cardiology department, we then wheeled him to the intensive care unit.

First thing Jock said when he groggily surfaced the next morning tucked in bed with drips, tubes, electronic attachments and personal TV channel screening his heart activity, was 'this could have been a lot worse'. He was so right.

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Now he's back home with pills to maintain a healthy heart function, feeling better each day and very, very grateful.

We are grateful for cellphone coverage, for volunteers who leave their jobs to help, for well-qualified medics and a helicopter landing in the paddock by our house, for an amazing hospital team working after hours, for technology developed so a small stent can be threaded from vessels in the wrist to be positioned in the wee coronary artery affected by the clot, for friends and family who have helped on the farm while the boss is off work for some weeks, for all the emails, phone calls and support we have received.

We are glad for humour in a serious situation, like our mate Brian who reckons he saved Jock by offering to give him the "kiss of life", which neither of them wanted, so Jock managed to make it home.

We sure count our many blessings and so appreciate all the care and prayer. I am particularly aware that for generations of families at Kaihoka before us the outcome would have been alarmingly different, considering the distance from help and not having the facilities we now have.

We still have problems. Even though it has rained the dry period means difficult management decisions, selling lambs store earns less than being able to finish them,. The budget's blown, but those events of January 3 bring a new perspective.

Wishing you a happy new year with big picture view and a fresh focus.

- Joyce Wyllie lives on a sheep and beef farm at Kaihoka, on the west coast of Golden Bay.