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Canterbury farmers jump on Plasback recycling bandwagon

Demand for Plasback's on-farm recycling service is growing so fast in Canterbury that the regional collector, McCarthy Contracting Ltd, now has a truck devoted to the task full-time.

Taitapu-based McCarthy Contracting collects farm waste plastic in a region that extends from Oamaru in the south to the Conway River in the north and throughout the West Coast.

Principals Grant and Robert McCarthy say that new regulations from regional councils mean Canterbury farmers should have environmental plans and those plans require them to recycle their waste.

"Farmers need solutions and this is it. We make it easy for them to recycle their waste silage wrap, baling twine, feed bags and fertiliser bags," Robert McCarthy says.

"Habits are changing. In the past farmers just burned or buried their waste. Now kids are taught about the importance of recycling in school, and we are all more aware of the need to protect the environment.

"As awareness has grown recycling has become mainstream. Our clients are livestock farmers from across the spectrum – wool, meat and dairy."

Robert says Plasback is a national organisation with a network of independent collectors but when you call the company's 0800 freephone number you are automatically connected to your local collector.

When they joined the scheme, McCarthy Contracting used to send a truck out once a month to collect plastic from farms. Now it goes out twice a week.

“That’s why we bought a truck specifically for the task. It has a Hiab crane, which makes it quick and easy for our driver to pick up the bin liners that farmers use to store their waste plastic,” Robert says.

“Much of our recent expansion has been in mid-Canterbury. We have picked up a number of clients there in recent months.”

Both Plasback and McCarthy Contracting had stands at the recent South Island Field Days in Kirwee. Between them they sold 35 collection bins to new clients over the three day event.

McCarthy Contracting also processes the waste plastic it collects. It operates one of Plasback’s six purpose-built balers. The balers are in regional centres throughout New Zealand and are used to compact the waste plastic so it can be shipped within the country and overseas for reprocessing.

Plasback also collects Ecolab and AgPro’s 200-litre plastic chemical drums through its on-farm recycling scheme.

Plasback national manager Chris Hartshorne says the bigger the collection scheme gets, it faster it and more efficient it becomes because collection contractors can schedule more frequent pick up runs.

“We are proud of the fact that by increasing efficiencies, we have not had to raise the cost of an on-farm collection at all in 10 years. We have also made it much easier for our customers to book a collection on-line through our website or on our free phone line,” Chris says.

Last year Plasback collected 1822 tonnes of silage wrap and other plastic, and it is on track to exceed that amount this year.

Recently Plasback entered a partnership with Auckland-based recycler Astron Plastics to turn waste silage wrap into Tuffboard, a plywood replacement product that has a variety of uses on farms. Tuffboard is available through Plasback or rural retail suppliers.

For further information contact Plasback’s Chris Hartshorne on 03 338 2400 or chartshorne@agpac.co.nz or Robert McCarthy on 03 329 6655. For collection, call Plasback’s freephone – 0508-338-240.

CAPTION: From left: Robert McCarthy, Chris Hartshorne, and Grant McCarthy with the new truck dedicated to Plasback collection.

