

# Keeping company in the country: collocations, compounds, and phrasal verbs in the rural lexicon.

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Early lexicographers were known to be arbiters and conservators of all that was in the literary and linguistic good, with dictionaries being expected to reflect social values. More recently the roles of lexicographical venturers have been designated 'gatekeepers' or 'tally clerks'<sup>1</sup> in confronting the idiomaticity of word use. Like the playing of an international game of chess, compiling a lexicon or glossary is a prolonged process of deliberation and decision-making. The selection of words and citations to include, and their arrangement, is the mere beginning. It was lexicographer Tom McArthur who aptly described 'words' as 'vexatious entities.'<sup>2</sup> The wiles and waywardness of words, the ways in which words cohabit or, amoebae-like, slough off some of their parts, their slippery changing form, their respective lexical life-expectancy, and their mating history can certainly lead the compiler a very merry dance.

One of the more arresting characteristics of the rural New Zealand lexicon is its 'matiness.' Words like to be together. Multi-lexical units (aka compound lexical items, compound lexical units, multi-word units, multi-word lexical units, compound or composite units, fixed expressions, fixed phrases, set phrases, word strings) abound, posing problems for their arrangement and classification. Linguists like Turner commented in the 1960s on the extent of compounding and idiomaticity in the New Zealand lexicon and most present-day Year 12 students can cite **sharemilking**, **woolshed**, **wayleggo** and **shedding up** as characteristic RD1 terms. Such 'matiness' requires much in the way of lexical decision-making, particularly in the ordering of headwords when many terms like **carryingcapacity**, **carrying-capacity**, **stock-carrying capacity** and **carrying capacity** have varietal forms.

Compounds and collocations have long posed difficulties. Ball's 1939 *Compounding the English Language* emphasized the complete lack of uniformity in spelling and treatment of compounds in newspapers and dictionaries. Compounds frequent the domains of idiom and metaphor and can be open, hyphenated and closed (or spaced, hyphenated and solid!) Not surprisingly, it was noted in the 1960s that 'the only way to really be sure about how a compound is written is to consult a dictionary, and even dictionaries will differ.'<sup>3</sup> Later, Ivir<sup>4</sup> stressed 'Collocations are a linguistic and lexicographical problem. For the linguist, they pose fundamental questions of lexical meaning

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<sup>1</sup> Delbridge & Peters, 1988: 33

<sup>2</sup> McArthur, 1998: 33

<sup>3</sup> Lodwig & Barrett, 1967: 122

<sup>4</sup> Ivir, 1988: 43

and of the relationship between grammar and lexis; for the dictionary-maker, they present dilemmas of a practical kind (how many and which collocations to include, how and when to enter them) as well as those of a more theoretical nature (how to specify the meanings of collocates in relation to the meanings of isolated, non-collocated words.)' Even more problematic is the lack of standardisation in the use of terms by lexicographers and linguists. Riggs in 1989<sup>5</sup> pointed out that 'someone writing about 'multiword lexemes' should know that authors speaking of 'set phrases,' 'idioms,' 'synthemes' or 'set collocations' may have been analyzing the same topic.' Riggs claims that at least 20 English terms have been used by lexicographers for 'multi-word lexeme'. Phrasal verbs are variously described as 'verbs composed of two or more lexemes,' or 'a verb-preposition combination' or 'idiomatic verb forms.' A student new to linguistics is bound to be confused by such a definition minefield. Crystal's *Penguin Dictionary of Language* tells us that an idiom is 'a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that it combines a single unit. The meanings of the individual words cannot be combined to produce the idiomatic expression as a whole.'<sup>6</sup> A compound is 'descriptive of a linguistic unit composed of two or more elements, each of which could function independently in other circumstances.'<sup>7</sup> A phrasal verb is defined as 'a type of verb consisting of a sequence of a lexical element plus one or more particles, such as *come in*, *sit down*.'<sup>8</sup> Collocation 'is the habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items.'<sup>9</sup> Collocations can be free or restricted. However, lexicographer Hartmann<sup>10</sup> simply defines idiom as 'a multiword lexeme' and this includes compounds, collocations and phrasal verbs!

Another related problem for lexicographers is the consideration of informality and syntactical and semantic context. Such domains as the woolshed generate specific multiword lexemes used in quite different ways in the milking shed, the saleyards, the 'open day' demonstration, or the Federated Farmers meeting.

This short paper considers the extent to which some of our rural lexemes have been found to join forces as collocations, compounds and phrasal verbs in data sources such as rural periodicals, histories and biographies published between 1850 and 2001. In such, lexemes are used in a range of registers of descriptive, informative, instructive, entertainment and persuasive writing registers dealing with various contexts /domains including dog trials, on-farm workday activities, agricultural and pastoral shows, contests and exhibitions, stock sales, advertising etc. For the purposes of this paper, the following terms are applied: a compound is two or more words combined into a morphological unit; a collocation is a multiword lexeme where two or more words are customarily used together and a phrasal verb is a verb-

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<sup>5</sup> Riggs, 1989: 97

<sup>6</sup> Crystal, 1999: 155

<sup>7</sup> Crystal, 1999: 66

<sup>8</sup> Crystal, 1999: 261

<sup>9</sup> Crystal 1999: 61

<sup>10</sup> Hartmann, 1983: 249

preposition combination. Data are grouped, within discussion areas, according to the date of citation or usage.

### Collocations:

The collocative strength or collocability of words like **condition**, **country**, **bluff** and **face** is significant in farming. **Condition** is a rural utility word. Everything has it: stock, wool, soils, crops, pasture, the truck... but only rarely does it go out alone. Items can have, or be in states of, **early condition**, **late condition**, **good condition**, **low condition**, **top condition**, **sound condition**, **general condition**, **daggy condition**, **new condition** and might well be **well-conditioned** or **poorly-conditioned**. There can be a **fall in condition**, and many animals can **go back in condition**. Qualitatively, an item in **reasonable condition** depends very much on the referent and context. A homestead in **sound condition** is almost a handyman's dream, whereas a tractor in **sound condition** is reliable. The *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture* in 1916 tells us:

Condition is a much-abused term when indiscriminately applied to animals. In good condition should mean in good condition for the purposes for which the animal is required.<sup>11</sup>

Since 1990 an attempt has been made to quantify stock condition, by way of **condition scores**. But condition scores for sheep are not the same as condition scores for cows:

Generally if good body condition (CS3) is achieved and maintained over the summer period, wool production will be high. Condition scores 0,1 and 2: indicate under feeding and low production. Condition scores 3 and 4: indicate good feeding and high production,. Condition score 5: overfed and overfat.<sup>12</sup>

But cows with a condition score of 5 are top producers:

His top cows are at condition score 5 or better for most of the year<sup>13</sup>

And:

Our cows probably never get below a condition score of four and a half and are always above five.<sup>14</sup> [sic]

However, both sheep and cows can suffer from **overcondition**:

Other cases have occurred among ewes run on the rough pasture alone so as to avoid overcondition at lambing.<sup>15</sup>

During the milking season, the cows are kept in good working condition; over-condition in the summer and early autumn is considered very undesirable.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> NZ Journal of Agriculture Dec 20 1916: 467

<sup>12</sup> NZ Sheep Council 1994. *Guide to Feed Planning for Farmers*. Palmerston North: Dinniss & Ass: 61-62

<sup>13</sup> NZ Dairy Exporter Oct 1999: 6

<sup>14</sup> Daily News Farming Supplement September: 22

<sup>15</sup> NZ J Agriculture May 20 1930: 297

<sup>16</sup> NZ J Agriculture April 16 1945: 351

In stock sale contexts, animals can be in **forward condition** or **backward condition**. **Forward condition** stock are intermediate between **store condition** and **prime condition**, with some finishing yet to be done. But **backward condition** stock are relative – they are so described because of the condition of other stock in the sale, not because they have a particular **condition score**:

The cows were mostly in backward condition and did not realize high prices.<sup>17</sup>

Sheep can also be in **mating fit condition**:

Observations of these flocks suggest that during most of the summer the ewes are maintained in 'mating fit' condition which in practice is unnecessary.<sup>18</sup>

**Country** has little to do with nationhood in the rural world. Although it is loosely used to denote land, it is also concerned with elements like topography and production. We can all accept and understand **hill country**, **steep country**, **high country**, **back country**, **down country**, **up country**, **pumice country**, **bush-sick country**, **foothill country**, **rolling country**, **productive country**, **deer country**, **sheep country**, **sandy country**, **bush country**, **close-hilled country**, **mustering country** and **shingly country**. But it is more of a task to define **sweet country**, **strong country**, **sour country**, **scabby country**, **open country**, **clean country**, **dirty country**, **broken country**, **early country**, **new country**, **easy country**, **poor country**, **hungry country**, **lean country**, **ewe country**, **wether country**, **hogget country**, **summer country**, **winter country**, **pakihi country**, **sound country**, **cut country**, **tractor country**, **crawler country**, **bony country**, **finished country**, **unfinished country**, **heavy country**, **light country** and **late country**. Region and context are semantically significant here, as with 'condition,' and rural real estate advertisements, in particular, require a 'country' gloss all of their own. **Walking country**, contrary to what we might think, is difficult steep, shingly, bluffy country where musters have to work on foot rather than on horseback.

**Face**, **basin** and **bluff** have their own meanings in New Zealand high country, but they are rarely used alone. From as early as 1857, faces have been qualified:

Sheep seem all right as all on steep sunny faces which have been partly cleared.<sup>19</sup>

Vegetating of loose faces in high country... Would it be suitable in the MacKenzie country to prevent shale-rock faces from slipping?<sup>20</sup>

On account of the extreme roughness of the country and the lack of suitable vegetation, the sheep do not graze on the high faces of the main range.<sup>21</sup>

Steep faces, heavily wooded, rose on either side of the river.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Hawera Star August 4, 1900: 4

<sup>18</sup> Stevens, 1958: 34

<sup>19</sup> St Leonards Station Diary, 1857 in MacFarlane, 1946: 126

<sup>20</sup> NZ J Agriculture May 30, 1921: 313

<sup>21</sup> NZ J Agriculture Feb 20, 1937: 98

<sup>22</sup> Newton, 1949: 140

...the old hind, joined by two others, was sidling through a shingle face downwind<sup>23</sup>

Open faces and great shingle basins, it was not good deer country.<sup>24</sup>

All of the 1423 acres of their property, with the exception of a few steep back faces and gullies, are ploughable.<sup>25</sup>

The collocate **paddock** is useful in showing change in the rural world. Early citations include **accommodation paddock** and **night paddock**. Many large stations and country accommodation houses provided **accommodation paddocks**, which were essentially **holding paddocks** provided for travellers' or station workers' horses and other stock:

Note to Cattle Shippers – good stabling, loose boxes and extensive accommodation paddocks.<sup>26</sup>

We had a hell of a job rounding them up, but got every one in the finish and travelled by a back road past Hanmer to the accommodation paddocks, which are near the Hanmer River.<sup>27</sup>

**Night paddocks** were common on bush farms and early dairy farms, where fences were few, and where wild pigs and wild dogs threatened stock. The **night paddock** was usually, but not always, close to the house or to the **house paddock**, **home paddock**, **homestead paddock** or **station paddock**. More recently, a **night paddock** is one where dairy cows are housed before the morning milking, and such a paddock is rotated around the farm. **Night paddock** is also used today for an area where stud mares, ewes and cows are kept before and immediately after parturition.

During the last 150 years, we have seen the coinage and use of **calf-sick paddocks**, **sheep paddocks**, **back paddocks**, **front paddocks**, **wether paddocks**, **ewe paddocks**, **dog-tucker paddocks**, **breeding paddocks**, **tupping paddocks**, **lambing paddocks**, **drying paddocks**, **killer paddocks**, **horse paddocks**, **hospital paddocks**, **hard-grazed paddocks**, **hay paddocks**, **silage paddocks**, **whare paddocks**, **wintering paddocks**, **hill paddocks**, **county paddocks**, **finishing paddocks**, **foaling paddocks**, **forage paddocks**, **forward paddocks**, **side paddocks**, **maternity paddocks**, **patchy paddocks**, **ram paddocks**, **capture paddocks**, **clean paddocks**, **docking paddocks**, **tailing paddocks**, **safe paddocks**, **isolation paddocks**, **saddling paddocks**, **run-off paddocks**, **sheep-sick paddocks**, **spelling paddocks**, **spelled paddocks**, **bush paddocks** and **shelter paddocks**. Rural schools provided **pony paddocks** until the 1960s, but now the term is only really used by real estate agents in advertising lifestyle blocks. Since the 1950s, particular areas have been designated **airstrip paddocks**. Now, in 2001, New Zealand's organic farmers discuss the economic viability of their **hemp paddocks**!

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*: 142

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*: 147

<sup>25</sup> NZ Farmer Nov 5, 1953: 19

<sup>26</sup> Hawera Star April 4, 1884: 4

<sup>27</sup> Stronach, 1953: 67

**Flattening paddocks** are those upon which cattle beasts are grazed under a hoof and tooth management plan, in order to flatten scrub and weeds. Metaphorically, paddocks feature too: the **long paddock** is the 'long acre' along roadsides and the '**fattening paddock**' represents a swagger's beat. The ancestral hearth is known as the **home paddock**.

**Paddock hands** are usually casual farm staff, a **paddock lunch** is that eaten out on the job, while **paddock shepherds** work with **paddock ewes**, **paddock flocks** and **paddock dogs** on large stations where a distinction is drawn between blocks and paddocks.

Muster is another term with several collocations, including **autumn muster** (or **fall muster** in parts of the South Island) **walking muster**, **culling muster**, **works muster**, **shearing muster**, **crutching muster**, **docking muster** and **lambing muster**.

Three particular Maori borrowings have common collocations in the rural lexicon. **Pakihi** came into use originally to represent a small clearing in a bush. We find **open pakihis** and **blind pakihis** in the mustering context. **Pakihis** are also swamplands and collocations here include **pakihi soils**, **pakihi bog**, **pakihi country**, **pakihi fern** and **pakihi terrace**.

**Whare** is an historically important term in the rural lexicon, used in several senses. As a small hut, we find **front whare**, **back whare**, **iron whare**, **mud whare**, **fern-tree whare**, **nikau whare**, **bungy whare**, **ponga whare**, **ponga and daub whare**, **rabbiter's whare**, **scrubcutter's whare**, **tree-fern whare**, **musterer's whare**, **boundary-keeper's whare**, **single man's whare**, **raupo whare** and **whare paddock**. Where a group of single men live together, we find **whare boys**, **whare boss**, **whare manager**, **whare paddock**, **whare system**, **whare fund** and **shearers' whare**.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'Maori' was collocated commonly and sometimes derisively. Among collocations were **Maori hay**, **Maori hut**, **Maori block**, **Maori boundary**, **Maori cabbage**, **Maori Chief** (a blight-resistant commercial potato) **Maori dog**, **Maori holly**, **Maori huntaway**, **Maori land**, **Maori privet**, **Maori track** and **taro Maori**.

Other collocated Maori borrowings include **manuka**, collocated with scrub and **tutu**, collocated with bed.

## Compounds

Many rural compounds, like **eyedog**, **woolshed** and **bobbycalf** are familiar to us all, irrespective of background. But other common compounded nouns, some cited below, are among our most colourful terms. Musterers are referred to by a variety of compounds. Among these are **scree-scramblers**, **tussock jumpers**, **dogmen**, **hillmen**, **gullyrakers**, **sandyhookers**, **dog-wallopers** and **mutton-punchers**. They use **hillbags**, **hillpoles**, **hillsticks**, **dog-floggers** and **snowleggings**. They decry the activities of **aerial-cowboys** (helicopters poachers) in their **aerial-packhorses** (helicopters). Other interesting idiomatic

compounds are **botbombs** (drenches) **bumbarbers** (crutchers and daggers) **blue ducks** (foggy or wet conditions during a muster) and **bushwhacker** (scrubcutter). **Pour-on** is a common term for a systemic drench poured on to the skin on the back of an animal, and **greenpickings** are remnants of wool picked from a fence or a bush. Capital stock, carried over from one season to another, are known as **carryovers** and **holdovers** and sheep on high-country stations are frequently referred to as **greybacks**. Aged gummy ewes are known as **broken-mouths** or **failing-mouths**. If they are straggling at the back end of a mob, they are **tailenders**. **Stockcrates** are used to transport animals on the trays of trucks and trailers. **Gate-leaners** are like **lifestylers**, viewed as 'playing at farming.' Cows are milked in **angleparks** and **herringbones**, and sheep are shorn in **raised-boards** or **woolaways**. Related to noun compounds are portmanteau words, such as **Cashgora**, **Sheeplan** and **helimustering**.

Compounds from other word classes include adjectives such as **whipshy** (of dogs frightened by stockwhips) **gateshy** (of sheep hesitant to enter a gateway) and **bikehappy** (dogs which become hyperactive when the farmbike starts.)

Compounded verbs include **early-wean**, **backbox**, **age-mark**, **legrope**, **back-graze**, **surfacesow**, **halfstock**, **hardstock**, **bellycrutch**, **buttonhole**, **breakgraze** and **breakfeed**.

### Phrasal verbs

Many phrasal verbs are found in the sheep-raising and management domains. Dogs **bark up** at particular stages of a muster, but they **melt off** the sheep when instructed to do so. Mobs of sheep may be **boxed up** intentionally:

It is only during the tupping season that it will be necessary to keep the ewes separate...The ewes can then be boxed up again, and run in convenient sized mobs. Before boxing them up, however...<sup>28</sup>

If you heeded the facial eczema warning and boxed the ewes up, many farms would be 100 per cent certain of a severe salmonella outbreak.<sup>29</sup>

Or unintentionally:

Not a single sheep [in three mobs] got boxed up.<sup>30</sup>

Not long after, our mob got boxed up with one of Bruce Udy's.<sup>31</sup>

Sheep can be **shed off**, **shedded up** and **shed out**. They can be **penned up** and **drafted off**. Fencers in a fencing competition can **out-fence** others struggling with a difficult post.

Paddocks are:

<sup>28</sup> NZ Farmer March 1918: 271

<sup>29</sup> NZ Farmer September 24 1970: 46

<sup>30</sup> Gordon, 1990: 109

<sup>31</sup> Pullen, 1996: 45

grazed out systematically and then closed up.<sup>32</sup>

By July the weather is getting wetter and the cows will pug up the breaks they graze on.<sup>33</sup>

Any animals prone to milk fever should not be milked out too much for the first few days.<sup>34</sup>

**Kill out** is used for the process of assessment of a carcass weight, as in:

On April 1, 28 of these stores were sent to the works, where they killed out at 39.9lb and on April 22 a further draft of 24 killed out at 38.6lb.<sup>35</sup>

Most of the lambs from the southern hill country farms killed out at 13.5 kg or more.<sup>36</sup>

Well-behaved sheepdogs, as they are being trained, should **kennel up** on instruction:

Whatever type of housing is provided, all dogs should be trained to 'kennel up' when told to do so.<sup>37</sup>

While stock are **cut out** of a mob and work is **cut out** when it stops, land is **cut up**:

Several wealthy syndicates are making enquiries in various parts of Southland (says the *Mataura Ensign*) for blocks suitable for cutting up into conveniently sized farms..<sup>38</sup>

Already three hundred [heifers] have been sent from Stratford to a Canterbury run-holder who is cutting up his sheep run into milking farms and putting on sharemilkers.<sup>39</sup>

The farm is part of the old Te Arai Station, cut up in 1908.<sup>40</sup>

But both stock and land can be **broken in** and even **go back**:

This contributor mustered the other day a number of yearlings and nearly all had a short, hacking cough such as lambs emit when 'going back.'<sup>41</sup>

...about 2500 acres in grass, balance has been grass, but neglected and gone back to fern and titree.<sup>42</sup>

In 1945, another block of 365 acres of unimproved hilly land which had 'gone back' was purchased.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>32</sup> NZ J Agriculture March 1967: 35

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*: 37

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*: 37

<sup>35</sup> NZ Farmer Oct 9 1952: 21

<sup>36</sup> Jarvis et al, 1989: 31

<sup>37</sup> Mills et al, 1964: 112

<sup>38</sup> Hawera Star, Jan 19 1905: 2

<sup>39</sup> Hawera Star June 4 1910: 4

<sup>40</sup> Tait, 1956: 12

<sup>41</sup> Hawera Star, Dec 13 1918: 2

<sup>42</sup> NZ J Agriculture July 15 1940: 40

<sup>43</sup> Tait, 1956: 69



It was not easy to watch sheep refusing to eat hay, going back in condition and standing in gateways when the green grass looked so innocent.<sup>44</sup>

**Breaking in land and bringing in land** involve the same process. But **breaking out** is a shearer's action when s/he opens up or divides the fleece when beginning a fresh sheep.

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Further analysis of the rural lexicon using a variety of contemporary sources, including websites, will no doubt reveal continuing use of collocations, compounds and phrasal verbs with which to confound those involved in lexical organisation. Such investigation would provide useful research activities at Years 12 and 13.

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<sup>44</sup> Gascoigne, 1965: 53