

# Rural NZ English

A specialist study in the lexis of the New Zealand rural sector, including the compilation of a lexicon of 5,000 words and 20,000 citations, was carried out in a PhD study by Dianne Bardsley. The rural sector has occupied a central position in the culture and economy of New Zealand since sheep were first imported by missionary settlers in 1814 to what was then an isolated and predominantly rainforested land. In 1900, more than 58 % of both colonial and indigenous Māori populations lived on farms and stations and, although in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this number has lessened appreciably, the sector's influence remains significant.

For the pioneer pastoralist and farmer, New Zealand was the antipodes of the homeland in terms of seasons, natural vegetation, and terrain. It posed climatic, geographic, and ecological challenges and new terms were required, existing ones adapted, and others borrowed from the indigenous language te reo Māori, for these new conditions. Rural New Zealand English lexis was found to be distinctive, enduring, and diverse and, in its genesis, not a sub-variety of Australian English as earlier indicated by Ramson (1966:66) and Turner (1970:93). The idioms of orientation that were developed in this new world helped settlers to establish an identity with each other and with the land and, since then, such idioms have maintained the purpose of orientation in various domains and regions. The diverse domains of mustering, of shearing, of stock sales, of arable farming, of hill country, of high country, and of dairying all have their respective technical vocabulary and idioms of orientation.

Details of the data sources, methodology, and a summary of results can be found in the *International Journal of Lexicography* (2005) 19.1: 41-72. A text based on the lexicon, entitled *In the Paddock and on the Run: The Language of Rural New Zealand*, is due for publication by the University of Otago Press in April, 2009. Some examples of terms and a photographic essay can also be found in *Te Ara: the Online Encyclopedia of New Zealand* in the section entitled *The Settled Landscape*. Further details can be sought from Dianne Bardsley, Director, New Zealand Dictionary Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, P O Box 600, Wellington 6140 or from [dianne.bardsley@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:dianne.bardsley@vuw.ac.nz)

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