

Research Pre-release Summary

Expected for release in 2024

Negotiating social licence to farm at Canterbury agricultural and pastoral shows.

Agricultural and Pastoral (A&P) Shows are often depicted as a meeting point for town and country. They are public events that showcase animals, food, equipment, skills, and recreation associated with agriculture, and provide family fun and entertainment. Initially established through England's Royal Agricultural Society, New Zealand's earliest A&P Shows were held in the 1840s. Today, nearly 100 annual A&P Shows are held across the country in urban and more rural settings. The largest of these is the New Zealand Agricultural Show, which is held in the Canterbury region of the South Island. Run by the Canterbury A&P Association, the event attracts regular attendance of over 100,000 people over three days, with the final "Show Day" enshrined as a public holiday for the Mid- and North-Canterbury region.

Previous research interprets A&P Shows as staged performances of agricultural and pastoral activities that promote a positive image of agriculture to non-farming publics. In this research, we draw parallels between these existing insights and the concept of social licence to operate (SLO), thus approaching A&P Shows as places where a social licence to *farm* is negotiated. We have conducted in-depth qualitative research on five A&P shows across the Canterbury region: the Ashburton Show, the Amberley Show, the Southern Canterbury Show, the New Zealand Agricultural Show (previously known as the Canterbury Show), and the Little River Show. Our analysis examines how social licence to farm is negotiated through activities and experiences at New Zealand A&P Shows. In doing so we also highlight ongoing changes and relational tensions in these negotiations, and who is included in – and excluded from – them.

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Inflatable rides at the Little River Show.



Crowds watch the sheep shearing contest at the NZAg Show.