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Connecting a young crop of farmers

Story by **Emma Masters**. Photograph by **Jason Porter**.

For many Australians, the annual Royal Show is a colourful carnival jam-packed with showbags, thrilling rides and an evening spectacle of fireworks. For others, it's a time-honoured opportunity to showcase their work, from animal husbandry to baking the perfect sponge cake. But for Middleton local Henry Scott – it's a chance to connect.

Since he was just 15 years of age, Henry Scott has been helping to bring together young people in primary industries through a series of events, including the 'Young Farmers Challenge' and social meet-ups held during local shows. Growing up on his family's seaside farm and studying agriculture at Investigator College in Victor Harbor, it's something the energetic 25-year-old says he felt naturally drawn toward.

'My brother Ed is a few years older than me and he helped start up events for Rural Ambassadors for country shows to stay in touch, and it grew to involve young people coming together for country shows and the Royal Adelaide Show,' says Henry. 'It caught my attention because I liked the idea of linking people together.'

Soon enough, the not-for-profit group SA Next Generation was formed and these days it organises a lot more than get-togethers. They now organise everything from development events such as training in media or public speaking, to an entire day held during the Royal Adelaide Show.

'Youth in Ag Day involves forums where we talk about important issues in the sector, we have a "farmers challenge" in the main arena and a Royal Rendezvous in the evening,' Henry explains. 'In the

farmers challenge, competitors might have to roll up a swag, then roll a wool bale about twenty metres, then fight fire where we make a scarecrow, light it up and they've got to spray it down. There are some easy day-to-day challenges and some not so easy – just like life as a farmer.'

It's become so popular the challenge has now gone national, and the work doesn't stop there. When I spoke to Henry he was preparing for a Zoom meeting for a national conference to be held during the Royal Adelaide Show this year. 'There's a lot to do but it's exciting and it'll certainly put us in the spotlight,' he says.

While the work keeps Henry more than busy alongside his full-time job with SA Water and playing for his beloved Port Elliot Southern Breakers soccer club in his 'spare time', he says it has given him numerous opportunities for growth. 'When I left school I didn't know what I wanted to do but I knew I didn't want to go to uni until I figured it out and I've picked up a whole heap of life experience since,' he explains.

'Some of it's come full circle, like I did drama in school and recently was an extra in an upcoming film *The Royal Hotel*. I messaged my old teacher to let him know,' he continues. 'My whole approach to life is that if I don't know something, I give it a go and ask the questions.' He says that while he's not a full-time farmer, it will always be an important part of his life. 'There was freedom growing up on the farm, with being close enough to do stuff, like go to the surf spot after school, and being far enough away to do stuff, like making a go-kart or whatever excited me at the time. I could make lots of noise and not upset the neighbours,' he says. 'And living close means I still help on the farm, even on a Sunday when my brother and I might be feeling a bit dusty, we'll still make it down to set up a couple of fences or move some sheep.'



Above: Henry Scott on the family farm, Middleton.