

Added safety from six wheels

SAFE AS: Two potentially disastrous accidents – one which wrote off his bike – gave Piopio farmer John Carter the incentive to fit clic-on dual rear wheels to his quad bike. He reckons they're lifesavers.



WHILE quad bike accidents, some of them fatal, continue to make headlines a North King Country farmer has modified his bike to keep himself out of the statistics. Piopio sheep and beef farmer John Carter (67) is no stranger to the dangers of riding a quad bike. He's had two "close shaves" and was "damn lucky" to come out of both without major injury. The first happened about six years ago when he was driving cattle up a steep face.

"I was forced to stop on the hill because I'd caught them up. "I ran out of traction and the bike started to run backwards as the brakes wouldn't hold.

"It began to flip over backwards and I had no option but to jump." That was in the days when quad bikes had safety frames.

He looked up and saw the bike cartwheeling on its safety frame over the top of him. "I thought 'this is going to hurt a bit', but miraculously it missed me.

"I was pretty shook up though."

The bike crashed down the hill, landing on top of a fence. It was a write-off. About 18 months ago, Mr Carter had another accident – one he puts down to a moment's inattention.

"It was quite a simple thing really . . . I was riding up a hill track carrying a sheep on the side of the quad, as you do. "I was in a bit of a hurry and going reasonably quick.

"As I came to a bend I was fiddling around with the struggling sheep, missed the corner completely, shot off a bank and was airborne.

"I thought 'well, that's the

end of me' but through sheer luck the bike landed vertically on its nose and there was no major damage to it or me – just bad bruising, shock and a few dents.”

Mr Carter's automatic Honda 430 has done a few miles but he reckons it's got a few more in it.

Clic Dual Wheels

Then at last year's National Fielddays he spotted a quad bike modification he says has probably since “saved his bacon” – clic on dual wheels.

“They're not exactly cheap. I spent about \$2000, but what value do you put on your life?

“I fitted them myself – the Swiss precision engineered duals just click on.

Mr Carter says he rides the quad now with total confidence in places he would have previously flagged. The duals also act like flotation devices on wet ground. “You have your inside tyres slightly tighter than your outside ones so they're barely touching the ground which allows you to turn just as easily and the bike's still economical on fuel,” he says. “I love the duals – it's a more comfortable ride as you don't pitch around so much.

“The main hazard out here at this time of the year is the long growth, sometimes you can't see where you're going.

“Our Mangaotaki Rd farm is broken country, very steep in places and we run bulls so there are bull holes where you sometimes don't expect them.”

Going downhill, if there's a hole just one wheel drops in and you carry on, whereas without the duals the whole bike could tip over.

“Going up, you have the option of going across the face if you need to, and the bike climbs a lot better.

“So, you're a lot safer going up, down and around, especially if you're carrying a load, like a spray unit.”

A minor drawback is the duals flick up a bit of mud but Mr Carter can fix that by making wider guards. He says he's also clipped the gatepost a couple of times, but soon learned to leave extra room.

“Putting on duals is the best thing I could have done to prevent rollovers.

“It won't prevent all injuries, but neither will seatbelts or crash helmets.

“A crash helmet might save head injuries in a rollover, but with the duals on you're not going to roll in the first place.

“If I'd had the duals before my first accident I would have had plenty of traction and it wouldn't have happened.

“As it was, I had to jump clear and if I'd had a seatbelt on I would have been bugged.”

Mr Carter and his son Shaun farm 500ha at Mangaotaki and 200ha at their Te Mapara/Tikitiki Rd block, along with a bit of extra lease land.

They run 4200 Romney breeding ewes, 140 Angus and Angus X cows plus their progeny, dairy grazers and buy in a few bulls.