



NEW APPROACH

Turners & Growers moves millions of dollars of food each day, so understands better than most about the importance reliability for its nationwide operations.

Words and photographs by Dean Evans



Moving freight is one thing, but moving perishables is a whole new challenge, and one business at the forefront of that experience is New Zealand's T&G Global, formerly Turners & Growers, an industry leader in refrigerated produce transport and packaging.

With nine depots nationwide, T&G offers a complete field-to-market, and market-to-market service, including next-day interisland service on and in crates, bins and pallets.

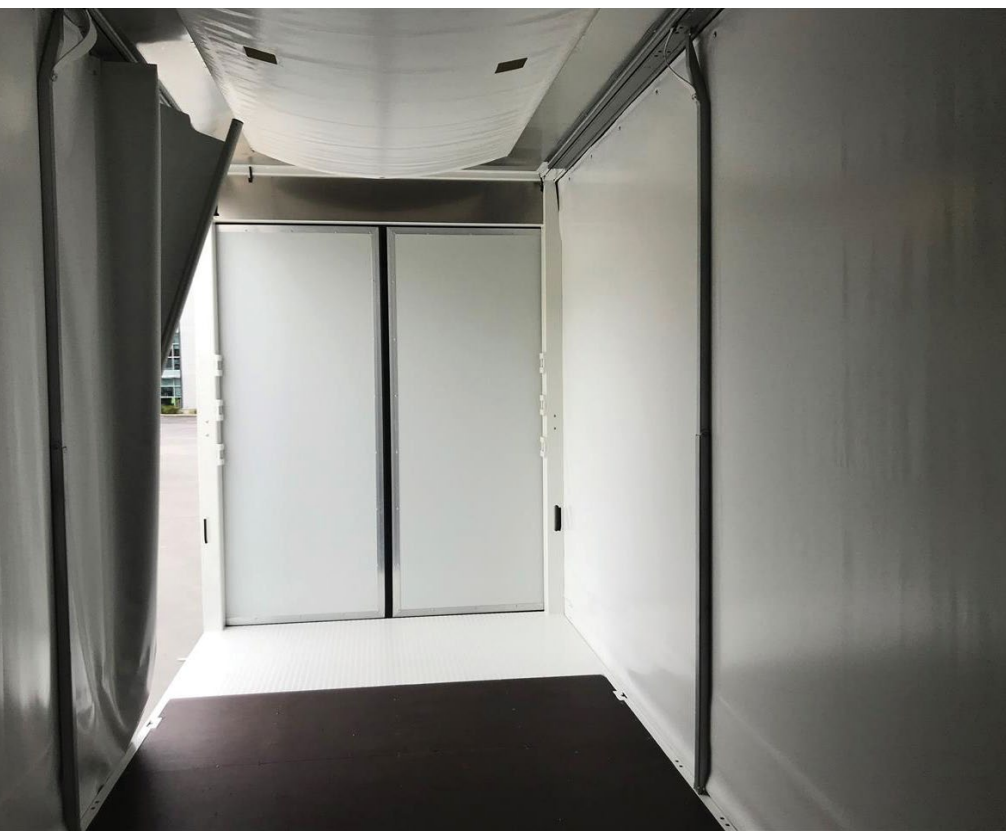
The point is, if something goes wrong, it's a big problem for T&G; often bigger than a regular freight transport company.

"Reliability is a huge thing for us," states T&G's National Transport Operations Manager Allan Nagy (nar-jee). "With a vehicle parked on the side of the road with a problem, most operators would be sitting there complaining about it costing them \$500 or \$1000 a day to be parked up. But on top of that, we've also got fresh produce in there that could, in the worst case scenario, have to be discarded. In cherry season, for example, an export pallet of cherries is somewhere around \$5000; so 36 pallets of those... that's \$180,000 we're taking care of in one load. So it's vital that we don't have any

reliability issues."

He adds: "We'll be picking up the product from Alexandra at 5am, and it needs to be in Auckland airport [1500km away] by 3pm the next day. That's where we can't afford to have the vehicles parked up.

"So we have a modern fleet: the average age is around 2.5 years, and we turn them over around one million km. They're fully maintained as part of our lease agreement and we work pretty hard to make sure it meets the service schedules. With the fleet, we're pretty stringent in what we do and how we do it."



Clean and refrigerated and ready for fresh produce work.

“OUR WHOLE FLEET IS ON BPW, THAT’S 50 UNITS... IT’S A RELIABLE PRODUCT, THEY ARE PRICE-COMPETITIVE, AND ONE OF THE THINGS I LIKE IS BRAND LOYALTY... SO FOR BPW AND US IT’S COLLABORATION AND A PARTNERSHIP.

ALLAN NAGY, T&G



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Talking to Allan at his office in Palmerston North, the company has just taken delivery of the latest addition to his fleet of 50 trucks and 43 trailers: the final unit one from an order of six identical Roadmaster refrigerated truck and five-axle trailers.

“We now have 10 of these units with the white branding, covering all of NZ, from Kerikeri to Dunedin, across to Nelson and through Hastings, Tauranga.

“All of our vehicles run a strict timetable, and the market we work in is supplying fresh produce to market. We get the last orders around 12:30-1am at the latest, and they’re on the road by 1am and delivered by 3am... otherwise we own it!

“So we have reliable vehicles, but if something does go wrong, we’re always working on contingencies and working with the customer to find a solution.

“Like when the earthquake happened in Kaikoura, we were some of the first vehicles across on the ferry to get the produce down to the south island. Our team was on top of it and running a service within two days, and then with a regular scheduled service. We don’t normally send drivers across on the ferry: 90-95 percent of our drivers return to base each day.

“So for us to suddenly change and get that

to work through the Lewis Pass, we actually had to put another leg in. It changed all the timetables up here, to match the ferry timetables, and we had to employ some drivers in Picton and Christchurch, because those drivers couldn’t get through from Picton to Christchurch to turn around get back here in time, so we had another truck based in Christchurch and they would come up and do a swap on that as well.

“Those sort of things just don’t happen overnight without a great team of guys making it work. It cost a lot more money; it was costing us \$700 a trip more, than what we were doing going down SH1.”

Reliable equipment is clearly a priority, and T&G has been a long-standing partner with BPW.

“Our whole fleet is on BPW, that’s 50 units,” says Allan. “We’ve been using them before I started, 14 years ago.” The new Roadmaster-built trailers all feature the same package of 19.5 disc brakes, AL2 suspension and Knorr Bremse brake kit complete with Trailer Information Module (TIM).

“It’s a reliable product,” adds Allan. “They are price-competitive, and one of the things I like is brand loyalty. We are running 50 trucks and trailers, and putting on 19 new trailers in 2019, and each of those has five axles on

it, so for BPW and us it’s collaboration and a partnership.

“I’m only aware of one failure, on an older unit, and BPW just looked after us and we carried on. I’ve been around mechanical bits and pieces too long to know that stuff breaks down, and one of the things that always rings in my mind is an old TV commercial for LV Martins, for whiteware and home appliances. Their catchphrase was ‘it’s the putting right that counts’. I can accept that things occasionally break, and whether it’s the fault of road conditions, the fault of a driver or just faulty product, I don’t want to hear excuses, I just want to know up front and get it fixed. The BPW guys are around, talking to us, following up – thankfully there isn’t a lot of follow-up needed, and we have TR Group to help our maintenance planning.

“These units just turn around and go. The hardest run is Invercargill to Christchurch to Invercargill, because those units run hot. Our trucks get into Auckland at 2:30-3pm, and the first one leaves Auckland at 4pm to down to Christchurch, where it’s there for maybe a one hour turnaround: that’s 1000km a day, six days a week. And we’re doing five of those units a day.”

Fresh is best, and T&G Global is doing its best to keep the country buying and eating fresh every day.



The last of six in the order of trailers for T&G Global, all using BPW axles.