



Wairere

Romneys • Composites • Terminals

Client Newsletter
May 2012

A game of two halves



PGGW agents selling one of the White Rock pens of 5 year old ewes.

It has been a heady twelve months. Last season, it was the second mouse which got the cheese, this season the early bird has caught the worm.

At times like this farmers say, "Why did we let the price go so high?.....\$7/kg would have been all right". But that's the nature of markets, they overshoot and they undershoot. Look around dairy products, oil, shares.

The bonanza is over for now. I hope you enjoyed it, and are now set up from a favourable growing season to target optimum production next season. The basics never change: feed the soil, feed young stock well, feed breeding stock for good condition score as a priority.

Congratulations.

After five years of mostly difficult seasons low inputs and low prices, sheepfarming performance in 2011 – 12 has been a credit to all of you out there: a national lambing of 119% has been coupled with an average lamb carcase weight (18.5kg?) which will set a new record by quite a margin. It demonstrates that sheep genetics have improved, and with better feeding can express at a much higher level still.

It has been the year of the breeder. The Masterton ewe fair on January 18th was the peak of the market. The top pen of Wairere bred five year ewes from White Rock station made \$230; the station averaged \$208 across the 1230 yarded. Next season will not see such a shortage of sheep. Extra ewe lambs have been kept, so there will be more two toothers for sale. Lamb numbers will be up considerably, driven by higher lambing percentages, and perhaps an extra 1-1.5 million lambs from hoggets.

The finishers will get their place in the sun again. What is the competition up to? Australian sheep farmers have had two good years compared to twelve months here. And the benefits of a strong domestic market and higher value woolskins resulted in farmgate values up to \$NZ10-40/kg at the peak, March 2011. As a result there is a move back into sheep from arable, and a move into prime lamb from fine wool.

Their farmgate price has tumbled too and ranged from NZ\$5 – 30 to \$6/kg in mid May, including NZ\$ 9 for the woolskin.

0800 Wairere (0800 924 7373)

Growing young stock well.

I was in western Victoria, Australia in late September. Retired dairy farmer Wayne Dodson achieved exceptional results last spring, tailing 150% from Wairere Romney/Border Merino ewe hoggets, mated at eight months. He achieved the same performance in 2010. "I give two 90 day Cydectin injections after weaning, which helps them. And I go around them at lambing, which a big operation might not do. But the payback is there the two tooth and

mixed age ewes do 160-170% and the lambs average 23kg carcase weight."

Wayne calls himself a hobby farmer, with just over a thousand ewes. But the message is there for all of us grow our young stock well and the rewards are so much higher in the first eighteen months.

And the rewards last a lifetime with improved productivity every year.



Wayne Dodson's Wairere Romney/Border Merino ewe hoggets with lambs.

Join the goldrush.

"My off-farm businesses, contracting in goldmines and pregnancy scanning, force me to farm easycare sheep. I don't do a lambing beat, but this spring my Wairere Romney ewes tailed 163% and the hoggets over 100%, mated two days later than the ewes (late March). I finish the lambs to 20kg with crops, (this year, as at 31st January, two thirds of the 2011 lamb crop had already gone). Irrigation on some flats allows me to grow out the ewe hoggets. They then spend the rest of their lives on our dry hills.

Many farmers in the south work very hard at lambing, and dread that time of the year, and so do their wives. My sheep look after themselves so well that I can't see any obvious improvement which Wairere can breed for".

Wairere has had a policy of mating all ewe hoggets since 1966, and lambing them unshepherded. Since 2004, 2,500 hoggets plus have been mated each year and only these which get in lamb are retained, usually around



Oliver, Geoff and Kirsty McLelland with ewe hoggets and lambs.

1900 (one exception in 2009, 140 dry hoggets were retained). These Romney hoggets at mating average around 40kg net of wool, at 7½ months old.

0800 Wairere (0800 924 7373)

Growing lambs.

I liken the growing of lambs to getting a motorboat up on the plane. It is hard work at a slow speed but everything becomes easier once you accelerate (via drench/quality of feed) and reduce the resistance of the water.

Several years ago Pierre Syben developed a link for PGGW between store breeders and finishers. His conclusions from running Lambsure for two years:

- Those finishing over 10,000 lambs per year achieved better growth rates than those doing smaller numbers.
- There were two breeds which did not perform for finishers: Corriedales and Perendales.

In fact, the steady increase in New Zealand lamb carcass weight has been partly due to specialist lamb finishers who focus on feed crops and new grass. And there are finishers who have switched off permanent pastures altogether. The other reason for the increase in average weight is the processors paying the same price for heavy lamb as for the benchmark 17kg carcass.

But, beware penalty on heavy lambs (>21kg) this winter. It is frustrating that retail price points dictate a discount on heavier lambs. Product development has not yet overcome the simplicity and low cost of selling a leg whole.

A recent analysis shows that store lamb production, as measured by cents/kgDM, is not far behind finishing lambs, (this season the store lamb breeders were often ahead!

The spring drought in Otago/Southland was a blessing in disguise):

- Store, 135%, no hogget mating 13.4 cents
- Prime, 140%, 50% hogget mating 15.4 cents
- Prime, 155%, 85% hogget mating 17.0 cents

The message? Don't finish on harder hill.

I travelled with a farm discussion group to Tasmania in late April. While there we saw lambs being finished on a feed crop of wheat (sown at 80kg/ha) and Tama ryegrass (15kg/ha). Irrigation is being adopted rapidly, be it for dairy, arable, or dry stock. The dairy operations which we visited were autumn calving, so there is a big feed cost through the winter.

One large farming operation (Andrew and Jane Bonde, son Sam and daughter Georgie) included a newly constructed lamb feedlot. Daughter Georgie recently came home from the mainland, after seven years experience on beef feedlots, and one lamb feedlot. She set up a fourteen pen feedlot capable of taking 4,200 lambs. Part of the setup will be roofed for the winter. The lambs were averaging around 225g/day, including a short settling in period

The cost of a forty day turnover is around \$A9-10, double the cost of paddock finishing. But over thirty five days can be accredited grainfed. The trick will be to achieve a premium from regular customers.

In the huge 2006 drought, nearly half of Australia's prime lambs were finished in paddock feedlots. But feedlots also have a reputation of going broke.



Georgie Bonde, Tasmania, with lambs on her feedlot.

From 38% to 140%.

This isn't a story about improved lambing, it's the difference in grass growth between the 2010 and 2011 springs in the Wairarapa. Dairy farmers tend to cut a specific area each year for silage/balage. The 2010 cut was 38% of normal, the 2011 cut 140% of average.

Our ewes and cows have to buffer these differences. Dairy farmers fill in the gaps with supplementary feed. Even that doesn't work in extreme situations: there were areas west of Pahiatua which received 778mm of rain in September 2010! Paddocks were a bog. Do we sheepfarmers adjust enough for these dramatic departures from normal?

Ballance Award.

Wairere was the Supreme winner of the Ballance Greater Wellington Farm Environment award this year. We were persuaded to enter and did so, knowing that competitions need entrants, and that we always learn something by having a go. The nine regional winners are now judged for the national award, which requires three days in Wellington in late June.

Caring for the environment is a good news story for farming – this year's winners span vegetable growing, dairying, and drystock. The regional awards are spaced out over a couple of months, and, combined with the national award, eke out four months of positive publicity.

Wairere's environment owes a lot to previous generations. My grandfather, Len (LT) Daniell, was a strong promoter of aerial topdressing. He wrote to Henry Ford in 1926, asking him to adapt an aeroplane for "crop dusting". Hill country relies upon the flyboys.

My father was one of the first to fence off blocks of native bush, starting around 1970. He fenced nine areas, with the help of the Catchment Board. Two more have been completed since, giving a total of 68ha. There are now: five QE11 covenants; corridors of native trees in gullies which link bush areas; 53ha of productive woodlots on erosion

prone sites; space planted poplars and willows; three kilometres of the main stream complimenting protected from livestock; 4ha of amenity planting complement and a recreational lake and wetland.

But for us at Wairere, the big picture is to make sheep farming easier, and more profitable. Wealthy farmers tend to care better for the environment. "You can't be green if you're in the red".



Derek Daniell at the Wairere recreation lake.

Success Stories:

Peter and Marjorie Miller –Nelson. Peter fenced and shore his way into his farm on the coast south of Farewell Spit.

"I've used Wairere rams for over 30 years. Performance is now so consistent I have come to expect 150% lambing as a norm, but have to admit that I dropped off that in 2011, after holding onto lambs for far too long, through a long summer dry on my sand country. At 70 years old it's great to be farming sheep that suit the environment and look after themselves most of the time".



Peter and Marjorie Miller with two tooth ewes.

John and Scott McKenzie – Otautau, Southland.

John and Scott farm 325 effective hectares at Otautau in western Southland, and run 3000 Wairere TefRom ewes.

"We have a three year average lambing percentage of

165%, and even managed 158% in the 2010 storms. We recovered this year to do 169% to the ram.

All lambs are normally sold prime with the average of 19kg/cw".

"The Wairere bred ewes can take a tough spell and still come back and perform well".



John and Scott McKenzie with Tefrom ewes pre lamb.

Here's wishing you a great season in 2012-13

Warm Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek".

and the
Wairere Team

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