



Wairere

What do you need? ... in your ideal sheep



- High productivity
- Sound feet
- Self replacement
- Premium wool skins
- Strong constitution
- Easy care
- Full hybrid vigour over Border Merinos

New Zealand's largest ram supplier has just purchased a farm near Heywood and airfreighted Romney ewes plus embryos. These were selected for tighter/finer wool type. This follows the sale of over 900 rams in recent years to farmers in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

Romney is the dominant breed in New Zealand for a good reason.

Opportunity



Two toothed and four tooth Romney ewes at Wairere, mid March 2013. Two toothed scanned 174% (without triplets) after lambing as hoggets. Droughts in New Zealand are not as severe but Wairere has had rainfall as low as 148mm in six months.

Prediction: The prime lamb system will steadily move towards self-replacing flocks dominated by New Zealand maternal genetics.

The ideal sheep?

The Border Merino has been the easy option for prime lamb farmers. But the system has significant disadvantages:

- There is no control over the genetics.
- The Border Merino is too big and inefficient relative to output
- The cross is also rated as soft in constitution and prone to foot problems.
- The price of Border Merino replacements can get scary.

Over the last twenty years there has been an adoption of New Zealand genetics, starting with the Coopworth. That trend is fast gathering momentum with the import of New Zealand composite and Romney genetics.

What is the best genetic combination for you?

That decision should be determined by the state of development of your property (soil fertility, pasture quality) and your flock. "Horses for courses"

- Coopworths are a productive breed (half Border Leicester, half Romney, interbred), suited to good, fertile land and good management. The breed is declining faster in New Zealand than the drop in sheep numbers, because of the purchase of better quality land for dairy cows.

- Perendales (half Romney, half Cheviot interbred) have been imported, but they are a one shot charge, at max. Perendales are too small to suit the desired carcass weight in Australia, and tend to have a lower scanning percentage. Wairere and several other major ram breeders have trialed Perendales crosses, but been disappointed in both growth rate and scanning percentage of the resultant crosses.
- Composites have a place on well developed farms with good feeding management. The first outcross to the right composite can give a significant lift in productivity. Most New Zealand composites use the high lambing potential of Finn and/or East Friesian genetics and the carcass and constitution of the Texel on a Romney base. **In New Zealand the majority of farmers who used composite rams have reverted to using the mainstay Romney breed to restore constitution, uniformity and longevity.**
- **Romneys have been the dominant dual purpose breed in New Zealand for over a hundred years. The Wairere Romney, performance recorded in commercial conditions on second class hill country since 1967, has the constitution, sound feet, and productivity to complement the Border Merino or Merino, or form part of a new stabilised Australian prime lamb composite.**

Proven Predictable Profitable

Wairere rams have been around a long time. Len Daniell bought registered Romney ewes in 1929. John Daniell started recording Wairere ewes on second class hill country in 1967. Derek Daniell has continued the search for the perfect sheep.

Size and scale

The Wairere Romney flock comprises:

- 10,000 Sheep Improvement Ltd recorded ewes and twinning hoggets
- 7,500 multiplier ewes and ewe hoggets

Constitution We select for constitution by mob stocking on second class hill country at a high stocking rate, averaging 750kg LW wintered. Wairere is a good **testing ground**, winter wet, summer dry, and in a Class 1 wind zone. Nationally, the Wairere reputation is built around **“shifting ability” and “bouncing back after a hard time”**.

Minimal drenching We practise minimal drenching in young stock. For six years ram lambs were part of an AgResearch trial for resilience and resistance to internal parasites. **Ewes and two toothers have not been drenched since 2005**, except a small proportion of two toothers three times in that ten years.

Easycare lambing **All ewe hoggets have been mated since 1966, and are all lambed unshepherded.** Selection for **easycare lambing** and against bearings has been practised for more than forty five years.

Hoggets must get in lamb Since 2005 this has been the practice, despite the difficulty of doing that with Romneys in consecutive droughts. This **selects for early maturity and fertility**.

We relented once, in 2009, keeping 140 (8%) not in lamb.

The self replacing wave

The Grant family near Coleraine, 625mm rainfall.

“We used to have Merinos, then ran half the flock as Border/Merinos. We started joining Wairere Romney rams over first cross ewes seven years ago. The Merino ewes have gone and the first cross ewes will be phased out over the next four years. The second cross Romney ewes are more robust and hardy than the first cross and require less drenching.

We lamb mid June/early July, and the whole flock averaged 135% in 2014. Rough weather at lambing is less stressful due to the lambs being far more resilient and the ewes superior mothering ability, culminating in better lamb survival rates.

Average carcase weight has been around 25-26kg in recent years. All lambs are marketed over the hooks as a mix of both terminal sired and maternal sired wether lambs with no discounts and top value skin returns. Our maternal wether lambs are of a lot higher

Eye muscle area Since 2001, up to 7,000 ram lambs each year have been measured for eye muscle area. This measurement is integrated into our SIL index.

From 1994 to 2012 we were involved with the Wairarapa Romney Improvement Group in an annual sire evaluation trial **comparing progeny saleable meat yield**.

Heavy culling We run all sheep in large mobs, and **let the fittest survive. Big numbers allow heavy culling**.

Reducing your workload Like you, we cull heavily on dags, and other basics like feet and pasterns. We are always thinking about how **to reduce your workload**.



On Ewan Price's farm near Heywood: Wairere Romney/Border Merino ewe with terminal sired lambs, early September.

Ewan Price runs 4,500 ewes and hoggets on 560 hectares, near Heywood Victoria, a stocking rate of under nine per hectare. But a lambing percentage of 145 and average carcase weight of 22kg, and a 90 percent contribution from the hoggets, delivers 310kg carcase weight and wool per hectare.

standard than our previous first cross and have real carcase shape with a lot higher percentage being turned off as suckers at a greater \$ value.

We have really benefitted from the hardiness of the Romney cross. They maintain an extra condition score through the tough winter period and have eliminated almost all foot problems due to their black feet.

The Romney rams have excellent longevity, have great libido and don't seem to suffer the lameness issues so often encountered in heavy breed rams.

Moving forward we continue to assess our options and considering the benefits we see in breeding these types of sheep a move to a straight maternal flock is certainly not out of the question. At the moment we are keen to keep a stake in the mid micron wool and wool skin markets, so are still experimenting with a mix.

These Wairere cross sheep are a pleasure to own and we are very impressed with the results so far.”



It's all about feeding

The most important lesson which Wayne Dodson learned from dairy farming is to feed stock well. Now a "retired" sheep farmer near Heywood, Wayne's emphasis on feeding has enabled him to weather the drought without a big reduction in lambing percentage. "The mixed aged ewes on the home block, which is a lot drier, lambed at 150%, down 20% on 2013, the ewes on the other block which has an annual rainfall of over 900ml, and which is relatively green all year round, lambed at 175%."



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

Wayne's ewe lambs are joined on the green block, then taken back home for lambing, where they lambed at 120%. Last year they lambed at 150%.

Wayne feeds his ewes on the home block silage in the dry. And pellets are fed to the ewe lambs to get them to a good joining weight.

Wairere Ram Booking Form 2015–16

Two tooth Romney, available late October or early February ex NZ, \$1,680	Romney or TefRom ram lambs (1/4 Texel 1/4 East Friesian 1/2 Romney) available from New Zealand early February, \$1,480	Romney ram lambs available from Heywood, for mating in late March/April, \$1,480
Qty: _____	Qty: _____	Qty: _____

Contact details

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____



Ross Macklin

Ross is a Kiwi who has farmed in Australia since 2004, managing farms in W.A. and Victoria. His career in New Zealand included running a sheep stud.

Ewan has farmed near Heywood for many years. He has steadily improved sheep productivity with Wairere genetics.



Ewan Price