



Romneys Composites Terminals

Why buy Kiwi rams?

Border Merino ewes have become very expensive. It is cheaper to breed your own prime lamb dams. Why not breed replacements of better quality than what you can buy?

Border Merino ewes have good size and a good woolskin base. But they have disadvantages: lack of constitution, poor resilience to worms, big mature weight so a high maintenance feed cost, and average feet. The Wairere Romney cross counters these weaknesses of the first cross ewe. **And** gives full hybrid vigour to the lambs. Our Australian clients say that the Romney cross lambs are growing as fast as the terminal sire cross lambs. So there is no downside to breeding your own replacements, only upside.

Craig Grant (near Coleraine). "Our oldest Romney cross ewes are three years old, just had their second crop of lambs. We had, and still have, fine wool Merinos. We put the Border over those, but wanted something hardier, with more fertility, and didn't want the ewes too big.



Typical Wairere Romney ram, showing the depth of body which translates to fast growing heavy lambs. This type is the ideal blend for the typical large framed Australian ewe. Depth and 'spring of rib' also translate to strong constitution.



Four of Stephen Creese's management team discussing genetics and management with Jim Varty (far left) and Derek Daniell (2nd right) on Tim's property.

The second cross with the Wairere Romney is tougher and produces an extra 20-25% lambing. We're using less and less drench. And we're hooking the wether lambs just the same as the terminal lambs.

I don't mind spending money on genetics, but I want to keep the benefit".

Stephen Creese, Tasmania. "In May this year our Creese Northeast management team, plus neighbour Tim Gunn, and agronomist Mark Rouse, visited Wairere and other lamb producers in New Zealand. Our current operation produces 15-17,000 lambs. There is scope to expand those numbers substantially as we further develop our land.

After our trip to New Zealand, I think that a self-replacing flock is the way to go. I want a stable composite, of an even type. We are experimenting with several breed mixes at present, including Wairere Romney, and perhaps Wairere composites in the future. My opinion is that the biggest risk with sheep-breeding is getting ewes which are too big. I'm not concerned about the diminishing Australian Merino flock and its effect on the prime lamb industry. At some point Australian breeders will realize the prime lamb industry can be self replacing as New Zealand has proven. Merinos are bred for wool production and trying to breed a dual purpose animal means there has to be a compromise somewhere. We are aiming to produce the ideal article in a self replacing meat sheep. More weight of prime lamb per hectare will pay better than wool.

I can recommend a trip to New Zealand, there are always one or two things you learn by seeing how sheepfarmers in other areas operate."

Richie Bellevue (near McArthur). "We were running into problems with our 19-20micron Merinos, they needed too much drenching. We're really pleased with the Wairere Romney cross. We ran them through on summer crop to an average weight of 22kg; the growth rate was similar to the Poll Dorset cross over the Merino.

Some Merino rams are lazy. These Romney rams are really good workers, and get all the ewes in lamb. We'll go another cross and put the Romney over the Romney/Merino."

Why do Wairere Romneys work well in Australia?

It is important to understand the different drivers behind the sheepfarming systems in both countries. New Zealand farmers run mainly self-replacing sheep at higher stocking rates, with exposure to internal parasites year round.

| Australia | New Zealand |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get penalised for lambs under 18kg, average weight is 20.5kg. • Based on a wool sheep. • Two tier system for prime lamb dams. • Dry climate(suits Merinos). • Flat land, easier to work, allows regrassing. • Competition for land use is mainly cropping. • Winter lambing, which forces a lower stocking rate, but allows 120-140 days of lactation. • Bigger ewes, 80-90kg. • Cheap grain and supplements often used to finish lambs. • Local market takes 55-60% lamb. • Merino genetics allow high value woolskins. • Reliant on hybrid vigour. Historically, focus has been on the genetics of wool. • Good at every sport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until recently, were penalised for lambs over 18kg! So average weight is 17.5kg. This average is lifting as processors pay the same per kg price for heavier lambs. • Dual purpose sheep, with meat always important. • Self replacing. Romney has been the dominant breed; Coopworths, Perendales and composites all have around half Romney. • Wet climate, so feet issues are important (works against Merinos). • Two thirds of the sheep farmed on hills, some very steep. • Competition for land use is mainly dairying, dairy support, and deer or beef. • Spring lambing, which allows a high stocking rate, and average lactation of 90-95 days. • Smaller ewes, 60-70kg. "Ewe efficiency" is a major talking point. • Expensive grain and supplements. Most finishing done on grass, some on feed crops. • Local market takes 5%, so geared for export. • Woolskins and pelts of lower value. The finer/bulkier Romney wool type allows high value woolskins on the first cross. • Have intensively recorded self-replacing sheep for over forty years to get more productive animals. There is a trade off between high productivity and hardiness. On harder country, Coopworths and composites don't hack it; Romneys and to a lesser extent Perendales(Cheviot Romneys interbred) are farmed. • Good at rugby |

Ewan Price (near Heywood)

"Our Romney cross ewe hoggets have scanned 128% in 2010. With the 12% dry hoggets out, those in lamb have scanned 145%, mated at 8 to 9 months old. After a tough spring it turned into a good year. Lamb weights averaged 23kg from 147% lambing and 80% (storm affected) from the in-lamb hoggets.

I have invested a lot in regrassing since the 2006 drought. The payback is accumulating, with ewes and hoggets in better condition year on year."



14 month old Romney Border Merino ewe hoggets with lambs, September 09 on Ewan Price's property