



**Client Newsletter**  
**August 2012**

# Wairere

## The year of Romney?

Is this the year of Romney? Or will a composite win the race? The U.S. Presidential election is bound to create some entertainment in November.

The heady euphoria of 2011 has been over taken by a more subdued view of the season in front of us. Gravity rules: every product has competitors and substitutes. We need McDonalds' lamb burger programme to be wildly successful!

A favourable summer/autumn has increased conception rate in many regions. Greater numbers to sell will offset some of the reduction in per head returns.

### Transformation.

Chris and I attended the Ballance Farm Environment Awards Showcase for Regional winners in June. The winners with most relevance for us were from Hawkes Bay, James and Jane Hunter. They have created an inspirational change to their farming system. James: "I used to think our limiting factor was summer dry. I now realise that it was winter wet." By draining heavy mudstone slopes, finishing crops (chicory, red clover and rape) can be sown as early as September, and annual yields as high as 20,000kg DM/Ha achieved.

The transformation of 25% of farm area into the equivalent of productive flats has revolutionised the farm system. All lambs can now be finished, including hogget lambs and trading lambs; an average carcase weight of 21.4kg at an average age of 153 days was achieved this year. No longer is there the annual worry about the regular Hawkes Bay coastal drought. And productivity has been increased to 300kg carcase weight equivalent per hectare, a new benchmark for dry hill country.

### Quantum leap possible.

Four years of droughts and low prices have dented enthusiasm for new pastures, especially with spray and pray methodology. However, the performance of new species like plantain, and an earlier spring sowing date, raise the prospect of being able to create a similar transformation on uncultivable hill country. The use of this quality feed, especially if good persistence allows three years plus before resowing, creates opportunity for ewes with triplets, lifting the lightest twin-bearing ewes, or feeding hoggets with twins better.

The key to the systems change is in making better use of spring moisture for accelerated growth rates on lambs (and ewes). The spring is where the money is made.

The new forage species add maximum value through the spring, before finishing lambs later in the season.



Romney

Composite

### Getting the basics right.

James' performance illustrates the importance of fundamentals:

- Soil fertility is high, P Levels of 20-30 on the hills, 40 on the flats; the lowest Ph is 5.7.
- The stocking rate of ewes is not high, at less than four per hectare. This allows room for a bull policy, breeding cows, and buying in lambs for finishing. A higher proportion of finishing stock gives flexibility.
- Lambing dates of ewes and hoggets are timed to spring grass growth.
- He buys very high index rams, both Romney and terminal.
- Ewes are lambed with a body condition score of three. Any lighter ewes are grazed on high octane finishing feed, which has the effect of growing both the lambs and the ewes to excellent weights at weaning.

*I can recommend the value of entering your local Ballance Farm Environment Awards. It is stimulating, educational, and expands horizons. It is also an essential public relations exercise for our industry.*

### Boosting the system.

A good growing season has allowed better growing out of ewe hoggets this year. Jean Forrester, North Canterbury, reports 155% scan from her Wairere composite hoggets. Other clients are reporting above average hogget

**0800 Wairere (0800 924 7373)**

scannings. It raises the question as to why we don't ensure 50kg+ ewe hoggets by 1st May every year. The economics of achieving "a two tooth lambing" out of ewe hoggets are indisputable. First requirement is a weaning weight better than 30kg in less than 95 days. And we need to target this as a standard achievement on hill country; in 1990, 38% of sheep and beef farms were described as being hill country; today it is 50%, and rising each year as dairying continues to expand. Hill country farms may need to become more self-contained in terms of the capacity to finish lambs.

The second requirement is to have high quality feed to grow lambs at a post-weaning growth rate of 135 -160g/day, to achieve the 50kg mating weight.

I talked recently to a dryland North Otago sheep farmer who bought his farm after accumulating capital through sharemilking. Richard Stawger routinely applies urea and/or sulphate of ammonia every year in the spring to accelerate pasture growth. In a poor spring he feeds barley and palm kernel to ewes and lambs. This takes pressure off the pasture. The pasture thus retains greater length and responds much better if or when rain does arrive. There is a high cost to feeding supplement, but the indirect benefit of not thrashing pastures is huge. Richard achieves 170 – 175% from composites in a 400mm rainfall area, and 120% from hoggets, which were 55kg at the start of this winter. He has a consultancy business with dairy farmers. The top dairy farmers are teaching us all how to feed stock better.

Richard has a regular program of sowing subterranean clover, targeting a paddock or two most springs. After drilling he grazes laxly with cattle to ensure that the seedlings survive and thrive, and seed in their first spring. That seeding ensures a good population for many years. Sub clover is rocket fuel for lambs in the early spring. It has the advantage of coming away earlier than white clover, and survives in areas where white clover does not. We are still learning about feed quality. At the Red Meat Sector conference in July, I was told about a recent Southland trial which demonstrated that old pasture can produce lamb growth rates as high as new pasture. The secret is the removal of all dead matter. Lambs grew at 400g for the first two weeks, but slowed to 200g/day over the following two weeks. Very hard grazing of pasture after weaning may work in summer wet areas, but is highly risky in dry regions. In dry areas, the autumn and winter offer the opportunity to hard graze to achieve superior quality.

### Winners at Wanaka.

Both Wairere and Wairere South were sponsors at the Tux New Zealand Dog Trial Championships in May. The four events were all run on Duncan and Allannah McRae's Alpha Burn Station, at Glendhu Bay, Lake Wanaka. Duncan and father Don had both qualified dogs, and were kept busy helping to run an event with 281 heading dogs and 256 huntaways. Competitors praised the sheep, "In good order with enough of a mind of their own to be challenging".

The Wairere flock of 5,000 ewes, run alongside 2,000 deer, and 700 cattle, has performed consistently through topsy – turvy seasons. Lambing survival to sale has averaged



*Duncan McRae*

140%, and lamb weights have averaged up to 19kg carcass weight. Ewes graze up to 1,500 metres above sea level. In every way, the McRaes can be proud of a picture book property which performs at a very high level.

Quite a number of those who qualified dogs for the championships use Wairere rams. It was a thrill to have client Kerry Kilmister win the Zigzag Hunt. Kerry and Lorena manage Rewa Rewa in the Wairarapa for Rod and Patricia Clutton.



*Kerry Kilmister with Pulse*

### Looking for the perfect dog?

(to go with the perfect sheep and the perfect woman). Lloyd Smith is in the final throes of producing a 160 minute DVD on dog training. Lloyd is well known nationally for his workshops with farm dogs.

Lloyd is one of four or five dog trial competitors who have won three of the four events. Only one man in history has achieved the Grand Slam.

Cost: \$35 incl packaging and postage.

Contact:

Lloyd Smith: 171 Hughes Road, RD 1 Palmerston. 9481.

Phone: 03 465 1311 or [www.puppentopaddock.co.nz](http://www.puppentopaddock.co.nz)

Wairere is one of five main sponsors of Lloyd's DVD.

### Wool – give it your support.

Over the past year there has been a lot of work in the background towards creating a future for crossbred wool. Craig Hickson put \$1.75m of his own money into purchasing Wools of New Zealand, on behalf of farmers. In September, Wools of New Zealand's directors will release a Prospectus, aimed at capitalising the company to improve the long-term prospects for New Zealand's strong wool and sheep industries.

The intention is to establish a grower-owned sales and marketing company, using Wools of New Zealand as an established platform. The directors believe that securing ownership of Wools of New Zealand is the industry's best

opportunity to capture greater value from New Zealand strong wool.

What exactly would growers own? Primarily it's about brands and innovation rather than bricks and mortar. Assets include the Wools of New Zealand, Laneve and Glacial brands; commercial relationships with global customers; research and design capability in support of our customers and supply chain linkages from the grower to the end consumer. September's Prospectus will outline the directors' strategy for capturing greater value for those wool growers who wish to invest in and commit to the opportunity. Those wanting a copy of the Prospectus should contact at [info.nz@woolnz.com](mailto:info.nz@woolnz.com) or go to [www.ourwool.co.nz](http://www.ourwool.co.nz) for more information. And there is a strong possibility that several of the farmer led organisations involved in wool marketing will come together over the next year.

*A Kiwi couple were shopping in Hong Kong last year when they noticed a shop with a queue outside. As they walked closer, they saw security guards at the door. Looking through the windows they realised what was in such hot demand ... Ugg boots. Who says that wool is dead and buried? Like any product it needs promotion and product development.*

## The end of an era.

After 20 successful years, the 'Wairere South' ram breeding and marketing partnership comprising Wairere South partners Derek and Chris Daniell (Wairarapa) and Trevor and Karen Peters (Otago) is being wound up.

With the next generation of the Peters family, Clayton and Morgan, now well established in good scale farming operations in the South, it was time to pass the baton.

The Peters family will continue their successful ram breeding operation under the 'Peters Genetics' brand. The Peters' farming operations also includes their well-known 'Peters Angus Stud'.

Derek and Chris Daniell's Wairere parent company will continue to operate its well recognized ram breeding operation throughout the North Island and South Island, as it has done for many years.

South Island ram sales direct from the Wairarapa have always been a big part of the Wairere business. Cheaper flights now allow easy access to Wairere's huge breeding base in the testing ground of North Island hill country.

The Wairere King Partnership, located north of Taumarunui and operated by Murray and Fiona Gemmell, will continue as before.

Anyone requiring clarification can contact: Derek Daniell 06 3772077; [derek@wairererams.co.nz](mailto:derek@wairererams.co.nz) or Trevor Peters 03 4466030; [atpeters@extra.co.nz](mailto:atpeters@extra.co.nz)

## A National Treasure

Dorian Garrick is New Zealand's best known geneticist. He devised the Production Worth and Breeding Worth indexes for LIC. And had significant input into the sheep industry while Professor of Animal Breeding at Massey University.

For the past ten years Dorian has lived and worked in the United States. His main project there is the beef genome. "When more is known about the beef genome, there will be some spill over to sheep. But the way chromosomes work is not simple. Even the knowledge of the human genome,

which has had billions of dollars spent on it, has not led to miracles for human health."

Dorian is in New Zealand every year, and usually has a deer stalking trip at White Rock. This gives us the opportunity to discuss genetic progress in sheep, beef, dairy, pigs, chickens, fish, and plants. The big question is: "When will gene technology and molecular breeding values offer a more accurate prediction of a sheep's genetic worth than what we are doing now?"

Talking of technology, it has been calculated that the long term profitability of a cow/calf operation in the USA is \$1 per cow. Electronic tagging such as NAIT would turn profit into loss!

Much has been made about using EID to identify sheep in current research programs. EID is just another means of identifying individuals. Other types of tag, even aerosol marks, can also identify individuals. DNA parentage identification is another modern technology which attracted a lot of attention. Again, there are other methods of establishing parentage. They don't sound so sexy, but they are cheaper, and they work.

Doing the basics right is what makes the money. The repetitive message on ewe body condition score is a key to success. Growing out young stock really well is another key. Top farmers have managed this way for centuries.

## Client Success Stories:

**A new client** purchased 40 Wairere Romney rams to put over his whole flock last year. "I can't believe the growth rate on the lambs compared to my traditional Romneys in the past. The lambs finished four to six weeks earlier, and yielded 1.5 to 2kg carcass weight better at the same liveweight cutoff of 40kg. I'm stoked. I should have listened to Andrew Puddy seven years ago."

### Fergus and Katrina Templeton, Southland.

"The big snow storm in September 2010 was an extreme event near the coast at Tokanui, 'lambs to the slaughter'.

My lambing percentage died in the hole at 140 that year. That was much better than many in the local area. And the ewes bounced back to do 158% in 2011.

I pride myself on growing my Wairere Romneys to do well in the ewe hogget competition (won Southland in 2011). The hoggets tailed 100% in 2011, and have just scanned 185% as two toothers.



Katrina and Fergus Templeton, Twin River

That extra size and condition pays off in extreme conditions. I hardly do a lambing beat now, just check for cast ewes. Sheep farming has got easier with the right genetics."

**David & Rebekah Kelly, North Canterbury.** "I'd seen how well Wairere Romneys could perform when I was shepherding at Awakino Station, North Otago, under Tony Plunkett. When I got the chance to manage and then buy my wife's family property in North Canterbury, I purchased some Wairere bred ewe lambs to replace Corriedales.



*David & Rebekah Kelly with son Isaac*

They performed well, but I couldn't help experimenting with other strains of Romney. The message has come through loud and clear: at five years old the Wairere ewes scanned ten per cent better and tailed thirty per cent better than the others. So, I've come full cycle, and last year I bought enough Wairere rams to cover the whole flock. I'm backing Wairere sheep to build our farming business."

**Doug and Jo McKenzie, Patitapu station, north Wairarapa.**

"This will be our 4th season using Wairere Dominators. Use Dominators for early lambing ewes (20th March) and then the same rams for the top half of the hoggets (4th May).



*Doug and Jo McKenzie with daughter Keira*

This year 2500 B flock ewes and 1350 hoggets. Scanning 178% and 120% respectively without triplets. (Last year scanned 173% and 84%).

Total farm system 1760 ha eff, 10,000 ewes, 3000 hoggets, 400 breeding cows plus progeny. (Closing June 2012 figures).

2011/12 Dominator result (ewes): 90% sold at weaning at 104 days av LW 32.6kg.

2010/11 Dominator result (ewes): 95% sold at weaning at 100 days av LW 31.7kg, in a really poor spring (overall average weaning weight 26.6kg)

Rams have lasted well.

Good muscling and supply lambs targeted for early sale.

Good pigmentation – identifiable.

Confidence in the flock and base breeding flock(s) used to create the Dominators – scale & genetic pool.

Confidence in the full recording (more than just a black face)"

Patitapa won Wairarapa Farm Business of the Year under Doug's father Bruce, 2009.

### The wish list

Murray Behrent, Procurement Manager for Alliance, addressed our Wairere conference in June. His wish list: the average Alliance supplier should achieve 150% survival to sale and 19kg lambs of good conformation, which Murray defined as better than 53% in Viascan yield.

On 13th August Wairere killed 180 cull straight Romney ram hoggets at 21.29kg and 57% on Viascan .

Eighteen years of eye muscle scanning is paying dividends. Doing big numbers (5,000 to 7,000/year) enables accurate comparison of sires.

Anna Campbell of Abacus Biotech also addressed our conference. She is one of around twenty-five scientists at Abacus, and heavily involved with analysis of rambreeding flocks. She welcomed the involvement of Wairere and Wairere South (now Peters Genetics) in flock analysis and forage trials.

### Apology.

In the May newsletter there was mention of the Lambsure program which linked breeders to finishers to processors; and a comment that Perendale lambs had not performed well in that program. I apologise for creating the impression of criticising all Perendales. There are some impressive performances achieved by Perendale flocks.

### Want work in the UK?

Chris, Caroline and Rob Hodgkins run Wairere UK in West Sussex, 50 miles south of London. They are used to working with Kiwis, and enjoy the association. Contact: locksfarm@googlemail.com or telephone 0044 190 389 2443

### 100 years at Wairere.

In 1913 my grandfather Len Daniell bought Wairere from the original settler John Rutherford, who cut the first clearing in the bush in 1864. On the weekend of 9th/10th March we are having a reunion for all those wonderful teams over the years who have helped make Wairere what it is today.

Guest of honour will be Sir Don McKinnon, who worked his first fulltime job at Wairere in 1957. Sir Don went on to farm in the Taihape area before entering politics.

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*Here's wishing you a great season in 2011-12*

Warm Regards

and the  
Wairere Team

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