



4/3/2009

Dear Client,

What a difference 12 months can make!

It would seem that at a time of a global crisis sheep farming is beginning to pull its weight. We are seeing lamb valued at over \$5/kg, budgeted to go to \$6/kg compared to \$3.40 this time last year, store lambs increasing in value from \$1.20 last year to \$3.00 at current sales and 5 year olds more than doubling in price. With input prices coming down and the dairy boom halted in its tracks, it would seem okay to be farming sheep again.

With sheep numbers down 12% to 33.9m, the lowest level since 1950 and many parts of NZ recovering from last season's drought we were expecting a difficult ram selling season. However with a total clearance of Suffolk rams, Suffolk X Texel rams and only 8 Romney rams left at time of writing, we are relatively pleased with sales, selling over 500 rams.

Down on the farm many are in the rebuilding phase with a lot more older ewes being retained than normal, which will require preferential treatment over the winter months. It is good to hear reports of ewes being in excellent order, the challenge now to hold and then increase it going into mating. For most, finishing lambs to heavier weights without having to worry about declining schedules at this time of year is a pleasant and encouraging change from past seasons.

Ram Welfare

With mating due to start over the next six weeks for the majority of clients it's timely to be thinking about the rams. It is important to have the rams checked by a vet at least a month before they join with the ewes to pick up any issues they may have. We believe that vet testing the rams before purchasing new ones; normally in November is a waste of time and money, as they will have to be retested again prior to joining. A simple examination of the testes can easily pick up any mange, misshapen or small testes at this time. If there is a history of Brucellosis in the area then vet testing at this time would be advisable.

If there is a history of Barbers pole on the farm over mating it would also be advisable to drench young rams and terminal sires with a Cydectin/Vetdectin product.

Remember any knock back the rams may have had leading up to mating, whether it be fly strike, heavy worm infestation, mange, or any sort of infection will affect semen production and can take up to 6-8 weeks to get back to normal.

Benefits of Suffolk X lambs on a summer crop

For a number of years we have seen our cull purebred Suffolk lambs put on superior weight gains against other trading lambs when finished on pasja crops. So this year we have put a trial in place to quantify this benefit and test the hypothesis that purebred Suffolk lambs outperform Suffolk X Romney trading lambs which in turn outperform Romney trading lambs when grazed on summer crop.



Preliminary results after 27 days

Purebred Suffolk lambs are growing **45%** faster than Suffolk X Romney trading lambs

Suffolk X Romney lambs are growing **47%** faster than Romney trading lambs

Purebred Suffolk lambs are growing **71%** faster than Romney trading lambs

It would appear that the Suffolk has the ability to adapt to the change in diet quickly and to put weight on more efficiently with this feed source. These results are based on raw data and we hope to bring you the final results in the Paki-iti October newsletter analysing the full 60 days once the data has been analysed.

North Island Romney Progeny Trial

We have spent a couple of interesting days at the Alliance meat processing plant at Dannevirke, recording lambs from the North Island Romney progeny trial. These lambs all went through the VIA Scan system which measures the yield of lean meat and the fat percentage, alongside measurements of the primal size and weight of lamb carcasses all at line speed. This was done to compare the performance of different sires from different breeding flocks around the country which are all looking to improve the carcass attributes of their sheep.

Ram Hogget Analysis

This past week we have just finished autumn weighing the Romney and Suffolk ram hogget's along with evaluating the ram hogget's in their sire groups. A visual examination of type and carcass was done on each sire mob. This is only a subjective evaluation but it gives us a very good indication of the type of sheep and the carcass conformation that the individual sires are leaving. This is only part of the ongoing process, as eye muscle scanning and consequently EBV's are all also strongly taken into consideration.

Longevity

We talk about short generation intervals being important when it comes to genetic gain, but more importantly the rams have to last. Terminal sires haven't got as good a reputation as maternal sires when it comes to longevity which is a major area we have been working on, so was interesting to note that in the terminal breeding sires, five were 5 years old and one was 6 years old out of 16 sires.

Full Backup

If you have any issues with the rams please feel free to contact me, or if additional rams are needed we do have options available.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stewart Morton'.

Stewart Morton
GENERAL MANAGER