



# **mr** Motu-nui Rams

Newsletter - 2018



## **EXCITING TIMES HERE AT MOTU-NUI!**

If you've been thinking it's gone a bit quiet here at Motu-nui Rams, it's because we've been flat out setting up a bigger and better operation! Neighbours and long-time clients Simon and Meg Perry have joined Jason in the new "Motu-nui Enterprises".

The operation now runs over 1700 ha (1200 effective) of Whareama hill country and river flats, and will involve commercial sheep and beef and some cropping alongside the stud operation. The increased scale will give us increased flexibility for dry summers, as well as provide a platform for expansion of the stud.

### **The Team**

Jason is still the face of Motu-nui Rams, in charge of all stud business, while Simon will be looking after the trading / cropping side of the operation. Meg will be looking after planning, finance and admin.

**It's exciting times – watch this space!**

I can say with excitement this is really going to get us on the front foot. I have been searching for this opportunity for some time and it fits extremely well, bringing in the neighbouring property along with expertise of Simon and Meg

I am really looking forward to being able to have all our recorded sheep at home, including lambing the ewe hoggets at home. The trading component is going to allow us to protect ourselves from droughts and get away from continually sending stock out grazing. Most importantly, we can now really start to see these top genetics grown out to their potential

This move really sets me up to spend more time focusing on the key areas of our stud and using to our full advantage the new technology and other key advancements coming our way in the genetic world. Having always pushed the boundaries, we can now set larger targets and invest more into relevant R and D that will keep our clients ahead of the game.

Jason



# A MILESTONE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

As I mark being home for 20 years, this past year without a doubt would have to be the best conditions I have farmed in on the east coast. Firstly, the weather played its part with easterly rain at regular intervals along with plenty of heat. The growth we saw on the Ica hills in January/ February was unprecedented to anything we have seen before at that time of year. It was a little surreal farming with grass over this period and we were forever looking over our shoulders to see what was around the corner to slap us in the face. I suppose this has just become habit.

Secondly sheep prices have reached all-time highs across the board. Although we sheepfarmers tend to be a negative bunch, indications are pointing positive at the moment so let's go ahead and enjoy this golden period.

I also acknowledge that not all have seen this lift in sheep prices just yet. I recall sitting down 10 days out from Xmas last year with our team and having to make the call - hold or bail out. The hottest December on record had forced thousands of lambs out of east coast hill country, with breeders struggling to make \$2.30. After much debate we made a ballsy

call and decided to hold and see what happens after the Xmas period. Well we received the best present ever - 3 inches of rain - and it was game on. Finishers made some staggering margins on those cheap store lambs - it would be nice to see everyone get a slice of the action this coming season.

**This is a year that will see many that probably wouldn't normally do so think twice about doing a lambing beat and tipping over that cast ewe or fixing that odd bearing. A twinning ewe dead on her back is a potential \$300 lost - doesn't take many to pay a few bills.**

So, as I look back on the last 20 years, the changes in farming practices and genetics have been staggering to say the least. The most pleasing gain I feel we have made is the consistency of performance through exceptionally challenging seasons. I recall moving sheep with my dad in the middle of the last drought we had and was feeling down and out. His comment to me was quite simple:

"Don't panic, son, you have bred a sheep that will bounce back from these conditions and still perform for you." His words were correct, by sticking to our tough culling criteria, along with the years of selection on ewe efficiency, we have bred a sheep that performs consistently through seasons that only give us half of the potential grass growth. Along with advancements in other areas like EID, SIL recording and genomic evaluation, not to mention the future of possible gene editing, the future of sheep production will move us ahead a whole lot quicker than the last 20 years has seen. We need to remain careful as an industry that we don't just breed a woolly robot, these sheep still need to be able to walk the hills and count their lambs!

Here at Motu-nui we promise never to lose sight of the need for good genetics to come in a hardy, resilient package that will deliver the goods on your farm. The future is exciting and with my new partners on board we're perfectly placed now to take full advantage of the developments on the horizon. Bring on the next 20 years!

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Jason



## WATCH OUT FOR THESE CONSOLIDATIONS IN 2019:

- Polygram Records, Warner Bros and Zesta Crackers will join forces to become Poly Warner Cracker.
- 3M will merge with Goodyear to become MMMGood.
- FedEx is expected to join its competitor UPS and become FedUP.
- Fairchild Electronics and Honeywell Computers will become Farewell Honeychild.
- And finally, Zippo Manufacturing, Audi Motors, Dofasco and Dakota Mining are expected to join forces and trade as ZipAudiDoDa.



## LOOK AFTER YOUR INVESTMENT!

Although we breed 'em tough, there are plenty of ways you can make sure your rams continue to perform for you over many seasons.

Firstly, remember your new 2th ram is only just a year old and not quite ready to foot with the big guys! If possible keep your new rams separate from the older rams, on good quality feed, until they have matured. You should quarantine drench any new animal onto your property, and then drench as you would your 2th ewes. Adult rams generally do not require drenching.

**Don't suddenly remember your rams the week before tupping! Rams produce 80% of the semen they will use in the 8 weeks before mating. Any stress during this time can have a negative impact on semen quality, so good quality tucker with minimal handling is the recipe for success here. (It's not just your ewes that benefit from flushing!)**

On average, rams lose 13% of their body weight over the mating season - and on some farms up to 25%! Making sure that rams are in good body condition coming into mating ensures they have reserves to

keep them performing until mating ends. But don't go overboard - fat rams can suffer heart attacks, and a bit of fitness can be helpful.

Motu-nui is accredited free of ovine brucellosis, and our rams are tested every year. However, this disease is still present in some areas and can be caught from other rams, including feral or "hermit" rams. It can dramatically reduce ram fertility, so getting a vet out to check your rams pre-mating ensures that your ram team stays free of this disease. At the same time you can find and treat injuries, foot issues and scrotal mange if they have picked these up along the way.

A lame ram is not an effective ram. Lameness in rams is very common - in a 2016 study in the Wairarapa 96% of commercial farms had some lame rams pre-mating. Our rams are renowned for lack of foot issues, but even genetically resistant rams can succumb if there is enough environmental challenge (wet ground, high bacteria load). If footrot is a problem, antibiotics are a better treatment than trimming. Trimming hooves with footrot makes them take longer to heal and spreads the bacteria through the mob. However, if hoof abscesses are the cause,

trimming needs to be done to open up the abscesses and prevent them moving inwards to affect the bones inside the hoof. Examine any lame rams promptly to determine the correct treatment. Genetics of lameness is an evolving field at the moment - we will keep you up to date with new research in this area.

The key is to plan ahead, so that you can get these checks done plus shearing or any other animal health treatments before that critical last 8 weeks before the rams go out. That also gives time to assess body condition and adjust feed accordingly.

**All of your profits for the year hinge on a good mating. Sometimes valuable rams can be the forgotten stock class on a farm. Keeping an eye on ram condition and soundness ensures your investment in our genetics will continue to pay off.**

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We acknowledge the assistance of Sara Sutherland, Vet Services Wairarapa, with this article.



# MOTU-NUI OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

One thing we're passionate about here at Motu-nui Rams (besides rams!) is being a part of our community.

In April we were privileged to be one of the sponsors of the Cross-Country phase of the NZ Pony Club National Eventing Championships, held near Carterton in the Wairarapa. We think our jump looked pretty darn good!



*Jump A of the Motu-nui Rails combination, complete with sheep!*



*Rebecca Davey from the Auckland team in action.*

## OTHER EVENTS AND ORGANISATIONS WE HAVE SUPPORTED OVER THE PAST YEAR INCLUDE:

- Lifeflight Trust
- Pet's Days at Alfredton, Gladstone and Whareama Schools
- Pahiatua Shears
- Pre-Shears Woolhandling Champs
- Puketoi Rugby Club
- Gladstone Rugby Club
- Homewood Claybird Shoot
- Pongaroa Golf Club
- Douglas Villa Skulls Soccer Team
- Te Wharau and Tinui Dog Trials
- Langdale Sports Club

# THE TEASER TOOL

It has been described as the sheep husbandry technique with the highest return for input required, and it is one not enough sheep breeders make use of – teasers.

Teasers are vasectomised rams which look and smell to ewes like the real thing, but can't do any impregnating. They release pheromones which 'fire up' the ewes' reproductive system and get them cycling. Often the first estrus is a 'silent heat', so once this passes with the teaser, the ewes are ready to meet the ram in full heat.

Motu-nui is able to supply top quality teasers from our unselected rams. If you are interested, please get in touch or note this on your ram order form.

## Why Use a Teaser?

- Using teasers with the correct timing will synchronise estrus in the ewes, dramatically shortening lambing periods, which can save labour at lambing, require less shedding of ewes, and allow earlier docking. One study in 2009 found that 90% of ewes lambed within 7 days of due date when teasers were used, compared to 15% in the control group (early lambing).
- Helps young sheep come into heat, so is particularly effective for 2ths and hoggets.
- Also accustoms young sheep to ram behaviour.
- Increases lambing percentage – a ewe is more likely to have multiples if she has cycled more than once before conception occurs.
- Helps bring ewes on sooner if trying to move lambing date forward.
- Where not mating hoggets, harnessed teasers can be used to identify sexually mature animals to select for replacements, as hoggets that mature earlier have been shown to have higher lifetime production.
- Harnessed teasers can also be used following tupping (3 days after rams are removed, at 1:500 ratio) to identify dry ewes before scanning and get them away sooner.

## How To's

- For maximum synchronisation, keep ewes as far as possible from any rams/ ram lambs/ cryptorchids for at least 3 weeks before teasers go out.
- Run teasers with ewes for 10-14 days before rams go out. Make sure rams are with ewes by 17 days after the teasers joined the ewes. (Note - depending on your objective, you may need to adjust your timing of teaser use – check with your vet)
- Teasers can be used at double the ratio of rams – eg at 1:300 ewes if you would put rams out at 1:150. Note – you may need to increase your ram ratio to deal with the concentrated lambing – there will be a lot of ewes looking for service in a short period!!



For those concerned about the risk of a major storm coming in a concentrated lambing period, ewes can be mated in two or more groups, with the teasers used for one mob after they've come out of the second (and then rotated on to the hogget mob). This will give the benefits of concentrated lambing while lessening risk, and getting the most milage out of your teasers (and rams).

Rams need to be vasectomised at least 6 weeks before use as teasers to allow healing and ensure no viable sperm remain. Two-tooths are ideal, as they are young and vigorous and should last several seasons, while generally having greater libido than lambs. As with rams, good teeth, feet and constitution are best for performance and longevity.





*Mixed age ewes at Keith and Lynn Munro's clearing sale in February*

## **SOUTHERN MUSTER 2018**

### **ROLL ON 2018/19**

Looking back to last year we were full of optimism and waiting for the promises made to be fulfilled. The season has now been completed and what an amazing turnaround.

At last sheep farming is seen to be the industry to be in. With a combination of good farming conditions and solid pricing we are now in a position to make substantial gains as a farming sector.

Lamb and ewe prices are at an historical high and all the industry leaders lead us to believe this will continue into the near future. \$7 to \$8 schedules into the new season look very achievable and gives us optimistic outlook going forward.

With this in mind and the out of season enquires we have had we are lifting our ram numbers substantially for this coming season. The Romney demand continues to increase along with the crossbreds to a lesser extent.

We have re evaluated the way we have sold the rams and we will now sell them in different categories to past years.

The top group of rams on index in an elite category followed by the larger group in a high range index as in the past and a medium index

range under that. We will no longer be offering a low index range as with the increase in numbers and the genetic merit of the other groups we believe this is no longer appropriate.

Also this season for the first time in 7 years we will be lifting the prices over all categories of rams.

We believe with the lift in performance of the rams and the current sheep farming environment, it is an appropriate time to do so. Also we have had increased costs from SIL and data collection along with our eye muscle scanning and these have deemed this necessary.

We note our major opposition breeder has lifted his prices substantially more than we have.

You will notice on our order forms the new pricing structure but please don't hesitate to give us a call and discuss things if you find it confusing. There will be a limited number of elite rams as only the very top indexes will qualify for this category.

## FACEBOOK

Motu-nui South/Dun CRAIGEN now have a facebook page so if you want to keep up to date with what is happening in the deep South go into this page.

Type **Dun CRAIGEN Farm/Motunui South Romneys** in the search bar.

*Motu-nui South sponsored Wyndham Senior C rugby team celebrate winning the 2018 competition*

### Clients

It excites us to see our clients doing so well in local sheep competitions as well as selling at auction.

One of our oldest client Keith and Lynn Munro of Waipahi retired in February and had a rip roaring clearing sale. Their ewes sold for \$10 to \$15 premium on anything else sold in the south with 2ths @ \$213 and 4ths @ \$207. A great premium for quality stock at that time of year. The Munro's always bought the best index rams available. We wish them well in their retirement.

We have once again been doing our client visits and continue to be impressed by the way Motu-nui genetics are working so well for them in all different environments. The Central Otago sheep this year have been ultra impressive. We saw a lot of very good stock and some excellent scanning results, so lets hope that rolls over into lambing percentage.

### Home Front

At Dun CRAIGEN it has been a busy 12 months as always.

In April we welcomed a new granddaughter Charlie to Casey and Luke so look forward to showing her off at ram selling time.

We have also made the move to EID tagging in the studs so should see an increase in accuracy, speed of data collection and display in the ram pavilion.

We also continue to do our bit in the local community. Casey once again coached the Wyndham senior men's rugby team who won

the Southland wide competition in the first division and Motu-nui South sponsors the Wyndham senior B team which also won their competition, so it was a BIG weekend for Wyndham. Marc's involvement was as president of Eastern Sub union and Chairman of Southland Country Rugby.

### Wool

Further to my previous comments last year on Merino New Zealand's involvement in strong wool.

We have 6 or 7 of our clients follow us. We all believe in their model and to date they have delivered a good premium on current market prices with no monetary outlay. It may not be for everyone but still worth a follow up for those of you who are interested.

Their contact numbers are:

**Chris Adams:** 0212428905

**Andrew McNeil:** 021476600

### Better Times

With lambing just around the corner, it is pleasing to see all our client areas have experienced a good winter and are well set up for spring and lambing. It will be great to get the rewards for patience in a good industry.

We all look forward to seeing you come ram time in November and wish you all the best for a prosperous season.

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From us all at Motu-nui South



## RAM BUYING WISDOM

Jason often gets asked, what's a ram worth? Of course you can argue that we're biased, but we believe at current sheepmeat returns, rams are priced well below value.

Compared to what is charged for a breeding bull, a ram represents a far better return on investment!

BakerAg founder David Baker has found two rules of thumb have proved their worth over the decades, and are as applicable now as when he began with the State Advances Commission (forerunner of the Rural Bank).

The first of these is how much to pay for a ram:- on average, you should expect to buy a good basic ram for **ten times the value of a prime lamb** (ie \$1500-1800).

The second relates to how many rams you should buy:- to maintain good genetic progress, look to **replace 4 rams per 1000 ewes each year**.

**How many of our clients follow these two guidelines? Maybe with sheep prices where they are, it's time to re-evaluate the value of good genetics and be prepared to invest more in rams!**

### Ram Culling Service

Here at Motu-nui we aim to give top-notch customer service. If you would like Jason to come out and help go through your rams to choose which to cull, get in touch!

## OUR TEAM HERE AT MOTU-NUI RAMS

L-R: Simon, Meg, shepherd Bryan, Jason, junior shepherd Tom, and stock manager Sam, atop Castle Rock where we climbed up to watch the sunrise as a team-building exercise!



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