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Motu-nui Romneys

Newsletter
October 2012

Expanding our operations

Another year full of ups and downs, having experienced one of the most exceptional summer's growth, amazing prices, you'd be forgiven for thinking nothing could go wrong. Six months later we're wet as a shag, the sheep meat schedule is back over 30% and the wool price is back to the good old days. This all harks back to that great saying that we all farm for the lifestyle!

I still feel there is a great deal to be positive about. Scanning has been up across the board, the easterly pattern that has made us all so wet on the east coast has been warm so grass has continued to grow. Stock have all had a good gut full of grass and will follow through to better survival than we have seen in recent years. Having weighed a few of our early lambs at birth we are up 0.5kg on the past few years. This bodes very well for our future weaning weights.

Most of you by now would have updated your 2012-13 budgets, and no doubt, once again have done a lot of crystal ball gazing. If history repeats there is nothing surer that if you are a store farmer you could be a tad nervous, as we know the finishing boys never get burnt twice. Let's hope for everyone's sake there is a margin in it for us all. I feel the weather will play a major role as to where the price is set, if we get the wind and things turn, there could be a lot of multiples looking for homes in a hurry. Weaning weights will be critical; I know we will be working hard to break all records.

As most of you would now be aware, having received the survey we sent out, we have made some exciting moves to improve the genetic progress we are making in our three different flocks. Firstly, our crossbred flock for which we have formed a partnership with Michael and Kate Tosswill and David Holmes. Pakaraka is a 480 ha property just to the east of Masterton. Pakaraka is a summer dry property and well suits our aim of testing our crossbred genetics. I will be working closely with the Pakaraka team to achieve the breeding objectives we have set. We plan at this stage to continue selling the rams at ICA. Most of you will know Michael and Kate as they previously spent four enjoyable years working with us. Michael will be working with us in the Ram arena while Kate will be running our computer system this year at Ram selling. They look forward to catching up with you all come ram selling time - not long now!

We have also shifted our Terminal flock to Davey and Wendy Moore's at Waiorongonui in Homewood. Once again, we wanted to centralise this flock and work on improving our performance within this important breed. Davey has been involved in his own breeding programme for a number of years. Once again, I will be working closely with them to achieve the goals we have set.

The reason we have centralised our flocks is to concentrate solely on the

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growth of our Romney's on ICA. These are the backbone of the Motu-nui business and to achieve our targets we felt it important to concentrate everything at one location. This also eases the recording pressure and human error that can occur.

I am very proud of the way ICA is shaping up and giving our stock a chance to show what they are made of. I will leave the word on day to day running to Greg later in the newsletter.

I trust you all know the value of surrounding yourself with good people. Here at Ica, I feel we have a first-rate crew, which brings me to my next point, in introducing the team that I have around me. Greg McKay has been with us since the day I bought Ica and has been a rock through some testing farming years. Coming from a strong, extensive farming background, Greg has an incredible



attention to detail, helping to manage Ica toward the outstanding results we are achieving. Greg has played an important role in the close relationship we enjoy with Taratahi Agricultural Training Farm – who bring students out for practical studies, including level four students. Sam Clark, a Taratahi graduate, hails from Taranaki and despite never having worked on a farm prior to Ica, he is an absolute asset to us. Sam fits in to our family farming ethos superbly and is growing his stock skills rapidly, enjoying the challenge posed by Stud farming. Another Taratahi student we have employed, Jemiah Shailor, is contributing a great deal to our business. Jemiah is learning about farming at a rate of knots and enjoying being involved in a dynamic team.

I know we've all got a bit of work to get stuck in to between now and November. I hope to catch up with as many of you as I can before ram selling and find out how you're tracking. Here's hoping the weather gods are good to us. Til' November, take care and happy farming!

Jason.



Sam Clark & Jemiah Shailor

ICA Day to Day running

Who would want to be a farmer? If it's not too hot, too wet, too dry, too windy, not enough wind, no grass, too much grass....then you have to deal with banks, accountants, lawyers, contractors, District Councils, Government policies, local and international markets, freezing works, disease, pestalage, animals, potholes and computers – just to name a few!

I've been farming for 25 years now and I'm still looking for that average/normal year that they used to talk about in the good old days, was there ever one? But at the end of the day it's still the best office

in the world and there's never a dull moment.

At ICA we are busy tagging lambs, it only feels like yesterday that we were doing that job. The lambs are hitting the ground running with an extra 0.5kg live-weight, and combined with my extra 5-10kg live-weight (my winter coat, or it is beer?!), it's becoming quite a challenge.

It seems like the rain hasn't stopped since February. In March we lost fences on the flats and a newly planted Kale/Rape crop. In July we had 240mm of rain which caused a lot of slipping. We've planted 200-odd poles, some of which need replanting as the ground is still moving. Two millimetres of rain now feels like 20! The ground temperature for the last two months has been our saving grace, at around 9-11.5 degrees Celsius. It has kept the grass growing enough for the ewes, ram hoggets and wretched Tasmanian grass grub, with thistles doing well too!

We set stocked on to pasture covers of about 800-900kg/DM for the singles and twins and about 1200kg/DM for the triplets. Because of the extra lambs on board and having to lamb twins on singles country, we've applied 24 tonne of Urea at 80kg/Ha to the twin/triplet country to counter this, plus the grass grub.

With steep hills, pH 5.2 and P 7-9 (over 80% of our twinning ewes are lambing on this country), medium hills pH 5.2-5.5 and P 12-14, and flats pH 5.7 and P 32 – two ton/ha of lime went on in the summer over the whole farm. Come spring, 400kg of Super will be going on to help get the place pumping. With more fertiliser and a lot more fencing over the next year we are hoping to feed our stock better than we have been able to for the past four years, and see the results that we know these sheep are capable of.

The ram hoggets are starting to fly now. They were 50kg out of the wool in July, and then spent the next week in and out of the woolshed due to the inclement weather. They were about 5kg behind last year's lot, but have a bigger frame so with a bit more sunshine and less mud they'll be looking great come November.

Our grazing policy has changed over the last two years due to the lack of grass we grow on the hills, and paddock numbers. We have four main mobs -



ewes, 2ths, 2 x 800 Ram Hoggets – which are all on 16 day rotations on different blocks. Being 99.5% sheep, we don't seem to lose control of the pasture and use the neighbours go cows to tidy up if needed. Will be a great point for debate at ram selling, as it was at our farm discussion group meeting!

In our spare time, we are doing a 5-in-1 trial with Coopers to see if they can use Multine at docking time on the lambs. We are also trialling different EID tags. We have been using EID tags for the last 7 years now and want to see if we can improve the retention rate as we lose about 8% of tags out of the 2ths every year. We will keep you posted on how these trials go.

I hope everyone is having a great lambing and am looking forward to seeing everyone at our 'office' come ram selling time.

Regards, Greg.



Greg McKay

From Motu-Nui Hiwi

The year has flown by and we now have another lambing upon us. Stock are generally in good condition. The winter has been a more traditional one for us; lots of frosts early on, relatively dry with very little growth in June and July. With warm rain in mid-August we managed to get some long awaited growth.

Scanning has been up across the board for most people this year and we too have achieved increased results. Our studs scanned 193% and our commercials 169% (tw/si) overall which I am very happy with. We just need to cross our fingers and ask Mother Nature to be on our side this spring, helping us all along. Stud

ewe hoggets scanned 101% and commercial ewe hoggets 101%. I was disappointed with this result and after a thorough analysis, can find no obvious reasons for such a high rate of dry's. At tuppung, all the dry's averaged 42.9kg, and 43kg at shearing and scanning. Each mated group had a fairly equal share in dry's so that ruled out a ram-related problem. I guess when you mate hoggets you never know how they will take the ram.

All our hoggets have now been shorn and I believe have come out of the wool in good order. The ram hoggets are starting to fill out but we need some more sun to really motor their growth along. This season we hope to have just over 200 Romney 2th rams and 42 Texel/Suffolk 2th (from Motu-Nui) rams for sale. It is pleasing to see our number of rams steadily increasing, along with demand in this area.

I know we're all hopeful that lamb prices won't be too far behind last season but only time will tell. Some reports say this year's price is going to be back at least \$15 per head on new season's lambs. It is interesting to note that the schedule is already \$2/kg behind on where we were at this time last year. I hope meat companies will begin the season at a lower price point, giving them room to keep the schedule steadier throughout the season. It's believed that lots of traders got burnt with the crashing schedule in February and March, with no lift throughout the autumn period. The breeder-finisher in our environment experienced disappointment in prices after seeing the earlier money paid for lambs. We need a stable market, to give traders the confidence to buy and be prepared to pay fair price.

A year ago everyone was happy with wool returns. Now that prices are between \$2-3/kg down on last year, it's a different story. This is not helped by the fact that synthetic carpet is half the price of wool carpet, and the GFC is causing a widespread dip in demand. Hopefully we will see an improvement in returns as this would help all of our bottom lines.

Prices for all age classes of Romney stock have been excellent over the last year. Long may this last.

Here at Motu-Nui Hiwi we are striving to breed a hardy, high performance sheep that requires only average quality feed to thrive, with minimal inputs to do so. No stud stock are fed on crop or new grass,





Davey and Wendy Moore - Waiorong

and any stock whose condition falls below average is culled. By operating this way, we hope that all rams we sell can handle the tough times and still deliver results. More importantly, we hope that their progeny on your farm will perform to a high standard without needing to be pampered along. We continue to put a lot of emphasis on mothering ability, hence we now tag at birth and cull any ewe (and her progeny) that doesn't stand when we catch her lambs for tagging.

We also place high value on lamb survival. Our lamb losses in the stud flock were 9% in 2011, 23% in 2010 (the year of the storm), 10% in 2009, 8% in 2008 and 8% in 2007 - we're pleased with these results though will continue to strive for improvements.

We continue to cull heavily on constitution. Mixed age ewes that don't wean close to or more than their body weight, in multiples, are culled. Single producing ewes that don't wean lambs over 60% of their body weight are also culled. Ewes from 2th onwards have to wean three lambs in 2 years or they too are culled on the basis of performance.

We are trying to increase our stud ewe numbers, while maintaining a heavy culling policy and only letting 2ths into the stud that have a positive SIL index. So when all reasons to cull are combined, the process of building up ewe numbers is a slow and steady one. I purchased another 100 in-lamb ewes from Jason again this year, taking our stud ewe numbers to 325. I also took another 197 in-lamb stud

hoggets. All dry hoggets were culled this year, in the hope that we will only be keeping replacement 2ths that have been successful in rearing lambs as a hogget.

I wish you all a good lambing and a great season both for returns and grass growth. I look forward to catching up with everyone before ram selling to discuss your ram requirements for the season ahead.

Best wishes from the 'Motu-Nui Hiwi Team'

Retirement, Rewards, Reflections

After 53 years of being involved in the sheep industry, Dianne and I have decided its time to step back from the day to day working life and pursue other interests outside of farming. As Dianne's health has deteriorated recently we intend to make this move sooner than we had anticipated.



It's been an enjoyable journey over the years and we've seen many changes in the management of our national sheep flock, changes that were needed for the betterment of the sheep industry. Along this journey we have met many people whose input into the sheep industry has been huge. The changes from the wool led production days, to the more demanding production of fertility and growth rate, have changed the entire way we farm sheep today. These changes have mainly been forced upon us in the endeavour to make sheep farming more economic.

The rewards of being involved in the ram breeding business over many years has been the number of people we have met who have become friends and long term ram clients in our business. The visiting of clients all over New Zealand has been most enjoyable, as all farmers are very passionate about their farms and stock. The many contacts we have made in the servicing industry have been most enjoyable and the sharing of information has been outstanding.

On reflection we have been very fortunate over the



years to be involved with many people who have helped us with achieving our goals and ambitions. Sheep farming on the east coast of the North Island is not easy with the finicky weather patterns. Our involvement with Romney sheep started back in 1972 and the phenomenal progress made over the late 1980's and 1990's were due mainly to the people like Holmes Warren and the late John Daniell, who we were most fortunate to be involved with. Our joining with the Wairarapa Romney Improvement Group in 1982 was a major breakthrough in sheep recording for us and the ability to interact with other group members was a huge advantage. With the introduction of pregnancy scanning and artificial insemination our genetic base increased at a monumental rate, and with the introduction of Sire Referencing using the SIL database we were able to compare the sires we were using with other sires used over the country. The use of eye muscle scanning combined with BV's for weaning weight and LW 6 allowing selection of sheep with superior growth produced huge advantages.

With the setting up of our franchise operations "Motu-nui South" with Bruce and Carolynn Robertson in 2005, and "Motu-nui Taihape" with Donald and Sandra Fannin in 2009, and just recently "Motu-nui Pakaraka" in Masterton with Michael and Kate Tosswill and David Holmes, we believe we have a very dedicated team of people, to lead our business into the next decade and beyond.

With recent wet conditions making our soils extremely saturated we are hoping for a dryer period while lambing is underway. We wish you a good lambing and hope to catch up with everyone at ram selling.

Kindest Regards, John.

And the Survey results are...

Our recent client feedback survey provided excellent results and we're sure you're keen to hear a summary of key points raised. We intend to progressively implement as many of your suggestions as possible - watch this space.

KEY POINTS:

- ✓ You want more information on SIL figures - both how to interpret the figures and how to apply this to your farming system.
- ✓ You place most emphasis on structure when purchasing rams, also looking at growth rate to weaning, survivability and fertility.
- ✓ You are most likely to confide in farming mates, scanners and farming neighbours prior to selecting your breeder.
- ✓ You want to hear more from us - more newsletters, what other Motu Nui clients are achieving, more in depth information on production, research and an opinion on topical issues.
- ✓ You want to access Motu-nui information online.
- ✓ You think Motu-nui has a strong profile in the market as a Romney Ram Breeder but needs to work on our X-bred and Terminal profile.
- ✓ Most of you would have confidence in Jason selecting your rams, citing his eye and knowledge as reasons for this.
- ✓ You look for your ram breeder to be a forward thinking, honest communicator with good breeding history and experience who provides hardy sheep, fit for the job on your farm.
- ✓ An overwhelming number of you would be interested in an open day at Motu-nui.

Now of course there was an excellent carrot for you all to send in the newsletter - a good evening out at Salute to the value of \$150. The winners are:
Joe and Shaun Fouhy, Glanworth Farming Ltd, Pahiatua,
Andrew Ellingham, Dannevirke &
Jeremy Macklow, Wanstead



MR_CLIENT PROFILE

Andersons Farm

Sheep are the main income earners on this 525 hectare property situated north of Mount Bruce on the eastern side of the main road heading toward Eketahuna. This farm is exposed to the elements with a large area between 500 & 600 metre asl.

Five years ago we saw a need to address the lean aspect of our $\frac{1}{4}$ East Friesian / $\frac{3}{4}$ Romney male lambs after the weaning draft. We have for many years used Polled Dorsets as terminal sires over a large number of ewes and these always give us a good bench mark on the potential of sheep with genetics that suit the markets we are farming for.

After researching the sheep available with a proportion of Texel in the breed we chose to try Motunui's $\frac{1}{2}$ Romney $\frac{1}{4}$ East Friesian $\frac{1}{4}$ Texels as our maternal breed. The results we have been getting from these sheep have been impressive and the growth rates and yields at slaughter have been better than expected.

We have also purchased around 200 $\frac{1}{4}$ texel ewe lambs from Motunui each year to add to our replacements. These ewe lambs are run with our own replacements from weaning and the best overall sheep are mated to lamb in late September. This year 760 went to the ram at 46kgs and from these 675 are in lamb with an overall scanning of 120%.

Last year we mated a lesser number and from these there was 45% killed off their mothers at 16.9kgs for \$129.70. The balance of these lambs were all slaughtered by the end of May. As 2 tooth all of the ewes that reared lambs as hoggets were scanned as in lamb in the first cycle. It is notable that only a small number of these sheep were scanned as singles.

Overall in 2012 all but a small number of lambs had

been slaughtered by the 8th May at 18.87kgs netting \$131.10 with the possibility of a pool payment to add to this figure. The influence of the Motunui genetics played a big part in this result.

As a maternal breed we find these sheep are good to handle, very fertile, and tremendous mothers. They are big bulky ewes and have no issues handling the steep terrain with it's sometimes harsh climate.

A good example of the potential of these sheep was last years 4 tooth that lambd unshepherded on some of our steeper country. They had scanned 181% and ended up docking 161%. Of the male lambs 44% were killed off their mothers yielding at the very top end of our processor's criteria.

We are pleased with the gains we have achieved from Motunui genetics and this years scanning reassures us that we are heading in the right direction.

Hamish and Brad Anderson

CLIENT:
Hamish and Brad
Anderson
LOCATION:
Eketahuna
SCALE:
525 Hectares



The Southern Muster: News from Motu-nui South

As I write this report we are experiencing the most amazing backend of the winter in my farming memory - 20mls of rain fell in July and 4mls in August. Absolutely unheard of in the deep south. Temperatures have been in the early teens and we have more grass than I have ever seen at this time of year.

Most importantly crop utilisation has been terrific and all we need now is a great September to take full advantage of all the feed and the good scanning results achieved.

It has been amazing to watch the rest of New Zealand drowning with rain. I only hope it lets up for everyone else so that you all can have a prosperous lambing.

Farming is a frustrating business and after last year's incredible prices we are now seeing a high dollar and meat company C.E.O.s trying to talk lamb prices down to below what I believe is an acceptable level. Prices must remain at \$100 plus for the long term sustainability of sheep farming.

The world demand for protein remains strong and we produce a product with a great reputation for quality so let's hope things improve in the near future.

On the home front we have been fortunate enough to grow our business with another 300 acres added beside Marcs block which is steeper and harder than what we've got so will provide a good challenge for the Motu-nuis.

We continue to grow our recorded ewe flock. We have 1400 to lamb this season which should give us a good base to work from in future seasons.



Our rams have come through the winter well. They were shorn on time and have only had 3mls of rain on them since shearing.

Because of last year's high lamb drop and our growing ewe flock, combined with strong demand, we are pleased to have an extra 50 odd Romney's and 25 Romney/Texel's for this year's Ram selling. It is a very impressive line of rams that should be looking a picture by selling time in late November.

As I made you aware last year at selling time we will lifting our prices \$100 for both groups to come in line with our Northern counterparts. We have not made this decision lightly but are very confident in the product we produce and know they will perform for you.

All rams will be sold on the home farm this year. The reason for this is that we are going to use new technology in our selling system, including a large screen which will display the ram details. It will be easy to see and will hopefully avoid all the paper war. Marc and John will still sell their group through our yards and Carolynn, John and I will then handle the rest. We believe this will be a user friendly system and will look forward to your feedback.

We have been endeavouring to visit as many clients as possible, and it is once again pleasing to visit you on your home patch. The positive vibes and your feedback help us make important decisions about our flock's future.

A highlight was visiting two on-farm, store lamb sales. The Nicol sale at Lees Stream was a beauty. The average price was \$115, with a top of \$151. They were an excellent line of lambs, very well presented and marketed to an enthusiastic bunch of buyers. Well done Sparky, the progress you have made with your flock is great! He also had 1500 more lambs to sell than ever before. The second sale we attended was the Nicolson brothers at Hampden. Another very good line of lambs were yarded, having come off dry, East Coast country. Once again they were well presented to a good bunch of buyers with prices averaging in the high \$90s. They too sold more lambs than ever before and it was great to see such outstanding results for two dedicated farmers.

Enough from me and my ramblings. As usual we will look forward to catching up with you all in November.





Because of increased numbers this year we will be selling over a two week period, but the way we sell will not change.

Remember to get your order forms in early please. It makes life so much easier at this end when it comes to making up our timetables.

Finally, all the best for an early spring and a good lambing.

Bruce,Carolynn, Marc and Joelene Robertson

P.s. On a sad note the Ranfurly Shield has left us and on current form the future doesn't look too bright for getting it back any time soon !!

STOP PRESS

Motu-nui Romney's will be featuring on the PGG Wrightson's Stud Tour Series Two, screening October 18 on Country99TV and available online at www.ruraltv.co.nz



MR_CLIENT PROFILE

Castlepoint Station, 25 000 S.U. Coastal, summer dry

We have used Motu-Nui Suff/Tex rams for 7 years over 4-5000 ewes and up to 2500 hoggets annually. With their high growth rates and ease of lambing traits these rams are highly suited to our requirements. Farming in such a variable climate we can never guarantee favourable spring/summer conditions.

Motu-Nui terminals enable us to consistently provide preferred forward store lambs to our finishers. These lambs quickly reach target C.W's of 21-22kg. The same rams are used in the ewes and then the hoggets and prove to be excellent hogget sires with minimal lambing difficulties.

I would not hesitate to recommend that farmers looking for quality rams with proven results use Motu-Nui rams.

Stu Neal.
Farm Manager Castlepoint Station

CLIENT:
Emily & Anders Crofoot
Castlepoint Station
LOCATION:
Wairarapa's East Coast
SCALE:
25,000 S.U

For further information please contact one of our branch managers.

Wairarapa.

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