

mr Motu-nui Rams



THE MOTU-NUI ROUND UP

Hungry ewes became well acquainted with the feeding system at ICA this year.

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Hi and welcome to our 2015 newsletter, It's been a tough year for farmers right round the country, but we're crossing our fingers for a better season ahead. Please sit back, relax and enjoy the latest update from our team.

Jason Le Grove (Owner-Operator)



Romney ram hoggets on rape crop, August 2015.

LATEST NEWS AND MUSINGS

from the Motu-nui Rams team.

OUR MOVE TO ICA IS PAYING OFF - When we moved to ICA eight years ago, one of the biggest motivators was to test our sheep. We felt ICA was representative of the class of country the New Zealand sheep industry was progressing towards. We stopped selecting solely on figures and start weighting 'type' more heavily. This change in tact has paid dividends. Our genetic gain has increased at an advanced rate - a very pleasing result.

BUILDING OUR FLOCK'S EFFICIENCY

Here at ICA we continue to focus on building the efficiency of our flock. Relating ewe weight-to-weight of lambs weaned is an excellent calculation to measure ewe production efficiency.

Motu-nui sheep have been bred to perform given just a sniff of grass at key times. Our ewes averaged 59kgs the day we finished hard feeding them (1/4/15). One week later, in their single-sire mating paddocks, they were 65kg. This elasticity is a sign of efficiency - why feed a bigger ewe more grass if you can get the same productivity out of a smaller, more compact sheep that holds on better in tough seasons?

WEATHERING THE WEATHER

Rainfall has been dismal - 254ml in 7 months at ICA while Masterton had 477ml, Cheviot and North Canterbury experienced 180ml over the same period. El Nino has a 90% certainty of continuing in to the 2015/16 summer (NIWA, 2015). The central and eastern Equatorial Pacific has seen sea surface temperature variances over +10°C, weaker trade-winds have hit central and western areas and the Southern Oscillation Index has been strongly negative (NIWA, n.d.). Batten down your hatches, get rid of trade stock, get as many lambs as you can POM - before everyone else is trying to - and avoid that store market!

FARMING CONDITIONS AT ICA

We fed out to our ewes for 84 days - a mix of balaage and alka barley (270gDM/hd/day and 75g/hd/day respectively at a cost of \$0.12/day and \$0.06/day). Our fully recorded EID system allowed us to track weight changes of individual animals, leading to more efficient management.

As most farms experienced, the season took an expected toll on scanning - mixed aged ewes were back 20% at 164% and 2ths 5% at 170%. Questioning the drop in mixed aged scanning despite being hard-fed? The reality is they spent 84 days locked in the same paddock, being fed for 10 minutes of the day and staring at the fence for the rest of it.

THIS YEAR'S KPI'S

- Docked 152%
- Weaning weight 32kg, 84 day – growth rate of 351g/day
- 54% of all ram lambs weaned 32kg and above
- 23% of all ewe lambs weaned 32kg and above

Achieved on hill country without forage or crops.

Ram hoggets were pushed hard. Thankfully, we had a kale/turnip crop up our sleeve, which carried around 1800 ram hoggets for 8 weeks. At the end of July they came off the shears at 52kg, having lost 5-7kgs on the crop. They're now looking like some of the best ram hoggets we've had. The key to their success has been their 32kg average weaning weight at 91 days. This stood them in excellent stead to not only handle a severe and prolonged drought but to grow out to the solid weights they are

now. Motu-nui genetics prove themselves in years like this when many softer breeds may fall out.

Wool has been a silver lining this year. Drought = no mud = higher yields + finer micron = more \$\$\$\$. Exports netted the highest returns in a decade in June (Chaston, 2015) and the trend has continued. Our ram hogget wool recently fetched \$7.16/kg clean – averaging 3.5kg/hd over 7 months, money not seen since 1989/90.

MR CLIENT PROFILE

FARM NAME	Burnview
AREA (total/eff.)	1600ha, two blocks
REGION	Herbertville, east coast of Hawkes Bay
OWNER	Burnview Ltd
MANAGER	John Barnett
CAPACITY	9500SU sheep / 4000SU beef (winter)

SHEEP STOCK POLICY:

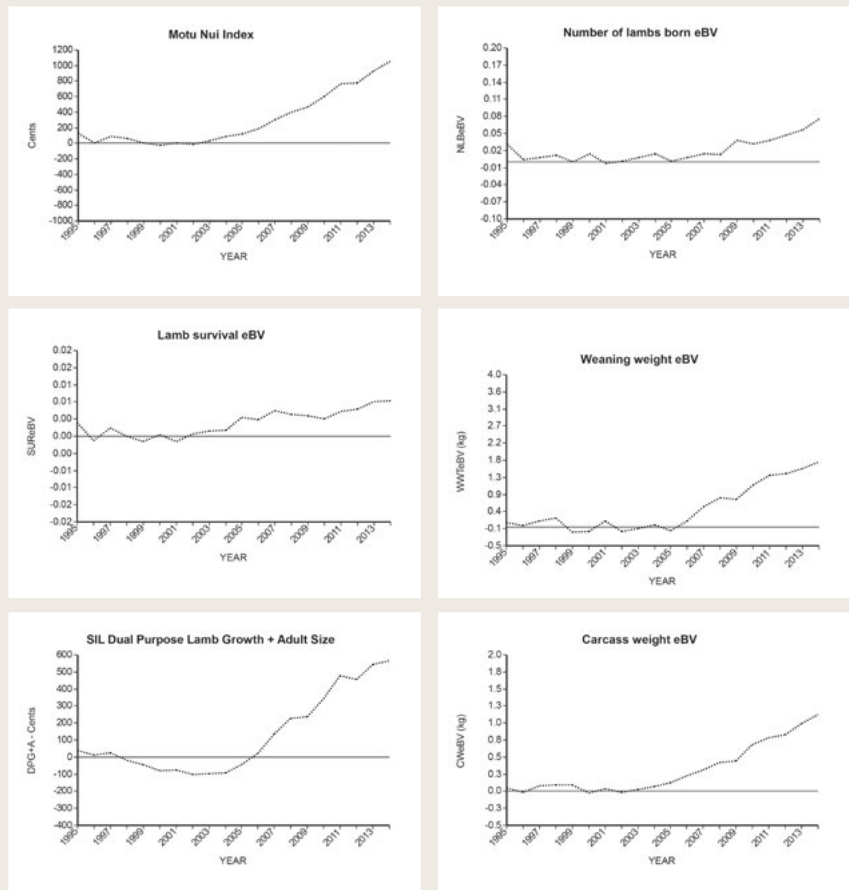
Finish 80% of lambs, 20% store. Best of Romney ewes POM, 15% terminal and old ewes gone by Christmas. Kill most ram lambs by end of March. 120-130% lambing, improving trend.

JOHN'S THOUGHTS ON MOTU-NUI GENETICS:

“able to handle summer dry conditions and hold condition – that's really important to us. Good survivability and for a Romney they achieve high growth rates, earlier than what we have achieved in the past. I've noticed our growth rates have increased over the last 12 years that we have been using Motu-nui genetics.”

“Batten down your hatches, get rid of trade stock, get as many lambs as you can POM - before everyone else is trying to - and avoid that store market!”

SIL GENETIC TREND GRAPHS





Stock manager Sam Clark feeds a 20kg bag of alka barley to the ewes, April 2015

CHANGES TO OUR TEAM

Greg McKay has moved on and is now enjoying working casually in the district. We thank Greg for his contribution and wish him all the best for the future. Sam Clark has stepped up to stock manager and is excelling in the role. At just 22, he is blowing us away with his intuitive management of stock. We also welcome Jesse Lange to our team as shepherd general.

I endeavour to see as many clients as I can through the year but it's impossible to see everyone – please don't hesitate to call if you have any queries or just want to chew the fat.

I reiterate my invitation to come and have a look around ICA. We'd love to show you what we're up to.

Motu-nui Crossbreds have RomCoop hoggets available for lease for the 2016 mating season. Call Jason or Michael to secure yours ASAP! We look forward to having these boys available for sale in November 2016.

We wish you all the best for the season ahead. Look after yourself and your family.

Kind regards, Jason and the team at Motu-nui Rams

mr Contact us:
06 372 3841



Panorama of ICA Station, Spring 2014.

Stud Industry Comment

It pays to know the background of any information you base important decisions on. With that in mind, let's take a look at SIL's Advanced Central Evaluation [ACE]. SIL ACE is proving controversial in the stud world.

SIL ACE is an across flock and breed evaluation produced by SIL. It aims to identify the best rams based on productivity traits

and then distributes their findings online and through apps, including RamFinder and FlockFinder.

The degree to which SIL ACE is standardised is arguable. The output of any tool is only as good as the data entered in to it and perhaps we need to ask more questions about what goes in? How do they incorporate drought effects? Hard hill country vs. pristine flats? SIL would also do

well to work towards one bureau (8 presently) to bring uniformity and credibility to the information farmers are basing their decisions on.

Is SIL walking a fine line and acting beyond their brief? In essence SIL are getting involved in marketing rams - funded in part by the Beef and Lamb NZ levies we all pay. I know I didn't sign up to market the rams of another stud.

CROSSBRED CORNER

Everyone knows how the weather has been over the past 12 months. The seasons have been 'unseasonal' and this has made farming a real challenge. Perhaps someone forgot to do their rain dance!

Aside from all the challenges, things are trucking along nicely on the Crossbred front. We've been re-assessing our breeding objectives and how these are met by our particular crosses. We've also been working to identify key traits we feel our SIL index ought to include. We've done this with your help – by talking to clients

about what you're chasing and what importance you place on various traits. Feedback is always appreciated and we look forward to discussing our improved index composition with you at ram selling in November.

This year we've retained the progeny of the F1 TefRom to



Extensive planting on Pakaraka allowed us to utilise poplar and willow through the summer – providing feed for hungry ewes and slowly increasing effective area.

stabilise the breed. This followed interest and demand by clients who showed preference for a stabilised TefRom. We look forward to comparing these boys with our F1s and seeing how they grow out.

We'll also be tagging our first RomCoop lambs this year. This ½ Romney, ½ Coopworth cross is going to be a great addition to our breed offering come 2016. The RomCoop has all the hybrid vigour and fertility you could want without compromising the hardy,

efficient Romney backbone. With seasons like we've just had, every farmer needs genetics that can hang on, even in the tough times.

Stock performance over the last 12 months has been pleasing, but I feel our sheep can still do better. Weaning saw a 31kg average at 95 days with 145% lambing – lack of sunshine didn't help.

Over the summer our over-population of poplars and willows became an opportunity; we utilised

these to great effect as feed. In fact, they sustained 1500 of our girls for 10 weeks. With 2-3 hours cutting time, the ewes could eat for a minimum of 2 hours (maintenance). On the whole they took to it remarkably well. Separate to the main mob, and I ran the 2ths and any mixed aged ewes with body condition score below 3.

While at times my body said otherwise, this was a good policy and secured ideal pre-tup weights in the 2ths at 65kg, with mixed aged not far off at 65kg. In future I'd decrease mob sizes to less than 500hd/ha. There's a fine balance here in advancing rotation length, allowing feed to come away and not compromising stock condition.

Our mixed age ewes scanned 174% and 2ths 175%. Again, I was happy with 2ths – flow on from strong pre-tup weights.

Ewes have been wintered on kale behind a wire (mostly) for the last 6 weeks with pleasing results. Keeping half of my ewes off the hills has been pivotal in setting up the good lambing covers we're now set stocking on to.

This year's crop of ram hoggets got off to a great start, averaging 48kg come April 1. This allowed me to push these boys out to the back country and shut them down through tupping and in to winter. Since coming off the hills these boys have smoked!! I look forward to showing them off in November.

Wishing you all the best for the season ahead,

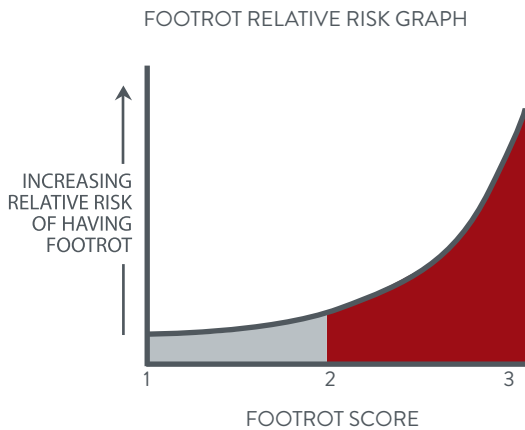
Michael and Kate

mr Contact us:
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ON SOLID GROUND

Feet are an ever increasing issue in the sheep industry

Have breeders taken their eye off the ball here? I like to think Motu-nui has not. We've spent years being tough on feet and our recent footrot gene-marker tests through Lincoln University proved our efforts have been effective. Feet are a highly heritable trait – for better or worse. Without four sound feet, productivity can't be maximised (Lincoln University, n.d.). We took samples from 35 rams used in the 2014 season with an average of 2 on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is least likely to get footrot), with many sheep categorised as '1s'. These results demonstrate the strength and reliability of Motu-nui Ram's feet.



*Relative risk curve of sheep getting footrot.
(Lincoln, n.d.).*

Good genetics will perform under pressure.

Did your sheep fall out this last year? Give us a call if the performance of your sheep needs to be turned on its head.

MR CLIENT PROFILE

FARM NAME Awapai Farm
 AREA (EFF.) 560ha
 REGION east of Woodville
 OWNER & MANAGER David & Christine Armistead
 CAPACITY 5500-5900SU / 80:20 Romney ewes: Angus cattle

Awapai Farm has a great balance of country: dairy surrounded flats to rolling and steeper hills. This gives us good breeding area and the ability to finish all our own stock, do some cattle trading, cropping and dairy supplement as the season dictates.

We started with Motu-nui in 2009, buying 24 rams which allowed us to get straight into their genetics. The last of these rams was used this year, so we are definitely getting longevity from them (5 seasons).

Motu-nui genetics are giving us a good lambing percentage, good wool, and allowing us to finish our lambs as we want. During recent drought years we've been able to tighten up lambs for 4-6 weeks and they still came back up to weight later on for winter trading.

I also like not having to worry about black wool, dagging or drenching plus the shearers find it easy to catch them. Cheers Dave & Christine Armistead



WORD FROM THE 'SOUTHERN MUSTER'

The 2014/15 season has been one that most of us would like to forget. It's certainly been the toughest in my farming career, both climatically and financially, but we're notorious for battling on in the hope of better days ahead.

The 2014/15 season has been one that most of us would like to forget. It's certainly been the toughest in my farming career, both climatically and financially, but we're notorious for battling on in the hope of better days ahead.

Climatically and environmentally, there's not much we can change and with the El Nino outlook for this season in our grasp, things are not shaping up well.

Financially, there are things we can change; we can spend more wisely, budget better, and continue to use good genetics – the key to greater profitability – in our flocks.

All this is fine but it would be nice to have support from within the industry. Agriculture accounts for 60% of New Zealand's GDP and you'd think this would allow us a lot more support from the supposed movers and shakers from within the industry. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Our National

Party Minister of Primary Industries is almost anonymous and gives us little constructive leadership or advice and certainly doesn't want to get involved in trying to right the meat industry's woes.

He believes it is not his job. I then question, what is his job?

I happily pay levies to meat-related organisations but also question what leadership we've had from the likes of Beef & Lamb NZ.

Now my pet subjects. We continue to see the same arguments. No leadership and certainly no look for amalgamation in the near future. What a shame.

For progress and price increases in the future we must go down this track. We're told co-operatives are the best for our assured future but does Fonterra's recent performance give you confidence?



Motu-nui South ewes on swedes at Braxton Station, Northern Southland.

OUR TERMINAL FLOCK

Our Terminal flock is still being pushed hard and we continue to run all animals as though they were commercial.

We're continuing to get great client feedback on our Motu-nui Terminal rams, especially their longevity, feet and colouring. The survivability of their progeny has also been very pleasing. The hybrid vigour that the SuffTex cross brings results in fast-maturing, high-yielding lambs.

Similarly, the SuffTex ram is proving to be an excellent hogget sire; the hoggets' survivability has been great.

mr Contact us:
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New-look website

We've revamped our website, updating the content and photos and making it easier to access on any device. Jump on and have a look at www.motu-nuirams.co.nz

'SOUTHERN MUSTER' CONT.

What we do know is we have a quality product that's going to be in shorter supply in the future and if we continue to produce a good product we'll eventually be rewarded.

I know the variance in lamb prices in the southern South Island was huge. Some companies managed to operate between \$5.10 and \$5.60 all season and others languished around \$4.75 and \$4.85.

Don't sell yourselves short and don't be scared to look at other options. Your bank account doesn't know where your lambs were killed! You owe it to yourself and your family to do the best for your own operation.

Visiting clients is still a highlight of the year for us and we managed to see many this year. Positive people always get positive results and seeing what our clients are achieving, talking about industry problems and what we need to be doing as breeders is time well spent for us.

We now have our ram hoggets shorn and they've come out of the wool well and should be an impressive line come sale time, despite a less than favourable winter.

Once again all the sale rams will be twins or triplets. We'll have our usual large line of Romney rams as well as Texel-Romney cross. On the terminal side, there'll be our usual Dorset Downs and a small number of Dorset Down-Texel cross, of which we're getting very positive feedback.

Ram selling will be the last week in November as usual and we look forward to catching up with you then. Please get your order forms back ASAP as this makes our lives so much easier organising the timetables for ram week.

All the best for a prosperous spring! Cheers,
The Robertson family, Motu-nui South

mr Contact us:
03 206 4894

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter and look forward to catching up with you at ram selling in the last week in November.

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MR CLIENT PROFILE

FARM NAME	Braxton Station
AREA (EFF.)	2200ac
REGION	Mossburn
OWNER	Philip Haas
MANAGER	Brendon Duthie
CAPACITY	10500 SU

Using Motu-nui South genetics for the last 6 years. The farm carries 6750 ewes and 1600 ewe lambs with 500 fattening cattle. In addition 3500 lambs are fattened from other Haas owned properties.

Average lamb weights are usually 18kgs.

This year the farm has had an impressive scanning with the mixed-aged ewes coming in at 193% and an overall scanning including 2ths ewe of 184%. Last year in a tough spring the ewes lambed 142%. It was a privilege to drive around Braxton. It is a very well farmed and managed property.

Brendons thoughts on Motu-nui South genetics "They are great mothers, the lambs can stand adverse weather and get up and go. The lambs hit target weights well and are very easy doing. These sheep are low maintenance and easy care which suits our system. They also handle the pressure periods of the year well and respond quickly when the feed arrives"



Motu-nui Rams

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Motu-nui Crossbreds

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