



mr Motu-nui Rams

Newsletter - September 2020



A NEW WORLD?

Another year has passed by with all its curve balls and uncertainty. Who would have thought last September we'd be having the conversations we are today? It's certainly been character building.

With issues such as drought, Covid and now water quality legislation, our plates have been pretty full, and at times overwhelming. But the reality is I'd rather be farming than doing anything else. Under the current conditions most of our businesses are still profitable, and recent events have shown our importance to the economy. We are adding value by producing a product, bringing in export income, employing staff and contractors, and purchasing goods from local businesses.

I have no doubt Covid has brought about a new world. The questions I've been asking myself are:

- Will people's habits change for good?
- Will people stop eating out and socialise at home with people they know?
- Will tourism ever be that same?
- Or will the world head back into normality once a vaccine is found? Which may be a long way off!

A quote from a wise man, "What we learn from history is that we don't learn from history"!!!!

Looking ahead to the upcoming season, I'd estimate ewe numbers are down by maybe 1m, scanning back by 10-20% plus a lot less hoggets mated. The net result maybe 15m lambs less to sell this coming season. How will the markets react to this?

Short term I think there is more pricing pressure to come. The cost of freight both air and shipping will more than likely go up. We also have developed I believe an unbalanced reliance on China for our beef and lamb. There two ways that could go...either they shut up shop and source their protein from elsewhere or their demand increases - I think even the experts are not sure week from week! When the processors are freezing down prime cuts, I think alarm bells should be ringing. Eggs in one basket. Synthetic meat is also here to stay and not going away. Let's not try to compete with them, but rather let's look at what we are good at and sell them nature's quality.

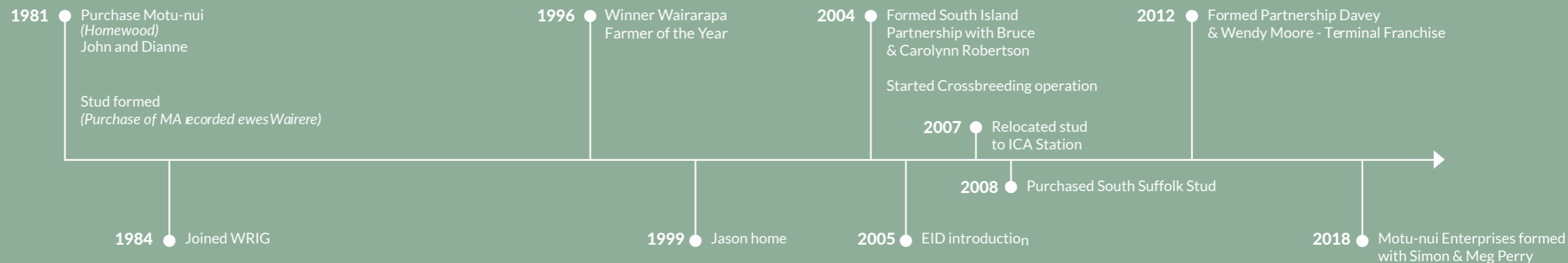
The future for farming I believe lies in changing a number of our current intensive farming practices to a more environmental based low-input system. This has been a large focus of our breeding objective; less input more output.

Cheers, Jason

Motu-nui Team from left to right: Simon, Jacob, Mark, Aleister, Jason

**OPEN DAY
OCTOBER 2ND**
We invite all existing and potential clients to come along for a look at our operation, some chat and a bite from the barbie - Friday 2 October. Ica Woolshed.

MOTU-NUI TIMELINE



MILESTONES

This year marks the 50th anniversary of WRIG – the Wairarapa Romney Improvement Group. This group was instrumental in driving the development of the Romney breed, and its members remain the source of the genetics used on much of the eastern hill country.

This milestone provides a suitable opportunity to look back at the history of Motu-nui Rams, with the above timeline showing key events in Motu-nui’s development.



Left: Docking time! Jason in control of the irons. Top right: John out tagging - the leather satchel is still in use today! Bottom right: Feeding out on the hills during the February 2020 drought.

MOTU-NUI GENETICS SINCE 1985

MICHAEL AND KATE TOSSWILL

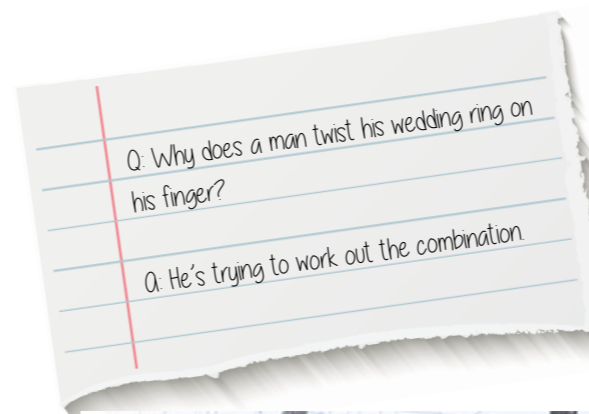
We farm Bagshot, 586ha north-east of Masterton, where we've been since February 2018. **Motu-nui genetics have been used on this farm since 1985.** Consistent ewe scanning of 170-175% (twin/single). Ewe hogget scanning last two years has been 120 and 132%.

With hardiness and great constitution, these sheep are excellent all-round performers.

We've been pleased to see the weaning weights and kill weights achievable from both the replacement and terminal progeny using Motu-nui Romney and SuffTex sires over our Romney flock.



Michael and Kate with their children, Ava and Johnny



Ewes taking to grain feeding over drought.

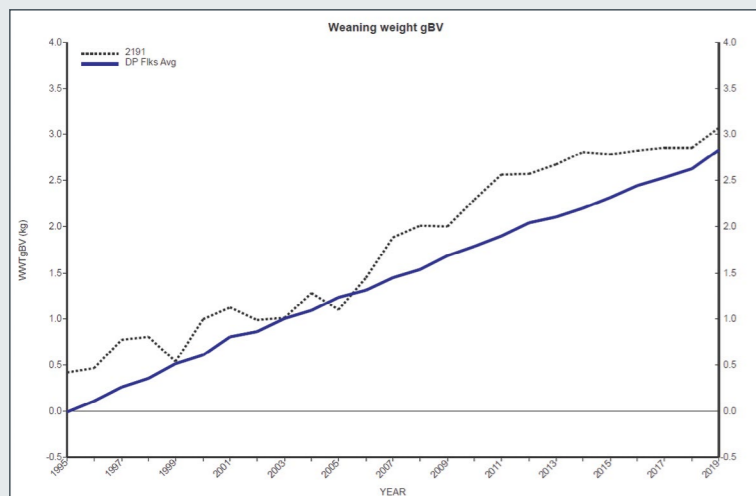


NEW FE PARTNERSHIP

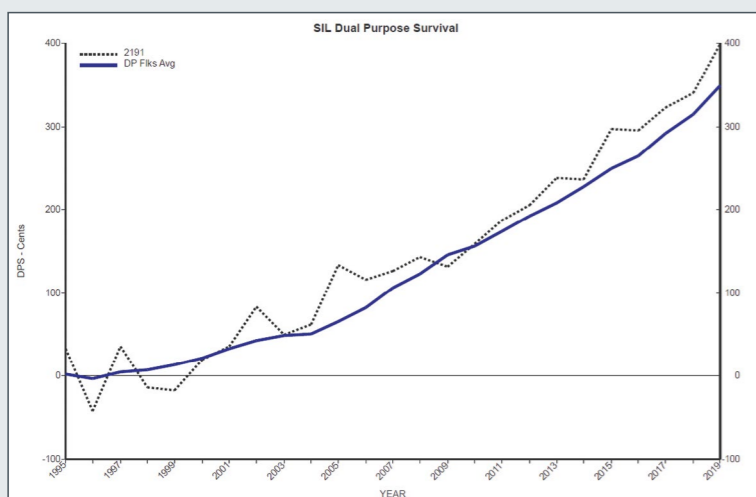


Facial Eczema tolerance is an ongoing project for us. We are excited to have joined forces with Will Jackson from Piquet Hill who has been at the forefront of FE tolerance for several years. Wills was keen to use some of our genetics to help improve performance in his breeding programme, and vice versa we're keen to jumpstart FE tolerance in the Motu-nui flock. While we will focus on a proportion of our flock initially, we foresee growing demand for this trait as FE marches inexorably down the country with climate change. Together with Piquet Hills we have built a breeding programme and will continue to develop this. Stay tuned!

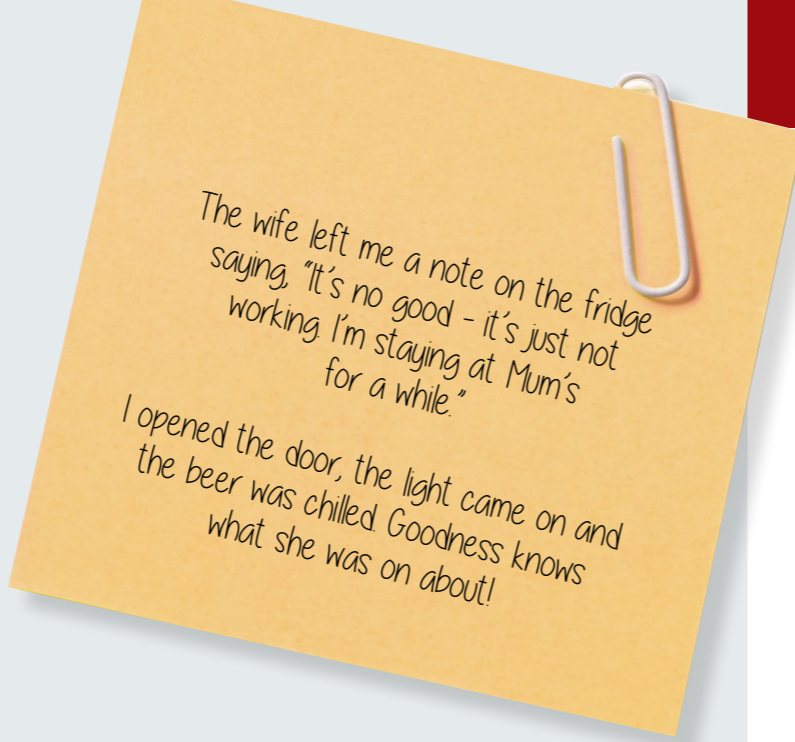
MOTU-NUI'S GENETIC PROGRESS



WEANING WEIGHT GBV



SIL DUAL PURPOSE SURVIVAL



These graphs compare Motu-nui Romneys (dotted line) with the average of all other Dual Purpose flocks on the NZMW (maternal worth) index (solid blue line).

At Motu-nui we pride ourselves on our sheep's ability to rear and wean good lambs off marginal country. This is illustrated by the above Genetic Trend Graphs for Survival and Weaning weight gBV.

SOUTHERN MUSTER

What an amazing 12 months we have had, and worst of all we have a long way to go before we get the feel of a new 'normal'.



The season in the deep south started off with a spring that never arrived. It was cold and wet right up to Christmas. Growth rates in both grass and livestock were well behind normal and we played catch-up for the rest of the season. Somehow we pulled through.

Farmers are very resilient but our resolve was certainly tested through the late summer and early autumn with drought then Covid-19 into the mix. What else could go wrong? Fortunately people still have to eat and at least farmers became a very important part of society and in turn gained a lot of respect from our urban friends. Not before time of course, and let's hope in the long term we are in a better situation to plan and map out the future of our farming to the benefit of all New Zealanders.

We will awaken to a new normal once Covid is brought under control and what that will look like is anyone's guess. We still need to remain positive and control the things that really matter to us - our farms and farming practices. Remember good feeding policies and good genetics will always assure you of a positive future. Motu-nui is a big part of this and we are always on hand for advice and encouragement.

Clients

Once again we continue on our round of visits. We always enjoy seeing Motu-nui genetics helping our clients to a better future. To see the lift in production in both fertility and lamb weights is always exciting for us.

Home Front

For all the elements that were thrown at us, we still had our best season ever. A record lambing with an average kill weight of 19.6kgs and with a continuing demand for our and our clients' surplus ewe lambs made us realise we are on the right track.

The whiteface rams were shorn on the 6th August and came out of the wool as good as we have had them. Unfortunately I cannot say the same about the wool!!

Once again all sale rams will be multiples but unfortunately we were unable to eye muscle scan this year due to Covid lock down. As we leased quite a number of ram lambs for service they had already left by the time the scanner was able to come so it was not feasible to scan.

Our terminal sires are also looking well and will be shorn in late August. This season we will have 100% Dorset Downs, Dorset Down Texel cross and Dorset Down Beltex cross rams for sale. A very strong meaty bunch of rams that were scanned early.

We are now looking forward to lambing. The ewes came through the winter in tremendous order and scanned very well.

Marc continues his involvement with Southland Country Rugby and Casey has retired as Wyndham coach after 4 successful seasons. Motu-nui continues to sponsor the Wyndham C team who are top qualifiers for their final next week.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE 'MR' CROSSBRED

In the past we haven't really given our Crossbred rams much of a plug. We are known for producing Romneys, and the crossbreeding side of the business was brought about to cater to clients wanting that traditional Romney hardiness plus some key traits from other breeds. We have been breeding crossbred rams for close to 16 years now, subjecting them to the same culling pressure as our Romneys. We feel the sheep we have developed has some real potential. There is a lot to be said for hybrid vigour and how it can add to the bottom line in a short space of time. As with any high performing sheep, it does need the right management and environment to thrive. If you think this may be for you then feel free to give me a call and we can discuss the ins and outs. Again, the Romney is our strength but moving with the times we need to be exploring other avenues. "It's about the right sheep on the right country."



JEFF FARM SURPLUS EWE AUCTION A BOOMER

A well-bred, well-presented line of ewes that were a credit to John and Liz Chittock and their team.

- 1405 ewes averaged \$225
- M.A. ewes @ \$246
- Annual Draft ewes @ \$235
- F/F.M. ewes @ \$202
- 350 surplus dry ewe lambs @ \$183

A great result for good genetics that were exceptionally well presented.

Casey and Luke have produced twin boys Jonty and Jackson who were born just on lock-down so their lives are very busy. Luke left his job and on the dairy farm and is now at home working with us.

We will once again be holding our annual open day in early November, with this being an opportunity for new and old clients to view this seasons rams and the farm. All are welcome. BBQ and drinks to follow.

Finally all the best for the spring and wishing you all a good lambing. Look forward to catching up with everyone in November.

The team at Motu-nui South

Bruce,Carolynn, Marc, Jolene, Casey and Luke

'OPEN FARMS' DAY 1 MARCH 2020

Motu-nui Enterprises opened its gates as part of the national Open Farms initiative to foster greater understanding and connection with our urban neighbours. We welcomed over 30 visitors, most of them travelling over 2 hours from Wellington/Hutt Valley, and enjoyed sharing the sights, sounds and feels of a working sheep farm. Feedback was extremely positive, with most visitors keen to come back next year!



Tractor trailer tour to the top of Ica.

GREG CROMBIE AT LEEFIELD STATION

I have used Jason's Motu-nui Romney rams on various farms I have managed in both the North and South Island. I have always found the rams to be sound and fertile. They carry the genetic potential to produce ewes that can count and thrive in challenging hill country delivering continuous performance. Jason drives this with his passion and enthusiasm for the sheep industry. The Motu-Nui Romney genetics have never let me down for over 20 years in NZ!



Greg Crombie, far right and team



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