



# Motu-nui Romneys

Newsletter  
September 2014

## WELL, THOSE 12 MONTHS SURE WENT FAST!

THEY SAY TIME FLIES WHEN YOU ARE HAVING FUN, AND I HAVE CERTAINLY ENJOYED FARMING OVER THE PAST YEAR. FIRSTLY WE GOT A TEXTBOOK SPRING, THEN A VERY KIND SUMMER AND AUTUMN. WINTER STARTED OFF VERY MILD AND ONLY OF LATE HAS IT TURNED WET AND COLD. PRICES HAVE REMAINED STEADY WHICH MAKES BUDGET REVISIONS LESS PAINFUL AND THE MOOD IN THE MARKETS LOOK POSITIVE. IT'S BEEN BLOODY GREAT SEEING SOME SMILES ON FACES AS I GET AROUND THE PLACE!

Other than parts of the Central North Island once again getting hit with a dry spell the country has evaded (so far!) any major weather events and following this most scanning's have been up 5-15%. Let's hope like heck that it is continued down the docking chute. We had a scanning of 180% across the board which was up on the previous drought year; the good season has also given us better ewe condition which will hopefully hold right through to weaning.

I want to remain as positive as possible and am not big on reporting on the industry as a whole - I would rather leave that to the experts. I cannot however avoid wondering if a steady year has glossed over our problems that still lurk in the shadows? There are predictions of \$100 per head for lambs in 2013-14, compared to \$85 in 12/13 and \$114 in 11/12. I am alluding to both to the meat and wool industries. Realistically nothing has really changed other than further evidence that sheep numbers in New Zealand are continuing to drop and sheep meat has become a niche market as has wool. We are all aware this has been brought about mainly from the expansion of the dairy industry and other land uses such as cropping. The widespread 2013 drought has also added to the decline. There have also been many changes within most sheep and beef units to become more self-sufficient. The ability to access irrigation especially in parts of the South Island has furthermore put paid to sheep numbers.

### THE RISE AND RISE OF THE HUMBLE SAUSAGE

The latest livestock numbers from the Beef + Lamb New Zealand Economic survey show only minor changes in next season's predicted volumes. However total sheep numbers are estimated to fall below 30 million for the first time. A small increase in lamb numbers is forecast as a result of a better national lambing percentage, mainly due to better

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## CONGRATULATIONS

to Mark and Richard Chrystall and Rob Collier who won the Balance Environmental Livestock Farm Award for the Horizons region. This successful team farm 25,000 SU over 6 properties in the Taihape area and have been using Motu-nui crossbred genetics for the last 5 years after 3 years with the Motu-nui romneys genetics. Well done guys!





ewe condition. This still depends on a normal spring, especially in the main sheep breeding areas of the East Coast, lower North Island, and the South Island. The total sheep flock declined by 3.2%, or nearly one million sheep. However, the drop in the number of breeding ewes was only 1.4%, whereas hogget numbers were down 750,000 once again driven by the 2013 drought. The lamb kill is expected to be down 5.3% to 19.8 million which is drought related once again, on a positive note is only expected to be 3.5% down by weight, which shows we are getting better at growing our lambs out along with generally better genetics and so on.

We may now see a settling of sheep numbers nationally with the easing of the dairy boom. We may even see a small increase if weakening dairy prices remain, mainly due to decreased demand for dairy support as I think you will find some farmers will find winter grazing within their own gate. This may also strengthen the ewe price with further retention of numbers this coming season, again strengthened by strong demand from the freezing companies. The mutton price has been our biggest win with attraction from China for the cheaper cuts. It makes selling a dry ewe a bit easier to swallow when you are getting \$100 not \$50 like we were for so long. On the flipside, have you tried to buy a sausage from the supermarket lately? You were once looked at sideways if you arrived at a BBQ with bangers

but now you're the man! Seriously though, I only see this market getting stronger as we target India and further develop our relations with the major powerhouse that is China. I look forward to hopefully seeing improved results in the meat industry's annual accounts to prove to us that they have made changes within their business for the better and can pass it on to us farmers. The debate will continue around the number of processing companies competing in the market and until there is change here we may see no change in price stability.

Our working team remain the same with Greg and Sam, and Dad when I can tie him down. We invite you all to come have a look around any time I am sure you will be impressed by what we are up to.



*Motu-nui rams November 2013.*

### PROVEN TERMINAL SIRES

We continue to improve our Terminal flock with emphasis heavy on growth rate. This is our 4th mating with our stabilised Texel cross. We are now getting a lot more even progeny. Great importance is also placed on weaning weight; most of these rams are used over early mobs so progeny need to be gone early from the system. Maintaining darkness in the head and points has also proved to be a challenge without losing production, this has improved by using carefully selected and proven sires. We also continue with our base terminal breed of South Suffolk, we have the same criteria in place for these but also add emphasis on survival as they can tend to be thinner skinned than the Texel cross. I am also happy with the way these rams are holding on. I have always said that Terminal rams tend to be the first to pack up. I run the terminal ram hogget's with the Romney's so they don't get any special attention I am sure this helps cull out the poor.



## DAIRY COWS STRUGGLE ON ICA HILLS

On the home front we have had a good year. One of our biggest concerns was trying to maintain feed quality, it normally takes a dry spell to tidy things up. Due to our lack of cattle we ended up bringing in dairy stock. This was a first for us and I'm not sure it will be repeated. The heifers struggled to adjust to our hill country so we couldn't push them as hard as we would have liked.

Our ewes ended up doing majority of the work and even the ram hoggets did a good job mobbed up and pushed. Having the ram hoggets at such good weight at weaning allowed us to push them through this period. This strengthens my earlier argument on upping weaning weights for risk management, it's easier to hold or market a mid-30kg lamb than one in the 20s. Summer rolled into autumn and the puzzling hunt to find 40 paddocks for single sire mating began. Mixed Age Ewes went to the ram at 66kg and 2ths 64kg (mated together). They lost 2kg during mating which isn't ideal but that's single mating - I am still not sold on DNA parentage and its accuracy, not to mention the cost. There is some good work going on at present to refine this process and we look forward to being able to use the eventuating tool in the future. We still strongly believe in tagging at birth, as exceptional mothering ability remains a trait we want to pass on to our clients.

The ram hoggets were finally shorn at the start of August and were the most even and heaviest we have seen them out of the wool, averaging 54kg. It is going to be very hard to cull down to our final sale numbers come October which is a good complaint.

So we are now at the lambing stage and hoping like all for a spell of good weather. ICA still challenges us with the lack of grass growth on our hill country. Our sheep just keep performing under the pressure put on them. This is the first year that all sheep (apart from the odd 7 year old) were born on ICA, and this I am sure this makes a difference.



*Friesian dairy cows finding ICA hill country hard-going.*

## UPCOMING WOOL LEVY VOTE

As we look toward voting on the reintroduction the wool levy in October, the wool industry comes back in to contention. This seems to be a touchy subject with memories of the millions squandered in years bygone not too far from the minds of many. We seem to be forever asked for more money to get the industry moving. I ask the question again - are there too many companies fighting for a piece of the pie? We sometimes seem to at a loss as to how we can pick this industry up and get some traction against other synthetic based products. I personally believe we can't afford to bury our heads and we have to do something. Inaction is not an option as we know damn well our product is good enough to compete on the world stage with any other synthetic Clayton's wool. ***I challenge you to ask your current wool representatives what they are doing for you before you vote.***





## MR :: PROOF OF PERFORMANCE

### BRAMERTON - TAUERU, MASTERTON

Owned by Michael Dossor and managed by Clark Goddard for the last 13 years, Bramerton are now grazing our Romney ewe hoggets Dec-Dec. Clark has been “blown away by their evenness and their ability to stack the weight on over the summer.”

### RIINI WILLIAMS ESTATE

Pricey Williams and his family run 2500 acres at Mataroa, just north of Taihape. Having used Motu-nui genetics for over 5 years Pricey has seen a considerable lift in the performance and constitution within his flock. They scanned 160% last year in yet another challenging Taihape season. They are currently lambing and Pricey said the survivability is amazing, especially considering the snow they have had to contend with. Mothering ability and hardiness were the key traits Pricey has been chasing and he is now seeing the results. Here’s hoping for a kinder summer for you Taihape farmers!



*Jason and Pricey Williams out and about on Pricey’s Taihape hill-country farm, August 2014*

### CHANGING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

While out visiting clients increasingly I see a whole new management system being implemented in our farming systems. Fed up with being backed in to a corner come Christmas time by our weakened store markets, we have had to look at ways around finishing or forward-storing these lambs. There is not a farmer in New Zealand who has not heard the buzz about plantain. I had to chuckle about the following overheard comment at a discussion day recently that “if you could roll it and smoke it and market it in South America it would be the perfect weed”.

Farmers are adjusting their ewe numbers to accommodate more of a finishing system within their business. There is some exciting stuff going on at the moment not just with plantain but also winter crops such as fodder beet for cattle, more development of hill country, electronic IDs, sheep handling devices and real-time access to information key to making the best decisions within your business. But obviously the one I am most passionate about are the advances being made through outstanding genetics. It is possible to wean 80%-90% of male lambs off mum to the works and this is where I see our greatest gains and our biggest opportunity to minimise risk within our farming systems. It will take considered and wise management decisions to ensure those ewes are fed correctly. By combining the technological tools that are available and by accessing the right knowledge this has become a lot easier. We are the same as dairy farmers - we produce milk, but ours produces a lamb!



*Weaning body weight. Mid-October 2013, MA ewe with a cracking set of triplets on the ICA hill country.*



## WORTH THE TRIP!

Since 2007 I've been heading up north to buy Motu-nui Romney rams along with Sam Manson, Pete Wright and Mark Neal from Canterbury. We all meet up in Wellington, hire a car, and the next stop is the Masterton hotel, home to the Golden Shears. Here we team up with Andrew Ellingham and George McKay. The drive up to Motu-nui is always full of big yarns and a lot of laughter.



*Back row: Mya, Emma, Hoppy  
Front row: Sky with Elsa,  
Beau with Queenie, Loki with John*

We are situated in the Marlborough Sounds with the other guys coming from Banks Peninsula. Motu-nui caters for all of our varying farm types from intensive operations to extensive hill blocks.

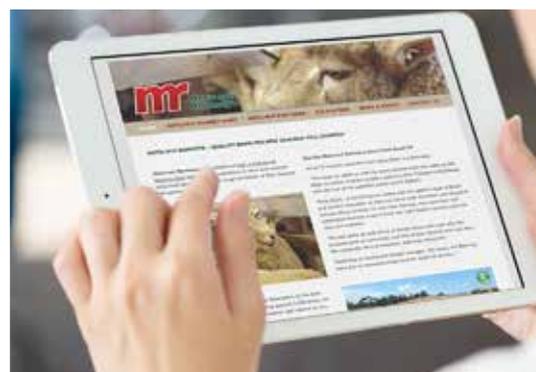
We are very happy with Motu-nui ram's constitution, fertility and hardiness. Every year our replacement stock is getting hardier, able to handle the dry and wet periods. Weaning and killing weights are increasing, wool weights are also improving.

What we enjoy about our ram buying trip is a good laugh and a catch up with Jason.

**Rod and Emma Hopkinson, Kenepuru Farm, Marlborough Sounds**



*What a good gust can do on the ICA hill country, mid-October 2013.*



## CENTRAL PROGENY TEST

Motu-nui Romney's have had a ram selected to participate in the CPT, which has recently added two new hill country properties as they identify the increasing need for sheep to perform on tougher country. The CPT aims to evaluate how well the progeny of one ram performs against other rams run on the same country. We look forward to updating you as results come out of the 5 year trial. For more information see [www.beefandlambnz.com](http://www.beefandlambnz.com)

## STOP PRESS

have you visited our website?

Visit us to see on farm updates and news from Jason, client profiles and achievements, plus our latest newsletters.

[www.motunuiromneys.co.nz](http://www.motunuiromneys.co.nz)



## MR\_CLIENT PROFILE :: STEVE AND JUDI DENNIS, WENDON VALLEY

Steve and I moved to Coalbrook farm in Wendon Valley in Eastern Southland in 1992. We both had farming backgrounds in Canterbury and had built up small farm purchases with the goal of buying a larger property either in Eastern Southland or West Otago. Coalbrook Farm was purchased because of the balance of the farm. One third flattish country, one third rolling foothills and one third steep tussock hill blocks. Including our cropping we run 5200 stock units over 490ha, including our lease block. We're 200 metres above sea level at the house and 600m at the top of the farm. Annual rainfall is usually around 900 to 1000mls.

We originally brought our traditional Romney ewes with us but they struggled with the hills and their lamb survival rate was low. We explored different breeding options during our time as Monitor farmers. The genetic attributes we were chasing were an ability to do well on the hill country, lamb survival with colder lambing and minimum shepherding, raising the lambing percentage and finishing our lambs to 17 to 19 kgs.

Having these goals led us to look at the North Island and romney alternatives . We chose the

Motu-nui South romney because of the heavier bone structure, lamb survivability and good constitution. We commenced buying the rams from the Robertson's around 2007/8.

We have found that our current flock have continued to perform well. The ewes have maintained their heavier bone structure, great maternal abilities, good constitution, and ability to handle the hill country very well. They cope with stressful conditions well and return to good health very quickly from any stress. Our lambing percentage averages between 140 to 150% with minimal or no shepherding. The lambs are up and active after birth and maintain good growth weights. We finish all our lambs now to good carcass weights and our Motu-nui ewe lambs grow out well. The wool is good sound wool.

We continue to reflect on whether we need to change to a more modern composite and have investigated the possibilities but have not been reassured that it would improve our sheep performance. We continue to review and discuss with the Robertson's our ongoing goals for our flock, such as earlier fattening, and appreciate their keenness to develop their Motu-nui stud'

### MOTU-NUI SPONSORSHIP AND SUPPORT

We are often approached for sponsorship from local community organisations. The rural community are an important part of our business and we are proud to be involved with the following:

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Langdale Horse Sports | East Coast Rugby Club |
| Tinui Dog Trails      | Whareama School       |
| Tinui School          | Gladstone School      |
| Alfredton School      | Wainuioru School      |
| Tinui Horse Sports    | Gladstone JAB Rugby   |
| Skulls Football Team  | Wairarapa A&P Society |



REMEMBER TO COMPLETE AND SEND YOUR RAM BOOKING ORDER BACK TO US BY 15 OCTOBER 2014!



## SOUTHERN MUSTER

WELCOME ONCE AGAIN TO OUR SOUTHERN REPORT. IT WILL BE GREAT TO PUT THE LAST TRYING SEASON BEHIND US. CLIMATICALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN A TOUGHER SEASON WITH A COLD DRY SUMMER PUNCTUATED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE CLOVER WEEVIL MADE GROWING STOCK OUT QUICKLY A REAL CHALLENGE.

The lack of clover and pasture cover really put the acid on our ewes but in true Motu-nui style they came through and we still managed to average 19kgs for our works lambs. Heading into winter with low pasture covers didn't overly excite the management team but the ewes have still come through with outstanding scannings. Stud ewes at 196% triplets included. They continue to amaze us and will need to heading into lambing as we have had an extremely wet cold August and covers are very low. Have to be positive that they will pull us through as usual.

Hopefully looking forward and on a more positive note, the outlook according to industry sources is looking brighter. Nothing lasts forever as the dairy industry is finding out and it looks like it could be our turn to have some strong financial returns.

Global demand looks strong and availability of lambs continues to fall so hopefully the \$10-\$15 increase in price will come to fruition. All in all nothing has changed in the key drivers to successful and profitable lamb production. Things we continue to strive for are increased lambing percentages, higher growth rates and better yields in our sheep.

To this end we have eye muscle scanned all our rams this year and will have this information available for you at ram selling time in the form of breeding values. The range in measurements was interesting and will certainly give us good data on the sires we have been using.

The sale rams were shorn in early August and the poor beggars have had 18 days of rain without a break since then. They came out of the wool well and will be a good even bunch come sale time in late November.

The next phase in our selection process will be dag scoring them through the spring and seeing their ability to handle our low drench regime; no drench since mid March.

On the home front a few changes have taken place. Marc's block has increased by another 135ha of challenging scrubby country which he is enjoying developing but it will be a long term project.

Casey our daughter is now home permanently as our stock manager. Carolynn, Casey and I have just been in France at the Women's Rugby World Cup where Casey was competing for her fourth time. After winning 4 previous titles, they were not so lucky this time and an early loss put them out of finals contention.

You certainly appreciate home after 3 weeks in Paris. I have never seen so many people jammed in such a small area. Certainly a tourist mecca, but give me Wyndham any day. Three to four hour queues for any of the tourist attractions, strange people and no road rules made for a challenging 3 weeks. Then there was the 40 hour trip both ways. We certainly need to appreciate New Zealand for the lovely country that it is.

Back to sheep and looking forward we will have increased ram numbers available again this season.

Along with the Romneys we will have a limited number of Rom/Tex rams available and also Dorset Down/Texel rams. All the Romney and Rom/Tex rams are either twins or triplets. No singles have been retained.

We have once again managed to fit in a few client visits and continue to get good feedback from them which is very encouraging as it helps to give us our future direction.

We hope you all have a successful lambing, the weather and grass growth improve and the clover weevil heads to South America or beyond!

Look forward to catching up with you all at ram selection time.

**Regards Bruce, Carolynn, Marc and Casey.**



## CROSSBRED UPDATE

What a difference 12 months can make. This time last year I was commenting on how tough a year we had just experienced. Export prices were at a low and with scanning %'s being lower than average, farmer morale was at a very low point. This season seems to be the opposite so far and the confidence appears to be back in the majority of sheep and beef farmers. With all the doom and gloom talk about 'the dairy takeover' and with the national sheep population diminishing, it's great to see such positive talk in the industry.

We are in the swing of lambing here with the early commercial ewes in to it. Our studs are due to start next week. Scanning for us was a mixed result I feel. Stud ewes were 184% while the 2ths were back a bit at 169%. We had very few dries, just a higher single rate. Whether this is an ongoing effect from last year's drought and these girls weren't quite grown out well enough? Seems to be common in scanning results this year.

Our new Border Leicester/Romney cross rams are up for sale this year. I have been impressed with the way they have held their own against the Texel crosses. Growth rates and weaning weights have been on par, if not better, than some of our other crosses. We have had a lot of interest in these boys and I'm looking forward to seeing how they perform.

I hope the rest of the season goes well for everyone. Winter feels like it is dragging on a bit this year! Look forward to catching up with as many clients before ram selling as possible.

**Regards from the Pakaraka Team, Michael and Kate Tosswill**



Motu-nui 'F1' Border Leicester first cross ram hoggets at Pakaraka, August 2014



For further information please contact one of our franchise managers. or visit our website [www.motunuiromneys.co.nz](http://www.motunuiromneys.co.nz)

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### **Motu-Nui Terminal**

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