

Waimai Romney Spring 2014

Welcome to the first edition of the Waimai Romney Newsletter. Hopefully the aim of this letter is to better communicate with our existing and new clients, and to make sure we at Waimai Romney are fulfilling our aim, of "providing commercially relevant rams" to New Zealand hill country farmers. As John always mentions, "we are in the service industry."

Breeding profitable sheep that survive is still our main goal at Waimai, with our focus on eczema tolerant rams still one of our top priorities. Alastair help set up the FE Gold brand two years ago, which is all about identifying the top eczema breeders in the country, irrespective of breed. Hopefully this brand will continue to get recognition in the market place, and if a farmer is serious about eczema genetics, they will buy rams from an FE Gold breeder. We have tested 37 rams this year, 15% of our sale mob, to enable us to test multiple rams, from individual sires, to give us greater confidence in their genetic ability.

We are continuing Faecal Egg Count (FEC) testing this year and our ram hoggets had their first drench on the 14th January 2014. When FEC samples were taken on the 20th May, 15% had nil worms and only 10% had over 1000 worms. Kikitangeo rams, which are highly worm resistant, continue to be used at Waimai. While we continue to have a major emphasis on fertility, consistently lambing over 145% survival to sale (152% 2014, 148% 2013), in a challenging environment and mating all our hoggets, we are focusing more on high growth and meat rams. We are selecting rams with good structure, who have a large EMA (eye muscle area) and a well muscled hind quarter. All our saleable rams were EMA scanned this year to help us identify which sires were consistently leaving well muscled progeny.

For the first time we have used sheep 5K. These are genomic DNA tests that help predict breeding values, and therefore help us in identifying superior genetics. As a ram breeder using genomics, we will have access to more accurate breeding values on our animals thereby making better selection decisions for not only our flock but also in your flocks

Spring has been relatively kind in the Waimai Valley, with lambing nearly finished, with just the hoggets to go, and silly season about to start; docking, drenching cattle, summer cropping, shearing, picking, weaning, dipping, drenching, XMAS!!

Hopefully somewhere in this schedule we will also get to see you all, during our ram selling season, but until then, enjoy the spring weather and best wishes for the coming season.

Kind regards

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