

## **Waimai Romney 2017**

It is supposedly spring in the Waimai, but we still have no idea, when the rain will stop, or who Uncle Winston will support! What we do know is it has been the wettest winter/spring the Waimai has experienced in John's 77 years, and we have all found it very challenging. While the sheep paddocks have fared alright, the cattle paddocks are a mess and will need some TLC over the next 6 months to get them back into full production. Once again, the sustainability of sheep on New Zealand's hill country has been proven, and we just need market prices for both meat and wool to continue to improve, to make sheep farming financially sustainable, which would be great for our environment, and great for us all! Due to the shocking weather, we have only done a few days docking, but have tagged all the stud lambs at birth, tagging 1233 lambs from 797 ewes mated

(155%), which hopefully flows through to the commercial ewes.

This year, in line with B+LNZ Genetics' commitment to provide breeders and farmers with the best genetic information possible, they have upgraded the SIL Genetic Evaluation, to the New Zealand Genetic Evaluation (NZGE). In short, this is the national across flock, and across breed sheep evaluation that identifies the best rams for economic traits. While we still think this is a work in progress, as studs get better "linked," and the "environmental effects of running sheep in different areas," are taken out, this evaluation will hopefully only improve. John and I were surprised and thrilled that a Waimai Romney ram was ranked the third best Romney in the country for Maternal Worth, and we had three rams ranked in the top 125 for Dual Purpose Reproduction, out of 2178 rams across All Maternal breeds, throughout the country. Once again, all our sires have been EMA scanned which when combined with selecting stud sires of moderate size, has differently meant that the commercial sires we have for sale this year are full of meat.

For the first time, we will be selling our Hampshire x Charollais terminal sires, the "CharaBlack." We have always been really impressed with the Hampshire's easy fleshing and early maturing traits, and have added the Charollais's excellent lamb vigour at birth, its easy lambing (the Charollais wedge shape makes them great for hogget mating), and their renown high meat-yield. Rowan Farmer of Stockscan has commented that "for their age, Charollais lambs are the most muscled sheep that he has scanned in both Australia and New Zealand." Our rams have come from Scott Linklater's Elite Charollais flock, who are the biggest Charollais stud in the country. Scott has used a Waimai CharaBlack over his ewe hoggets this year and we will continue to work closely with him. A Waimai CharaBlack ram 1081/15, who was used this year had a huge 32.02 cm<sup>2</sup> of EMA (eye muscle area) at scanning this year. Please let us know if you are interested in purchasing a terminal ram as there are limited numbers

Once again, we look forward to seeing you all over the ram selling season, and to seeing the sun!! In the meantime, look after each other, and continue to be proud of the tremendous work that sheep and beef farmers are doing for New Zealand.

Kind regards

**Alastair & John Reeves**

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## Ultrasonic Rib Eye Muscle Scanning In Live Sheep

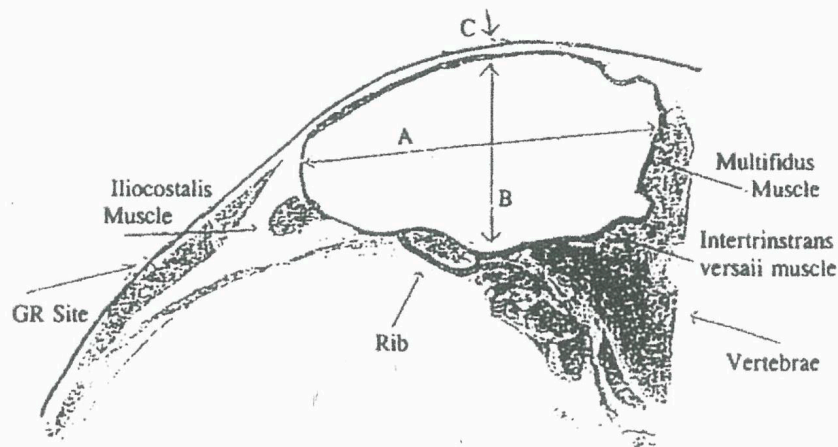


Fig 1 - Exposed 12th rib on the carcass cut through the last thoracic and first lumbar vertebrae

### MEAT INDEX

The meat index formula is based on the eye muscle width (A), eye muscle depth (B) and fat (C) measurements. A higher weighting is given to eye muscle width (A) because it is more heritable while eye muscle depth (B) is influenced by environmental factors. Fat (C) is penalised slightly. The resulting number is then adjusted for the age of the sheep to get an index.