

WAIMAI ROMNEY**Spring 2019**

“Lamb prices have cracked the \$8/kg mark for the second successive year and things could get even better,” according to ASB senior rural economist Nathan Penny. “At this juncture, we think there is a 50:50 chance that lamb prices will set record highs over the spring of 2019, particularly as current prices are neck’n’neck with this time last year.” This is fantastic news and would suggest we are tracking well into our second year of “the decade of the sheep,” but rather than this all resulting in a positive mood within our rural community, there seems to be a high level of uncertainty and apprehension out on the farm, about what the future will hold. There is a huge amount of noise out there around carbon and freshwater, global eating habits and animal welfare issues, the environment and population growth, all of which is increasing the level of angst in our agricultural sector

At a time like this, I believe it is imperative we all pull together as one, engage with the negative noise with positive science based information, and be exceptionally proud of the way that we farm, and the wonderful products that we produce, which are in huge demand from discerning customers all around the world.

Even though our politicians and media have been very poor at celebrating the information, the latest IPCC report on agriculture emphatically supports New Zealand’s sheep and beef farming systems and the way we farm! The report highlights that “agriculture and livestock farming has a role to play in addressing climate change, and identifies that New Zealand’s sustainably produced livestock products, from sustainable, low greenhouse gas emission farming systems will be part of the global solution.” The IPCC report reinforces that the New Zealand pastoral livestock sector is already a leader in this space! While we still need to continue to make improvements, we should all be immensely proud of, not only the wonderful products we produce, but also our story, our truth, about the way we farm.

Spring is always an exciting time at Waimai Romney as we start to see the results of genetic decisions made earlier in the year. With so many variables in farming that we can’t control, genetics is one thing we can. In the Red Meat Profit Partnership summary of what derives top performing farmers, it concluded that “top performing farmers spend considerable time, effort and money on genetics to make sure they have the best for their system, as genetics is viewed as critical to their farming success.” We believe that Waimai Romney’s focus on “breeding profitable sheep,” with the right combination of health and production traits, is hopefully enabling sheep farmers to achieve their farming success.

The FeGold brand (leading facial eczema genetics) continues to get recognition in the market, while the WormFec Gold brand (identifies breeders making progress in breeding for resistance to internal parasites), is slowly starting to get some traction. We are very proud to have these two brand attributes associated with Waimai Romney, as only a handful of breeders across the country have them both, and these health traits, we believe, will only become more important in New Zealand sheep breeding programs.

Our average NZMW (New Zealand Maternal Worth), for the Waimai Romney sires we used this year was an average of 2654, which puts these sires in the top 10% of NZMW sires. While our high reproduction and survival traits have been maintained, we have had a huge focus on high growth

sires, with this years Waimai Romney sires averaging in the top 15% for growth which is up from top 30% only a couple of years ago. IMF (Intramuscular Fat), is a new trait we have started to have a look at, as it is highly heritable and greatly influences the eating quality of the meat. I will be interested in your thoughts about whether it is something to pursue with Waimai Romney, or just focus on getting this trait into our terminal breed, the CharaBlack.

As some of you will already be aware, we have had a major change at Waimai Romney this year as we have decided to have our own Ram Sale on farm. It was something Dad and I had talked about doing, and while a bit daunting, it is something we are really looking forward to. The Mid Northern Ram Sale at Claudelands has, until further notice, gone into recess. We will be having the sale on Thursday 7th November, at 1pm (rams penned for inspection by 11am), at 841 Waimai Valley Road. We will be penning approximately 80 Romney and 20 CharaBlack rams for sale by auction, with the remainder of the rams sold by Private Treaty as per normal. If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to make contact.

Once again, I look forward to seeing you all soon. Please take time to fill out the enclosed order form and client details as we are in the process of updating our data base.

Take care

Kind regards

Alastair, Ann & Helen



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