

Waimai Romney 2020

The 2019/2020 year will be remembered for two things. Covid 19 and Ashley Bloomfield!!

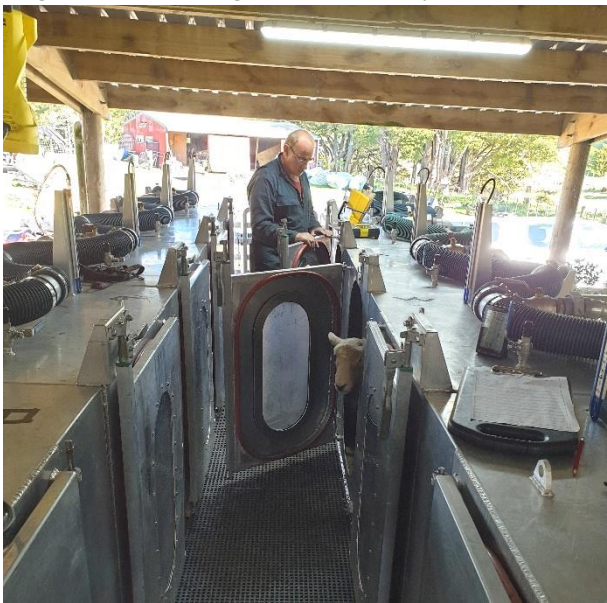
One positive to come out of this crisis was that farming was deemed an essential service. As an industry we knuckled down, and did what was needed, not only to put food on New Zealanders tables, but the tables of the world. For a small moment in time we were left alone by the Government, the media and negativity which has dogged our industry the last few years, and just produced the best food in the world in our sustainable farming systems. We are great farmers and should all be very proud of the food we produce, and I congratulate every one in our industry for how we have handled the Covid 19 crisis.

New Zealand's daily carbon dioxide emissions fell up to 41% during the alert level 4 lockdown, which was the largest estimated drop in the world after Luxemburg. Traffic fumes plummeted and air quality improved all with no change in livestock numbers. An inconvenient truth some members of our community are unwilling to acknowledge.

With elections upon us and all the talk about the problems in the environment it needs to be recognised that we will all be part of the environmental solution. No one has the right to pollute! Councils with their aging infrastructure shouldn't be dumping their waste onto our beaches, our kids shouldn't be leaving tonnes of inorganic rubbish at our summer music festivals, we all need to stop consuming cheap inorganic crap that invariably ends up in our landfills, are equal challenges to cleaning up rural waterways.

It disappoints me that as a country we keep using synthetic carpets in our homes (with the average NZ home with synthetic carpet containing the equivalent of 36 000 plastic bags), when they are made from non-renewable petroleum and end up in our landfills when the wool carpet alternative is 100% sustainable, naturally renewable, bio degradable and even sequesters carbon. I'm bewildered that successive governments continue to put rock wool and glass wool insulation into our ceilings when the wool insulation equivalent uses 20% of the carbon required to make these alternatives and yet we have a bi lateral agreement between our major parties to reduce carbon greenhouse gases! Why hasn't the Green Party supported the use of wool when it has been described as "Natures Miracle Fibre." Are they an environmental party or just anti farming?

Given the challenge of the pandemic crisis, the cost to our economy and the resulting debt, it is clear the primary sector is going to be essential in delivering improved returns to assist in keeping this economy viable. Considering wools environmental properties and the need to grow the economy I totally support Amy Blaikie's petition calling on the House of Representatives to make it mandatory for all Government Departments and all Government funded projects to be refurbished with NZ wool carpets and NZ wool insulation. It concerns me that our major parties have not embraced this petition as I believe they are more interested in legislation that is designed to hamstring rather than help New Zealand's sheep farmers!



This year at Waimai we are excited to have participated in the first ever methane trial run by AgResearch putting 164 rams through the trial. They have developed the technology to measure the oxygen, carbon dioxide and methane emitted from individual sheep with the data collected used to develop breeding values for lower carbon sheep. AgResearch scientist Dr Suzanne Rowe, of Invermay, said the farmer-led project was exciting and she was pleased to see

it being taken to the farm gate. The technology has been 10 years in development and is incorporated into single animal stalls or chambers, which are built on to trailers so they can be taken on-farm. Dr Rowe said there were bigger differences in methane production between individuals than between breeds. "Our lower methane lines are more productive than our higher lines! They produce more wool, are leaner with a higher yield, their breeding values are \$8-\$10 more than the high lines and we don't know why." The sheep industry has done a wonderful job in lowering emissions, as we have dropped 30% on 1990 levels, and genetics can further lower this and we could possibly be the first industry to be carbon zero. At Waimai we will be using this information in selecting our sires for the season by only selecting those rams with lower methane emission breeding values.



There has also been some interesting work done by Scotland's Rural College and the Moredun Research Institute showing that parasite infections in lambs can lead to a 33% increase in methane output, with parasitism one of the top 3 livestock diseases that increase greenhouse gas emissions, but one that is cost-effective to manage. "Worms reduce performance, in particular feed conversion ratio meaning animals take longer to finish at lower weights. In addition, the research shows animals with worms release more methane per day due to the upset they cause to the digestive system." This knowledge will facilitate more accurate calculations of the true environmental costs of parasitism in livestock and reveals the potential benefits of mitigating emissions through controlling burdens and selecting parasite resistant genetics. Our focus at Waimai breeding parasite resistant sheep over the last 15 years, and the fact we are WormFec Gold accredited will hopefully put our clients ahead of the rest.

It continues to be unseasonably dry here in the Waimai, which I think is reflected across most of the North Island. The rams are a little bit behind last year weights, so will be looking forward to some spring rain. We are having our **Open day** on the **15th October 10am-4pm** with our **Annual Sale** starting at **1pm Thursday 5th November**. We look forward to catching up with you all, either at our sale or during private treaty sales.

Take care

Regards

Alastair, Ann & Helen



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