

Hello Members,

Thanks to all who have supported this issue of "Sheep NewZ". It would be good to have some more photos/articles each time other than those on the feature breed.

I wonder how much money is being spent on bureaucracy in the wool research, development and promotion sectors? There seem to be several companies with great mission statements but is anything much actually happening out there? NZ Merino seems to be achieving the most in both advertising their product and developing new uses.

Some of the Companies and their mission statements are: -

**Wool Research Organisation of New Zealand**, "To promote, encourage and fund scientific or industry research and information transfer that relates to the post harvest wool industry" *Several projects on going from 2013 – results??*

**Wool Industry Research Ltd** – a subsidiary of the above  
"Focus on investment in research which increases the value and competitiveness of commercial NZ wool based activity through co-operation, integration and sector development built on leading edge research and development"

**Wools of New Zealand**, "committed to growing perfect pure wool for generations to come... wools of NZ owned by the farmers who grow our wool."

**NZ Merino**, "Want to join us in the transformation of the sheep industry from faceless commodities to premium brands globally?" *[Leading the field with good results!]*

**Wool Equities** (One of two companies formed on demise of the old NZ Wool Board – July 2018 – posts \$1.7 million loss. *What do they do????*

**Primary Wool Co-op**, "We are a farmer owned co-operative, committed to capturing the real value of wool, returning profits to members and supporting industry-good initiatives."

I'm sure there are others too. This was just the result of a quick search on Google.

Restoring the old "wool mark" with its international recognition would be a good start. Also, research into products that each use a small amount of wool but are sold in their millions, rather than a few expensive items.

See the article inside on the innovative (and unlikely) use of wool in surfboards. More of this thinking outside the square would be great. Another NZ Merino Company project along with Paul Baron and Firewire Surfboards.

I propose that NZ Merino takes over the marketing of all NZ wool!!!!

Helen McKenzie  
Editor

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## ASSOCIATION NEWS & VIEWS

### From The President



Hope everyone has had a great time over the holiday season. The weather was great here in the south over the summer and everyone seemed to be having lots of fun.

Lambs and ewes are bringing record prices this season which is very pleasing. However the same old fiddle plays the same old tune to try and bring prices down such as the uncertainty of the Brexit deal, Trump, and the Chinese economy which shows how we can be exposed so quickly. Hopefully common sense will prevail and our prices stay up at a reasonable level.

It is really disappointing to see our farm training institutes facing difficult times. Telford for example set up in South Otago with the gift of land from the Telford family in 1964. It ran successfully for many years. Lincoln University took over in 2011 with Taratahi Agriculture Training centre taking over in 2017.

In 2018 Taratahi went into interim liquidation with some loss of jobs. Southland Institute of Technology [SIT] has taken over for the 2019 year. Good to see Wairarapa Federated Farmer's President William Beetham is pumping for the Taratahi home block. It really concerns me that education minister Chris Hipkins would like to see training through Landcorp. That, to me, would be a disaster after reading some of the comments from Landcorp over the past year.

Ram sales have been steady but could have been better because of high lamb and mutton prices. Maybe it has been because sheep numbers are static.

I have recently read where another sheep breed has hit our shores. The "Australian White" shedding sheep brought here by Kaahu Genetics. Always interesting to see new breeds establish.

I have recently been to the Omakau A & P show. Great to be there with the Central Otago community who treated us well. We took our southern South Suffolk feature show there in honour of Don McLean, a respected breeder of South Suffolks, Dorset Downs and Southdowns who for many years has shown sheep throughout Southland Otago and Canterbury. Great to catch up with Don and Win.

Was good to see old mate, Trevor McCall, on TV's Seven Sharp explaining the main points of judging sheep. Might be standing for PM next!!

The next round of breed tours will be coming up soon. Make the effort to go on these tours as it is interesting looking at other breeders' stock and often ideas are discussed over a cup of tea or a drink. You also get to see other areas of New Zealand which you wouldn't see travelling the main routes.

Remember if you have anything to bring up at the council meeting get in touch with you delegates early.

*Jim Berney*  
**President NZSBA**



*L-R Duane Davis, Trevor McCall & Jim Berney at Omakau A & P Show*

**Photo:** Berney Family



### **From The General Manager**

A new year and already February is almost gone.

**Breed Committee Elections** – Most breeds have sorted themselves out with some members retiring and new members replacing them.

Two breeds are having elections, the Dorper and Texel breeds, and that is really encouraging as it tells me that there is a lot of interest and passion within those breeds and a number of persons want to get involved managing their breeds.

We now let democracy work!

**Romney New Zealand** are going to their AGM with the intention of joining the NZSBA subject to the agreement of their members. Presently we manage their affairs and they are outside the Association, so it would be great to have them within the Association.

As explained to them they are still autonomous within the umbrella of the Association, and they will continue to run their own affairs.

**Breed Conferences** are being organised and those members who are organising Conferences this year will be sending their information to the office next month.

This years' Ewe Hogget Competition in its continuous 23<sup>rd</sup> year has kicked off for this year and entry forms are available on our website.

**Dairymeade NZ** – one of our recent new breeds are now on the NZSBA website with their own webpage. [www.nzsheep.co.nz/dairymeade/](http://www.nzsheep.co.nz/dairymeade/)

**Inspection of animals to new breeders** – a common problem is a member sells ewes to a person who at a later date decides to register a new flock. The animals then require an inspection, and the initial price of the ewes maybe in dispute. The vendor then has to make contact with the purchaser as to who is liable for the cost of inspecting the animals and may wish to discuss the price paid before issuing a transfer.

**125<sup>th</sup> Celebrations** – early March 2021 - to be based in Queenstown. A breeds display to take place at the Wanaka show along with a bus trip around Central Otago.

More details soon as we would like breeds to refrain from holding their own breed conferences in 2021, and support these celebrations.

**East Friesian** – With the renewed enthusiasm in sheep milking the East Friesians this year are holding a Field Day, as the last time they had a get together was March 2003 – that's encouraging.....

*Greg Burgess,*  
**General Manager, NZSBA**

# AgriHQ



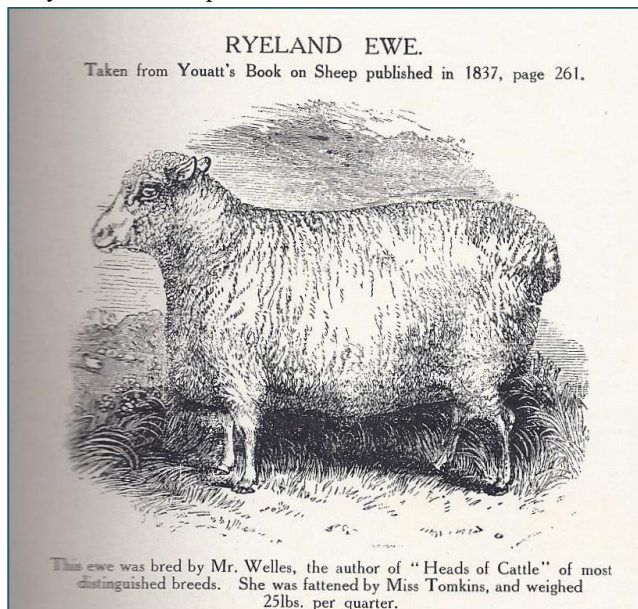
## Feature Breed

### RYELAND

#### ORIGIN & HISTORY

The following is from the website of the UK Ryeland Flock Book Society's "Potted History" of the breed.

The breed was developed in the area surrounding Ross-on-Wye and was highly prized for its fleece. The wool clip was of exceptional quality, and this was partly attributed to the succulence of the grazing – a reflection of the excellent pastoral conditions of the area. Mediaeval records show that Dore Abbey ran a flock of 3,000 of these sheep, and the monks were responsible for weighing and conveying the wool crop to Hereford for collection prior to shipment overseas. It was mostly sent to Flanders, highly important in the wool trade at this time, and also to Italy, fetching the highest price in Europe in the 13th-14th centuries. Ryeland wool became the measure against which the quality of other wools was assessed. During the 16th Century the breed increased in popularity, possibly helped by the supposed fact that Queen Elizabeth I was a strong supporter of Ryeland wool. Apparently a pair of stockings, given to her as a gift, pleased her so much that she swore that she would thereafter only wear clothing made from Ryeland wool. The breed widened its geographical spread, moving up towards Leominster which was the main wool market in the area. The wool became so highly valued that it was termed "Lemster Ore". It is also believed that the Lord Chancellor's seat in the House of Lords, the "Wool Sack", was originally stuffed with Ryeland fleeces. It has since been re-stuffed with wool from around the Commonwealth as gesture of unity and friendship.



*Ryeland ewe from Youatt's Book on Sheep, 1837*

In addition to their fine fleeces, Ryelands have always been highly regarded for their quality carcasses. The number of breeds specifically developed for meat production increased dramatically in the latter half of the 18th Century thanks to the pioneering work of Robert Bakewell, and the emergence

of the Leicester sheep. Later the creation of the Suffolk added to the competition. In the second half of the 19C the Ryeland was still dominant in its native territory, but was probably beginning to experience some pressure from these other breeds. Ryelands became popular for crossing with Dorset, Lincoln, Cotswold, and Leicester sheep as part of the huge interest in breed improvements brought about by the legacy of Bakewell. Ryelands were also significant in the development of the Poll Dorset, the likely source of the polled gene. However, the opening years of the twentieth century saw little interest in purebred Ryelands from commercial farmers and the formation of a new breed society was partly a response to this situation. The Ryeland Flock Book Society was founded by eight breeders in 1903, a time that saw the establishment of a considerable number of our traditional sheep breed societies. The main aim was to encourage the breeding of Ryelands both in the UK and overseas, and to ensure that the purity of the breed was maintained. Also, a Flock Book was to be published annually, and sheep would be registered in it with details of their pedigrees being recorded. Both of these aims were achieved very quickly – Volume 1 of the flock book comprised of 14 flocks, ranging in size from 14 to 280 ewes, and listed 135 registered rams.



*Photo of Ryeland ram from Vol 1 of the UK Flock Book, (1910). Bred by Mr WT Barneby, Saltmarshe Castle.*

Ryelands prospered during the 1920s, with some 80 registered flocks. Ryeland sheep took a hefty 12 prizes at the 1922 Smithfield show! Growth in the breeding population continued (despite a small downturn during the Great Depression) into the 1940s. During this period, Ryelands were exported all over the globe, particularly to Australia and New Zealand, where affiliate breed societies were founded. The first Ryelands made it to New Zealand in 1903, and Australia in 1919. However, the end of the Second World War saw the beginning of a significant decline in Ryeland numbers. In 1952 there were only 40 Ryeland flocks remaining. By 1974, only 980 registered breeding ewes remained, a situation which caused it to be listed as rare by the then newly formed Rare Breeds Survival

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"Fostering the improvement of all sheep breeds and providing a unified body whose collective voice has a beneficial effect on the total New Zealand sheep industry."

Trust. The combined efforts of the RBST, the Ryeland Flock Book Society and a band of dedicated breeders have turned around the breed's fortunes.

Today it is numerically healthy. The number of flocks has risen, but flock sizes are much smaller than previously, bearing out the fact that most Ryelands are now kept as "hobby" sheep, rather than as a commercial breed. The Ryeland Flock Book Society has in the region of 500 members made up of Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland breeders.



*Group of Ryeland Shearling ewes; bred by Mr F E Gough, Leominster, UK. Sold for export to NZ in 1903.*

The Ryeland came to NZ in 1903 with Flock #1 being that of the NZ government at Weraroa, Levin. In 1924 that flock had 180 ewes.

NZ Ryelands had a stand-alone Society from 1924 – 1959 with 35 Flock books being published in that time. Over the years there have been 3,922 rams single entered.

In the NZ Sheepbreeders' Flockbook of 1969 there were thirty seven flocks containing 1203 registered ewes. Robert Port's *Bushy Downs* stud entered that year and just withdrew last year (2018) after almost fifty years of breeding. This flock is still in existence, having been purchased in its entirety by the McDonald family of Dipton in Southland.

## BREED DESCRIPTION

The Ryeland is white-faced Down breed. Moderate size. Polled. Face (dull white, not chalk white) with varying amounts of wool but must be clear around the eye and lower face. Dark nostrils, mouth and feet; no pale pink ears or black spots on body. Fleece - no kemp fibres, soft handle, 29microns average diameter.

The Ryeland is a dual purpose breed. Ryelands are eligible for wool classes at the Royal Show. They cross well with all maternal breeds of ewes. The Ryeland over Perendales leaves a very smart ewe for further crossing. Leaves good crossbred lambs, long-bodied with well rounded hind quarter. Ryelands are generally a very docile breed; ewes are maternal, milky mothers.

Ryelands as a breed are both thrifty and hardy. They do not need lush pastures as they will get overfat. They are naturally thickset with good bone. They readily climb to the top of medium steep hill country.

Ryelands also have a noticeable liking for a mineral block in their paddock. They are an ideal small holders breed as well – good to eat, laid back to deal with and a fleece of handspinning quality.

## Bodyweight

**Ewes:** 55-65kg

**Rams:** 85-100kg

## Meat

The sweetest meat you'll ever eat!

## Breeding/Lambing

110%-140%. Depends on management

## Numbers

2018 NZSBA Flock book figures

200 registered ewes plus youngstock

## Wool

Fine, Down type. Free of black fibre.

Fibre diameter averages 29 microns.

Staple length 65-80 mm

**Location:** Small number of flocks spread from Southland to the Wairarapa.



**Below:** *Ryeland fleece wool on a ram at Steven French's stud in Tasmania in September 2018.*

**Photo:** Warwick Potts



"Fostering the improvement of all sheep breeds and providing a unified body whose collective voice has a beneficial effect on the total New Zealand sheep industry."





The best-selling RFID sheep tag in Britain and Canada, known as the SET tag, is now available in New Zealand.

Shearwell New Zealand supplies direct to farmers and offers livestock tags, EID readers, software, weigh crates and drafters.

The one-piece sheep tag has a wrap-around design that's light enough to be inserted into new-born lambs and strong enough to last for life. It was designed to give the best possible retention. The latest trial work in Canada shows 99% retention in 50,000 tags over a 3-year period. With these exceptional retention rates, SET tags are gaining popularity in Australia, Brazil, USA, Canada and now New Zealand.

Shearwell's revolutionary tag design allows this lifetime tag to be used as both a visual identification tag and a low-cost method of electronically identifying sheep. The tags can be applied to sheep at any age, and are also suitable for identification of other species. They are available in 11 colours (yellow, green, white, orange, grey, blue, purple, pink, black, red and brown).

Another useful tool is the Shearwell Stick Reader which has been developed for speed of use and accuracy. One of its helpful features are the green and red lights, green to show the animal is being read for the first time and red if it has already been scanned which is a real plus when pen reading.

This is the ultimate farmer-friendly tool – simple to use, rugged and versatile. It reads all types of EID ear tags and boluses, and can hold up to 16,000 records! It links by Bluetooth to mobile printers and weigh-heads. Another unique feature is the ability to interface with both android and iOS apps, which means it will greatly assist farmers to meet their NAIT requirements.

The Shearwell Weigh Crate or Automatic Drafter takes the pain out of handling large groups of sheep. The race reader and digital weigh-head are linked to a handheld stock recorder so data collection is easy, fast and accurate.

Knowing the pressures on costs, Shearwell is committed to bringing value for money to the marketplace. Talk to us about the best solution for your farm.

For more information go to [www.shearwell.co.nz](http://www.shearwell.co.nz) or call 0800 79 99 89.

## STUD PROFILE # 1

**Rosemarkie Ryeland Stud, Flock #251**

**Established 1986**

**Owned by Warwick Potts & Helen McKenzie,  
Masterton**

When the *Rosemarkie* flock was set up in 1986 there were 501 registered Ryeland ewes in 11 flocks. Sadly today that number has reduced to 6 flocks totalling 144 registered ewes plus young stock.

Currently we have 78 ewes and 27 keeper ewe lambs from 2018. We are trying to get up to at least 100 ewes to assist in keeping the genetic base as broad as possible.

Ryelands are great sheep. We now have only 140 acres of rolling country but when we had 400 acres of medium hill they were happy to climb the hills along with the Cheviots, Shropshires and commercial ewes we had. I have to say that Ryelands are a marked contrast to Cheviots in that they are a comparatively laid back breed and not prone to sudden flights of fancy!

We find the ewes excellent mothers who are right beside you when tagging the lambs. At docking the lambs are generally solid with a well rounded rump. This year 32 ram lambs at weaning averaged 38kg. The top lamb (single) was 49.5 and bottom, a twin 28.5kg. 10 were 40kg or over.

Crossbred lambs taking advantage of hybrid vigour should improve on that considerably.

I feel one of the reasons they have not been so popular is the fact that they are now considered a terminal sire breed (although still actually dual purpose) and do not leave colour marked progeny for ease of drafting. Also, a perceived tendency to over fatness. Certainly if you put adult sheep on your best pastures they will happily partake of the food offered and fatten accordingly but they do not need to be pampered. Some of the overly lean breeds could probably use a dash of Ryeland!

The sweet flavour of their meat is another strongpoint of theirs. It's a shame that only the mainstream breeds ever get asked to participate in the various tenderness and flavour trials. There may well be hidden delights in some of the less well known breeds.



*Rosemarkie ewe & her lamb at docking.*

## STUD PROFILE # 2

Eel Bend, Flock #270

Established 2012

Owned by Jill Thomson & Hamish Rennie, Leeston

Eel Bend stud began in 2012 when Hamish, my husband, gave me some sheep for Christmas to keep down the grass.

I chose Ryelands because they looked like Penelope, a lamb my father, a doctor, nursed back to health when I was young. Penelope was returned back to her home farm some months later after she barked my father's new kowhai saplings and she ran riot with me through my mother's clean house. Ryeland was also a good choice because Hamish's grandfather, WO Rennie, had one of the first Ryeland studs [Flock #5] in New Zealand.

What Hamish had not expected was that by acquiring only 5 pregnant ewes from Lloyd Falconer's *Leithan* stud in 2012, they would be named and the various personalities and roles noticed. Those five ewes produced six ewe lambs and three ram lambs from two different *Leithan* lines. We have also acquired two ewes and a ram from the late Ross Fraser's *Inchloan* stud, and recently three rams from Alex, and now Debbie, Ward-Smith's *Fleetwood* stud (which includes descendants from WO Rennie's rams).

We had basic knowledge about sheep, but not the knowledge that comes from being solely responsible for sheep. Despite a few losses that were my fault - droughts and a flood, we now have 103 sheep – all named – and still thriving with an eat anything attitude.

The older rams live in the orchard paddock with us and are generally not shy (apart from the *Fleetwood* rams who are becoming braver). They are easy to handle and line up for cuddles. They look after each other, intervene in fights between rams as can I without threat, and can be settled down with being told how handsome they are. The hogget rams do an excellent job of looking after the chubby ram lambs when they arrive from the ewes' paddock aged 5-6 months.

Because of their tameness, we currently lease our rams out for tupping to lifestyle blocks and to other stud breeders. They evidently handle well when away and offers have been made to keep them.

Owing to the small numbers of registered Ryelands in New Zealand, we use as many of our rams as we can for our ewes (one on one last year) to build up genetic diversity. This has perpetuated some diversity in size, shape and features from the various studs, but still a consistent look of black nose, hooves, and ears, a long back and deep belly, deep brisket, and sunny temperament. They produce a good length of wool in the high 20s micron range.

Our 36 ewes age from 1.5 to 11 years. Our oldest breeding ewe is 10 and had triplets this year (our 7<sup>th</sup> set). They are great mothers and want to clean their lambs and bond as soon as possible. They work as a group and run lamb-sitting services in the barn for the younger lambs, and then the hoggets and lambless grandmothers care for the older lambs so the ewes all have a decent chance to eat. Despite still feeding the lambs, the ewes are in good shape for mating next month. Our Ryelands are very fertile (usually twins) and generally lamb well. At the moment we have an even split of ewe and ram lambs.

As a vegetarian, I can't comment on the quality of the meat.  
(Jill)



WO Rennie's Ryelands, Rotopapa Farm, 1938



Poppy with her triplets, Dylan, Bridget & Fiona



Ryeland Sire at Eel Bend, 2018



## STUD PROFILE # 3

**Charmwood Ryelands, Flock #272**

**Established 2014**

**Owned by Diana & John Mitchell, Paraparaumu**

We acquired our first Ryelands (four ewes) from Helen McKenzie and Warwick Potts in 2015. We chose this breed as we had a lifestyle block on the Kapiti Coast with plenty of grass and nothing to eat it. We had previously borrowed a small flock from another sheep owner in the valley but when they moved we realised we needed some sheep to keep the property under control and also put a bit of meat in the freezer.

With both of us being around 60 when we acquired our sheep we had to find a breed that was quiet for us to handle and where we didn't need a sheep dog. After a bit of research on the internet we thought the Ryeland would be very suitable and we were pleased to see on the Rare Breeds site that there was a breeder not too far away in the Wairarapa.

With our four good looking ewes and a borrowed ram from Helen we added another 6 lambs to our flock which included two sets of twins.

We currently have 18 sheep on the property but could probably stretch to 25 at a push. We don't like to overstock as some years we have had long dry periods.

Our son in law is frequently called upon to lend a hand in the yard. He's a townie and when we first asked him he looked a bit horrified. I suggested he looked up sheep handling on You Tube which he did and as he has a quiet calm disposition he is now a valuable asset.

Our other reason for choosing the Ryeland is that it is a rare breed and needs people to keep breeding it. Once the lines are lost it would be very expensive to get back enough sheep for a genetic pool. We are very lucky to be able to learn from Helen as she has so much knowledge and she has taught us what to look for in a good Ryeland. For anyone considering this breed it is good to know that you can tap into her experience to keep you on the right track.



*Ewes & lambs at Mitchell's recently*

**Photo: Mitchell**

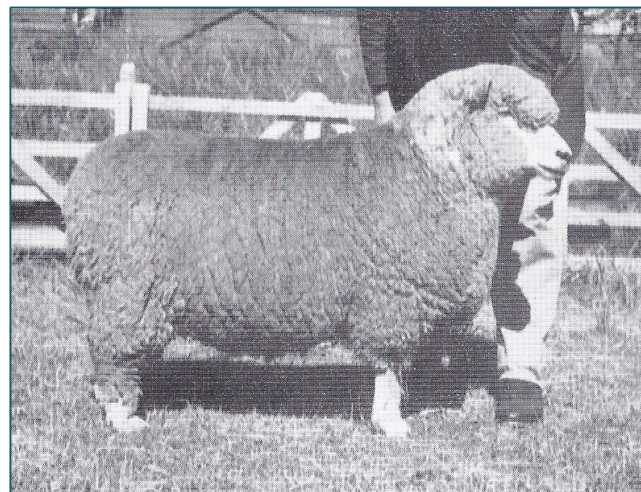
## STUD PROFILE # 4

**Mihiwaka Ryelands, Flock #252**

**Established 1987**

**Owned by John & Shona Chapman, Port Chalmers**

I have been farming Ryelands for over 30 years now, starting with 8 ewes and a ram from the Biggar brothers who farmed deep in the Catlins. They were definitely old school and I was fortunate in my choice as they probably had some of the best sheep in New Zealand at that time. I still remember quite clearly the day I drove down with my father to inspect and take delivery of my foundation animals. It was a typical Catlins day, the rain sheeting down and I stood in their covered yards trying to give the appearance of someone who knew what they were about. After the deal was concluded they pointed out to the greenhorn that one of the ewes had a black hock ! Away back home through the rain we went with my first Ryelands only to have the axle on the ute break. Fortunately we were close to home and could offload in a convenient paddock and return for them the next day.



*A prizewinning ewe of Biggar Bro's from the late 1950's*

Most of those ewes were cast for age so it wasn't long before I needed a top up to keep my embryo flock growing. Ian Muldrew from North Otago offered me a ram and 4 ewes which gave me the additional boost required. The ram had won at the Royal Show in Invercargill against the Biggar's sheep and they had been keen to purchase it but there was a great rivalry between these two breeders so Ian preferred to sell him to me to keep him out of their clutches. Ian's woolshed was a sight to behold, being literally papered with the prizes he had won in a lifetime of showing his Ryelands, Southdowns and I think Suffolks.

At the time I was still a youngish fellow and I was a little intimidated by these crusty and vastly more experienced breeders. Time has sped by and now I am one of the old fellows and near the top of the flock book but sadly the overall numbers of Ryelands are steadily trending downwards. This is a great pity as they have some unique

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attributes and great character - I am constantly reminded of this when I bring in my Ryelands after the Perendales, and find that rather than piling up three deep in the race they are stamping their foot at the dog, or when they look over your shoulder as you tag their newborn lamb.

I sometimes feel I don't get full value from my Ryelands as the demands of running a full time commercial flock take precedence, but they are an ideal type of sheep for anyone looking to stock a small block. They're hardy and less rambunctious than most modern breeds and have a ton of character, often bringing a smile to the face on a busy day.



*Some Mihiwaka Ryelands from the 1990's. Photo: Chapman*



## **Ryeland Sheep Breed Society New Zealand Facebook Page Gets International Attention**

*By Hamish Rennie*

At the Ryeland Sheep Breeders 2018 AGM I agreed to create a Facebook page for the Society. The basic aim is to try to promote Ryelands using social media. It took me until the Christmas Holidays to find time to figure out how to do it, but it is now up and running:

<https://www.facebook.com/ryelandsheepNZ/>

The basic approach is to try to help people get interested in our breed by having pictures of sheep, relevant information and interesting stories, and make it easier to find breeders and more information.

Everyone likes lambs, so I opted for a lamb as the banner. There is a link to our NZ Sheepbreeders' Association hosted Ryeland webpages and other contact information.

My intent is also to enable each stud to show off its sheep and promote the breed generally and specifically their stud. Four studs now have albums (that's half our studs, but my goal is for 100%).

Photos of the progeny of a Leithan ram show what a great terminal sire Ryelands are. More such photos would be great.

I have discovered that I know nothing about how to use Messenger, but a number of people communicate with me and the page using Messenger. There is an excellent

Ryeland sheep shearing video sent by Peter McDonald that I am still trying to figure out how to put on the page, but this has made me realise that these pages can have educational value and might interest future breeders or purchasers still in schools.

The initial stock internet photo of a Ryeland was quickly replaced by a set of Rosemarkie Ryelands alongside the lamb banner. The sheep and setting looks great!

I have also included a small history taken from the website on the Facebook page. More hours than I intended have been spent searching the internet for interesting Facebook pages or websites relevant to Ryelands and this has led to links with UK and Australian Ryeland breeders' associations Facebook pages. I also visited other individual stud Facebook pages that seemed to have interesting material and be actively maintained. There has also been good support from folk in the NZ Rare Breeds Conservation Society.

It has been a bit of a learning experience, but interesting. In less than a month we had over 250 views, 100 followers and a similar number of 'Likes'. Many of the comments are from the UK and Australia and there has been some note comparing and some off-line chats as well. This international interest is opening up possibilities for reciprocal visits and information exchanges for breeders who are meeting via the Facebook page. It is really interesting to see how strong Coloured Ryelands are in the UK and to learn that Ryelands have made a big comeback in the UK and are now no longer even a minority breed. Hopefully this renewed interest in Ryelands will gather momentum in NZ too.

I am still learning how to manage the page. It remains a work-in-progress, and it will need continued renewal of pictures, news and stories to help generate new interest in the breed. So anyone out there with photos of their Ryelands or of good looking progeny from a Ryeland cross, please email them to me with a brief description at [Hamish.rennie@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:Hamish.rennie@lincoln.ac.nz).



*Eclectic Energy Ryeland ewe, Lucy, supervises day care while the other mothers graze*

**Photo: Jill Thomson**

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## A Bit of NZ Ryeland History

Donald Reid was kind enough to arrange for some photos of his father, Robert Reid's Ryelands.

Robert's stud, "Darfield" was founded in 1934 by the purchase of 15 aged ewes from HC Bayly Withell, flock # 35.

The ewes were in lamb as follows: -

- 6 to Ealing WP III,
- 2 to Ealing 3 L10,
- 2 to Ilam No. II,
- 3 to Ilam No V,
- 2 to Ealing WP II



Robert Reid

At that time HC Bayly Withell had 248 ewes.



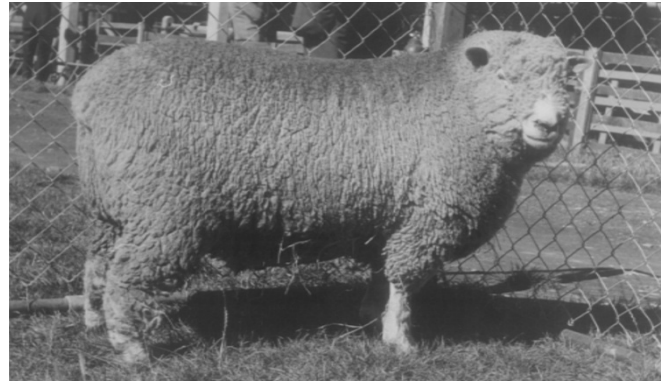
HC Bayly Withell's Champion Ryeland ram Canterbury A & P show, 1952

Photo: Meat & Wool magazine

In 1959, the last year of the Ryeland Sheep Society of NZ being a stand-alone society, Robert had 55 ewes.



[I do not know the year his flock dispersed as I do not have the NZSBA flock books for the years from 1960 until 1969 – Ed]  
Pair of Robert Reid's rams at unidentified show – probably Canterbury



Another of Robert Reid's rams

### Editor's Note

On the demise of Lucas Watson ( HC Bayly Withell's son in law, I understand) whom I did not have the good fortune to meet in person, he left his Ryelands to the other NZ Ryeland breeders, free of charge, as long as they paid transfers and transport. A magnanimous gesture indeed

Sometime later we were rung by a Watson family member who said we could have his Ryeland flockbooks and NZSBA books. We were down that way a few months later and called in. We obtained volumes 9 -35 (the latter being the last issue) of the RSSNZ books.

Amazingly, sometime later I was browsing in a secondhand book shop, (in Christchurch, I think) and came across Volumes 1 – 7 and completed the set. We were also fortunate to acquire Vol 1 of the UK Ryeland Sheep Society studbook from Watson's. This is a very important book as it has several photos of the type of sheep in the UK in the early 1900's.

In the 1934 flock book of the Ryeland Sheep Society of New Zealand there was a letter to HC Bayly Withell from a Mr AG Youngman of Little Croft, Narre Warren in Victoria, Australia who had bought 6 ewes that had been sold in lamb in a sale in Victoria. They had been exported by HC Bayly Withell. He was writing to ask for the breeding of the ewes. He identified them by the individual notches in their ears.

In 1933, 293 ewes and 5 rams were exported to Australia. The preface to the 1934 Flock book by the President, Professor G S Peren, says there had been a marked increase in interest in the Ryeland for crossing with Romney crossbred sheep with the object of producing finer wool and at the same time improving the carcass.

Interesting to note that only 9 of the 67 flocks in 1959 were based in the North Island, being spread from Palmerston North to Kawa Kawa in the Bay of Islands. In the South island they were spread from Seddon south to Invercargill.



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## So why do we have sheep breeds?

By John Bates (Farm Consultant) & Jon Hickford (Lincoln University)

It is a fair question, and one that we were reminded of when we attended a Southdown sheep breed field day last week, near Timaru. Here we learned from one of the breeders, that the Southdown has existed as a breed for over 400 years. A little bit more homework (thanks to Google), and we found out it originates from South-Eastern England, specifically in the 'South Downs' of Sussex. We could give you a far more detailed physical description, at risk of 'teaching grandma to suck eggs', but instead we will focus on one commentary that suggests it is valued for fleece, meat quality, ease of lambing and for improvement of other breeds (it apparently underpinned development of the Shropshire, Hampshire, and Oxford), and that it is hardy and quick growing too.

These are all fine attributes, but we were keen to know what the 'point of difference' was for the Southdown breed, and thus why it is of relevance to sheep farming in NZ today. This question was asked at the meeting, and what was teased out in the following conversation was that the modern Southdown has good lamb survival, a good carcass meat yield, and that it is early maturing. An ideal sheep for those

cold yet dry regions on the East Coast of both Islands, where snow can still fall in October, but there may be no grass left by Christmas, and where you want good lamb survival and a lamb that is ready to kill anywhere between 15 and 22kg's depending on the season.

This leads to the obvious question of how it compares with other breeds. Is it better, or worse in any given trait, or combination of traits? The *prima facie* case is of course that it not only has to compete, but it has to be better than other breeds to succeed. The simple economic equation of turning dry matter into meat (and/or wool) must prevail. In that respect, until recently carcass value was not rigorously assessed from a meat yield/value perspective, it being based on growth. At that same Southdown field day it was therefore very pleasing to hear the SIL representative, Sharon McIntyre, reporting changes to SIL evaluations, such that carcass value evaluations are now also informed by meat data. What-is-more, there is on-going work to improve meat yield predictions for breeding stock (and about time we can hear some of you saying!).

So is there a place for breeds at all, or will we end up with a New Zealand, 'one-size-fits-all', composite sheep or pure bred that serves the needs of every NZ sheep farmer and that consistently tops the SIL terminal sire index. That would

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seem to be what some geneticists think. However we believe that there is a very important role for sheep breeds in this country, and one that must be protected.

Firstly we need to acknowledge the diverse environments that we farm our sheep in. These environments dictate in many regards the type of animal best suited to perform. There is a growing wealth of information that takes it a step further and shows that environment sometimes dictates how certain genes will work. This area of science is called epigenetics and tells us environment can influence how genes are expressed. Simply put, environment is not only important in dictating how a sheep will perform, but also in how its genome or genes affects that performance.

Secondly there is a lot to be said for a breed that over many generations has eliminated faults and breeds true to type. Traits that are often poorly measured such as mothering ability, lamb vigour, ease of lambing, etc., are often well selected for in a pure breed, but this emphasis is lost as the crossing of breeds is undertaken to improve only selected performance traits. We have seen progeny from sires that are well ranked for a few performance traits, but their offspring while on average good for those traits, can have other obvious faults or greater variability. Thus, in the quest to increase growth, we may have created bigger and bigger carcasses, but if those carcasses yield very little meat, or are highly variable in their meat yield, then they potentially become a big cost to the system.

Having breed diversity is not only essential to make good genetic progress, but it also allows us to change direction if needed. This is one of the real strengths of having different ram breeders in different areas, breeding different types of the same breed. We don't have to look any further than the incredible work that upper North Island ram breeders did to breed for facial eczema tolerance, and just think where their clients would be now if these guys hadn't done that breeding work over the last 20 years or so. If FE spreads further South with climate change, as many now predict it will, we will have even to thank these innovative breeders for.

It goes back to what has been said in this newsletter previously, that we need to better differentiate our sheep products. We cannot continue down the pathway of simply producing more sheep meat and wool, and in the belief that 'more is better'. We need highly differentiated products, with a good 'story' behind them, and we believe breed needs to be part of that story. Remember the previous metaphor about no one drinking red and white wine anymore, but instead paying good money for a Central Otago Pinot Noir, or a Barossa Shiraz. We have to go down the same pathway with our sheep. The reality is most of New Zealand can grow Pinot Noir grapes, but no one can produce the Central Otago quality. It is a combination of environment, management, genetics, cultivar and marketing. Five pillars

for making a great wine, and in the future hopefully a great lamb.

### **So what do we do moving forward?**

We firmly believe that each breed needs to find its 'place in the sun'. Where does it have an advantage over other breeds or breed composites. This involves talking to ram breeders, ram clients, lamb drafters, scanners and others who deal with your breed. Find out why they like or dislike your breed, and where they see them perform the best. You also need to involve processing companies in the discussion and talk about where the changes in market requirements will occur over the next 5 to 10 years. You need to fully understand and be able to quantify the advantages of your breed in certain environments, or under certain management systems, in terms of hard cash. Then it is about developing breeding tools that set you in that direction as a breed. Working with organisations like Beef and Lamb Genetics on developing breed specific indexes with the flexibility to allow individual farmers to accommodate their own personal breeding objectives too.

Also you as a breed group need to make sure that sheep farmers know what you are doing and that you look to promote your breed strongly. Work wherever possible linking your product attributes as far down the processing pipeline as you can and providing your support wherever possible.

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## **GORE RAM FAIR**

Blackdale Texels, from Riverton, sold a ram for \$8000 to Wharetoa Genetics, and another at \$6200 to Sam and Viki Holland (Culverden). Both sheep were bred from imported English semen. Waikaka Texels sold rams for \$5000 and \$4700.

Geoff MacFarlane from Te Anau, sold a Hampshire ram to Ben Butterick of Canterbury for \$7200.

Guy Letham from Ashburton topped the Dorset Downs at \$5500.

Trevor and Doris McCall (Charlton) topped the South Suffolks, selling a ram for \$3800.

In the Romneys, Paul and Kay Gardner, from Ashburton, got the top price of \$3000.

Trevor Potter, from the Ohio Stud at Pukerau, topped the Poll Dorsets selling a ram for \$5200. Mr Potter had a very strong sale, both stud and flock, selling another ram for \$4500 and flock rams up to \$2100.

Alasdair Lindsay (Isla Bank) sold a Suffolk ram for \$4000.



**Geoff MacFarlane's Hampshire ram sold to Ben Butterick for \$7,200 at the Gore Ram Fair. This is thought to be the record price for a Hampshire ram.**

*Left: Ben Butterick, right Geoff MacFarlane*

The ram is Four Winds 64/17 and the sire is La Mac 669/15 who Ben bred himself. He was out of a Four Winds ewe.

The ram was sold on the 16th Jan, then Ben took him to the Bank Peninsula A & P show 3 days later, where he not only got Supreme Sheep of the Show but Supreme Animal which was great!

*Item sent in by Geoff MacFarlane*

'Little lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee? Gave thee life, and bid thee feed, By the stream and o'er the mead; Gave thee clothing of delight, Softest clothing, woolly, bright; Gave thee such a tender voice. Making all the vales rejoice?

William Blake, 1757-1827,  
*Songs Of Innocence, "The Lamb"*



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# Sheep Breeding and the National Strategy on Biodiversity

By Hamish Rennie<sup>1</sup>

Submissions have closed but there are likely to be other opportunities to influence the strategy's final form on the National Biodiversity Strategy <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/have-your-say/all-consultations/2018/new-zealand-biodiversity-strategy/>. This will set in place the Government's biodiversity direction, related plans and funding, for the next 20 years. The site for submissions is heavily slanted, as one would expect, toward indigenous biodiversity. Where, one might ask, do sheep breeds fit?

The NZ Sheepbreeders' Association is based on a belief that the consistent characteristic of particular breeds of sheep should be retained. It is about maintaining diversity within the sheep species. As Professor Jon Hickford argued in a recent NZSA Newsletter, having diversity is really important for a variety of reasons, like changing customer preferences.

Regardless of these practical reasons, the national strategy is driven by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which New Zealand has ratified (i.e., agreed to be bound by it). The CBD is primarily aimed at preventing what has been called the 6<sup>th</sup> Great Extinction, the current rapid loss of our planet's species. The Convention specifically includes domesticated species (e.g., sheep) and biodiversity is defined as including 'within species diversity' – so it covers sheep breeds. It acknowledges both economic and cultural values of biodiversity and there can be little doubt of the cultural importance as well as the economic importance of sheep to New Zealand.

Every nation that has ratified the CBD has to take certain actions to implement it – these include preparing national biodiversity strategies and action plans. New Zealand developed a national biodiversity strategy to cover the 2000-2020 period and has also produced National Action Plans, the most recent for 2016-2020. This last action plan was to enable us to show how we were contributing to achieve a set of Goals and reach targets agreed by the Parties to the Convention (those countries who have ratified it).

Particularly relevant to sheep breeders was the CBD's Aichi Target 13: *By 2020, the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals ...is maintained, and strategies have been developed and*

*implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.*

The NZ National Action Plan 2016-2020 was supposed to be setting a path to achieve this target but was silent on domesticated animals. The 2000-2020 National Strategy Goal Four was to *Maintain the genetic resources of introduced species that are important for economic, biological and cultural reasons by conserving their genetic diversity* (e.g. sheep).

The government has worked especially with the NZ Rare Breeds Conservation Society with regard to introduced animals, including sheep. The Rare Breeds Society includes a list of 53 sheep breeds, much of it not updated since 2005. See: <https://www.rarebreeds.co.nz/sheepnumbers.html>

The new National Biodiversity Strategy will replace the Strategy developed in 2000. The process is led by the Department of Conservation, which is logical as DoC has responsibility for preserving our indigenous biodiversity. The Department has good connections with the Rare Breeds Society, but clearly the Society is short on resources to ensure its database is maintained. As the data is allowed to become so out of date, it follows that there is no capacity to give warning to Government of the impending loss of a sheep breed. Nor is there a clear path to take action to prevent the loss of a sheep breed. New Zealand has developed, by design or accident, a number of breeds (e.g., Coopworth, Arapawa, and Pitt Island) that are arguably indigenous and some are rare. I recall reading once a list of sheep breeds developed in New Zealand that were now extinct (if anyone can provide me with that list I would really appreciate having it again).

In summary, sheep breeds are covered by the CBD and the Government in the last Strategy recognised the value of domesticated breeds to New Zealand and has indicated concern about the threat of a decline in genetic resources, especially those that have socio-cultural or economic value for New Zealanders.

We live in a country with amazing indigenous biodiversity that we justly have a responsibility to care for and preserve, but it will always be a hybrid ecosystem, and that needs to be recognised and part of the strategy needs to address the non-indigenous and the breeds that are locally developed and effectively indigenous. My analysis leads me to conclude that it is important to ensure that the new National Biodiversity Strategy continues to recognise sheep breeds as important to this country's socio-cultural heritage and its economy and that sufficient resources are included in future action planning to ensure the resources of the Rare Breeds Society are such that it can maintain an up to date database and provide an early warning process for breeds that are threatened or endangered.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Hamish Rennie is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Environment, Society and Design at Lincoln University where he teaches environmental policy, planning and law. In the 1990s he was a member of the New Zealand Government's official delegation at four UN Biological Convention meetings.

The NZSA can provide a positive contribution to the current process by providing a revised estimate of the numbers of the sheep in the various categories within the Flock Book to the Rare Breeds Society and DoC as part of a submission on the current redrafting of the National Strategy. It should also seek, and every member of the Association could probably help, to ensure that the socio-cultural and economic value of our diversity of sheep breeds is formally recognised in the new Strategy and that there is effective monitoring of breed numbers and actions put in place to ensure that rare, especially rare commercial or indigenous, breeds do not die out in New Zealand. Make your submissions now! <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/have-your-say/all-consultations/2018/new-zealand-biodiversity-strategy/>

**Below:** Ryeland ewe and twin lambs at the *Ray Monde-Deux* flock of John & Tristia Lakey at Sunbury, near Melbourne, September 2018. Note the Maremma sheepdog with his house in the background. He keeps the foxes at bay. Some farmers in Australia use Alpacas in the same role.  
**Photo:** W Potts



**Below:** Ryeland ewes and lambs, at John Hurst's *Glenynille* stud, Tasmania, September 2018. This has been a closed flock for many years.



## A BIT OF HISTORY

### ROMNEY SHEEP.

*Otago Witness*, 6 May 1897 (*National Library, Papers Past*)  
A QUESTION FOR EXPERTS. WELLINGTON, May 1

At a meeting of the Agricultural and Pastoral Association Mr Brady gave it as his opinion that the Romney sheep now being bred and shown in the colony were not true Romneys. It would be difficult to find true Romney sheep in the whole country now. The name ought to be altered or a new class introduced and be known as "the improved Romney". A member asked, "Why not the New Zealand Romney?" Mr Brady said that he would have no objection to that, but he pointed out that, under existing conditions, judges were often puzzled and obliged to pass over sheep which did not show enough of Romney, although they were the best sheep. Mr Majendie supported Mr Brady's remarks. Acting on the suggestion of the chairman, it was eventually decided to propose the matter as one suitable for discussion at the forthcoming Agricultural Conference.



### SHEEP EXPORT

*Waikato Independent*, 21 December, 1922  
(*National Library, Papers Past*)  
ROMNEYS FOR EAST AFRICA  
Palmerston N., Dec 19

Last week another consignment of Romney sheep were shipped to East Africa, where New Zealand sheep are reported to be doing well. The shipment consisted of 14 two-tooth stud Romney rams on account of Mr A R Fannin of Taihape. These are good typical Romneys, showing plenty of character and constitution and, being reared on high country, should do exceptionally well.

Other lots were: one two tooth stud ram, on account of Mr Oscar Monrad; and five two tooth stud Romney ewes, on account of the same breeder. These are fine sheep of pure descent from the old Wairongomai flock, and are very true to type and full of quality.

# AgriHQ



## 2019 Sheep Measles Prevalence Remains at Low Levels

New Zealand has recorded its lowest Sheep Measles lamb prevalence level in recent years said Project Manager for Ovis Management Ltd, Dan Lynch. 0.57% of lambs processed in the season ending October were detected with sheep measles against 0.59% in 2017 and 0.64% the year prior.

Mr Lynch said this low prevalence reflects the ongoing application of on-farm control being exerted by farmers throughout the country.

The fecundity of the sheep measles parasite requires strong control by a large majority of sheep farms to keep this prevalence low let alone lower it to a level worthy of attempting eradication he said.

On farm the key to control is ensuring all resident dogs are on monthly dog treatments and having strict requirements on visiting dogs.

The current prevalence reflects that rarely now does Ovis Management come across a farmer not treating their dogs for sheep measles and it surveys show that sheep farmers are increasingly moving to monthly treatments to break the lifecycle.

Lynch said that people treating their dogs on a three-monthly basis for parasites may think they are on a sheep measles programme whereas, in reality, they are actually on a dog health programme.

Relying on three monthly dog treatments for sheep measles control is inappropriate considering you are dosing every 90 days for a parasite with a 35-day prepatent period. While

farmers with minimal risk factors may get away with three monthly dosing, from a national control perspective monthly dosing provides greater protection.

Drugs available for monthly dosing such as Droncit or Wormicide are readily available at minimal cost and are extremely effective.

On farm control is also dependant on applying controls or banning foreign dogs coming on farms. Increasingly Ovis Management is sending out their Restricted Dog signs as famers seek to restrict foreign dogs entering sheep pasture. Every dog coming on farm without evidence of sheep measles treatment within the

last month or 48 hours prior puts all the on-farm procedures, and associated costs, at risk. From relations or friends bringing dogs to contractors turning up for work with dogs deterring or banning dogs is the best option.

The ability to eradicate this disease was seen as impossible some years ago. It remains challenging given its ability to replicate however, over time, farmer commitment to control has created the environment where with processor support and further downward pressure the impossible may be an option.

For more information contact Ovis Management Ltd on [covis@mia.co.nz](mailto:covis@mia.co.nz) or ph 0800 222 011.

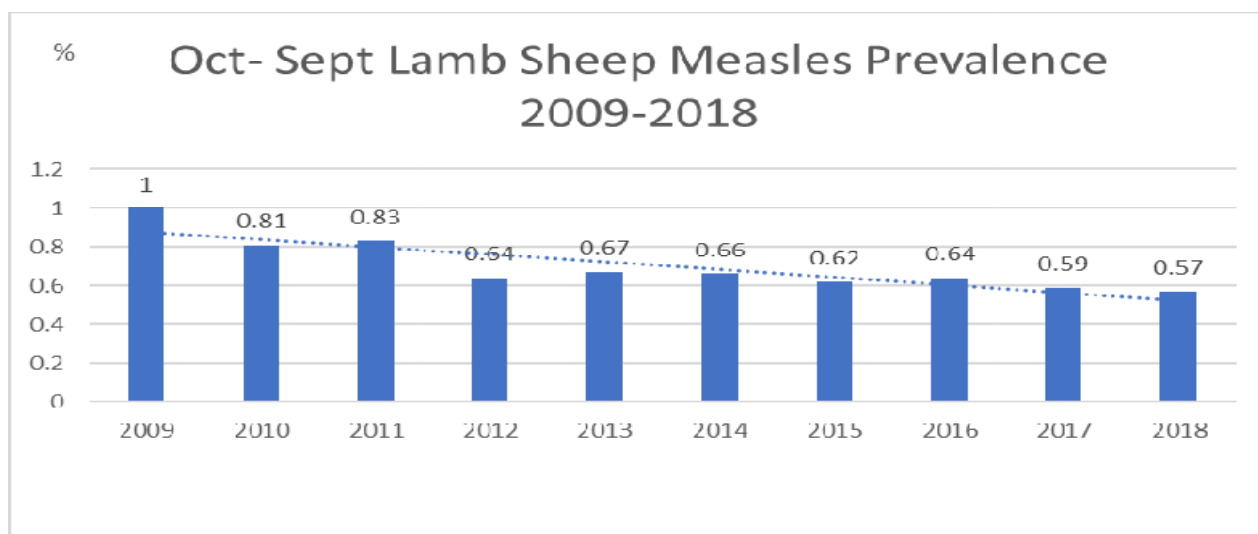


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DOG ENTRY**

(SHEEP MEASLES PROGRAMME OPERATING)

Dogs must be treated for sheep measles before entering

For further information  
contact your Vet or phone 0800 222 011  
[www.sheepmeasles.co.nz](http://www.sheepmeasles.co.nz)



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## RYELANDS IN THE UK

The table below records the annual new registrations for UK Ryelands over the last three years.

	Ryeland Females	Ryeland Males	Coloured Females	Coloured Males	Total Registrations
2016	1468	307	939	238	2952
2017	1318	312	1039	249	2918
2018	998	215	837	206	2256

There has recently been a move to set up a few breeding flocks of Ryelands in the Republic of Ireland. There have been some sheep sent over to Holland and Belgium and also the first Ryelands were exported to Spain last Autumn.

### Examples of the modern British Ryeland and the Coloured Ryeland

Courtesy of the Ryeland Flock book society [UK]



▲ Ryeland ram, *Dolwen Crown Derby*



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# NZSBA PERFORMANCE RECORDING SERVICE

## NZSheep

It is nice to report that the number of breeders' performance recording with NZSheep is on the increase. The breeds that have recently joined are Suffolk, Poll Dorset, South Suffolk, Southdown, Hampshire and Charollais. Meeting with clients at the various ram sales as been invaluable to me, in discussing first hand any breeders questions.

Since the New Year, Lyndsay and I have been busy entering your 2018 Lambing data and more recently weaning weights. It would be nice to say we are up to date with this, but we still have not received all breeders lambing data, let alone weaning data. If breeders keep up to date, with data that requires entry by NZSheep, they can be sure they are making the best use of their performance data for animal selection; otherwise the data could be based on information a year old.

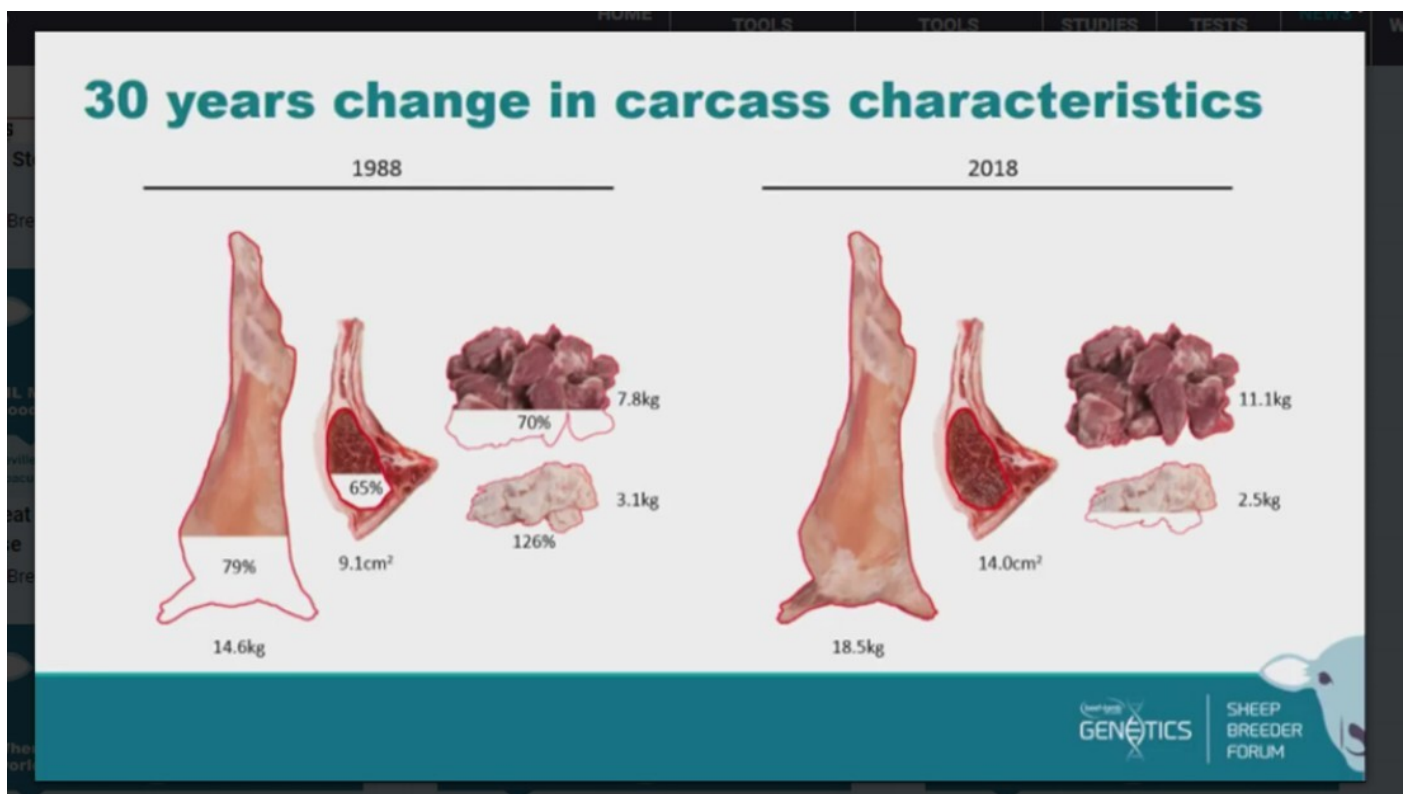
Something worth considering is to get your 2th selection lists for rams and ewes rerun following the input of the next years lambing and weaning weights.

SIL has over the past few months has made some major changes, to the Genetic analysis and the meat module.

The NZGE analysis changed from the Multi step to Single step on 1<sup>st</sup> February. The analysis is run over the weekend and includes all breeders data entered up to 5.00pm Friday. The Single step is taking a bit longer to run; therefore the data from reporting sometimes is not available till the Tuesday.

The main feature of Single Step is to better estimate the genetic contribution an individual receives from relatives. For example, using pedigree only (e.g. NZGE with no genomics), each grandparent is assumed to contribute 25% of their genes to the grand-progeny. In reality, the amount is not 25% and Single Step gives a better estimate of the true amount. So under Single Step, if an individual receives a greater proportion of genes from a grandparent that was of high merit for a trait, the BV is increased. Conversely, if the individual receives a smaller genetic contribution from that grandparent – or more from a grandparent that was poor for the trait – the BV for that trait would be reduced.

You will have to be DNA measuring to get most benefit from the new analysis Single step currently includes genotypes from maternal flocks only. Inclusion of Terminal breeds is currently being worked on and may in the future see a separate Terminal evaluation.



“Fostering the improvement of all sheep breeds and providing a unified body whose collective voice has a beneficial effect on the total New Zealand sheep industry.”

## Revised Meat Module

The Meat module has been updated to better reflect changes in carcass weights, composition and the mix of current breeds, along with the value of meat.

Many of the genetic parameters used previously were based on work done in 1992: *High time for and update.*

The revised reporting separates the Carcass Weight (CW) into two portions, one informed by live weights and the other by meat trait information.

1. Carcass Weight (CW BV)- Live weight information reported in Growth Sub Index.
2. Carcass Weight Yield (CWY BV) – The change in CW prediction with the inclusion of meat information reported in the meat sub – index

For flocks recording meat traits this change could result in an increase in DPG and TSG of about 200c on average.

Some breeders are not recording ultrasound data this will have a big effect on their meat BVs, as would be the case if you started to use ultrasound measurements.

While on Ultrasound, it is best practice to scan at least 10 progeny per sire, this may require scanning rams and ewes.

VIAscan data is another valuable area to gather meat information, yes, it is only currently available with Alliance, but SIL is working to bring other processors on line.

You will need to have your animals tagged with EID tags and in this way, particularly with cull rams, you can get individual data back; for Carcass weight, leg, loin, shoulder and total yield plus GR. Worth considering even tagging the works lambs with EID's. A flock I am involved with got all that data on 120 animals last season.

So as much additional data you can gather, plus having you SIL data current will increase the accuracy of selection list reporting.

I would encourage breed groups to work together to improve their breed. Performance recording is the only way you are able to measure if you and or your breed is making progress. Those of you performance recording, encourage your ram clients to look at SIL figures as well as the physical aspects of an animal, as well as your fellow breeders not recording.

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These are exciting times for those sheep breeders Performance Recording, and we at NZSheep are pleased to be of service, as you strive to make genetic progress. To those of you stud breeders not performance recording, have a think about adding it to your farming operation, most of you at present are recording all the traits required. It's a tool available to all so why not use it?

**For further enquires contact**

**Nigel Jay**

**SIL Bureau Manager, NZ Sheepbreeders' Association**

**Home (03) 325 2467 Mobile (021) 140 7827**



## The World's First Wool Surfboard.

(Reprinted with permission)

### Kiwi Ingenuity And The World's First Wool Surfboard



L-R Mark Price (Firewire), Hadleigh Smith (NZ Merino), Paul Barron (Barron Surfboards) **Photo:** Woolight

Kiwi entrepreneur Paul Barron has partnered with The New Zealand Merino Company (NZM) to develop a new wool composite technology that could change the global market for New Zealand wool.

Barron has partnered with US based Firewire Surfboards, who have designed and manufactured a 'Woolight' range of surfboards, to commercialise the technology at scale. NZM and Barron have developed the wool technology and are investigating other market opportunities for the wool composite.

The technology is a new high value market for New Zealand strong wool, at a time when the industry is struggling with low wool prices and looking for alternative markets.

According to NZM Chief Executive John Brakenridge, what Firewire is doing producing wool surfboards is the start of a movement and the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the wool composite technology.



Woolight Seaside

**Photo:** Rob Machado

"While the first application of this technology is being used in surfboards, it has the potential to replace fibreglass in many other products such as boats, aircraft and furniture.

"The wool's natural performance such as tensile strength means that products made with this new technology are lighter and more flexible than traditional fibreglass, while maintaining its strength.

Tauranga based surfboard maker Barron first came up with the idea when he spilt resin on his wool jersey (jumper). It gave him the idea to build a surfboard shell out of wool. Traditional foam boards are typically housed in resin and fiberglass for structural integrity, Barron's wool technology replaces fibreglass with wool.

"With this technology we can produce a surfboard that has the potential to outperform traditional boards. Basically, you grow a sheep, shear it, wash the wool twice in water and make a material that is light, flexible, durable and fast," says Barron.

Firewire CEO Mark Price has recently been in New Zealand to meet with Barron and the Pāmu farmers who will supply the wool for the 'Woolight' boards.

Price, along with surfing pro Kelly Slater who is a co-owner in Firewire, has a desire to steer the company to zero-landfill by 2020 and they see wool as a component of this process. "We're sourcing ZQ wool that is ethically sourced and at the end of its life it will biodegrade and give back to the environment.

"Not only is NZ a country with a long and rich surfing tradition the growers that we are sourcing the wool from share our values of doing things in a better way.

"Surfers by definition commune with nature on a daily basis, so they have a heightened sensitivity towards the environment and can relate to the technology that wool offers in terms of performance, and obviously the sustainability story is off the charts," says Price.

Pāmu Farms of New Zealand will supply the bulk of the wool fibre that is used in the 'Woolight' surf board. According to Pāmu Chief Executive Steven Carden, the partnership with Firewire gives sheep farmers a sense of pride and confidence that the future for wool doesn't have to be the status quo.

"We hadn't thought surfing would ever provide the channel to take a positive New Zealand wool story to the world, but it makes sense that those that enjoy nature so closely would be those that can solve environmental and performance challenges - we can learn from this", says Carden.

"This partnership also supports Pāmu's focus on innovation from sheep and deer milk to wool surfboards, Pāmu is at the forefront of positive change in the agriculture sector by adding value to our raw products and to the economy."

"Fostering the improvement of all sheep breeds and providing a unified body whose collective voice has a beneficial effect on the total New Zealand sheep industry."

The 'Woolight' surfboard range will be available for sale in New Zealand around April/May 2019.

**Editor's notes** [from Press Release, not Sheep News -Ed.]

### **The New Zealand Merino Company (NZM)**

NZM is New Zealand's leading commercial wool marketing and innovation company. NZM is recognized for its track record of innovation, both in the Merino and mid micron sector and more recently strong wool, flipping a very traditional, production -led and commodity-based industry on its head to bring about a global market-oriented culture that creates, delivers and captures long-term value.

### **Pāmu**

Pāmu is the brand name for Landcorp, a Stated Owned Enterprise, and one of New Zealand's most innovative farmers and food businesses. It is also the name given to the quality products created by the company.

### **Paul Barron**

Paul Barron is a New Zealand surfboard manufacturer. He founded Barron Surfboards in the mid -eighties and having spent twenty years in the South Island making boards, Barron Surfboards moved to Tauranga, where Paul continues to make high performance, handcrafted surfboards.

### **Firewire**

Californian based Firewire is dedicated to elevating the surfing experience through innovative design, new materials, and advanced construction methods. All Firewire surfboards and accessories are designed and built with two goals in mind – to improve the surfing experience as much as possible and have a s little impact on the environment as possible.

**“If we don't give back along the way, no matter our success in building our business, in our view that is diminished” Mark Price, CEO Firewire.**



## **DORPER SHEEP BREEDERS' OPEN DAY**

**Saturday, January 19<sup>th</sup> 2019**

The Open Day this year was attended by a small group of enthusiasts, however, for those that did come along there was good discussion and I for one appreciated the input of Cristine and Lindsay on conformation faults along with other matters of importance to the ongoing development of our breed.

The focus for the day was ram selection which I presented as my approach beginning at decisions made at weaning which probably halve the male group and then by September final lamb selection by which time most structural issues will have been removed from the mob. I welcome any comments by interested members who were not able to attend. For me the take home messages were –

1. Production performance is the first key selection parameter as LW at weaning allows (in commercial production) the marketing of lambs straight off the mother. It would be expected that the better ram lambs will be 40kg plus.
2. By February when 200day weights are available any ram lamb under 40kg will definitely be out of contention for ram selection. While in theory one could argue that weaning weight is the key selection target it must be remembered that the Dorper's attribute of low Birth Weight needs to be kept in mind. There is no point pushing for heavier and heavier lambs at weaning as that will lead to departure from our moderate sized adult weight.
3. Final selection for structure is in September by which time rams should be around 60kg and all not meeting the criteria set by the breeder can still be marketed as lambs.
4. SIL figures were mentioned. There is quite a diverse range of opinion of the value of Maternal and Terminal Worth Indexes within the group. I see two issues – up to now the mature LW of the ewe has not been factored in to the calculations and the other is the small numbers of Dorsers from which figures are derived as there are only a few members on SIL.

However, it is my contention that within a breeders' own flock the ability to rank all ram lambs is quite



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**“Fostering the improvement of all sheep breeds and providing a unified body whose collective voice has a beneficial effect on the total New Zealand sheep industry.”**



helpful and even if the Terminal/ Maternal Sire figures are questionable surely comparing figures of 400 to 300 to 100 should be significant? The important point is to consider SIL figures of secondary importance to structural faults.

In future, ewe LW at mating with a condition score is going to be factored in to the calculations. This should help address one of the criticisms of the SIL technology.

In the discussion period when each breeder presented their sheep Cristine Drummond made some excellent comments on sheep structure and judging.

The Helmsman gave John Roux a couple of ewe hogget sales. My hope is that members will, in future, endeavour to bring along one or two quality ewes each. This forum is ideal for members to purchase quality ewes to contribute to their flock genetic improvement. By providing good information on the bloodlines and quality of these ewes prior to the day then I am sure we will encourage more sales because even those members who cannot attend may still bid by phone.

Once again Don Edgecombe's input in setting up yards, providing shade cloth for shelter and a bucket of water for each pen needs to be acknowledged.

A big Thank you! Don for your efforts.

Jim McPhee



UK Ryeland **Photo:** Ryeland Flock Book Society

## **Note: CLASSIFIED DVERTISEMENTS**

*Free advertisements are available for member breeders with surplus stud ewes/rams for sale.*

*Let others know that you have spare ewes. Maybe enable a new flock or two to start.*

*Remember the "Sheep NewZ" goes up on the website, available to be read by anyone with an interest in sheep!!!*

*Email adverts to the Editor or [nzsheep@clear.net.nz](mailto:nzsheep@clear.net.nz)*

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## **CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS**

**Sheep Breeds posters are available at the Office.**

Contact: [greg@nzsheep.co.nz](mailto:greg@nzsheep.co.nz)

The **Closing Date** for next issue of the newsletter will be **May 20<sup>th</sup> for the June 2019 newsletter.**

Next **"FEATURE BREED"** will be the **Valais Blacknose.**

If you would like to be part of this section, **photos and stud histories of all breeds are accepted at any time.**

Email or post to the Editor – see front page for address details.

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