

Hello Members,

Another year has begun with the dreaded Covid still within our purlieu. Hearty thanks to those who have supplied items for this issue of the NewZ, especially the regular contributors!

Have had a request from Anne in the Office – **“Remember to send in your Brucellosis accreditation certificates please”**. As stud breeders we need to be setting the example for the rest of the sheep-breeding world to follow when it comes to animal and flock health.

I see that “Campaign for Wool” has a smart new website – well worth a look. Just google Campaign for Wool.

Here on our farm, we’re busy yard-weaning our heifer calves and today had a repeat buyer come and take a Ryeland ram for his small farm near Alfredton in the Wairarapa. He is quite keen to buy a few purebred ewes but with so few Ryelands in New Zealand now I am always reluctant to let ewes go to someone who is not willing to register a flock. Their meat is so nice to eat we tend to keep any cull ewe hoggets for the table. Our few mixed age cull ewes go off to the works – when you can get them in, as the works struggle with staffing through Covid.

It looks like its Wairarapa members may be hosting the Rare Breeds Conservation Society’s AGM in the middle of the year, so Warwick and I have offered to have a Field Day at our place to promote our Heritage breeds – Shropshire & Ryeland sheep, Red Poll cattle and still 3 Clydesdale horses. Hopefully it will coincide with the North Island Poultry Show so should get a few more members than usual. If you are interested in attending, please let me know.



Fred Groverman DVM

Photo: Uwe Rutzen

Recently, a very well-known American Shropshire breeder and veterinarian passed away. Fred Groverman, 88, is believed to have had the oldest continuously-owned pure Shropshire flock in the world, and the

only truly pure Shropshire flock in the US.

Last year he, along with fellow US breeder, Cody Hiemke, imported semen from three rams from the Highley Shropshire flock of Lucy Burrows at Rangiora. They now have lambs on the ground from them.

Helen McKenzie
Editor

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ASSOCIATION NEWS & VIEWS

From The President



Welcome to the Autumn edition of Sheep NewZ. Summer/Autumn has been a very wet affair, with our area having approx. 250mm of rain to date, compared to 60mm this time last year - great for growing grass - not so great for harvesting crops/hay making. We should have a good grass bank/saved supplement supplies going into Autumn/Winter.

In the Canterbury area feed supplies have held the store lamb market up and lamb prices in general haven't taken their normal seasonal dip, great for producers and finishers alike.

It was good to see the ewe market as strong as it was, giving everyone a much-needed boost and returning confidence to our industry.

I don't think there is anything to say on the covid front except that Omicron is spreading at an alarming rate. To all members I hope you can stay safe in these trying times. It is a great pity that almost all Autumn Shows have been cancelled; not only do breeders miss a chance to display their various breeds but the camaraderie we all take for granted during the show season will be sadly missed.

The Sheep 125 celebrations that had been put on hold have been deferred to the year 2024 - which will in fact be 130 years since the formation of our Association. This decision was not taken lightly, but it was felt that by then we should have a clearer picture of what direction we can take.

One thing that the abundant grass growth (at least here in Canterbury) will give the early mated ewes is ideal conditions for making target live weight and then some.

Looking at the ewes in our area - they are in really good condition so here is hoping for plenty of twins.

All the best for your studs mating this year.

Tom Burrows
President NZSBA

From The General Manager

End of February and we still haven't our freedom, and Covid-19 still monopolises our conversations.

Sheep125 – due to the continued uncertainty with the pandemic the Sheep125 committee met recently and agreed to postpone the celebrations until 2024 when the New Zealand Sheepbreeders' Association will be 130 years old. It is unfortunate but our normal lives continue to be disrupted for the last 2 ½ years.

Breed Conferences – 2022 – so far as some breeds were having early conferences these have been postponed, again because of the uncertainty regarding Omicron. Hopefully for those breeds organising conferences in May I would like to think we should be on the other side of the pandemic.

Sheep for Sale – our IT man is working on this and as well as sales, there will be buy, and jobs. Organisations will be approached to advertise on this site. Obviously, all enquiries will go through the office.

NZSBA Promotion – Country-Wide – hopefully you sighted our ads last month and your feedback is most appreciated. Do we continue with ads this year? Or should the Association leave advertising to individual breeds?

Breed Committee Elections 2022 – Some breeds returned their nominations, whilst others didn't.

There has been so much interest with 2 breeds that there are elections. This shows there is tremendous enthusiasm within those breeds, as members are willing to put their hand up to volunteer their time and effort for their breed. Good luck to all nominees, and if you fail, try again in 3 years time.

Breed Committee Elections 2026 – I will ask Council to consider changing the Rules from postal voting to voting by email, as postage is now very expensive, slow, and unreliable. When our Rules were formulated, the word computer wasn't in the dictionary.

I will also be asking those Breed Committees with a number of districts to reduce them. An example is where a breed has

4 Districts of 2 representatives totalling 8. In one of these districts there may be 5 flocks. I will be proposing that all breeds just have 5 to 6 vacancies and those nominated persons can come from any area in New Zealand.

In this day in age, people who volunteer their services for their breed shouldn't be parochial.

RAS Levies – members don't realise but every member of the NZSBA is levied by the RAS every year @ \$3.30 per member. The Association is an affiliated member of the RAS and I have always struggled with paying an invoice each year for what? This year I contacted the RAS and queried what we receive for the annual payment. The new Chief Executive Phil Holden finally responded with a telephone conversation. He was very honest and said he didn't know what we receive from the RAS, but asked our membership to have a conversation about how the RAS can aid sheep breeders etc.

Eye Muscle Scanning Workshop – this has been on the Councils agenda for a couple of years and we need action now as there are new entrants working as eye muscle scanners, and eye muscle scanners are asking us to organise an accreditation workshop.

Commemorative Jerseys - for sale – WINTER IS AROUND THE CORNER!!


Cost of Jerseys – Men's - \$170.00 – Ladies - \$135.00 and these can be posted anywhere in New Zealand. Check out our website for more details.


Tag Discounts - Shearwell, Allflex, Datamars (includes Zee Tags and Tru-Test) - Now offering discounted tags to members. When ordering please state you are a member of NZSBA, and they will send the product to you, but will send your invoice to our office, and we will then invoice you.

To our sponsors thank you for your continued support, and to members and here's hoping we soon have normality.

Greg Burgess
General Manager, NZSBA







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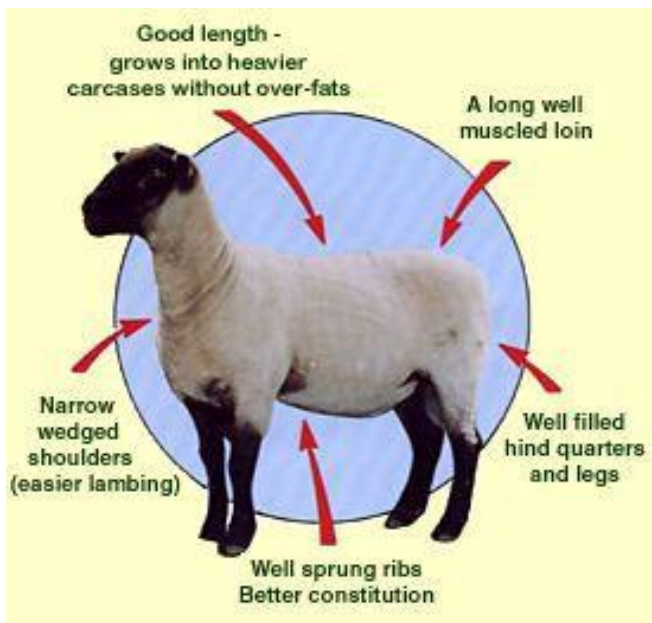
BRIEF HISTORY

The South Suffolk first appeared in New Zealand during the 1930s in response to an overseas demand for leaner meat.

It is a New Zealand breed developed in Canterbury by a Southdown stud breeder, Mr George Gould, who was also responsible for the introduction of the Suffolk sheep breed to the country. Gould wanted a specialist breed to meet the requirements of a price schedule for prime lamb cuts which carried penalties for too much fat. The quick maturity and carcass shape of the Southdown and high flesh-to-fat ratio of the Suffolk were incorporated.

The South Suffolk became a registered breed in 1955 and is increasingly being used as a terminal sire for prime lamb production. Its high yielding carcass makes it ideal for further processing. The Down wool is used for fine apparels and hand knitting yarns.

BREED DESCRIPTION



Bodyweight

Ewes: 65-90 kg (143-176 lb)

Rams: 90-120 kg (187-231 lb)

Meat

High yielding carcass, ideal for further processing

Breeding/Lambing

130-160 percent

Numbers

Stud 4,500 approximately

Many commercial flocks as well

Wool

Short, fine, Down type.

Fibre diameter: 27-33 microns.

Staple length: 75-100 mm

Fleece weight: Range 3-4 kg; Average 3.5 kg

Uses: apparel and knitting yarns.

Below:

*These lamb carcasses are all sired by South Suffolk Rams.
Average weight of 22.35kg*



PGG Wrightson Livestock

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STUD PROFILE #1

Glenafric South Suffolks Flock #498

Established 2020

Appendix flock #A498 registered 2003

Owned by Hoban family, Amberley



▲ *Glenafric from above*

Our family has bred stud Corriedales since 1925 and adding a meat breed to our business more recently was an exciting opportunity. We share-farmed the *Waidale* Southdown, Romney and South Suffolk Flocks in 2018 and then purchased the South Suffolk flock in 2019. These sheep have fitted nicely into our property which is a coastal, dryland hill country farm near Waipara in North Canterbury. They were the breed of the three mentioned that coped best with our commercial sheep and farm system and we were lucky to secure them. We have found them to be easy to manage at lambing time; the lambs want to live from the start and they grow fast. Having heavy lambs killable at weaning is critical in our environment and having tried nine different terminal options over our commercial Corriedale ewes we have found that, for us, South Suffolks tick all the boxes.

The stud has grown and we will mate 250 ewes this year plus all hoggets.

The *Waidale* sheep were run under a crossbreeding system using South Suffolk, Suffolk and Southdown rams. We are working back towards a pure flock. In 2020 we purchased 48 Myola ewes and ten ewe lambs from Trevor and Doris McCall plus six Inver ewes and one ewe lamb from Stuart and Teresa Sinclair. Apart from hogget mating, only pure South Suffolk sires are used.

Hoggets are mated to a Southdown in order to breed rams for clients who like a Southdown/South Suffolk cross ram. At our on-farm Helmsman sale in December we have been offering around ten of these crosses alongside 40 South Suffolks and 20-30 Corriedale rams. The sale has grown each year since our first in 2019 and despite the stress and effort preparing for the day, we look forward to it.

Feedback on the South Suffolks has been that they are shifting well to dry, hard hill country from Central Otago to Marlborough and leaving fast growing, hardy, progeny.

One of the reasons we enjoy breeding stud sheep is the camaraderie. Without the social aspect of sheep breeding, it wouldn't be half the fun. We enjoy time with clients and other breeders. The South Suffolk breeders have been welcoming and supportive.



◀ *Pat & grand-son William EMA scanning, 2021*

Glenafric rams
▼



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STUD PROFILE #2

Spring Creek South Suffolks

Flock #97

Established 1945

c/- Doug Croy, Oxford

For 52 years I have been involved with breeding South Suffolk's. Firstly, with my grandfather's stud *McG*, Flock #13 and then with my mother's stud, *Spring Creek*, Flock #97. The two flocks were combined under *Spring Creek* Flock #97 and so *Spring Creek* Stud was formed.

I have seen a lot of changes in the type of animal that the market requires and seen a lot of different studs fall by the wayside because they couldn't or wouldn't change fast enough to provide the type of sheep that the industry requires.

At Spring Creek I have listened over the years to what both the farmer and the Meat Industry needs are and I am confident that we can produce rams that will suit every one's requirements.

Over the years at Spring Creek Stud I have stuck to a vigorous culling of animals that don't stack up in conformation and figures.

My Breeding Programme is to produce well-muscled animals with good growth rates and conformation, which are easy care, and will shift anywhere In New Zealand.

With the use of different recording systems this has given breeders another tool that can be used alongside breeders' assessments to rank their animals.

Only the very best rams will be offered to buyers at our annual Elite Ram Auction in December using the Bidr Auction System, with Bianca Murch being our Canterbury representative.

Buyers can register on-line with Bidr and see a video and commentary on each individual ram.

Pedigrees and Performance Figures for each ram are also displayed as you scroll through the offering.

The only rams not in this sale are the top 2 or 3 rams which I feel have the best genetics' which will be beneficial to the Breed and can be bought at the Gore Stud Fair to be used as future Stud Sires.

Currently the Stud is smaller in ewe numbers to what it used to be, but this doesn't stop it having access to what I consider are some of the best ram genetics in the country. Stud breeding has been my passion for 52 years and during that time I have been aiming to sell top rams to commercial farmers; that go on to produce the lambs that are needed by the Sheep Industry. That is my goal.



L-R: Doug Croy, William (7), Alice (10) & James Hoban. Doug Croy bought this ram, Glenafric G29-20, last year in shares with Jim Berney



▲ Some of the Spring Creek stud rams

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SOUTH SUFFOLKS – A few words from the President

The South Suffolk breed is currently in a strong place, with some very strong and enthusiastic breeders.

The breed was represented with a ram in the 2021 CPT trial and another ram has been accepted for the upcoming trial in 2022, which is great for the breed, as it has been a long time since a South Suffolk has been accepted.

Although we don't have any results yet on the 2021 trial it is going to give us some valuable linkage for SIL and with other breed initiatives such as Link Sires, we see our breed only going forward in the future.

South Suffolk ram sales have been strong this year throughout the country, with the majority of breeders, having a complete sell-out of rams.

As on-farm sales gain popularity it was great to see the *Glendonald* Stud, *Martinborough* and *Shian* Stud, *Taumarunui* have their first on farm sale while *Watertown* Stud, *Cave*; *Camla* Stud, *Motukarara*; *Glenafric* Stud, *Waipara* and *Rocklea* Stud of *Dannevirke* continue their on-farm sales while the rest of South Suffolk breeders sell privately

As a breed we are conscious to breed rams that leave well identified progeny early maturing with plenty of meat on their carcasses so commercial farmers can gain optimum results

Simon Prouting,
NZ President



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NEW ZEALAND SOUTH SUFFOLK LINK TRIAL

Submitted by Doug Croy

The South Suffolk breed committee in consultation with South Suffolk breeders undertook a Link Sire trial for the 2021/ 2022 lamb season.

This trial involved us using the SIL genetic engine so only South Suffolk breeders whose flocks were on SIL or were in the process of joining up could enter this trial

The ram chosen had to be a proven sire that ranked high on SIL and was true to breed type and showed the attributes of what the market requires.

A total of 92 South Suffolk ewes from 8 different breeders were mated with Inver B48/17trip in three different locations. To fit within the lambing dates of these breeders the ram was made available for use from the 10th of March in Nth Canterbury, Sth Canterbury from the 31st of March and was finally returned to his owner at Omakau by the 20th April 2021.

It was pleasing to see that one North Island member of the South Suffolk Breeders was represented with ewes at the first mating place at Nth Canterbury. Each breeder supplied no less than 10 ewes which were mated for one cycle with the ram Inver B48/17trip then they were returned home to their owners' flocks.

We are hoping that 12 or more lambs in each flock are born and make it through to 100 days when they, with the other lambs born on each property, will be weighed and scanned, so enabling this information to be analysed using the SIL genetic engine.

By having the same ram being used in each flock this enables us, as a breed, to run across flock analysis within the breed. This will do away with expensive trials that we have previously held, which while being important at the time, have been very labour intensive.

By using the SIL genetic engine to run this trial we know that the results will be more creditable for both our breeders and the farming public to understand.

We as a breed are looking forward to using this information, alongside what we know is the type of animal that the market is requiring, to continually improve our breed. By having this type of linkage, we will be able to put forward with confidence rams to go in across breed trials like the CTP trial, which we have been involved with this last season.

When all the information from each of the 8 flocks involved is processed this will enable us as South Suffolk breeders to run a sire summary so that we can see where the link ram is placed and if there is a higher ranked ram that can be used in further link-sire matings.

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Lambs	1 ml	6 ml	Milking	2 ml	15 ml
Hoggets	1 ml	10 ml	Kids	1 ml	6 ml
Rams/Ewes	2 ml	10 ml	Adults	2 ml	10 ml
Dairy Cows	3 ml	25 ml	Horses		
Cattle			Foals	2 ml	15 ml
150 - 300 gs	2 ml	20 ml	Yearlings	2 ml	20 ml
300 kgs plus	3 ml	25 ml	Adults	3 ml	30 ml
Calves	2 ml	15 ml	Pigs		
Deer			Adults	2 ml	15 ml
Fawns	1 ml	10 ml	Working Dogs		
Hinds	2 ml	20 ml		1 ml	10 ml
Stags	3 ml	25 ml			

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Please shake well before use.

TYPICAL CHEMICAL ANALYSIS

Element	g / Liter	Element	g / Liter
Nitrogen	30.0	Zinc	0.350
Potassium	30.0	Boron	0.060
Phosphorus	24.0	Copper	0.375
Calcium	0.3	Iodine	0.150
Magnesium	0.3	Cobalt	0.090
Sodium	4.5	Selenium	0.075
Sulphur	2.3	Sucrose	22.250
Chlorine	1.2	Vitamin A	150 000 IU
Iron	0.600	Vitamin D	15 000 IU
Manganese	0.090	Vitamin E	90 IU



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Our Story

Roger Ramsey, the owner of Majestic Sheep Breeders, has always enjoyed breeding sheep, and looks forward to Spring each year when his new lambs are born. When Roger and his wife Justine first became aware of the Swiss Valais Blacknose, they fell in love and decided to begin breeding them.

Roger and Justine are both perfectionists, and when they decide to do something they will do everything to the highest standard. This allows us to ensure we're selling our clients top quality stock, embryos and semen.

Get in touch if you're looking for more information on the Majestic Swiss Valais Blacknose (*Majestic Valais NZ, Flock Number 64*) or the Majestic Aussie Whites (*Majestic Aussie Whites NZ, Flock Number 6*).

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- Recipient/ Surrogate Ewes for sale, scanned and guaranteed that they are in-lamb with purebred Swiss Valais Blacknose embryos.
- A limited numbers of F1 Ewe hogget's (F1 - 50% Swiss Valais Blacknose X 50% Romney).

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- Majestic Sheep Breeders have embryos and semen from our registered rams and ewes available to the New Zealand and International Export Market.



Our Aussie White lambs at two months old.

Australian Whites

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WAIPARA DOWNS TEXEL STUD 1990 - 2022



Ruth Berry opening the Waipara Downs Texel dispersal sale

Photo: Ian McCall

The end of an era and the end of a legacy. The sun was shining on a glorious North Canterbury Day where buyers turned up in good numbers to partake in the Dispersal sale of the Waipara Downs Texel Stud owned by Ruth and the late Keith Berry. A fantastic display of top-quality sheep went under the hammer with new and old breeders given the opportunity to purchase Genetics from the stud that was founded in 1990. The transfer of a number of ewes to other studs will ensure that the flock's legacy will continue to live on.



Ruth & Keith Berry **Photo:** From their sale catalogue

In an article published in 'The Texel New Zealand - 25 Year History of New Zealand Texels' book, Keith Berry's foray into Texels all started when he was "young and fit", he quips. Wind the clock back 25 years and grading was very important. He was often getting over-fat lambs and found the process of "trying to skinny them down" very unpleasant.

John Sidey mentioned a new breed that could go to heavy weights without being overfat. So Mr. Berry went with his father-in-law to the first Lamb XL sale at Feilding and returned home to Waipara with one ram, aptly dubbed Tommy Texel, and four ewes, which was the start of his flock 'Waipara Downs'.

Numbers were multiplied through embryo transplants, with one particular ewe producing about 28 lambs over a three-year programme. Poll Dorset ewes were used to grade up and stud ewe numbers were maintained around 100.



One of the sale ewes

Photo: Ian McCall

"I'm really just a sheep enthusiast", Mr Berry said. He acknowledged that he did have his detractors when he first went into Texels. Only people I knew really well told me that I was nuts. Another chap in the district known to do eccentric things...wrote me a really nice letter, to say, 'Well done'.

The best thing for Mr. Berry was how the breed got him out to shows and meeting lots of new people. "I've made some really good friends because of Texels", he said.

Mr Berry was on the first breed committee and remained on it for about 12 years. At the first auction, there was a meeting afterwards and it stemmed from there, with those keen, heading back to their regions and forming clubs. When he was chairman, there might have been about 212 studs, he recalled.

When it came to the quality of the Texels now, compared to when they first came out, he recalled turning to John Sidey 25 years ago and saying "what the hell did you bring me here for?"

They were so different from anything else and, while there were some that nearly looked like ordinary sheep, others looked like prime pigs, he recalled. "I certainly wouldn't have guessed a lot of people would use them through their flock to add a bit of conformation which has happened," he said.

Initially, the Berrys were breeding rams for themselves and that led on to selling a few to other farmers. Now they sell between about 30-40 rams a year, including two or three stud rams. Most went to local clients, mostly to breed prime lambs.

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Mr. Berry's son-in-law used them, on "pretty steep country", and was getting 56% lambs away straight off the mother, using a Texel over a Romney-cross type ewe and was up to around about 55% yield.

When it came to his involvement with the Texel breed, Mr. Berry said it had been "more than just sheep".

Keith's passion for his Texel Stud and universal enthusiasm for participating and sharing his knowledge on the NZ committee and local committees is well known. He generated conversation and enthusiasm in all his dealings with the Texel breed over 30 years plus.

His generosity at sharing his rams with young breeders was universally known, and he was always delighted in seeing their progeny produced.



Beautifully presented sheep on sale day at Berry's

Photo: Ian Mc Call

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ARE YOU ARTHUR OR MARTHA? HOW SHOULD WE PRODUCE AND SELL NZ LAMB?

Professor Jon Hickford, Lincoln University (With thanks for useful discussions to John Bates)

In the modern world it seems one is allowed to choose one's gender at birth, albeit parents apparently corrupt this by raising their children as little boys or little girls. Lucky for us it is a bit easier with livestock, noting that non-reproductive stock ultimately get a one-way ticket to the abattoir. However, what breed of livestock should you be farming, and how should you mate them to maximise your gain; be it genetic or financial?

Books are written on this topic, with different breeds, genetic approaches and breeding systems described in detail, including mathematical proofs and vast amounts of empirical evidence. It is my job as an academic to understand this detail, and to teach students about it. While the science is well known, factor in people, markets and the environment, and I get as confused as the next aging white male. Why?

Let's start with people, and thus effectively the market. We are a fickle bunch, as we have unique likes and dislikes, wants and desires, insecurities and fears. My prime sirloin or roasted leg of hogget is someone else's hummus, although most of you reading this probably side with me on that one. The thought of a hamburger scares me, let alone one with a reconstituted vegetable protein patty. Herein is the problem though, in the same way that some people will pay a lot of money for prime sirloin, others seek out a burger with an Angus beef patty, and others still, will no doubt go for the lab-grown version. Who is right? All of them, if it sells.

This brings me to lamb production. Which breed of sheep should we then farm from the perspective of people and markets?

If the customer is prepared to pay a healthy premium for a particular breed, then let's farm that breed exclusively. This sounds fine in principle, but it is where the tension starts. How do you breed for great maternal traits like fertility, the ability to hold or improve body condition over winter, birthing ease, mothering ability, milking ability, quality wool production and a small frame size (low maintenance cost and GHG efficiency), whilst also getting rapid growth and large well-muscled carcasses from your slaughter lambs? Some of these traits are highly heritable, but some are not; and regardless, if you breed for too many things, your genetic gain in any one of them is low.

Some of the traits are outright incompatible. For example, heavier ewes, by definition, have a higher maintenance cost and the science points to an ideal body weight being around 65 kg for a maternal ewe. If heavier ewes produce no more weight of lamb at weaning (even if they are apparently more fertile), you achieve nothing other than a higher carbon

footprint and increased winter-feeding cost, although arguably larger sheep might produce more wool.

These arguments of course led to the development of composite sheep, the idea being that you could combine all the good traits from a variety of breeds into the perfect sheep. Whether that has worked, is a point of contention, but it is notable that in the 2018-2019 season, B+LNZ (45th Edition Compendium of Farm Facts) has the national NZ Romney flock at over 50% of sheep numbers, with composite sheep at just over 12%. The other major named breeds are all under 10%.

Collectively, the breeding challenges have led to some breeders running separate lines of the same breed: maternal lines and terminal lines, hence the Arthur or Martha bit. That might work, but whom do you go to if you want to source new genetics? Can you have your cake genetically and eat it too?

This brings in the use of terminal sires. The biological advantage of heterosis, especially for hard to breed for traits like fertility and survival is undeniable. While that value varies breed-cross by breed-cross, who wouldn't want improvement in these traits if that manifests as increased lamb production (e.g. weight of lambs weaned per ewe wintered), and especially if you are incapable of finishing your own weaned lambs and instead on-sell them. Be it a two-way cross (e.g. a Suffolk ram over a NZ Romney ewe), or a three-way cross (which is used extensively in the UK), the benefits of terminal sire use are proven.

The terminal sire advantage potentially comes at the cost of not being able to brand your sale lambs as being of a given breed to get a market premium. This is where the challenge occurs for producers, because a sizeable lift in the weight of meat sold at weaning courtesy of heterosis, currently appears to be of much greater benefit to your balance sheet than a small lift (assuming a premium is available) for producing meat from a desirable breed, for a particular market. If the premium for breed increases, you might start to win, but are you benefitting from having a specific breed, because of a passing market fad, or because of an altogether less tangible set of production attributes that are associated with that breed and its meat?

In short, do and will people buy lamb because it is a named breed, or because they believe (rightly or wrongly) that the production system for that lamb aligns with what they value and desire? Do they simply not care, and just like the taste of lamb (I am in that camp), or do they only buy meat when it is on special (My Scottish heritage comes through in that respect)? Also, through all this, do not forget that the

consumption of sheep meat by NZ consumers continues to fall (B+LNZ data for 2006-7 to 2016-17 shows our domestic consumption of lamb dropped by 23 per cent over the decade).

What is causing that? Is it because the use of spritely young female Olympians to market lamb in NZ simply does not work? I ask because the Australian domestic market for lamb is approximately 7 kg per person per year (NZ is under 4kg), which is among the highest rates of sheep meat consumption globally. Globally, Meat and Livestock Australia argue that the outlook for sheep meat consumption is positive, driven largely by growth in population and household wealth in developing markets. The Aussies are always so upbeat about everything!

This introduces the next challenge. There is a huge difference between our NZ lamb production systems, and those in the US, Australia, China and the UK. We farm sheep without subsidies or crop assurance schemes, albeit some correctly argue that all farming has environmental impact, thus the environment subsidises lamb production. Others would argue that this is simply the price you must pay to produce good food.

In New Zealand, our sheep are now predominantly grazed on hill-country in systems where you cannot turn on the tap to grow grass as our dairy farmers do. This hill country land is steep and cannot be used for cropping, hence unlike other countries we are not using land that could be directly used to produce food. In hill-country farming, sheep provide many benefits, and in concert with cattle, they provide us with a globally enviable, grass-fed and efficient production system. That system comes at a cost though, because as we know ruminants produce methane, and slower growing ruminants produce more methane. Factor in things like waterway quality, biodiversity, winter-feeding challenges, pests and disease, and this system is under pressure. There are doubtless easier ways to make money, like offsetting someone else's carbon pollution, but in my opinion, we should not over-indulge that one on good food-producing land.

Efficient production or maximum gain with minimum input and impact has to be at the heart of our hill-country production systems. If you are small, then a single breed of sheep is one option. You don't need a lot of separate blocks to maintain different breeding groups as you might with a terminal sire system, and at the cost of fencing these days, that may not be something you can easily change. You might also have the ability to finish and market your own sheep to capture a breed premium, albeit that probably means the development and maintenance of crops, something you can only consider with adequate land, rainfall or irrigation. Running dairy grazers will likely make you a lot more money. Another option, which is even simpler, is to buy in your replacements and mate everything to a terminal sire. With this

option, you don't have to carry through your replacements, so you have even fewer groups of stock to feed and manage.

If you are larger, and the country is harder, then terminal sire use and a 'sale at weaning' approach is probably better. You should have the land resources to be able to maintain two or more breeds or crosses and gain the benefit that accrues from capturing heterosis or hybrid vigour in your sheep. It requires a bit more thought for sure, but the benefits are documented. In a carbon-economy, the increased growth rates and thus carbon-efficiency you will obtain will be of benefit, albeit how that trait will ultimately reward you in the market, is anyone's guess.

We also have to think about wool. For many years, my argument is very simply that if you are going to produce wool (of any fibre diameter), you have to do it well. If you are not prepared to do that, then there are emerging 'lamb only' breed options of hair and shedding sheep. Currently, they probably have not been bred to the stage where they can match the lamb production efficiency of a terminal sire system, but with good breeding using SIL eBVs that will happen.

However, terminal sire systems could be improved too. While currently, good maternal ram genetics (with appropriate eBVs and indexes) are available from stud breeders, their use on farm could be further improved if they were only mated to the best maternal ewes, leaving more inferior ewes to be mated to terminal sires. This could now include recording the performance of individual commercial ewes using EID tagging, etc. There are undeniably challenges in doing that, especially as regards how you ascertain which ewes have superior fertility and lamb production performance, but I would like to see a renewed emphasis on wool quality, pre-empting the re-emergence of what is undeniably a fantastic fibre with unique properties. Even commercial ewes could easily be sorted into elite and inferior lines using simple fleece evaluation tools, and the elite ewes only mated to superior maternal genetics that include performance recorded wool traits. Given the moderate to high heritability of key high value wool traits, wool quality in commercial flocks would quite rapidly improve.

Finally, will pure breeds (of any kind) then be in a position to exclusively market their meat as superior, perhaps in the way that Merino producers market their wool (relative to cross-bred and mid-micron wool). Will it ever realise a useful financial return? I feel the 'jury is out' on that one still, and not least because of the great 'levelling force' imposed by our major meat processors. Until such time as they can sell strongly-branded breed specific products (will that ever occur?), there will be little enduring benefit to any farmer. This is not to say that small breeds can't try to capture the interest of a meat company and a specific market, but I suspect that will be a battle. You will also have to consider the following.

You are probably aware that we are not allowed to sell our fine NZ methode champenoise wines as champagne; the French have put a stop to that. It is also true of Emmental cheese, Parma ham and of late, Haloumi (Greek in case you were wondering). Throw in a bit of patriotism and country of origin labelling, and you can see where things may head. How long before the Brits or Dutch put a claim to the WTO that we in the colonies are not allowed to sell our sheep meat labelled as Suffolk or Texel respectively? Is it wise to pursue traditional (aka someone else's) breeds, of any description, when inherent in branding the product with the breed is risk? Should we instead be developing our own breeds and thus brands, embellished with key attributes like being farmed outdoors, on grass, and efficiently - so from a production and thus carbon perspective; and perhaps the Corriedale, Perendale, Coopworth and arguably the NZ Romney too, are already in that space.

Finally, New Zealand sheep farmers are in the main still paid on carcass weight, hence the more weight you produce, the more money you earn. Highly marbled (high IMF) lambs come at a cost, and an 18 kg carcass that has lower marbling will on average cost less energy to produce, than a highly marbled 18 kg carcass, if everything else is equal. This also means it will likely have a higher carbon footprint. If you try

to overcome this by creating your own higher quality feeding systems, they come at a cost too, and probably create increased carbon and nutrient management issues, especially if cultivation is required. Hybrid vigour remains critically important with the use of terminal sires, and while nothing comes for free, it produces benefits for important traits that may not be easy to improve in pure breed stock. Maternal traits such as mothering ability, fertility, lamb survival, milking ability and longevity (an underrated trait) are essential attributes of any maternal breed, while growth is king for a terminal sire breed, and as farmers, you need to use all these tools to maximise lamb value.

Generally, breed is lost as soon as the head is cut-off a lamb. Accordingly, marketing your breed will be difficult for the majority of New Zealand lamb producers unless you have clearly defined attributes that justify marketing separately because they provide clear financial advantage. Alternatively, can our sheep farmers make even more money by further improving their existing conventional production systems on what is mainly non-arable land, and do it with low carbon footprints while having ecologically sound businesses? If so, should they even worry about marketing, especially given that in paying a levy, they in-fact own a fair bit of a lamb marketing system already.



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Above: Recently taken photo of two tooth Shropshire ewes at Lucy Burrow's Highley Stud, Rangiora



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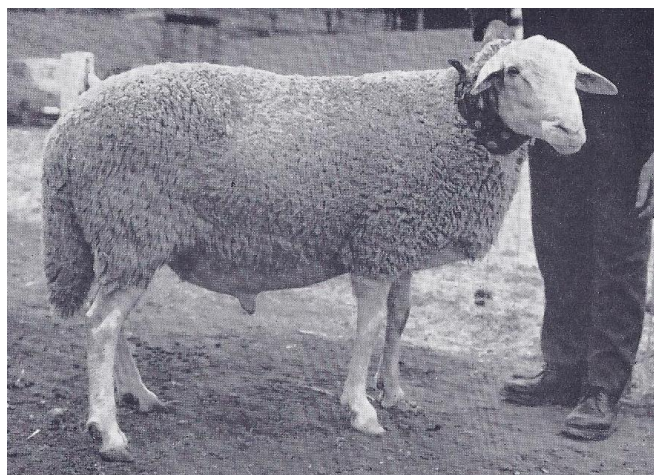
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Mediterranean Sheep Breeds

From “**Sheep Breeds of the Mediterranean**”, edited by I L Mason. Published by the FAO of the UN by the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau, 1967

The Lacaune Sheep



Lacaune ram

Photo: FAO

The local breed in the Monts du Lacaune in the south-east of the Tarn *département* has long been noted for its milk yield. It has been improved by selection for milk, especially since 1870; crossing (eg with Merino, Southdown & Barbary) has left few traces. In 1947 it was officially combined with the identical Camarès breed of the south of the Aveyron *département*. Another synonym is the Mazamet. It has also absorbed the Larzac and Ségala breeds of Aveyron and the Lauraguais and Corbières of Aude.

Its area of distribution now covers Tarn, Aveyron, and Aude and the north-west of Tarn-et-Garonne and Haute Garonne, and the breed is spreading in all directions. Numbers were 780,000 in 1963.

Description

When shorn it is difficult to distinguish the Lacaune from the Limousin (to the north) and the Préalpes du Sud (to the east). The Limousin has more hair; the Lacaune is narrower and has **a more extensive fleece; the Préalpes has a barer belly.**

Height: 70-80cm

Weight: Ram 80 -100kg; ewe 50-65kg

Fleece: rather short, thick, elastic locks. Bare head, underside of neck, belly and most of legs.

Polled both sexes.

Performance

Milk: for Roquefort cheese is the primary product (68% of income), followed by meat (28%) and wool (4%).

Wool: Fleece weight, ram 2.5kg; ewe 1.5kg

Milk: Breed mean about 80kg. Recorded means of small numbers of females vary from 100 to 160kg. Fat content up to 8%.

Fertility: Twins are sufficiently common that on weaning the number of lambs in the flock is equal to the number of ewes. Improvement: a standard was drawn up in 1902 and adopted by the Syndicat D'Élevage which was founded in 1928. In 1945 official milk recording began and in 1947 a flock book was started.

Southern Cross (grading using Lacaune genetics from France) breed in NZ (From NZ Sheepbreeder's website: "The Southern Cross breed is the result of crossbreeding and selection for performance in the New Zealand seasonal pasture-based sheep dairy farm system.

Coopworth ewes were initially bred to East Friesian and Awassi sires, but since 2017, an Artificial Insemination programme has been run annually using imported semen from progeny tested French Lacaune sires. The Lacaune breed is the mainstay of the French industry where 800,000 ewes are supported by the only large-scale, scientific breeding programme in the world for dairy sheep.

The Southern Cross breeding goal is efficient conversion of pasture into profit. Accordingly, key traits include, but are not limited to, milk production, high component percentage, udder conformation, low Somatic Cell Count, good feet and legs, and longevity. These traits closely match the French breeding goal, which is another reason why the Lacaune is the main contributor of genes to the Southern Cross breed.

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Punchbowl Poll Dorset Stud Dispersal

by Ian McCall

The end of an era, after 52 years, 33 in the ownership of Doug & Jeannie Brown, the Punchbowl Poll Dorset stud has been dispersed. One hundred mixed aged ewes and 38 ewe lambs went under the hammer and met with keen demand from throughout New Zealand, resulting in a complete clearance.

There were also 450 Polltex ewes and 150 ewe lambs sold with equally as strong demand. We wish Doug and Jeannie all the best for what the future brings.



Photo: Ian McCall

▲ Some of the *Punchbowl* Poll Dorset ewes at the sale

A Bit of History

National Library, *Papers Past*
Gisborne Herald 25 July 1939

SUFFOLK SHEEP IMPORTS FAT LAMB TRADE – SOUTHLAND DEVELOPMENT

The arrival of the Waitaki at the Bluff recently with a consignment of Suffolk sheep was of considerable interest to Southland breeders, who are at present developing sheep studs, especially for breeding sires for producing suitable fat lambs for the export trade.

With the arrival of this shipment of over 40 sheep, it is understood that there are today more Suffolks in Southland than in the rest of New Zealand. The importation was arranged through the stud stock department of the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company, Limited, and included 30 Suffolk ewes and one ram hogget bred by the State Research Farm at Werribee, Victoria, on account of Mr J F Scott, and 10 Suffolk ewes and one ram which have been purchased by Mr John T Gibb.



Photo: Ian McCall

Ross McCall presenting Doug and Jeannie Brown life membership to the Suffolk breed

Punchbowl speech by Symon Howard, Chairman of SuffolkNZ, at the recent Suffolk dispersal sale prior to presentation of life membership badge by Ross McCall.

‘On behalf of SuffolkNZ, I’d like to acknowledge the contribution Doug and Jeannie and the Punchbowl stud has made to the Suffolk breed in NZ.

Punchbowl was started 45 years ago in 1977 and Waimotu prefix was added in 2000 under their children, Simon and Alice’s, names.

Certainly, over the years the Punchbowl prefix has been a prominent genetic thread in most studs in NZ. As the latest across-flock results have shown, Punchbowl rams are well represented in the top tier of the program.

Over the years, the stud has had much success at stud fairs, once selling the top-priced at all three NZ stud fairs in the same year – I am not sure that any breeder has ever achieved this other than Punchbowl.

Doug has always been a very good supporter of the CPT yield trials and other similar trials to better the breed over the years. He served on the breed committee from 1989-2006 and was chairman from 1995-1998. With still one more ram crop to sell, we will no doubt still see Doug at next year’s stud fairs.

I am sure it was a hard decision for he and Jeannie to make to disperse their studs. On behalf of the breed, I wish to thank you both for your contribution to the breed in NZ, and to wish all the best for whatever lies ahead.’



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WOOL – AND HOW IT GROWS

A REVISED SERIES OF ARTICLE ON ASPECTS OF WOOL BIOLOGY.

(First published in *Black & Coloured Sheepbreeders' magazine* Issue #19, November 1980) By Roland Sumner, AgResearch, Whatawhata Research Centre. Reprinted with permission of BCSBA & Roland Sumner

Part Three – ARE ALL WOOL FOLLICLES THE SAME?

So far in this series of articles aspects of the structure of wool fibres and how they grow from the skin have been discussed. In the second article mention was made that some follicles were associated with sweat glands and small arrector pili muscles. Why should some follicles be different?

As a result of a considerable amount of investigation in several countries, more particularly Australia, we now know that there are two distinct types of follicles called primaries and secondaries. The two types of follicle (Figure 1) are distinguished by their position in the skin and their associated sweat gland, an arrector pili muscle and a two-lobed sebaceous (wool grease) gland. Secondary follicles, on the other hand, only have (and then not in all cases) an associated single-lobed sebaceous gland.

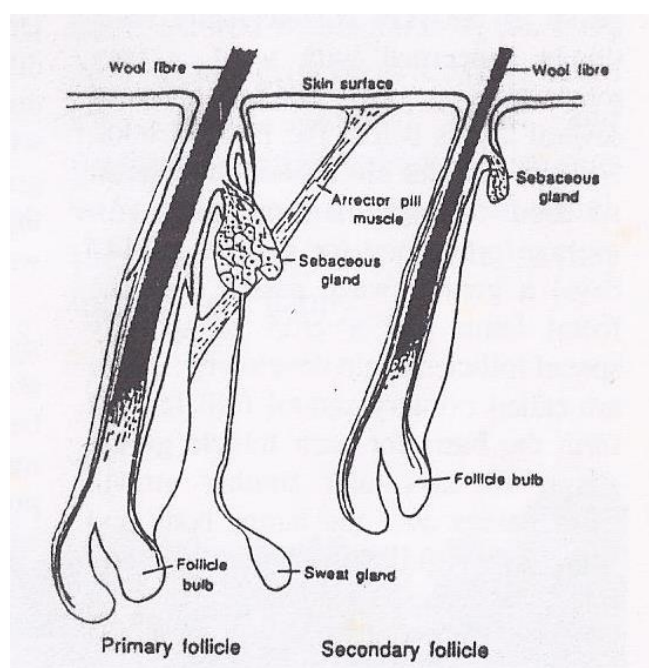


Figure 1

Diagram of a longitudinal section through a primary and a secondary wool follicle showing their associated structures.

These two types of follicle occur in the skin according to a distinct pattern called a “trio” in which three primary follicles surround a group of secondary follicles. The number of secondaries in the group has considerable biological significance on the type of fleece grown by the sheep. On account of the biological significance of the number of secondary follicles in a group the ratio of the two types of follicle is given a special name and called the S/P ratio. This is the ratio of the number of secondary follicles in an area of

skin divided by the number of primary follicles in the same area of skin. S/P ratios can only be counted with the use of special microscopes.

Marked differences exist between breeds of sheep in their S/P ratio. Many of the so-called “primitive” sheep breeds which have two defined coats; a long outer coat and fine inner down coat, have an S/P ratio of less than 3. Our common English breeds of sheep have values between 4 and 6 with Corriedales and similar Merino cross sheep having values between 10 and 12. As an upper limit the Merino has values of between 16 and 22. Thus “primitive” type sheep have about 10 follicles in their follicle group while the Merino has about 60 follicles. With the follicle groups being about the same size in all sheep the skin of the Merino contains about 6 times as many follicles as “primitive” type sheep and 4 times as many follicles as English breeds of sheep.

The development of the follicle group in the skin is, like many other things concerned with wool, a very remarkable process taking place in several stages before the lamb is born. No new follicles are formed after birth. At about 60 days after conception (An average pregnancy for a sheep is 147 days) a growth wave passes over the foetal lamb and a crop of sparsely spread follicles begin developing. These are called primary central follicles and form the basis for each follicle group. About 10 days later another growth wave passes over the lamb's body and two further follicles (primary lateral follicles) begin developing near the primary central follicle forming the base trio. From about 90 days after conception until up to birth secondary follicles develop within the trio of primary follicles.

If Merino ewes experience severe underfeeding late in pregnancy secondary follicle development in the skin of the foetal lamb may be permanently retarded. Research has shown that the adult fleece of lambs that received a severe nutritional check before birth contain less fibres than normal. As a compensation, the fleece tends to be coarser. In New Zealand it has not been possible to induce permanent effects to the fleeces of Romney sheep by nutritionally stressing their dams.

As breeds differ in their S/P ratio so the mean diameter of fibres growing from secondary and primary follicles also differs between breeds. The diameter of both fibre types in the Merino is similar while in the Romney primary fibres are about 1.3 times coarser than secondary fibres. The Drysdale

on the other hand is markedly different. “Hairiness” in the Drysdale is due to the presence of a specific gene which results in the primary follicles growing long medullated fibres while the secondary follicles grow ordinary wool fibres.

Through the appreciation of the significance of follicle patterns in the skin of sheep it is possible to obtain a better understanding of the various interacting factors which result in the production of that unique fibre called wool.



“Good judgement comes from experience, and often experience comes from bad judgement.”

Rita Mae Brown (1944-)
American writer & activist

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Hampshire News & Import Update

by Kevin Mawson

Welcome to another newsletter. December the 1st I went to Gisborne to my Hampshire friends, Mark and Rose Candy's, ram sale where he had a strong line up of rams on offer. This was my third time I had been to his sale. The laugh of the day was when Mark pulls out a cigarette and no, he doesn't smoke usually and Rose says what are you doing you don't smoke and his replies was, "It calms the nerves". That, I understand, because a lot of work goes into getting the rams ready for the sale. A lot of the farmers are returning each year as they know the potential that using Hampshire is giving them a quicker return on the lambs. Keep up your good work Mark with the Hampshire's and can't wait to see your next crop of lambs.



Rams at Mark Candy's sale

Photo: Kevin Mawson

Now to let you know where I am at with mating this year. First things first, I put a zinc bolus in everything on 11.2.22. This takes the stress off FE for a bit, with the weather the way it is lately, high humidity, rain then sunny days, spores can rise so fast and before you know it you can get an infection in the flock and that will lead to all sorts of problems later.

I know I am not an expert, but I have seen the devastation it can do and for the minimal expense against the cost of a ewe and lamb it is a no brainer. Also, the spread of the FE spores is reaching areas that you would normally think safe.

Now that's off my chest, back to what I am doing, the dates are set for the 3rd of March to start the AI and embryo flush program for my Hampshires. This year I will be flushing two



ewes that were embryos I imported from Ireland and the sire will be Maverick, another top recorded ram from the UK.

◀*The orange tag ewes for flushing and AI.*

We will also be doing AI on six other ewes with the same semen. The results I have had from the last two years of AI and ET has been amazing, and to be able to AI them will give me a totally new blood line.

What I need now is to be able to go to shows so other people can see the Hampshire breed and their potential as sires.

Below: The blue tag lambs are September born and they were ET lambs from my best two ewes, giving me twenty nice strong lambs.



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Email adverts to the Editor or greg@nzsheep.co.nz

The **Closing Date** for next issue of the newsletter will be **May 20th for the June 2022 newsletter.**

Please get items in well before the deadline!!!

“FEATURE BREED” will be Merinos, Poll Merinos & Half Breds

If you would like to be part of the feature or the newsletter, **photos and stud histories of All Breeds are accepted at any time for next issue.**

EMAIL OR POST TO THE EDITOR – see front page for address details.



Published by NZ Sheepbreeders' Association

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