

# Sheep NewZ

#28 Spring 2022



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### Hello Members,

I was so sad to learn of Queen Elizabeth II's death. As with most New Zealanders I have known no other monarch. The only thing is we can be grateful for is she did not seem to suffer any ill health or Alzheimers. I saw her greeting new UK Prime Minister, Liz Truss and looking very elegant just a couple of days before she died. Long live our new King.

Thanks to the many Shropshire breeders who submitted for the Breed Feature - helps I'm the chairman, I guess!

I'm trying a new look for the Sheep NewZ – a front cover, numbered pages, and a contents list. I imagine the front cover in future issues will show a/some sheep of the Feature Breed or maybe just a show winner. I will be looking for some good photos for the spot! Perhaps this will encourage you to submit a photo or two? More articles are also needed so if you have a "pet" sheep topic and would like to share it please send to me. Not a guaranteed acceptance of course!

**Show season** is upon us again so let's make the most of it. Hawkes Bay Show while not a Royal Show, has a full schedule of breed classes. \$10 to enter each class.

The NZ Agricultural Show will also be soliciting entries shortly. No doubt their schedules will go online so look out for them and those of your local shows.

If you have children at school enquire if the school knows about the Campaign for Wool's **free** "Wool in Schools" programme. This is a great resource.

*Helen McKenzie*  
**Editor**

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### Front cover photo

Highley Stud's Shropshire ewe lambs

## ASSOCIATION NEWS & VIEWS

### From The President

Greetings to all members, of the Spring Edition of Sheep NewZ. Spring might have finally arrived - after having endured what is possibly the wettest winter in our area ever. It certainly wasn't hard to make mud - with over 9" of rain for July, little wonder.



The poor old sheep didn't enjoy it at all and by all accounts most of the country had a very wet winter. We can hopefully look forward to some more favourable climes!

By now lambing is well under way. In our area the weather has been okay for lambing - it was just a matter of finding a dry spot for the ewes to lamb on. The tricky part was shifting ewes/lambs through muddy gateways. Talking to the local vet recently, he commented that there is a lot of sleepy sickness about this year attributable to the abundance of grass at mating - heavier than normal ewes with a lot more lambs on board - thus needing a lot more quality protein going into lambing. With all the wet weather and lack of sun the grass lacked the quality required to maintain the sheep.

Product prices for our sector are very favourable at the moment, slightly dampened by costs (Fuel, fertiliser, freight and compliance) all seem to be taking any edge we may have off. The lamb market still remains strong, and the pundits seem to think it will do so for a good while yet. Good for the sheep industry - now all we need is for wool to bounce back.

Is covid waning - or are the cases not being reported as much? The former we hope so as life might return to some kind of normal. It is good to see that the A&P Show movement is going ahead with their shows - something positive to look forward to.

Shropshire's are the Feature Breed for this issue. Shropshire's were some of the first sheep to arrive in NZ, with advertisements in the Christchurch paper (Papers Past) of 1862 for Shropshires for sale at the local market.

Through the early 1900's they were numerically ahead of all other meat breeds. Once the Southdown and other English breeds became more fashionable the Shropshires slowly dwindled to the point that there are now only approx. 350 stud ewes in the book.

With the advent of the Youth Initiative Scheme we have new members joining up - so this augurs well for the future of the breed.

All the best for spring and the rest of lambing.

*Tom Burrows*  
**President NZSBA**



## From The General Manager

**Weather** – I am conscious that some members have been severely affected from flooding and I hope you are all recovering and there is support for you.



**South Australia** – Just returned from a brief holiday in South Australia with my family. Having never been to South Australia I really enjoyed travelling to Shiraz country visiting wineries, climbing Mt Lofty, seeing the rugby test in the magnificent Adelaide Oval, and then just a brief walk from the venue and you are surrounded by bars, restaurants.

Farmers Union Iced Coffee – here's some trivia, this drink produced in Adelaide is just so popular amongst all demographics in South Australia, and it actually outsells coca cola!

## NZSBA Council & AGM Meeting – COUNCIL REPORT:

**'Sheep 125' – Now 'Sheep 130'** – Owing to uncertainty the celebrations will now take place in 2024.

**Ewe Muscle Scanning Workshop** – Requesting \$10000.00 from Beef+LambNZ in order to run the workshop. A decision will be known by October.

**New Breed Approved** – The Zealandia Breed has been accepted into the NZ Flock Book, as the Breed has three flocks, Breed Description and Breed Standards.

**New Tail Docking Law and the Phasing out of Live Shipping** – A meeting was held during the year with an MPI representative where the two issues were discussed.

**Code of Conduct** - Whether the NZ Sheepbreeders' Assn requires a Code of Conduct was discussed and it was agreed that the Rules in place are adequate.

**Youth Initiative**– As of 31 March 2022 there are 16 registered Youth Initiative studs.

**NZ Sheepbreeders' Assn Advertisements** – Advertisements were placed in Country-Wide last year. It was agreed for these to continue in Farmers Weekly but be smaller and without a photograph and incorporating a slogan.

**The Royal Agricultural Society of NZ Inc** – The Council has agreed that the NZ Sheepbreeders' Assn to continue being an Affiliated Breed Society of the RAS, and to review this issue in a couple of years. Officers from The Royal Agricultural Society of NZ Inc to be invited to next year's Assn's AGM.

<b>President</b>	<b>Tom Burrows</b>
<b>Senior Vice President</b>	<b>Mark Copland</b>
<b>Junior Vice-President</b>	<b>Penni Loffhagen</b>

**NZSBA Office** – The staff are busy compiling this year's Flock Book. Should you be approached requiring information regarding your Breeding Return please answer promptly.

**NZSBA Website – For Sale Page** – Chris our website person has almost completed this page, but now requires some members to contact the office should they have any sheep for sale, as we need to assess if there are any issues before going public. **Performance Record?** – should you be interested in Performance Recording please contact the office.

**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.

**Greg Burgess**  
General Manager,  
NZSBA





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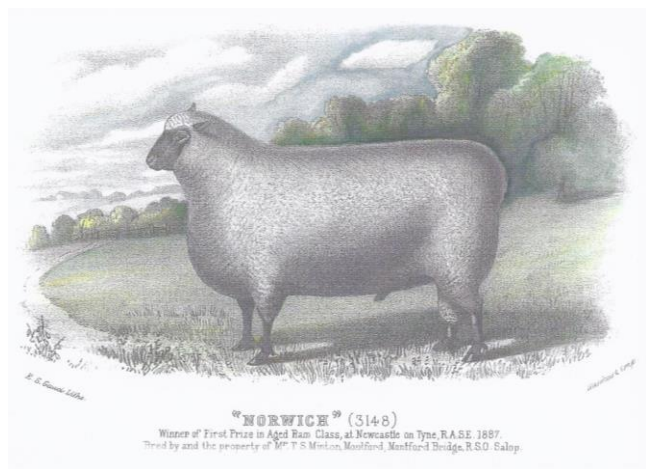
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## Feature Breed

### SHROPSHIRE



Above photo from the UK Shropshire Sheep Society

#### Brief History

Shropshire sheep were developed in the mid 1800's. Some of the native breeds used were the Morfe Common (horned, speckle faced and fine woolled and the Longmynd (small, black-faced and horned). May also have some Southdown and possibly Leicester. Developed originally as a dual-purpose sheep.

The breed was the premier terminal sire internationally during the late 1800's and very early 1900's. It lost favour as the Southdown grew in popularity. Also, in the USA they had bred their Shropshires with "wool from their nose to their toes" which was not what those using them in other countries wanted. In the 1990's there was a milking flock in Pennsylvania, with cheese being made.

The first Shropshire sheep were imported into NZ in the early 1860's – thought to be 1864 originally, but more recently earlier records suggest 1862.

The breed is renowned for their hardiness and thriftiness and the ability of their lambs to be up on their feet getting a drink very quickly after birth.

From a low of 39 registered ewes in 1982 (2 flocks in the NZSBA Flock book) and one flock of previously registered purebreds – numbers unknown; the registered numbers have grown to around 350 registered ewes - not counting last year's ewe lambs.

#### Description

Shropshires are a medium sized, polled breed with a "soft" black face – not anthracite coal black as with Suffolks. The poll should have white wool – not black hair - on it. Good wool should be found down to the hocks without britchiness or black hairs. Front legs are generally clean although some may have a bit of wool. Shropshire fleece is suitable for hand-

spinning and they have very tasty meat. Their wool has been used in woollen hosiery and hand knitting yarns.

#### Bodyweight

**Ewes:** 50 - 60 kg with some heavier  
**Rams:** 80 - 110 kg

#### Meat

Medium grain, very good flavour

#### Breeding/Lambing

110 - 140 percent

#### Numbers

Registered ewes – around 350 (plus female youngstock)  
12 flocks in the NZSBA Flock book – 4 set up in 2021

#### Wool

##### Fibre diameter:

29-30 microns

**Staple length:** 50-75mm

**Fleece weight:** Range 2 - 3kg

**Uses:** Hosiery & knitting yarns.

Shropshires in the UK are doing well. In 2021 there were about 5438 registered Females and 494 males.

There is now a newly set up European Shropshire Sheep Association. So far has 20 odd flocks as members although there are many small commercial flocks as well. Some of them used to use the British registry but with Brexit that is no longer allowed. Germany has its own registries – not as a country but regionally.

Shropshires are also to be found in greater or lesser numbers in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Eire, France, Norway and Spain. They are very popular for grazing in conifer (Christmas tree) plantations and cider orchards – once trees are up a bit. They are renowned for being tree friendly but of course they need to have adequate grass on offer. [Here in NZ we have had our ram lambs used in an olive grove successfully. -Ed.] There was a trial among lavender in the UK but not sure it has progressed further although it was promising at the time. Shropshires have been in the USA since the mid 1800's and continue to be a "firm farm favourite" as their breed logo states.

Numbers in Australia are similar to those in New Zealand.





**STUD PROFILE #1****Rosemarkie Stud Flock # 287****Established 1982, Masterton****Owned by Helen McKenzie & Warwick Potts**

I first got interested in these great sheep when talking to a then acquaintance (now long time friend) on the workers' train about what to run on my newly acquired smaller farm of 120 acres. She was aware of rare breeds of domestic animals nationally and internationally that were in need in support or were going to disappear altogether. Shropshires were on the verge of disappearing in NZ in the late 1970's. She suggested them.

There were two flocks still registered when I bought my first dozen or so sheep from John Green's *Mamaku* stud. Sidney McDonnell had started his *Cannock Chase* flock as Marshall's *Oporo* stud withdrew from the flock book. They totalled 39 ewes. Wratt's (*Beech Grove*) still had Shropshires but they had been deregistered a few years prior. They were kept purebred and their son, John, managed to get them re-entered subject to using registered rams from the other two flocks. They were very good sheep.

We have now had Shropshires for 40 years but have reduced our numbers to around 60 ewes of ours and also run our son Alistair's registered **Stirling** flock as he is currently living and working in NW Queensland. That consists of approximately 15 registered ewes. We have reduced our Shropshire numbers in order to increase that of our Ryelands which are down below 200 registered ewes in New Zealand.



*Shropshires on the left, Ryelands on the right*

For nine years we ran them on our 390acre eastern Wairarapa hill country farm along with commercial white face ewes. The crossbred lambs were great. Now we have a retirement block of 140 acres still dry, with rolling hills and they also thrive there.

Shropshires have the second longest fleece of any of the Down breeds after the Oxford Down. Cross bred lambs will usually throw to their dam's fleece. The crossbred lambs will be colour marked for ease of identifying the progeny of

terminal sires. Weaned lambs will be in the vicinity of 16 to 20 kg carcass weight as long as their dams are fed adequately. They do well in dry hill country with lambs able to hold their condition if drought strikes.

**STUD PROFILE #2****Turoa Stud Flock # 290****Established 1990, Te Puke****Owned by Keith and Heather Wratt****Shropshires...A Family Commitment.**

*Shropshire ewe and her new twins – just 20 minutes old*

**Photo** K. Wratt

Sometimes it is good to take a moment and reflect on years past and for my family it is their commitment to the Shropshire Breed through what is now, 4 Generations.

The opportunity to write a few words about our Shropshire Stud has given me the chance to reflect and think about the Wratt Family and its contribution to Shropshires in New Zealand from the late 1800's.

The Wratt Family have strong historic links to Motueka with my Great Grandpa (John Stuart Wratt) being the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mayor of Motueka from 1902 to 1904 and then again in 1912. There is a street in Motueka called Wratt Street, which honors my Great Grandpa's service to local politics..I have a fair idea of what his thoughts would be about present day Politics, but I won't go there!!!

I am not sure if John Stuart Wratt had Shropshires but his son, Edgar Stuart Wratt (my Grandpa) certainly did. E S Wratt had a number of Shropshires entered in the 1937 Motueka A & P Show with good success. Grandpa farmed on the fertile Motueka Plains in Whakawera Street and also on a couple of hill blocks to the west of Motueka.

My Dad, (Allan Edgar Wratt), with my Mum Gwendoline, farmed in Upper Moutere after the Second World War and



they too established a Shropshire Stud called *Beech Grove* in the late 1950s. He also exhibited Shropshires at the Motueka A & P Show through the 1960s.

Then it was the turn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation of the Wratt Family to continue breeding Shropshires.

My Brother John established the *Te Mahara* Stud, Flock No 288 in 1987, my sister Margaret established the *Mamasa* Stud, Flock No 291 in 1990 and Heather and I established our Turoa Stud, Flock No 290 also in 1990.

But wait there's more!!!

In 2017, my nephew, Chris Wratt, established the Ovca Stud, Flock No 315 and became the 4<sup>th</sup> Generation of our family to breed Shropshires.

I can only dream about Shropshire Breeding reaching into another Generation of our family.....that would be our Grandchildren....maybe, but there's a lot of water to go under the bridge yet before that would become a reality. Perhaps that's a treasure for years ahead.

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## STUD PROFILE #3

### HIGHLEY SHROPSHIRE STUD

**Flock #303 Established 2008**

**Owned by Dr Lucynda Burrows, Rangiora**

I started the Highley Shropshire Stud in 2008, from foundation ewes from Dr Lorne Kuehn's *Waitangi* stud and Helen McKenzie's *Rosemarkie* stud.

Part of the reason I chose Shropshires was because they are a heritage listed rare breed. As I was about to launch into a prolonged study period (I was embarking on a PhD in Molecular Genetics) at Lincoln University.



*Highley ewes on winter crop*

Thus, I thought that the rare nature of Shropshires would be a good fit for my studies. Plus, my paternal forebears originated from Highley in Shropshire, England.

From those small beginnings my stud built up to over 100 ewes but has scaled back to approximately 65 ewes this year.

The main attributes of the breed are their low birth weight, good growth rates, great mothering ability, their ability to live on minimal feed when the going gets tough and their very placid nature. The rams are excellent for hogget mating because of their low birth weight. We have clients reporting that they rarely have any birthing difficulties with the Shropshire across their hoggets.

Another great attribute is their ability to produce intramuscular fat (IMF) - which is probably why their meat has such a succulent flavour. One butcher likened their meat to Wagyu in its marbling characteristics!

▼ *Highley 73-190 out with ewes*





**STUD PROFILE # 4****GALLANT STUD Flock #317****Established 2019****Owned by Emma Pollitt, Gisborne***A Gallant stud ram lamb*

Gallant Shropshire's was established in 2018 with three foundation ewes from Rosemarkie Stud. They came in lamb, and to our delight, all had twins, and so the stud program was born!

The Shropshire breed was chosen for a multitude of reasons, particularly their adequate size for what was at the time our small farm; their maternal ability, grass conversion and use within orchards and plantations. Over the years these reasons have affirmed our decision, and we have also grown to adore their docile dispositions, constitution, and carcass attributes.

We have introduced more females to our flock from the Highly and now dispersed Rangitukia Studs, slowly building numbers which now has a much larger cap as we purchased more land to expand operations. We also run a flock of commercial MA ewes and hoggets, which all go to a Shropshire ram to produce prime lambs for market.



*Let's play follow the leader!*

Prior to the pandemic, we enjoyed much success in the show ring, encouraged by Helen McKenzie to attend and promote the breed. Alongside the breed classes, we aim to enter prime lamb competitions with Shropshire-sired stock to

further promote and benchmark the breed. We look forward to getting back out there this season.

**STUD PROFILE # 5****OVCA Stud flock #315****Established 2017****Owned by Chris Wratt***OVCA ram #6-20*

Flock was founded in 2017 with the purchase of ewes and ewe lambs bred by Keith & Heather Wratt – his aunt and uncle. The flock now stands at about 25 breeding ewes. They are currently agisted with Highley Stud.

*OVCA ewes at Highley Stud***STUD PROFILE # 6****Filly Farm Shropshire Stud flock #322****Established 2021****Owned by Peter Blaikie**

Founded with ewes from Rangitukia and Highway Lodge flocks when they dispersed.

We haven't got a massive flock, 20 ewes, and we have three young girls and so once we have a bit more time we will look to expand. When we do, we would like to promote the breed more and look to sell animals for those looking for tree friendly sheep.

We use ours to keep our olive grove mowed.



## STUD PROFILE # 7

### Downlands Shropshire Stud flock #320

Established 2021

Owned by Zenita Kath



▲ *Downlands ewe hoggets*

Downlands Shropshires run out of a small holding in Kirwee, Canterbury. Originally the farm was a 1000acre sheep holding. We now operate a 30acre section and breed Shropshires only.

Established in 1865, Kirwee House is the original homestead of this area and we have been working hard to restore and renovate the homestead and surrounding outbuildings over the last 12 months.

The original grain and shearing shed still stands and we are proud to say this is still in use today. ▼



We presently run 30 breeding ewes of varying age and utilise introduced genetics from North and South Island breeders. A 'Highley' ram has now been with us for the last two seasons.

2022 lambing is just about finished, and we have many healthy little Shroppies on the ground.



▲ *Young Shropshire lamb*



▲ *Shropshire ewe and lamb*

When you are fifty, you start thinking about things you haven't thought about before.

I used to think getting old was about vanity, but it's about losing the people you love. Getting wrinkles is trivial.

*Joyce Carol Oates,*  
American writer



## LEASE YOUR LAND FOR SOLAR WHILE GRAZING



### Lightyears Solar are building dual-use Solar Farms

New Zealand solar farm developer Lightyears Solar is looking for land in your area – and you may have the ideal site right under your nose.

The company is building large-scale solar farms to connect with the national grid and is seeking landowners with sites for one of their utility-scale solar farms, which can share with your animals – ideally with sheep.

Lightyears Solar will lease, and in some cases buy land, depending on the agreement with the landowner. Suitable land needs to be five hectares or more, flat and sunny, and ideally close to a high voltage powerline.

They are currently developing a solar farm south of Auckland, where animals including sheep and pigs will graze beneath the solar panels and share the space, allowing the landowner to gain income from leasing the land, while still being able to use the land for agricultural purposes.

**"The site will be a great example of how a solar farm can work as shared-use, and we're very keen to work with more landowners like this," says Lightyears Solar development manager Matt Shanks.**

**"The installation of a solar farm is quick and low impact, and under a lease agreement, can provide a landowner with long-term, stable income."**

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"The ability to keep the land agriculturally productive while also securing a long term lease income was a great opportunity for us" says farmer Nigel Upchurch.



Image credit: Nigel Upchurch

Lightyears Solar is New Zealand owned and operated, run by a team with experience in building large-scale solar farms overseas and in New Zealand and managing complex construction projects, who have a passion for sustainability and smart design.

Visit [www.lightyearssolar.co.nz](http://www.lightyearssolar.co.nz)

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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."

## A Bit of History

### THE ARGENTINE INTERNATIONAL SHOW

The Otago Witness, 24 August 1910

National Library *Papers Past*

#### THE SUCCESS OF MR E SHORT, OF FEILDING

The Buenos Aires Herald of June 10<sup>th</sup>, referring to the international show at Palermo, says: -

One of the most remarkable features in the show has been the extraordinary success achieved by the Romney Marsh sheep from New Zealand bred and shown by Mr Ernest Short, of Parorangi, Feilding, New Zealand. They have simply swept the board, and Mr Short has to his credit the champion ram lamb, the reserved champion, the champion pen of three Romney Marsh ewes, the first prize for rams lambled before January 1, 1909, the first prize for a pen of three ram lambs lambled between May 1 and October 31, 1909 and first prize for pen of three ewes lambled before January 1, 1909, and first prize for a pen of ewe lambs lambled between April 1 and October 1, 1909.

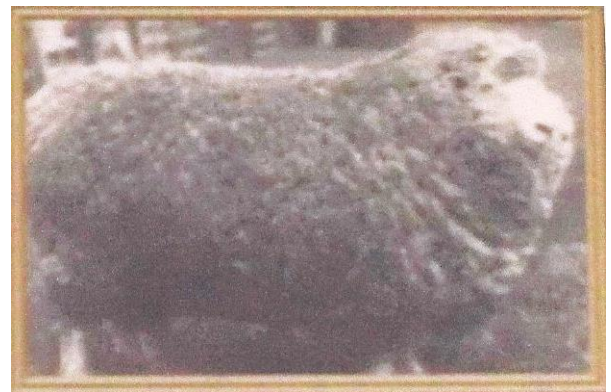
Considering Mr Short was the only exhibitor from New Zealand he has proved himself indeed a worthy representative of his country, and for his pluck and initiative most assuredly deserves the success he has met with. Sheep such as his are not brought a three weeks sea voyage without considerable risk and great expense, and it is more than probable that those who will undoubtedly follow where Mr Short had the pluck to lead will reap the benefit. All the more credit is therefore due to the pioneer who has opened up a new market for New Zealand prize stock and shows the breeders of this country what they can buy with their money. To his honour let it be said in passing that money has never been the question with the Argentine breeder. All he has ever asked for and continues to ask for is the best, no matter at what price.

Mr Short is naturally proud of his success and still more so of his wonderful country where such sheep as his can thrive. In the course of an interview Mr short said: - "Unfortunately I was debarred from competing in the two classes the conditions of which demand the sheep be lambled between January 1 and April 30. These were the classes in which the Kent Cup was awarded. Of course, only sheep bred north of the line could compete. It is altogether a splendid show, and the buildings are the best and most complete that I have ever seen; in fact, far better than anything to be seen in England.

In reply to questions Mr Short said: - "I can honestly say that without a doubt the exhibits of Herefords and Shorthorns are the best I have ever seen". This confirms the report of the English and Scottish judges.

Concerning Argentine-bred sheep, Mr short said: - "they are a very fine healthy, hardy lot – it would be a great advantage if breeders here would go for denser backed sheep and showing more character in the head and denser covering – I believe the climate is greatly to blame for some of the faults."

Incidentally Mr Short ventured to express the opinion that England will have to look to her laurels if she wants to hold her own against her kids. She must pay more attention to the quality of her stock and not continue to trade on the splendid name the good old-fashioned English farmer got for her. If Great Britain would allow her colonies to send in live sheep for competition, the English farmer would soon have a standard set for him. I don't see why she does not do this. Our sheep are free from scab and all other diseases, and I am quite convinced that our English Leicesters, Border Leicesters, Corriedales and Romney Marsh would beat the Home-bred stock in any open competition as they have here. By the way (to get away from sheep) so would our Clydesdale mares. The English Clydesdales are getting too light in bone and feather and losing those essential points which make them celebrated the world over.



*Photo above and words below are from the Feilding Coach House Museum display.*

The World Champion from the Manchester block, "Record Breaker III", Ernest Short's stud Romney ram scooped the supreme prize at Palermo, Argentina in 1910.


Describing how he selected stock for breeding Short once said, "The head is what I always look for first of all. If I don't get character there, I discard the sheep at once. After the head I look for shape of carcase and constitution. Wool is the last consideration as it can be bred on anything with careful mating."

[Note: a separate article said that "no less a judge than Mr EJ Riddiford has stated that Record Breaker III is a perfect Romney sheep. The same gentleman valued the stock that went of Palermo at £5,000]



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February	19-22	2023	March	26-29	2023
March	5-8	2023	April	16-19	2023
March	12-15	2023			

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## TOUR REVIEW

### Molesworth 4WD Trip, March 2022

*Thank you for organizing such a wonderful trip for us all. Chris was a super tour leader; Mary's hospitality and food at the station was wonderful and the 4WD experiences and scenery will stay with us all for a very long time.*

*It's up with the best trips Chris and I have done anywhere in the world.*

*We all are keen to do D'Urville Island next year."*

*Liz Darlow, Auckland*



**Fact Sheet 72. Updated, July 2019****METABOLIC DISEASE IN EWES**

Metabolic disease can cause a significant amount of ewe wastage. The key is prevention through adequate nutrition.

**SUMMARY** Metabolic diseases primarily affect ewes in late pregnancy and sometimes early lactation. They can have a huge economic impact on a farming operation especially if there are large losses of capital stock. Disease prevention is crucial. Provide adequate feed and reduce stressful situations, particularly in the critical stages of pregnancy and lactation. The success of treating affected animals varies according to the type and progression or stage of the disease. Treatment should occur as early as possible to be the most effective. Farmers should consult with their veterinarian as soon as possible in order to treat the affected animals successfully and minimise further losses.

**PREGNANCY TOXAEMIA** Sometimes referred to as **sleepy sickness**, twin lamb disease, lambing sickness or pregnancy disease. Pregnancy toxaemia usually affects multiple bearing ewes in late pregnancy.

**PREDISPOSING FACTORS**

These usually fall into the categories of either under nutrition or stress, for example:

- Sudden restriction of feed intake in late pregnancy due to yarding, crutching, shearing, or a snowstorm.
- Falling nutrition in the last two months of pregnancy. This is when the energy demand from the growing foetus is at its peak.
- Pre-lamb shearing in combination with inadequate shelter during stormy weather will decrease the feed intake of the ewe but will increase the energy demand.
- Any disorder that prevents the ewe from feeding adequately may bring on pregnancy toxaemia, e.g. lameness, teeth issues, internal parasites. In some grazing systems, where the ewes are heavily stocked, the competition for feed may be too high, and the sheep become starved or fed inadequately. Ewes with multiples are more susceptible than single bearing ewes. Older ewes have been reported to be more susceptible than younger ewes. Lack of exercise is sometimes reported to be a predisposing factor.

**CLINICAL FEATURES** Not all of the symptoms listed will be evident in all cases.

Early stages:

- Affected ewe separates herself from the mob
- Appears depressed

- Loss of appetite
- Reluctant to move, often seen as the sheep who lags behind from the mob when shifted (it may take longer to notice these stages if the ewes are set stocked and not shepherded often)

Mid-stages:

- Affected ewes will become more depressed
- Head can be carried in an unnatural position
- Ewe may appear blind and may wander aimlessly
- Show little reaction to dogs or a human
- If forced to move the ewe may stagger or crash into obstacles
- Wool can be easily plucked from the body
- Neuromuscular symptoms may also appear, such as twitching of the ears and muscles surrounding eyes and muzzle, teeth grinding, and frothing at the mouth

End stages:

- Ewe may become cast
- Stargazing, where the ewe will tilt her head towards the sky

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- The ewe may abort the foetus; sometimes the act of lambing aids the prognosis of the ewe, although most lambs are born dead
- Eventually, coma and death

The treatment of pregnancy toxaemia is difficult and produces variable results. Early treatment is the most important factor in a successful recovery. Once the ewe shows severe clinical symptoms or becomes cast, then renal (kidney) failure has probably occurred, and recovery is unlikely. Treatment involves provision of carbohydrate such as oral propylene glycol or intravenous dextrose. There are several solutions on the market which contain carbohydrate and other nutrients to aid the synthesis of glucose. Treatment also involves managing dehydration and maintaining appetite. Administration of calcium borogluconate under the skin is recommended. Maintaining appetite is very important—if the ewe starts to graze voluntarily then full recovery is more probable. It is important to leave affected ewes with normal ewes to encourage feeding, although adequate shelter is also required. Managing dehydration is also important and drinking water must be made available. Fluids can also be administered either orally or intravenously (a more expensive option). Caesarean section (performed by a veterinarian) reduces the metabolic demand of the foetus. This is more successful in the early stages of the disease.

#### PREVENTION

Providing adequate nutrition for pregnant ewes is the most important factor in preventing pregnancy toxaemia. The main guidelines for prevention are as follows:

- Prevent unnecessary fasting and stress in pregnant ewes—particular care should be taken with pre-lamb shearing or crutching to minimise the time ewes spend off-feed.
- Adequately feed pregnant ewes, including preferentially feeding ewes carrying multiples. Base feeding levels on scanning data and the use of pregnancy feed tables.

Note that inclement weather raises the energy demand of ewes, especially if they have been shorn before lambing. Provide adequate shelter. Have supplement reserves and a plan ready to feed stock as early as possible following a storm.



#### HYPOCALCAEMIA

Sometimes referred to as **milk fever**. This disorder is caused by insufficient intake and absorption of calcium into the blood.

#### PREDISPOSING FACTORS

Due to the demands of the developing foetal skeleton, a heavily pregnant ewe will need to mobilise some of her own skeletal calcium in order to meet her calcium requirement.

Additional calcium goes into the milk. Therefore, hypocalcaemia is most commonly seen in late pregnancy and early lactation, although it can occasionally occur in dry sheep. The amount a ewe uses from her skeletal reserves depends on the diet she is consuming. These reserves must be replaced following lambing. If they are not, the ewe may be more susceptible to hypocalcaemia in subsequent pregnancies. Lush, actively grown pasture, dry mature summer pastures, wheat or concentrate feeds containing low calcium (less than 1g/kg DM) and high phosphorus may predispose the ewe to hypocalcaemia.

The main predisposing factors for hypocalcaemia are:

- Sudden changes in feed type or grazing regime
- Sudden increases in green feed
- Mustering and holding for crutching or shearing
- Access to sorrel or other oxalate-containing plants.

**CLINICAL SIGNS** The diagnosis is usually based on a history of a sudden change of feed or method, clinical signs and a rapid response to treatment. Blood samples can also be taken to assess calcium levels (these should be taken from at least five ewes).

- Initially ewes will stagger and seem hyperactive. • This rapidly progresses to the ewe becoming cast and then comatose. Their body position is usually one of sitting up with their head bent around to their flank.
- There may be no corneal reflex.
- You will often see bloating and regurgitation of stomach contents.
- Bearings (prolapse) can also occur in affected ewes.
- Untreated animals will usually fall into a deep coma and die within 24 hours.

#### TREATMENT

Treatment with calcium borogluconate under the skin will result in a rapid (within 15-30 minute) response to treatment. The ewe will get up, urinate, walk away and start feeding. Muscle tremors may also be evident. Low blood magnesium and glucose is also common in ewes affected with hypocalcaemia, therefore treatment with magnesium sulphate and glucose may also be warranted.

If the ewe does not respond quickly to treatment, it may be necessary to treat for pregnancy toxaemia (see section above) as this is a common effect of hypocalcaemia.

#### PREVENTION

Avoid stressful situations in late pregnancy and early lactation such as unnecessary mustering or yarding for long periods without feed. Introduce sheep gradually to any green feed crops. Do not transport heavily pregnant ewes. Give calcium supplements to grain fed animals, especially during drought conditions where pasture is not available.

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Pre-season message from PGG Wrightson

### Wool Specification Forms

A constant issue for wool brokers is the inaccuracy of wool specifications arriving at the wool store causing disruption to the otherwise streamlined through-store bale handling systems. Whilst most wool handlers and wool classers pride themselves on doing a good job in the wool shed, if the source document for the bale handling and warehousing functions is not accurate, time delays and additional costs associated with correcting the mistakes become major issues for wool store staff and management.

Too often brokers find an extra bale, or more than one bale with the same number, within a consignment. Often the description written on the bale label does not match the description written on the wool specification. Several lines in the same consignment and on the same specification are often given identical descriptions despite intention for the lines to be kept separate.

These are all things which create confusion for wool store staff, delays receiving bale weights and test data information for growers, and additional handling costs for brokers. The wool specification **MUST** be accurate, every bale **MUST** have a separate number, the total number of bales recorded on the specification **MUST** match the total number of bales transported, each line **MUST** be described correctly and differently from other lines, there **MUST** be a clear instruction that the specification accompanying each load is either complete to handle or to be held for further bales to follow later to complete individual lines, every load **MUST** be accompanied by a specification showing the grower's NZFAP ID number if they have one.

**PLEASE BE ACCURATE WHEN FILLING OUT WOOL SPECIFICATIONS. THERE CAN NEVER BE TOO MUCH INFORMATION RECORDED**

Wool Specification Sheet 2022.pdf ([pggwrightson.co.nz](http://pggwrightson.co.nz))





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# NZ WOOL CLASSERS ASSN. JUNE 2022 NEWSLETTER

(Reprinted with permission)

## 2022 AGM Classer Day Mosgiel Blair Davies of NZ Merino Company NZM Key Classing Message 2022/2023 Season

### BIN BALES

The cost of processing and transporting bin bales is making this part of our industry extremely expensive and inefficient. We are asking for your help, and we want to work with you to make a significant contribution to the reduction in the number of bin bales from every property for the coming season.

Owners, contractors, classers, leading wool handlers, and pressers can all play a role in this. We will all need to work together on this issue. To clarify so there is no confusion, we are talking about partitioned bales that go to binning and contain many different wool types, not single bales of the same type. We ask you as the classer to take ownership and most importantly have a plan.

This plan is not going to work if you say I will look at it on the last day of shearing, that is too late. You need to start thinking about this before the first day of shearing. I can't emphasise enough the importance of having a plan to make this work. A good starting point is to check how many bin bales there were last year, and what was in those bin bales.

You will need to check last year's tally book. Be aware of how many sheep are being shorn? Starting on the first day, be aware of part bales that are being accumulated. By pressing out bales in main lines slightly lighter (110kgs) or slightly heavier (195kgs) you will be able to eliminate some bin bales, but this will take planning. There should be no main line types in bin bales, i.e. no fleece, necks, backs, PCS, Bellies or 2nd Pcs and or Lox. Configure your bale weights so this does not happen. It's OK to combine certain types e.g. Hogget Necks and Backs and Hogget Bellies and Pcs. Many of you are already doing this. The key is to start your planning on the first day. We want to reduce the number of bin bales; we won't be able to eliminate them.

### SPINNERS CONTRACTS

Some growers may have Reda and or Lora Piana contracts. A full skirt is required. flanks, full back and necks must be removed along with any shorter wool. Classing must be specific for these contracts. Micron must be even and be of traditional crimp, keep bold crimp wools separate. Lines must be 95mm absolute max, keep longer and shorter wool separate. Absolutely no tender wool or degrees of tenderness will be accepted. Watch VM, you may need to skirt

deeper/heavier to remove Hore Hound as an example. VM max is 1.5%. Do not push the boundaries.

### PRE-SHEARING HOMEWORK

The key is communication before and during shearing. Meet the owner and contractor prior to the start of shearing. This is very important if you haven't classed at that property before. Check previous test results but use this as a guide only. Are there any climatic or genetic changes that will affect the makeup of that clip? What contracts are in place, different contracts require a different prep/skirting level.

Before you start check the shed, is it clean, number of bins. Skirting/classing tables are they fit for purpose? Organise and name your bins to suit you as the classer. Always do a demo skirt before the first run starts. This makes sure the leading wool handler has everybody on the same wavelength and is very important when you are using two skirting tables.

Shearing is the start of value add for the grower. By meeting the contract spec and/or gaining auction premiums that the commodity mkt is paying for good prep and good classing etc, you the classer and your team in the shed are adding value. The classer plays a very important role in the supply chain by monitoring the preparation and ensuring an excellent classing standard.

A key ingredient in good classing is to class what is in front of you, Like Wools with Like Wools. Don't worry if you are not hitting the contracted volumes, we will sort that out internally. We would rather have a shortfall for the contracted volume than have a whole line rejected because it doesn't meet the specs.

### AUCTION PREP AND CLASSING

If you are classing a shed where the wool is going to auction, do the best prep and classing. This will allow for any premiums that are available at that time. You are not classing to the current market but classing to what is in front of you. Once again Like Wools with Like Wools

### VM

Most contracts have a VM max of 1.5%. As stated earlier we know Hore Hound will be an issue in some areas this coming season. You may have to skirt heavier to remove as much as possible.



**GRASS** e.g. Barley

Grass lies parallel to the fibre and during the manufacturing process it is very difficult to remove. If there is any doubt this VM contamination must be removed.

**OTHER CONTAMINATION**

Every year we see contamination from items that end up in wool bales, e.g. singlets, towels and more recently masks. A towel or something similar can ruin a whole contract for the buyer. Be aware this is happening and put steps/checks in place to prevent it.

**DOCS TALLY BOOK/SPECIES**

A classer's good repour with the presser helps to eliminate mistakes. The classer should always check the tally book. If there are no mistakes in the Tally Book, then there should be no mistakes in the Species. If you as the classer are responsible for the species use the NZM electronic species, this prevents double up of bales numbers etc and allows

traceability within NZM'S ZQ brand. It is a requirement of ZQ that the speci is completed correctly and is accurate.

**PROFESSIONAL**

You as a classer are a professional in your field. Your handling of your staff should always be professional. An important part of our ZQ Ethical Wool Brand is social responsibility, within that platform everybody should be treated the same, fairly and shown respect, along with helping others. You will get a much better buy in from others if you look after them, help them and be kind. Be proud of what you are contributing to this industry and the important role you are playing. If you need help, please put your hand up. We are here to help you and we want to help you.

Good luck for the coming season from Blair Davies of NZ Merino Company



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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 #17, November 1980*) By Roland Sumner, AgResearch, Whatawhata Research Centre.

Reprinted with permission of BCSBA & Roland Sumner

### Part 5 – Nutritional and Seasonal Effects On Wool

I have previously likened wool growth to the output from a large number of machines on a factory floor and indicated how the quantity of merchandise produced by the machines varies with the time of year and level of feeding of the sheep. What about the quality of the product? Wool has several quality attributes of major importance to handcraft and commercial yarn production which are influenced by feeding level and time of year. The characteristics of greatest importance are fibre diameter, fibre length, presence of medullation, loose wool bulk and presence of unscourable discolouration.

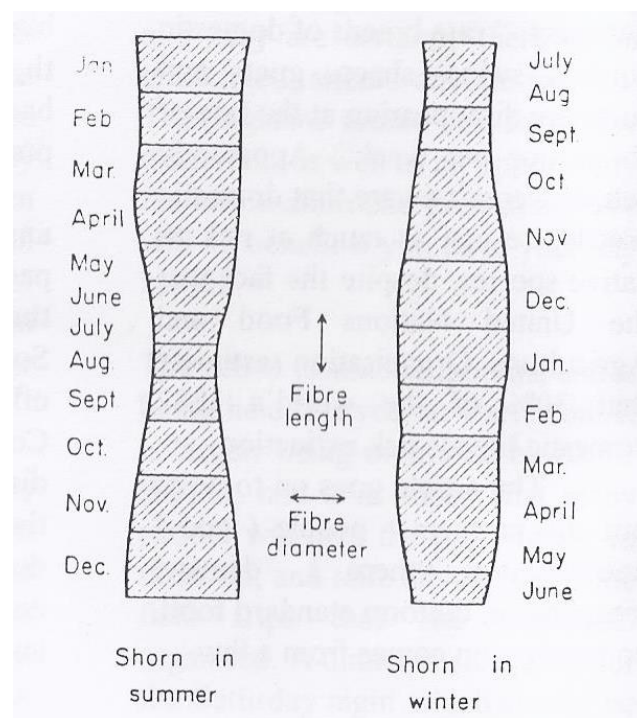
#### Fibre diameter and fibre length

The two most important characteristics are fibre diameter and fibre length. Fibre diameter affects spinnability while the length of fibres in a yarn affects its strength. Generally coarser fibres grow faster than finer fibres. Consequently, the heavier fleeces in a flock tend to be coarser and longer. Though this relationship is fairly strong the heaviest fleeces do not always have the longest staples. While it would also be reasonable to expect changes in fibre diameter and fibre length growth rate to occur together, fibre diameter and fibre length are not in complete unison.

Trials at both Massey University and AgResearch, Invermay, have shown that seasonal changes in fibre diameter occur about a month later than corresponding changes in fibre length. Thus, the maximum value for fibre length growth rate in the summer occurs about a month before the maximum value for fibre diameter. Similarly, the maximum values occur a month apart in winter. The result of these growth trends for a fibre shorn in mid-summer is shown diagrammatically in *Fig. 1*

As indicated in my previous article, wool growth is influenced by feeding level and is more responsive in the summer than the winter. The effect of this is that changes in diameter and length growth are not as smooth and gradual as *Fig. 1* would suggest. In reality we tend to have an area of thinning in the autumn and a further area of more marked thinning in the early spring. Though the chemistry of the wool fibre changes slightly during the year an overall relationship applies whereby the strength of a fibre is related to its cross-sectional area. Strength is important in commercial

processing and handcraft work. Longer fibres result in stronger yarns with less fibre wastage during processing. If fibres are going to break during processing, and there is always a small proportion that will, it is desirable that only a small portion breaks off rather than for the fibre to break in its middle. With reference to *Fig. 1* it is easy to see why autumn and spring shorn wool are preferred by processors to mid-summer shorn wools. Wool shorn in mid-winter would be the ideal, but this may not be practical on some farms. Management aspects related to timing of shearing will be



discussed in a later article.

*Figure 1 A diagrammatic representation of fibres shorn in summer or winter.*

#### Breaking and coting

Thinning of the fibre due to the stresses of pregnancy and lactation, superimposed on the already slow rate of wool growth during winter, result in a mild weakening of the fibre. This is referred to by the wool trade as unsoundness or tenderness.

If sheep receive a severe injury and experience continual pain or become very sick, and unable to feed, the wool follicles suddenly stop, or almost stop, growing fibre. Any fibres that do continue to grow will be much finer. Consequently, the wool staple will be much weaker at this point. This extreme degree of unsoundness is called break. Flystrike, and severe footrot, if not attended to for some time are sufficient to induce a break in the sheep's fleece.

Under conditions of prolonged mild stress such as ewes affected with facial eczema, some of the wool follicles growing coarser fibres keep growing slowly while the finer

fibres stop growing and are shed into the fleece. With continued wetting and drying, combined with the fleece blowing in the wind, the shed fibres work their way through the fleece with the formation of a matted or cotted fleece. Lightly matted fleeces are called soft cotts and heavily matted fleeces hard cotts. Cotts tend to form during the winter months when wool growth is slowest. Longer stapled lustrous wools are more prone to cotting than shorter down-type wools. Cotted second shear wools are uncommon. The stress of rearing twin lambs when carrying a full fleece, can be sufficient to induce cotting if the ewes are not fed adequately during early lactation. Cotting and break are serious wool faults. Before cotted wool can be used for yarn production, either commercially or as a handcraft, the fleece must be torn apart or opened. Commercial openers cause a considerable amount of fibre breakage. Tender wools also break during processing. Both faults thus result in an increased proportion of shorter fibres resulting in a weaker yarn. Consequently, there are price penalties for tender and cotted wools. As a word of warning, never include a cotted fleece in a line of free wool. The resultant damage to some delicate machinery at the mill can be very expensive to the processor.

### Medullation

Some coarser wool fibres, particularly in the britch region have a core of large air-filled cells, the medulla. Factors affecting the medullation were discussed in Part 1. Though medullation is considered desirable in adding increased wearability to carpets it may influence the dyeability of the wool. Medullated wool also tends to feel harsher, limiting its use in handcrafts.

### Bulk

The feel or handle of wool is also important. Many end-uses of wool requires the fibres to have an appearance and feeling

of fullness. Bulk is just this, the ability of wool to fill space. Farmers can relate to it as its ability to “fill the hand” or how many fleeces can be pressed in a bale. Lustrous Leicester/Lincoln wools have a low bulk where it is easy to press an overweight bale, whereas low lustre Dorset wool has a high bulk making it difficult to press a heavy bale. This same attribute is carried through to the end-product with bulk imparting a feeling of apparent density in the product made from the yarn. Bulk is strongly inherited and not affected by feeding or time of year.

### Yellowing

Studies of wool biology are generally applicable to both white and black pigmented wools. There is however, one area where pigmented wools superficially appear to differ and that is in respect of unscourable discolourations. Discolourations still occur with pigmented wools, it is just that we cannot see them. The most serious unscourable discolourations are yellow and called canary stain. It is likely that several types of yellow discolouration occur. As high humidity and warm temperatures are a major factor in the incidence of yellow discolourations they tend to form most commonly in spring and early summer. Autumn shorn second shear wools are more discoloured than spring shorn second shear wools. The earlier full wool sheep are shorn in the season, the better their colour is likely to be. Cotted fleeces are usually badly discoloured.

Good feeding all year and controlled stock management are necessary to grow sound wool with good fleece weight suitable for a variety of end uses.



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	M	L	XL	XXL	3XL
½ Chest	56	58.5	61	63.5	66
Centre Back	69.4	71.4	73.4	75.4	77.4

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(Courtesy The Clip -Campaign for Wool #8, July 2022)



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The **Closing Date** for next issue of the newsletter will be **November 20<sup>th</sup> for the December 2022 newsletter.**

**Please get items in well before the deadline!!!**

**"FEATURE BREED" will be Texels**

If you would like to be part of this section 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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