

# Sheep NewZ

#29 Summer 2022



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**Note: Suffolks are the next Feature Breed, Issue #30**

### Hello Members,

Once again, a big Thankyou to Ian McCall for supplying some photos from the NZ Agricultural show.

Also, thanks to the Texel breeders who have so willingly supported the Texel feature this issue. It makes the task so much easier with articles readily to hand.

On pages 14 & 15 is an article on lamb weaning from a Beef+Lamb New Zealand factsheet, “Deciding When to Wean Your Lambs”. For reasons of space in the NewZ, I have not included the scenarios - they are available online.

A reminder from Greg: - **Office is closing 22 December and reopening Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy & Prosperous New Year

*Helen McKenzie*  
**Editor**

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Email: [rosemarkie@wise.net.nz](mailto:rosemarkie@wise.net.nz)

### A Bit of History



Shropshires return to Canterbury Ram Sale after approx. 60year absence! Ram is Highley 372/21, sold to Emma Pollitt.

#### Front cover photo

Jim Sharrat, Karaka Stud, with some of his ram lambs

## ASSOCIATION NEWS & VIEWS

### From The President



Hello to all members, and welcome to the summer edition of Sheep Newz.

Summer has barely arrived with the cold spring continuing well into what should have been warmer climes. The grass was very slow to emerge in most of this part of

Canterbury, which in turn impacted on lamb growth, with several of the early lambing farms commenting that they were 2-3 weeks behind.

The round of on-farm lamb sales just got underway and with a very good rain in most parts of Canterbury this week - 70mm in our area. Conditions should favour not only the vendors but the purchasers as well.

The New Zealand Agricultural show a couple of weeks ago was a huge success, not only in attendance - more than 110,000 people through the gate. Bearing in mind under 18's had free admission, this was a terrific result.

The sheep section was as good as always, although entries were back a bit, with close to 800 sheep entries. This was probably to be expected considering we haven't had a show since 2019.

As always at Canterbury the quality of sheep on display was very good. I was particularly impressed with the Supreme Meat Breed sheep - a Hampshire exhibited by the Butterick family - a very well-balanced ram hogget with great muscle tone and a very smooth disposition about him. It will be interesting to watch this sheep's progress.

As Christmas gets nearer there never seems to be enough hours in the day.

I wish members all the best for the upcoming festive season and I hope you all have a successful ram selling season.

*Tom Burrows*  
**President NZSBA**





## From The General Manager

**Flu rather than covid-19** - I've only just recovered from the flu, yes remember before covid-19 we used to get the flu and 600 persons would die a year from it. I must say as I haven't had the pandemic yet the flu strain I received knocked me and I have taken a few weeks to recover.



**The NZ Agricultural Show** – yes this iconic show in Canterbury came back after a hiatus of a couple of years. The entries a bit down, the weather behaved itself and the public starved of activities like shows attended in their droves.

It was great catching up with members, but also noticeable for those members who weren't there. Still missing were the Merinos as they now have gone to Wanaka.

The Valais Blacknose had their own standalone tent down the main avenue, and it will be interesting if they decide to continue.

**Breed Conferences – 2023** – organisers need to firm up on dates for their conferences in 2023 and contact the office. With breeds not having had the opportunity to meet for two years everyone should be looking forward to 2023 and taking the opportunity to join their breeds conference.

In the sheep world it is just so that important members meet periodically.

**NZSBA Website** – has now been updated and in a different format. – BREEDS should continue to provide photos of your sheep and update any information that needs updating. Any published articles should also be included on your webpage.

### NEW

**Sheep for sale** – you can now go to our website and sell sheep online. Once on our site, go to sheep sales, then create add. Very simple directions.

Jobs/Grazing – also all online now

**Annual Return** – now if you wish you will be able to complete the Annual Return on-line. The office will be contacting you before Christmas to enquire if you still want a hard copy.

**NZSBA Promotion – Country Wide** – it was agreed at the July Council meeting we will continue with a series of ads in the Country Wide in December and January. The ads now will be without a picture. **Look out for them!**

**NZSBA Flock Book – 2022** – the flock book has been published and circulated to those members who require a hard copy and is also online. Should you wish to purchase a copy, please contact the office.

**No Annual Returns** – Some meetings are very upset with their members refusing to complete an Annual Return as they seem happy to pay the \$50.00 fine instead.

Breed Committees are now actively approaching those members and encouraging them to complete their Returns.

**Commemorative Jerseys - for sale – CHRISTMAS PRESENTS!!**

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 let's hope Ram Selling goes well, and here's hoping for a normal 2023

**So, all of the above, and a big thankyou to Helen, and here's hoping for a positive 2023!**

**Greg Burgess  
General Manager  
NZSBA**





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## Feature Breed

### Texels



#### Brief History

The modern Texel originated on the island of Texel, above Holland in the North Sea, when the small native Texel breed was crossed with Lincoln, Leicester and Wensleydales in the late 19th century. Because of the harsh and often bleak conditions they had to develop invaluable characteristics.

They gained the ability to thrive despite a short growing season and often poor-quality pasture, meaning they became very efficient at feed conversion and growing no waste.

The Texel is well known in many countries as a breed which transmits its qualities to its progeny when used for crossing purposes.

#### Arrival in New Zealand & up to today

*(Contributed by Rob Forsyth)*

1985 saw the original Texels from Denmark and Finland enter full NZ quarantine. There were two importers, Animal Enterprises, a private company headed by Don Tate; and Ag Research, a government owned agency. While the initial imports came from the same countries, both importers had different objectives. Animal Enterprises saw the Texel as a purebred or first cross animal, whereas Ag Research were concentrating on the crossbreeding benefits to the sheep industry. The commonality however, was to improve the carcass composition of the then dominant sheep breeds, Romney, Perendale, Suffolk and Poll Dorset. Both goals were achieved, borne out by the influence Texel genetics has had on both terminal and maternal breeding/crossbreeding programmes for many years.

I was fortunate enough to be involved with the initial importation of Texels by Animal Enterprises. Here were sheep with meat hanging in all the right places, good temperament, and bold distinct features. A genetic footprint that has evolved into what we have today.

Texel NZ members were, and still are, quick adopters of new technologies – eye muscle and CT scanning to identify superior meat yield and intramuscular fat (IMF); and partially

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## FARMERS WEEKLY

funding the identification of the Myomax and Microphthalmia gene markers which have been industry good initiatives. The late Don Tate, a partner and GM of Premier Texels instigated what is now the Texel Across Flock (TAF).

This enabled members to identify genetics that would improve their breeding programme without outside influence from other breeds as occurs with SIL. Texels are measured against Texels. The value and contribution the TAF has made to the industry should not be underestimated.

The great thing about breeding is that it can be both communal, or as individual as you want. This allows breeders to bring their breeding objectives to life and see if they work or not. Diversity is a breeder's best friend and where most innovation comes from. Examples of this are the Pattersons working on short tails, Garry Latta seeing if Intramuscular fat can be accurately measured using ultra sound and CT scanning and Roger Weber, Graham Colquhoun and myself trying to unravel the complexities of Facial Eczema (FE) in Texels. FE is a terrible disease, deserving a far larger budget.

The current emphasis on low input sheep genetics is a perfect fit for Texels. Originally being from the island of Texel meant they had to make do with what was available from native vegetation to seaweed. A purebred Texel has at least three metres of extra gut length enabling it to extract every megajoule of energy available. Unfortunately, no PB Texels

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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.”*

were eligible for the low input trial due to hoop jumping criteria. They would have made a great control and kept everyone honest. An opportunity lost BLG.

UK Texel genetics have been used in many breeding programmes over the last four seasons, going full circle it seems, as some breeders want the more traditional Texel look. Interestingly, CT scanning shows NZ Texels have more meat than their UK brothers. Looks can be deceiving.



✓ A line of Texel lambs awaiting tailing at Egilshay Stud  
**Photo:** Alistair McLeod

Texel NZ conducted a breeder survey earlier this year. It was instigated and run by our co-chairperson Heather Busby. It has given our committee plenty to work on now. Going forward it will enable future committees to continue what has been started and build on it. I would encourage all breed societies to engage in something like this. It maps a pathway to go forward with your breed.

Texel breeding objectives have and will change in the future and as guardians of those genetics we need to be visionary and ahead of the game, something I believe we have achieved over the last 32 years. The tangible gains Texel genetics have made to the NZ sheep breeding industry can be seen and judged by the farmers we serve. No other sheep breed has been more influential than the Texel in giving the NZ sheep industry the only true dual-purpose package.

### Description

The breed description starts from the premise that the role of the Texel breed in New Zealand is to be not only a superior terminal sire for high quality lamb meat but also as a sire of crossbred daughters suited to a wide range of environment as a highly efficient dual-purpose ewe.

### Bodyweight

**Ewes:** North Island 60 - 70kg with some heavier  
South Island 70 -80kg

**Rams:** 85-110 kgs

### Meat

Fine grained, lean growth (less fat produced in proportion to the weight of meat).

### Breeding/Lambing

Lambing %- NI 130-170% (FE effects lambing %)  
SI 140-200%

### Numbers

Registered ewes – around 6,300

### Wool

**Fibre diameter:** 28-35microns

**Fleece:** Dense with a blocky tip and high bulk around 30cm/3g. Good colour, low lustre with well-defined crimp and staple formation

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**STUD PROFILE #1**  
**Seneschal Stud Flock #334 (MC)**  
**Established 2016, Pukekohe**  
**Owned by Gavin Deadman**



Waikato show. Ram was Reserve Champion Meat Breed & Champion Texel. **Photo:** Sarah Catherwood

I began the Seneschal Texel flock in 2016 with ewes that were purchased at Shirley Hayes 'Pineacre' stud auction and had them sent north. These foundation ewes have set a nice meaty type for me and had the added bonus of being Microphthalmia clear. I now have around 40 ewes and sell rams to commercial and lifestyle clients each summer.

I also have Poll Dorset and Southdown flocks, so it is interesting to compare the breeds. They are run together most of the year. I find the Texels to be hardy and good doers; very maternal, good to handle and easy care. Being in north Waikato, facial eczema can be punishing in summer when conditions are ripe (high humidity and night temperatures above 12°, and ryegrass trash under the pasture is the ideal for eczema fungal spores to explode) Texels don't have a lot of resistance to this and I bolus the ewes with a zinc bullet that helps with prevention. Despite this, on a bad year, some sheep may still get affected. It's extremely debilitating and the prognosis is basically cull or death.

Breeding for resistance is a long, expensive, and difficult road however for the Texel breed to flourish up this way it could be the only way forward.

I am grateful to David Burn in Dannevirke who I have got a couple of good Kowhai Glen rams from over the years including a touch of UK genetics. I've enjoyed seeing an improvement in muscling and type in the progeny.

I recently had some success at the Waikato A & P show, winning Best Texel and Reserve Champion Meat Breed with a ram hogget.

## Texel winners at The NZ Agricultural show 2022

Photos: Ian McCall



▲ Don Edgecombe with his Supreme Champion Texel ram



▲ LM holding her Champion Texel ewe



▲ Don Edgecombe with his reserve champion ram hogget

'I, who fall short in managing my own affairs, can see just how it would profit my neighbour if I managed his.'

Anne Ellis (1875-1938, American Pioneer)

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**STUD PROFILE #2****KARAKA STUD      Flock # 318****Established 2010, Invercargill****Owned by Jim Sharratt**

^ Some of Jim's lambs

I was asked to do this stud profile for the Texel feature having been a registered breeder in the UK before moving to NZ, highlighting the differences between the farming operations.

I was brought up on a hill farm in the Peak District, Northern England. Upon leaving school I started working for the Wilson's of Woodside Farm as a head stockman for their 'Tunstead' pedigree herd of Charolais cattle, eventually becoming manager. 1990 after being there for 9 years the Wilson's retired from farming and leased the farm to me. That is when I purchased my first Texels, building the stud up to 80 ewes, the high point coming in 2008 in achieving top joint price for a ram hogget at the Carlisle Ram Fair, 12,000 pounds.

In 1991, I started my own sheep and cattle pregnancy scanning and contract sheep dipping business, travelling to NZ and Western Australia annually. That was my initial introduction to NZ. In 2002 I took on the tenancy of a bigger farm, 265 acres plus high country grazing rights from the Lowther Estates, while still continuing to pregnancy scan in England, NZ and Western Australia. On the Lowther Estate farm, we ran 700 breeding ewes, comprising of 620 crossbred ewes lambing outside in May with an average lambing scan percentage of 165; 80 stud ewes lambing inside in February with a 170% lambing. 70 breeding cows which were housed inside for up to 7 months of the year depending on how wet the autumn and spring were. This is done to stop plugging – a real problem. Stock inside is very labour intensive.

The average stud flock in the UK is only between 30 to 40 ewes. The big difference is in the number of embryos done there. Some studs doing multiple hundreds of embryos in a year. Around 50% of the stud animals are sold as ram hoggets (called gimmers) at about 7 months of age in a weight range

from 75 to 100 kgs, at auction where stud and commercial buyers compete alike. Very few ram hoggets or rams are sold on the farm. This does make it easier for new breeders to get started, unlike here where established studs have their regular client list - very hard to get your foot in the door.

One of the real differences between the two countries is how lamb, mutton and beef is sold. Most of it is sold on the hoof across the auction floor, with lambs in pens from 2 to 20 where butchers and supermarket buyers compete. This system gives the farmer direct feedback on what the market wants. Even within the same breed on a 40kg liveweight Texel lamb there can be a difference of a third more in price, and a lot more between different breeds. And this is all because a butcher knows what he can make off a certain farmer's lambs. About 30% are sold as dead weight lambs and are sold on a grid system graded on conformation, the better the conformation, the higher the premium. This is why, in the UK, Texels are breed of choice.

With the ever-increasing regulations, compliance costs and paperwork imposed on farmers in the UK, I just got fed up. Having been coming out here scanning since 1994, we decided to make the move in 2009. NZ unfortunately is moving down that same path. Bought a property just out of Masterton and that year bought my first Texel ewes from Peter Morris and started the Karaka Texel Stud. Lambed out 35 ewes this year. The Texels here through upgrading and environment have evolved into a plainer looking animal that I was used to.

So, in 2017 when the restrictions of the importation of semen was lifted, Roger Weber 'Grasmere Texels' and I started importing semen. Presently we have imported semen from 10 different sires. In December 2019, Roger and I purchased a 2/3 shear in a triplet ewe lamb at the SELECT 7 ELITE EWE Sale, top 1% on UK index and the highest animal for gigot BV at the auction. Collected 9 embryos in 2020 and implanted them in April 2021 getting 7 live lambs.

I am really pleased with the progress I have made since introducing UK genetics and the present crop of lambs on the ground out of one of the embryo rams are the best yet for breed character, growth, muscle and bone here or in the UK. All sires from Karaka are footrot DNA and CT scanned.

In 2021 I moved to Robertson Road, Mabel Bush, Southland and I can't believe the power of the land here, by far the best ground I have ever raised stock on.

Using Texels to me is a 'no brainer', their superior yielding ability, great mothering qualities and ability to convert rough feed.



**Footnote:**

Earlier in the year Texel breeders Alistair & Karen McLeod of *Egilshay* Stud, purchased a ram lamb from Southland Texel breeder, Jim Sharratt, *Karaka* Stud.

Karaka 'Tyson' 24-21 is 50% English 'Duke' bloodline. As a ram lamb we mated him to approx. 60 mixed aged ewes this last season with no lambing issues. We are really impressed with his progeny, some of which we consider to be outstanding. He has bred an even line of nicely shaped Texel lambs, with heavy bone, that are very well muscled and with good clean colour. We were very happy in general with our lambing this season, with all ewes lambing producing a tidy range of good looking Texels. They seem to be thriving in their new environment in the Maniototo.



▲ Ewes with lambs at foot by Karaka Tyson

**Photo:** Alistair McLeod

## Texels and Meat-Eating Quality

For the ten or so years that the Canterbury A & P Association "Mint Lamb" competition was sponsored by Alliance, it was won by a Texel lamb four or five times. In the 2021 "Mint Lamb" competition sponsored by South Pacific Meats, Class 1 (14.6-20.5 kgs) was won by a Texel/Romney lamb; and in Class 3 (Ram Breeders) Texel lambs were placed 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>.

Texels have the ability to grow to larger liveweights whilst depositing less fat on the carcass. Texels have a higher lean: fat ratio in lambs. At the same carcass weight Texels are leaner, have less fat and have a higher market value. So Texels produce optimum lambs for today's grading specifications and any system paying on yield. At present we are paid for carcass weight, adjusted for GR.

Using GR as a measure of maturity, carcass value increases from low GR to an optimum and declines at higher GR. The

advantage of moderate fat levels, is guaranteed acceptable levels of intramuscular fat. Perhaps it is time to select for optimum fat rather than minimum fat.

But maybe GR isn't the best measure of maturity and what we need to look at is muscle maturity. The reason carcass value increases as GR increases is because muscles are maturing as well and are still growing (particularly in the high value cuts) when GR is supposed to be limiting lean meat yield.

For meat-eating quality to be maximised the amount of intramuscular fat needs to be considered. This is influenced by lamb growth rate, target slaughter weight, and management. Each lamb has an optimum slaughter weight. The optimum slaughter weight is related to the level of maturity of the lamb, which is related to the mature weight of the sheep.

I have spent the last ten years CT scanning my Texel ram lambs to measure carcass composition. A carcass consists of meat (lean), fat and bone. Change the proportion of one and the other two change in the opposite direction. The CT Fat component is the subcutaneous and intermuscular fat.

For the last seven years I have been assessing the intramuscular fat in the carcass from the loin image of the CT scan, independently of CT fat.

I have been told the average intramuscular content in NZ lamb loin is 2.6%. My Texel ram lambs consistently average above 3.0% for IMF. The range of liveweight at CT scanning has been 42-60kgs, with a corresponding IMF range of 3.1-3.8%. These figures are averages.

You might say that is all very well, but how does that translate to farm productivity. I mate my Texel rams to Romney ewes. For the 2021-2022 season my Texel/Romney lambs averaged 18.0kgs with an average yield of 56.5%. 95% of the carcasses qualified for a yield payment and 92% of the carcasses qualified for the "hand-picked" premium. I will let you do the sums.

The conclusion I have come to for assessing lambs for carcass composition is do it at your target slaughter weight, it is the most relevant because lambs need to be at their optimum (muscle) maturity at that weight.

This is my opinion, and in no way reflects the thoughts on the subject, of other Texel breeders.

*Garry Latta.*

Redwood Texels.

Fairlie, South Canterbury



## Microphthalmia

By Alistair McLeod, *Egilshay* Texels

Microphthalmia is a recessive gene found in various animals which causes varying degrees of blindness. This disease was found in the Texel breed soon after it was released from quarantine in NZ in the early 90's.

Through research, a gene marker was eventually found, giving breeders the ability to test and therefore identify carriers. Animals may be born obviously blind or as 'carriers.' Without testing, carriers will show no obvious sign of having this recessive gene. From here an elimination programme was put in place to ensure breeders were not passing the gene on in their sires. This has evolved into an option to have an MC accredited flock (microphthalmia clear) where all animals are tested or bred only from 'tested clear' stock.

Numbers of carriers over the years have reduced significantly, in registered purebred flocks due to the strict rules applied by Texel NZ. Unfortunately, however, non-registered and crossbreed flocks not testing can still leak the disease into commercial flocks. This is one of the reasons why purchasing Texels from a registered Texel breeder is very important.

## FE and Texels

By Rob Forsyth, *Premier* Texels

Facial eczema (FE) used to be a North Island problem as far back as the 1960s. No farms are safe in the North Island now and it's moving South. FE has been found at the top of the South Island, the West Coast and North Canterbury. The cost to the farming industry is in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

I have experienced first-hand the animal welfare and financial cost of facial eczema on our farm in Central Hawkes Bay. We began ram guard testing 50% Texel rams in 2013 in partnership with fellow breeder Roger Weber. We went to a few FE gold meetings and had a half day master class with the grandfather of FE breeding, Edward Dinger, who promptly told us that we would be very old or possibly dead before we would achieve anything with Texels.

Our FE Texel group grew to three with the addition of Graham Colquhoun and we are known as FE TEXEL ELITE. Through sporidesmin testing we began to make slow but steady progress. Texels are known to store Copper in their liver and elevated copper suppresses the uptake of zinc which aids in the expulsion of FE spores.

Could this be the reason Texels were known to be susceptible to FE?

Tricia Johnson at AG Research Invermay is currently conducting a study on the correlation between elevated copper levels and tolerance to FE across several sheep breeds. In the meantime, we have discovered a Texel ram that survived an extremely severe natural challenge which has turned out to be genetic gold. This ram will change where Texels can live.

FE is an animal welfare issue, so if you sell rams into FE areas, please start ram guard testing to prove that your genetics won't let your clients and the industry down.

Texel FE elite 64/16 bred by Graeme & Roslyn Colquhoun from Matamata, in partnership with Rob & Kathy Forsyth (Premier) and Roger Weber (Grasmere) survived a natural 2 million spores challenge as a ram lamb. The following year he was Ramguard tested at 42 (the maximum allowed) and passed with a nil rise. He has crossbred progeny on the ground tested and passed at .6 with a nil rise.

*64/16 is one of the foundation sires of Texel FE Elite. ✓*



*Stud Texel rams*

**Photo:** Rob Kent

Right, 4-year-old Bell-View 010/18 aka "Ding-dong" named for his breeding (as well as other more obvious attributes), and Left, 15 month old hogget Maple Genetics 21288/21 aka "Tachydar" named for his Welsh grand-sire, Vorn Aberystwyth.

Rob Kent, *KMG Stud* Limited (Onga Texels)

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*"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*




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## Opinion Piece by Jon Hickford

### Welcome Back

After the interruption of COVID-19, it was great to be back at the New Zealand Agricultural Show. It is a weakness I know, but I still call it the Christchurch A&P Show, albeit I also accept many people still associate me with Lincoln College. It has only been 30 years since we changed that name.

What a show it was with respect to attendance and enjoyment, and that despite the wild winds on the Friday. The gate recorded more than 115,000 attendees, and if that sounds a lot, and it was, then think about that as just about 1 in every 10 South Islanders!

I think that attendance is a really good thing, not just because it allows the organisers to address their stretched balance sheet, but also because it suggests that the rural-urban divide may not be as pronounced as we at times think it is. But can we be sure?

The talk of taxing GHG emissions makes farmers think they are being got at by Government, and they are, so that was always going to be an issue at this show. Contrast the treatment of our farmers with how other carbon polluters like

the airline industry are treated. After the Michael Cullen bailout to the effect of \$885 million back in 2002, which gave the Crown an 82% stake in the airline, they have (since COVID), shored them up with another near billion dollars of loan facility, and they snuck this through (doesn't that sound familiar) without undertaking a climate impact assessment as they were required to do under their own Cabinet rules. But don't worry, we can just plant a few more pine trees....

Meantime, and despite climate change apparently being a nuclear-free moment, this same Government dropped the fuel excise tax and RUCs to ease the cost-of-living crisis. True some of this crisis was unavoidable courtesy of Mr Putin's war in the Ukraine, and a bit of supply reduction skulduggery led by those good global citizens, the Saudi Arabians. However, if the average motorist who goes for a bit of a motoring jaunt for the weekend felt a bit more pain in their pocket, that might hasten the switch to more fuel-efficient cars and reduce consumption. Don't forget that the worst traffic on the Southern and Northern Motorways out of Auckland are at holiday weekends, so it's hard to argue that these super-roads are being built just for commercial traffic.

Talk of nuclear free moments, also highlights the sheer lunacy of importing coal for electricity generation at Huntly. I never had much time for the blustering David Lange, so while stopping nuclear armed ships was something that I accepted,



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**FARMERSWEEKLY**

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the dismissal of nuclear-powered electricity generation was something that we might live to regret. That may well be the case for Germany, where they decided some time back to trust Mr Putin and use natural gas (which produces carbon dioxide) to generate power. No surprises then when the German government recently announced its plans to keep the Isar 2 and Neckarwestheim nuclear power plants that were being decommissioned, online and available, if the country has no other option to keep warm this winter. For the record (because we aren't reminded enough), Lange's often quoted 1985 Oxford Union debate cry of "I can smell the uranium on your breath", wasn't directed at the US or any other world leader. It was directed to the televangelist Reverend Jerry Falwell, the man who later claimed that 9/11 represented God's judgment on America's sinful behaviour. Hmmm....

David Lange, the then leader of the Labour party, was also the person that claimed agriculture was "a sunset industry", because he believed New Zealand's reliance on agriculture was diminishing and the country should now be focusing on manufacturing and tourism. I am not quite sure what Mr Lange thought we in New Zealand, or anywhere else for that matter were going to eat, but a statement like certainly underlines how great the rural-urban divide may have been in the past. We all know that farming equals food, and in New Zealand's case food exports and the foreign exchange they generate allow us to buy things overseas, including handy things like vaccines!

This brings me back to the Show. Perhaps the record gate was simply because the people of Christchurch like the idea of a fun day out, and who can blame them after earthquakes, fires, Mosque shootings and COVID-19. However, maybe it also reflects the fact that despite COVID-19 and the absence of the apparently important tourists, our economy ticked along quite nicely for at least two years, until the inflationary pressure from Government tipping money into the economy started to bite. Little wonder too, when we see that export data revealed that New Zealand's food and fibre exports for the year ending June 2022 leapt to \$53.3 billion, adding \$1.1 billion to the expected \$52.2 billion announced in June. Agriculture Minister, Damien O'Connor, noted that meat and dairy led the charge in bringing an additional \$1.1 billion into our economy, but is that a reason to tax them?

So, in the context of that rural-urban divide, and whether the average urban New Zealand understand the impact of the proposed emissions tax, then maybe, and it is an optimistic maybe, the attendees of the Show do value our farmers, our wealth producers, the people who underpin our agriculture and horticulture led export economy. Maybe deep down, they respect those who get up tirelessly every day to farm and produce food. Perhaps they really do know how important it is to our well-being. But then maybe I am fooling myself....

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## 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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**NZ OWNED AND OPERATED SOLAR COMPANY**

"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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## FACTSHEET

# Deciding when to wean your lambs

August 2022

### Deciding on your lamb weaning date/dates

Ideally, your weaning date/dates achieve two goals:

- ① **Maximise profit from lamb sales, and**
- ② **Ewes' target condition is met, so next year's productivity is not compromised.**

This factsheet outlines the factors that impact on weaning date and includes example scenarios.

### Factors affecting weaning date

Deciding exactly when to wean is influenced by several factors – all of which can change over the course of spring:

1. Lamb age, weight and growth rates
2. Ewe weight, condition and stage of lactation
3. Feed quality – now and in future
4. Feed available – now and in future
5. Cost of supplements
6. Animal health status of ewes and lambs
7. Lamb prices – store and schedule.

While farmers generally have their own guidelines for exactly when to wean – such as single lambs hitting a specified weight, or ewe condition falling below a pre-determined threshold – the key is to regularly assess the above variable factors.



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## Maximising profit from lambs

When considering weaning date in relation to optimising lamb sales, there are some useful biological facts to be aware of:

### Lamb growth

Growth rates peak in the period three to six weeks after lambing (averaging 250-350g/head/day).

Growth can stay high in late lactation (eight weeks onwards), but only if pasture quality is very high (at least 11MJME/kgDM) and feed allowances are high.

By eight weeks old, lamb growth rates are generally declining, with very little growth benefit from the ewe's milk.

### Lamb grazing

Lambs start eating pasture at about two weeks old and can fully digest it by three weeks.

However, lambs weaned before six weeks cannot simply make up for the lost milk by suddenly eating more pasture.

Lambs weaned before eight weeks will typically grow slower than lambs left on their mothers, unless higher quality forage is available.

### Singles vs twins

Single lambs will nearly always grow faster than twin or triplet lambs – even with preferential feeding of multiples – because singles receive so much more milk throughout lactation.

### Weaning check

If ewes and lambs are well fed with high-quality pasture and ewes are milking well, weaning between eight and 12 weeks will reduce lamb growth.

Lighter lambs often have less of a weaning check than heavier lambs.

If lambs are within 2-3kg of sale weight, they will reach sale date faster if left on the ewes.

## Maintaining ewe condition

Determining your weaning date is not only about lamb weights and their immediate profit. The lamb side of the equation must be balanced up against ewe condition.

Putting weight on ewes over summer is a relatively expensive exercise, especially in summer-dry regions. It takes a staggering 65MJME (6-7kgDM) to put 1kg back onto a ewe post weaning.

Therefore, the general rule of thumb is to wean ewes at or above their target mating Body Condition Score (BCS) for the following year. That way, no condition gain is required over summer and ewes can be used to clean up aged or dried grass, helping condition pastures.

When considering weaning date in relation to maintaining ewe condition, be aware of:

### Post weaning weight gain

As you would expect, no longer feeding a lamb means the ewe has more energy free for maintenance and condition gain. If you feed ewes at the same rate as pre-weaning, they can be expected to gain weight at about 50g/head/day.

Conversely, if you want to hold ewe condition post weaning, budget on reducing feed intake by 20%.

### High energy feed options

For ewes to gain weight at 100g/day, a high energy feed (at least 11MJME/kgDM) is needed, such as lucerne or summer brassica. These crops require careful prior planning to have on hand in summer.



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**Book Review – Counting Sheep, a celebration of the Pastoral Heritage of Britain by Philip Walling, 2014**

ISBN 978 1 84668 505 7

(From the dust jacket) – with his eye for the idiosyncratic, Philip Walling meets some of the sixty native breeds that thrive in this [UK] country, weaving from them a story of wool, money and history, of merchants and farmers and

shepherds, and above all, of the soil. He tells us about each breed, learns about their past and confronts the present realities of sheep farming, re-discovering along the way the fields of Britain, where he finds a life running parallel to modern existence, struggling to remain unchanged.

*A very readable book on UK sheep breeds – Helen, Editor*

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### HOW IS TRACEMOL LIFT USED?

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- Poured on hay or grain
- In milk used to rear calves
- Available in 20 L, 200 L and 1000 L

### WHEN IS TRACEMOL LIFT USED?

- Ideal in times of stress such as docking, calving and weaning when the animal's demand for minerals and vitamins are high.
- Pre-mating when higher levels of minerals such as selenium or iodine are beneficial.
- Whenever soils, and consequently pastures, are deficient in essential minerals required by stock.
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Photos from the NZ Agricultural Show, Christchurch



*L & C Drummond's Supreme Champion Dorper & best carcase Meat Breed sheep at The NZ Agriculture Show*

**Photo:** Ian McCall



*Lochaire partnership's Champion Poll Dorset ewe*

**Photo:** Ian McCall



**Photo:** James Hoban

*South Suffolk ram, Glenafric 13-19 who won supreme Champion South Suffolk. He was third in the best meat sheep of the show.*



*Highley Stud's Supreme Champion Shropshire, ram over 18 months*

**Photo:** Emma Pollitt



*Centre: Rachel Cooper (from England, working at Glenafric over summer) holding the Hoban family's Champion Corriedale ewe. Left: judge, Milton Savage, from Victoria and Australian Corriedale young ambassador, Katrina Abbott, from NSW. Right: James Hoban background with his Reserve Champion ewe.*

*The Champion ewe is Parham Hill 171-17. She went on to win the Supreme Champion Corriedale award, the best SIL recorded Corriedale ewe and the Dual-Purpose breeds Super Ewe competition the following day.*

**Photo:** Hoban family



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## WOOL – AND HOW IT GROWS

A revised series of article on aspects of wool biology.

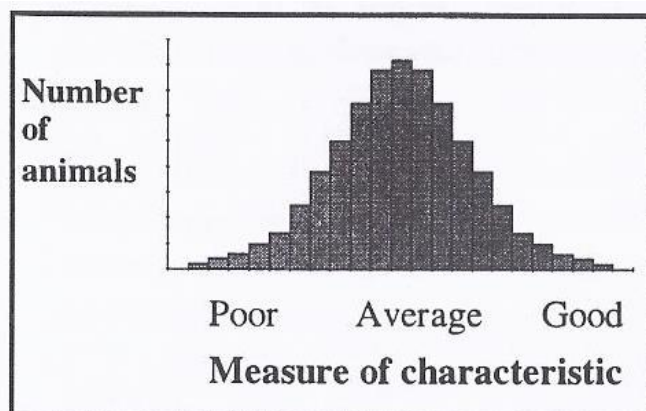
(First published in *Black & Coloured Sheepbreeders' magazine Issue #17, November 1980*) By Roland Sumner, AgResearch, Whatawhata Research Centre.

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## Part 6 – Wool Improvement Through Breeding

So far in this series of articles I have discussed how wool grows, emphasising the importance of good feeding. In this article I want to discuss wool improvement through breeding.

The expression of any production characteristic is not identical for all animals in a group. There is always variation, which if drawn as a graph looks like this:



This variability arises because each production characteristic is the result of a multitude of biochemical and physiological processes controlled by a multitude of genes.

One of the challenges of farming, whether it be a small or a large farm, is to use this variability and improve the performance of all the animals being farmed and not just the odd one in a group. In the case of characteristics controlled by single gene pairs the outcome of specific matings can be readily predicted according to the principles of “Mendelian” genetics and changes can be easily introduced. When a multitude of genes are involved prediction of the outcome of particular matings cannot so easily be predicted even though each gene pair involved itself obeys the principles of mendelian genetics. Complexities of higher mathematics become involved, and the area of study is termed “population genetics”.

The expression of production characteristics controlled by a multitude of genes, for example fleece weight or twinning ability, is due to two components. The effect of the genetic “make-up” of the animal and the effect of the environment in which it lives. Thus, a sheep with an average fleece weight may have a poor genetic background for fleece weight and

have been well fed or it may have a good genetic background for fleece weight and been poorly fed. The genetic information each would pass to its offspring would, on average, be different.

Some characteristics are more strongly influenced by their genetic ‘make-up’ and less by the environment while others are more strongly influenced by the environment and less by their genetic ‘make-up’. Scientists, who delight in playing with numbers, call the strength of inheritance of a characteristic its ‘heritability’. Heritability is the ration of the variability in a characteristic due to its genetic ‘make-up’ divided by the total variability of the characteristic due to its genetic ‘make-up’ and environment. Thus, a characteristic with a heritability of 1 would be totally inherited and unaffected by the environment while a character with a heritability of 0 would be totally regulated by the environment and not inherited at all. In practical terms a character with a heritability of greater than 0.5 is strongly inherited, 0.2 -0,5 mildly inherited and less than 0.2 weakly inherited.

*Table 1: Estimates of heritability of wool and other productive traits for the New Zealand Romney*

Characteristic	Heritability	
Greasy fleece weight	0.2 - 0.4	Medium
Staple length	0.2 - 0.4	Medium
Quality number	0.3 - 0.4	Medium
Fibre diameter	0.2	Low
Bulk	0.5 - 0.7	High
Character	0.1 - 0.2	Low
Hairiness	0.5 - 0.8	High
Face cover	0.4 - 0.6	Med/high
Number of lambs born	0.0 - 0.1	Low
Weaning weight	0.0 - 0.3	Low

Table 1 lists some of the more important characteristics involved with wool production and an indication of the heritability for Romney sheep. also included are some other productive characteristics for comparison. This information has been derived from several complex breeding trials carried out over many years at Massey and Lincoln Universities and several agricultural research stations. Merino and Romney sheep have been shown to differ in some attributes. Insufficient trials have been conducted to know if other sheep breeds differ.

Genetic improvement of a group of animals is primarily dependent on having a large number of animals in the group. The larger the number of animals involved the greater will be the difference between the selected top producing animals



and the average of the group. Hence the greater the improvement in the next generation. Conversely the more characters that are considered the less will be the overall superiority of the selected animals and the slower the overall progress. Also, the quicker animals are 'turned-over' and the more generations that can be fitted into a certain time span, the greater will be the overall improvement.

This may be summarised as:

Improvement per generation =

Heritability x superiority of selected parents  
above the group average,

The characteristics of major economic importance in sheep farming are fleece weight, twinning and lamb weaning weight. Fleece weight is fairly strongly inherited and given sufficient animals can be improved. Twinning ability and weaning weight are weakly inherited and little genetic progress can be made within small flocks. In these

circumstances good feeding prior to mating is of much greater importance in increasing lambing percentage while good feeding after lambing will increase lamb weaning weight. On large commercial properties considerable effort is directed towards increasing wool production, fertility and lamb growth rate through the use of Animalplan [*probably SIL today – Editor*] the national flock recording scheme.

Stock improvement through breeding is a long, slow, painstaking process requiring patience and careful recoding. If you only own a small flock do not despair. I hope the foregoing has demonstrated to you that good feeding and management are the real keys to producing good wool for handcraft use.

Further reading:

Dalton, D.C. 1976. Animal Breeding – first principles for farmers. Aster Books. 48 pages



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64/16 the FE " Gold Nugget".

Ram photo

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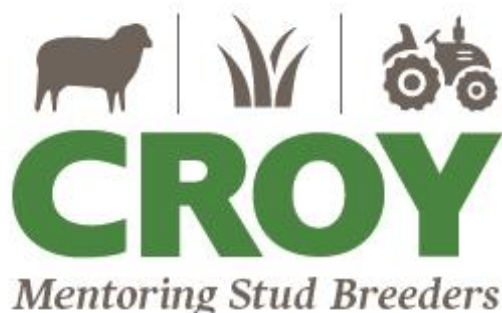
## TEXEL ACROSS FLOCK (TAF)

The Texel Across Flock (TAF) was commissioned by the NZ Texel Society to enable Texel breeders to evaluate their sheep and as a vehicle to source pure Texel genetics to improve their own flock. Unlike the NZGE it was never designed as a marketing platform.

The first run of TAF or as it was known then the National Texel Sire Referencing Scheme was on 12 May 2000 on 1999 born lambs. There were 19 Foundation Flocks of which 'Premier', 'WTD', 'Murray Downs', 'Crest' and 'Grasmere' are still participating. 37,060 animals (including foundation parents) were involved in the analysis.

The TAF has been an invaluable tool for pure Texel breeders. It gives the most accurate information on purebred Texel genetics; no interference from crossbred information. In the November 2022 TAF analysis there were 41 studs reported on. It has been a great success over the 22 years.

If there are other registered purebred Breed Societies that would like to start their own across flock, you are welcome to contact me, Roger Weber at Grasmere Texels, or Rob Forsyth at Premier Texels on how to get started.



Doug Croy has been involved in the Stud Industry for over 50 years. Doug has vast experience, from running his own successful "Spring Creek" stud and is prepared to pass on his knowledge to you, the stud breeder.

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Both styles made in NZ

### Measurements

in CM

#### WS213A Women's Merino

	8	10	12	14	16	18
½ Chest	42	44.5	47	49.5	52	54.5
Centre Back	63	64	65	66	67	68

#### MM047 Men's Awakino Pullover

	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

### COST

Men's Jersey - \$170.00 (gst inclusive) Women's Jersey - \$135.00 (gst inclusive)

Email form to NZSBA – [greg@nzsheep.co.nz](mailto:greg@nzsheep.co.nz)

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	Women's Jersey	Size:	Number:
	Men's Jersey	Size:	Number:
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**Russell Currie Ph 0274 102 496**



*Some of the sheep at the Hawke's Bay show in October*

**Photo: K. Mawson**



*Rosemarkie Stud's Supreme Champion Ryeland ewe hogget, Hawkes Bay show October 2022*

**Photo: H McKenzie**

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

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

## **Note: CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS**

***FREE small advertisements are available for member breeders with surplus stud sheep for sale. Full, 1/2 or 1/4 page ads may have a charge. Talk to Greg!***

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

Email adverts to the Editor or [greg@nzsheep.co.nz](mailto:greg@nzsheep.co.nz)

The **Closing Date** for next issue of the newsletter will be **February 20<sup>th</sup> for the March 2023 newsletter.**

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

## **"FEATURE BREED" will be Suffolks**

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 the next issue.**

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

**Published by NZ Sheepbreeders' Association**

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