



Follow the Leader...

Profits Higher from a Mount Linton Sire

AUTUMN 2008

Not all doom and gloom

It's been a tough year financially for most sheep and beef farmers throughout New Zealand, compounding this is the drought conditions that have affected much of the country at various times and to various degrees. In circumstances like these it is sometimes hard to remain positive and to think the light at the end of the tunnel isn't a train!! During our travels and talking with clients and associates we have encountered a fair amount of disillusion with the sheep industry in particular, however there are positive signs out there for those of us with some belief in our product. As suppliers of both sheep and cattle genetics we certainly won't be cutting any costs to continue breeding the most productive, efficient and consumer focused product we possibly can.

After a foot of rain during lambing in October and only two days when it didn't rain, we had very little else until mid March when we had five inches over two days. Although it went green overnight nothing really grew until we had follow up rain ten days later. It is now growing at 50-60kg DM/ha/day and we are having a ripper of an autumn to date, which we desperately need to get some condition back into the capital stock before winter. While we were officially in a drought and have certainly been in better shape, I recently spent a week in the Wairarapa on a study tour and had to feel for these people who have had droughts two years in a row, still no rain, and are in a considerably less fortunate position than ourselves.

While there is nothing we can do about the weather there are other things we as lamb producers can influence that will have a significant bearing on our future profitability. One of these is to put enough pressure on our meat company's, whoever they may be, so they have no option but to get themselves collectively into a position of strength for marketing and processing. The \$15 figure that has been banded about as an upside to farmers in a mega merger is nowhere near enough on its own.



Mount Linton remains focused on the future of sheep and beef despite the difficult year.

In the immediate future however there will surely be a significant lift in demand from a reduced supply of lambs, partly due to the change in land use to dairying and partly to the drought. The danger will be that if lamb returns lift this winter, as I predict they will, we as an industry could become complacent, take the pressure off and lose momentum. We most certainly cannot afford to do this as our businesses will become unsustainable.

The meat yield of our lambs is another factor that will affect our returns in the market place in the near future. The Alliance group are already paying a yield based

payment on the Viascan information and I believe PPCS are investing considerable resources into developing a yield grading system of their own. We have been pushing this for quite a while and are delighted that it is now becoming reality as there have always been the knockers who have said it will never take off. It is here and ignore it at your peril!!

Notwithstanding the fundamental need to get the marketing and processing sorted as soon as possible, I believe there is a strong future for smart sheep farmers. The recent announcement of the free trade agreement with China is a real positive and further reason to have confidence in the sheep industry moving forward.

Motu Update

Jim Ferris

Prior to spring lambing, staff moral was high, weather was perfect and things were going to plan. The 7200 hoggets were spread out in late September onto covers of 1650kg DM/ha ready for lambing on 5 October. At a meeting with staff on the 4th a comment was made about the long range weather forecast for a wet October. The MetService got that 100% right! The rain arrived on the 5th and didn't stop for 27 days. We recorded an average of 12mm rain/day or 312mm for the month. The hoggets had a tough time lambing, but despite this we came through with 4650 lambs marked. This wasn't the expected result but a good effort considering the conditions.

In contrast November and December bought a huge lift in pasture production, which got the silage and winter cropping programme underway. However in late December the dry started to take effect, which was a worry with thousands of lambs due to transfer in from the Station on 8th January. The dry spell lasted until the end of February and in this time lamb growth rates were average. The pasture ME levels back in November were 11.8MJME but in January/February this level dropped back to 9.9MJME and I suspect was the cause of lower growth rates. However autumn has arrived and brought a new flush of grass so lambs are now achieving 280-300g/day.

A similar level of production occurred in the steers where rapid gains of 1.7-1.9kg LWG/day were achieved in November/December before dropping to 0.9-1.1 kg LWG/day through the dry period. The first shipment of 16-month steers were sent in late February at 470kg carcass weight and will continue to be drafted off at this weight. Introducing a new set of catteries and weigh platform this season has made the cattle work easier for stock and staff.

The cows at Motu were weaned in early April and pregnancy testing showed a 2% dry rate. These cows are in excellent condition and will be offered for sale at the upcoming Mount Linton Station auction.

Ceri Lewis
Mount Linton General Manager

www.mountlinton.co.nz



General News

The adventures of summer are over for another year

Gone are the long evenings and hot weather of a great Southland summer. The typical activities such as barbeques, swimming and games of touch, golf and tennis took place as reward for the hours of hard hot work. These activities were enjoyed by all staff including the many visitors to the Station including casual workers and overseas visitors. We also had the pleasure of introducing an Auckland based marketing executive to the practical side of farming.

At Christmas the social club event saw staff on fishing boats reeling in blue cod, shark and other treasures from the sea. Unfortunately the rough weather meant many could do no more than hang over the side of the boat.

At the speed shear event held recently at Ohai, the Mount Linton team held out against the local fire brigade in an annual competition including shearing sheep, sculling beer, hammering nails and eating dry Weet-bix.



Another successful muster takes place at Mount Linton.



A competitor at the Mount Linton dog trial works his way toward the pen on the short head course.

Upcoming Events at Mount Linton

MYSTERY CREEK FIELDDAYS

Come and see us at site Pe5 (in the Pavilion).

INAUGURAL AUCTION OF MOUNT LINTON CATTLE

Mount Linton is offering a selection of cattle for sale by auction for the first time in autumn 2008.

CATTLE ON OFFER:

- 200 R2 heifers VIC to low BW Angus for 1 October calving
- 150 annual draft cows VIC to Charolais for 1 October calving
- 50 annual draft cows VIC to Angus for 1 October calving
- 15 calving ease bulls

NB: These numbers are subject to change

WHEN:

1pm Thursday, 1 May 2008

WHERE:

Mount Linton Station

TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST CONTACT:

Ceri Lewis / M: 021 678 809 / A/H: 03 225 4687

Mount Linton hosts dog trial

Spectators and competitors enjoyed the scenery out at Rock Hut during the Mount Linton dog trial held in December. It was the first time the trial was affiliated with the New Zealand Dog Trial Association and it proved a successful event for both local and competitive trialists.



Stock Manager Jamie Findlay and partner Tania Gill head off for another mornings work.

Mount Linton Angus



BREEDING OBJECTIVE:

"To maximise returns to clients through high fertility, above average Self Replacing Index with increased carcass attributes."

Drought causes breeders to take a fresh look at fertility

Ceri Lewis

This year three new bulls came up on the radar that were genetically suitable for our program and off I went on my annual pilgrimage to Australia to inspect them. Because of the conditions in Australia at the time I was able to see the bulls in their working clothes, which is exactly how I like it because that's exactly how we do it. I sometimes get asked by clients whether I am confident of using genetics from environments other than our own, almost as if there is a perception that Australian cattle are unsuitable for our conditions. My thoughts are, if they can thrive in an environment as tough as theirs they will do the same in ours. The continuing drought in Australia has seen a change in focus for many of the smarter breeders. They have come to realise that they need to be breeding cattle that are able to get back in calf under duress in most years. The positive correlation between fat and fertility plays a big part in their breeding programmes, and has been very much our line of thinking and a part of our selection criteria. So despite the different climatic conditions between Australia and NZ (hot and dry versus cold and wet) the requirement of cows is the same. This year on the Station has been a classic case in point where the cows were on a rapidly falling plane of nutrition when the bulls were introduced.

The three new sires include:

KAROO W109 DIRECTION

This bull has all the maternal characteristics we have spent years breeding into our cattle; plenty of fertility, great carcass figures as well as positive fats and a sensational phenotype.

BONGONGO BULLETPROOF Z3

Excellent calving ease and birth weight, moderate growth and then a dramatic drop for mature cow weight. Again this bull shows great carcass traits with positive fats including 3% for IMF. Look out Steak of Origin when we get these calves on the ground!!

TE MANIA AMBASSADOR A134

A very sound bull, impressive phenotype, fantastic carcass figures and he also drops nicely for mature cow weight. His birth weight EBV is higher than we usually like, although by no means extreme, so he has been used over mixed age cows.

TABLE 1: The Australasian Angus Group Breedplan EBV's (March 2008) of the new sires introduced to the Mount Linton herd in 2008.

	EBV	CALV. EASE DIRECT (%)	CALV. EASE DTRS (%)	GEST. LEN. (DAYS)	BIRTH WT. (KG)	200 DAY WT. (KG)	400 DAY WT. (KG)	600 DAY WT. (KG)	MAT. COW WT. (KG)	MILK (KG)	SCROTAL SIZE (CM)	DAYS TO CALV.	CARCASS WT. (KG)	EYE MUSCLE AREA (SQ.CM)	RIB FAT (MM)	RUMP FAT (MM)	RETAIL BEEF YIELD (%)	IMF (%)	SELF REPL INDEX (\$)	CALV EASE INDEX (\$)
KAROO W109 DIRECTION Z181	EBV	2.6	1.2	-4.8	3.2	36	74	97	87	13	1.9	-3	57	4.1	0.7	0.6	0.6	1.2		
	Acc	55%	44%	78%	88%	79%	76%	77%	66%	51%	75%	45%	65%	56%	63%	63%	61%	57%		
BONGONGO BULLETPROOF Z3	EBV	4.9	2.3	-2.7	1.5	28	61	85	59	18	1.2	-1.8	56	4.2	0.5	0.2	0.6	3	66	81
	Acc	75%	60%	96%	98%	96%	92%	85%	71%	58%	85%	56%	80%	69%	77%	77%	74%	73%		
TE MANIA AMBASSADOR A134	EBV	-1.5	1.6	-1.6	5.2	31	67	88	64	15	3.4	-4.4	51	6.1	0.5	0.2	0.9	2.7		
	Acc	55%	50%	73%	82%	78%	75%	73%	64%	57%	75%	49%	65%	58%	65%	65%	63%	60%		
BREED AVG. EBVS FOR 2006 BORN CALVES																				
EBV	0	0	-2.1	4.3	33	62	80	74	74	11	1.1	-1.7	42	2	0.1	-0.1	0.3	0.7	36	22

Herd shows true colours

I must admit to being a little nervous as we lined the heifers and cows up for pregnancy testing. The cows were lighter than usual after a tough spring and as the drought kicked in it had a considerable effect on how we were able to feed them. Calf weaning weights were down 27kgs on last year's average and the cows had not been flushed before the bull went out. The cows had also lost condition between the start of mating and weaning. However my fears were misguided with the yearling heifers at 7% dry in two cycles and the cows 5.5% in the same. The most pleasing result was 4% dry from the first calvers, the hardest mob to get back in calf. This was a true test of their fertility under a real challenge and they came through with flying colours. We are now trying to get some condition back on them for the winter.

Secure your bulls now

We have several clients who are now purchasing bulls in the autumn at 18-months as opposed to yearlings in the spring. If you think this will suit your system better, we are more than happy to do this. We also have 15 calving ease bulls for sale at our inaugural in-calf heifer and annual draft cow sale on the 1st May. This is primarily but not exclusively designed for clients who may be purchasing heifers from us for the first time and need a bull to cover these.

Carcass traits praised

The 18-month heifers were scanned recently and our focus on carcass characteristics is reflected in the outstanding results. The experienced scanner commented they were the most impressive animals he had scanned, partly due to the measurements and also the uniformity of the group.



The 18-month heifers scanned 93% in calf in two cycles.

Mount Linton Texel & Suftex



BREEDING OBJECTIVE:

"To maximise returns to clients through increased meat and growth without compromising fertility and survival."

Dual purpose Texel takes a turn in the limelight

Hamish Bielski

Re-evaluating your management systems and direction is one of the outcomes of experiencing a challenging year like 2007/2008. The tough economic and climatic conditions has seen many clients encompassing maternal Texel genetics in their selection criteria. When we look at maternal genetics in the Mount Linton environment, four major points stand out: fertility, survivability, lamb weaning weight, and carcass yield and constitution. It is these points that form the basis for utilising and improving the dual purpose asset present in our flock. Though the recorded Texel flock at Mount Linton has a large terminal sire component, which remains a strong focus, there is a proportion of highly ranked dual purpose genetics. It is through specifically selecting and breeding these sheep that we can offer clients a maternal meat breed and increasing demand for these genetics gives us confidence in the direction our breeding program has taken.

Fertility—Fertile ewes are specifically identified and put to fertile Texel sires. Texel ewe hoggets must also scan and rear a lamb.

Survivability—Ewes must rear all lambs born. Mount Linton have been a part of the AgResearch national lamb survival project, which helps identify any areas/sires limiting progress.

Weaning Weights and carcass yield—Continue our strong emphasis on growth and yield traits and you have the ultimate combination. CT scanning has proven once again that eye muscle scanning only tells you part of the picture. The CT scan yields relate to the Alliance yield grading system and we know our clients are benefiting directly from this technology.

Constitution—Our definition of constitution is the ability of an animal to hold its bodyweight longer and to put lost weight back on rapidly after a sustained period of pressure. Some people call its guts! The selection process for this

requires one word, pressure! Mob stocking and 8–12 week drench intervals for the young stock ensures the weak drop out. A policy of not drenching pre-weaning is also key. It becomes very obvious which lambs don't make the cut and it identifies which ewes aren't milking well enough. Ram lambs are also selected for resistance to internal parasite through faecal egg counting and dag score.



Selecting Texel ewe hoggets that scan and rear a lamb is one way of ensuring fertility in the dual purpose Texel at Mount Linton.



The latest crop of Suftex ram hoggets that will be available as two-tooths. The Suftex finishing lambs from the Genetic Unit to date averaged 92% meat yield.

Ram sales remain strong

The demand for maternal Texel rams was high, as clients opted to put more growth, meat yield and resilience into their flocks.

Demand for Suftex rams has also been excellent this year leaving all two-tooth rams accounted for before Christmas. For those who missed out we do apologise and you can be assured this demand was foreseen last mating and you will have no problems in the future.

It was great to meet you all this past season and I will be in touch with you again throughout the year. If you are at the Fieldays at Mystery Creek come and see us in the Pavilion at site Pe5.

CONTACT US TODAY:

www.mountlinton.co.nz



Office

T: (03) 225 4838
F: (03) 225 4843
E: office@mountlinton.co.nz



Ceri Lewis
GM / Cattle Genetics Manager
M: 021 678 809
T: (03) 225 4687
E: clewis@mountlinton.co.nz



Hamish Bielski
Sheep Genetics Manager
T: (03) 225 4689
M: 021 779 485
E: texels@mountlinton.co.nz