



**PROVEN UNDER  
PRESSURE!**

**AUTUMN 2015**

# Follow the Leader...

## Genetic Propensity to Marble

Ceri Lewis

Following the success of last winter's cattle finishing on 20ha of beet we planted 50ha in the spring having taken on board some of the detail we didn't get quite right last year and have grown some great crops. Our steer calves will be weaned in early April and we aim to have them on the beet by early May and if we can replicate the growth rates of the gurus we will be killing cattle at 14 months old before Christmas at 280kgs carcass weight. If

we are successful in our endeavours we have plans to double the area we plant in the spring and we will be looking for more cattle to winter on beet next year. We would like to source Mount Linton bred cattle, either calves or 18 months as their genetic propensity to marble is a huge advantage when killing cattle on the SFF Beef EQ programme. If you sell store 18 month cattle in the Autumn or calves at weaning we would love to hear from you.

## Damage caused by Clover Root Weevil

Ceri Lewis

Last year we saw the beginnings of the clover root weevil at Mount Linton and this spring it has really kicked in and caused some damage. The cold wet spring was tough on lamb growth rates and the lack of clover has compounded that, we anticipated this would happen but perhaps not to the extent it has. To try and mitigate this we planted 100ha of Red Clover which has been a great success as the tap root is too deep for the weevil to get at, we also planted 85ha of Rape and Italian on the Downs and 100ha of Rape on the developed hill out of an aeroplane. We have struggled in the past to get

decent liveweight gains out of our young finishing cattle in the late summer and the rape and Italian has been instrumental in maintaining growth rates at 1.5kgs a day as well as a huge boost to lamb finishing. We aim to plant 100ha of Red Clover each year so we have 300ha in at any one time. We have purchased about 4000 store lambs for the rape crops and there will be a good twist in them this year. We put a bloat capsule in 15 smaller steers and put them on the clover and kept a close eye on them. They grew at 1.75Kgs a day but we did lose one with bloat soon after shifting them onto a new break.

## From the GM

Like most of the country we had a cold wet spring and the weather didn't come right until just before Christmas. Since then we have had a great run, just enough rain to keep things ticking along and some real summer weather. We had plenty of days in the 30's in January and February, we don't usually have to knock off mustering due to the heat but it beat us a few times this year; the swimming hole by the Rock Hut cattle yards was a welcome relief after calf marking and the Wairaki river was the place to be on the weekends with a fly rod!

In January last year we were lucky enough to get a young shepherd, Dan Broughton from the Jeff Farm cadet training scheme run by John Chittock in South Otago, and this January Hamish Elliot joined us from the same stable, they are two outstanding young men and a credit to themselves and Jeff Farm. They are also pretty good at touch footie, 15's and Tennis which goes without saying is part of the job description. The Station has a Touch team and Tennis team in the local competition and we usually have about a third of the local Rugby team.

*Ceri*

Ceri Lewis  
Mount Linton General Manager



**PHOTO:** Our not so secret Santa, Ceri Lewis doing his part for the kids Christmas party



**PHOTO:** Some happy staff after receiving their secret santa presents

[www.mountlinton.co.nz](http://www.mountlinton.co.nz)

# Suftex, Texel, Mainstay



## Ram Breeding Programmes

Dave Warburton

Well it has that autumn feel now and we had a reasonable frost this morning so my tomatoes are stuffed, barely even changed colour!! Someone said take the plants out hang them upside down in a shed and the fruit will colour up. After all the effort of growing them I am game to try this theory.

When I was vetting and palpating thousands of rams testicles each year, I would always ask the farmer where the rams were from. Every now and again the farmer would say they had changed this year. When asked why they just said "My 5 years are up, it's now time to add vigour from another stud."

I have pondered this for a while when I have been searching for ram breeding programmes that fit our low input-high output/performance under pressure philosophies and come to the conclusion that:

1. It is hard enough to find a ram breeder that has a programme that is making progress in the direction you want to take let alone want to change after 5 years.
2. If the breeder can demonstrate they are making progress in the traits you are interested in then that is all you can ask of them (as long as they know what structural soundness is too). If the breeder is using outcross genetics (ie is not a closed flock) then there is no "vigour" from changing breeder, that is just an old wives tale. To demonstrate progress you need to ask for the breeder's genetic trend graphs. These show the progress made compared to the national flock and themselves over the period they have been recording. It is incredibly powerful information and is the only way to know each year is improving. (Individual rams may not always be better than last year, but the new ram "team" should be)

So a better old saying in this case would be "If it ain't broke don't try and fix it"

Unfortunately our pricing for the Suftex has to go up this year to cover the costs of the embryo transplant programme (we are doing another one again at the moment)

	Natural bred rams	Embryo transplant bred rams
TSO >1000	\$850	\$900
TSO <1000	\$700	\$850

Our extra Suftex rams produced from the ET programme have almost all been gobbled up in new orders, so if you need to change your numbers from previous years, or would like to take the last few, then it would pay to get in and order them asap.

Our pricing structure hasn't changed for the Mainstay maternal rams, but we are looking to add a 3rd pricing bracket in 2016.

Cheers  
Dave

## Hogget Mating Study

Dave Warburton

In 2015 and onwards we are conducting a hogget mating study.

Did you know that approximately 1 million lamb progeny are slaughtered as a result of hogget mating?

That is approximately only 5% of our annual lamb kill.

There are 3 main reasons for this.

1. It is a big effort to get hogget's to adequate mating weight.
2. Hogget lambing often results in lots of assisted lambing, or lambs born dead from dystocia
3. The lambs are small and take forever to reach a killable weight, often right into winter, when feed priorities should be with flushing capital stock for the next mating.

While we can't do much about point 1 other than provide fertile genetics to get in lamb, we think there is an opportunity to develop a sire that will significantly reduce points 2 and 3.

We are trying to develop a hogget mating terminal sire, that will be born easily but grow fast and yield well.

We will mate 200 hoggets in each group and compare our Suftex, our hogget mating sire, our romtex and a cheviot.

It will take a few years to get to a stabilised end point but with close monitoring and benchmarking we think we can reach our goals.

We don't claim that this breed will be a silver bullet, there is more than one way to go about achieving this, but nevertheless we have the scale to test the product thoroughly.

We will have a small number of the first cross available this season if you would like to test them out. We would love to get some feedback on their performance. They aren't the prettiest sheep but have a good wedge shape (narrow shoulder/wide hips and small head).

In the long term they will be sold as ram lambs only.



# Angus



BREEDING OBJECTIVE:

"To maximise returns to clients through high fertility, above average indexes with increased carcase attributes."

## Angus Update

Ceri Lewis

The young bull we purchased a half share in from Rennyalea in Australia was put straight into the AI centre following my visit in May last year and did not collect very well initially which is common in young bulls and as a result of that we only used 100 straws this year in our AI programme, however we now have 1000 straws of good quality semen for next year's programme. With an IMF EBV of 5.4 we believe he is the highest IMF bull in the Angus Industry globally, certainly on Breedplan. A handful of Bulls have started with figures of over 5 but once the accuracies increase they often settle in the mid 4's range, however H840 had a freakishly high raw data scan for IMF which would indicate to me that he has a very good chance of holding his EBV. The bulls we used in our AI programme this year had IMF EBV's ranging from 5.4 to 2.8

Whilst the TB issue has been devastating, every cloud has a silver lining and we have been able to use all the bulls we normally would sell as Yearlings to our clients and of the back up bulls for the AI programme,

these Bulls had IMF EBV's of between 3.2 to 2.5 (breed average is 1.4) and nothing was used that was under 2 in the commercial herd. The calves born in the Spring of 2015 to both the stud and commercial herd are going to make a quantum leap in marbling which is being reflected in our ultrasound scans. Bill and Judy Austin have been scanning our Stud heifers for many years for Rib fat, Rump fat, Eye Muscle Area and IMF for the Breedplan data but for the last three years we have been scanning all our commercial heifers for IMF and EMA shape and using this as a culling tool. In 2014 out of 950 heifers we had 67 that were culled for either IMF or EMA and in 2015 out of 1150 only 26, which is a dramatic improvement. Last winter we scanned all our commercial cows (over 2000) and will be culling them at weaning on their scan results, we can do this because we are bringing into the herd 7-800 in calf 18 month heifers annually that are genetically far superior, and we had just under 3% dry rate in our MA Stud Cows this Autumn.

## Update on Beef Cow Efficiency Trial

We have been busy with Anna Boyd and her Ag Research team all spring and summer weighing and body condition scoring our cows and taking DNA samples. We also took a weaning weight every commercial calf (we usually weigh about 15% to get an average) and took DNA samples from them, I didn't realise this was part of the deal originally but Anna is not to be messed with so DNA and weigh we did! There is some really interesting data coming out already about changes in BCS and weight between post winter, pre mating and weaning and there are some significant fluctuations in individuals within the same management group. When that data is correlated to calf weaning weight with DNA parentage and pregnancy test there will be some very powerful information. The trial is going to run for five years. We are currently in the early stages of discussion with Beef and Lamb Genetics to run a similar programme in our commercial ewe flock, there is never a dull moment at Mount Linton!

## TB – Clear herd test

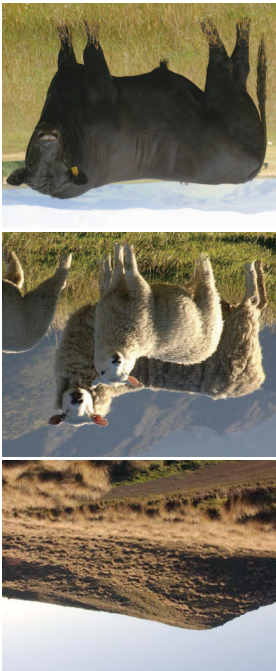
We had a clear herd test in late December which was a lot of work with 2600 cows with calves at foot but a great relief all the same. The timing of the December test means we will have our next test in late June and all going well we hope to have 18 month bulls for sale in July. We will be doing a parallel blood test with the skin test to guarantee the bulls are TB free. We will be putting a catalogue together on our website and will be in touch with all our Bull clients in due course.



*PHOTO: Staff having a few quiet and relaxing at the Christmas party (Scott and James are on the bouncy castle)*



*PHOTO: Annual touch game at the Christmas party*



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