



**PROVEN UNDER
PRESSURE!**

SPRING 2015

Follow the Leader...

Highest hit rates in the country on the Beef EQ programme

Ceri Lewis

We killed the majority of our steers off grass in the Autumn but took 460 steers and 120 heifers into the winter and the plan was to transition them onto the Fodder Beet early in April to avoid having to do it in the mud like last year and get them fully transitioned before the rain came. Great plan but Huey had a different one and we had a big snow dump in the first week of April so plan B came straight into play, transition in the mud!

We fed the cattle for 50 days on beet which is the benchmark for the increased effect on marbling off fodder beet and then started killing them. We have been killing our prime cattle with Silver Fern Farms in their Beef EQ programme which offers premiums to producers on the eating quality of their animals. The criteria for the Beef EQ master grade requires animals to be low ph, good meat colour (pink), have white fat, low ossification and a good degree of marbling. Marbling starts at the front of the carcass (the brisket) and moves backwards to the rump as the animal reaches its mature weight and this is why we have a focus in our breeding programme of animals that produce carcasses that are highly marbled, grow quickly to 600 days (18-20 months) and have an early maturity pattern (positive fats and a low mature cow weight). The national average hit rate for animals falling into the master grade is 28%, with most animals falling out of spec due to low marbling. Mount Linton's cattle ranged between 75 to 93% hit rate with one notable exception and had the rare honour of having two carcasses falling out of spec for too much marbling. We weighed the cattle every week and recorded their individual liveweight gains.

WHAT WE LEARNT!

The weather has a huge impact on liveweight gain, mob averages varied from 300 g/day to 1.5 kgs a day and individual animals ranged from -1.2kg/day to +3.4kg/day depending on the weather and the underfoot conditions. I have long suspected since being in the deep



PHOTO: Cattle on Fodder Beet

south and have now confirmed that we greatly underestimate the amount of energy animals use to keep warm before they start using that energy for liveweight gain and putting on condition. Animals from different mobs that are boxed up even two weeks before slaughter will have higher ph, poorer meat colour and lower liveweight gain. Ossification occurs earlier in heifers than steers due to the release of oestrogen associated with the onset of puberty. Animals that are drafted with head torches in the dark don't grade well, animals that were left in the yard to settle for a few hours before trucking graded better than those that were drafted out of the holding paddock and straight onto the truck. Our truck drivers were excellent, I asked that they didn't use cattle prodders and this I'm sure made a big difference to the ph and meat colour.

We have the highest hit rates for the master grade in the country on the Beef EQ programme and this has created a fair bit of interest in the genetics and the systems throughout the winter and have had a few top operators through. We had two heifers entered in the Steak of Origin competition in May that marbled 7 and 6 off grass at 17 months of age.

From the GM

Like much of the country it has been a particularly challenging winter weather wise at Mount Linton with 34 snow days since the beginning of April and our annual rainfall up 30% on average. The condition has melted off the sheep and cattle and our motto "proven under pressure" is about to be well tested again this spring. Both bins on our airstrips are full of Nitrogen waiting to be flown on to the Downs and developed hill country and we are about to weigh and condition score our 930 first calving heifers and our stud cows before spreading them out for calving as part of our trial with Beef and Lamb genetics and Agresearch.

After being out of the market place for 18 months with TB, we were delighted to catalogue 95 of our eighteen month bulls in June and sell all but four that injured themselves. We are very grateful to everyone who has stood by us in this difficult time and take it as a compliment that our genetics are adding value to your beef herds.

Our Welsh boys will be arriving for their six month stint in early September and we have a social club trip to Queenstown skiing lined up before lambing and calving starts, someone should probably warn Queenstown!

Here's hoping the exchange rate has the effect it should on our beef and lamb returns and the spring is kind to us, we could all do with a break.

Ceri

Ceri Lewis
Mount Linton General Manager

www.mountlinton.co.nz

Suftex, Texel, Mainstay



Progressing Sheep and Beef Production systems

Dave Warburton

Mount Linton has a long history of working with industry researchers to help progress sheep and beef production systems for all farmers.

Lately we have been involved in several projects.

Ceri and his team have collected DNA and body condition scores and liveweights 4 times a year for 2 years on all breeding females, stud and commercial. That is 4,200 females. A condition score breeding value will be developed to help stud breeders select for an easy keeping female.

Hamish was also involved in a similar study of the stud sheep collecting this info 4 times a year for 3 years. This breeding value is about to be rolled out as a trait and will also be bundled into an index. We are very interested in this trait because sheep that hold condition under our management pressure are the ones we want. However having a good condition score still doesn't explain why she holds her condition better than others. Is it because she is a bossy and competitive sheep, perhaps she eats more than the others to hold her condition, perhaps she spends less energy by moving around the paddock less or maybe she is a better converter of feed into muscle and fat?

Beef and Lamb Genetics are working with us in a 3 year study looking at ewe longevity in commercial flocks. They have collected DNA samples from all the ram lambs used on the Station this last mating. They will then follow through 4000 ewe lambs for 3 years collecting condition score, scanning and most importantly "why she is culled" data. BLG also want to follow through the progeny of these rams in some of our clients flocks, so that means depending on who purchases the target rams this Spring we may contact you to see if you would like to be involved in this study. The outcome of this study is SIL will produce a longevity breeding value so we get to build in another trait, rams that produce daughters that last!!!

We have our Alliance and Marks and Spencer supported hogget mating sire study looking to identify a lambing ease but high growth and suitable specification carcase. This will be an ongoing study but we will do a lambing beat on an extra 700 hogget's this season as part of the lambing ease component of the study.

I also have a pet interest in sheep mastitis. As a Vet the only guideline I can currently give farmers when palpating ewes "if in doubt chuck her out". But maybe some lesions and some cases of mastitis resolve on their own like they can do in dairy cows. Is there unnecessary wastage? We know very little about mastitis. So I am going to palpate udders of stud and commercial sheep in conjunction with our Station Vet Rochelle Smith and hopefully develop a grading system and longer term some prognosis/guidelines on will she come right or should she be culled.

We also have in the pipeline a study looking at lamb eating quality with SFF.

We are very passionate about providing the consumer of lamb with a fantastic and consistent eating experience, as is already in place with our cattle, this has to be the niche that will reward us financially long term. 4000 commercial lambs will be EID'd and sire verified through to slaughter. We have also bought semen in an Australian terminal sire ram that has proven high marbling, tenderness and worm tolerance traits. We want to benchmark our homebred product vs this Aussie invader. You don't know what you don't know so we better see what they have to offer over the Tasman. Hopefully he won't be taking home the trophy for top eating quality sire!

We don't stand still at Mount Linton!



PHOTO: Snow up to the top wire

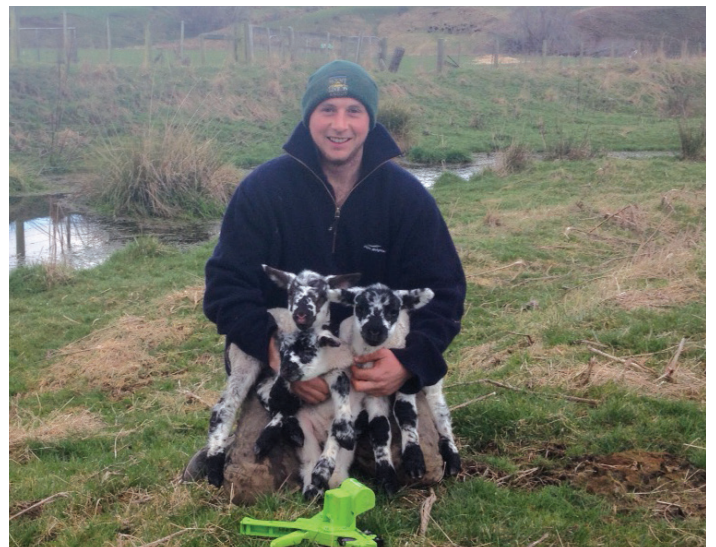


PHOTO: Sion Morgan holding some of our ET Lambs



PHOTO: Looking up Franklins from the trig station

Angus



BREEDING OBJECTIVE:

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

Rennylea K163 stands out amongst his peers

Ceri Lewis

My trip across the Tasman this year was a great success and I found a bull at Rennylea that really appealed to me. I have a list of bulls that I take with me that I have selected on their EBV's before I leave and then it's a matter of inspecting the bulls to make sure that their genotype matches what I am looking for in the phenotype. We drove around more than five hundred bulls of different age groups and in mobs of about 100 at Rennylea and K163 stood out amongst his peers like the proverbial as soon as I saw him.

He is an exceptionally well muscled bull with skin like a seal (I'm starting to sound like the head and jaw brigade!) which always indicates easy doing and high marbling qualities. I often joke with Bill and Judy Austin when they are ultrasound scanning our heifers in February that I can pick the high marbling animals on their coat type as they come up the race and I let Bill know there is an 8 coming next and am invariably right. It started as a bit of a joke but it is uncanny how often they are scanned at over 8% IMF by Bill which is right at the top of the scale. K163 was so naturally quiet you could just about put a hand on him in the middle of the paddock and he has a very moderate frame size. He is a genuine curve bender from birth to 600 day weight then drops away beautifully for Mature Cow Weight. His exceptional muscle pattern is reflected in his EBV for Eye Muscle Area which is 17.1 square cm (breed average is 4.1) Along with last year's big find H840 that has an IMF EBV of 5.9 (breed average is 1.4) we think we have in the mix two of the best carcass bulls in the Angus Industry globally, onwards and upwards.



PHOTOS: Cattle on the Fodder Beet

Rennylea K163 EBV's

Top 10% Top 25%

September 2015 Angus Australia BREEDPLAN

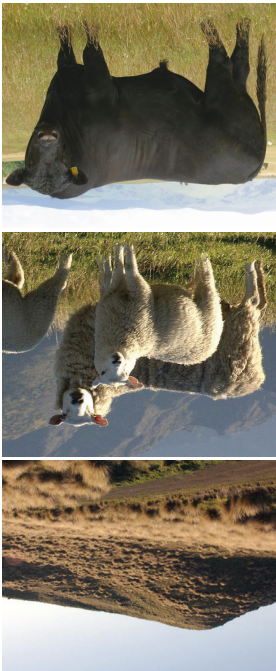
	Calving Ease Dir (%)	Calving Ease Dtrs (%)	Gestation Length (days)	Birth Wt. (kg)	200 Day Wt. (kg)	400 Day Wt. (kg)	600 Day Wt. (kg)	Mat. Cow Wt. (kg)	Milk (kg)	Scrotal Size (cm)	Days to Calving (days)	Carcass Wt. (kg)	Eye Muscle Area (sq.cm)	Rib Fat (mm)	Rump Fat (mm)	Retail Beef Yield (%)	IMF (%)	NFI-P (kg/day)	NFI-F (kg/day)	Docility (Trial)
EBV	0.0	-0.2	-0.6	+1.9	+40	+77	+104	+67	+28	+1.3	-3.7	+62	+17.1	+0.1	-1.3	+0.6	+4.2	-	-	+5
Acc	61%	46%	71%	79%	74%	76%	75%	73%	61%	79%	41%	66%	65%	67%	67%	59%	60%	-	-	64%
Breed Avg. EBVs for 2013 Born Calves																				
EBV	-0.3	-0.1	-3.3	+4.4	+40	+74	+96	+86	+14	+1.6	-3.5	+54	+4.1	-0.1	-0.1	+0.3	+1.5	+0.07	+0.13	+3

Rennylea H840 EBV's

Top 10% Top 25%

September 2015 Angus Australia BREEDPLAN

	Calving Ease Dir (%)	Calving Ease Dtrs (%)	Gestation Length (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 Calving (days)	Carcass Wt. (kg)	Eye Muscle Area (sq.cm)	Rib Fat (mm)	Rump Fat (mm)	Retail Beef Yield (%)	IMF (%)	NFI-P (kg/day)	NFI-F (kg/day)	Docility (Trial)
EBV	-2.0	-3.5	-1.0	+2.8	+42	+76	+99	+72	+20	+1.1	-4.9	+66	+5.4	+3.5	+2.8	-2.6	+6.0	+0.65	+0.97	-8
Acc	68%	59%	73%	79%	76%	77%	79%	77%	69%	80%	52%	71%	69%	70%	70%	65%	66%	57%	57%	68%
Breed Avg. EBVs for 2013 Born Calves																				
EBV	-0.3	-0.1	-3.3	+4.4	+40	+74	+96	+86	+14	+1.6	-3.5	+54	+4.1	-0.1	-0.1	+0.3	+1.5	+0.07	+0.13	+3



SENDER:

Mount Linton Station
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MOUNT LINTON DOG TRIAL

Friday 27th November | Saturday 28th November
Held at Rock Hut, signposted from the Station

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