



**PROVEN UNDER  
PRESSURE!**

**BREEDING OBJECTIVE:** "To breed fertile, thick, moderate framed cattle that lower the cost of production and produce a high value niche product"

# Follow the Leader...

SPRING 2017

## Angus Ceri Lewis

### Silver Fern Farm Beef EQ Programme

We have had another great season with our hit rates on the SFF Beef EQ programme, we started killing in April off grass and by the end of August are about 70% through our kill. We set a target for ourselves at the start of the season to achieve an average 80% strike rate on our steers and are well on track to achieving that. Our strike rate on our heifers is much improved on past seasons as well with most lines between 65-75%.

### Steak Of Origin

There were 92 entries in the Angus section of the Steak of Origin competition this year, we entered four steers and had 3 in the semi-final of 16. The final is usually held in Feilding as part of the Beef Expo week but this year was held at the Cloud in Auckland in an attempt to attract more media coverage. It was a great evening and we came 3rd in the Angus class, head judge Graham Hawkes commenting it was so close at the top it was very hard to choose a winner.

### Mount Linton Bulls

We have decided to increase the price of our Bulls this year, we had considered moving to the auction system but I believe our private treaty system is unique and our clients like the fact they can put a figure in their budgets at the start of the year and know what they are going to pay for their Bulls rather than have to go to auction and keep putting their hands up until they get what they want.

Rather than simply announcing we have put our prices up I thought it would be helpful if I could let you know some of the reasons we came to the decision as we like to think we treat our genetic clients as we would expect to be treated ourselves.

### So What Are Our Points Of Difference?

- Other than Bill English, we have the largest recorded Angus herd in the country at 850 females.
- We have a completely commercial focus, driven solely by profitability, and can walk the talk with our 2,400-cow commercial herd and the results they are achieving.
- Our Bull calves are wintered in one mob, we only sell 62% of the calf drop into the Beef industry because mob pressure of that kind sorts the wheat from the chaff.
- Our stud cows can lose over 150kgs during the winter and will put most of that weight back on before mating.
- We semen morphology and motility test every Bull we sell as yearlings to try and mitigate any risk of infertility to our clients and ourselves, why wouldn't

you? We believe we are one of only two seed stock producers in the country that test yearling Bulls.

- We use all the Bulls we sell in the autumn ourselves as yearlings so they are tried and tested and they very rarely break down because the vast majority of Bulls break down in their first season and we take the hit on these.
- We have a fertility guarantee on our Bulls which is second to none in the industry, if you have a poor pregnancy result due to a bull problem, we will look after you.
- We have had a focus on carcass quality in our breeding programme for the last 10 years so we are light years ahead of most of the pack.
- Many of the top carcass Bulls we use from Rennylea in Australia cannot be used by our competitors because they are Performance Registered not Herd Registered but we are able to use both so our potential for genetic gain is not confined by medieval protocols.
- The progeny of Mount Linton bred cattle are highly sought after by finishers supplying the value add niche programmes that financially incentivise suppliers for grass fed marbled beef. (Please let me know if you have any store stock and I can put you in touch with some finishers).
- We target the Angus Pure Index because it has a focus on an early maturity pattern, killing progeny at 16-20 months prime with a premium for marbling which is exactly what we are doing in our commercial herd. Our Bulls rank highly on API and when compared to other Bulls of similar Indexes in the industry they are still exceptional value.
- We think the Beef industry is in pretty good shape and has been for a while, it doesn't take many calves or even fewer 20 month finished steers to pay for one of our Bulls.
- Our genetic trend graphs for the traits that make us money are impressive, please ask to see them next time you are down or alternatively I can email them to you.

### How It Rolls

As in the past, the pricing on the Bulls is based on their Angus Pure Index, the Yearlings are now \$4,000 for the top 10%, \$3,500 for the top 25% and \$3,000 for everything else. The 18-month Bulls are \$7,000 for the top 10%, \$6,000 for the top 25% and \$5,000 for everything else. We will be offering a volume discount for five or more Bulls.

We hope you will understand our reasons for the increase and are confident you will recognise the value our genetics add to your business.

## From the GM

We had a dry late summer and autumn and went into the winter under the pump but have come out the other end as we always do. Our ewes were lighter going to the ram and our scanning was down a couple of percent, the upside is we have no bearings this spring. The cows did it tough and lost on average 91kgs over the winter but again a sniff of green grass and they are away again. We had over 50 frosts and about average rainfall and August has been a great end to the winter with only 20mls of rain and a bit of sunshine and some of the boys have got their shorts out!

We abandoned our July 2nd shear partly due to the weather and partly due to the economics. We shored 12,000 terminals and after selling the wool and paying the shearers it had cost us 80 cents a sheep which makes it quite expensive animal health. The rest of the ewes will be more prone to getting cast out on the hill country but we have just purchased three drones to do lambing beats. I went around my 800 in calf heifers on Saturday evening from the deck of my house with a G & T in one hand, I really do like technology!

Beef and Lamb prices are looking quite optimistic this season, we hope we can all make the most of it and the weather looks after us all over the lambing and calving, have a great season.

**Ceri Lewis**  
Mount Linton General Manager

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

# Suftex, Texel, Mainstay



*Swedes under snow in July*

## Rams that will perform under pressure

Emma Gardiner

Made it through the first winter! The warm sunny days of autumn were a surprising but welcome way to start as I arrived here just in time to put out the rams for mating. It wasn't long before the first dusting of snow and then the frosts arrived and kept on coming. Pasture growth was next to nothing, but we were well prepared for winter with ample crop to keep us going. I'm very happy with the condition the ewes and hoggets are in for lambing and am looking forward to welcoming the first Suftex lambs in the next few days, and I imagine a few days after that I'll be eagerly awaiting the arrival of the last hogget lambs at the end of October.

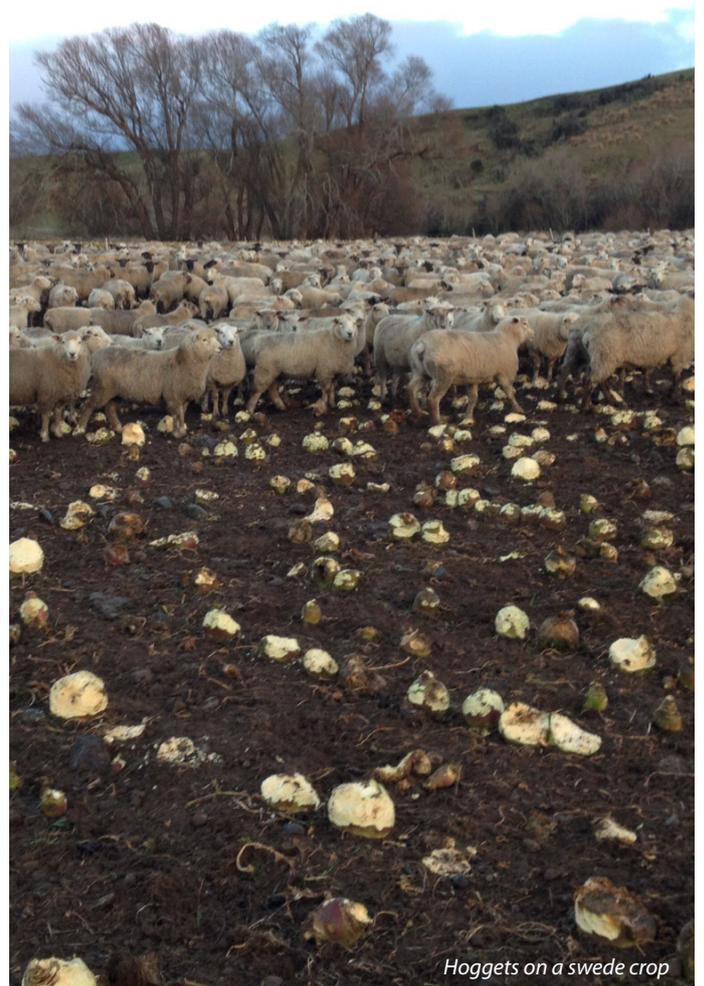
Scanning went well this year, with the mainstay 2th's doing 171% and the M.A did 193%. The hoggets were the top performers this time around doing 136% across both breeds with only 12% dry after a 25 day mating cycle. Although I know some of our clients have been getting even better results!

Once again the Stud ram lambs were used out on the station and were pushed hard, ensuring a hardy ram that will perform under pressure. All the work required of them as lambs results in hoggets that are smaller at sale time than their genetic potential. But you only have to look at the ewe hoggets to see that the growth is there when all that is required of them is to eat, sleep and then eat a bit more.

It was great to get out on the road this winter and meet some of our clients in the North Island and Canterbury. I look forward to meeting more of you as the ram selling season approaches. Please don't hesitate to email, call in or ring anytime.

I hope the lambing has been going well for those already started and is warm and settled for those of us about to kick things off.

To see our rams performing in a variety of conditions and systems across the country... Refer to Marty Kelly and Stew Gunn articles...



*Hoggets on a swede crop*

## Marty Kelly

Marty Kelly has been using Mount Linton Mainstay rams for the past five years. A friend of former Sheep Genetics manager Hamish Bielski, he had heard a lot of good things about the sheep and their production. In what appeared as stars aligning, what was achieved at Mount Linton with the Mainstay was what Marty was looking for in a ram. "I was really excited about the growth and the yield gains that had been made."

The rams had been tested on the station as hoggets, so Marty knew what he was getting when they arrived at Wardendale in North Canterbury. Running 1050ha effective and running 8500 stock units, Marty needed a sheep that would handle the country and found exactly that in the Mount Linton Mainstay. Marty had spent time working for Landcorp at Kepler and had seen the gains made with their breeding, so when this led him to look on SIL, he discovered the Mount Linton Mainstay popping up a lot, he knew he was on to a winner. "They'd won a few awards as well." The similar climate of Mount Linton and Wardendale meant the sheep also handled the conditions well, Marty said. "When it's wet and cold it's wet and cold. The properties are similar and we've got the same sort of breeding objectives." As a result of the gains Marty has been making with the help of the Mount Linton Mainstay, he has also won the Mint Lamb Competition. "I went in it because obviously I buy rams with these traits - growth and yield. What better way to test than to benchmark yourself?"

Entering the maternal class it also painted a picture for Marty of the advancements that were being made. "We're still making gains and winning, it was a pretty good indicator we're doing well. Going in this competition we are making progress." Marty is a firm believer that you can feed sheep well to get them to grow, but you need good genetics to get the yield and the carcass. "My sheep aren't big and the Mount Linton sheep are moderate size ewes that have really high growth and yields traits."

This year, Marty's mixed ages ewes scanned at 198%. A lot of people said that by making gains in growth and yield he would drop fertility, but with the Mainstay this had not happened. By improving his own system and better feeding through a stronger winter programme, the genetics had been getting a real chance to thrive, Marty said. He has also been buying the Angus bulls off Mount Linton for the past four years. This year Marty scanned 98% in his mixed age cows, 100% in his second calvers and 100% in his first calvers. When he first looked into the Mount Linton Angus, he realised the breeding objectives were again very similar - "Breeding a cow that holds her condition and that bounces back after calving before being put back in calf."

## Stew Gunn

The Mount Linton Mainstay has been used on Brooksdale Station for 10 years. After hearing many positive stories about the sheep, Stew Gunn went to see for himself, and has not regretted it since. Running 4500ha in the Porters Pass, Stew needed a doer, and that was exactly what he found. "They're hardy sheep in this environment. They're good mums and they're fertile." Mount Linton being the scale it was allowed great genetics gains to be made, which Stew was thrilled to pick up on. "By purchasing their genetics we're piggy backing on the gains that they've made." All the sheep run on Brooksdale Station were Mount Linton genetics, and the Mainstay ewes were put to a terminal sire.

In the early years the progeny tended to through to a certain breed, but now-a-days it was a really uniform, even line, Stew said. To this day he was still getting good growth gains and the fertility of the Mainstay was incredible. While he had dropped the sheep numbers to 4200 mixed age ewes and about 800 hoggets, these days there was a lot of triplets running around Brooksdale. Stew sells all of his five and six year old ewes as in-lamb, and this year they scanned at 208% - triplet, twin and single scanned. The mixed age ewes scanned at 178% twin and single.

Every year, with the Mount Linton Mainstay, Stew scanned his mixed age ewes about 178%. "We do have a lot of triplets and I'd say even though we've dropped our ewe numbers, we're ending up with the same number of lambs."

As well as buying the Mount Linton Mainstay ewe lambs, Stew also leases the Mount Linton Angus bulls as yearlings to cross with his heifers. Running 300 mixed age cows and about 80 heifers, as well as grazing dairy cattle, a large amount of Brooksdale now runs cattle. The low birth weight EBVs of the Mount Linton Angus bulls means a stress free calving for Stew. "We haven't had to assist one heifer for the last three years." All of the calves born out of the heifers are killed, with the genetics meaning they grow well and have good fat. "I used to go down but now Ceri just picks them out. For me, I want bulls with high fat and growth figures. That's the two main key traits we are after."

The Mount Linton Angus do well in the conditions in the Porters Pass and the bulls do the job well. "They don't get to extreme. The bulls have good form without growing too big." Brooksdale was similar country to Mount Linton, ranging from 400m above sea level through to 1400m and was very winter dominated - so both the Mainstay and the Angus held condition well. "Everything does pretty well here."



2th & MA ewes pre-mating



**SENDER:**  
Mount Linton Station  
Ohai, R.D.1 Otautau,  
Southland, New Zealand

Mount Linton Dog Trial

Friday 24th November and Saturday 25th November | Held at Rock Hut, signposted from the Station

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