



**PROVEN UNDER
PRESSURE!**

AUTUMN 2018

Follow the Leader...

New Scanning technology bringing outstanding results

Ceri Lewis

We carcass scanned our 14 month heifers in late January and in spite of the driest summer in 100 years which impacted significantly on their feed intake, we lifted an entire % point in their IMF scan. Intra muscular fat is measured as a percentage in the eye muscle at the 13th rib and the scale is from 0-8.3; our commercial heifers lifted from an average of just under 6 to just under 7 from last year's results which is huge.

We have been scanning our commercial heifers coming into the herd for six years but decided to scan our mixed age cows three years ago and then culled the lower scanning cows and the quantum leap in this year's scanning is a direct result of that.

There is some new technology in the carcass scanning world in New Zealand called the CUP system out of the USA where three images brought up on the screen of Bill Austin's ultrasound scanner are transferred to a lap top operated by Judy Austin and these images are sent to the USA and interpreted there and the results sent back. The advantage of this system against the conventional ultrasound method is if the animal has an exceptional level of IMF

it is easier to interpret. The CUP system can supposedly scan up to 10% IMF, we had plenty over 9 along with a 10.1, an 11 and an 11.2, most by our Rennylea H840 Bull that has an IMF EBV of 5.8 (breed average is 1.7). The technicians interpreting the images contacted Bill and said there must be some mistake but Bill reassured them there was no mistake!

At the same time our Eye Muscle Area is also tracking north even though fat and muscle have an antagonistic genetic relationship, through using Bulls that break this relationship like Rennylea K163 who has an EMA EBV of 16.7 (breed average 4.8), and an IMF of 3.7. We have sons of his that have backed up our AI programme that are outstanding types with a very impressive muscle pattern.

Calm after the storm



From the GM

The old saying Southland can get you down but won't let you down came a bit close for comfort this summer. We came out of the winter in pretty good shape and it looked like the ducks were lined up for a great season, lamb and beef strong and a warm dry August then we got 100ml in the form of a snow storm in early September that dealt to everything that was born then for the next five months we got a total of 130ml and plenty of days in the mid 30's.

650 yearling steers were first to go in November then 15,000 store lambs that we weaned early in December and January, then 1400 cows and calves in mid-January. Needless to say we have been flat out and the team on the Station have been fantastic and looking forward to a trip to Stewart Island over Easter with the social club.

We were very fortunate as once we decided in early January the cows had to go we sent an email out on Monday lunchtime and we had found homes for the 1400 cows by Tuesday night and I could have placed another 6-700.

On the 1st February it started raining and we had 94mls of warm steady rain over two days and we haven't looked back. It took some time after the initial rain to turn around but once we got some back up it went nuts. We have had some crop failures but have stitched some Italian in and will salvage something and with the reduced stock numbers we will be fine.

As I write this in mid-March we are struggling to beat the fly and get our 2ths shorn, and ewes shorn a fortnight ago are getting struck. We will be drenching ewes next, nah just kidding!

We fielded two touch rugby teams in the local 14 team competition and our top team the Shy Teds (say it fast) came 3rd and for the Dirty Dirties it wasn't about winning but taking part. Our tennis team of 4 had a few draws but the top 2 are unbeaten in 3 years but apparently it's not about winning!

Having had less than 500ml for the last 9 months we are now hoping our annual rainfall won't catch up over the next three.

Ceri

Ceri Lewis

Mount Linton General Manager

www.mountlinton.co.nz

Suftex and Mainstay



Challenging Times in the South

Emma Gardiner

Well it's certainly been an interesting and challenging six months to round out my first year on the job! Lambing kicked off with a couple of storms right in the middle of the first cycle of Suftex lambing that really tested the survival abilities of the Suftex lambs. Just another in the list of challenges the rams have to go through before they go on to our clients. Identifying a potential stud sire born during day after day of sleety rain should serve to further improve our overall survival. By the time the Hoggets were underway in mid October the weather had largely settled down and resulted in tailing percentages for both breeds over 90%.

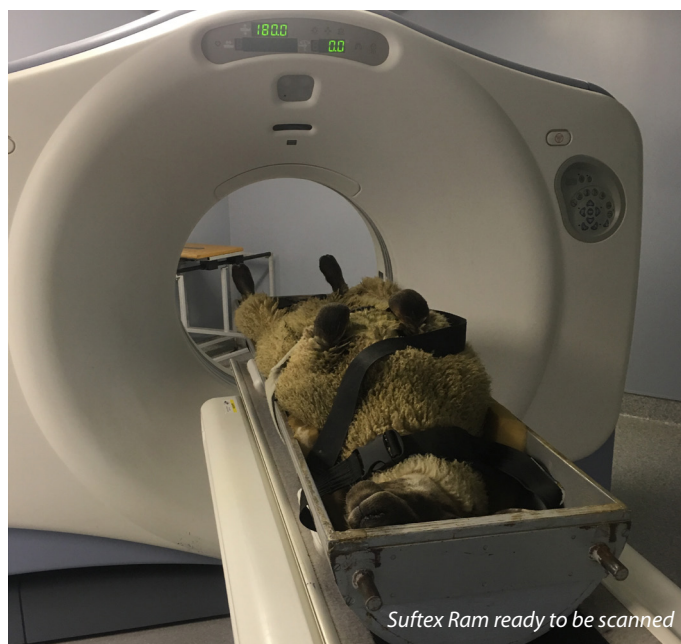
Due to weather conditions and feed availability weaning of lambs born to 2th and Mixed Age ewes was carried out throughout Dec both on the stud and the station. The Suftex lambs weaned out well with twins averaging 32 kg and singles at 40kg in early December. The Mainstay lambs had more variable weights due to being significantly younger but have since shown strong growth rates with an average daily gain of 0.15 since weaning, the best lambs doing over 250g per day despite feed quality being relatively poor until the last few weeks. The Suftex/Charolais cross lambs born to hogget's have been performing remarkably well given the hogget lambs have experienced the toughest of conditions of any stock class. The twins weaned at 28kg with a high proportion of those being reared as twins.

You can see in the photos the dramatic changes this season has given us, from snow in early November to a shade of brown in January that I associate more with farming in North Canterbury than with Southland. Then February and the rains arrived and we all enjoyed almost literally watching the grass grow before our eyes and the weight and condition really start to pile on to the stock. The Mixed Age ewes of both breeds held their condition well post weaning despite the somewhat foreign concept of an extended period of pasture clean up duty. The station has also seen the ewe condition lift rapidly over the last month and with minimal lambs to finish this season the focus can be put on getting the ewes into the ideal condition for mating this year.

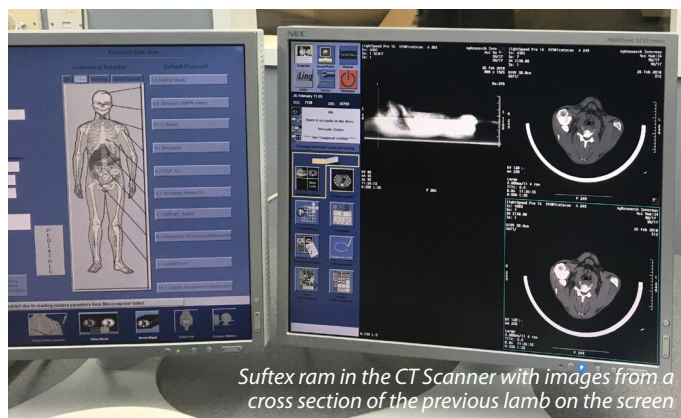
Next seasons crop of rams is looking good and I have been collecting Eye muscle areas and CT scans to further our knowledge of who the best rams will be going forward. In addition to this it is exciting to be able to start getting a look at indexes for Meat quality and how our rams perform when measured in this way. It will certainly simplify the process of selection when we are able to combine the carcass and meat yield traits into one index.

I recently went along to a Beef and Lamb workshop about the social licence to farm. It is clear that in a world where meat can be grown in laboratories and vegetarian alternatives created that mimic meat very closely we need to be thinking about how we will be able to compete. A focus on meat quality and producing lamb with a consistently excellent eating experience is going to be a key point for us. In-addition we need to keep looking for improvements in the way we farm particularly in terms of animal health. As many of you will be aware we don't drench our 2th or MA ewes either on the stud or the station and as part of the Worm FEC program we will be working towards reducing as many drenches as possible. Alongside this we are trying to breed for clean sheep with no dags, as not only can this reduce the need for handling but also helps towards fly strike prevention.

This year we have been lucky enough to get a maternal and a terminal ram into CPTs (Central Progeny Test) that are happening this season. This is a fantastic opportunity to benchmark ourselves against other breeders and breeds, especially in the case of the maternal ram. It will be exciting to follow the progress of these rams. Another aspect of this year's breeding program is the use of Embryo Transfer (ET). We use the



Suftex Ram ready to be scanned



Suftex ram in the CT Scanner with images from a cross section of the previous lamb on the screen

ET program in the Suftex ewes to try to increase the number of lambs born from the top ewes, with an aim to producing high figured, meaty, darker faced rams. This year the selection process involved drafting off a selection of the top figured ewes as well as a range of ewes that fit the type we are chasing. These ewes will be paired with three of our best sires through AI and the station contributes maternal recipient ewes to carry and raise the progeny. Another benefit of this program is that the donor ewes are then able to be naturally mated and may end up with half a dozen or more genetic progeny.

I do hope that over the winter months I'll be able to get out and visit as many of our ram clients as possible. The ram selling season in Nov/Dec seemed to go by quickly but I very much enjoyed meeting you all and am keen to see all the different environments and conditions our rams have headed out to. The boys should all be raring to go to work but if you have any problems or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.



Maternal ram lambs in early March enjoying the milder temperatures and abundance of feed



Maternal hogget with lambs at foot

Angus



BREEDING OBJECTIVE:

“To breed fertile, thick, moderate framed cattle that lower the cost of production and produce a high value niche product”

Beef EQ Update

Ceri Lewis

We finished killing the last of our R2 steers in early November so they were all finished by the time their second birthday came around. The previous season we averaged a 77% hit rate on Beef EQ and had a target this season of 80% and we achieved 84%. The marbling component of the matrix is becoming a given for us and we are fine tuning everything else as there is almost always a reason for a disappointing result and we keep learning. The number of animals that miss out because they have too much marbling is increasing every year which begs the question what we do with these animals, it would be nice to get them sent home so we could eat them for starters but we are working on a master plan!

Building Numbers

We mated 978 stud females this Spring which makes us the largest herd in the country other than possibly Jacinda's! We had a vicious storm in early September and the calves born to the early gestation heifers and cows were in full swing and for the first time ever we retained the females that lost calves in this storm, they are our best genetics and it was through no fault of their own.

In total we mated 4,250 females of our own and the Bull power required to cover these females as well as our clients is putting pressure on the system even though we get to use half of them ourselves before selling them as 18 months and this is likely to grow year on year.

Our own female numbers will increase although may not necessarily be farmed on the Station but through our share-farming partnerships and we want to make sure we keep the pressure on the selection criteria.

Calving Ease

I never cease to be amazed as I get around the country of the stories I hear of calving problems in Angus heifers, in this day and age it should be a given and the focus should be on adding value.

People often ask me what the difference is between the Bulls we sell as yearlings and the Bulls we sell in the Autumn after we have used them ourselves. The answer is very little, in terms of the EBV's of our Bulls we don't have a big range, you can throw a blanket over the whole lot. Other than a handful, all our Bulls have positive calving ease, low gestation, moderate birth weight, as much growth as we can fit in without compromising the mature cow weight, low days to calving, high scrotal and the best carcass in the business!

Unless you are running a terminal programme with mature cows and Angus Bulls (which some people do), calving ease is the single most profitable trait you should be targeting and once you have that locked in you can start targeting the free traits like IMF. IMF is termed a free trait because you don't have to give anything up in your breeding programme to add it in. Be aware that in general terms growth is not a free trait because it has a strong correlation with birth weight and mature weight (big birth weights and big mature cow weights) however we try and break that negative genetic correlation by using Bulls in our AI programme that bend the growth curve at both ends i.e. moderate birth weight, high growth and low mature weight.

New Blood in AI programme

We are looking forward to the spring and welcoming the new calves by Rennyale G420. When I was doing the mating sorts there were hardly any

females that we couldn't have used him over in our AI programme that wouldn't have benefited, and he is a complete outcross from anything we have used before. I will be heading over the ditch soon to check out a handful of Bulls that fit our breeding objective very well but need to make sure they fit the phenotype we are looking for, I like the moderate framed thick, easy doing cattle, they can all look good on paper!

Upcoming Bull Sales

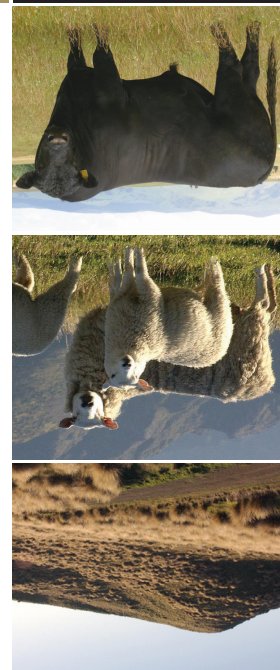
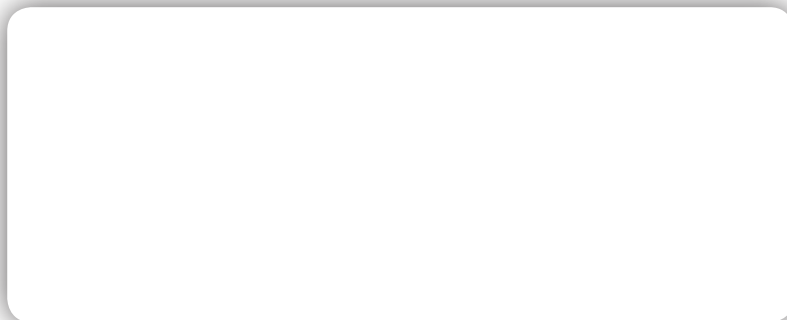
The Bulls have done it pretty hard this summer over mating with very little feed but they have been on Rocket fuel since the dry broke and we weighed them in early March and they have been piling it on which is what I love about the Mount Linton cattle, they bounce back really quickly after being under pressure. We hope to have the catalogue out by late April and start selling in mid-May. I will be in touch with you all in due course and look forward to catching up with as many of you as we can over the winter, until then best wishes for a mild winter and a kind spring.



Before the dry broke



Two weeks later



SENDER:

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

www.mountlinton.co.nz

Office

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



Ceri Lewis
GM / Cattle Genetics Manager
T: 0800 685 468
A/H: 03 225 4687
E: clewis@mountlinton.co.nz



Emma Gardiner
Sheep Genetics Manager
M: 021 779 485
E: texels@mountlinton.co.nz

www.mountlinton.co.nz

