



A representative shot of Glenview late Sept - waiting for the grass to grow.

GREETINGS FROM GLENVIEW!

Barb & I hope you are all in good health and in reasonably good spirits despite having to negotiate yet another challenging/gruelling winter that followed yet another long dry summer and autumn.

Last week's BakerAg AgLetter (25th Sept) aptly summed up the current feed situation across the country as 'uncomfortably tight' and cited the flow on effects from the extended dry earlier in the year, low root reserves, porina damage and low soil temps as the main culprits.

Our poor Hawkes Bay neighbours up the road have probably had the toughest battle having to cope with back to back droughts and prior to getting 50-80mm of southerly rain last week were still desperately dry.

Consequently farming has not been easy for anyone and so far September has not delivered any appreciable spring growth that we have all been desperate to see despite the slightly warmer temperatures and a fair amount of sunshine.

Hopefully the pasture will finally wake up and spring into life any day soon and by the time you receive this 'late spring' newsletter your farming landscape will be looking a whole lot better and reasonably well placed to take advantage of the strong sheep and beef meat prices that are forecast for this coming season.

Despite our ongoing farming challenges the daily news bulletins that we see certainly put our problems into perspective relative to so many other sectors within the country (tourism, hospitality etc) that have had their livelihoods pretty much destroyed by Covid. The scenes off shore are of course way more dire and the misery currently affecting a huge proportion of the world's population due to the virus, starvation, war and natural disasters etc is very sobering. So on that note I had better stop whinging on about our lack of grass!

MATT HAS MOVED

For those of you who have only recently started receiving our newsletter – some brief background. Our involvement with Matt Olds began when he purchased our Mikimiki block (10 mins NW of Masterton) just over 3 years ago. At that point we entered into a share farming arrangement whereby Matt agreed to farm some of our Romney stud ewes.

Late last year Matt sold his Mikimiki block and purchased 'Balmoral', an attractive and much larger hill country property with excellent infrastructure, at Tiraumea 40 mins NE of Masterton. The district of Tiraumea is situated half way between Alfredton and Pongaroa and generally has a mix of better quality lower country and harder, higher hill country. The area is renowned for its high wind run.

Many of the farms in the area are under siege from forestry syndicates and with the carbon price now around \$65/T that will unfortunately continue to be the case. Balmoral was purchased in its entirety (800ha) by a forestry syndicate and all the back country is now in pines. Thankfully the front part of the property was put up for sale which gave Matt an opportunity which he grasped with both hands and those hands (and feet) haven't stopped since he arrived there in late January.



Matt counting ewes off the first truck load into Balmoral.

The purchase of Balmoral has also given Barb & I the opportunity to significantly grow our Romney stud operation as Matt has been happy to fill his farm up with our stud ewes while farming his own cattle. He also farms a lease block on the main road north of Eketahuna and spends a good part of the winter pregnancy scanning ewes over the lower Nth Island. This part of his business (Oldmate Scanning) has also grown in recent years but he tells me there is still scope to take on new clients. So if anyone is looking for an experienced, accurate, owner/operator sheep scanner for next season then Matt would no doubt be pleased to hear from you. His contact number is 027 904 0196

We are excited about our involvement up at Balmoral because it will allow us to:

- grow our Romney stud operation
- test our sheep in a different challenging environment
- expose the flock to a slightly different style of management

It is envisaged that Matt will continue to run the majority of the twin scanned 2th and mixed age ewes. We will continue to run all the older ewes (6yr, 7yr plus some 8 yr), all the triplet scanned ewes and some of the twin scanned ewes plus singles here at home. We will also continue to run approx 600 Romney ewe hoggets (all mated) plus all the ram hoggets here. All the South Suffolks will remain here with the overflow run up on the Taratahi block.

ROMNEY PREGNANCY SCANNING

Ewes: Overall we were pretty happy with the way the pregnancy scanning played out both here at home and up at Balmoral. The mixed aged ewes scanned impressively at 208% and 207% respectively but the 2ths were slightly disappointing at 174% given that 6% were dry for some reason.

Nonetheless when all the mobs were combined we ended up with an overall pregnancy scanning result of 197% which we were more than happy with.

Ewe hoggets: All the ewe hoggets (incl. hogget progeny) were mated as usual this season to top end Romney ram hoggets and later scanned at 101%. While this result was no record breaker we were still quite pleased given that the 'in lamb' rate was one of the highest we have had but included fewer twins – not a bad thing! We mated an extra 150 ewe hoggets this year and brought their mating forward by 10 days. We don't use teasers so were quite chuffed with the way that things turned out.

We should point out again that all of our Romney lambs (except triplets) are born on unfertilised hill country (no fertiliser for over 30 years). The ewe lambs are weaned back on to similar country and are later tupped as hoggets on similar country. They are then wintered and lambled on similar country.

We have only just finished set stocking the ewe hoggets for lambing at a higher stocking rate than usual given the extra numbers and we are hoping that the grass lifts in time for them. In hindsight this was probably not the season to carry an extra 150 in lamb ewe hoggets but to their credit they have come through the winter in quite good order and we just hope they don't run out of puff before the grass starts lifting.

THE ULTIMATE IN MOTHERING?



We would have to confess that we left our run with the ewe hogget crutching a bit late this month which wasn't helped by a few consecutive days of wet weather. Consequently we had a few lamb in the holding paddocks while waiting to be crutched!

While I wasn't pleased to find that some had lambled uncrutched and on the wrong part of the farm I was nonetheless incredibly impressed to find that in every instance these hoggets had managed to hang onto their lambs (singles and twins) and feed them while 600 other hoggets were constantly milling around and climbing all over them.

They were easy to shed out of the mob when the time came to bring the others in for crutching and will finally get crutched in a few days time once their lambs are old enough to be moved.

HOGGET PROGENY CONTRIBUTING MORE AND MORE TO THE FLOCK

Over the years it has been extremely gratifying to find that the proportion of ewe hogget progeny that make it back into the breeding flock or are sold as 2th rams has steadily increased. This despite the fact that they are born a month later and now even include a growing number of twins that have been reared as twins. Technically these sheep should be genetically superior in many respects given the age of their mothers so it has been very rewarding over the last couple of decades to see the standard of the hogget progeny steadily improving when we wean them. We put this down to better mothering, milking and the lambs being more thrifty.



Ram hoggets out of hoggets - July 2021.

The ram hoggets that were out of ewe hoggets were run separately last autumn and we were really impressed with their thrift, growth, type, evenness and lack of dags. When we went through them in late August prior to shearing only 3 needed to be culled out of approx. 100 given their quality, although I should point out that anything substandard was taken out at weaning. We hope they continue to do all the right things in order to make the cut prior to ram selling.

GETTING MORE SERIOUS ABOUT FE TOLERANCE

While the majority of our ram clients do not have facial eczema issues we do have clients that farm in fringe areas and a few that can be hit quite badly from time to time. Thankfully we have not seen any clinical cases here but others in our area have and, given the changing climate, we suspect this insidious condition may well become more common further south.

Accordingly, like many other ram breeders, we feel that we need to be able to offer clients who are at risk a genetic package that includes some genuine FE protection, albeit not as comprehensive as the protection FE Gold breeders can offer.

To that end we ventured north to Gisborne last summer and purchased two FE Gold rams from the Hinenui stud that is operated by the Teutenberg family. They run one of the largest FE Gold Coopworth flocks in the country and a number of years ago purchased a smaller local Romney stud flock. Both flocks have been sporodesmin dosed since around 1985 and have been dosed at the FE Gold rate of 0.6mg/kg for many years – they are serious FE breeders!

We checked out their Romney flock with lambs at foot in advance and were generally impressed with their 'type', their performance and the way that they were being farmed. No adult sheep are drenched.

One of the criteria of FE Gold breeders is that 10% of sale rams have to be sporodesmin tested and one of the rams we purchased was included in that group. The other ram wasn't tested but has an even higher EBV for FE tolerance. Both rams have very high overall SIL indexes and in our opinion were the best two rams in the elite mob of rams we picked from with regards to structure and type.



Hinenui sires - the one on the left was sporodesmin tested to .6mg/kg.

Both have progeny on the ground now and we will be watching them closely over the next 12 months to see how they develop. Hopefully they will be well represented in next year's sale line-up for those of you who may be interested.

We are following AgResearch's work with interest with regard to developing a fully validated, high throughput blood test to measure FE tolerance. This would avoid the need for animals to be exposed to the toxin and would potentially revolutionise breeding FE tolerant flocks. Their results so far look very promising and they are now looking to progress to the next stage in the development of a commercially available test for farmers.

FARMING ON THE CHATHAMS

Congratulations to Liz and Bruce Tuanui and their son Del and daughter in law Gigi for hosting the Country Calendar team and helping to produce a really interesting feature on their fishing, farming and conservation operations. We hope most of you saw that episode and enjoyed it as much as we did.

We were especially interested given that Liz & Bruce have been buying our rams for a number of years now and it gave us the opportunity to not only get to see where the rams were ending up but also enabled us to put some faces to the numerous emails and phone calls that we have received.

The programme certainly wetted our appetite for Chatham Island blue cod and we (along with many others) have been ordering online from the Chatham Island Food Company ever since. The fish is air freighted and delivered to your door in the shortest possible time frame and is delicious – second to none!

The Country Calendar episode also wetted our appetite to learn a little more about farming on the Chathams so we asked Liz and Bruce if they would mind giving us a thumbnail sketch of their farming operation and any other interesting features of their Island life that we could include as a feature in our newsletter.

They kindly obliged and we have copied their email which gives a fascinating insight into the upside and downside of living and farming on the Chathams.

Tuku Farm

Approximate area of farm is 5000 acres with effective area approx 2000 acres, 800 acres bush & covenants, remaining is undeveloped peat country.

Tuanui's have farmed on the Chathams 6 generations — with the present farm at Tuku 2nd generation set up in trust for future family..



The pasture is predominantly native grasses with areas of improved pasture. Some areas of the Chathams esp coastal have really high P levels due to originally being alive with burrowing seabirds.

Some farmers use small amounts of fertiliser for cropping and hay paddocks but as general rule not for fertilising large areas. The cost of fertiliser is \$203 t from Ravensdown to the Chatham wharf. We run 2400 Romney ewes along with 600 replacement hoggets that are put to the ram. Have 150 Angus/Hereford X cows. Lambing percentage in a normal season is approx 130% but we do have an ongoing problem with feral pigs taking lambs. They are hunted throughout the year and all through lambing but have still

lost up to 500 in one season.

We start lambing mid October and wean early January. The late lambing is due to not being able to start shipping lambs until end of April as do not travel well in the summer heat.

Some farmers finish lambs on crop before shipping but majority don't. Have included a photo of crop grown here on farm with little to no fertiliser because it was ordered but not sent and too late by the time ship had done another trip. This crop in the photo is Goliath rape.

The cost of shipping lambs to Napier is \$30 per head this excludes cartage from farm to wharf and wharf to grazing which can be up to \$5 per head.

The only wool shipped is just fleece wool the rest is dumped. Freight on a bale of wool is \$120

Cattle are all sold store grazing can be a number of weeks if have had a rough trip. Cost per head to ship is 65c per kg. All freight in and out of the island has a county due charged e.g \$12 for a bale of wool.

Most of the power is diesel generation from a main source and extremely expensive- 92 cents per unit plus line charges. Outlying areas like us have to be self sufficient as the main power does not reach everyone.

We have 2 hydro units [the only ones on the island] with a back up of solar for the summer months. Have had one of the units in for over 30 years.

There is no abattoir at all on the island and other than local home kill all small goods are brought in.

We are heavily involved in conservation having had a bird that was thought to have been extinct for 105 years rediscovered on the farm on 1/1/1978. 2700 acres of bush was gifted to the crown by Bruce's parents Manuel and Evelyn in 1981 to help with the birds survival. Taiko camp which we now run as a Trust was established as a base to look after the Taiko and other threatened species. We have since protected a number of key habitat and built 2 predator free areas one in which has nearly half the worlds population of Chatham Island taiko with 15 pairs. We have also translocated a number of endemic species back to main Chatham -Chatham petrel, tui, titi, Chatham Albatross. The Chatham Island Parea, 30% larger than the mainland kereru, was all but extinct in the late 1980's with less than 40 birds. The farm is the stronghold of this species with over 500 seen on the ground feeding on native plants. The population now is around 800 -1000. We have ongoing predator work done on the farm.



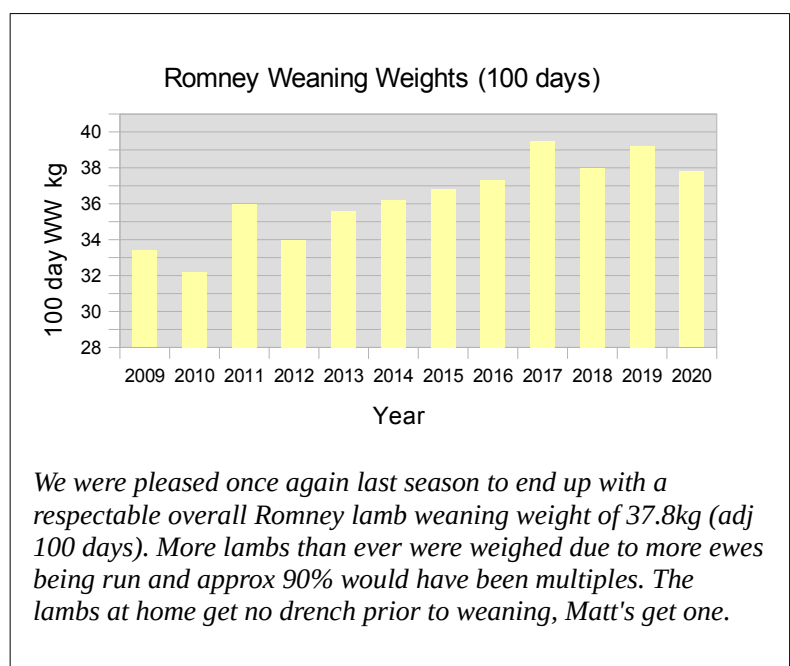
There are many positives on the Chathams living here and bringing up a family. There are a lot of natural resources that we have access to that don't incur a cost. There are our coastal food sources like pua, bluecod, kina etc that are readily available but also a large lagoon that islanders have access to with whitebait, cockles, flounder eels etc with no commercial take. The weka is a pest on the Chathams due to lack of predators [no mustelids] so is also a seasonal food source which helps to control numbers.

Cheers Liz and Bruce Tuanui

A SHOUT OUT TO OUR SHEARERS

We have been extremely fortunate over the years to have had the services of excellent shearers who have constantly polished our sheep to perfection! Two shearers in particular have been the mainstay over the past couple of decades and we thought it was about time they got a mention in the newsletter given the contribution they make and the fact that they are such an integral part of our small team.

We so appreciate seeing all our sheep going out the porthole having been shorn to perfection but of course it is the ram hogget shearing that is seen and appreciated by the most people. We couldn't count the number of times clients and agents have commented on the high standard of shearing that is still evident months later.



Allan Grant, a proud Scotsman, is one member of our elite team and has been coming in our gate for about 10 years or so now. Despite having lived locally for going on 20 years he still calls Scotland home and represents Scotland whenever he competes in the Golden Shears Open here in Masterton.

He bought a local shearing run a number of years ago and has a very loyal client base who appreciate the quality service he provides and his relaxed 'not a problem' manner. I can recall an occasion when we were desperate to get Romney ram hoggets shorn in August as wet weather had held us up. I rang Allan with an SOS only to find that he was completely committed to shearing out on Glenburn Station (1½ hrs away) over the following days. My heart sunk but then he said "how about I turn up around 6.00pm when I get back and we could do a few then". He duly turned up on cue and shored until 9.00pm without a break. He then repeated that heroic feat the following evening and we finally got the job finished – hats off to that man!



Richard doing what he does so well!

Richard Pearson is the other member of the team and has been with us now for around 25 years and even had the dubious distinction of shearing the last sheep in our old woolshed not long after he started doing our shearing.

At 72 he now calls it quits after 2 or 3 runs but while his daily tallies may have dropped back his standard of work has not and he still shifts mountains of work albeit in smaller bites. He too still competes in the Golden Shears Open and such is his longevity in the industry that, for some years now, he has been shearing for the 3rd generation of the same family!

Richard has had an extremely interesting life to date which began in Southampton, England. He moved to the Falkland Islands aged 13 in 1963 with his family and spent the next 10 years there experiencing a very different but adventurous lifestyle.

One of his most notable experiences involved spending a full year essentially alone on Passage Island running one of the farming operations, aged 19. He was in daily contact with people via the radio network but saw no one for over a year apart from when supplies were dropped off once a month. Richard had to be almost self sufficient – meat, milk, butter, veges with cooking and heating via a peat burning oven and gas lamps used for lighting.

He made his way to New Zealand via England in about 1974 and has made the Wairarapa his home ever since but has always hung onto his English accent. Over the years Richard has entertained us around the smoko table with stories about his experiences – all told in his unique and amusing way, and his stories are not just limited to the Falklands – his knowledge of ancient history, music and culture is extraordinary – a truly multi dimensional character. Here's hoping there are still many more smokos with Richard to be had!

WOOL STILL MATTERS

Despite the abysmal state of the strong wool market in recent years our focus on wool quality has never wavered. This starts at docking when any lamb with black fibre is culled and the checks continue at lamb shearing and subsequent shearings. Allan and Richard are extremely



Barb - still weighing fleeces.

conscientious in that regard and Barb is always on the board at shearing constantly looking for reasons to cull sheep!

We have always strived to breed Romneys that have quality, medium (46-48 wool count) type wool with good style, and always cull sheep if we see faults such as britchy, plain or harsh wool. We continue to weigh all ram hogget fleeces which generate EBVs for fleece weight. At the end of the day it is about constantly striving to breed the best sheep that we can. Wool is part of the Romney package and so for the sake of our job satisfaction alone it needs to be right!

SOUTH SUFFOLKS

Please don't imagine that because our South Suffolks sometimes don't get a mention in our newsletter they are less important to us. They are of equal importance despite being a smaller part of our ram operation.

Unfortunately the newsletter so often gets top heavy with Romney stuff and there is only limited time and scope to extend an already lengthy newsletter.

Suffice to say thanks to your support we are continuing to grow the South Suffolk flock in order to breed more rams and keep improving the standard of the rams that we put up for sale. As with the Romneys we are lambing more and more South Suffolk ewe hoggets and their progeny are also contributing to the growth of the flock and the quality of our sale rams.



Home bred 2th sires used in 2021.

We are continuing to invest in top end genetics from other flocks and accordingly we have committed to heading down to Oamaru at the end of October to take advantage of an opportunity to get top pick from a larger South Suffolk operation down there. As always we will be looking for a ram that excels in every respect – figures, background, type and structure – particularly with regards to feet and good back ends. We will let you know how we get on.

FINAL WORD (phew)

Thank you for all your support last season – it went extremely well for us for which we are very grateful. Hopefully we will get to do it again in a few weeks time?

To that end we would really appreciate it if you could either fill out the ram order form and mail it back to us or preferably email it to us by **Friday 22nd October** at the latest. We can then quantify your requirements, allocate rams and lock your pick into our system.

Once we receive your order Barb will email you to confirm that we have received it. Once we get towards the end of November she will start her ringing to organise days and times that suit for picking and I will start getting the rams ready.

In the event that you do require rams from us again this season we very much look forward to catching up in the usual way and at the usual venue. In the intervening time we hope your grass grows, your stock thrive and your work programme goes well.

Good luck and good farming.

Kind regards

Geoff

