



Warm greetings from a very waterlogged Glenview. Barb and I trust you are managing to inch your way through this incredibly challenging winter one day/one job at a time and hope your morale hasn't taken too much of a hit in recent months.

The last 18 months would easily be the wettest that we have experienced in our 40 years here – and by some margin! The water table has been so overloaded for so long now that even the tops of ridges have become bogs as the water keeps pushing out of every part of the ground. So far though we seem to have dodged a bullet and have only had a few shallow slips but we hold our breath every time it rains which is most days!

Nonetheless we have had a dream run compared to the poor people East of here and up through Hawkes Bay and Gisborne who got absolutely hammered by cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. The damage to farms (apart from all the other destruction) has been nothing short of catastrophic and as one farmer we spoke to put it “we have gone back 50 years overnight in terms of our infrastructure”. And of course prior to those two cyclones that area had been trying to recover from previous major weather events that had wreaked havoc.

We are also very aware that the ongoing wet winter has made the task of undertaking repairs even more difficult and in many instances has wiped out repair work - soul destroying! So needless to say whenever we have a frustrating or bad day here at Glenview we remind ourselves of the monumental task that our cyclone affected colleagues are facing and it certainly puts a perspective on things.

Hang in there guys – spring and summer are not far away now (hopefully) and will undoubtedly provide the opportunity to repair, regroup and go forward.

FARMING IS TOUGH GOING RIGHT NOW

A year can be a very long time in farming and things have certainly soured a bit since this time last year, mainly due to :

- Doubling of interest rates
- Significant increase in input costs
- Reduction in sheep meat prices
- Relentless wet especially Nth Island



Another day in the mud!

Of course the dairy and cropping sectors are also doing it tough right now as they grapple with similar issues which effectively adds up to a 'perfect storm'.

On a much more positive note though it was refreshing to read Dani Darke's column in the latest Country Wide magazine in which she stated that she and her husband were refusing to be gloomy about farming just because we are currently facing some headwinds. They have put their money where their mouths are and have recently purchased a large part of their neighbour's farm and quoted economist Cameron Bagrie as saying "I can tell you that I would rather be a farmer in the next 2 years than an Auckland property developer".

We were also heartened by a comment made by respected farming accountant George Collier in the same publication that up cycles in farming are always longer than the down cycles. Therefore with any luck by this time next year our global markets will have got back up to speed and we will all be singing a different tune!

FARMING WITHOUT FERTILISER (UPDATE)

We have now farmed our hill country (which makes up the bulk of our property) for 35 years without applying any fertiliser or lime. We elude to this in our advertising and occasionally mention it when people enquire about rams.

After leasing Glenview for 5 years from 1982 we begged, borrowed and somehow scraped together enough to be able to purchase it in 1987. The property had been neglected over previous decades and the lack of

fencing and stock water in particular urgently needed addressing. Unfortunately our very large mortgage meant that we could not fund both fencing and fertiliser so the latter was put on hold. Given the poorer quality and native component in the pasture we didn't have a great deal to lose!

At the outset we intended to simply monitor the situation year by year and assumed that eventually we would apply fertiliser again when we could afford to. We got soil tests done which showed that the pH was in the 5.5-5.8 range, P 8-12 and S 9-11.

About the same time we embarked on a programme to breed Romneys that could perform at the highest level despite being farmed on 'predominantly unfertilised native hill country'. We felt that if sheep could prove themselves in an environment like ours where they had to cope solely on a diet of 'low octane' feed then they would be more likely to excel elsewhere.

Over the following seasons we did not observe any drop off in pasture quantity or quality and consequently continued to divert our fertiliser money towards other farm development. Now 35 years on we are still doing that and remain adamant that there hasn't been a decline in pasture production or composition. Our carrying capacity has remained constant at just under 9su/ha (60:40 sheep/cattle ratio) but the per head performance of the sheep has lifted significantly.



Visitors in our back paddock (shut up for winter). Plenty of holes were dug and we were pleased to be told that we at least have a healthy worm population!

Purely for interest and for the sake of our newsletter we did some comprehensive soil testing over the entire property in the spring of 2009 and included a sample of the results in the newsletter that year. They showed that there had been no change in P, S or pH over that 20 year period.

Last autumn we were contacted by Christchurch based John King who amongst other things acts as an independent facilitator of various Red Meat Profit Partnership action groups throughout NZ. He wanted to bring a group of people to our property to assess how well our operation was performing without fertiliser.

Consequently we thought we ought to update our soil tests so we could provide the group with some current data and satisfy our own curiosity. Once again we found that essentially nothing had changed (see table) with

pH and P levels although S had dropped back despite it remaining at the same level for the previous 26 year period. We think that the drop in S may have perhaps had something to do with the phenomenal pasture growth that occurred here over the previous 12 months especially during the wet summer.

Typical analysis on Glenview hill country			
	pH	Olsen P	Sulphur
1983	5.5	6-8	9-14
2009	5.6	8-10	9-10
2023	5.5	6-8	4-5

Comments:

- We didn't originally set out to farm without fertiliser – it was a strategy that we adopted through economic necessity
- We are certainly not 'anti fertiliser', nor do we suggest that the majority of farmers are wrong and we are right – we have merely taken a different approach which has allowed us to fund other work
- Obviously you don't get anything for nothing and we would undoubtedly grow less grass and probably poorer grass which necessitates a slightly lower stocking rate but not lower per head performance
- We have always been convinced that our slightly lower stocking rate has been more than offset by what we save – possibly by a factor of 10
- Given the financial pressure that many of us are currently facing we thought it might be of interest to share our experience of farming without fertiliser.

MATT OLDS – FARMING WITH FERTILISER

For the last 5 years or so we have been fortunate to have had a sheep share farming involvement with Matt, initially at Mikimiki and for the last 2 years at Balmoral, his hill country property up at Tiraumea, 45 mins NE of Masterton.



Matt & Sarah with Balmoral in the background.

Matt and partner Sarah (now fiancée) currently farm 1000 Romney stud ewes for us, all DNA recorded, and they do a great job. Sarah also has a full-time career outside of farming which she thankfully is able to run from home most of the time, and Matt of course is flat out over the winter operating his now large scale ewe scanning business when not a lot of sleep is had!

Their ewes range from 2ths through to 5yr olds and are mainly twin scanned. We lamb all the triplet scanned ewes here at home and replace the Balmoral triplet scanned ewes with twin scanned ewes from here. We also run the 6,7 and 8yr old ewes (in addition to ma ewes) and all ram and ewe hoggets here.

As we have said previously we believe it benefits our breeding programme to run our sheep in two different environments and expose them to different management styles.

Tiraumea (situated in the Tararua district, 80 mins NE of here) has always been regarded as having a tougher climate – wetter, colder and more wind, although this winter I'm sure our mud is deeper than Matt's!

Another difference between here and Balmoral is that Matt uses fertiliser in the normal way and uses summer crops strategically to get through the notoriously dry summers his area can experience that follow the cold windy springs. The point is that in contrast to how we operate here at Glenview, Matt, at times, gives his sheep feed that is more expensive and better quality.

We don't believe this contrast will compromise our breeding programme at all given the flock has such an extensive background of being farmed on unfertilised hill country. We buy back our ram lambs in February and ewe lambs as hoggets in April. As soon as the ewe hoggets arrive home they are run up on the unfertilised hills and are mated there, lamb there, rear their lambs there and are grown out there through to the 2th stage at which point many will return to Balmoral for mating.

Our involvement with Matt has been a relatively recent development in terms of the evolution of the flock which has enabled us to work alongside a skilled operator and grow our overall business. We nonetheless felt it was important to be completely transparent about the way our sheep are being farmed at Balmoral with regard to fertiliser use.

ROMNEY PREGNANCY SCANNING

From what we have heard most people's preg. scanning results have been in the solid - very good range with less dries than usual. An abundance of feed over the summer/autumn would have undoubtedly contributed to this and it has been suggested that the regular rain over that period may have also helped by washing fungal toxins (incl. FE) off the grass and down into the base of the sward.

Our combined Glenview/Balmoral scanning came out at 194% which we were pretty happy with especially given that just on 40% of the ewes this year are 2ths.

The ma ewes came out at exactly 200%, 2ths 180% and we only had 1.9% dries overall. 16% of the flock were scanned with singles, 68.6% with twins and 13.5% with triplets. Another pleasing feature of our scanning this season was that once again we did not end up with an excessive proportion of ewes scanned with triplets.

ARE DAUGHTERS OF TRIPLET BORN RAMS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE TRIPLETS?

This is a question that we are occasionally asked and our response has been that from our experience definitely not. For over three decades now our sire mobs have included a significant proportion of triplet born rams, most of them reared as triplets. Despite that the proportion of ewes scanned with triplets has not increased over the years and has remained steady at around 15% or less.

As we acknowledged in last year's newsletter it is inevitable that around 15% of ewes will conceive triplets in flocks that are scanning in the 190-200% range. While we are not strong advocates of triplets on hill country we have nonetheless found here that a triplet component of around 15% requires little extra work, the ewes lamb unsupervised and in a good season will wean 230% with lambs 35-40kg at 100 days.

Our motivation for using triplet born rams as sires in our Romney flock has never been about boosting fertility. Instead it has always been about selecting outstanding multiple born and reared 2th rams that have an exceptional performance background and exceptional structure and phenotype.

If some of those outstanding 2th rams have in addition been born and reared as triplets then in our opinion they will be truly exceptional given that they will be the product of exceptional mothering, milking, lamb growth and thrift as they would have had access to significantly less milk and would have faced significantly more adversity for the first 100 days of their lives.

MEASURING INTRAMUSCULAR FAT (IMF)

Thanks to Chris Spark's (WRS Scanning) constantly evolving expertise we were able to measure IMF for the first time this season when both Romney and South Suffolk ram hoggets were eye muscle (loin) scanned as usual in May. The scanning



Chris in action eye muscle & IMF scanning in May this year.

is done using an ultrasound image and Chris is now able to quantify the amount of IMF on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being low and 5 being high.

To our knowledge this has not been done on any scale with sheep before but this season a handful of breeders have taken this initiative and added this feature to breeding programmes in order to further enhance the carcass qualities.

We have been told that the two things that have the most influence on eating quality are IMF and aging (texture) with IMF having the most influence. IMF is also regarded as healthy fat from a nutritional perspective.

We note that in the last 12 months Alliance Group have invested in technology (Fluorescence Spectroscopy) in two of their Sth Island plants that is able to accurately measure IMF in the loin. Apparently this is a first for a NZ red meat company and they say this will allow them to identify premium quality carcasses which will enable them to build up and scale their premium programmes. We certainly hope that this is rolled out in the Nth Island asap.

So far so good with our recent scanning showing some sheep within both breeds rate highly for IMF despite there being quite a range – so we definitely have a good base to build from. We see this as another opportunity to further improve our sheep in order to add value for clients. We will keep you posted as we go along.

SOUTH SUFFOLK BREEDERS AGM TOUR (MAY)



This year the biannual two day get together was held in Rotorua and hosted by Nth Island club president Ian Lawrence, wife Georgia and son Michael who farm 15 mins west of the city. We were based right on the edge of the picturesque Lake Rotoiti, a stunning venue. We also got to experience some of the other nearby lakes aboard an ex WWII American amphibian landing craft driven by a hilarious and highly entertaining, random character. Entertainment aside it was refreshing to catch up with people from throughout the country and hear about their trials, tribulations and of course their successes.

One of the highlights on day two from an educational perspective was a visit to the Liggins Institute which is a sheep based biomedical research facility that has a special focus on the influence of nutrition throughout

pregnancy. Some of the more interesting things that we learned were:

- Nutrition is critical throughout pregnancy and starts at conception – particularly important with multiples. Reducing feed intake in early pregnancy resulting in a decrease in live weight of as little as 10% can have negative outcomes for foetal growth. Progeny from ewes restricted during pregnancy can take up to 10 months to catch up to those lambs born to ewes that were kept on an even plane of nutrition.
- The transfer of antibodies from ewe to unborn lamb is negligible so vaccinating ewes pre lamb contributes little or nothing to the unborn lamb. All the antibody transfer occurs via colostrum so access to sufficient colostrum in the first 24 hours is critical.

- Research done on 'pain' at docking/tailing has indicated there is a spike in cortisol (stress hormone) for a period of about 3 hours post docking, then also elevated noradrenaline levels for several weeks in response to inflammation. They found that undocked lambs were 1-2kg heavier at weaning.

SOUTH SUFFOLK SIRE



Braewood 280/19 about to be trucked home (mid June).

Braewood 280/19, one of three sires used this season, was loaned to us by Simon and Fiona Prouting. We gave him a full quota of ewes here prior to which he covered his mob at Proutings prior to which he spent time at the Tararua Breeding Centre where semen was taken destined for the Sth Island and for use in the 2023 CPT trial.

He took all that in his stride and retained his condition throughout. He is a wide, deep ram with an impressive back end, excellent feet and good

constitution – a perfect Glenview fit! He is also a very well performed sire and we have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to incorporate his quality into our breeding programme. 280/19 will also strengthen the linkages within the breed throughout the country especially the larger flocks.

RAM PRICE INCREASE

We are sorry to have to finish the newsletter on a disappointing note and given the financial (and physical) pressure that all farmers are currently under we know our timing could not be worse. For that reason we have agonised over this issue for some time now but the reality is our current pricing is unsustainable and consequently we will have to increase the price of both Romney and South Suffolk rams by \$200. We make the following points:

- Our costs have risen significantly.
- Our prices have become too low relative to our competitors.
- Because our top end prices have not increased for some time most new clients want to come in at the top end and so we are getting a bit of a 'log jam' at that level.
- We have doubled our ewe numbers over the last 5 years but are probably only selling about 25% more rams. Therefore the quality of the rams that we now sell has been enhanced quite significantly.
- We are now doing even more measuring and recording of data and our physical assessment of sheep is even more detailed nowadays.



Tuanui rams about to be put on a boat to the Chathams.

As we have stated previously it has always been our intention to price our rams somewhat conservatively relative to our competitor's and we genuinely believe that will continue to be the case. Needless to say if anyone has any issues re ram pricing then please come back to us so we can quickly find an arrangement that works for you.

More than anything we would not want a lift in ram prices to compromise anyone's farming operation or get in the way of good ongoing relationships that we value very highly.

RAM ORDER FORMS

In lieu of the change to our pricing we have made a change to our ram order forms so clients can indicate which price level they wish to pick at. Romney rams will now be priced between \$1000 and \$1500 at \$100 price breaks and South Suffolk rams will be priced between \$800 and \$1000 again at \$100 price breaks.

We would really appreciate it if you could return your ram order form, either by mail or email, by the **30th of September** at the latest. This will allow us to safeguard your place in the pick and allocate numbers prior to accepting new orders. Barb will acknowledge your order when we receive it so you have peace of mind knowing that you are booked in.

As we have pointed out previously we send ram order forms to all clients irrespective of whether they deal with us privately or come with an agent. Agent clients can either return their forms or ask their agent to let us know – either way is absolutely fine.

SEE YOU IN NOV/DEC (HOPEFULLY)

We so hope you are able to stagger through the balance of this marathon winter in reasonable shape and also hope the long awaited spring is early and kind so man and beast can dry out, shake off some of the mud and go forward with a bit more spring in the step.

Follow the election with interest (?) and at the very least take some time off to thoroughly enjoy the Rugby World Cup. Good luck and good farming!

Kind regards from us both,

Geoff



Glenview Romneys were supplied by Matt for the 2023 Pre Golden Shears Wool Handling competition at Riverside, Masterton. Glenview Romneys also proudly co-sponsor the Wairarapa A & P Show Open Shearing Competition in October.