

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

2024

Warm greetings to you all from us at Glenview. It is nice to be able to start this year's newsletter in a relatively buoyant frame of mind, in stark contrast to how we were feeling this time last year. Our lift in spirits is mainly due to a very kind winter and an even kinder spring (to date) which shorn ram hoggets and newborn lambs have really appreciated. The ground is wet but not too wet, the grass is growing and the stock are looking well, so at least things are looking good 'on farm' right now!

We hope that most of you are currently having a similarly good run and your 'on farm' fundamentals are also in reasonably good shape and ready to kick start the new season. We have gathered that most regions have benefited from the same kind weather patterns over the winter and into the spring (except Southland unfortunately) which has certainly been great for morale.

Rewind twelve months and the 'on farm' landscape looked horrible by comparison. We were all up to our necks in mud after eighteen months of constant rain, the hills were starting to fall down and the stock were doing it hard. And yet we got off light compared to our cyclone affected colleagues further up the coast who got absolutely smashed.

We hope you guys are now feeling a whole lot less traumatised than you were this time last year and have managed to make significant progress with the rebuild. We are certainly very conscious of the enormity of your task and that, in so many instances, it will take years to put things right plus a lot more hard toil and money. All the best!

DROUGHT

Rewind eight months and we were in serious drought mode (from one extreme to another) which didn't relent until June, at which point Barb mowed our lawns for only the second time in 2024 and not because she had been lazy I hastily add! Jokes aside, this last drought was probably up there with the worst two droughts we have experienced throughout the four decades we have been here and necessitated locking the entire South Suffolk flock (incl. lambs/hoggets) down on baleage in holding paddocks from mid January through to June.



The cattle also spent the bulk of that time on a 'baleage only' diet (not that they complained) which was not an inexpensive exercise but it at least held their condition and saved what little cattle feed we had left up on the hills for the winter. We also sold our 18mth steers (12mths early) to take some pressure off the baleage stack and our bank balance.

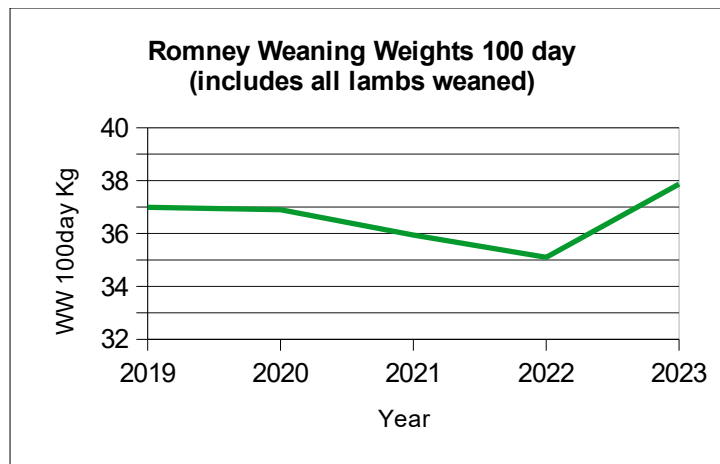
The Romneys meanwhile were left to eek out an existence on whatever feed they could find throughout that period which was a pretty stern test of their thrift and constitution, especially for the lambs/hoggets. Delighted to report that they coped remarkably well. The ewes were respectable at tupping and their pregnancy scanning result at the end of June was similar to any other year.

Ram and ewe hoggets hung in there also and looked reasonably happy and certainly healthy throughout. While this past season has been extremely challenging from a climatic and financial perspective, one of the things that has kept us going and kept our spirits up has been the impressive way the Romney hoggets have handled the adversity.

BALMORAL

Thankfully the drought didn't kick in up at Balmoral (Matt and Sarah Old's property at Tiraumea, 90mins NE of here) until a bit later on and consequently Matt helped the Glenview end of the operation out big time by hanging on to all his ram and ewe lambs that come back here, a lot longer than he would normally. So that made a big difference by lightening our load here at a critical time and would have contributed to the way our sheep here have coped so well.

In addition Matt has stuck his neck out a bit more this year and is running more ewes for us – all this while running 1400 lambs for an extra month and dealing with drought. He has taken all that in his stride and the last time we spoke he reckoned that he was really happy with the condition of the ewes, going into lambing, which was very reassuring! A very good effort indeed, especially given that Matt is on the road for a good couple of months over the winter, pregnancy scanning ewes. He nonetheless manages to keep his finger on the pulse and clearly has a good team behind him, no doubt lead by Sarah.



Pleasing to get a good lift in weaning weights last summer!

Talking of teams - for those of you who are not already aware - Matt and Sarah are now officially a (great) team, having tied the knot since the last newsletter. Congratulations again!

THINGS LOOKING MORE HOPEFUL BEYOND THE FARM GATE

In a financial sense the last eighteen months or so have been the toughest period to farm through since the Rogernomics reforms in the late 1980s, and that's going back a long way! The combination of very high on farm inflation, interest rates doubling and a significant drop in sheep meat prices has put even moderately indebted, good operators under severe financial pressure.

We clearly still have a way to go and the next season is also going to be a bit of a struggle but there does appear to be a little light at the end of the tunnel. Interest rates have definitely peaked and are retreating downwards albeit very slowly. There is an expectation that the momentum will increase towards the end of the year and into next year which will positively impact the bottom line quite significantly if rates reduce by at least 1-2%.

According to what we are all hearing there is also some cautious optimism around a modest improvement in sheep meat prices this coming season. This seems to be based around a predicted lower supply coming out of Australia, NZ, EU and UK which will hopefully result in higher global prices. A lift in demand from China would of course help the cause too, especially with regard to mutton.

Beef prices are certainly the good news story currently and over the last couple of months have provided a lucrative and welcome income stream for anyone selling but an expensive outlay for anyone buying. B+LNZ is predicting the 'all-beef' price to be 4.3% above last season reflecting strong demand in the US where the cattle herd is at its lowest level in over 70 years.

PURCHASE OF MANA 47/22

We purchased this very good Romney ram primarily as a FE sire at the Mana (Malcolm Wyeth) sale last November. We were pushed all the way by a very determined under bidder to the extent that 47/22 ended up making the top price by a very considerable margin.

First and foremost he has a strong FE background, particularly on the sire side, which Malcolm purchased from the FE Gold Waimai stud and was ranked 1st on SIL for FE in that flock.

From the outset it was apparent that 47/22 was an outstanding sire in every respect and we were delighted to find a top FE sire that had all the other qualities that we always look for. He has a very good performance background and all the right physical attributes and we are very optimistic he will knit well with our flock while building our FE tolerance.



Mana 47/22

Incidentally the determined under bidder (ram breeder) was from Gore and consequently wasn't interested in the ram's FE background, just his performance background and his physical makeup. Malcolm has since mentioned that 47/22's twin sister has turned out to be a real standout, so all of that bodes well and we look forward to seeing how his progeny develop.

TRIPLE DRENCH RESISTANCE

Unfortunately this is becoming increasingly common throughout NZ and we are hearing more and more about this issue in the media nowadays. Inevitably this will become even more widespread going forward and will likely impact most of us at some point in the future. Our local vets have kept reinforcing that message and last autumn reported that they were encountering major worm issues during the autumn drought and we understand that many of those were around drench resistance.

Thankfully we have not encountered any problems of that nature here at Glenview yet (probably just good luck rather than good management) but we know that could change at any point. Consequently it was very gratifying (and a relief) to see our hoggets stay healthy (and clean and dry in the back end) throughout the drought while they were under pressure.

In recent years we have gone against good veterinarian advice and have not conducted any drench checks and have instead, some would say ignorantly, chosen to rely solely on our visual observations after

drenching to monitor drench effectiveness. Our argument (rightly or wrongly) has been that if our drench wasn't working it would be clearly apparent.

The counter argument to that of course is that it might not be clearly apparent in the early stages, but we would prefer to delay having to rely solely on either of the two novel drenches (Startect and Zolvix). They are hellishly expensive, very hard to obtain and more importantly they are the last two 'tools in the box' and so we would like to leave them in the box for as long as we can.

Therefore we have continued to take the approach that while the triples 'appear' to be doing a good job for us we will endeavor to get as much mileage out of them as we can. Even if (worst case scenario) the triples haven't been fully effective here for a while then that would mean that the worm resilience status of the flock has been tested even more, which would be a good thing from our breeding perspective.

Having just said all that we should acknowledge that some time ago we did gratefully take some veterinarian advice to use one of the novel drenches strategically as a knockdown/exit drench. That made perfect sense to us and so for the past few years we have used Startect sparingly in that way which would have presumably helped our cause. As a precaution we drench all sale rams with Startect prior to sale.

I should perhaps add that over the years we have been very careful to not under dose and as a precaution have always tended to slightly overstate the live weight of the sheep that we were drenching. Barb has also never stopped reminding me of the need to shake the drums of drench really thoroughly prior to use (especially new drums) so as to reduce the chance of under dosing. We have no idea whether any of the above would have helped but thought we would put it out there anyway! Time will tell and we will keep you posted.

BREEDING ROMNEYS THAT REQUIRE LESS DRENCH

This has been a major focus of our breeding programme for the last 30 or so years. Over that period we have continuously challenged our sheep to varying degrees by withholding drench at times (lambs drenched only once prior to autumn) and extending the drenching interval whenever we could to identify the more worm susceptible sheep and the more worm resilient/resistant sheep.

Alongside that we have only ever retained sheep that have continued to grow at a good rate and maintain their condition (ie good constitution) and remain relatively dag free. We have been dag scoring lambs, hoggets and ewes for a long time now but have definitely stepped it up over the last 10 years or so and these are fed into SIL and generate breeding values.

Currently we are focusing mainly on dag scoring all lambs at weaning and all hoggets in Aug/Sept. The SIL scores range from 0-5 (0 = no dags) and we would likely cull anything that had repeated 3s or on occasions repeated 2s irrespective of how good they might be in



Glenview 855/22 sold to Eden Bank Romney Stud, Gore.

other respects. Consequently we have found that our dagging has reduced to the extent that nowadays we would expect at least 80% of our hoggets would not need to be dagged prior to shearing 8 or 9 months after being shorn as lambs.

In addition we have undertaken a number of other initiatives over the years such as measuring blood antibodies and testing saliva samples in order to measure levels of immunity/resistance to worms. We did not gain much from that work as we didn't find it to be particularly accurate or meaningful.

Over the decades we also followed Romney breeder Gordon Levet's progress in his quest to breed worm resistant sheep in his hostile sheep environment up at Wellsford, north of Auckland. In 2016 we attended his auction and purchased 3 rams, including the top priced ram, in order to add more impetus to our own breeding programme. That year 88% of Gordon's sale rams had never been drenched which was quite an achievement. The rams that were put up for sale were not big or heavy and there was some debate at the time as to whether they had thrived or merely survived.

Nonetheless they were healthy and had undoubtedly come through a very stern test in reasonably good shape. We ultimately used 2 of those rams in our breeding programme over the following two seasons and were quite pleased with the female progeny, some of which we still have as very old ewes. The females turned out to be solid, open faced with clean points, all very similar and certainly haven't lacked longevity.

So that is a brief summary of some of the work we have done and initiatives we have taken over the decades in order to breed sheep that are less susceptible to worms and therefore less reliant on drench. This has been done in parallel with breeding sheep that are less prone to becoming daggy as the two issues are related.

It is clear to us that we have made significant progress which is immensely satisfying. However it is also clear to us that while we may have come a long way we are still a long way away from hanging up the drench gun for good and in all probability will never get to that point. Our sheep still benefit from drench and that is usually apparent when they are drenched and barbers pole worm outbreaks (usually autumn) can be devastating in the absence of drench. Nonetheless we will keep plugging away in order to hopefully keep making progress.

BEWARE OF TUPPING SOUTH SUFFOLK EWES ON LUCERNE BALEAGE



South Suffolk ewes and ewe hoggets locked down on baleage (early March).

In event of a bad drought (like the one we had earlier this year) we lock our South Suffolks in holding paddocks and restrict them to a 'baleage only' diet which they quite enjoy, for the most part. The Romneys are not so lucky – they have to take their chances and 'tough it out' unassisted as previously mentioned.

Most of the baleage is purchased from Scott's, our local contractor, as we require it. One of the challenges as droughts drag on is sourcing 'sheep quality' baleage and during the last drought we got to the point quite early on where our only option was lucerne baleage. We are never that keen on lucerne because it can be quite variable (stalky) and even more expensive.

The other issue with lucerne of course is that it is risky with ewes in the lead up to and during tupping due to the elevated levels of coumestrol which suppresses ovulation. Nonetheless there was no alternative and given we were still some way off tupping we reluctantly switched to lucerne hoping that the drought would break in time for the ewes to go out on to grass in the lead up to tupping.

Clearly that didn't end up happening so we just had to box on with our lucerne baleage and hope that we would get away with it.

Well we didn't get away with it! Our South Suffolk ewe pregnancy scanning was back 26% - not a disaster but still quite significant!

South Suffolk Ewes	2020	2023	2024
Tupped On:	Baleage – Mixed Pasture	Grass	Baleage - Lucerne
Triplets	15.7%	14.7%	2.8%
Twins	62.2%	64.3%	63.5%
Singles	20.7%	18.4%	30.9%
Dry	1.2%	2.6%	2.8%
Scanning %	192%	192%	166%

The table illustrates what occurred this year in contrast to 2023 when the ewes were on pasture and 2020 when we were once again in drought mode but on that occasion the South Suffolks were fed grass baleage. Note the reduction in triplets and the increase in singles.

Bottom line is that faced with the same circumstances we would undoubtedly have to do what we did again as there would be no viable alternative. Nonetheless we thought we would share a 'bad news' story for a change to give anyone who didn't already know a 'heads up'.

WE HAVEN'T GIVEN UP ON WOOL

Despite the collapse of wool prices we have continued to take a pride in the wool that our Romneys grow and have striven to maintain the standard and quality. As we have said previously, quality wool is part of the Romney package and there is little or no cost associated with keeping the standard up.

Nor have we altogether given up hope that one day soon wool will once again add to our bottom lines instead of eroding our bottom lines. Yes it would be great if a much bigger chunk of the global market recognised and embraced all of the attributes wool has and then covered their floors with it – and let's hope that happens!



2 th rams looking good having just arrived at Ben McLauchlan's, mid Canterbury, after 24 hrs in transit.

However from what we are reading and hearing it would appear that if there is ever going to be a game changer for strong wool it will almost certainly involve deconstructing it in order to extract protein and other components.

Back in June, Rural News featured a story about Keraplast Ltd, a Christchurch based company now American owned, that last year extracted protein from 77 tonnes of strong wool and incorporated the ingredients into personal care products (such as shampoo) and nutraceuticals – products with significant medical or health benefits. Apparently that wool was processed into 14 ingredient products that was exported to 19 countries with sales exceeding \$10 million. The company has recently expanded into new factory premises to enable it to process 100T annually and is paying farmers a premium above market prices.

Also back in June the NZ Farmer wrote an article about a breakthrough development by Wool Source, who have produced a bio-based pigment made of 100% wool that provides the same colour intensity as synthetic pigments, but is biodegradable. Wool Source is a subsidiary of WRONZ and was launched in 2020 to test market potential for products developed through the New Uses for Strong Wool programme.

The programme focuses on breaking wool down and then reconstructing it into particles, powders and pigments. Chief executive Tom Hooper is quoted as saying that overseas interest is 'immense' but 'Wool Source will only use NZ wool, build it in NZ and capture the value-add in NZ'. He also stated that Wool Source's use of NZ wool does have the potential to ultimately drive up the price of wool given that if all goes well there is the potential for up to 20% of the NZ wool clip to be utilised in this way.



Romney ram hoggets about to be shorn (late August).

Clearly it will inevitably take time for Wool Source to scale up their operation to the point where it potentially starts to have a positive impact on the price that growers receive. However it is at least good to know that significant breakthroughs are being made that collectively could change the game for wool growers.

Who knows – a bit further down the track it might be common place to see shedding sheep farmers eagerly scurrying around their paddocks with rakes and wheel barrows eager to cash in on the next wool boom!

LAST WORD

Many thanks, once again, to all of you for your ongoing or recent support. Farming is a constantly evolving business and things can change from one season to the next so we don't ever take your repeat business for granted. In fact when we mail out ram order forms at this time of the year we always do so with a degree of trepidation especially when we know that it is really hard going out there right now.

Thanks to you we have had a really fortunate run with ram sales in recent years and that has allowed us to keep driving the operation forward with the focus constantly on quality and ongoing improvement. Last spring we had even more lambs born and therefore have had even more scope over the winter to critically evaluate the ram hoggets in order to keep lifting the standard.

But we will let you be the judge when we hopefully meet up in late November/December? We very much look forward to having a good catch up then. If you are wanting to order rams could you please let us know (mail or email) **before the 15th of October**. Approx numbers are absolutely fine!

In the meantime, good luck and good farming!

Kind regards from us both,

