



FERNLEAF Newsletter - April 2018

Opening

Hello again to our many clients and a warm welcome to those of you new to our stock and breeding program this year. We hope things are going well for you. It certainly has been a great season for us with consistent rain and staying warm – not a frost in sight as yet. Our sympathies are with all our friends in Southland and their nightmare of a season – it is quite unbelievable that we have had it so good when for others in our small country, things haven't been so great.

Breeding for resistance to parasites

We're delighted with our progress breeding sheep resistant to parasites and we still have about 150 ram lambs undrenched even now that we are well into April.

We place huge emphasis on the direction we are heading as we believe parasites will only become more and more resistant to drugs and drenches and it must help people out to know they have options about how to deal with this issue – that is – to buy our sheep – nudge nudge, wink wink.

In PGG Wrightson's recent sales brochure they were saying that Gribbles Laboratory are finding increased resistance samples coming through and they were recommending using one of the new drenches to overcome this.

This step makes some sense but surely this is not a long-term solution.

We have been keeping detailed recording for 40 years with SIL so we have tracked a variety of factors including breeding values, live weights and wool strength, etc. And we have spent many years working on Faecal Eczema tolerance so we think we have gotten most things covered. But we still believe an effective immune system is vital for the parasite challenges ahead.

In support of our focus we are finding that the rams coming through that are the most resistant are by and large the ones with the higher breeding values, better body weights and superior physiology – better sheep will be better across the board.

Just this morning a US guest staying at our B&B was telling me of the problems he is having in human health with resistance to drugs and medicine and I am wondering if animal health is more advanced in this direction.



Welcome to Justin



Ian and I welcome Justin to the team – Justin is the second son of the family and he also is becoming more involved with our endeavours.

Justin is widely experienced working on farms and he has been fencing since 2004.

So he gets to see a good amount of the countryside and we are finding that he has a fresh understanding and appreciation of what we're doing with our quest for resistance to parasites, which has been very encouraging for us

Client visit and ram delivery trips

In October of last year Carolyn and I travelled through Napier, visiting some current and prospective clients and we made the most of the opportunity to take in some of the sights.

On a delivery trip In January Justin drove me more than 800 k's in one day taking rams to two new clients.

Our first delivery was to a new client north of Wanganui. We drove to the farm via the Paraparas – always an interesting drive. Justin had done a lot of docking down there and was showing me where he'd been. From there we headed down past Bulls and up and over the Saddle Road to Woodville. That was fascinating as I hadn't seen the Manawatu windmills up that close before. From Woodville we went into the hills behind Martinborough.



Fieldays

Mystery Creek Fieldays are only a bit over two months away and we hope to see some of you there.

Justin will be on our site for a day, he tells me, so we are looking forward to having his input and I am sure you will find his outlook refreshing –Unfortunately we were unable to make it to the Central District's Field Days in Feilding this year – it was a bridge too far for us and we do regret that we weren't able to make it as we have enjoyed being part of that event and the perspective we gained from that area of the country – Grandfather Houlton Forlong was born in Wanganui (or is it Whanganui) and went to school in Bunnythorpe so we feel a certain affinity with the Manawatu.

Wool

Wool returns are continuing to be very disappointing – what a pity it is that we have to almost give away such a great product.

However, it is pleasing to see an increasing interest in dual purpose sheep again – i.e. those bred for wool and mutton – like romneys that stand the test of time.

Sales of Four-tooths

We have been finding considerable interest in four-tooths that we have both used ourselves and otherwise retained - see some of our samples on offer below.

These sheep are going onto some of the harder blocks and even though are a year older they seem to be standing up better to the challenge than smaller two-tooths.



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