



FERNLEAF NEWSLETTER

April 2020



Hello from Fernleaf

Well, what a different time we are living in and, as I write this, Carolyn and I, both being further through our 70s than we usually care to admit, are keeping to ourselves. We are really appreciating the good rain we have been getting lately as it is helping to green things up.

At the moment of writing this we are quarantining ourselves, even from my sons Ian (who has come home for the duration) and Justin and Ananda (who live across the road in the house my father built in 1936). The reason for this is that we were suspicious of the health of a Russian couple who were our last B&B guests for the season. They left us in early March but we think it wise to keep to ourselves for a few weeks.

Ewes, ewe lambs and rams for sale

Quite a few sales of our surplus ewes and ewe lambs have fallen through as a result of the drought and current travel restrictions so, if anyone would be interested in taking the opportunity to purchase some, we will undertake to get them to you.



Very little drenching

Despite the dry weather and shortage of feed I'm hugely pleased that very few lambs have needed drenching. It has been very satisfying to reflect on the process we have put ourselves through- year on year we are still making progress. And, as I've said before, we have turned a corner from dependence on drenches to comparatively few lambs needing drenching and we are just not losing the lambs we once were.

Anyway, we'd drenched less than 10% of lambs by the end of March.

Along with increased immunity to worms and parasites another benefit is reduction of dags. In fact here are some of our ram lambs- never drenched or dagged.

The weather – in our great land of ‘four seasons in a day’ – if only – bring on some liquid sunshine

As with much of the rest of the country it's been an extremely difficult couple of months for us, with dry weather, lack of water in

some areas and having to hold bulls much longer than usual.

Despite this challenging weather and growing condition situation I'm very pleased with how our sheep have come through – I think they are in good stead to take advantage of the current growth we are blessed to have and they are ready to face the winter ahead.

I've never seen Fernleaf looking as dry – and I was born here ... before World War 2 ended ... years ago – ha ha – I'm nearly a relic – who would have thought that would happen – my goodness!! The season's weather situation has also added to the very tight feed supply – I've been making my own silage for four years now. This arrangement has worked out really well as I have the gear to do the job. Ian is usually around for some of the time as he has school summer holidays and loves mowing and mucking about. I also enjoy the job and it means I can cut the grass when it is ready to be cut, rather than having to wait for contractors who are having to deal with everyone else's cultivation needs as well as mine. But I must say, the grass just wasn't there this year and my silage pit is a bit on the light side of the balance.

Anyway, back to the weather situation ... we've had good rain here – not too heavy, not too light- so the way ahead looks easier.

No National Fielddays – shock horror!!! – who would have thought

One of the biggest changes for us this year, of course, in the cancellation of National Fielddays. After having been there with our sheep for the past 15 years it is going to be quite a change not to be planning, attending and then getting up there for the week.

What both Carolyn and I will really miss is the chance to be able to meet and chat with you. We really appreciate that you have faith in what we do, so much so that many of you have been buying rams from us for years.

Fielddays are also an opportunity for us to show off our sheep and what we have managed to accomplish to often-unbelieving farmers that such a thing is possible... the thing we do have though, as you well know, is the research and data to back up our claims.

It took long enough, don't you think?!

Justin came across a very interesting 'letter to Jacinda and Winston' the other day on Facebook and we've all been laughing about it ever since ... finally we are being recognised as 'essential' by our beloved government, especially as our darling tourism industry falls apart.

After all we will be the ones who are still out there, busting our butts to bring our fantastic product to market and having to put up with our cows farting day in and day out.

Maybe they will slow down their belittling us and moaning about how much of a burden we are on our great country when, in their isolation, they come to realise where the food they eat actually comes from and get even part of an idea of what it takes to get onto their tables.

I'm ready to help you with the silage next season Grandpa - Freya

My third son Campbell brought his wife Kirstee and their daughter Freya down for Christmas so they could spend some time with us and Freya could experience farm life. He and Kirstee then took her to the Kumeu Show in March and sent us this photo – good to see the younger generation coming along and developing an appreciation for farming.

In fact, I must say I'm looking forward to when she turns up on that tractor as I'd quite happily cruise around on that one – looks like a good ride!!



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