



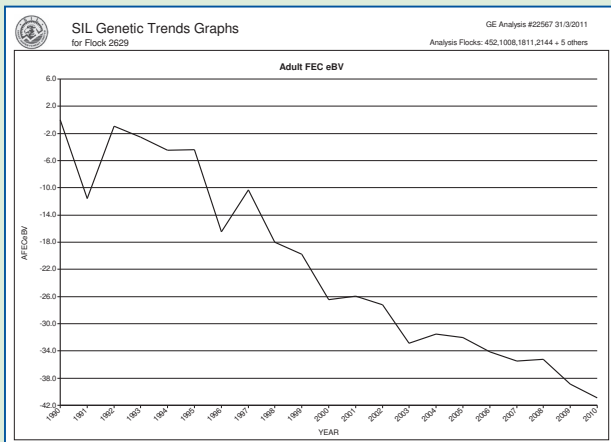
Dear

After a horrid start to the spring with the storms in September the season has finished off well with excellent prices right across the board. The forecasts for next year show a sign in prices softening a little – lets hope they don't soften too much as we all need a few good years not just one. We have had a good year with the ram sales too – selling more rams than we have before which is showing that the promotion we have put into it is working and word is getting out that we've got some good genetics at Nithdale! What follows are some key points to keep you informed as to what is happening with our sheep genetics.

WORM RESISTANCE - PROGRESS TO DATE

The genetic trends for worm resistance is shown in the graph below. Over the 19 years we have been involved in the WormFEC program we have reduced faecal egg counts in our ewes by over 40%. That doesn't sound like a lot but in genetic terms it is significant considering we have increased production by 1400 cents per ewe

over that same period of time. What we have also noticed is that the age the sheep are developing an immunity is getting younger. This year we took our ram lambs through to 19 February before they got their first drench. We can't throw away the drench gun yet but at least we are going in the right direction.



Romney Ram Lambs mid February 2011 – Undrenched (and Unculled)

MyoMAX TESTING

This years Romney ram lambs are 8% double copy MyoMAX, 64% single copy MyoMAX and 28% Non Carriers. The Suffolk ram lambs are 26% double copy MyoMAX, 58% single copy MyoMAX and only 16% Non Carriers. Each year we are increasing the frequency of the MyoMAX gene in both studs – the suffolks have more double copies as we have been using the Texel with them for longer than the Romneys. It will still take another 5 or 6 years before we have mostly double copy rams for sale but we are at least halfway there now!

CT SCANNING

This year we CT scanned a lot more ram lambs – both Suffolks (32) & Romneys (62) in order to get better information on meat yield. The meat index on our reports include this information making it more accurate. It gives better recognition to MyoMAX carriers with double copy Suffolks averaging \$1.61 better in Meat Index than non carriers and double copy Romneys averaging \$0.65 better in Meat Index than non carriers. Each year we continue to CT scan we should make faster progress in improving overall meat yields in our sheep which will result in better meat yields for our commercial clients.



CT slice through the hind legs on a Nithdale Double copy MyoMAX Suffolk ram lamb

NITHDALE

Commercial Meat Yields

Over the last four years in our commercial flock we have increased the meat yields (based on viascan results) in our Terminal cross lambs from 53.35% lean meat to 55.06% and in our Romney lambs from 51.60% lean meat to 53.54%. So the 6 years of MyoMAX blood testing and using MyoMAX rams is showing good results.



Suffolk Ram Lambs mid February 2011

Sheep50K

We blood tested all Romney sires used last year at Nithdale and had molecular breeding values calculated on them through Pfizer Animal Genetics new commercially available 50K SNP chip. The molecular breeding values are based on the sheep's DNA for four traits (reproduction, weaning weight, carcass weight and worm resistance).

These are blended with existing estimated breeding values (calculated from individuals and their relatives performance for these same four traits) to generate genomic breeding values. What it does is increases the accuracy of the breeding values and therefore the reliability of the genetic value calculated for those animals. It comes at a reasonable cost but it gives us as a breeder more accurate information for selection and culling decisions and also our clients more accurate information for buying decisions when they come to look at rams.

Dag Scoring

This year we started dag scoring our Suffolks and the second year for the Romneys. We should have started 10 years ago as we aren't going to clean them up over night but at least we have made a start now. Already we are starting to see sire lines in the Romneys that do have less dags.

ACE

The latest Advanced Central Evaluations (April 2011) which is New Zealand's national across flock and breed evaluation includes rams used as hoggets last year. Our genetics are right up with the best in New Zealand with even more featuring at the top. Nithdale 519/06 still ranks number 6 on the Dual Purpose list and number 10 for reproduction. Eleven of the top 100 rams on the Dual Purpose list including Worm Resistance are Nithdale rams and 22 out of the top 100 on the Worm Resistance list are Nithdale rams. We are also featuring more on the Growth and Meat lists with 10 Nithdale rams in the top 200 on the Dual Purpose and Terminal Sire lists for Growth and 9 Nithdale rams in the top 200 on the Dual Purpose and Terminal Sire lists for Meat. **The biggest movers are on the Terminal Sire list with Nithdale rams ranked 1st, 3rd, 4th and 12th in New Zealand.** Two of these rams are double copy MyoMAX Romneys which shows the work we have been doing with the MyoMAX gene and growth in our maternal flock is starting to pay off. To top it all off there are 7 Nithdale sires in the top 200 for wool. Important now that things are looking more positive in the wool sector! If you want to check these out for yourself go to www.sil.co.nz and click on SIL-ACE. Nithdale Romneys is flock 2629 and Nithdale Suffolks is flock 2595.

FIELD DAY

Set aside Friday 8 July 1:30pm @ Nithdale Woolshed for a field day. We have organized some speakers looking at the topics of: 'Worm Resistance in Sheep' – Fact or Fiction?; Sheep DNA technology – Is it relevant to commercial farmers?; Yield Grading – How much more can commercial farmers get?; ACE reports – How relevant are they to commercial farmers? We will have plenty of heaters going, some sheep and information on display and finish off with a BBQ and some drinks. Look forward to seeing you there if you can make it!

If there is anything you wish to talk about or discuss please feel free to give me a ring on 0800 648 432. Any feedback on what we are doing or what you would like would be most welcome. You are more than welcome also to come and have a look around anytime so give me a call if you would like to.

Regards

Andrew Tripp

Any enquiries contact **ANDREW** on Phone **0800 NITHDALE** or visit our **WEBSITE** at www.nithdale.com