

Romneys, Suffolks & Suffolk/Texels

7 November 2007

Dear Reader

After a great September we have had an average October and it has been snowing in November! The seasons must be back to front! We hope that you have fared well over this last year and we all look forward to better returns this coming season. Below is some news of what is happening on Nithdale and the highlights with the studs over the last year. Also included is our ram order form for you to fill in and send back if you would like to order rams from us this season.

Dairy Conversion

No doubt many of you would have heard rumours that we are converting to Dairy. I've even heard that we are selling our Sheep studs as well! We are converting part of our farm to dairy (but not the whole lot!). Given that the last two years we have gone backwards financially (as most sheep farmers have no doubt), we have decided to diversify and spread our risks by adding a dairy enterprise to our farm. We are converting 320ha on the North side of Nithdale Road and aim to milk between 900-1000 cows, wintering the cows on the farm. We will still be running 6000 ewes and we will NOT be selling the sheep studs! So we have not given up on the sheep industry and in particular the genetic/breeding side of it. We will be employing a dairy manager who will run the dairy unit and it will actually allow me to focus more on the sheep studs which we are going to be expanding. There has been a lot of interest in the work we have been doing with Worm Resistance and MyoMax in the Romneys and MyoMax in the Suffolks both in New Zealand and overseas so converting part of the farm to dairy will give me more time to focus on the sheep studs which I am really enjoying.

Website

If you have access to the internet, have a look at our Website which has been up and running since the early winter.

<http://www.nithdale.com>

On it we have quite a lot of information; a bit of history on Nithdale, history on each of the studs, breeding objectives, photos of rams used, genetic trend graphs which show the genetic progress we have made, information about the sire referencing groups we are involved with, links to other sites (Southern Romney Development Group, Catapult, SIL etc) and contact details. This newsletter will be loaded on to it as well. So go to www.nithdale.com and have a look! The website has already yielded a few genuine enquiries which has been great – a number of them from overseas (UK and Germany). The number of hits we have had to date are 16706.

Romneys

We had a great lambing with the Stud Romneys this year with 165% lambs tailed to ewes mated (Ewes scanned 201%). We had very few ewe deaths and good lamb survival which contributed to a good result. We have still got about half the tailing to do in the commercial ewes but hoping to do over 140% with them this year. We kept extra ewes going into the winter and bought more in lamb ewes after killing our dry hoggets so overall hoping for 16000-17000 lambs this year which will be more than we have had before by a long way.

Worm Resistance Gene Marker. Recently Catapult released a new gene marker for parasite resistance called WormStar. If a ram has a two star rating its progeny will have a faecal egg count reduction of between 7-12%. If a ram has a one star rating its progeny will have a faecal egg count reduction of between 2 and 9%. The genes that they have identified and marked are only part of the overall genes that contribute to parasite resistance. There are a number more involved that they haven't actually identified and marked yet. Our top sire for worm resistance (top of the Southern Romney Development Group for Worm Resistance) doesn't actually have any stars! So until Catapult can identify all the genes involved in parasite resistance the best indicator of resistance is still the worm resistance INDEX which is the breeding value behind parasite resistance. The average of this years sale 2th Romney rams have breeding values for faecal egg counts of 41% lower than 1995. The best of them – 549/05 (also best 2th in the SRDG for parasite resistance) – a ram we used in the stud this year has breeding values 68.8% lower than 1995 (his sire does have a two star rating with WormStar, his grandfather on his dam's side was very good for low faecal egg counts back in 1998).

MyoMax gene: This year we used a ½ Romney ½ Texel with two copies of the MyoMax gene and two ¾ Romneys with single copies of the MyoMax gene in the stud. We also mated all our ewe hoggets carrying a MyoMax gene to a ¾ Romney with a single copy MyoMax gene. Our intention is to increase the frequency of the MyoMax gene in part of the Romney Stud while breeding back to the Romney. At this stage we will be keeping part of the Romney Stud as pure Romneys but also focus on breeding a MyoMax Romney which will be a ¾ or 7/8th Romney with two copies of the MyoMax gene. On the ram order form can you please indicate your interest for the year after in these rams to give us an idea of what you want.

Suffolks

There has been a growing demand for terminal sires, particular ones that are performing. In our own commercial flock we had killed 2200 terminal cross lambs by mid December (45% of the total) at an average of \$67. Growth rates to catch those early premiums are crucial. With the stud we sold every available 2th ram and leased out 40 ram lambs. We could have sold another 30 rams if we had had them. This year we have kept extra ram hoggets and we have mated our ewe hoggets as well so we will have extra ram lambs this year and 2th rams for next season. Currently we are running 230 Suffolk ewes which we aim to lift to at least 300 over the next two years.

MyoMax Gene: This year other than a few pure Suffolks we mated most of our Suffolk/Texel ewes to a Suffolk ram and most of our Suffolk ewes to double copy Suffolk rams. The aim is to increase the frequency of the MyoMax genes in the Suffolks. We have a small number of double copy MyoMax rams available for sale, our intention down the track is to retain some pure Suffolks for those clients wanting them but offer for sale predominantly single and double copy rams (¾ to 7/8 Suffolks or more). As with the Romneys any ram that we sell that has been tested with TWO copies of the MyoMax gene (called a MyoMax Gold ram) incurs a royalty fee from Catapult of \$150 (Catapult have a patent on the gene marker test and we have to sign an agreement before we can blood test any sheep). We absorbed this cost last year however from this season we will add it onto the price we charge for those rams (Although this year we only have a few for sale!). If you think that is a lot then consider these figures: The progeny of a double copy ram will have 2.5% more lean meat than the progeny of a single copy ram. For a \$60 lamb that equates to an approximate extra value of \$1.50 per lamb sired by that ram. If that ram is mated to 100 ewes (@ 140% lambs sold to ewes mated) that is an extra \$210 per year over a ram with only a single copy. If the ram is used for 4 years that gives a 560% return on the extra investment. There aren't too many investment opportunities

around like that! Once we are actually fully paid for yield the returns will even be greater.

Overseas Interest: Over the autumn we collected semen from two rams which we have sold in the UK. The Suffolk industry there has undergone a huge transformation. They have serious problems with inbreeding and birthing difficulties so there has been a lot of interest in outside blood from easy lambing Suffolks hence the opportunities available for us. In the UK they have a voluntary breeding program for Scrapie Resistance with the aim to bred resistance to Scrapie into their national flock. We identified a Scrapie resistant Suffolk ram (ARR/ARR) that has a good index and conformation that we collected semen from. The other ram was a ram lamb, 81.25% Suffolk with two copies of the MyoMax gene which ranked 7th in our flock. Both of these rams we used in our own stud this last year. We have since had another person from the UK come to visit and a person from Germany coming to visit early next year.

Hogget Mating: This year we mated our Suffolk hoggets in order to boost the number of lambs to satisfy the growing demand for our Suffolk rams. At tuppung (9 May) they averaged just under 60kg and scanned 139%. We are still to tail them but there are just under 100% recorded lambs alive and growing well to hoggets mated which we are pretty happy with.

Southern Field Days

We have booked a site at the next Southern Field Days in February to raise the profile of our sheep studs and what we are doing. It will be a good opportunity for us to meet and talk with people and I think a better idea than just splashing out money to Country-Wide, Straight Furrow and Otago Southland Farmer. I'll be getting some more hats for our clients this year (both beanies and caps) so you can all wear them around the Field Days depending on the weather and come and visit our site too!

This Years Sale Rams

We have retained a reasonable number of 2th rams both Romneys and Suffolks this year (over and above what we sold last year) in order to give our existing clients a good selection to choose from and to cater for new clients. Again we will have the option of leasing ram lambs if necessary, however for those that do we request that you only have

them out for 3 weeks with no other rams and we would prefer that you had your own rams tested for Brucella ovis (which is a good practice to do anyway).

I have pencilled in the first two weeks in February to sell rams so I will contact you before the end of January to arrange for you to come and pick your rams. If you won't be around those two weeks let me know on your order form and we can discuss other arrangements. Can you please send your ram order form back to me before Christmas. If anyone is after some more ewes (6th and older) and possibly some ewe lambs we are having a sale on Tuesday 29 January 2008 where we will be selling off some capital stock.

If there is anything you wish to talk about or discuss please feel free to give me a ring on (03) 2053586 or 0272566647. 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. It's actually a good time to come and look at our sheep with lambs still on their mothers. We certainly appreciate your business and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Regards

Andrew & Heather Tripp

Nithdale Romneys, Suffolks & Suffolk Texels

Order Form – 2007/2008 Season

Name: _____

I would like to order:

Breed	Price	Number
<u>Romney 2th Rams</u>	\$700	_____
	\$500	_____
	\$400	_____

Are you interested in MyoMax Romneys 2008/2009? Y / N

<u>Suffolk 2th Rams</u>	\$500	_____
	\$400	_____
<u>Suffolk/Texel 2th Rams</u>	\$500	_____
	\$400	_____

All double copy MyoMax rams will incur an additional charge of \$150.

All ram lambs will be leased out for \$150 each (Romneys, Suffolk and Suffolk/Texels).

Please note for those who make payments by Direct
Credit we have a new Bank Account: 06 0335 0433545 00

Please send to:

(or Fax: 03 2953587) Andrew Tripp
Nithdale
RD 2
Gore

By 25 December 2007