

14 October 2008

Dear Client

It is good to see some better weather, the grass growing and the lambs happy and content! It is also good to see prices for lamb this season looking better, we can only hope that the current world financial crisis doesn't take the gloss off that. Below is some information on what we have been up to the last twelve months with both the Romneys and Suffolks and a ram order form for this years sale 2th rams.

Romneys

The last 8 months have been very busy for us with the purchase of Murray and Lori Rohloff's Awareka Romney stud. With sorting up ewes and lambs, getting them onto our database, catching up with clients and lately tagging lots of lambs we've been kept on our toes! Lambing has gone really well with not too much bad weather and very few troubles. We are halfway through tailing the studs and percentages are looking pretty good. We are tagging all the lambs with electronic tags at tailing time and have purchased a new set of Prattley scales and scanning equipment. This will enable us to save time and increase accuracy with recording weights and measurements in the yards. With only myself and our Stock Manager, Mark Pickering, looking after 6300 stud and commercial ewes we are constantly looking for ways to make things easier and more efficient. This is part of our overall philosophy of fewer inputs (animal health costs at a minimum) and breeding easy care sheep (having sheep that require only minimal management). It goes a long way to keeping costs down and making life easier for us!

We have lambed our hoggets for the last four years, but this year is the first time we will record all their lambs. We have blood tested all our ewe hoggets, mob mated them and will blood test the lambs at tailing time and use the Catapult 'Shepherd' gene marker test to determine parentage. The hoggets are lambing out on the hill and I have only been going around them once a week – so far so good. One big advantage of recording the hogget lambs is that we can make faster genetic progress as we are decreasing the interval between generations by one year rather than waiting until they are two tooths before we breed from them.

Thanks to all who returned the survey forms we sent out over the winter and to most others whom I was able to catch up with on the phone. We have taken note of a number of comments that were made and it will be good to discuss some of them further with clients when they come to get rams this year.

With combining Murray's stud with ours this last year we have been able to cull out the bottom sheep in both flocks which has meant the ones we have retained including this years 2th rams have very good figures. Ken Moore, our sheep recording bureau manager, said, "You have some pretty impressive figures"! However figures are just one side of the equation and doesn't change the importance of breeding sound sheep. Anything that has faults or causes trouble doesn't hang round for long!

With combining Murray's stud into our own we have had to adjust the pricing on the rams a little as Murray was selling his for more than we were! We have set a base price of \$600 and \$800 depending on the rams overall index (lower 20% for the \$600 rams and the next higher 70% for the \$800 rams – not including the top 10%). We felt the best way to deal with the MyoMAX gene was to add an extra \$100 for one copy and \$200 for two copies to the base price. The blood testing we are doing does cost a lot and at least this way the extra cost for the MyoMAX genes is only on the rams that have it. I have included a copy of the information sheet from Catapult on the MyoMAX gene that shows the benefit to

the commercial farmer (based on a \$3.50/kg schedule which hopefully will be much higher in the future). It makes the extra \$100 or \$200 a very good investment! We don't have a lot of double copy MyoMAX 2th rams available this year but we will have more each year as we progress further down the MyoMAX track. We do have an elite group of rams (top 10%) that are available for sale for stud purposes (price range of \$1000-\$3000). If anyone is interested in any of these rams please indicate on your ram order form. Once these have been picked through they will be incorporated into the \$800 group of rams. Murray had his sheep also sorted into two groups based on fertility (one a high fertility group and another, a lower fertility group but with better traits in other areas). To keep things more simple I will not separate them out however we can always sort through the rams offered to you on the day and select rams based on the traits that are more of a focus for you.

In terms of the picking order I have merged our existing clients with Murray's clients so if you were getting rams near the top of the order with either us or Murray you will be still near the top. If you were near the middle you will still be near the middle etc. We have kept 400 Romney 2ths rams this year which is about 100 more than what our clients and Murray's clients together have indicated they require. We are hoping for new clients too but it means that all existing clients will all get a good pick.

Down the track there are some exciting developments in the genetics/DNA area that we will be able to incorporate into our stud. Some of you may have heard of the DNA proven genetics available in the dairy industry this year compared with the traditional daughter proven genetics. AgResearch are predicting that within 18 months the same technology will be available within the sheep industry. In short it means that we will be able to determine the complete genetic potential of a ram or ewe by a simple blood test and resulting DNA profile – even as a lamb. Obviously there will be the usual culling of anything that doesn't make the grade for whatever reason but it will help make genetic progress even faster. We will of course weigh up this technology to determine the benefits compared with the costs to both ourselves and you our clients as it comes on stream. Watch this space!

Suffolks

The last 8 months have not been as busy with the Suffolks (just as well!) but we are really happy with the progress we are making. We have had a very good lambing this year and the lambs are doing well. We have also tagged the lambs with electronic tags for the same reasons as the Romneys.

This year along with linking into the Premier Suffolks we have linked in with Mount Linton and more closely with Russell and Andrew Welsh who are also crossbreeding and taking advantage of the MyoMAX gene within the Suffolk.

In the past we have differentiated between Suffolks and Suffolk/Texels. From now on they will be either MyoMAX Suffolks (with one or two copies of the MyoMAX gene) or Suffolks (no MyoMAX gene). The reason for this is that we have a range of purities now with the crossbreeding we have been doing over the years. Most of the Suffolks now are crossbred however a number of them have very little Texel left in them (other than the MyoMAX gene!). If you would like pure Suffolks (100%) then please specify that on your ram order form – we still have a few!

As with the Romneys we have set a base price (\$50 lower than last year) and those with one copy of the MyoMAX gene will have an extra \$100 added to that price. Those with two copies of the MyoMAX gene will have an extra \$200 added to that price. This year we have very few double copy rams

available for sale but as with the Romneys the number of these will increase next year and beyond as we head down the MyoMAX track.

This Years Sale Rams

We will begin selling rams at the end of November and sell right through December. If you would like to order rams for this season can you please fill in the enclosed order form and send it back to me by the 15 November. I will be in touch with you shortly after that to arrange a time for you to come and select your rams. Anyone who is coming from further a field and needs accommodation will be most welcome to stay with us – we have a two bedroom self contained unit attached to our house.

With both the Romneys and the Suffolks we would like to sell as many 2ths as we can but we will also lease ram lambs to cater for clients requirements. This was particularly so for the Suffolks last year when we sold all the 2ths and had only about half a dozen ram lambs out of 125 not used by either ourselves or leased by clients. We do have in place more stringent requirements regarding their use as there are animal health issues associated with rams coming back into our flock (in particular brucellosis).

Murray had a policy of offering a 2% discount for those who paid on the day. We will offer that as well. Murray also had a policy of drenching all rams with a three way acting quarantine drench. We have done a drench reduction test on our farm and as far as we are aware have no drench resistance. However we do quarantine all sheep coming onto our property so it is a good practice to do. We will therefore also do the same for you.

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. We certainly appreciate your business and we look forward to seeing you shortly.

Regards

Andrew & Heather Tripp

Nithdale Genetics

Order Form – 2008/2009 Season

Name: _____

I would like to order:

Breed	Price	Number
<u>Romney 2th Rams</u>	Stud Rams	_____
	\$800	_____
	\$600	_____
With MyoMAX Genes		Yes / No
<u>Suffolk 2th Rams</u>	\$450	_____
	\$350	_____
	With MyoMAX Genes	

All single copy MyoMAX rams will incur an additional charge of \$100

All double copy MyoMAX rams will incur an additional charge of \$200

All ram lambs will be leased out for \$150 each.

Please note for those who make payments by Direct
Credit our Bank Account is: 06 0335 0433545 00

Please send to:

(or Fax: 03 2053587) Andrew Tripp
Nithdale Genetics
RD 2
Gore

By 15 November 2008