



Dear

There is no doubt that the week of 18-24 September were particularly challenging for farmers in Otago and Southland. With tailing just underway the scale of losses is still only an estimate but there are some horrific stories floating around. Certainly losses were dependant on stage of lambing, stocking intensity, condition of ewes, amount of feed, shelter and altitude. Perhaps worst hit were coastal areas but there have also been some big losses inland as well. At least the weather in recent weeks has been pretty good and feed is starting to come away. Also encouraging are the meat companies talking better prices for lamb as well as a willingness to take heavier lambs. Alongside strengthening wool prices there looks to be opportunities to mitigate some of the losses from the storms.



A few ewes and lambs during a break in the weather

It would be great to say that our sheep are so hardy that we had very few losses however there wasn't much chance of any newborn animals living on some of those days out in the open. There were days I came home shivering even with 6 layers on! The romneys were lambing at their peak over those 7 days - on the worst days up to 40% of lambs born were dead the next day, however 60% still lived due to what shelter we did have, mothering ability and some degree of hardiness! Although we haven't tailed our commercial lambs yet we are well through tailing the studs. The suffolks which were almost finished before the start of the storm have tailed 124% (lambs tailed to ewes mated) and the romneys are looking at approximately 122% even though they scanned 15% better than the suffolks. So considering what they went through that's probably not too bad!

CLIENT VISITS

Over the winter I have visited over 110 past, present and potential clients which I have really enjoyed. It has been great getting out and about and seeing people on their own farms and getting a feel for the issues and challenges facing everyone. The visits have given me a renewed sense of focus and also confidence that where we are heading is in the right direction with our genetics. It has been encouraging seeing our genetics performing well in a number of different environments ranging from coastal, inland, intensive, hill, wet and dry. Credit needs to go also to the number of good operators getting the best out of those genetics! Thank you for the opportunity to visit and for the hospitality shown. I am back on the road again this week – so anyone who hasn't had a visit – expect a phone call shortly! Although I won't get to the North Island this year I plan on travelling up to Nelson after Labour weekend visiting clients on the way.



Heather and I attended the launch of Sheep 50k by Pfizer Animal Genetics at Millbrook in early September. Sheep 50k is the DNA test which determines the genetic potential of a sheep, initially in just three breeds: Romneys, Coopworths and Perendales and just four traits: Fertility, Worm Resistance, Growth Rates and Meat Yield. In time it will cover other breeds as well as other traits (such as the cold tolerance gene and Facial Eczema resistance – for North Island and

top of the South Island clients). We have blood tested all our Romney sires used this year and will be receiving results shortly. One of the advantages for Nithdale is that AgResearch has been blood testing our sires since 1995 alongside the Southern Romney Development Group and a few other Romney breeders and have used those animals to validate the 50k chip for the Romney breed. So we will get the most benefit out of using the 50k chip that our sheep have helped develop. The biggest benefit is that it will give us more accurate breeding values for those sires and their progeny which will enable us to make better selection and culling decisions. Ultimately it will allow us to make faster genetic progress which means our clients will make faster genetic progress as well.

SIL-ACE

SIL-ACE is the advanced central evaluations run by Sheep Improvement Limited and is New Zealand's only national across flock and breed evaluation to identify the best rams for economic traits. Out of thousands of rams used within the sheep industry recorded on SIL over the last 3 years, Nithdale Rams have been performing well. Just to note a few from the latest lists updated in August: Nithdale 519/06, 8th on the Dual Purpose List, 3rd on the Reproduction list, Nithdale 36/07, 37th on the Terminal Sire list, 94th on the Terminal Sire Meat list, 10 Nithdale rams in the top 100 on the Dual Purpose WormFEC list. Nithdale 225/07, 2nd on the WormFEC list, 20 Nithdale rams in the top 100 on the WormFEC list, Nithdale 454/07, 4th on the Wool list. So a lot of Nithdale Sires performing among the top in New Zealand over a wide range of traits and overall index.

LEASING RAM hoggets

Obviously our preferred choice is to sell 2th rams but depending on circumstances sometimes in the past we have leased out ram hoggets as well (over mating time). This year we will be leasing out a few more ram hoggets to cater for clients needs particularly with the Suffolks. In this situation we do need to take particular care to remain brucellosis clear. All hoggets need to be run with no other rams and out for the ewes for only three weeks. We keep them separate for 30 days when they come home and blood test them for brucellosis. Only once they are clear can they go back into the mob which is generally halfway through winter.

SALERAMS

We will begin selling rams at the end of November and sell right through December and January. 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 20 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 guest accommodation in our house.

CAPITAL STOCK trading

I have had a number of clients ask about capital stock that are Nithdale bloodlines – either to sell or to buy. So this year I have put a space on the ram order form for clients to note if they have capital lines for sale or are wanting to buy (either cast for age ewes, ewes, 2ths, ewe lambs or second cut ewe lambs – anything that can be bred from!). I can coordinate matching buyers with sellers as part of the service we provide at no cost to the clients – I will just leave the price setting up to the buyer and seller!

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

Regards
Andrew Tripp

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