

Romneys, Suffolks & Suffolk/Texels

October 2009

Dear Client

I hope the spring has treated you kindly this year as we all look forward to hopefully a reasonable year for sheep. Last years returns for sheep were great and we hope that the current exchange rate crashes in about 6 weeks – just in time for us as we start selling lambs!

It was great catching up with a lot of established clients last year and also getting to meet a lot of new clients – many coming from Murray Rohloff's cliental. It will be good to catch up again this year. Below is some news on both our Romneys and Suffolks plus a ram order form for this season.

Romneys

Our scanning was back a bit on recent years this year (194%) and our ewes came through the winter lighter than average. The spring has been the tightest I can recall on Nithdale but we have had a pretty good August and September to make up for it. Over lambing we had a number of ewes slip with toxoplasmosis. Other than salmonella brandenburg in the 2ths 3 years ago this was the worst abortion we have had in our ewes. We ended up with 16% wet dries and the vets insisting that we vaccinate next year. We stopped vaccinating for sheep abortions 5 years ago because we wanted to focus on low inputs and breeding sheep that are hardy to environmental challenges. That will not change next year. It may mean that we will have to take the hits some years but hopefully the long term gains will be greater for us and our clients as well as lower input costs. Our death rates over lambing (1.6%) and numbers of bearings (0.6%) continue to drop which is encouraging. This year our commercial flock (4000 ewes) was not shepherded at all. Mark our Stock Manager even took some time off! Our hoggets are due to start lambing shortly and they too are set stocked on the hill and are lambed without shepherding. With the dairy conversion last year taking out a lot of the better cultivated area on the farm the commercial flock is run predominantly on hill. Even the stud ewes are run on the hill for a good part of the year. They are only lambed in the paddocks so I can get around on my 4 wheeler to tag lambs! This has given us a renewed focus of breeding a hardy sheep that can perform with minimal inputs and under more trying conditions.

This last mating we used predominantly rams with at least one copy of the MyoMAX gene (3 had two copies – one of those is a 7/8th Romney). So the frequency of the MyoMAX gene is increasing in our flock all the time. We have plenty of 2th rams with one copy of the MyoMAX gene this year for sale but it will be a few years before we have a number of double copy rams available for sale. Although the MyoMAX gene is an important part of our breeding program our primary focus is still on quality,

soundness and overall index. Down the track our aim is to have a Romney with all the traits we have been selecting for over the years (fertility, growth, worm resistance, hardiness, easy care etc) with the meat of a Texel.

We have had some rams performing really well in the Advanced Central Evaluation sire referencing scheme (ACE). The evaluations are done by Sheep Improvement Limited (SIL) and include all flocks in NZ on SIL. The Central Progeny Test (CPT) trials that Alliance were involved with help with the reliability of the ACE reports. Nithdale 966/01 although dead has progeny still performing extremely

well. The ram himself ranks 11th overall on the ACE WormFEC list (all flocks in NZ on the Worm FEC program) and on the ACE trait leader list for fertility he ranks 4th overall. So a highly fecund worm resistant sheep! Nithdale 225/07 is a Romney/Texel cross with one copy of the MyoMAX gene and ranks 5th on the ACE trait leader list for WormFEC. As far as worm resistance goes what these results are suggesting is that we are definitely near the top in New Zealand (at least amongst SIL recorded flocks) – particularly after combining Murray Rohloff's genetics with our own. One of our rams, Nithdale 36/07, a $\frac{3}{4}$ Romney, with two copies of the MyoMAX gene actually ranks 8th overall on the ACE Terminal Sire list which shows that the meat traits from the MyoMAX gene is definitely coming through into the Romneys as well.

We have some interesting developments ahead in sheep genetics that AgResearch have been working on over the last few years. In December they will be making commercially available single nucleotide polymorphism technology or just SNIIP chips for short. They are DNA gene markers for a number of traits in sheep that will increase the accuracy and reliability of the breeding values that are calculated for our sheep. No doubt there will be a cost to it and just how much it is taken on by stud breeders will depend on the cost of it. The short of it for us is that even if we use that technology in just the rams we intend using as sires in our stud it will help us make better decisions and therefore better progress than what we are achieving at the moment. As far as it concerns you it just means that you will make better progress yourself in your own flock.

Natalie Pickering from AgResearch is doing a PhD on flystrike and dags. Two parts of her project focus around dag scoring, breech barness and flystrike measurements on both breeders properties and those of their clients. We are getting involved as we see this as an opportunity to start selecting for other traits that will make our sheep even more easy care than what they are. If we can get away with minimal dagging and have less flystrike (more prominent further north) then that will make things even easier for us and our clients. What Natalie would like would be a few of our client to get involved as well to make a few measurements and collect a few samples in their commercial lambs. Natalie will provide the information and help required. If you are interested in helping out can you please respond on the ram order form and I will get Natalie in touch with you.

A reminder too that if you have access to the internet we have a lot more information about both the Romneys and Suffolks on our website: www.nithdale.com

Suffolks

Last year we had another great year with Suffolk sales selling every ram that was fit to sell! Across the board there has definitely been a swing to using terminal sires particularly with lambing percentages going up and more yield based payments coming from the meat companies. The average index of the 2th rams available this year is about 300 cents overall ahead of last year which shows the jump in average index of the sires of these rams used two years ago. We made similar progress again this year with the rams we used at mating time. So although we don't have many Suffolks at the top of the Terminal Sire ACE lists hopefully it won't be long before we do.

We have been making some good progress with the MyoMAX gene too, although again we haven't compromised quality just for the sake of the MyoMAX gene. This last mating only one Suffolk ram used had two copies of the gene, although most of the others had one. We still selected rams on overall index making sure they were sound in all respects. The incidence of the gene through the Suffolks though is much more than the Romneys due to the fact that we have been using the Texel much longer. This year in both the Suffolks and Romneys we used another Texel (by AI) that has two copies of the MyoMAX

gene that ranked 2nd on the ACE Terminal Sire list in order to bring in another high ranking MyoMAX carrier into our genetic mix. Our top Suffolk ram, Nithdale 90/07 is a 75% Suffolk with one copy of the MyoMAX gene, equal for both growth and meat and positive for survival, a very good all round ram.

We are working more closely with the Welshs at Mandeville and Hamish Bielski at Mount Linton – both part of our Sire Referencing Group, Premier Suffolks, but also crossbreeding Texels and Suffolks. It has given us an opportunity to not only link in with other breeders but use top genetics across our flocks.

We have also had more enquiries from the UK for both Suffolks and Romneys and Suffolks from Australia which we are looking at. The UK require sheep from New Zealand to be resistant to the brain disease Scrapie which means more blood testing. We have already tested the sires used this year in an effort to narrow down the search for rams that will fit that requirement. Surprising how many rams we used, both Suffolks and Romneys that are resistant to Scrapie!

On a different note our dairy unit is going much better this year. Production to the end of September this year was nearly four times more than the same time last year. So certainly a load off our minds and it is giving me more time to focus on what I enjoy the most – the stud work. I had intended to get around a few more of our clients this last winter but all the trials and tribulations going on here kept me from going too far away. I certainly intend to get out more over this next year and catch up with clients on their own farms. Again we have booked a site at the Southern Field Days in February so it will be an opportunity to catch up with people then too.

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 guest accommodation in our house.

Again we will be offering a 2% discount for those who pay on the day as Murray Rohloff did as well as giving the sale rams a quarantine drench before they leave the property. 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 – 2009/2010 Season

Name: _____

I would like to order:

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

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

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

Can you help out with the Flystrike and Dag project? Yes / No

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 2009