



Ceres Farm Ltd

MEMBER N.Z. OVINE REFERENCE SCHEME
FACIAL ECZEMA TOLERANCE TESTING SINCE 1984

A. E. Dinger
128 Baker Road
Whitehall, R.D.4,
Cambridge
Phone/Fax: 07 827 8784
e-mail: aedinger@ihug.co.nz
Web: www.ceresfarm.co.nz

NEWSLETTER No.27 September 2003

Another year that was pretty good. Prices have dropped a bit but are still pretty satisfactory and it is relatively easy to make farming sheep profitable and the outlook is positive.

After having no spring (the winter just seemed to continue) the summer arrived but it remained cool and the rains came just in time every time. The autumn was excellent and I had as much grass as in the spring (well almost). Bodyweights and fleece weights at 300 days were the highest average ever. Lambing was hectic as usual and now I am hoping for an early spring.

With agricultural research money curtailed even further we did not do as well on the political front, but then what else is new? Let's hope that the protest over the FART tax was enough to put that crazy idea on the back burner.

NZ Ovine Reference Scheme

MNCC had a good year again, two rams were eligible for selection No.227 and No.7 and the latter was chosen as a reference sire. In the last five years 3 rams from MNCC have been selected. To make it easier to have the rams available at selection time, I will keep my 4th rams on the farm till the selection process for NZOSR is done (early January), since it looks possible that more will be chosen. These rams will still be for sale but the buyers of the rams simply will get them a bit later. This year there are three rams with higher DPO indexes than No.7.

FE Challenge

There were only very low FE spores on the farm this year. Sixteen rams were dosed with 0.6 mg sporodesmin per kg bodyweight. This dose rate, the highest in NZ, will be kept at that level for the foreseeable future till all reactors are gone and is in my opinion high enough to counter a worst case scenario.

Animal Health

Ewe live weights, worms, feet / foot rot and brucella ovis were the topics most raised during the year from clients.

Ewe Live weight:

Ewe hoggets should not be mated unless about 40 kg. Mated hoggets never grow as big as unmated hoggets as adults, so if you want to keep your ewe seize in check mate your hoggets. Sheep council published a booklet on hogget mating which will be available from me. As it happens my adult ewes were at ultimate weight for efficiency according to the latest research with an average of 69 kg at lambing time, which means around 61 kg at mating.

Worms:

The farm media have published plenty on worms and worm resistance and I hope you have read it.

There is a summary of the current information on my website: www.ceresfarm.co.nz and it is available in print to anyone that asks for it.

My own drench programme is for a farm wintering 15 SU/ha. and is always under review.

Trying to minimise drenching as much as possible, the following works for me.

The ewes and all hoggets are injected with “eweguard” just prior to lambing. At a 100 days (weaning) all lambs get a bolus and a “1 in 5” injection. This means that the lambs are 200 days old when they get exposed to worms for the first time and the idea is that they are then heavy enough (have enough immunity) to withstand a worm challenge. Still have to drench odd lambs that are dirty and crutch somewhere in May and that is when the lot get a drench. I wait till most are dirty. The hope is that the resistant worm population mate with non resistant in this period and get sensitive to drench again.

The drench family is alternated every year. Usually they then stay clean till shearing mid winter (July) and in mid August it is time for “eweguard” again.

The idea of “safe pasture”, drench alternation and cattle clean up of pasture is now being challenged by worm scientists as not as useful as first thought.

Since it will take between 12 and 15 years to build up a decent tolerance for worms through breeding, I have decided to leave that to my successors and hope that a DNA test will be found in the near future. Also scientists are still divided on what best course to take: breeding for worm resilience (tolerance) or worm resistance.

Breeding for worm resistance will cut production quite a bit (20 to 25 %) and increase daggs. So in my opinion the resilience option looks quite a bit better, but it is not as highly inherited and is as yet not available as a breeding option on SIL.

The important thing is to start working on the composition of your pastures, keeping it short in November and December so that after weaning you have a nice juicy grass and clover mixture. If you get your pastures right your lambs will keep on growing and be less susceptible to worms and other diseases.

Feet and foot rot:

Sheep council has issued a booklet about foot rot which I can give you. My advise would be to remove all limping animals. Maybe costly the first year but every year there will be less. There is a foot rot vaccine for most but not all of the strains. Talk to your Vet about it if you think you have a problem. There is supposed to be a foot rot tolerance DNA test available but up to now I have not been able to get it.

With the introduction of the Finns and East Friesians the feet status of my sheep's feet have not improved and weak pasterns are a thing to watch out for. I do my best in that regard but usually weak pasterns only become a problem with some rams when they get heavier and older.

Brucella Ovis:

Every year the FE tested 4th's and vasectomised rams are tested for brucellosis. This is a compulsory test that all Coopworth ram breeders must take. MNCC has been free for 25 years now and I am happy to show anyone my certificate of accreditation.

All rams for sale are palpitated by my Vet for abnormalities in the winter after shearing. In young rams brucellosis is rare. After a call from a worried client I made a few inquiries and it is more prominent than I thought.

It is probably wise to have your rams palpitated in the winter by a Veterinary and the rams with lesions removed. Infections could incur by stray rams from your neighbour or the purchase of rams from non testing breeders. Don't mix the rams from an untested flock with a tested one. Eventually infected rams become infertile, but worse they spread the disease to other rams which could affect their fertility at mating time.

SIL (Sheep Improvement Ltd)

With the results MNCC has achieved over the past years with fertility and Facial Eczema testing I made the decision to concentrate more on growth and meat. To enhance the reliability of the meat and growth sub indexes all ram hoggets have been scanned for muscle and fat depth. Then for the first time, rams for my own use were chosen with the highest ranking for meat and growth in mind rather than the highest DPO, most are very high ranking in any case, but of course the FE test will have a bearing on what I eventually will choose. To prevent information overload the 2th ram selection list will become much simpler and the cards that go with every ram will only give DPO and the ranking in the Breeding Values.

Ram Prices

Since now not only the average production of my own flock but several genetically linked flocks is taken into account as well, the spread of MNCC genes has caused the indexes of my sheep to climb quite dramatically over the past couple of years.

It has meant that my cut off point of the index after culling 70%, is now almost double that of two years ago. Even the lowest index ram has now an index of 400 plus. To prevent ram prices going through the roof, ram prices this year still start at \$400 (plus GST) and gradually work their way up to \$1000 at a dollar per index point so the DPO index is the price of the ram (plus GST). Last year a ram with an index of say 405 would have cost you \$ 795. This year it will cost only 405 dollars!! It shows everything is relative, because nothing has really changed.

FE tested rams and 4th rams remain at a \$1000(plus GST) each regardless of index.

The purchase of rams is one of the most influential decisions you make in regard of the future of your flock. Your rams make up to 85% of the genetics in your flock.

Please ring, e-mail, fax or post the cut off back to me for your ram requirements.

It helps me planning to give what you want. I don't have a priority client list as such and usually sell on a first come first serve basis with an allocation system that tries to give everybody a fair go and access to a higher priced ram as far as possible.

Wish you a very prosperous farming year and hope to see you early November.

Edward Dinger

This newsletter and the 2th selection list are shown on my website: www.ceresfarm.co.nz

=====**Cut off here**=====

Send to A.E. Dinger, c/- Ceres Farm Ltd., 128 Baker Road, R.D.4, Cambridge.

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

I need approx..... rams from MNCC.