



WAITAKI BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL FRASER FARM

Waitaki Boys' High School Fraser Farm Update. April 2021

As the production year winds down, planning for the new one starts immediately. Rams were joined with our ewes on 24 March, for a 19 August *planned* start to lambing. As always, we are fortunate to be loaned 2 terminal-sire rams from Doug and Jeannie Brown's Punchbowl stud. This year, we have the use of 2 rams the Browns have used themselves in their breeding programme, so some of the best genetics they have.

For simplicity's sake, Fraser Farm runs a breeding ewe only system. This means all ewes can go to a terminal sire to maximise lamb growth rate and carcass quality, and the operation is simpler with no replacement ewe lamb flock. Multiple flocks would be complicated with only 8.1 hectares. However, this does mean we have to work closely with local farmers to purchase replacement ewes each year, and we thank them for their support.

Key points this month:

- Currently on hand are 135 ewes and 18 lambs. By the end of April we will be down to winter numbers of 5 lambs plus the ewes. These lambs are carried over for stock handling activities for the students. Our ewes are too large for teaching safe handling to those inexperienced.
- At mating, the ewe flock averaged 73kg. With a stocking rate of 16 ewes per hectare over winter, keeping the ewes at such good weights and condition is a testament to the work of the managers and the effort to maintain pasture quality and soil fertility
- Monitoring is a key task on the farm, to involve the boys practically and in the classroom looking at the data. We have upgraded facilities over the years, and currently are looking to replace our old scale weighbars, which stopped working accurately. A borrowed set are filling in for now.
- Fertiliser was applied on 13 April. This year we applied a total 3.16 tonnes of a Superphosphate/N/Se prills mix, at 390kg/ha. This applied 30kg P per ha which is approximate maintenance for our stocking rate, plus a small dressing of 26kg N/ha to boost winter feed production and maintain quality.
- Pasture covers are currently excellent, with an estimated 2500kgDM/ha on the south block, and 3500kgDM on the north block. This may even be an issue for pasture quality, so ewes are behind a hotwire and on 3-4 day shifts to manage the feed.
- Lambs are sold fortnightly at Waiareka Saleyards. This has been fetching better prices than slaughter this year, plus it is also an excellent opportunity for a couple of boys to represent the school at the sale each time, which is well received. Total lamb sales this year will be 221 head, and average prices should be around \$115
- As well as keeping the ewes in good condition and growing lambs fast, we were able to make 291 small bales of hay, which some students helped the managers cart and stack. 190 bales have been sold so far – anyone interested in some can contact the school to purchase
- At our last meeting the committee met with Corbyn Gibbs, Fraser Farm Prefect for 2021 and the 3 Fraser Farm scholarship recipients this year: Markus Natiri, James Horn and Harvey Brown. A great opportunity to hear from the young Waitaki men where they have come from and what they expect to achieve over their time at Waitaki.
- Over summer we did encounter an unusual animal health issue in the lambs – some displayed clinical signs of Vitamin B1 (Thiamine) deficiency. This was easily treatable, but an unexpected issue we will keep an eye on in future.
- We are looking forward to Waitaki Girls' High School visiting the farm regularly in Terms 2 and 3, with a couple of timetable slots now allocated to them.
- All the very best to Ag teacher Elizabeth Prentice as she leaves (temporarily) for a hip operation, look forward to seeing her back soon and the Managers will keep the farm tiptop in your absence!

