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carcass weight, within each of the three slaughter dates, the LS-sired lambs had estimated GR depths that were only +0.56, +0.50 and +0.06mm greater respectively than those of the R-sired lambs ($P>0.05$).

Some of the advantages of the LS-sired lambs will have included an unknown contribution from heterosis. Nevertheless, the LS-sired lambs returned approximately \$3 per head more than the R-sired lambs. This represents an additional net return of more than \$0.6m (\$15.3m versus \$14.7m), if 30% of Landcorp Farming Limited's 637,000 breeding ewes were mated to LS rams.

CONCLUSION

Profitable sheep farming can result from innovation such as the development of synthetic lines, or the application of innovative management systems. In realising that optimal

production systems may be more profitable than maximal production systems, NZ sheep producers could well consider developing a synthetic to perform under pastoral management systems, perhaps in combination with exploiting specialist pastures and judicious use of supplements. With relatively large commercial flocks available in NZ, the opportunity to screen animals and select for desired traits is greater than in many other countries. In contrast to the screening operations of the past, however, breed of sheep need not necessarily be considered.

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Mount Linton wools - now and beyond 2000

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ABSTRACT

At Mount Linton Station the emphasis in wool production is moving away from the concept of quantity alone, towards a philosophy of quantity and quality. The quality component is being driven by end-user requirements. With this in mind we are working closely with a specific company, Summit Wool Spinners in Oamaru. We are also investigating the possibilities for producing specialty crossbred wools, examples of which include the creation of "branded" lines produced under an appellation standard and "chemical-free" wool.

The demands of the manufacturer are having an increasing impact on the genetics and ram breeding elements of Mount Linton's wool production system. The change of emphasis towards quality wool production and the genetic requirements for parasite resistance resulting from reduced pesticide use, will put increasing pressure on our ram-breeding enterprises. By capitalising on the large numbers of animals we have available we can meet the challenge of concentrating on producing high quality wool products for specialist markets. To achieve this, the linkage between the farm and the end-user is vital to the future of Mount Linton Wools.

INTRODUCTION

The McGregor family has owned Mount Linton Station since 1903. In that time the estimated wool production has been 95000 bales or 14,250 tonnes. Forecasted production over the next 25 years is 66,500 bales (10,000 tonnes). Mount Linton runs 50,000 Romney ewes and 11,500 ewe hogget replacements, 7,500 Texel cross ewes and 4,500 replacements, and 3,320 cattle. The present annual wool clip is made up of 237,000 kg of ewe fleece, 60,000 kg of hogget fleece and 74,000 kg of "other" wool.

There are three ram breeding flocks associated with the company. Tan Bar, where Mount Linton's flock rams are bred, has 1300 Romney ewes and has been running since 1975. This farm is part of the Southern Romney Development

Group and runs a multi-purpose flock with the emphasis on fertility (155-165% lambs weaned over the last three years), plus wool and meat quality. Mount Linton Farm carries a flock of 800 super high fleece weight Romney ewes, started in 1988 after consultation with the late Dr Hugh Hawker. In addition, Mount Linton has a grade-up flock of dual purpose Texels with equal emphasis on wool and liveweight.

We are currently in the process of evaluating where we want to be with our sheep breeding programme in the next 10-20 years. Mount Linton continues to enjoy a very close association with AgResearch at the Invermay Agricultural Centre, whose staff have had a considerable input into past breeding programmes. John McEwan has just completed an updated audit of our existing programme that will assist the board and management with longer term predictions. Basi-

cally, the principle will be the use of more than one breed to gain the greatest amount of hybrid vigour possible. This strategy will help to achieve the Company's long term objectives for wool and meat production.

The NZ sheep industry

NZ is currently in a unique situation. The wool stockpile is virtually gone and the 1994-95 clip is estimated to be 200,500 tonnes. This is the lowest annual production in 30 years and a drop of 6.4% from the 1993-94 season. In comparison, Australia's monthly sales of stockpile wool are in excess of their Wool Board plan, and the privatisation of the remaining wool is due to take place in 1997. World sheep numbers have declined by 6% in the past five years to approximately 873 million. These numbers are likely to decline even further, and Australia will continue to be the most unpredictable producer in the foreseeable future. There is therefore, a greatly reduced wool supply on the world market. If we are to capitalise on this situation in NZ, and make wool production a real sunrise industry, a number of very important things need to happen.

The NZ industry must set standards of quality and excellence that the rest of the world will aspire to. We cannot afford to be simply takers of global wool prices. There needs to be a vast improvement in the communication gap that exists between wool producers and processors. We must meet identified needs of the market, rather than perceived needs. In my experience, the vested interests of some individual players in the wool industry have often been put before the interests of the industry as a whole. The signals and directions given to producers in the past, have frequently been abysmal, and confusing to say the least. There is currently serious debate as to whether separate Meat, Wool and Dairy Boards are the correct format for the future. It may be that a Sheep Board (covering lamb, mutton and wool) and a Cattle Board (incorporating beef and the dairy industry's inherent strengths) is a more appropriate structure. Perhaps there is even merit in combining all three.

To exploit the present world situation in terms of wool production we must produce a sought after product that is of high quality. If we are to improve the quality of crossbred wool we need to:

- add value behind the farm gate by using objective measurements; this particularly applies to crimp, style strength and colour;
- pay shearing gangs and wool handlers on the basis of quality rather than quantity;
- provide bonus payments that reward growers who produce superior quality wool;
- redesign existing wool handling systems to maximise quality and add value without adding excessive cost.

Meeting the market

Our association with Summit Wool Spinners began in 1990. In the future, I believe that this relationship will be viewed as having been the start of a new era for Mount Linton wool trading. Summit specialises in producing a complete cross-section of carpet yarns for its customers. Computer blending and Chemset Systems are among developments that

allow it to be a leading supplier of top quality yarn to NZ, Australia, South East Asia and Japan. By working closely with Summit we are able to clearly define long-term objectives and focus on producing wools to the company's specifications. In turn, they can satisfy their end-users. Summit's increasing assistance with on-farm production and woolshed management is the first step in the processing chain and is important to both of us if we are to set standards for others to achieve. By being closely associated with a processing company we also have access to processors and end-users. In our case this is the Japanese associates of Summit, such as Sumitomo Textile Division, Kurabo Fujii and others. We are able to discuss common problems and aspirations, which gives all parties the ability to understand each other's position and to plan ahead.

We also currently produce a quantity of Texel-Romney bulky type wool. This line is being used by the Summit factory to make blankets and is also used to make hand-knitting yarns in Japan. These lines both have the Mount Linton name associated with them on their packaging. In the future we hope to expand this aspect of our production further, by improving quality and quantity in consultation with our down-stream users.

A new age for New Zealand wool

In NZ, we are extremely lucky to have WRONZ with Dr Carnaby as general manager of research and development for crossbred wool. Without a doubt this organisation is a world leader in its field. They have achieved a number of breakthroughs including adding crimp, reducing lustre and several other projects that remain commercially sensitive. In addition, the Wool Board has changed its name and relaunched itself as Wools of NZ. The appearance of the Wools of NZ generic Fernmark must surely signal the dawning of a new age for NZ crossbred wools.

We have other advantages that many wool producing nations do not have, or do not utilise:

- large numbers of animals that can be selected for specialised crossbred wool types;
- the ability to produce to appellation standards and market branded products;
- chemical-free wool and its clean, green image;
- the ability to reduce pesticide use in sheep management by using genetic improvement for parasite resistance.

CONCLUSION

As we improve the style and predictability of our wool clip we hope that we can match it to the more specialised requirements and trends of the processing industry. By doing this we will contribute to the improvement of productivity. Awareness of the end uses of wool is essential for our sector to ensure its future. By judicious appraisal of markets we can "invent" wool types with characteristics that satisfy the requirements of both the processor and the consumer. These advances, that will keep NZ at the forefront of world crossbred wool production, are the framework of the challenge that is being met by the Mount Linton team.