

AVALON Genetics

new zealand

The BEST COMBINATION of RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE and LOW DAG SCORE GENETICS in New Zealand

Spring Newsletter 2019



Welcome to Avalon Genetics Spring newsletter. The start of winter got us out of jail feed wise, with early May our best growth rates since early February. We had our second summer/autumn dry in a row. May to July were very good and then at the business end it got tough. Three snow falls, hail, wind and rain made lambing tough. Went into my first paddock one morning and out of 4 sets of twins, I had 3 live lambs, 2 going to die, and 3 dead. So I went home for the day. Basically our winter has been August, September and October.

- TOPICS TO BE COVERED:
- 1 Lambing Observations
 - 2 Supporting Mental Health
 - 3 Cost of Production
 - 4 Suffolk Texel Option
 - 5 Maternal Worth Index
 - 6 Progeny Testing
 - 7 Dag Score
 - 8 Prices for 2019 - 2020

LAMBING OBSERVATIONS

Scott and I shared the tagging and for the first time in 31 years I only did half the ewes. The weather was very cold and wet, but some things went well. Out of 410 Ultimate and Texel ewes I looked after:

- lambed 3 ewes*
- 1 bearing*
- 2 hard udders*
- no big udders*
- a few brown legs that we cull on*
- a handful of black spots on legs*
- culled approx. 10 ewes for being poor mothers*

DNA testing is great, but it comes at a cost and you don't get the opportunity to observe mothering

ability and cull for faults at birth. We don't want to export bad faults to your farming operation.



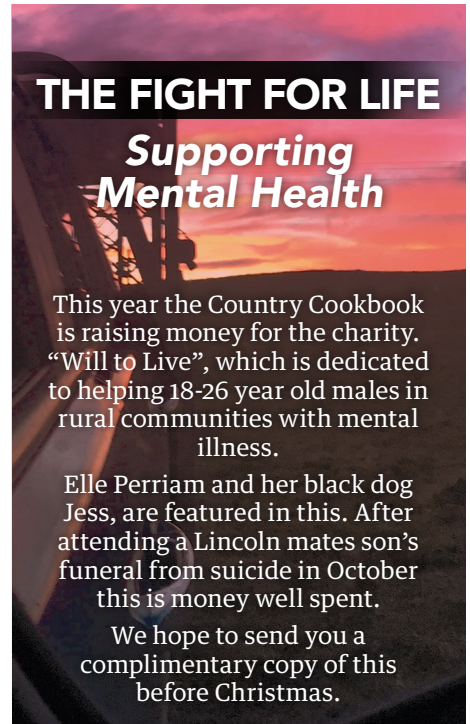
THE FIGHT FOR LIFE

Supporting Mental Health

This year the Country Cookbook is raising money for the charity, "Will to Live", which is dedicated to helping 18-26 year old males in rural communities with mental illness.

Elle Perriam and her black dog Jess, are featured in this. After attending a Lincoln mates son's funeral from suicide in October this is money well spent.

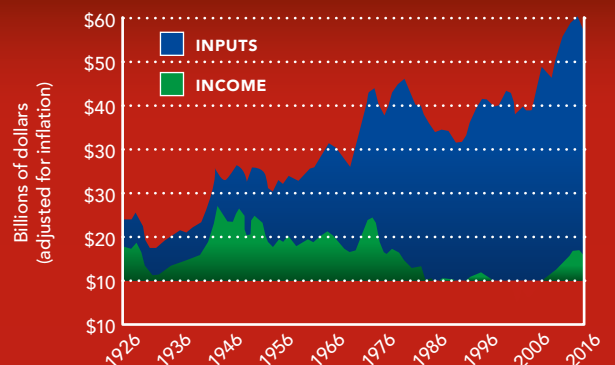
We hope to send you a complimentary copy of this before Christmas.



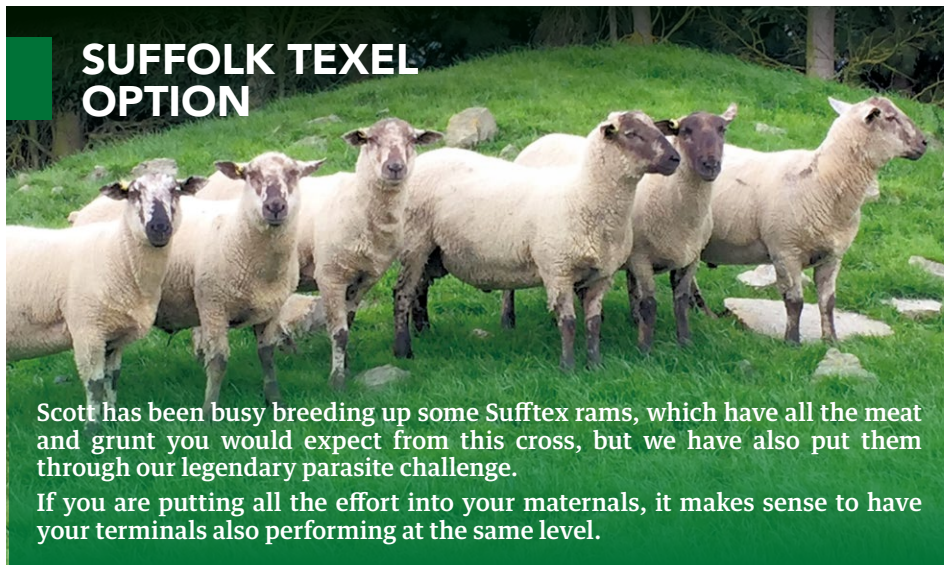
COST OF PRODUCTION

There is interesting data out of Canada but I think it sums up all farming countries. The service industry continues to take the bulk of income we produce, regardless of the prices received. Only 12% gets back to farmers in Canada, and just as in New Zealand, we take all the risk and do all the work. Back on farm, drenching and dagging are two of your biggest health costs. On a 5000su property that has a standard triple drench program, the cost including labour is around \$2.16 /su. Dagging at contract rates equates to \$2.96/su giving a total cost of \$26000 pa. Over a 40 year farming career this is over \$1 M of costs. If your ram breeder isn't doing the hard work on resistance and dag score then, they are passing this cost onto your operation. This doesn't make much sense to us.

Wealth extraction by agribusinesses



SUFFOLK TEXEL OPTION



Scott has been busy breeding up some Sufftex rams, which have all the meat and grunt you would expect from this cross, but we have also put them through our legendary parasite challenge.

If you are putting all the effort into your maternals, it makes sense to have your terminals also performing at the same level.

MATERNAL WORTH INDEX

This was promoted as the next big step in sheep genetics with a single index to allow you to compare different genetics.

Unfortunately one size does not fit all, because we all operate in different environments and the genetic engine does not accommodate these variations.

Also, the Maternal Worth Index could also be called the High Input Index, with no penalties for the cost of production apart from the recently introduced Adult Size Index. So what we have is stud breeders giving their sheep every drench and animal health option in order to be able to compete with every other breed. Now if there was a cost built in to record drenching, dagging, feeding regimes other than grass, we would get a much different result.

PROGENY TESTING

Last year in an effort to build better linkages with other breeds we used a Perendale plus two North Island rams, a Romney and Coopworth. The results were quite poor, with the NI rams being placed in the bottom 25% of our rams.

One of the North Island rams was ranked in the top 10 in New Zealand for performance plus resistance.

We actually had to work hard to keep their lambs growing long enough to FEC them, then they were culled. In between this, the two sires had 20 and 24% of their progeny flystruck, so we were quite disappointed.

However this reaffirms how far ahead we are against rams ranked in high input environments who are not able to perform without drenches in a high performance/low input environment.

The top 10 ranked ram ranked 64 out of 84 rams in our flock and the other ram came in at 82nd.

DAG SCORE

Currently we have 9 of the Top 10 rams in New Zealand for dag score, which is a great result following our 31 years of selection for resistance and dag score. What makes our results even better is we are selecting sheep under zero drench and high parasite challenges, compared to selecting sheep that stay clean under a standard drench regime.



There is up to \$6000 of dagging and crutching costs for all the progeny from one ram leaving daggy progeny.

We are dagging up to 30% of our works lambs before they go on the truck. This is the work farmers get sick of. If your breeder isn't doing objective measuring for dag score, he is passing on the costs to you.

PRICES FOR 2019 - 2020

We haven't increased prices since 2004 and it is time to reassess these. We believe we are selling the NZ's best combination of performance with resistance, resilience and dag score.

We note that average bulls are now selling for around \$10,000, not the top ones. For the first time in my career we are looking at not two but perhaps three years of good lamb and mutton prices in a row.

This season the top 40% of the Perendale, Texel and Ultimate will be at \$1500, the next 50% at \$1200 and bottom 10% at \$900. Terminal Texel and Sufftex will sell at \$900

Selling will take place in December, with the option of late sales taking place in January.

Please send back your Ram Order forms by mid November if possible.



All the best for the season.

**Regards,
Allan & Sonia**