

FERNVALE GENETICS

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Welcome to the Fernvale update for 2013. We hope everyone is enjoying a good lambing this season due to a kind spell of weather. The Fernvale ewes have finished lambing with the hoggets $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through. From what we see so far it has been a very successful lambing.

We strive to keep at the forefront of genetic progress so we have undertaken the shepherd plus DNA parentage test for identifying the parentage of progeny. This test works by:

1. Testing the ewes to gather their DNA sequence. This is done via a blood test and results are obtained in the laboratory by Pfizer.
2. Test the sires the same way as the ewes.
3. Tag and take a DNA sample of the progeny at tailing time from a snip off the lamb's ear. These are again sent to the laboratory to match their parentage via DNA.

This undertaking is an expensive exercise – especially initially as all the ewes in the flock need to be DNA tested @ \$23 per animal. We consider this an important and vital step to the recording process as it eliminates any human error in the lambing paddock.

Due to the cost, this year and subsequent years we are undertaking the DNA Parentage Test just in the two tooth ewes and their progeny. This should take around a 4 year progression to cover the whole stud as we keep testing the two tooth's every year.

As you may be aware, our policy at Fernvale is that all animals retained in the stud and/or sold as stud sheep must be multiple born and reared animals. The DNA testing gives us an environment where we can set stock the ewes at lambing time and leave nature to take its course with completely no intervention. No intervention means only the strong survive and bad mothers are identified by not rearing their multiples it also takes out the human factor of finding labour that is proficiently skilled in stud lambing and tagging.

While our Romney and Romdale maternal sires continue to be the major part of our business, we have noticed a strong growth in our terminal sire operation. Our focus of the operation with regards to these has been to produce good quality terminal sires, but at the same time, attempt to keep the cost down and pass this on to our clients. Demand for these has been exceptional and we have had to increase this side of the operation to cope with this. There will be around 180 terminal sires for sale this season.

The financial outcome for this season appears to be more promising than last season with the predicted lamb price at \$100 plus. (Last year's average was around \$80). A boost to the bottom line helps us all!

We look forward to catching up with you over the coming months with the selling of the ram hoggets due to take place in late November.

We hope this letter finds you well
Kind regards – Lloyd and Angela.

Ram Hoggets 15th October

