

FERNVALE GENETICS

Romney Romdale Suffolk Sufftex

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Welcome to the Fernvale update for 2016. This spring has been one out of the box which has meant high lamb survival and excellent grass growth. What a great way to start the season!

It has been a year of change in our farming operation. From 30 June 2016, we have merged all of our farming assets into the one operation, known as Fernvale Genetics Limited. Additionally, we have leased a further 2500 hectares from Steven Norman, bringing our total wintered stock units to near on 40,000.

Involved in this lease was the taking over of 4000 composite ewes which will all go to a terminal sire and will be recognised as “B” ewes. The interesting thing that we discovered was that at shearing these ewes only shore a total of 3.4kg of wool per sheep. At the same time, we were shearing our Fernvale commercial ewes. These shore 4.6kg of wool. Both these two lines of ewes had around 10 months of wool growth. This highlights the detrimental effects of bringing a Texel type fibre into your maternal capital ewes.

$1.2 \text{ kg wool} \times 80\% \text{ yield} = 0.96 \text{ clean kg} @ \$4.70/\text{kg} = \$4.51 \text{ per sheep difference}$. As you well know, this is approximately the cost of shearing the animal. (Note that this is a clean price where wool prices are going down. Imagine the difference when wool prices start increasing again!).

It has been a disappointing start to the wool season when you compare the last couple of years' trends. Unfortunately, the high dollar and the decreased demand in China have created somewhat of a speed bump. This has been the norm for the wool industry, with farmers having to be at the bottom of the pile. I firmly believe that the model needs to be changed so that we as farmers become more involved through the entire supply chain.



Suffolk and Sufftex ram hoggets 17th Oct 2016



**Typical Stud
Fernvale Ewe
with lambs at
foot
12th October
2016**

With the sheep meat market, all indicators to date are that this season is shaping up to be similar to last season. Time will tell how the Shanghai Maling merger plays out. I personally have some reservations on this. If this capital injection is used for industry good – such as consumer awareness, market development, product branding etc, then it can only be a positive for the meat industry. But if this capital injection is used as funding for a procurement war to further fracture the industry, then this can only be a detriment.

This season, the rams are by far the best that we have ever produced. We are extremely proud of the stock that we will be presenting to you. The performance we are now getting out of our Romney ewes is exceeding our expectations. The policy we implemented years ago of only retaining **multiple-reared** animals is taking our survival rate at lambing to a whole new level. We are now achieving a sub 20% death rate from scanning to weaning, which is extremely pleasing.

Our farming policy now means that all stud ewes and rams have been DNA profiled. The ewes are scanned to identify number of lambs born, and then pre-lamb shorn. After shearing they are set-stocked and left completely unassisted for lambing. Mother nature is left to take care of any culling. At tailing, the lambs are DNA profiled and tagged to identify parentage. At this stage, any lambs that were not weaned as a multiple are not retained within the stud.

The demand for rams is increasing and getting to the point where it is beginning to outstrip supply. Please return your order forms promptly to avoid disappointment.

Kind Regards – Lloyd, Angela and the team at Fernvale Genetics.