

# MARLBOROUGH MERINO ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2009 – PRINTED BY BLENHEIM TOYOTA

## CHAIR(WO)MAN'S MESSAGE

We have a great committee consisting Hamish Oswald, David Molinuex, David Grigg, Tom Small, Graham Cooper, Ron Small representing the Stud Breeders and Kelly Allan, our secretary. We look forward to liaising with Simon Harvey as the regions representative on the Merino NZ Inc board. We also have a strong and enthusiastic group of Young Merino farmers, with Grant Allan as chairman. The association will also be liaising more with Federated Farmers. Marty Westenra will be our representative. It is interesting only 55% of farmers belong to this group. They do a huge amount of work on farmers' behalf and deserve your support.

Special thanks to Blenheim Toyota. Not only do they sponsor the 2th Ewe Flock competition, but they print and deliver our NEWSLETTER. Thank you also to PGG Wrightson, our secondary sponsor. I know both these businesses are well supported by our community as are the advertisers in the programme. Thank you to Blair Davies and the NZ Merino Company for providing drinks and nibbles at the end of day one. The NZ Merino Company also provided Icebreaker Jackets for our judges. I love sending the Australians home in Icebreaker!

Consider keeping one of your better fleeces to enter in the Marlborough A & P Show, 6 & 7 November. Entry forms are out and more are available from Mrs P Childs, 578 5822. The Association sponsors the hogget fleece, class 3131. To those eligible, the Junior judging competition takes place at the A & P show on Saturday morning. A training day takes place before this. Information will be advertised closer to the time.

The eradication of the Meat and Wool Levy has created a lot of discussion. This does create an opportunity for wool growers to come up with a business place to better cater to their needs. One big surprise was the poor voter turnout. Only 39% of those eligible cast their vote. Merino wool growers have always been proactive in achieving results, and planning is underway as to how we will address the impact of ceasing the Meat and Wool Levy.

You are reminded of the **MGIL Annual General Meeting** on October 16,2009 commencing at 4pm at the Coptorne Commodore Hotel, 449 Memorial Avenue, Christchurch. An **informal shareholder meeting** is to be held one hour prior. This is for shareholders to express their views in an informal environment. Your regional representative is Ron Small (575 7257).

Kind Wishes

Sally Wadworth  
aschworth@xtra.co.nz



**Do you and your staff know  
what to do?**

The Marlborough Merino Association is considering a day course with the Marlborough Red Cross Association. Discounts are available to groups of ten or more. Please contact Sally Wadworth, [aschworth@xtra.co.nz](mailto:aschworth@xtra.co.nz) or phone 572 8245 if you are interested

### IN THIS ISSUE

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## Weighing and Condition Scoring in the Merino 2T Competition

Have these objective measurements achieved their purpose?

In 1996 Peter Jerram and I introduced these 2 basic techniques to the Merino 2T competition more as a demonstration and to get Merino farmers thinking about the most important driver of productivity - body weight and condition.

We have been concerned about the low lambing percentages in many Merino flocks and were somewhat dismayed to find that lightweight 2T's, too light to be successfully mated, were still doing very well in the competition. How could a mob of 2T's averaging less than 40kg, too light to reproduce or produce the wool they were capable of, still win. We were therefore adamant that if we were to continue being involved then weight and CS would have to become part of the scoring. Ensuring hoggets were fed well and reached target weights was just as important as ram and hogget selection and should be part of the competition,

Opinions varied. Some farmers were critical of the competition becoming a "fat sheep" competition, others that Merino were "all about wool" - nothing else and body weight and condition should have nothing to do with such an event. Some didn't believe their weights and accused us of having faulty scales. However support from important members of the committee meant that in 1999 body weight and condition score became part of the final score.

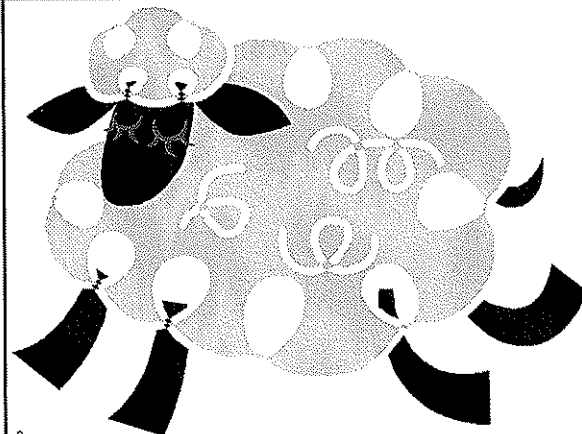
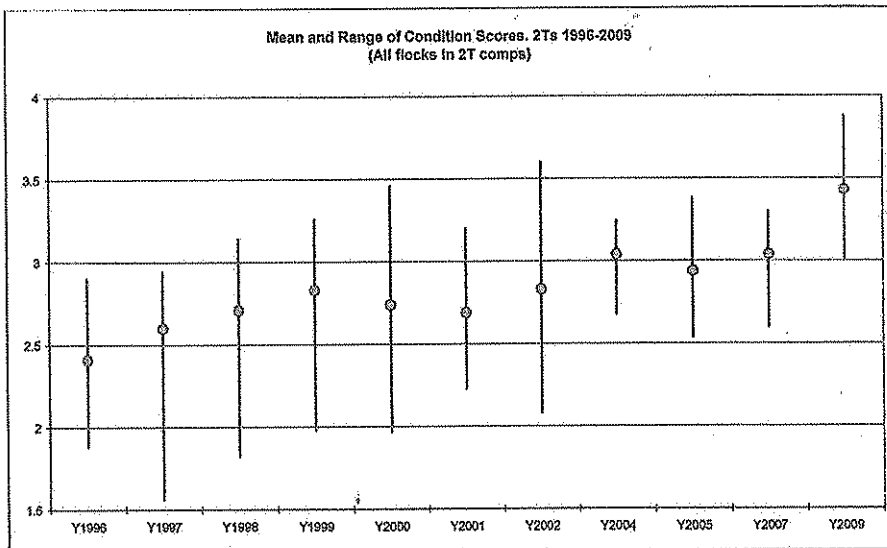
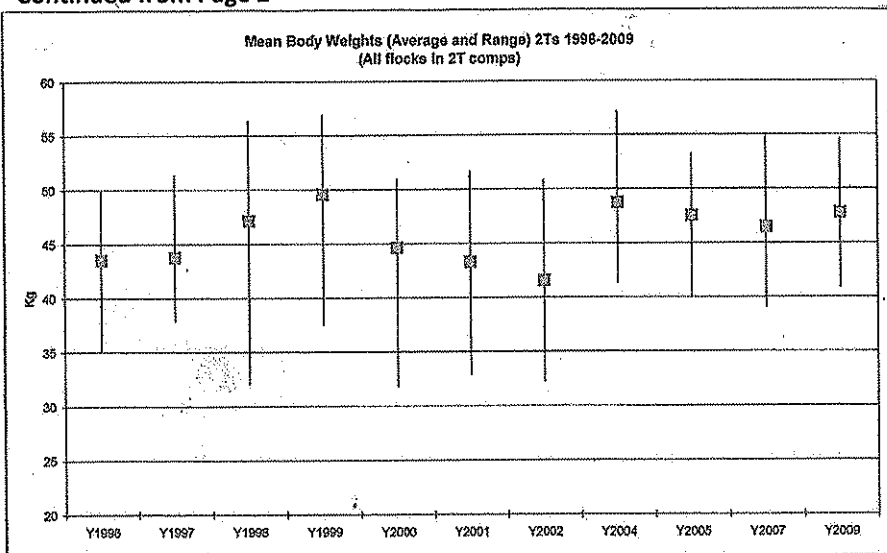
So, has there been any improvement in how Marlborough Merino farmers grow their hoggets and has there been any change in 2T mating performance and lambing percentages? Since too few Merino farmers provide me with filled in OptiLamb I cannot answer the lambing % aspect. However it does appear many hoggets are finished now at much improved weights and there has been a pleasing trend to higher condition scores in the competition over the last 13 years.

While the average body weight of the mobs varies significantly between years a lot of this is due to the ratio of super-fine, fine and medium flocks in each year group. However since 2002, almost all properties have got their 2T's to between 40-55kg. Prior to 2002 it was common to have a mob or two in each year averaging a little over 30kg.

More revealing is the trend in condition scores. This has steadily improved from a low of 2.4 in 1996 to 3.4 this year. In fact this year no property had a mean CS less than 3 so all flocks scored maximum CS points. Having all entrants achieving maximum CS points has made us feel that the aim of doing all the work has actually worked.

Do we believe that implementing weighing and condition scoring into the 2T competition has had any influence? Probably the greatest help to improved hogget growth rate has been the widespread use of vineyard grazing by Merino farmers. We would like to think however that both the Marlborough Merino Association Best Practice Hogget Project and incorporating weighing and condition scoring into the associations 2T competition have highlighted the importance of objective measurements and feeding and have also had a part to play.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

In 1971, "Farmers" (the store with more) had Choysa Tea on special at 29 cents, marked down from 36 cents.

If you were keen you could join the Pelorus Sound Mail Lauch run and pay \$1.40 for a round trip (this included the wharf toll)

For only \$4.40, you could travel to Christchurch in the luxury and comfort of a Newman's coach

**COMING UP.....**

**November 1:** Training Day for Junior Judges.  
Venue TBA, Contact Tom Small

**November 4-9:** Hunter's Garden Marlborough

**November 6 & 7:** Marlborough A & P Show  
Junior Judging Finals

**November 11-14:** Canterbury Royal Show  
Junior Judging Finals

**November 27:** Marlborough Merino Members  
Xmas Function, to be held at  
"Aschworth" at 3pm

**March/April 2010:** Field Day at Duntroon

Morris and his wife, Esther went to the state fair every year, and every year Morris would say, "Esther, I'd like to ride in that helicopter". Esther always replied, "I know Morris, but that helicopter ride is fifty dollars, and fifty dollars is fifty dollars".

One year, Esther and Morris went to the fair, and Morris said "Esther, I'm 85 years old if I don't ride that helicopter, I might never get another chance". To this, Esther replied, "Morris that helicopter ride is fifty dollars, and fifty dollars is fifty dollars". The pilot overheard the couple and said "Folks, I'll make you a deal. I'll take both of you for a ride. If you stay quiet for the entire ride and don't say a word I won't charge you a penny! But if you say one word, it's fifty dollars".

Morris and Esther agreed and up they went. The pilot did all kinds of fancy manoeuvres, but not a word was heard. He did his daredevil tricks over and over again, but still not a word. When they landed, the pilot turned to Morris and said, "By golly, I did everything I could to get you to yell out, but you didn't. I'm impressed".

Morris replied, "Well, to tell you the truth, I almost said something when Esther fell out, but you know fifty dollars is fifty dollars!".