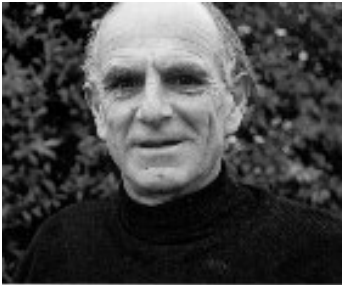


merino inc. newsletter



from the chairman

AGM

Inc.'s AGM was held in Christchurch on 11th August, with a strong attendance from representatives of Regional Associations, growers, and personnel from industry and research institutes. The past year's performance and results, as reported by the Board, were positively commended by the meeting. The Board is proud of its achievements, and the enthusiastic endorsement of its role by the meeting was certainly gratifying.

We welcome to the Board Brian Hansen, the new Canterbury region Director, and look forward to his enthusiasm and input. At its meeting following the AGM, the Board invited Geoff Mavromatis to continue as a co-opted Director for a further 12 months.

The Inc. Board recommended to the AGM, and a motion was approved, that Directors' fees be reduced to \$5000 and the Chairman's fee remain at \$10,000. With two fewer Directors, this gives a total Director cost of \$30,000/year.

Dr Richard Templer, General Manager Research and Development, Meat and Wool NZ, addressed the AGM, outlining the working relationship which Inc. and MWNZ have developed, and emphasising its importance to both parties. He acknowledged the strength and unity within the Merino sector, and Inc.'s focus in working for Merino growers which he wanted to see continue – in his words "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" The meeting received a clear message from Dr Templer that Merino Inc. is seen by MWNZ

as a very effective industry body, with a successful Inc./ Regional Association/ grower network.

INDUSTRY UNITY

Merino Inc. is the Merino industry good body, and has cemented a unified position for growers alongside MWNZ which continues to gather momentum. However, when travelling and meeting growers, I repeatedly hear concerns regarding divisions within the industry in respect of the wool marketing area. The united purpose we had four years ago has been eroded, to the detriment of our business opportunities, and I ask the question "Is this division being driven by the producer or the corporate sector of our industry?" I guess this will be on our minds as we vote on the future of MGIL.

As the Chairman of the industry good body, I ask growers to reflect on whether, for the good of the industry, we need more co-operation in the commercial arena. The opportunities for Merino Inc. to commission and facilitate R&D work, to be delivered and/or taken up by the commercial sector, would be far simpler and ensure more complete service to *all* Merino growers if there was improved industry accord. When Inc. seeks support/ funding leverage etc., it would be in a much stronger position if there were greater co-operation within the commercial part of the wool industry.

While the conclusion of the merger negotiations between two of the

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from the chairman (continued)

major industry players may address some of the concerns expressed by growers regarding industry unity, will this provide the level of unity that we need if we are to compete successfully as an industry?

One of the roles that growers have indicated they want Merino Inc. to fulfil is that of an advocate for the industry. We are aware of the industry changes that have taken place, but it is not easy to come up with practical solutions. If there are things that you believe Inc. should be doing as an advocate then contact me or, better still, your Director.

ANIMAL WELFARE

The National Animal Welfare Code is currently under review, and Merino Inc. has made a submission. MWNZ and Merino Inc. spoke to that submission at a recent meeting of the Na-

tional Animal Welfare Advisory Committee [NWAC], and were well received. Inc. took the lead and the merino position is well understood.

WAY FORWARD

Merino Inc.'s programme for the year ahead is to complete existing project work, scope the industry for new initiatives, and strengthen the links between Inc., Regional Associations and growers.

To assist in bringing the industry closer together, Inc. is exploring the concept of an industry forum, where representatives from all sectors can share their concerns and identify solutions that would need some form of co-operation. This is still in the very early stages, and is being looked at for March 2006.

Ross Beech

"If there are things that you believe Merino Inc. should be doing as an advocate then contact me or, better still, your Director."

seeds in carcasses

The only type of penetrating seed found in the carcasses of 2465 Merino lambs studied was riggut brome (*Bromus diandrus*). This was quite surprising, as the general expectation was that several types of grass seeds, including Barley grass were penetrating right through the pelt. Seeds in the fleece were also studied, and many other species were present there, including similar levels of barley grass to the riggut brome. The study also found that the seed is already present in the skin of the lamb at weaning at 4 months of age.

The lambs came from six different high country environments all known to have a problem of penetrating seeds in lamb carcasses. The lambs from 4 of the properties in the investigation were followed through to slaughter, and on average, 10-50 percent of lambs were put onto the detain rail because of seed contamination in the carcase. Twenty seven percent of these detained carcasses were down graded

(2.6% of all lambs slaughtered), so the effect of seed damage on both farmer and processor are considerable.

Dr Grant Edwards, from Lincoln University, provided some interesting information on the brome grasses as weed pests. They are well known as problem species in both dryland environments and in arable situations. In particular, riggut brome is a problem in the United States, in a range of environments. It is found throughout New Zealand, but especially in dry South Island environments. However, he predicts that it will become more widespread as a problem. There is no straight forward control measure, but Dr Edwards noted that there are 2 stages in the life cycle where management strategies may reduce or mitigate the problems. For example, the flower heads can be grazed off to reduce seeding. Alternatively, keeping merino lambs out of problem areas during seeding will help reduce the problem.

The only type of penetrating seed found in the carcasses was riggut brome, even though there were similar levels of barley grass in the fleece

supporting change alternative fly strike management

Animal welfare issues and the chance to position New Zealand merino production to take advantage of market opportunities are driving change away from surgical mulesing. Responding to the commercial incentives means the on-farm practices that replace mulesing must ensure that other problems aren't created which may be risky from the market's perspective, such as increased chemical residues in wool.

An industry-wide project has been set up to work with farmers to assist with technology, tools, information and direction to minimise fly-strike without mulesing. The key to the project is learning from the experiences of those who don't use mulesing, particularly those who have never done so or haven't for some years.

The work is being funded by Meat and Wool New Zealand Ltd and Merino Inc and being carried out by The New Zealand Merino Company. In addition to their in-house expertise in marketing, and in wool quality and production, they will also involve animal health experts, including vets and others in the work. All merino farmers will receive information to help make decisions about managing the change, including information on:

- Management practices that have been successful and unsuccessful in the management of non-

mulesed sheep and the positives and negatives of these practices;

- The effect of those management practices on wool quality and production;
- Any problems that a change in management practice could cause in the market;
- Information on best-practice use of preventative fly strike treatments;
- Analysis of the efficacy of these products/chemicals, including information extracted from case studies and scientific papers;
- Progress with the development of non-surgical mulesing alternatives; and,
- Other relevant information

The information will be developed and updated over the next two years, and will be made available through road shows and workshops where issues can be discussed, as well as through detailed written and web site packages.

For further information, please contact Mark Stevenson at NZM (03 377 7990) or Claire Mulcock at Merino Inc.

seeds in carcasses

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Further work is proposed, including:

- Establishing the costs and benefits from shearing lambs at weaning
- Establishing national statistics on seed contamination to gauge the extent of the problem and therefore off-farm industry relevance.
- Determining the key aspects of *Bromus diandrus* biology and distribution, and identifying control strategies.
- Forming an industry group to work with meat companies to reduce costs to farmers from downgrading

This project was jointly funded by Merino Inc and Meat and Wool NZ Ltd, and carried out by Alan Marshall (formerly with Tectra) and now at Lincoln University.

A report on this work will be available soon on www.merinoinc.co.nz.

the woolbook

The Woolbook is a computer package that is set up to easily record wool information and analyse how each stock class is performing year on year. It was designed by the Merino Monitoring Group, a group of 23 merino businesses in the South Island of New Zealand.

This version, Woolbook 1.5, has been upgraded through funding from NZ Merino

Inc and is available free to all merino farmers in New Zealand. It comes with a user manual designed for those who have no prior knowledge of the software; and a software installation shell to enable easy installation. This package is 'stand alone' (i.e. it does not require any other software).

Information can be recorded either by manually entering data from your wool sales advice documentation or, for Merino Company clients, it can be imported directly from a file they provide. There is also a "File send" option so that the Woolbook file can be readily emailed to someone else.

For further information, go to www.merinoinc.co.nz.

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wool sale reports

Available from Meat & Wool NZ Ltd web site:
www.meatandwoolnz.com.
Find the link on the top right hand side of the Home page. These reports include market indicators for Fine, Mid-Micron, Fine Crossbred, Coarse Crossbred and Lambs., and various commentaries and trend graphs.



directory

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We're On the web!

www.merinoinc.co.nz

directors farewelled

The contributions that the 3 retiring directors have made to the work of Merino Inc. were acknowledged at the recent AGM.

Lyn Finch

Tribute was paid to Lyn's work with growers in development of the Glengyle partnership, that, at the time, was an innovative approach to supply systems. Lyn joined the original Merino NZ Inc. Board in 1997, and continued as a director with Merino NZ Ltd then with Merino NZ Inc as the North Island director, retiring in 2004.

She has been missed both for the passion, enthusiasm and energy she brought to Merino Inc, as well as the particular expertise she contributed through her experience in the textile manufacturing and retail industry.

Bob Todhunter

Bob has been on the Board since 2001 as the Canterbury Director. Bob used his business acumen and his depth of practical experience in the industry to provide insightful and considered input to the discussions, never missing an opportunity to remind the Board that there are merinos other than 18 micron and finer.

Richard Burdon

Richard served one term as an Otago director on the Board, but with the reduction in the number of directors, his position isn't available any longer.

Armed with a deep briefcase, Richard brought a wealth of information and enthusiasm to the Board table, and was a strong champion of the need to get information out to farmers.

 **STOCKsale**
www.stocksale.co.nz