

merino INC. newsletter

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From the chairman...

The 2008 Merino Inc AGM was again well supported by growers and industry representatives. The Canterbury Merino Association re-appointed Brian Hansen to the Board, and so the Inc Board remains unchanged [including Chair and Vice chair]. Research and Development manager, Claire Mulcock, outlined Inc's work and activities for the past year. There can be no doubt that Merino Inc has a vital role to play in giving growers a single strong voice to M&WNZ, resulting in the levy funds from merino being well targeted to grower requirements.

The address to the AGM by John Gregan, Chairman of the Meat

Industry Action Group [MIAG], was a memorable highlight of the meeting, and can be accessed through the Merino Inc website. There are obvious parallels between MIAG's objectives and those of the merino growers who formed Merino Inc in 1996, targeting the development of strategies and structures to deliver returns that would provide for good sound farming businesses.

The passion and dedication to the MIAG cause expressed by Gregan is what the NZ wool and meat industries desperately need, with farmers committing to a business model and then driving it. Gregan discussed the example of Fonterra, a grower

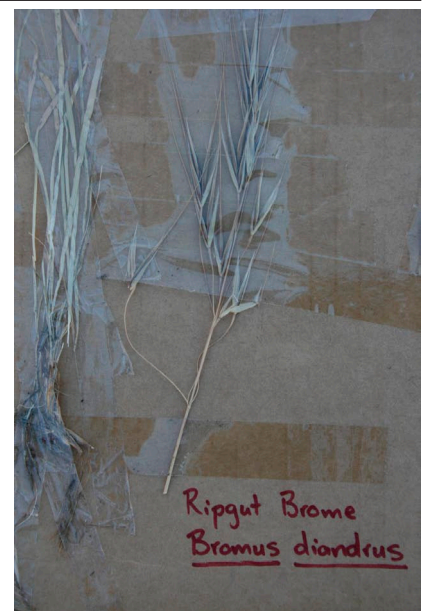
controlled business which has been able to deliver substantial market rewards back to producers. There was a suggestion from the floor that Fonterra could be the partner the meat industry requires. On reflection, I can see real merit in this: Fonterra is a co-operative of producers, processing and marketing a perishable protein-based product in the international arena. Their objectives are the same as a meat producer. Furthermore, dairy properties produce a significant volume of meat. An intriguing concept to ponder!

Ross Beech

Ripgut brome update

One of the Merino Inc funded projects currently running is the Ripgut Brome project, coordinated by Grant Edwards of Lincoln University. The annual grass weed is a significant contaminant of carcasses and wool. To date the project has found that;

- Ripgut is currently concentrated in Marlborough and Otago, less in Canterbury but this is likely to change in time.
- Shearing at weaning reduces the number of seeds in the carcass (shorn: 6 seeds/carcass; unshorn 17 seeds/carcass). However, there was a smaller effect on the number of lambs on the detain rail at processors.
- Lax grazing in early spring promotes Ripgut; harder grazing in mid spring (in October, just as seedhead emerges) can reduce Ripgut. Salt application is an option to either enhance grazing pressure or encourage sheep into areas with less Ripgut.
- Spray topping (150g a.i./ha glyphosate) in mid spring appears to be effective in preventing seedhead and seed development.



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Whole property management plans

A set of guidelines has been prepared as part of the project designed to assist high country high country farmers in preparing management plans for their properties.

Three factors increasingly make management planning a necessary part of high country farming;

- (i) resource consent requirements,
- (ii) the need to be able to demonstrate sustainable land management as part of product marketing, and
- (iii) the desire of some high country farmers to continue managing significant inherent values on their properties after Tenure Review.

Management plans are divided into four parts:

Introduction: This part includes; management plan context, vision and goals, summary of property management, and opportunities & constraints to achieving the vision and goals. The vision and goals are perhaps the most important section of the management plan as it describes the vision that the farmer has for their

property and the goals that need to be met to achieve this vision.

Management units: This part provides both a division of the property into management units and the identification of management objectives for each unit. These management objectives outline the key approaches to the management of each unit and reflect the underlying economic and environmental (including social) values of the property.

Management approach: This includes sections on finances, infrastructure, pasture and soils, stock, plantations and woodlots, plant and animal pests, native biodiversity, recreation and historic resources, agrichemicals, energy & water efficiency/quality, and health and safety. These sections discuss the strategic approach to different aspects of property management required to meet the goals for the property.

Implementation: The final part of the management plan includes sections on monitoring and plan implementation.

The monitoring section outlines the methods that the farmer will use to monitor the consequences of management actions. Many of the management actions assessed in the monitoring section relate back to the specific performance targets set with the individual management goals and as such provide the quantification of the success of management at meeting these goals. The implementation section discusses how the plan will be implemented, the way that farm operations will be reviewed, and the role of external stakeholders if any in this review.

Full project details, the complete guidelines, and an electronic management plan template is available by contacting Dr David Norton (Rural Ecology Research Group School of Forestry, University of Canterbury) on david.norton@canterbury.ac.nz or www.forestry.ac.nz/nortonlab/home.

Creative Fibre award

The winner of the 2007 Merino Inc Award at the Creative Fibre fashion parade was a stunning white gown; titled "Snow Queen", by Trish Malanaphy of Thames.



The award was for the entry displaying the most innovative use of merino wool, with more than 70% of the garment being in merino wool. The winning garment was made of felted merino and silk.

Many of the winning garments contained merino. To see the simply awesome array of uses of merino wool, and other natural fibres, go to the Creative Fibre website to see the colour photos of previous winners, www.creativefibre.org.nz

Creative Fibre is the New Zealand organisation for all fibre crafts. The 2008 exhibition, where Merino Inc is again sponsoring an award, will be held in Hamilton in September, and traveling to Christchurch and Invercargill in October. The 2009 festival will be held in Timaru in April.

Merino excellence awards

The Otago Merino Assn, in association with the NZ Wool Testing Authority, announced this year's Merino Excellence awards during the Fibre Select event in Queenstown in June. Some of the results included:

Overall adult winner

Lammermoor Station

Ravensdown production competition winner

Bog Roy

Child cancer fleece competition

Overall winner Ahuriri Downs

17 & under micron Ahuriri Downs

0-17 micron Moutere

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Marlborough Young Merino group

A group of young Marlborough merino farmers and shepherds are working together to ensure the sustainability of the merino industry in Marlborough. The group formed a discussion group earlier this year, and the 15 strong members have had 2 meetings.

Graeme Ogle (farming systems specialist) and Derrick Moot (a lucerne and pasture specialist from Lincoln) worked with the group in May at Bonavaree farm, Seddon. Bonavaree was one of the focus farms in the recently finished SFF dryland farming project — "Beyond Reasonable Drought". Fraser Avery outlined some of their key steps to success:

- Farming to the strengths of your environment — not the weaknesses. Fraser and Doug have 80% of their lambs away by the end of November, thus avoiding the variable pasture growth periods of summer.
- Choosing pasture species that suit your climate and terrain.
- Planning is the key to any successful operation

The group's second meeting in early August focused on setting up for shearing and clip management and ewe management pre-lambing. Blair Davies (NZ Merino Company) emphasised the importance of doing your homework before shearing this season: for example, did last year's contract meet the specifications? What are the major climatic and breed changes made since last year that may impact on this year's clip?

Pete Anderson (The Vet Centre), outlined a range of factors that influence lamb survival, including toxoplasmosis, campylobacter, feeding during pregnancy, iodine and VitE/selenium. He emphasized the importance of consistently feeding ewes in the 70 days before lambing, as essential to maximize lamb survival and growth rate to weaning. Lambs born to merino ewes underfed in late pregnancy, have as hoggets, lower fleece weights and greater fibre diameter. These effects are permanent.

The next meeting, planned for late October, at Scott McKenzie's property in the Wairau Valley, will include practical sessions on condition scoring

ewes and lamb post mortems. The afternoon session will focus on development of hard hill country. Scott is in the process of developing a large 340ha block of partly fern and matagouri 1500–2500ft hill country. The group is investigating setting up part of this area as a trial.

Are you interested in learning more about the discussion group or coming to the next meeting? Contact Hamish Oswald (575-7724) or Grant Allan (575-7364).



Hearing from Fraser Avery in an Omaka barley stand at Bonavaree.

Focus Farm days positive

Good numbers and a positive feel was representative of all four focus farm days held as part of the Cessation of Mulesing programme in May. This is reflective of the commitment NZ farmers have to dealing with this issue voluntarily, and before legislative enforcement is required. Results from the projects breeding and pasture trials was shared as well as other strategies to assist farmers to replace the need to mules. Frank and open discussion from those farmers involved certainly assisted in generating discussion from the audience.

Mackenzie/ Waitaki two tooth results

Despite autumn drought conditions having an adverse affect on number of entries, a very successful event was held in late May — with the following results:

- 1st Ahuriri Downs — Bill and Andrew Sutherland
- 2nd Tara Hills — Patterson family
- 3rd Bog Roy — Dave and Lisa Anderson

Canterbury's inaugural two tooth competition

The Canterbury association ran their first, highly successful, two tooth competition in April. Ten properties opened up their farms and exhibited their sheep over the two days.

Results:

- 1st Lake Coleridge Station
- 2nd Glens of Tekoa
- 3rd Glenaan Station

Gordon McMaster Encouragement trophy Mt Arrowsmith Station

Merino NZ inc.

PO Box 13646 Phone: 03 365 0881
 Christchurch Fax: 03 377 2991
 New Zealand web site: www.merinoinc.co.nz email: admin@merinoinc.co.nz

Inc Updates

Farewell to Claire

Claire Mulcock, our highly regarded and knowledgeable Research and Development Manager has resigned as of the end of October. Claire has managed the R&D role over the past 5 years, competently dealing with a wide range of industry groups, corporate and research bodies, providing qualified advice to the Board of Directors on a huge range of topics, not to mention dealing with the frustration of coordinating the research funding process. Claire intends to devote more time to her independent consulting business. We know that she will be missed not only by Merino Inc and its members but the wider merino and wool industry.

Biella update

The 2009 Biella ambassadors will be announced any day. Once again the level of interest and the calibre of the applicants has been outstanding, a real challenge for the independent selection panel. We thank all applicants and look forward to hearing back from the ambassadors when they return in March.

And we have just fare-welled Biella Masters students Giovanna Bettanini, Angelo Donati and Alessandro Ivaldi. Their study here included a day at AgResearch, meetings with The NZ Merino Company, Meat & Wool NZ and Merino Inc), interspersed with time in Marlborough with the Beech, Westenra, Wadworth and Allan families.

Click goes the ...camera

Merino Inc will be running a photo competition in 2009. The advanced warning is to give you time to start carrying those cameras on the farm, and capturing any typical event related to "a merino life". More details of the competition will be in the autumn newsletter, outlining prizes, categories and rules.

Lead the way in 2009

If you think that 2009 will be the year to extend yourself beyond your comfort zone (for the benefit of both yourself and the industry) and a little financial or peer support is required, please contact Merino Inc.

Applications for the 2009 Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme are open. Through residential workshops, seminars and personal study, twenty-four people who live and work in rural New Zealand meet to develop solid leadership skills; learn how political, cultural, social, economic and physical forces impact on New Zealand agribusiness, and establish networks with leaders from New Zealand and beyond. The course consists of three parts; a 7 day residential programme at Lincoln University, a 10 month period undertaking a project and a 10 day residential programme at Lincoln and in Wellington. Applications close on Monday 20 October 2008. Those interested in applying should visit <http://events.lincoln.ac.nz/kelloggs/>.

Go to the "Glammies"

The Merino associations are keen to up the profile of merino meat, and are encouraging farmers to consider entering the 2009 Meat and Wool NZ Golden Lamb Awards — the "Glammies".

The award measures tenderness and yield, combined with a taste-off panel of judges comparing taste, tenderness, aroma, juiciness and texture.

To be eligible a mob of 25–50 lambs (from which one is randomly selected) must be slaughtered in early February, be within a carcass weight range of 15–19.5kg, grading Y or P, and have been weaned for a minimum of 2 weeks.

Details for the 2009 awards are due out in October, and will include a class for fine wool breeds. If you are interested please check the Meat and Wool website for details, or contact your merino association for assistance.

Docking option

Director Brian Hansen has been involved in trialing a prototype TePari Patesco docking iron. From last year's experience he reports "this iron differs from other irons in that it leaves a bare area on the top of the tail stump, which doesn't subsequently grow wool, and hence does not attract dags". The TePari docking iron is available for \$950 + GST, freephone 0800 837 270.

Merino Inc Directory Directors

Marlborough/North Island	Ross Beech (chairman)	Ph. 03 572 5083
Otago	Tom Rowley (vice-chairman)	Ph. 03 443 1744
Waitaki/McKenzie	Simon Cameron	Ph. 03 435 0791
Canterbury	Brian Hansen	Ph. 03 314 4258
Administration	Allison Brook	admin@merinoinc.co.nz
Research Manager	to be filled	
Communications Manager	Jo Jermyn	jo@merinoinc.co.nz
Website	www.merinoinc.co.nz	