



WAITAKI BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL FRASER FARM

Waitaki Boys' High School Fraser Farm Monthly Update. October 2020

As any sheep farmer can tell you, with wool at historically low prices, lambing percentage is one of the most important drivers of profit on sheep farms now. Tailing was completed this month on Fraser Farm, and it was a pleasing result – now the focus switches to keeping them healthy and thriving until sale.

Before covering the activity on the Farm, the committee would like to acknowledge Mr Ray Fox, one of the team managing the farm day to day. Ray is well known in the community after a long career farming, and is giving up time in his retirement to be an integral part of the success of the farm. He recently had his 80th birthday and Waitaki Boys' High School held an afternoon tea to mark it (photo on the Facebook page). Thank you Ray, for all that you do.

Key points this month:

- 228 lambs were tailed. 11 of these lambs were donated to Fraser Farm for rearing, so 217 lambs from the 137 ewes mated, to give us a lambing percentage of 158%. This is down from 171% last year, a reflection of the difficult conditions in autumn, but total lambs for sale is the same as we increased ewe numbers to the ram this year
- 25 lambs were reared on the automatic feeder – as well as the donated lambs the managers pick up 'at risk' lambs to foster onto the machine. This helps us with lamb survival and is a benefit to the lambs left on the ewes.
- All lambs received a 5 in 1 (clostridial) vaccine and a vaccine for scabby mouth (Orf) at tailing
- Overall, ewe survival has been excellent with only 3 deaths/culled since scanning. In part this would have been helped by the reduced number of triplet-bearing ewes this year.
- Cover is lower than usual, reflecting the increased ewe numbers and the drier spring, but at 1500kgDM/ha is on target, in the past we have had some issues with feed quality due to covers getting too high, especially for lambs.
- This weaning, we plan to sell a significant number of lambs store. Our focus is on our ewes and our lambing percentage, and reducing lamb numbers early will help with this. It is also beneficial from a management point of view – large numbers of lambs over summer entail extra work, just when our workforce of young men are away on their school holidays.
- We take 5 lambs through winter to have suitably sized animals for lessons in sheep handling. These are sold each spring, before their adult teeth appear. This year they were sold at the Waiareka saleyards and we are pleased to say we topped the sale. This is something for the school to be proud of, and some of the boys attend the sale as representatives of Waitaki Boys' High School, and are always welcomed by the farmers and farming industry people at the sale.
- One of the aims of the Fraser Farm committee is to keep the farm in excellent order, as a credit to the school. Ongoing maintenance is a never-ending task as a result, and this month the culvert across the creek was replaced. This makes access easier, and it looks better.
- On the subject of the creek, as report elsewhere the boys in the Waitaki Boys' High School's Creek Restoration project, ("The Creek Boys") and the Enviro Group are working on riparian plantings, and the award won from Rabobank will make the Farm even more of an asset to the school grounds.

- At our last meeting, the Rector gave us an update on the school's progress towards its goals. The Fraser Farm managers and committee are proud Old Boys and heartened to see the progress made.
- Over the past years, the Farm has had a programme of capital investment to help it achieve its purpose of excellent productivity, great stewardship of the land and excellence as a teaching resource. Most obvious of these is the tractor, but even more important have been items such as the scales and weighing crate, and development of the handling facilities. However, with these taken care of, the Farm is now able to increase its investment back into the school, and the primary means of this are the scholarships awarded each year. We look forward to the imminent announcement of the 2021 recipients, and we are very pleased to see how past recipients are becoming 'young men of outstanding character'.