

Waitaki Boys' High School Fraser Farm Update. May 2023

It's been a while since our last report to the school community. We do see these reports as important; we want everyone to know what's happening on the farm as it's a big part of academic and pastoral life at Waitaki, it's something novel for the school to have and there is a lot of value in it. Plus, it's great to acknowledge the role of the volunteers who run the farm so the teachers can teach, and the students can learn.

Since the last report, our tireless team of Murray Isbister and Ray Fox (who take care of most of the day-to-day tasks), and David Ruddenklau (who helps out on the farm and also has a wealth of experience and contacts and sources that 'grease the wheels' figuratively) have had a successful summer and we look ahead to an excellent 2023/24.

Key points this month:

- Rams were joined with ewes on 24 March and will be taken out of the flock on 20 May. The two rams were loaned to us from Doug and Jeannie Brown's 'Punchbowl' stud. This is the last year we will be able to get their rams as they are selling the farm, so we wish to acknowledge again the invaluable contribution they have made. Not only have we been able to use some of the best terminal genetics available in NZ, having the rams only be here for tupping makes management much easier. A direct contribution to the school's bottom line.
- We still have about 50 lambs to sell. This is late enough in the year, but feed covers are good, and we have obtained some grazing on neighboring blocks for the ewes to spare some feed. We continue to sell the lambs through Waiareka Saleyards – it suits the small drafts we have, and a good chance for some boys to represent Waitaki Boys' High School at the sale, always appreciated by the old boys present.
- Fertiliser went on this month, in conjunction with Ravensdown this year (and we thank them for sponsoring part of the cost). Nick Hyslop applied the fertiliser at no cost.
- A blend of Flexi N (55kg/ha) and Superphosphate (330kg/ha) plus Selenium prills was applied, a total of 385.5kg/ha. This applied 24kg Nitrogen, 30kg Phosphorous and 36kg Sulphur per hectare. This is all the N we apply each year, so well below limits and risks of leaching. The P is just maintenance, to replace that which is removed each year, which again minimises loss through run off.
- On 11 May, a dung beetle colony was released on the north block of the farm, sponsored by North Otago Sustainable Land Management (NOSLaM). The intent is that these will, with care and management, have several benefits as they incorporate the sheep dung below the soil surface:
 - Improved soil health and reduced runoff; Increased pasture productivity
 - Reduced infection of livestock by internal parasite
 - Reduced fly pests and human disease
 - Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- For more information on the dung beetles, see: <https://dungbeetles.co.nz/>