

Pukekaka Sheep and Beef Farm

Farm Managers Report

21 June 2013

Winter is upon us, we woke up to 50mm of snow on the lawn this morning and around 120mm up on top of the hill, strong winds are making it very cold at present. Until now the winter has been very kind to us with very warm days which has given the grass a chance to grow.

Through April and May we fed out 150 tonne of Barley to 4,000 ewes. This, along with small amounts of rain has let the grass grow and we now have enough grass to get us through the winter. Feeding barley was a new experience for us, something that I have never had to do before. After a few challenges at the start with stock getting used to the different sort of feed, it turned out to be very successful in getting the grass to grow and maintaining stock at the same time. It was good that we started doing it early before it started getting wet, the barley was starting to get wasted in the mud and it became difficult to get the feed into the wet paddocks without making it dangerous for us. We have had to drop 2,000 stock units, so only have 9,000 on hand at present, that's 200 ewes, 1,200 hoggets and 150 cattle less than usual. This will have an impact on next year's income as well as the income we are down this year from the drought.

Over the last few weeks Casey and I have been catching up on repairs and maintenance around the farm. This includes 800 metres of new fence, replacing some that were past their best and fencing off some bush at the end of the lane. We have also been fixing holes in existing fences, straining some fences up and straightening some angles and strainers. We still have a way to go before we catch up on all the repairs that need doing, hopefully will have that sorted by Christmas

This coming week we are shearing 3,300 mixed age ewes with a cover comb which leaves a small amount of wool on them to keep them warm on these colder days. We do this at this time of year for a couple of reasons, firstly it increases the birth weight of lambs and hence their survival, and makes management of the ewes through lambing a lot easier with less wool on. On the 26th of July we are set to scan all ewes for lambs inside, this will be very interesting this year with the ewes having been feed barley while the ram was out. We usually scan in the high 160's so am thinking that we will be closer to 150% this year.

Two weeks ago we TB (tuberculosis) tested all cattle over one year of age on the farm, we again tested clear as most farms do around here so our TB status moves up to C9 which means we have been clear for nine years. We were C2 when we started on Pukekaka.

Last month I got a letter from Ovis Management which I quote;

".....Ovis Management Ltd is the meat industry organisation monitoring sheep measles in plants throughout New Zealand. Each season suppliers of lambs to meat companies lose thousands of dollars as a result of sheep measles infection. In addition, the presence of sheep measles cysts on lamb and sheep meats exported poses risks to markets. The national sheep measles database indicates that the prevalence of sheep measles in lambs you supplied for processing between 1

December 2012 and 31 March 2013 was 2.78%. This places you in the "High Prevalence" category. The national average for this period was 0.33%....".

For those few of you that bring dogs onto Pukekaka you need to understand that it places Pukekaka at risk if your dog's aren't dosed monthly for sheep measles and their food is either frozen or cooked for the appropriate length of time. Now that our prevalence is high it creates more work for me and we also have to get the local veterinarian involved at our cost to resolve the issue that we have.

At present Casey is on holiday in Hawaii, it will be a real shock coming home to these temperatures! Hopefully Maree and I will get away for a break later in the winter.

Hope all is well with you all.

Kind Regards

Rob