

Pukekaka Farm Managers Report - September 2015

Greetings

Spring is here and the days are warming up as we are coming out of a typical Taihape winter that was cold and wet. Going into the winter short of grass and the cold weather has meant it has been a long tough winter and feed has had to be rationed out. All stock have come through in good condition and yes our feed covers are still short but the grass is growing underneath them so we should be OK.

We scanned the ewes in July, the mixed age did 178%, 1% up on last year. The 2 tooth did 170% which is down 7%, mainly because we had the full 1600 2 tooth to the ram this year, last year we only put 600 to the ram so was a lot easier to flush the lesser number before the ram went out. The Hoggets scanned 115% which is the best we have ever done. Overall it was a pleasing result as the ewes and 2 tooth were lighter than previous years, the hoggets were the heaviest we have had, hence the best result.

We start lambing in earnest in a few days and there are already a few early lambs around and they are doing very well. The Heifers and Cows start calving in October. The ewes, cows and hoggets all give birth without any help from us, the first calving heifers get checked twice a day so we can help any if necessary. Nine years ago we had to help 30% of them to calve and now, after selecting the right bulls to get the easy calving genetics, we only need to help around 5% to calve.

We have a digger here at the moment fixing up a few tracks and pulling out an old totara post fence that is rotten so we can put up a new one, Jack and I have thumped half the posts in and hopefully will do the rest in the next few days. Our new grass will be sown in the next week or so in the paddocks that have been in crop for two winters, all part of the winter cropping, re-grassing program.

As every year goes by, Pukekaka infrastructure gets better and better, the fences and yards have been repaired or replaced, the yards concreted or metalled for all weather use, tracks tidied up, woolshed repaired and upgraded, laneway now completed to the back flats all making this a more efficient farm in all respects with less stress on stock and humans, although this is farming so not entirely without hard work and at times some stress.

Last month we did some soil tests as we do every three years, the Olsen Phosphate levels range from 9 to 26, up from 7 to 17 in August 2006. This is a result of regular maintenance fertiliser as well as some capital fertiliser in the early years. The better the fertility the more grass we grow and in general terms the shorter the winters, if we get summer rain.

Hope all is well with you and we look forward to seeing some of you at Pukekaka for this year's AGM on November 7th.

Kind Regards

Rob Stratton

Farm Manager