

Pukekaka Sheep and Beef Farm

Farm Managers Report

16 April 2014

Casey left us late last month and is now in Australia driving tractors, she is doing night shifts, 12 hours on 12 hours off so haven't heard much about how she is getting on. I advertised her job in the Farmers Weekly and had ten applicants, from these I interviewed four of them and have given the job to Jack Bendall. Jack is 20 years old and has been working on Otairi Station in Hunterville for the summer, he comes from the South Island and has a Diploma in Agriculture from Lincoln University. He will start some time later in May once he has given notice at his present job and visited his family down south.

This summer has again been rather challenging, not as bad as last year but dry enough to force us to sell all of our trading stock before the end of February. Two weeks ago we put our annual fertiliser on and with that we put on twenty units of nitrogen to kick start the grass when it does rain. In the last week we have had good rain and are now growing grass so no need to drop stock units or feed supplements this year.

As I said in my last report stock prices have been a lot better this year than last, we sold lambs for \$87 as opposed to the \$58 we got last year. Aside from the trading stock we bought in August and the lambs there hasn't been a lot else to sell as we built our stock numbers back up to where they were pre drought. We have kept more older ewes to make up for the hoggets that we didn't have last winter and had a lot less yearling cattle to sell as we sold most of them as weaners in the drought last year.

Last week we pregnancy tested the cows and heifers, the 18 months heifers had 2% dry and the cows 6.5% dry, the national average is 13% and 10% respectively so this is a very good result. We sold those dry cows on Monday for \$800, up from the \$670 we got last year, they were in better condition and prices are better as well.

The ram goes out in eight days time, feeding two weeks prior and ten days after the ram goes out as well as body condition at the time are the critical things to getting good conception. Now that the rain has come we have been able to feed those ewes better so hopefully our scanning should be a lot better than the 154% that we did last year. In 2012 we scanned 174% so somewhere in the high 160's would be good.

Keeping a good team of working dogs on a farm is always a challenge, their average working life is only about eight years and as the older ones get closer to retirement you have your younger ones coming on. Sometimes their life is cut short from accidents, being hung up in fences or injuries from cattle as both Casey and I have experienced. In the last two years Casey has had to put two young dogs down, one from being hung up in a fence and the other from bowel complications. Just last week a promising young huntaway of mine was diagnosed with congestive heart disease brought on from a virus, so at the age of three is confined to light duties and early retirement, very disappointing after spending many hours training him.

School holidays start this week so will be good to have Sam and James home to help me on the farm and Anna is still working in Brown Sugar during the holidays to help fund university. Maree has a part time job at Wild Roses in town and is enjoying that. Hope all is well with you all.

Kind Regards

Rob