

Hello from sunny West Otago after the best spring weather in my living memory. It was a pleasure to be out tagging stud lambs this year. It's a sad fact that sheep farmers face yet another breakeven year at best. Beef and some timber from woodlots look to be our only star performers this year.



**TOPICS TO BE COVERED:** ■ It's Not Just Performance ■ SIL ■ Wool ■ Dag Score ■ Ram Cards + BV's ■ Genetics for 2016-17 ■ New Clients

## IT'S NOT JUST PERFORMANCE

The genetic package you purchase when you select your rams, is not just about performance. There are many traits not measured on SIL, which have a real impact on your farms success.

### 1) Longevity

We keep our best ewes for up to 4 years past their first 5 years of production and that after lambing half them as hoggets. We don't run them separately, they must perform in the flock. This allows us to reduce the number of ewe hogget replacements we need to run, which improves our flock efficiency and profitability.

Last season I attended a local clearing sale with Perendale ewes being sold. I was staggered that there were even 4

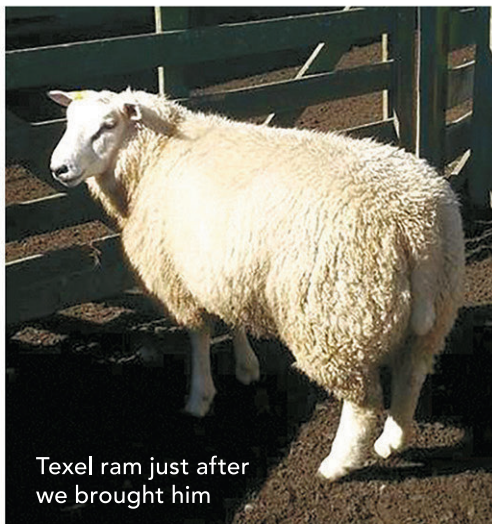
tooth ewes with failing mouths and it got worse for older lines of ewes.

Our most efficient sheep are over twice as productive as the least comparing kgs of lamb weaned per ewe.

The challenge is how we increase our selection pressure in flock sheep without the intensity of a stud operation. EID tags and scales are part of the equation. What we need is saliva test or something similar that would tell you if your twins or triplets were actually rearing all their lambs.

### 2) Udders and Structure

Even with keeping ewes for up to an extra 4 years I only culled 4 ewes for udder problems this lambing in our 750 stud ewes.



Texel ram just after we brought him

## SIL

Avalon has sold its half share of a Texel ram to one of NZ's biggest ram sellers. Avalon purchased a Texel ram highly ranked for fertility and growth traits. Unfortunately his progeny didn't grow and scoured so much we never used any progeny in our stud. In short, no growth, resistance and high day score.

This ram has been used by one major ram breeder in NZ by AI and has now been brought by a second large NZ franchise. He now appears in the front page of ACE terminal rams highlighting what he is capable of under a high input system which SIL has interpreted as his true genetic worth. His performance is totally driven by drench and other chemical inputs, without these his progeny ranked at the very bottom of 50 sires we have used over the last 2 years.

## WOOL

We are currently selling our organic wool through PGG Wrightsons. They have developed a Global Organic Textile Standard which our wool is marketed through and our wool is sold direct to an Austrian company, who process it in Romania. Our wool is ending up as high end rugs in European homes and business floors. This photo and article was in the PGGW annual report for 2016. Our son is James.



### Wool travels from the rolling hills of Otago to European markets

Alan Richardson is one of the New Zealand farmers who is supplying wool to TSCA via Bloch & Behrens

Alan farms 1300 hectares of rolling to steep Otago hill country that has been 100 percent organic since 1998. His farm supplied 20,000kg of certified organic wool to TSCA. The wool comes from the eight-month study from ewe fleeces which is in the 16-18 micron range. He supplied crossbred wool through Bloch & Behrens which is off the backs of his self-bred 'Ultimate' breed of sheep (a mix of Friesian and Fleisch), which he has developed over many years.

Alan said, "It takes a lot of work to achieve fully organic status, so it is very rewarding to see how the wool we supply ends up in consumer's hands as a finished product. We were delighted to see how well the GOTS certified rug was received by the market when it was launched at the Domotex Trade Fair in Germany in January."

Pelle Petersen said, "The wool used to manufacture the rug takes on a journey from the rolling hills of Otago, New Zealand to Romania for spinning and then hand-crafted into a high-end rug by TSCA in Romania."

"We are finding that end-use customers are more discerning about the wool journey. They want to know that the sheep are well treated and that they are using or wearing wool products that have followed an integrity journey throughout the entire supply chain. We now have these processes in place to ensure that New Zealand wool takes a journey of integrity and we are building a reputation for this. It is exciting to be able to have our wool being used and worn in the most discerning markets in the world."





## DAG SCORE

Cutting off dags is one of the least favoured jobs on a sheep farm and also a major cost. It has always been our focus to breed dag free sheep under the toughest conditions which exist on low input chemical farm. A daggy replacement ewe lamb may require up to 16 crutching's in her life time.

Avalon has two sheep on the ACE dag score front page, a Perendale and an Ultimate. Hopefully as we build up better links we will get onto some of the other trait lists that many people select their rams from.

## RAM CARDS AND BVS

Just to revise our ram cards and the info they contain, let's look at an example ram card for our Perendale Ram AV 214/12.

BVS are estimated breeding values of an animal based on individual traits which are recorded. They also take into account the performance of relatives to add accuracy to the predicted figures. For production traits positive numbers are better but for disease resistance and dag score negative is best.

### AVALON Genetics new zealand

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#### Individual Ram Record

SIL Flock ..... 845 - our Perendale SIL no

| Ram I.D.       | Sire                                | Dam                                   | Birth/Rear Rank                               | Dam Lambing History   |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| AV 214/12      | AV 240/10<br>Dad.                   | AE 1537/04<br>Mum                     | 2/2<br>born as / reared as<br>a twin / a twin | 122222212<br>- 9 lambings<br>- 16 live lambs<br>- outstanding longevity |
| Breeding Value |                                     | Performance Index's                   |   |   |
| No. Lambs Born | 0.040                               | → Up 4% in fertility                  |   |   |
| Weaning Weight | 1.50                                | → Up 1.5 kg in weaning weight.        |   |   |
| Autumn Weight  | 3.64                                | → Up 3.64 kg in autumn weight (March) |   |   |
| Meat Yield     | 1.13                                | → Up 1.13 CM in meat yield.           |   |   |
| Fleece Weight  | 0.16                                | → Up 160g in wool                     | Index   | Rank  |
| Adult FEC      | -25.81                              | → -25% less worms                     | 1371  | Value   |
| Dag Score      | 0.36                                | → up 36% in days                      | 229   |   |
| Survival       | 0.037                               | → +ve is no favourable                | 1600  |   |
|                | -up 3.7% in survival, our best sire | Overall                               | 3/50  | \$16.00   |
|                |                                     |                                       | 50 sires tested                               | \$16 of genetic value from this farm.                                   |

## GENETICS FOR 2016-17

We have a strong line up of Perendale, Texel, Texel x Perendale and Ultimate rams for this season.

Prices remain the same as last year in what looks another breakeven year at best for farmers.

We enclose our ram order form for the 2016-17 season and hope we can continue working with you.

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## NEW CLIENTS

We have had some good reports coming from new clients around the country.

Last season was one of the toughest for facial eczema in NZ and we had some Ultimate rams perform without any susceptibility to facial eczema in a Taranaki hot zone for F.E.



Regards,  
Allan & Sonia