



# One Stop Ram Shop

INTERNATIONAL  
NEWSLETTER No. 61  
January 2007



Haast river with a school of sharks? 5-10-06.



Ram 4U quietly drove into a farmer's garage at Haka; not a scratch. South Canterbury, Oct 2006.

## TWO TOOTH RAMS ARE STILL AVAILABLE AT OSRS.

Reasonable numbers of most genotypes are still available for purchase at one site on each Island. Anybody requiring rams is still sure of a good selection although some lines are sold-out.

Farmers appreciated the great number of stabilised crossbred rams marketed this season. Pricing and selection, based upon a SIL ranking for any genotype, made farmer selection so much easier and no 'fuss'. OSRS ram sales usually cease about May each season. Staff and rams enjoyed a Xmas/New Year break after months of intensive activity for man and stock. TMG is moving surplus ewe lambs between farms now.



Tailing. Gavin Landreth has exceptional Finn Texel sheep. Owaka. Otago 12-10-06.



New gates signs for the Openday. OSRS West. 28-10-06.



Philip and Robyn Holt, their sons and Colin Burlace discuss Texel-Suffolk rams which are used on the Holt farms at Napier and Tutira. OSRS Hawke's Bay Openday, 7-11-06.



Phil and Trudi Blair from Ohoi with Robin in Colin's magnificent new facility. OSRS South. Openday, 10-11-06.

**Ron Frew**, is a candidate for the Western N I ward, in the February 2007 election for a seat on the Meat and Wool NZ Board.

Ron is an ideal candidate being a pastoralist and vegetable grower, who is totally committed to the principle of the family farm.

Please vote for **Ron Frew** who has the experience and personal integrity to make an excellent representative. I thoroughly endorse Ron. Robin Hilson, OSRS.



## THEY SAID -----

"Hi Robin. Lambs are looking really good despite the awful spring.

1<sup>st</sup> draft (mostly singles) 15 weeks old, 18.4 kg cw.

2<sup>nd</sup> draft (twins + triplets) 16 weeks old, 19.2kg cw.

3<sup>rd</sup> draft 17 weeks old, 17.3 kg cw.

Also, weaned at first draft, so second draft a week later had been weaned. They all look alike as well, so very neat and tidy! Cheers Alison Ritchie.

ps. 158% lambs to sale from ewes mated.

*Onga Onga, 19-1-07  
Ewes. Ultimately Finn-Textel.*

"Hi Robin, We have just reviewed some of our rams post-docking the hoggets. They came in at 100% hogget lambs docked and 82% hoggets mated. Most losses were from dystokia. This year we were able to pin it down as we did not have the losses due to weather. We have two "—" rams and most of the losses were white-faced lambs. We think we can do better. The "—" rams are out. We would like to up our order of rams by two making it four Texel Suffolks please if it is not too late?"

*Maria Lupton, Otangiwai, KC. 15-11-06.  
Texel Suffolks give trouble free hogget lambing.*

"Hi Robin, We purchased some Finn-Textel ewes off you 18 months ago and since then you have sent us your newsletter. We thoroughly enjoy it and would hate to miss receiving it. We have finally moved onto our block of land so could you please alter your records."

*Gordon & Wendy, Carterton. Wairarapa.  
Certainly.*

"Robin, Thanks for the note and newsletters which are getting broader! They may develop a **cult** following! Keep in mind what James Joyce said 'you have to question your own disbelief' or David Byrne (Talking Heads) 'watch out or you might get what you're after'. I'm sure there is a Buddhist quote applicable. Don't be too hard on Clarke, she's a great politician even though she only smiles with her teeth"

*Ken, Nelson.  
Notes like this are stimulating.*

"Hi Robin, thought you may be interested in my results for 2006 lambing. 1444 ewes to the ram; 2110 lambs docked – 146%. I'm very happy, best ever percentage—finally broken through the 135% barrier! Lambs looking bright and doing well".

*David Darby, Porangahau, 22-11-06.  
Surplus ewe hoggets, TMG sold to Springfield, Canterbury. They became outstanding 2ths.*



*Peter Stace moving Finn Textel ewes. Resilient sheep.  
Brookby, Marlborough. 20-10-06.*



Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association (ISCA) visitors photographed at OSRS (above) in September 2006. Here are excerpts from their publication 'Drystock Farm' about NZ farmers. "NZ farmers are committed to production of animals that are trouble free, eat less and produce more. ISCA met with Robin Hilson who created One Stop Ram Shop in Hawke's Bay. He breeds a variety of rams for specific performance and production purposes. Robin is in no way wedded to the purebred philosophy or even crossbreeding. His rams are almost all composites of two or three breeds, tailor made for specific purposes and environments".

"They (farmers) are commercially driven and less class conscious than their Irish counterparts tend to be. Although they pay great attention to detail, particularly their breeding programme, their ethos is more about kilos per hectare than rosettes in the show ring"

*Interesting observations from one of the best international groups to visit. Super people.*

"Thank you so much for the lovely bowl, it will look stunning in my new house. I went hunting back through the records when Murray said we had been buying rams from you for 15 years. The first we got was a Texel in December 1992 for \$1200. How time flies!

*Diane, Dannevirke. Nov 2006.  
Longstanding clients have been receiving a gift made by Neudorf Pottery, Nelson*



*Spring, Blair and Sarah Gallagher used Finn Textel rams across perendales with a marvellous result. **Best is still to come.***

*Mt Somers, Ashburton. 20-10-06.*



*Argyle Station cattle fattening pad. A large property which is being transformed thoughtfully. Waikaia, Southland. 10-10-06.*



## ETHICAL FOOD

**Ethical food:** offers 'hope' to save the environment.

- Organic food.
- Fair-trade food.
- Local food

Organic food is environmentally friendly as it relies on crop rotation, manuring, composting and is not intensive. However; to produce the world's current output, rain-forests would be lost forever.

Fair-trade food raises poor farmer's incomes. An 'extra' charge on food goes to the producer. Already most fair-trade products are in oversupply. So the fair-trade producer is encouraged to grow more. In fact, retailers keep most of the 'extra'. Customers 'feel' good.

Local food minimizes food miles and therefore pollution of transport. NZ lamb uses ¼ of the energy needed to produce UK lamb. Food miles theory does not stand scrutiny.

What is needed is Government action; reform of world trade, abolished agricultural tariffs and subsidies. Free trade **would** help poor farmers. If the ethical food movement grows, governments will endorse the aims in political agendas and receive votes for doing so, then trade reform will ensue.

*eg, Global warming is talked about by governments worldwide. People pushed politicians.*



Spring. Outstanding Finn Texel/Merino hoggets with lambs. Sheep with ideal conformation and intelligence.

*Mt Pisa Station. Central Otago. 5-10-06.*

### ARE FARMERS 'REALLY' RETURNING TO TRADITIONAL RAMS?

Yes, where they have reached undesirable levels of performance with some of the '**named**' **composites**, too much East Friesian, Finn or where management has not adjusted to the extra production.

About **2%** of OSRS clients have changed **back**, whilst **15-20%** annually are buying **stabilised crossbreeds** for the first time. Sales growth has also come from farmers returning to OSRS rams after using 'named' breeds for a year or two.

OSRS realised a decade ago that farmers would achieve their 'ideal' scanning objective, (ie, fertility levels) so choose growth rate and survival the two selection priorities.

Stabilised flocks, both traditionally and DNA recorded, use the SIL genetic engine for progress. Experienced staff and 'common sense' selection practices keep OSRS stock at the forefront of NZ ram breeding.

### 'ROBIN, ARE YOU STILL A WRITER?'

This question was asked of me when I was photographing Alastair's finish at La Paz.

I turned and recognised a Mexican I had haltingly spoken to in May during the Baja 500. We had shared some cactus shade way out in the desert, of north Baja. We talked as bikes tore past, but his English was insufficient to understand that I was a farmer. He asked if I was a writer because I had a pen and trusty Warwick 8B4 exercise book. I replied 'yes I do a little'. This he obviously understood.

Here he was, at La Paz-1600 kms away. He recognised me, remembered my name and addressed me with thousands of people around. He had travelled down to see the race finish.

*Fancy remembering my name and person after all those months. Mexico is a wonderful place. Mexicans are really pleasant, friendly people.*

**Jon Morgan** (Farming Editor, Dominion Post) writes like no other agricultural reporter. His continually excellent articles about individual farmers gets to the core of the subject's philosophy and why that person is of interest. His article on Alec Olsen (Jan 11) is journalistic excellence, informative, inquisitive, accurate and tolerant of his subject's views. *Alec uses OSRS rams on his HB farm*

### ASSET EROSION

"Great chunks of WEL assets have been flogged off during the past three years and now there is only one product left – Keratec" John Stirling. FW 27-11-06.

Old Wool Board assets were combined into WEL as nobody wished to sell them off and return money to farmers. WEL has done so; with-out returning anything to farmers. What an appalling Board this has been. The group of wise males were rewarded well financially, but failed commercially and throughout the three years only informed stakeholders of 'sell off's' after the event.

#### Failure; all predictable.

In December, serious opposition to WEL arrived, as belatedly stakeholders realised how few assets remain. Nothing could have been effectively challenged before but it is almost too late. People whom farmers know have put their names forward as director candidates for a new WEL Board, (Dec 2006).

At present, Karios Holdings (Bio Pacific Partners) another equity fund, has bought a 17.03% stake in WEL. Directors Marshall and Henry along with beleaguered chairman Bently are standing down "to reflect the new ownership of WEL". This hasty retreat will allow two Karios directors to join the board, along with a new independent director, Keith Sutton (what qualification?)

#### Good luck WEL; the fun may soon be starting.

: For a few million dollars an Equity fund may be well-positioned to utilize \$300m in tax losses accumulated by NZ Wool Board over decades.

: What an extraordinary action by Pederson and Carter (Fed Farmers) to announce that FF will remain "neutral" about this issue. True leadership takes a stance, gives an opinion. **How feeble!**



## BAJA 1000

### (1048 MLS;1678 KMS; THE LENGTH OF NZ) NOV 15-18, 2006.

- Baja had been trashed by a hurricane and floods. (Sept). Repairs to the wrecked course were completed just on time.
- Although destruction was everywhere and the course so overwhelmed, the rains turned deserts into vibrant wonderlands.
- Intense interest and support was shown by all Mexicans.
- Honda pit stops (19) fuelled and oiled vehicles. Wheels were replaced at prearranged pits. Pits keep radio contact with controllers. Personnel were supportive of weary riders.
- 412 machines entered, 214 finished.
- Completion relied upon four factors of equal importance.
  - a) Support crews-'chasers' and organisation.
  - b) Rider skill, experience and 'pre run' knowledge.
  - c) Machine. 650 Honda and GPS (safety)
  - d) Luck.
- Ursula drove the 'chaser', with spares and food, to six stops with few breaks and no sleep. 1676 kms. A huge feat.
 

**Robin kept talking.**
- At night some roads were shared with racers. Chasers were almost as crazy as trucks/'monsters'.
- Alastair was third amateur, (17 professionals) in a class of 49. Race time 32.53 hrs at 51.5 kms/hour.
 

**He is a super fit, enduro athlete.**
- Robin and Joy visited US and Mexico from 14-22 Nov, their busiest time of year. They travelled 52,000 kms but did not buy any carbon credits to cover the trip's CO2 emissions.
- Entry to US was delayed seriously twice, resulting in a mad scramble for planes because Robin looked like a wanted terrorist who had a similar passport number.
- LA Paz's most prominent restaurant is the 'Kiwi'. No kiwi meat on the menu, only kiwi cream soup.



1 Cleaning the 'chaser' truck.



2 Designs of street plastic. Ensenada.



6 La Bay. 8 hour drive. Signs for racers. 603 kms. Very Hot.



7 30 minute stop. Feed, drink. Lights on bike. Clean up.



11 Alastair ok. Night rides are most enjoyable.



12 Cool. Riders are visible. 40 min stop. Noisy, spectacular.



16 Loreto. Made it. Luck. A loose axle. Racing time lost. 1243 kms.



17 Rest, repair bike. Racer; tired but ok. 7am. Everybody cheerful. No Sleep.



21 Santa Rita. Tension. Honda fuel pit shutting. 1508 kms. Tough section next.



22 LaPaz, Finish. 1678 kms. Adoring crowd. Elated support crew. Go Kiwi!





3 Official vehicle check. Anxiety, organised mayhem. Ensenada.



4 4.30am Chasers leaving the racer who started at 7.30 am.



5 Typical Baja. Rocks, sand, cactus.



8 Away. Service truck, with all mod-cons, 12 staff, all for a truck racer.



9 Abreojos. 4 hours fast drive. 10pm. 856kms, travelled. All is well.



10 White Bridge. Dust everywhere. 2am. 1158 kms. Spectacular.



13 Dawn. Loreto lights. 4am.



14 Loreto. Racing truck-coming. 6 am 1243 kms.



15 Screaming, dusty truck-gone. All Loreto watching. Clean camera again!



18 No place to kiss; too much armour.



19 Insurgentes. 1368kms. Hot, weary. Blazing sun.



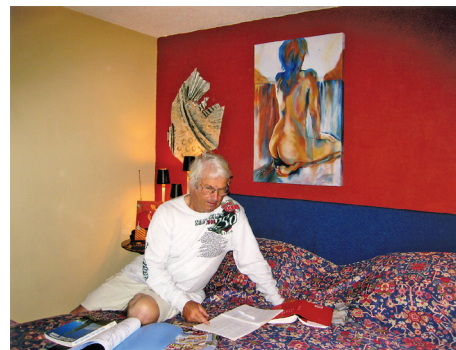
20 They race over sand flats and volcanic mountains, like Ruapehu.



23 Tired, elated. Interviewed for US audiences. Worth the effort.



24 Kiwi bird (*Apteryx joyii*). Kiwi restaurant; La Paz. How odd!



25 Accomodation 18-20 Nov. The owner painted nudes. Robin wrote notes.



## RESEARCH FUNDING

Agricultural productivity has risen 4% per annum (rest of NZ 1.5%) over the last 20 years. National Bank have listed eight factors which created these gains but missed a major one, ie **climate** has **worked for agriculture**. The bank was right about genetic improvement but this was largely the new-breed **crossbreeding initiated by OSRS**.

John Lancaster(Pres NZ Institute of Ag & Hort Science), said six of the eight points resulted largely from research.

*Maybe: but only the two factors above (ie, genetics and climate.) increased the production significantly NZ wide and initiated the 4% growth.*

Dick Davidson: the newest Ag Research director. "I do not think that there have been much exciting breakthroughs in the last 15 to 20 years" R N. 19-12-06.

*Correct: Masses of research paid for by levies has been useless. eg. WRONZ created ways in which dag wool could be utilised in wool blends which effectively allowed processors to use less high quality fleece wool; the only wool which returned any good money to the farmer.*

*Somehow the number of scientists employed was more important than the quality or usefulness of the research undertaken.*

If Meat & Wool NZ cuts funding it is probably due to the result of scrutinising the quality of the projects.

M&W NZ is providing expanded information through its colourful website [help@meatandwoolnz.com](mailto:help@meatandwoolnz.com) and by regular spreads in the Farmers Weekly. Farmers will be better informed of board activities. A list of research projects shows where the \$10.27million in funding is to be spent this financial year.

M&W NZ annually gives \$7 million to Ovita which props up biotechnological science.

*Does the expenditure of \$17.27 million on R&D give financial benefit to stakeholders? Up to \$40 million maybe collected annually by levies (taxes).*

**Benefit may come from the R&D but what return do stakeholders get from the rest of this huge tax take?**



Elite, 1/4Finn, 1/4Texel, 1/2 Perendale rams for Howard and Helen Boyd. Quality sheep for Mossburn, Southland.



Drying washing in RAM 4U. Air and sun blasted. It works well.

Otago, Oct 2006.

Amberley A&P Show. Dorper/Texel X Romney lambs won the 'Pen of three prime Lambs' class. OSRS sold the sire to the Hawarden breeder. Nov, 2006.

*Excellent lambs, so thought the breeder and judges.*

## CLIMATE CHANGE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HAZARD FOR LIFE ON EARTH. ONLY MAN-MADE POLLUTION IS NEW.

Dr Gavin Kenny is a climate change scientist. Affable Gavin visited OSRS when collecting information for a report about change in HB and how to adapt in Eastern NZ.

His message "to farmers and growers is (that) even if you don't agree with what you are hearing about climate change, there is a lot of benefits to being smart and doing things anyway". NZ FW, 20-11-06

NZ is getting warmer and colder, at times.

In July 06 the NZ Climate Science Coalition (NZCSC) asked MPs to officially investigate climate change. "They believe the public is being given incomplete, inaccurate and biased information about greenhouse gases in the atmosphere .

Niwa's data showed little evidence of warming and no evidence humans are affecting temperature".

Dom Post

According to records, NZ may be **no** warmer now **than in 1800**; there has been no significant warming in 50 years. eg. Christchurch temperatures peaked in 1915; this was higher than 1996. 1925 to 1955 it was cool. **Overall, no change since 1905.**

Wellington peaked in 1918 and 1922. 1925 to 1955 it was cool. **Overall, no change since 1880.**

This contradiction between records and claims by the government that there is sufficient evidence of warming to justify limiting CO2 emissions **needs** an enquiry.

As recently as 1976 Callaghan's Government looked at easing UK's acute lack of water by barging water from Scandinavia. Planning was advanced when it **rained and rained and rained.**

"One of the coldest Decembers in 60 years is evidence there is no global warming in NZ." NZCSC. **OSRS agrees. Another millenium bug?**



Los Angeles prices for lamb meat.	16-12-06.
Belsons; Boneless lamb	NZ \$30.09/kg.
Shanks	NZ \$22.61/kg.
Ralphs; Loin Chops	NZ \$47.00/kg.
Rib Chops	NZ \$53.00/kg.

## GENE MARKER TECHNOLOGY

Speeding up the rate of selection for economic sheep traits using biotechnology is excellent as long as uneconomic traits don't come with the package. Good information continues to come out of research. All gene marker technology now available comes with 'baggage' as it is not genetically engineered. All markers are breed related.

It is possible to have designer sheep with the  
 Boorola gene, (fertility and Merino baggage)  
 Loin max, (extra eye muscle volume and Dorset baggage)  
 Inverdale gene, (fertility and Romney baggage)  
 MyoMAX gene, (leanness, meatiness and Texel baggage)  
 Wishart gene, (fertility and Romney baggage)  
 Survival gene, (Survival and ...? baggage).

### What a ewe it would be!

A double copy of markers will be ideal in many crosses (eg, Myo gene) but be disastrous in others (ie, Inverdale), when ewes would be infertile.

To date the gains made by this marker research is interesting but of **little national significance**. Some farmer gain; but most could have been achieved by simple crossbreeding and breed stabilisation. **So much easier: Finn, Texel with a dash of NZ white-face.** No meat processor is paying extra for the quality end-product yet!

The greatest need for agricultural research, at a national level, is to find markers which will allow ewes to be tolerant to facial eczema (FE). The answer to this ghastly disease will be found in Finn sheep or flocks already showing tolerance. TMG/OSRS has found evidence of FE in sheep from West Otago and Southland. As the climate warms, FE spreads.

**Do the Mainland (SI) biotechnology researchers appreciate the seriousness of FE?**



Another OSRS fence smashed, SH2. Three more in January.

## FIVE LINERS

- A quad driven for one hour approaches the ISO levels of maximum vibration, after which the spine vibrates (out of control) as the body cannot absorb the low frequency movement. *Problems ahead.*
  - Possums may be useful! Prostate glands in humans grow after 40 years and often cause trouble by age 60. Possum prostates grow during mating, then shrink. The trigger to this could help humans. *Possums need not **all** go back to Australia, yet.*
  - Each OSRS selling site has enjoyed farmers bringing trailers to ram selection:- fewer rams held around awaiting trucking delights everyone.
  - For years many rural people have waved to RAM 4U in the backblocks; they still do. A very SI habit. *Why?*
  - Rural villages are looking spruce everywhere; especially the tiny ones eg; Tokanui, Lumsden, Urenui, Whataroa. *More paint, more hospitality, more pride.*
  - NZ Food Industry: 30,000 business's; 590,000 people employed; 23% of NZ's GNP (\$31 billion); 53% of NZ's exports (\$18.6 billion.)
  - Processing companies talked down the schedule price for new season's lamb almost before they were conceived. It is hard for farmers to listen to these annual predictions (threats). **Farmers are price takers.**
  - Dioxin; Farmers have been drenched by dioxin sprays for years. Science has found no ill effects except a dose of acne. Dom-Post Science report, Jan 2007.
  - NZ Government workers spend more than 35,000 hours per year on Trade Me. Dom-Post report.
- Won't anybody bid on our politicians?**
- Britain has paid the final instalment (of 50) of £3.8b to US and £1 b to Canada for WW II debt. *Who pays for the Iraqi war? Cost, US \$1 Trillion so far.*
  - UK Government has bought 255,000 tonnes of carbon credits (at £9.76/tonne) to offset environment damage by top politicians jetting worldwide 2007-2009. *Much better to leave the politicians at home; save the planet, save the taxpayers, save the audiences.*
  - Earthquake prediction. Behavioural changes in snakes accurately indicate imminent tectonic activity, giving up to five days warning. Snakes get frantic and leave buildings even when hibernating. China Daily. *NZ needs a Ministry of snakes, for shakes.*
  - 2006. 13,915 Australians settled in NZ and 19,003 NZers moved to Australia permanently.

<b>ROBIN HILSON</b>	<b>06 8558 335</b>
<b>COLIN MCDONALD</b>	<b>03 2468 475</b>
<b>DON BUCHANAN</b>	<b>07 8966 845</b>
<b>DAN WHEELER</b>	<b>0274 363 167</b>
<b>PETER KETTLE</b>	<b>0274 839 595</b>





Texel ewes and lambs. Born late September. Tarata, Dec 2006.



Finn Texel ewes and lambs. Easy to farm, tough sheep. Tarata, Dec 2006.



Texel Suffolk lambs. August born. Rams used NZ wide. Burnside, Dec 2006.



Karl Hamilton with 'slinky's'. Lambing losses were minimal. Becks, Otago.



Tarata. Awful spring. Stock health good. Short grass for cows with calves.



Productive Finn Texels. Ewes scan around 200% and have one killable lamb, at least, by weaning. Gavin and Jane Petterson. Takaka, Oct 2006.



A photo to celebrate USA's 300 millionth citizen. The small feet were made for walking; the big ones **cannot**; a cost of lifestyle.



Auckland, airport security. The arrow highlights an 'article' on the road at the security point, totally ignored. 14 Nov.

## PREDICTIONS

- OSRS stabilised rams will steadily replace traditional sheep.
- Dry autumn and winter.
- More Wool Equities directors will go.
- Visits by 'aging' rockers.
- Lamb 'Oscars' will attract widespread interest.
- Kate Middleton watching is coming your way, (Prince William's friend).



Green and lush. Not NZ, but Baja desert after rain, a rare sight.



Xmas Dorper lamb. Charlotte and Lucy Tucker adored Grandad's lambs and visited them whenever possible. OSRS, 28 Dec 2006.



Productivity in a beautiful setting. Finn Texels at Collingwood catch many a tourist camera. Len Win, Nelson. Oct, 06.

## 16 MONTHS OF DORPER LAMBING AT OSRS

Birth Date	Wean Date	Age Days	Wean Weight	Growth Gms/day
1-5-05	5-9-05	96	33.9	311
25-8-05	04-12-05	101	36.5	322
4-11-05	10-02-06	98	35.1	317
17-01-06	10-04-06	83	25.2	255 X#
03-04-06	25-07-06	113	28.4	216
12-06-06	12-09-06	92	24.3	221 ##
25-08-06	6-12-06	103	34.3	294 XX

- **X** These ewes lambed 120%; remated after 6 weeks.
- **#** All lactating ewes suffered ryegrass staggers.
- **##** Cold, wet conditions.
- **XX** Same ewes as **X**, 160% tailed.
- Ewes are lambing 1.7 times per year. 145% lambs tailed.
- All lambs were killable at weaning on four occasions.
- For 3 lambings the weather was wet and atrocious.
- Figures are averages. Weights are kgs. Birth weight average 4 kgs.