



## THINK FINN!

### Finn cross ewes:

- Don't have bearings (except an odd one).
- Have some natural facial eczema tolerance (clinical FE has been identified at Tapanui).
- Don't need flushing.
- Perform predictably.
- Produce few triplets (less than Coopworths).
- Carcasses yield well.
- Finn is the most used sheep breed in the world.
- Produces milk high in protein.
- Please the bank manager.



$\frac{1}{4}$  Finn  $\frac{1}{4}$  Texel  $\frac{1}{2}$  Perendale



This report is based upon a scientific paper presented in 1988 by Dr R L Baker,  
Ruakura, NZ

## Abstract

Highly prolific Finnish Landrace (Finn) sheep have been exported successfully to over forty countries to improve reproductive performance. Heterosis for litter size has been low to negligible. Finncross lambs have been lighter at birth than local breeds, but weights at weaning and later, are similar. Quality, weight and composition of cross breed carcass has not differed.

Finn cross carcasses have more kidney fat and less subcutaneous fat than local breeds. Crosses have 5-10% less fleece weight. Finn cross wool has similar, or better, processing qualities. Finn cross sheep have superior longevity, reproductivity and economic efficiency.

## Finn Reproduction

Finn cross ewes had superior reproductive performance in UK and Europe (by 25%); in NZ, RSA, USA (70% to 100%). Heterosis helped this result.

Lamb survival and weight of lambs weaned increased in Finn cross ewes.

## Early sexual maturity

Purebred Finns and crosses mature early. Finn crosses had superior fertility, litter size and net production. Rams mature early and exhibit high libido. Finn ram semen is of similar quality to local breeds but is viable over a longer season.

## Growth and carcass traits

Traditional breeds 'look' better than pure Finns. In NZ, at One Stop Ram Shop, 26 years of selection for improved conformation and growth rate has produced pure Finns which are visually attractive. Finn cross birth weight is 10-20% lower than home breeds. Weaning weights and daily weight gains are similar. The percentage of kidney fat increased as the percentage of Finn increased. Finn cross carcasses are subcutaneously lean; as lean as Texels.

## Wool Production

Pure Finn ewes average 2.8 kgs of greasy wool of 25-28 microns. Wool has a longer staple (than other breeds), is semi-lustrous, silky and soft handling. It is ideal for home spinning. Crossbred micron falls slightly when compared with that of a coarse woolled dam. Processed Finn cross wool showed no negative traits. Several trials drew parallels with Merino wool but with less shrinkage and breakage. All this was confirmed by NZ wool processors.

## Lifetime Production and longevity

In US, crossbreed longevity was better than that of purebreds. No breed effects for parasite loads, footrot or foot soundness have been found. Six reproductive years is typical for Finn cross ewes.

Total value for lifetime production:  $\frac{1}{4}$  Finn cross ewes; 18% gain over purebreds and  $\frac{1}{2}$  Finn cross ewes; 29% gain over purebreds.

## Economic productivity or efficiency

$\frac{1}{4}$  Finn ewes have consistently outproduced local breeds by 14% (range 9-18%)

$\frac{1}{2}$  Finn ewes have also outproduced local breeds by 25% (range 20-40%). This result improves when expressed in terms of ewe weight.

In NZ,  $\frac{1}{4}$  Finn ewes' gross revenue had a 41% advantage over Romney;  $\frac{1}{2}$  Finn gross revenue had a 55% advantage over Romney.

Initial heterosis is partially lost in subsequent generations but by using performance recording there is increased productivity (One Stop Ram Shop has performance recorded for 40+ years).

Worldwide, many new breeds have been produced which utilize Finn genetics. One Stop Ram Shop has a number of breeds with fixed proportions of Finn, Texel and local breeds. These new breeds have been stabilised and performance recorded for the last two decades. A scientist selected two groups of Finns for NZ, (1985), which differed genetically. One group had been selected for size and growth rate which averaged 2.6 lambs per lambing; the other was selected for fertility and averaged 3.5 lambs per lambing.

Both these two groups are represented in the One Stop Ram Shop Finn flock.

## The 'Finn effect'

In 1988, the NZ national lambing percentage was 99%; now, 2011 the average national lambing percentage is 120%.

Finn genetics do not give masses of triplets to crossbreds, just improved twinning.

$\frac{1}{2}$  Finn ewes typically produce 15% Single 70% Twins 15% Triplets. (Booroola; 32% Single 37% Twins 31% Triplets).

At One Stop Ram Shop as a breed stabilised the number of triplets born remained constant (and 'acceptable'), while more lambs were weaned and survival improved.

Finn cross ewes have only the occasional bearing, if any.

Finn cross ewes do not need 'flushing' before mating.

Finn cross ewes have an extended mating season.

## Dr. Baker's conclusion

"... a small percentage of Finn genetics ( $1/8$  to  $1/2$ ) can be fitted into most management systems in temperate countries to give an increase in productivity and net income."

## Robin Hilson's conclusion

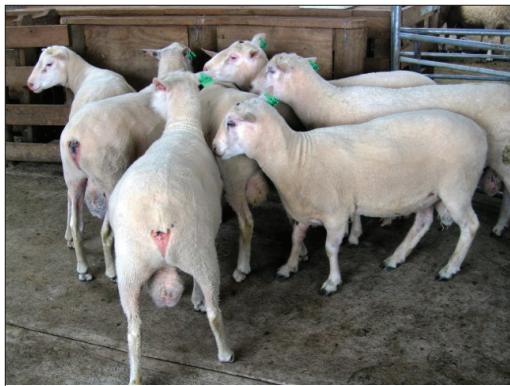
He has observed Finns in Finland, RSA, Australia and NZ.

Finn sheep are tough, long-lived and tolerate dry conditions. They are multiple sucklers; feeding any lamb if they themselves have the milk. Finn sheep are intelligent and wonderful mothers.

The Finn breed offers the greatest lift in productivity (and therefore money in the pocket) of any breed observed internationally (by him).

NZ farmers have yet to see the potential of Finnsheep realised.

Since the Finn was released to NZ farmers in 1990, breeds with Finn and Texel blood make up **30% of the NZ maternal breeding flock.**



18 months old Finn Rams



Finn Ewes



Finn lambs



Finn Texel



$\frac{1}{4}$  Finn  $\frac{1}{4}$  Texel  $\frac{1}{2}$  Romney



$\frac{3}{8}$  FINN  $\frac{3}{8}$  TEXEL  $\frac{1}{4}$  ROMNEY



## FINNISH LANDRACE

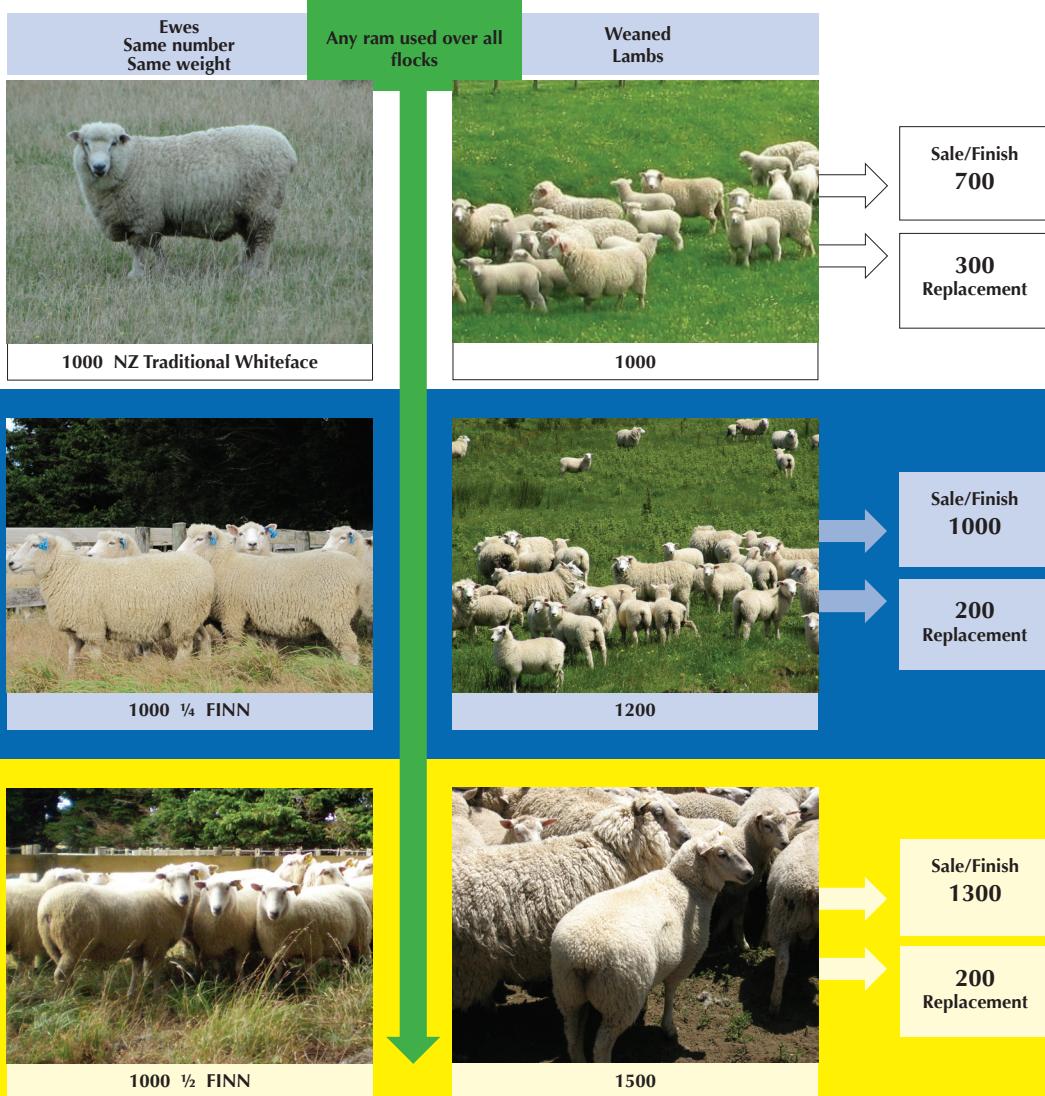
### Key Points

|  | <b>FINN</b>   | <b>1/2 FINN</b>   | <b>1/4 FINN</b>  |
|--|---|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No sleepy sickness</li> <li>• No bearings</li> <li>• Very productive</li> <li>• Lambs heavier than they look</li> <li>• Hardy</li> <li>• High protein milk</li> <li>• Facial eczema tolerance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No sleepy sickness</li> <li>• Very few bearings</li> <li>• 'Coopworth' look</li> <li>• 20-50% more lambs</li> <li>• Lambs heavier than they look</li> <li>• Tough</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No sleepy sickness</li> <li>• Few if any bearings</li> <li>• Looks like homebred dam</li> <li>• 16-20% extra weaned lambs</li> <li>• Lambs heavier than they look</li> <li>• Tough</li> </ul> |

|  |          |           |            |
|--|----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Birth weight (kg)</b>                 | 2,5 to 3 | 3 to 4    | 3,5        |
| <b>Growth to weaning (g/day)</b>         | 250      | 250       | 250 to 300 |
| <b>Autumn Jan-Mar (g/day)</b>            | 120-150  | 150-200   | 150-200    |
| <b>Weaning weight (kg)</b>               | 24 to 30 | 25 to 32  | 26 to 34   |
| <b>Wool weight (kg/year)</b>             | 2,5 to 3 | 5         | 5          |
| <b>Micron (<math>\mu</math>)</b>         | 26 to 29 | 34 to 36  | 32         |
| <b>Hogget weight 7-8 months (kg)</b>     | 34-40    | 34-40     | 40-50      |
| <b>Hogget weight September (kg)</b>      | 45       | 45        | 50         |
| <b>2th weight for tupping (Kg)</b>       | 55       | 55-60     | 57-62      |
| <b>Average mixed age ewe weight (kg)</b> | 55 to 70 | 60 to 70+ | 65 to 70   |
| <b>Weaning number killable (%)</b>       | 40       | 100       | 100        |
| <b>Longevity (years)</b>                 | +1       | +1        | +1         |
| <b>Number of female culled (%)</b>       | 10       | 10        | 10         |



## What a difference Finn genetics make



Pure Finn Ram x NZ Whiteface = Ewes (FR) 30-50% more lambs  
Half Finn Ram x NZ Whiteface = Ewes (¼ F ¼ R) 16-20% more lambs



## No Bullshit, No Lies

This story discusses thoughts on hoggets and lambing over a period of 30 years and the changes that have come about during that time.

Over the years Sue and I have had several different breeds of sheep, all bringing good and bad traits – lots of lambs; good and poor constitution; good and poor udders; and bearings. Fix one problem, get another. Sound familiar? Bearings were a big problem so we went to see Robin at a field day where he tried to talk me into  $\frac{1}{2}$  Texel  $\frac{1}{2}$  Finn. However, being a little bit traditional I decided on the  $\frac{1}{4}$  Texel  $\frac{1}{4}$  Finn  $\frac{1}{2}$  Perendale. After seven years we now have a mob of ewes that have no udder problems, good constitution, and very few bearings no matter how well they are fed (I like fat sheep!). We had 171% lambing this year to the ram with these ewes – no scanning, no costly drugs – just a four-in-one and a dip.

Our ewes are **stabilised  $\frac{1}{4}$  Finn  $\frac{1}{4}$  Texel  $\frac{1}{2}$  Perendale**.

So what do we do now compared to 30 years ago? No electric fencing except for break-feeding, lambing later in the year to suit grass growth, and a better cattle to sheep ratio. Cattle go on to crop from August to the end of October. This gives the sheep more scope, less pressure, less bugs, and consequently no drugs and an easier lambing.

A point I must make, is that our ewe weight has come down about 20kgs which makes them easier to feed. This has not affected lamb weights. We have been lambing hoggets for about 20 years. At the start they were extras but with better breeding this has improved. Without doing anything fancy, (using 3 teasers for 700 hoggets) we got 595 hoggets in lamb and 535 lambs tailed for 2011. The weather did affect this number as we had six inches of snow at the end of the year.

This year we are putting seven Dorper rams across 900 hoggets on the 20th of May. Tightening up the feed for one week before and two weeks after this date will result in smaller lambs at birth but no fewer numbers. They will be set-stocked at the same time as the ewes on just a nibble of grass, given a five-in-one and Cydectin ten days before lambing. We do work with our hoggets at lambing, taking twins off the poorer hoggets and mothering them on. This has resulted on a more even line of lambs and better hoggets.

After trying several breeds or rams with the hoggets we have decided on the Dorper. Lambs have a low birth weight but they grow into little bricks. This has turned into a bigger part of our farming operation and no longer seen as an extra.

In summary, I believe in the old saying “Keeping things simple”.

Jeff and Sue Moss  
3726 Old Coach Road  
RD 1 Clinton  
03 415 7707



Jeff, Colin and Dayanne at the top of Jeff's farm. There are stunning views in every direction of some of NZ's best pastoral land.  
Clinton, Feb 2012



Jeff Moss on his Clifton farm. New Fencing, new pastures, smart management; it is responding well. Clifton, Feb 2012



¼ Finn ¼ Texel ½ Perendale hoggets and their dorper sired lambs. Outstanding hoggets and lambs.  
Clinton, Jan 2012



This very stroppy Finn ram became 'as quite as a lamb' when Jeff rubbed his head. Jeff likes Finn sheep.

Waimumu, Feb



After three days penned and only humans to look at, the OSRS rams are off to Hawke's Bay and green pastures. Sue, Robin, Colin and Jeff.  
Waimumu, Feb 2010



Allan Botting (Mataura) selected from these ¼ Finn ¼ Texel ½ Perendale rams. Robin and Dayanne drove down to help Sue when Jeff was unexpectedly Hospitalised.  
Clinton, Jan 2012