



Sheep or trees?



Sheep or trees... New Zealand at the crossroads. Wairere ewe hoggets, full belly crutched, early May 2019.

From food to wood?

Many large farms are being converted to trees, some lured by planting subsidies available from the Billion Trees program, and all by the promise of \$25 per tonne for carbon credits, all underwritten by you, the taxpayers. We are witnessing a huge change to the New Zealand landscape and economy, all for an international agreement which has been assessed as having an infinitesimal effect on global temperature, even if all countries achieve GHG reductions to match their targets.

This blanket forestry would not be happening without the Paris Accord.

Other countries are well behind in meeting their interim targets. The reality is that the modern world is married to oil for heating and cooling, plastics, synthetic fibres and transport, with no alternative cheap and clean source of energy on the horizon. And, vitally important, food production is dependent on nitrogen fertiliser from oil.

Sixty percent of the world population would starve without it.

Pastoral farming earned 49% of New Zealand's merchandise exports in 2017-18. Yet we are being sacrificed on the altar of an ideology. I'm part of an action group of Wairarapa farmers, 50shadesofgreen.co.nz, which is determined to change the government's approach to the Zero Carbon bill. Our landscape is in danger of becoming one shade of

green, the dark, DEAD green of *Pinus radiata*. It's now or never. Please support us over the next few months. The fight is on. Please email Inconvenient Truths to all your email database... we need to reach as many urban people as possible, find it on 50shadesofgreen.co.nz

**Join us for a march on Parliament.
July 10th. Save the date!**

50shadesofgreen.co.nz

Our purpose: to protect New Zealand's rural communities, our beautiful landscape, our economy, and unnecessary cost to you, the taxpayer.

PEOPLE Rural communities are being gutted by the sale of farm land for tree planting, lured by taxpayer subsidies for carbon credits. Farms generate seven jobs per thousand hectares, forestry, one. Schools shut when pine trees close in. Pine tree areas become dark, sombre, DEAD.

FAIRNESS? Agriculture in New Zealand is being unfairly treated by government. Our 10 million cattle and 27 million sheep will be taxed for natural GHG emissions. Almost all the other 1.2 billion cattle and 1 billion sheep in the world will not be taxed. How fair is that?

Why not tax rice paddies for methane emissions? Because no country will do it.



Protect what we value for future generations.

White Rock Station. Should we smother it with pine trees?

THE PARIS ACCORD: is about LIMITING manmade warming. New Zealand farmers have been reducing ruminant numbers over the past thirty years, and reducing the area farmed. But pastoral farming still earns 49% of New Zealand's export receipts.

THE REAL VILLAIN is the 45% increase in New Zealand's human population since 1990. But Government is presenting farming as a scapegoat. What other countries are undermining their most important economic sector?

AIR TRAVEL is not in the Paris Accord. The government is promoting long distance tourism over farming, which shows that it isn't interested in reducing GHG emissions. The Greens are simply interested in a symbolic gesture.

YOU WILL PAY TWICE The reduction in export receipts from farming, plus taxpayer subsidies for tree planting, will reduce your standard of living.

OUR BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE Fifty shades of green will become one shade of green, the dark, somber green of *Pinus radiata*. Is this the landscape that you want, or our tourists want to see?

YOU CAN'T EAT WOOD Food security is a big issue for an island nation. With a world population predicted to be 11.2 billion at the end of this century, it makes little sense to reduce our food growing area. Meantime, carbon credits are providing social welfare for foreign investors in buying land and planting trees.

THE ENVIRONMENT Pine trees reduce biodiversity, dry up streams, damage roads and cause dramatic sedimentation in rivers and the sea during logging.

OUR POOR ECONOMIC MODEL Primary industry produces 78% of New Zealand's merchandise exports. Much of that foreign exchange is diverted into building houses and infrastructure in cities. This is a high cost model. We love to think that "we punch above our weight", but the reality is that much of our asset base has been sold offshore.

POLITICAL EGOS Green politicians are desperate to look good, even though their solutions defy common sense. Other countries are well behind on their interim targets to reduce GHG emissions. But no country, other than New Zealand, is prepared to shaft its economy. Is it possible to be a leader if there are no followers?

IS THE WORLD SLOWING DOWN? No. China has contracted to build 300 coal fired power plants in other countries. 500,000 hectares of forest around the world are being cut down every year to make way for farming. The Christian Democrat party in Germany has recently decided not to support a Climate Change Bill, simply because there is no current way to implement it without damaging the German economy.

REALITY CHECK Our wonderful lifestyle is underpinned by cheap energy. Unless a new source of cheap and non polluting energy is discovered, people globally are not going to change their behaviour enough to make any significant difference to manmade climate change.

CONCLUSION It is a bad mistake to shaft farming, the foundation of the New Zealand economy for 170 years. Alternative Government policies should include:

- Halt population growth
- Impose a surcharge on all air travel
- Charge foreign visitors for taxpayer created facilities
- Target self sufficiency in oil and coal rather than pretending that we will stop using those energy sources
- Impose carbon credit costs on fossil fuel energy use, not on ruminants, which evolved 90 million years ago
- Focus on improving productivity in construction and infrastructure, where New Zealand is very expensive and very slow

You can't eat wood

A combination of African Swine Fever and the Australian drought has lifted protein prices across the board. Global meat and fish consumption is close to 500 million tonnes per year, and rising. The continual media blarney about synthetic meat, vertical farms, etc, sounds threatening to our businesses, but a reality check shows that world demand for our meat is rising, as is the demand for oil.

A thirty year crop faces huge risks around demand and value in the future. And there is talk about logging being banned on steep slopes or unstable soils. Our definition of sustainability is farcical. Will logging twenty times in five hundred years be acceptable for soil stability and sediment runoff?

Goodbye Wairere, gone to trees

Lagoon Hills, south of Martinborough, was running 9,800 Wairere bred ewes last spring. Docking percentage was 140, despite storm losses, a tribute to young manager Tom Lilley.

Manawaimai, Wanganui, sold to a joint venture company between My Farm and Comvita. The plan is to plant Manuka. One of Alastair Polson's last decisions was to buy 65 Wairere Challenger ram lambs in March 2014. This bold decision paid dividends, the Romney cross over the composite flock breeding a more robust type. Manager Alex Matthews won both huntaway titles at the national dog trial champs last year, a rare double. But now has to find another farm.

Hadleigh, just fifteen minutes from Masterton: this 14,000 stock unit property has a lot of easy country, but a six kilometre "private" side road attracted Roger Dickie to act for a foreign consortium. Foreign buyers can receive carbon credits from New Zealand taxpayers...social welfare for foreigners? And who owns the carbon credits? New Zealand? Or the purchasers, who may choose to use them for offsetting somewhere else in the world?

David Gower, Wanganui, sold to a farmer who will let the Manuka spread naturally. This was harder country, with some natural Manuka. David bought a whole team of Wairere Romney rams in 2015 and has moved them to better country in the Taihape area.

In my opinion, Manuka is preferable to pine trees. There is a cash flow from honey within several years of planting. And, it is much easier to recover hill country from Manuka to pasture than from pines.

Learning from the best

In early May I organised a tour of top sheep farmers for a visiting group from Australia. It is always a privilege to learn how the best operators make it happen.

Matt Iremonger manages Willesden Farm on the south side of Banks Peninsula for the Thomas family. Until two years ago, Matt was equity manager of a 20,000 stock unit property in North Canterbury. During that time Matt used Wairere rams, which were used over the 10,500-10,800 ewe flock in combination with some composite rams.

Average lambing was 165-167%, with a majority of lambs sold POM. Three consecutive drought years, one with annual rainfall of only 181mm, became the impetus for a change in direction for the partnership. Matt and Katy chose this time to look at other opportunities. They switched their own capital to a different farm in North Canterbury, in an equity partnership with the Thomas family who own Willesden. And shifted to running Willesden, which is in a higher rainfall area.

Wairere had previously sold some Romney rams to Willesden, to cross over the Perendale flock.

In eighteen months Matt has made substantial changes. He has dropped ewe numbers to 6,500, but still has 1,900 cows in the mix to graze steep hills to 900m above sea level. Last year he negotiated to buy a flat farm alongside Lake Ellesmere which has much lower rainfall and free draining soils to counter balance the wet clay, valley floors of Willesden. Matt has since found water there, and received consent to irrigate. Willesden now has 500ha of centre pivots.



Matt Iremonger in action.

By culling the poorer sheep and downsizing the ewe flock, and feeding better, the scan last year lifted to 181%. Those Perendale /Romneys used to lamb around 105-120%. Ewe lambs have been bought in to enable a quick increase in ewe numbers towards 10,000. What a difference management can make.

Tim and Sara Coop farms steep hills on the north side of Banks Peninsula at Port Levy. Tim runs 6,500 ewes and 350 cows. The weaning percentage over the past two years has been 150 and 152. Tim sells all his surplus lambs at weaning, and sends his ewe lamb replacements grazing on the plains, so as to guarantee well grown two toothers. Tim gave us a handout with his own financial figures for the previous five years, plus notes on high performance sheep farming from BakerAg's weekly market and management advice newsletter, the AgLetter. *The lessons have never changed...grow your young stock well, and look after the BCS in all your ewes.*

Tim's father started buying some Romney rams from Wairere in 1992, when Tim worked at Wairere, and mated them to his more traditional Romney flock. There was some progress in productivity, but the big move came when Tim bought a team of Wairere Multiplier (then quarter each of EF, Finn, Texel, Romney) ram lambs in 1999. That cross supercharged both weaning weight and lambing percentage. After 2005 Tim criss-crossed between Romney rams and composite rams from two other breeders. However, the sheep gradually became less robust. From 2015 Tim has used only Wairere Romneys. There has been a steady lift in lambing, from 138% in 2013-14 to 152% weaned in 2018-19. Hogget lambing has improved too, 71% last year.

"That production boost from the composites of the 2000's taught me a lot about feeding!"



Tim Coop left, with Justin and Bill Webb from Australia.

George Tatham (a director of Beef and Lamb) and **Tom Bowie** (equity partner in the 25,000 stock units and plant), farm three properties in the Wairarapa. George inherited a good Romney flock from his father Bob, 130% being a typical lambing twenty years ago. Around fifteen years ago George put East Friesian/Texel rams over the whole flock. That cross improved both lambing percentage and growth rate. George followed on with second stage Multipliers from Wairere (3/8 Texel, 3/8 Romney, 1/8 EF, 1/8 Finn), but plateaued at 135-140%. Five years ago Tom introduced hands on BCS several times per year, and has lifted lambing to an average 145, with up to 80% POM. POM weights have been 16.9-17.5kg. The easy contour, coastal terrace country has allowed pasture renewal of fifteen percent of the farm every year, with enough area in plantain/clover/red clover/new grass to allow hoggets to be lambed on high octane feed. That feed also allows early weaning of lambs, at 60-70 days old, from the old ewes. The old ewes can then be sold, and other ewes spread out more.



George Tatham and Tom Bowie

Two years ago a decision was made to revert to Wairere Romney rams. The ewe hoggets show improved uniformity and body type. Hoggets have been weaning an average 100%.

Sully & Katie Alsop farm several properties near Masterton. Some land is owned and some leased. The couple have a farming partnership with Jack Hodder and Toni McWhinnie from Wellington. Sully took over a flock of 900 Wairere Challenger (FE resilient) ewes in early 2017, with ram lambs that meet specification headed to Wairere King, north of Taumarunui. This spring the ewes docked 162%, despite some storm losses, with ram lambs averaging 34kg at 97 days average age.

As a farm consultant with BakerAg until eighteen months ago, Sully emphasised the lessons that he'd learned from the Ewe Efficiency Analysis which BakerAg had run for some years, but also credited his wife Katie with her excellent management of the farming operation before their second child was born.

- The ewes are fed as well as possible after weaning, targeting BCS of 3.5-4. That BCS provides a buffer against a dry summer and a tough winter, and allows ALL ewes to be at least BCS 3 at lambing. "I'd rather have the right BCS and shorter than desirable pasture covers than the other way around."
- Ewes are BCS sorted several times thru the year.
- Triplets are scanned separately, and lambed in small paddocks to reduce the risk of mismothering.
- Hoggets are mated, at 48kg plus, and deliver around 140-150% scanning.

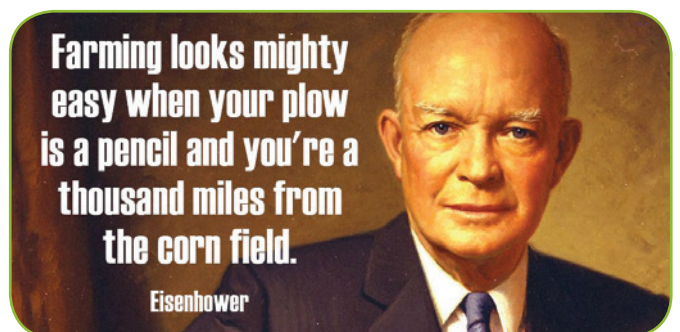


Sully and Katie Alsop

- Hoggets need to wean at an average weight of 66kg, to enable two toothers to average at least 65kg at mating.
- Nitrogen fertiliser has been applied to all the truck country this autumn, to ensure feed for the winter.

Matt & Lynley Wyeth farm against the Tararua ranges, due west of Masterton, with hills running up to 900 metres above sea level. Their composite flock, now 7,300 ewes +3000 lambing hoggets, has averaged 155% over the past few years. That has included some indoor lambing of triplets for better lamb and ewe survival, and automatic feeding of around 300 orphan lambs per year. Spring Valley is now producing 357kg of carcass meat and wool per hectare, which is a huge achievement. How are they doing this?

- 1800mm rainfall, double the hills on the east coast side of Masterton, but sometimes prone to prolonged dry conditions.
- Free draining soils, which help lamb survival.
- Around 500 hectares of cultivable land with high octane crops for finishing lambs and some cattle. These areas enable early weaning (as young as 50 days and 22kgLW), and enable pressure to be taken off ewes on hill country. Early weaned ewes have more time to recover BCS before the summer dry.
- Has composite ewes which deliver scans of 220%.
- Achieves average carcass weights of 19-20kg, but from January on, because their country is later than most of the Wairarapa.
- Excellent grazing... no roughage visible, despite having cows in the system. The cows are calved in November and weaned in February. Cow grazing is found off farm when required... using a "flexible farm boundary".



Eisenhower was commander in chief of the American Army in WWII, and President of the USA 1952-1960. He came from a farming family. American farmers have had a bad year. Sector debt has increased \$US 410 billion.



Matt and Lynley Wyeth

- Ram lambs are moved off the home farm to our finishing country and grown out on summer crop and specialist pastures. Spring Valley home then becomes a specialist ewe lamb grower in summer. This enables all the male lambs to be fed to optimum on specialist pastures and crop after weaning. This is different to most hill country farms, which rear their own replacements, and usually on hills with no new pasture.
- Matt talked about the lessons he learned while visiting top sheep farmers in the UK. Some of them were achieving lamb growth rates of 500 grams per day. "It showed me that we compromise the potential of our lambs in New Zealand by not feeding well enough or the right feed - We are farming ruminants not sheep and beef".

The best IT program?

Justin Webb, one of the visiting Australian group, is the co-founder of AgriWebb. Justin and his co-founders, Kevin Baum and John Fargher, have a long history in livestock production. John was raised on his family's 400,000-acre sheep and cattle station in South Australia and Justin's family have been producing livestock in Victoria for generations, inspiring the foundation of AgriWebb.

AgriWebb is an offline livestock farm management software that is helping to simplify record keeping, improve profitability and eliminating stressful audits so that growers can benefit from continued sustainability, increased productivity and profitability.

"We started our journey back in back in 2014 with just a handful of farmers using our tablet-only app. Since then we have grown to become Australia's market leader in livestock software, by solving complex problems through simple software" said Justin.

In Australia, AgriWebb is delivering the digital future of agriculture for more than 2600 livestock farmers nationwide,

accounting for more than 10% of the national herd/flock, and has an increased customer base of 1,000 more top producers across the UK, Brazil, USA and South Africa.

To learn more check it out at agriwebb.com



AgriWebb Co-Founders (Kevin Baum, Justin Webb & John Fargher)



Dayanne Almeida

Wairere's movie star

Dayanne Almeida was a hit in a recent Country Calendar, shot mostly at Wairere during ram selling last November. The film crew did come to Wairere in early September, but the violent storm in that week meant that footage of lambing was missed. The sun is always shining during Country Calendar...

The recent good news is that Dayanne and her partner Paul Crick have taken over a couple of farm leases previously run by Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre, with around 8,000 stock units. Dayanne has also accepted an approach by Zoetis for a sales and client liaison role with ram and bull breeders in the North Island. That will advance her career in genetics. An example of Dayanne's analyses of the Wairere flock is reproduced here:

Group	LW7 range	Mob%	AS HOGGETS				AS 2 TOOTHES				
			Scan %	2/(%)	AvgWWT*	MatelW	BCS	Scan %	WeanLW	BCS	AvgWWT
A	31-36.5	19	119	20	24.9	55.9	2.3	182	63.7	2.3	26.2
B	37-42.5	61	130	31	25.6	58.9	2.3	186	67.1	2.4	26.3
C	43-48.5	17	135	35	25.9	60.3	2.3	184	68.5	2.4	27.4
D	≥49	3	151	48	28.3	61.6	2.4	197	70.7	2.8	28.3

2/: percentage of 2ths that scanned twins as hoggets per group.

*of twin ram lambs

0800 Wairere (0800 924 7373)

Lessons from the UK

Pierre Syben has been in the UK since early March, with the objective of increasing ram sales from WairereUK. He has visited existing ram clients and prospects from south to north. Farmers there are living with massive uncertainty around Brexit. One estimate is that beef will face an 84% tariff into the EU.

Pierre visited a client with 5,000 ewes who, several years ago, built a free range barn for 32,000 egg layers. The setup is largely run with automation, with just one employee, a Bulgarian who lives in a caravan and is paid \$23,000 per year. How do we compete with that? And only three percent of the hens bother to free range outside!

Celebrating the farm environment



Wairere ewe hoggets, 10th May 2019.

Wairere client Palliser Ridge has recently won the Greater Wellington Ballance Farm Environment Award. Owned by Jim and Marilyn Law, with managers Kurt and Lisa Portas having an equity stake, the business has invested heavily in adding value beyond the farm gate:

Lisa runs a recently built lodge on a hill top with sweeping views of Palliser Bay, ideal for Wellington people wanting to get away from it all. The self catering options include lamb and beef produced on farm. Palliser Ridge has an arrangement with the Greytown Butchery, with farm produce sold to local restaurants. The main woolshed doubles as an events centre. Kurt does farm tours for visitors.

Palliser Ridge wool is used by Marks and Spencers in sports jackets and casual wear. This link to an end user was organised by Wools of New Zealand, and the supply group includes several other farmers in the Wairarapa. New Zealand Natural Clothing also uses Palliser Ridge wool, to manufacture jerseys and beanies. Honey, including some Manuka honey, is bottled from hives on farm.

Jim and Marilyn were also responsible for rescuing the Pirinoa store from closure. They installed fuel pumps, and supported a young, local woman to get established.

It now does a thriving trade, and is the hub of the local community. Jim has served in a number of governance roles, including at Brackenridge, an accommodation/events centre/health spa near Martinborough. Jim rose through the ranks of Mobil over a stellar twenty seven year career, including ten years in Africa.

Jim and Marilyn have created an equity share for Kurt and Lisa. And take pride in employing new recruits to farming, and enhancing their career progress.

On the productivity side, Palliser Ridge used to run Wairere composite ewes, but has transitioned to Romneys over the past eight years. Lambing is typically around 145%. Lambs are mostly sold as forward stores at 37kg, by private arrangement to Lean Meats suppliers who target 22-23kg carcass weight lambs for the Atkins Sheep Ranch brand in North America.

Winning the Greater Wellington Ballance Farm Environment Supreme Award came after entering five years earlier, and realising that further development was required. Pole planting has been an annual exercise, 500 poles per year. Many dams and gullies have been fenced off and planted. Jim's membership of Ducks Unlimited resulted in nesting boxes for waterfowl. Community contribution is also a vital aspect for judges.

We wish Kurt and Lisa well for the National Showcase final in early June.

Here's to another good year

It has been a topsy turvey season, sometimes too dry, sometimes too wet. Some areas have done well, others have struggled. But the omens look good for next season, so we can farm on with confidence.

Best wishes from the Wairere team.



The Palliser Ridge team, Kurt and Lisa Portas, Marilyn and Jim Law.

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