



Newsletter  
January 21

# SmartSheep

## Rusty and Lisa Nevill, Moa Creek, Central Otago

"It's two and a half years since I started farming the Wairere Merino flock after the ewes were transferred from Lake McKay at Luggate. What was going to be a one year grazing arrangement has become long term.

Why?

Because I've got to like these sheep, and they provide a benchmark to my own Halfbreds, Quarterbreds and Romneys.

What I like about Wairere Merino:

- They are robust. I haven't drenched any ewes since they arrived in July 2018.
- The tailing percentage to ewes mated has consistently been 135-140%, and that's with a high percentage of two tooth in the flock.
- The ram lambs last year weaned at 34kgs, and the ewe lambs at 30, at one hundred days old. Over 300 of the ram lambs were grazed on after weaning for potential sale as rams.
- The wool from the ewes in August this year was 25.7 micron, vm 0.6%, y-z -1.4, yield 74.5%. Our wool merchant, Brent Hickey, "Wool tested up great, and looks the part."
- They have strong constitution. The Wairere Merino ewes and ewe hoggets run with my commercial ewes and hoggets through most of the year, except from lambing to weaning. They stand out as a line. The Wairere ewes run most of the year on a 4,400 hectare lease block which runs up to 900 metres above sea level. The lease bounds my home farm, which is flat with 75% irrigated.
- I've always been interested in sheep breeding (There are always Dorset Down and SuffTex rams available for sale from my studs, and I had a Border Leicester stud for some years).
- The original Wairere Merino cross of Nine Mile Merino rams over Wairere Romney ewes results in a highly productive Halfbred ewe. I've tried rams from several other studs over some Wairere Romney ewes, but have come back to favouring that original cross.



Rusty Nevill

- I've had up to 290 Wairere Romneys here, producing first cross Wairere Merino. It has been useful to observe the base breed on my home farm; 200 of the 290 Romneys lambed as ewe hoggets in 2019, and as two tooth in 2020.
- These Romneys have great mothering ability. Improved lamb survival is a big plus.
- in early December I tipped over 295 potential two tooth replacement ewes, and culled nine percent for foot faults. I like to be thorough in maintaining standards. Feet are a critical issue for fine wool and mid micron farmers. A high lambing percentage allows more scope for culling.
- I've been hearing some strong, positive feedback from Wairere Merino clients, about how these sheep have out produced Halfbreds from other genetic sources.
- Gundy Anderson at Benmore mates some of his Nine Mile bred Merinos to Wairere Romney rams, and sells the ewe lambs for breeding to some high performing farmers. That is the reverse of what we are doing in this Wairere Merino flock.
- Wairere Merino SmartSheep hit the sweet spot of combined meat and wool value. With ewe hoggets clipping 22 micron and ewes 25 micron, these Halfbred genetics cash in on good wool prices while lambing at a good percentage. And the lambs grow fast under an average commercial feeding regime."



*Wairere halfbred ewes at Digby Cochrane's Hunter Valley Station, Lake Hawea, September 2020. Lambing has lifted from 85 to 130% plus. Lambs are sold at weaning in early February, at 28 to 31kgs average. Every year they go to the same two buyers in North Canterbury.*

## Wairere Merino

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## Aaron Johns and Pru Heaney, Nevis Valley, Central Otago



*Aaron Johns and Pru Heaney*

Farm 2 properties in the Nevis Valley, Craigroy station (we own) is 3200ha & Ben Nevis station (leased from an Auckland family) which is 4700ha.

The properties range from 670m-1600m above sea level & are made up of 150ha of cultivated flats & 7750ha which ranges from oversown river flats, terraces & lower hill country to steep tussock country.

Stock wintered

- 5000 1/2 bred & 1/4bred ewes
- 1000 merino wethers
- 1300 ewe hoggets
- 300 breeding cows
- 150 r1 & r2 heifers

Took over the properties in 2015, was stocked with merino ewes, tailing 76% in our first year. Started using Wairere Romneys (over our merino ewes) the following year to breed halfbred lambs. In 2020 Our halfbred ewes tailed 130%. Our halfbred lambs are sold store end of February & average 30kgs. We have been using a Wairere halfbred over our halfbred ewes over the past 4 years, these ewes average 24.5micron.

We are also putting merino rams over selected 1/2 ewes to bred a 1/4 bred replacement ewe. This is the first year we have done it and the ewe hoggets averaged 18.6micron. The main purpose of this is reduce the micron to increase our wool profits while maintaining our lambing percentage.

The main Advantages of running a halfbred ewe for us are,

- lambing percentage
- no issues with feet (footrot)
- good mothers
- hardy ewe that can handle cold winters



*Craigroy Station, Nevis Valley*

## Andrew Herriott

Andrew took on the role of Wairere South Island Sales Manager in early August 2020. Andrew and Lynn set up Herriott Livestock trading company in October 2019, after Andrew had spent seventeen years drafting for Alliance.

As a young man Andrew worked on farms, including nine years with Pat Garden at Avenal Station, before managing 10,000 stock units at the Keppoch Estate, Moa Flat.

Four years later the opportunity arose to purchase 160 hectares in West Otago next to Lynn's family (Fletcher)

farm. The property runs mainly trading stock. Andrew will combine farming with the Wairere role, and Herriott Livestock.

Lynn has worked in or managed a branch for CRT/Farmlands for twenty years. Andrew's interests of dog trialling, golf and whitebaiting have given him a wide network in the Deep South.



*Andrew Herriott*  
027 240 0231

Summer rams have come to Central Otago.

Here's wishing you heavy weights and high prices this season. Derek Daniell

# Ram bookings for February 2021

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to book \_\_\_\_\_ two tooth Wairere Merino rams, at \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Price brackets:** \$1,650 \$1,250 \$1,000 \$800 (circle one)