

Where are we going with sheep?

Presentation to Meat & Wool NZ Field Day

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Challenge for NZ sheep farmers

Improved profitability *through*

better productivity

better prices (some opportunity thru timing of sales)

So we need to focus on

on-farm productivity

processing productivity

meeting the market

But we need to work on things that **we can control**

So what is the market saying?

Supermarkets, Hotel & Restaurant

Getting it when we need it

Consistency

Value/price

Users

Consistent eating experience

Clear conscience about buying the product

Product is safe

Value/price

What does this mean for us?

Reality

Customers are wanting more information about the products they are eating

welfare of the animals, carbon footprint, water use, food safety

So

we are going to need better information systems to provide the information with the product

What does this mean for us?

Reality

while we must be consistently profitable

we must be able to deliver what the buyer wants when they want it *and*

provide the information with the product

....but How

continuous improvement in the product

improved on-farm & processor productivity

improved information systems

What can we do to ensure a future

Driving on-farm productivity

Focus on enterprise profitability

Uptake of new technologies

Focus on meeting the market

Using all of this new information

A photograph of a flock of sheep in a green field. The sheep are in the foreground and middle ground, some looking towards the camera. The background features several trees, including a large evergreen on the right and some deciduous trees on the left. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**So how can we as farmers
respond & what can we do
now or look forward to that
will help us**

What Can We Do Now?

Increasing profitability with

- Better rams *thru* better genetic improvement systems
- Greater flexibility *thru* more lambs by terminal sires
- Better management systems *thru* better pastures

What Can We Do Now?

Better rams *thru* better genetic improvement systems & better ways to use variation within breeds & between breeds (and newer breeds)

- **Productivity**

 - now* – growth, disease resistance, lamb survival

 - future* – ewe lifespan

- **Product quality**

 - now* – muscling, leanness

 - future* – consistency, tenderness, meat colour, etc

What Can We Do Now?

Greater flexibility & greater returns *thru* more lambs by terminal sires

- Improved ewe productivity *means* fewer ewes required for replacements
- So more ewes to terminals *means* greater flexibility and being able to be more responsive to the market
- and immediate higher returns

What Can We Do Now?

Better management systems *thru* better pastures

- Better pasture species for growth & quality
- Species that grow well when they are needed
- Knowing more about the pastures and how to manage them & keep them performing

What Can We Look Forward To?

Increasing profitability with

- Better knowledge of how you are performing & how you can improve *thru* new information systems
- Better links to the market *thru* integrated systems from the farm to the market

What Can We Look Forward To?

- Better knowledge of how you are performing & how you can improve *thru* new information systems
- This is NOT new – CF2000!
- New software products will provide ways to make it much simpler to monitor performance of animals, paddocks, finances, & the whole farming system & hence to benchmark

What Can We Look Forward To?

- Better links to the market *thru* integrated systems from the farm to the market
- Systems that provide feedback from the market to the processor & then to the farmer and breeder

Continuing Progress & New Technologies

Commercial farmer investment in genetics

Fewer farmers ... fewer ewes

Mating more hoggets or keeping ewes longer

Higher ewe to ram ratios so use fewer rams

Higher fecundity means more terminal sires

Growing farmer awareness of value of genetics

Continuing Progress & New Technologies

Fewer farmers ... fewer ewes

Consequences: More competition among ram breeders

Composite maternal strains

Composite terminal strains

Improvement in established breeds

Many breeders have gone

... facilitated by new technologies & new developments

Management Challenges

Management

..... **Knowing the business**

Pasture – new species & specialist pastures

Fertiliser –strategic N, phosphate & lime

Health – more attention to parasite management

Higher lambing – more specialist meat sires

Thinking – culling to reduce futile labour

Triplet ewe – more focus, lamb survival

Trace element nutrition – more focus

Management Challenges

Management

1. **Know the business to manage the business**
2. **Actively managing feed supply & utilisation**
3. **Management & genetics to reduce futile labour**
4. **Improving lamb survival & growth**

Management Challenges

FOUR key management challenges

- 1. Know the business to manage the business**
- 2. Actively managing feed supply & utilisation**
- 3. Management & genetics to reduce futile labour**
- 4. Improving lamb survival & growth**

..... All depend on better knowledge:

- 1. Understanding the drivers**
- 2. Understanding the feed situation**
- 3. Knowing the details of flock performance**
- 4. Knowing individual animal performance**

Management Challenges

Key management challenge 1

Know the business to manage the business

What are the drivers at all levels?

the major driver weight of lambs sold

Impact of knowledge on management

what knowledge would really make a difference?

Management Challenges

Key management challenge 2

Actively managing the feed supply & utilisation

Measuring feed supply

Predicting feed supply & quality

Management Challenges

Key management challenge 3

Management & genetics to reduce futile labour

Easy care does not mean no care

Managing to enhance lamb survival

Internal parasite resistance

Identification of problems & culling
(feet & lambing problems, & dags)

..... potential impact of crossbreeding

Management Challenges

Key management challenge 4

Improving lamb survival & growth

Managing live weight & the 'condition profile'

Pregnancy scanning

Paddock management (ewes with trips & quads)

Vaccinations & trace minerals

Pre-lamb strategic nutrition

..... potential impact of crossbreeding



Challenges for NZ sheepfarming

Challenges for NZ Sheepfarming

Production

Environmental management

Market

Challenges for NZ Sheepfarming

Production

Size of ewes?

Practical limits to increasing lambing rate?

Anthelmintic failure?

Challenges for NZ Sheepfarming

Environmental management & welfare

Water quality

Fertiliser use

Animal welfare

Challenges for NZ Sheepfarming

Market

Country health status

Environmental – carbon footprint (& food miles)

Traceability: health & welfare

Is the price of lamb meat sustainable?

Competition from dairy

Challenges for NZ Sheepfarming

Focus on what we can control

On-farm productivity –

knowing what drives profit & what we can do now to make an immediate difference

Working with the meat companies –

building a relationship that enables them to supply their international markets

Challenges for NZ Sheepfarming

Looking at the future: creating value not cost!

Individual animal identification will be a reality –

so how can we use the data to create useful information about our business?

Carbon accounting will be a reality –

how can we manage this on farm to minimise the costs?

Two challenges we are working on in AbacusBio!

Summary

Last 20 years: productivity per ewe has improved greatly

... More focus on the individual ewe productivity

Knowing the business

Financial performance & management

Physical performance: Genetics & management

Summary

Future: Driving on-farm productivity

... More focus on the whole enterprise profitability

Drivers of enterprise profitability – *looking at what we can control*

Impact of new technologies – *creating value not cost*

..... AND MANAGING THE MARKET

The End

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