

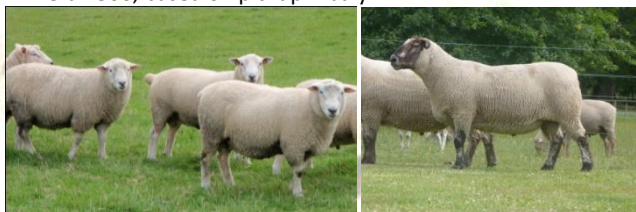
# Rissington Breedline UK Spring Newsletter – June 2011

We welcome you to our spring newsletter. The outdoor spring lambers have had a good season with great survival. The biggest challenge likely to be the dry conditions in the south. Lamb values remain high in UK & NZ. It's important farmers don't take their eye off the ball in terms of production efficiency, with high prices as input costs will only increase and subsidies decrease.

Don't forget wool! Highlander wool prices are now \$6.50/kg clean (\$5/kg greasy) in NZ. A Highlander ewe fleece is now worth more than \$20. This has risen 250% in 2 years. The gain in your wool cheque might even buy you a ticket to the rugby world cup?

## Ram orders

We include our 2011 ram order forms which we would urge you to return to us by 30 June to ensure we can supply. Our Highlander 2th ram price is £600, reflecting the on farm maternal benefit and Primera £500, based on pickup in July



## Ewes & ewe lambs

If you are wishing to sell or purchase Highlander ewes or ewe lambs please complete with description & details on the order form. We will list on our website to match sellers with purchasers. We will charge £2.50 fee to the both parties on a completed sale.



## Events

We are attending the NSA sheep events over the next few months. Last week we attended Welsh Sheep. Great to get positive feedback from farmers on survival, easy lambing, easy finishing of last years Primera lambs and the solid weight of this years Primera lambs at tailing!

NSA sheep events we are attending

- 8 June NSA North Sheep
- 14 June NSA South West Sheep
- 23-26 June Royal Highland Show NSA marquee
- 4 July NSA Northern Ireland
- 18-21 July Royal Welsh Show – NSA Pavillion

Look forward to catching up with you at these events or on farm.

*Bayden Wilson and Richard Wilkie*

Trial work

### • **Scottish trial**

How do the Highlander X Hill sheep perform? A trial flock of 471 Highlander X (Blackface/Cheviot) ewes mated at 56kgs scanned at 199%, with just 7 (1.5%) dry. Still to analyse lambing data, but these ewes are ideally suited to outdoor lambing over a wide range of conditions. Shepherds comments are that the outdoor lambs have pretty much caught up to the older indoor lambs.

### • **CAFRE – Greenmount College, Northern Ireland**

Steven Johnston showed me their downland flock of Highlander & HLX ewes with Primera lambs on them. As part of a grazing demonstration 142 ewes with 185% lambs are grazing on 7ha from birth to weaning. The stocking rate is based on an average pasture growth rate of 50kgs DM/day. To date cattle had still needed to be brought in to utilise surplus. Another 3Ha is being cut for silage. The lambs and the pasture quality looked great. Amazing what can be achieved with good grazing management and efficient genetics. It will be great to see what they wean off that area. 'A good example of understanding your pasture growth rates, livestock demand and having a contingency when things don't go according to plan'

Breeder Profile

### **Rob Pratt – The Chilterns, Bedfordshire**

Rob's business 'Breeding Vision' runs the Rissington Breedline Highlander and Primera Nucleus flocks, totalling 900 ewes and replacements. This flock is fully DNA pedigreed with records run alongside the NZ nucleus flock. Last year he also purchased the Hartline composite ewe flock and has high genetic merit pedigree Suffolk and Charolais.



2011 results to date demonstrate the performance levels of the UK Highlander Nucleus flock lambed outdoors, minimal shepherding, no triplet fostering or concentrate feeding:

Highlander Nucleus	2011	
	Ewes	290
Mating & lambing start	7-Nov	31-Mar
Mating weight	65	
Ewes scanned dry	6	2%
Lambs scanned	583	201%
Lambing	Outdoor	
Ewes assisted	2	1%
Lambs tailed	495	171%
Lamb mortality scan to tailing	88	15%
Ewe deaths mating to tailing	4	1%

## Lamb supply chain goals

Current increases in lamb prices have been driven by continued demand for sheepmeat worldwide meeting reduced lamb supply. UK retail lamb prices don't seem to have risen for a number of years. In fact any volume sales seem to be driven by deals! This raises market concerns over the sustainability of lamb supply into the future. How do we create value for the consumer?

Our goal for the UK is to set up a sustainable supply chain of the highest quality lamb. Working with farmers from the far South of England, through Wales to the top of Scotland will achieve the required seasonal spread of consistent grass fed spring lamb. These farms will combine natural grass/forage based grazing systems with efficient and high welfare genetics. Working with seasonal supply from our NZ farmers in NZ will achieve a unique 12 month supply of the same quality.

For the consumer this special supply chain will deliver consistent great tasting lamb, sustainably sourced off natural free range grass fields, with the highest animal welfare and quality of life

## Update from Richard Wilkie

My trip back to NZ had my fingers in many pies, I took over management of the family farm, got involved in the forage side of the Farm IQ project, progeny test trials, forage and yield trials, and of course got married to my lovely British wife.

The **Farm IQ work** is looking at meat quality, yield and growth from 5 different forages. These forages included two brassica varieties, improved pasture, Lucerne and Chicory. We monitored animal growth rates and carcass yield from the different forages. We carried out kills from each forage every 4 weeks, in tandem with 2 weekly forage analysis to build a profile of what the animals were eating.

The **progeny test** each year determines the sires to be used in the Primera nucleus. On one day 1200 lambs are killed and individually dissected into retail meat cuts. We weigh and measure these to determine the rams whose progeny are producing the highest retail meat value. Selected loins are collected by Agresearch for meat quality analysis with samples sent to Bristol University for taste panelling to verify meat quality genetic markers.

**The Farm** went through some changes last year with the re-introduction of sheep! The 620 Highlander ewe lambs mated to Primera weaned 80% survival to sale. The 2th ewes weaned and sold at 60kgs and all lambs were gone before 6mths of age, at an average weight of 18.3kgs. A really profitable option, on the strength of which we have taken on 1,100 ewe lambs this year to run with the 150 R1yr & 115 R2yr grass finished Bulls, so the old man is in for a very busy 3 months.



Bayden & Richard with his Highlander 2th ewes & lambs

## Flock efficiency. How does your flock measure up?



Can you answer the following 'simple' questions?

- What was your ewe mating liveweight & condition score.
- How many (%of) ewes needed assistance at lambing
- What was your flock mortality scanning to tailing, to weaning
- How many kgs of lamb was weaned per kg of ewe mated
- What was your lamb growth rate pre and post weaning
- What does your lamb market supply profile look like
- How much feed was required to produce a kg of lamb

The answer to these questions will tell us how efficient your ewe flock and finishing systems are and where you might fit into a regional lamb supply chain. We plan to work with representative regional farms to demonstrate efficient lamb production and supply. Watch this space!



## Merger confirmed

23 May 2011

Rissington Breedline Ltd and LandCorp Farming Ltd's genetics division will officially merge on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July to form a new company - Syrex Genetics. The name reflects the company's scientific approach to breed performance, which is echoed in the company's new tagline - Excellence is in our DNA.

UK customers it is business as usual and they will continue to be able to access Highlander and Primera genetics from existing breeding programmes.

Syrex Genetics will capitalise on their exclusive access to the largest available single commercial database worldwide enabling significantly improved genetic gain for its customers. The amalgamation will mean increased short and long term genetic gain in the breeding programmes as well as efficiencies from the ability to share resources, skills, technologies and equipment.

LandCorp CEO Chris Kelly says the size of Syrex Genetics will increase the new company's ability to invest in groundbreaking research and development technologies that are becoming more expensive and complex. "This will allow to provide our customers with significant and sustainable genetic gain,"

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