



ROMNEY NEW ZEALAND PRESIDENT'S REPORT

June 2012

The 2011-2012 season has been one the best years regarding prices back to the farm gate. Sheep numbers in New Zealand continue to fall leaving a big vacuum of short supply for our markets. Many sheep farmers are getting close to retirement with the next generation gone, doing other vocations. This is not only happening in our industry but it is happening worldwide in the rural areas. It is important for us to attract younger people back into our industry. The knowledge, the history, the substance, the traceability and the excitement of breeding superior genetics is an art that people get a great pleasure from. Today the money to attract these young people into our industry is there to be had. It is great to see the resurgence of Young Farmer clubs, along with stock judging competitions; it is important we keep our base breed at the forefront and pass on the experience we have all gained to the next generation.

For Romney to move forward, "unity" is the key; information is power. How does one describe good? Unless you measure it you cannot describe it in this day and age. Since we started the Merial Ancare Trials in both Islands we now have got productive information. For us to have Assoc Prof Jon Hickford assisting us who has been a power of strength in the validity of the recorded information. In today's world, technology is helping us to lift the bar on performance. It won't be long before scientists develop the snip chip to be 80% accurate and then we can select animals through DNA for superior traits. (at the moment it is 30% accurate)

The North Island Trial has had its best year yet. A favourable season has helped. Romney NZ certainly appreciates Kerry Osbourne's input, in allowing his flock to be used in the trial. Thank you Kerry. To the breeders that supply rams into this trial thank you also. This year with the linkage we have with the South Island Trial, it will provide more important material for us to identify superior genetics within our breed. Again Council repeats this is not a competition but a trial to identify the strengths of the registered breed that we all share. On behalf of us all we must thank Shane McManaway and John Morris (Allflex) for their continued support. We must also give David Dodge a big thank you for Merial Ancare's sponsorship.

In the South Island Trial more in depth recording of dam production from male lambs being processed will be beneficial. All lambs that are processed through the Alliance Via-Scan are referenced back to the mothers; in essence dams that have had high

yielding lambs have been put to high yielding CT scanned ram lambs. To the people who supplied ram lambs to the South Island Trial a big thank you. The CT scanner at Lincoln demonstrates that human eye cannot measure meat, fat and bone to the same degree and the CT Scanner is producing really interesting results.

The wool trial is into its second year using the Pastoral Management machine. This technology allows us to measure a side sample of wool and gives a reading for micron, curvature and bulk. This trial is also under the guidance of Assoc Prof Jon Hickford. This trial to date has demonstrated that micron can change from year to year due to climate and feed conditions. It will take up to five years before a real evaluation can be quantified.

Romney Rugs are still being sold in the United States. This has certainly been a learning experience. Wool Equities Ltd which oversees the running of Romney Rugs Ltd, will make a decision at the end of August whether to stay with CCA under the Just Shorn brand or to sell the rugs through different channels. The American economy is picking up along with enquiries for rug sales.

This year we have seen some very good articles on Romney. It is important as members you keep being proactive and leading the way to produce the sheep of the future. On behalf of Council we would like to thank you the "members". Times have changed and it's amazing how people are coming back to basics.

Special mention must be given to Jon Hickford. From all of us "Jon" we cannot describe how grateful we are, having you involved in planning the future of the Romney breed. Thank you.

In closing we would like to thank Greg Burgess and his team for the professional job they do at the Sheepbreeder's office. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for the positive way forward and running of your breed society. To John Jackson, many thanks for your contribution to the breed. At times we were never sure if we were at a Romney meeting or an Angus meeting, but you did get your point across.

President Hugh Taylor