

## **Presidents Report.**

The season of 2012-2013 can be best described as hard work for little return. In stark contrast to the previous season, meat and wool prices are painfully low. Along with this, drought has hit most of the country especially the North Island. As farmers we have endured these circumstances before but many in the industry want change so we can farm to a "plan" that has a strategy for a "better future". Nature we cannot change but as sheep farmers we need far more transparency than what we have had in the past. Hopefully the movement "Meat Industry Excellence" (MIE) will drive for change to get a new sunrise industry.

The Romney breed in general is becoming in flavour again as some of the new "so called breeds" have failed. Today our sheep are more productive. There is a lot more research being done not only with the "Merial Ancare Saleable Meat Yield Trial" work but with other traits that are benefiting our breed. Special mention must go to the breeders in the north with the work they are doing with worm resistance/resilience and Facial Eczema.

AgResearch are keen to be involved in the "Merial Ancare Saleable Meat Yield Trial" to further explore the genetics within the breed. This year Brookfield 1294/10 has been used in both the North and South Island trials also in the Central Progeny Trial. The connection with all three trials will give us an indication where our breed matches up against all other breeds. Ten rams have been used in the North trial and seven in the South. Ram Hill 322/11 has been a standout in the South 2012 season. On actual information 322/11's progeny have killed out at 18.5kgs carcass weight (in 13 weeks) with an average meat yield of 57.40%. The average daily weight gain was 330 grams from birth to weaning for all of 322/11 progeny. Two of his progeny were held back for the trial this year. One of the lamb's brothers had a 62.6% meat yield. The other ram lamb used in the trial's mate processed out at 59.38% meat yield. These trials are not only measuring the sires used but the dam's input into the makeup of the production figures. Further measurements will be made in the future to establish more accuracy. The outstanding result this year from the trials was the winning of the National Mint Lamb competition. Romney competed against all other breeds and won with an 8 week old lamb. This lamb was judged best for taste and tenderness. Should the Romney breeders explore further into this aspect as it may have a unique quality product to market!!!

There are many organisations and people to thank. David Dodge from Merial Ancare, Jon Hickford Lincoln, Tricia Johnson AgResearch, Alliance Meat Company, Clare Callow SIL Massey, Kerry Osbourne, The Taylor Family, Allflex and Shane McManaway and John Morris and all the breeders that have supplied rams to the trial.

Wool has been a forgotten word but we do have a dual purpose sheep. The wool trial is in its third year and already getting some interesting results. Many of the 2th ewes are the second generation of the trial and indications are showing finer type wool. One ram lamb used in the trial this year was tested with 31.9 micron with a curve of 70.2. Another ram used was Glenleith 6/11. He has a measurement of 34 micron and a curve of 74. 200 ewes are in this trial. Particular interest will be wool weight versus value by going finer. A special thank you to Eugene O'Sullivan, Don Morrison and the Lincoln team headed by Jon Hickford. Throughout the year we

have tested many rams and found most in the 40 micron bracket with the odd one over 50 micron.

In December the President was quoted 'that the Romney breed was going to breed for finer wool'. This evidently has upset some breeders. I did not wish to upset anybody with my comments but if I have offended some breeders I will formally apologise for those comments.

The "Go Finer" programme is underway with breeders from Romney, Perendale and Mid Micron. This is a trial where fine end crossbred/mid micron wool is made into fabric. A group of growers from each breed has come together under the direction of Jon Hickford and Wool Equities Ltd. The programme is driven by having an integrated system whereby suppliers are involved in the end result and not at the farm gate. The door is open for any breeder who wishes to take part.

Lucy Archer from AgResearch has taken many bloods from Romney rams all over New Zealand. Today the genetic scientist can measure the performance traits of each sire by way of DNA. Although not fully accurate yet, this tool will be the way of the future re selection for productivity. The more rams' DNA we can collect the more accurate we can get the results.

It is hoped by AGM time that all the Romney rugs are sold. Wool Equities wants to focus on the Milton Mill and the Palmerston North weaving company producing woollen cloth. The future of making rugs is on hold at this stage although Bruce Woollen has a tufting machine at Milton.

The Council is fully aware of the shrinking sheep industry and the impact on our breed. It is difficult to make headway but Council is spending a lot time and effort to demonstrate the attributes our breed has by way of trials. It is very frustrating when people use the Romney name to sell their commercial stock when the stock have little Romney in them. Council has stuck to basics when it comes to protocol and got on with the future. Other forms of land use are certainly putting pressure on the sheep industry. This we have no control over but we only hope things will change.

In conclusion I would like to thank the members for their loyalty and passion. Council would like to thank Greg Burgess and his team for a professional job well done. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Council on behalf of us all for the voluntary time and effort they have put into making this a proactive breed society.

President Hugh Taylor