

# kelso. *news*

COMPOSITE SHEEP – A NEW GENERATION OF GROWTH

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## Farming with clear goals

Farming with clear goals means Mark and Elspeth Thomson are now in a position to buy into Elspeth's parents 106 hectare leased farm at Kauana, five minutes north of Limehills in Southland after only five years of farming on their own.

Last season the Kelso hoggets went to the ram at 52 kgs and scanned 159%, lambing 125%. "The mothering ability of the hoggets is fantastic," says Mark. "I go round at lambing with a smile on my face. A hogget mother of twins will bond with both lambs in half an hour."

In total Mark and Elspeth run 1000 stock units, including 300 hoggets.

This season the lambs went to the works at 17.8 kgs – down a bit from 18.3 kgs last season. The lambs are weaned after 80 days at 25-26 kgs (approximately 300 gms a day), with the hoggets' lambs weaning at 23-24 kgs. By mid April, 90% of the lambs were gone to the works plus 300 bought in store lambs. Mark's goal for this lambing is 170% for the ewes and 130% for the hoggets. They will be increasing the farm to 90 hectares.

Mark is often asked how the hoggets develop, but he says he doesn't pay any special attention to them once they develop into two teeth. "I've lambed Border crosses and Coopworths and Romneys and none of these come close to the mothering ability and the milking ability of the Kelsos – and I'll say that to



Mark and Elspeth Thomson, with their children Lachlan, 2 years old and Emily, 5 months.

anyone. Sheep with triplets I leave all the way through and they cope with that."

"Despite lambing the hoggets, I am not left with any tail-end among the lambs going to the works. I'm just amazed – we are rapt with these sheep and can't wait for lambing to come around."

## Progress at Kelso

Kelso is a breed. Twelve years of performance-tested development has brought it to the standard it has reached today.

- There are imitators, generally offering little more than first cross rams.
- Our involvement with Ovita, using DNA identification, will give us a progressive advantage in identifying genes that will increase sheep farming profitability.
- Our base of 12,000 ewes and 3,000 ewe hoggets gives us a huge base for selection.
- Working closely with Abacus Biotech for our mating and development plans allows us to make continued genetic progress.

- We consider ourselves to be "Stockmen working with scientists".

We are really excited by the young stock now coming through – they are even, with good feet and bone. We believe that sheep farmers want these qualities, plus an emphasis on growth and lamb survival, and they want sheep that they can be proud of.

We are able to supply extra breeding pressure on these qualities because our clients are now scanning close to 200% in their Kelso-based flocks. Achieving high lamb weaning percentage and fast lamb growth is now a partnership between ourselves, our clients and our veterinary and genetic advisers.

*Roger Marshall*

## Top marks

Mark Raine, farming 3000 acres of steep hill country at Awakino, north of New Plymouth, was recently awarded the Progressive King Country supplier of the year.

"We won it because we supplied the number of lambs we said we would, when we said we would, and most of them were in the red square [premium] category," says Mark.

He sold about 4800 lambs at weaning, at an average weight of 32 kg, though he is now aiming for 33-34 kg.

Mark says he has had a great season. "This year I have the best ewe lambs I've ever grown, weighing 40 kg on 25 February. Ewes this year averaged 66 kg before tupping and they are still climbing, and the two-tooths are doing 235 g a day."

## Benefits of Ovita and DNA

After our initial DNA analysis within our Ranger programme last year, we decided this year to do our entire Kelso maternal programme with DNA parenting.

The positive spin-offs were amazing.

1. We could multiple sire mate with mobs of up to 1000 ewes.
2. This took out the variations or paddock effect on our NLB features as all were treated the same.
3. Nil shepherding at lambing meant our breeding values for survivability were more accurate.
4. There is now no limit to the scale Kelso ewe numbers can grow to, because of no tagging at birth.
5. The use of DNA makes our sheep breeding operation truly commercial with nil shepherding on all classes of country.
6. As DNA gene markers are found Kelso will have DNA profiles of thousands of Kelso females to analyse.

*John McDonald*

## Stockco Flexiram Leasing



Kelso has worked with Stockco and found it to hold a valuable and useful role in financing stud stock. We believe that this is an area which will grow. Kelso does not gain any commercial benefit from this arrangement other than providing a genuine option for farmers to have consistent payments each year.

It is a cost-effective way of spreading payments and the payment terms are flexible – for example, the first payment for rams may be delayed 12 months to match the sale of the first lambs sold.

*David Marshall*

## STOP PRESS

Kelso congratulates Phil and Jo Cregoe on winning the title of 2004 Farmer of the Year. And to thank them for choosing Kelso composite genetics over the original romney flock of 2650 breeding ewes.



*Phil & Jo Cregoe.*

## Pedigree, performance and profit

Charlie Saxton, Otago rugby great, said that to be outstanding at the game of rugby you must have 'the three P's' – position, possession and pace.

In sheep breeding, you also need 'three P's' – pedigree, performance and profit.

I believe we have this in Kelso with 14,000 recorded females including hoggets which can be traced back three generations or more – that's Pedigree. This is a huge advantage in sheep breeding on a large scale from a composite base.

Kelso clients on third and fourth generation Kelso ewes are scanning 185-210% in mixed age ewes including two tooths, and up to 150% in hoggets – that sure is Performance.

Weaning 140-170% with progeny growing out to 20 kgs, plus consistently doing 200-250 gms per day, and hoggets lambing 110%, makes Profit.

Field days in Gisborne, Feilding, Temuka and Queenstown

attracted excellent numbers in 2003. Feedback from these days has been very beneficial to Kelso, and to new and existing clients.

Over the past four months Kelso has placed a number of Kelso-bred females throughout New Zealand, mainly ewe lambs along with a number of breeding ewes. We will build on this next season due to the demand for Kelso genetics within the sheep breeding industry. We will be doing more visits, and aiming for more exposure at field days, and more on-farm discussion days.

I'll be going to the World Sheep and Wool Congress on July 17-23 in Ottawa, Canada – if anybody is interested in coming along, please contact me.

In the six months I have worked with Kelso what impresses me is the calibre of the people working within Kelso, and the professional advisers to the group. They are outstanding in all areas of the livestock industry, New Zealand and worldwide.

*Snow Hellyer*

# Ian and Debbie Stewart say goodbye as an associate flock



*"I believe the Kelso composite is the most complete sheep in New Zealand at present."*

Our property, Brookvale is a 245 hectare block located at Waiata, 13 km from Colyton, north east of Feilding. The property is one third flat, one third cultivatable and one third class 6/7 hill country. It is a well developed property divided into 100 paddocks. We have been involved with Kelso since 1999.

In February 2003 the Elite Kelso Flock came to Brookvale, and we lambed 2,200 stud ewes and 500 commercial ewes. We were in the middle of a drought, but once the rain came, the sheep thrived.

We have found the Kelso composite to be an outstanding sheep. They are tremendous mothers and grow extremely fast. They have an open face which is good, with outstanding longevity. We have ewes here that are up to 9 and 10 years of age producing top weight twins every year. They are easy care at lambing and good to muster, and they don't get spooked by water when crossing creeks. They are a very intelligent animal.

With having a high lambing percentage the standard of sheep has improved out of sight. This is put down to genetically superior rams.

I believe the Kelso composite is the most complete sheep in New

Zealand at present. After using the Finn cross since 1993 through to the Kelso composite, I have found them to be an outstanding breed.

The team of people woven into Kelso, from the South Island to the North Island, is wonderful to work with. They are progressive farmers, active in modern methods and are very warm people.

It has been very busy and enjoyable the past 12 months. We had our first Field Day at Brookvale on 22 October which was a great success with 180 people attending. Speakers included Dr Peter Fennessy (on Kelso sheep genetics); John McDonald (the Kelso Rangers); Carl Williams, (scanning Kelso ewes); David Shield and Matt Holden (the successful use of Kelso sheep). Our special thanks go to Will Wilson and Sarah Marshall who contributed so much to the success of the day.

It is with great sadness that Deb and I have had to resign from Kelso. Last November I had a back injury which damaged my Cauda Aquina (lower spine) and I spent 10 weeks in the Palmerston North rehab unit learning to walk again. My thanks to Phil De Silva, Peter Boyce and Deb for keeping the farm running smoothly, with the support of the Kelso team. It is going to be a long slow recovery, so in the best interests of Kelso, we have relocated the flock to Matt and Emma Holden's property at Onga Onga. We wish them every success in the future.

*Ian Stewart*

## New associate flock



Ian and Debbie's composite flock is now with Matt and Emma Holden, who farm 18km west of Onga Onga, bordering the Ruahine Ranges. Their farm is 480m above sea level and receives 1500mm of annual rainfall.

Kelso is very grateful to Ian and Deb for handing over a stable composite flock to Matt and Emma and thanks them for their dedicated work in helping

to lift the Kelso flock to new levels. Ian and Debbie, who have become friends of all the Kelso people, will continue to be part of our group.

Kelso is excited about working with Matt and Emma. Their commercial, physical and financial performance is excellent and we look forward to working with them. Matt is a stockman. He hosted the girls for the TV programme "City Girls" screened recently.

*David and Roger Marshall*

## Kelso Ranger Terminals

We are now preparing for our third mating of Kelso Rangers with 3,200 female Rangers mated to our highest growth rate and meat value Ranger sires, selected over the last two seasons.

We now have a real apex of sires emerging from the results of selection and population genetics. Our top growth rate ram lamb did 600 grams per day at Cone Peak Station from tailing to weaning. Out of approximately 400 Ranger rams 42 ram hoggets were selected for ongoing selection, with criteria consisting of later weights, eye muscle area and total meat value.

All were run at Cone Peak including hogget mating. The 42 initial selection averaged 43.1 kg weaning weight and 411 grams per day.

With these elite Rangers we are now on target to mate 5000 female Rangers within two years, producing up to 2000 Ranger rams for sale.

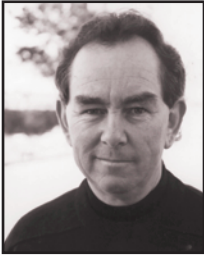
### THE MAIN DRIVERS BEHIND RANGERS

1. Kelso realized no one had seriously looked at selection for lamb survivability in terminals by lambing unshepherded on hill country.
2. The average registered terminal ewe flock in New Zealand is around 100 ewes so selection through population genetics and genetic technology (5000 females) will greatly speed up genetic progress.
3. The realization that up to 40% of New Zealand ewe and ewe hoggets will probably be mated to a terminal sire within three years.
4. With meat yield testing becoming a reality in meat companies, Kelso has to have a programme in place with sufficient scope and numbers to make quick genetic progress in the desired traits.
5. The Ranger is a dynamic breed – we can incorporate the best terminal genetics from anywhere.

This is an exciting development for Kelso – Abacus Biotech has set Kelso a target of 4% genetic gain per annum in growth rate and yield!

*John McDonald*

## KELSO FRANCHISE TEAM



**Michael Talbot,**  
Longdowns

At Longdowns this year, all our Kelso ewes will be DNA identified which will allow them to be multi sire mated

and lambled unsheltered.

We are now running a proportion of our Kelso ewes at Richard Daly's property at Windwhistle, to test them under truly commercial conditions. In 2003 our two tooth's weaned 160% for Richard with minimal shepherding. The ram lambs were returned to Longdowns and have all exceeded 50 kg before being sold.

Congratulations to our clients John and Betty Greenslade of Montalto Ashburton, Supreme Winners of the 2004 Canterbury Region Ballance Farm Environment Awards and also the PPCS Best Livestock Farm Award. John and Betty's average ewe weight was 65 kg and they achieved 152% lambs weaned, despite a major snowstorm, and 102% hogget lambs weaned, with a total lamb average carcass weight of 18.1 kg.

The judges commented that the Greenslades had "a well-thought out approach to stock and pasture management and high long-term production levels in a harsh environment."



**Jason McDonald,**  
Acton Meadows  
and Cheddar  
Valley Station

The McDonald family of Kelso southern has purchased Cheddar

Valley Station, together with some other Kelso associated investors.

The station is 8300 acres and initially will carry 18,500 stock units. It borders the north side of the Waiau River in north Canterbury.

All the Acton Meadows' Kelsos - 3500 in total - are being shifted to Cheddar. Jason will be the overall manager and Tracey will manage the recording side of the Kelsos.

This is a strategic move for Kelso, as with all sheep being DNA:d for parentage the Kelso numbers can be increased to 6000-8000 with no shepherding. The superior genetics are being selected in the same commercial environment as that of our large scale clients who are demanding selection for survivability.

Acton Meadows, at Five Rivers in Southland, will still be our main Kelso selling and distribution centre, managed by Glen McDonald.

The breeding format will be: at weaning the top 50-60% of ram lambs will return to Acton Meadows for further recording and selection for later weights, eye muscle area and meat value, and sold and distributed as usual.



**Darcy Hamilton,**  
Kaikino

I don't think anyone went through lambing without a storm of some description. It was one of our wettest

lambings, making tagging at birth a nightmare. This was the reason we decided to DNA parental match the remaining stud ewes.

The survivability increased the moment we left the ewes alone, especially in the AI mob.

We still docked 150% overall, not the 160% we were expecting, and averaged 31.5 kg at 95 days for their lambs.

We were very pleased with the DNA progeny matching, and will now mean we can lamb in any paddock on the farm.

Along with a lot of our clients we are finding the composites are still performing under adverse conditions. They have been able to take advantage of good prices in both the good and the bad seasons we have experienced in the past three years.

The ewe lambs are also fetching a premium as breeding stock. If you have any surplus composite ewe lambs please ring Snow Hellyer 03 476 1724 or 0800 115 357.

# kelso. **PROGRESSIVE BREEDING FOR PROGRESSIVE FARMERS** *Order your rams now*

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