

## Seasons Greetings

To all our friends and clients. As the year ends we would like to provide you an update and look forward to seeing you in the New Year hopefully after a well deserved break.

### 2019 A Challenging Year

This would be the most challenging year in my farming career. There are a number of factors to this (getting older maybe) but continued attacks on our right to farm are of significant concern. Regulation on winter grazing, carbon, freshwater, biodiversity and others are shaping up to seriously affect our rural communities and our ability to continue farming livestock. This ongoing wave of anti-farming has coincided with the worst spring conditions since the big 2010 snow year. Actually in 2010 after the snow, conditions improved whereas this year the rain and cold continues.

On the flip side the world is short of high value protein, lamb and mutton are at record prices. The returns I've had to date are nothing short of eye watering, over \$150/head of lamb and over \$180/head of cull ewe. It seems strange to be wondering why we do this on such wonderful current returns. Across rural New Zealand there is anxiety and concern, a real lack of confidence caused by multi party attacks on the Agriculture sector. My various engagements off farm have cemented the view that we must fight the really crazy stuff, adapt our farm systems where possible or exit. During the winter I called on past staff farming in the UK as well as looking at sheep Blackdale has sent over and flocks where we are getting highly rated genetics from, They (UK sheep farmers) are living in a no mans land, on top of government regulation, Brexit, poor prices relative to costs they may have questionable market access past 2020.



Hamish Walker MP for Clutha-Southland  
November 30 at 8:17 AM



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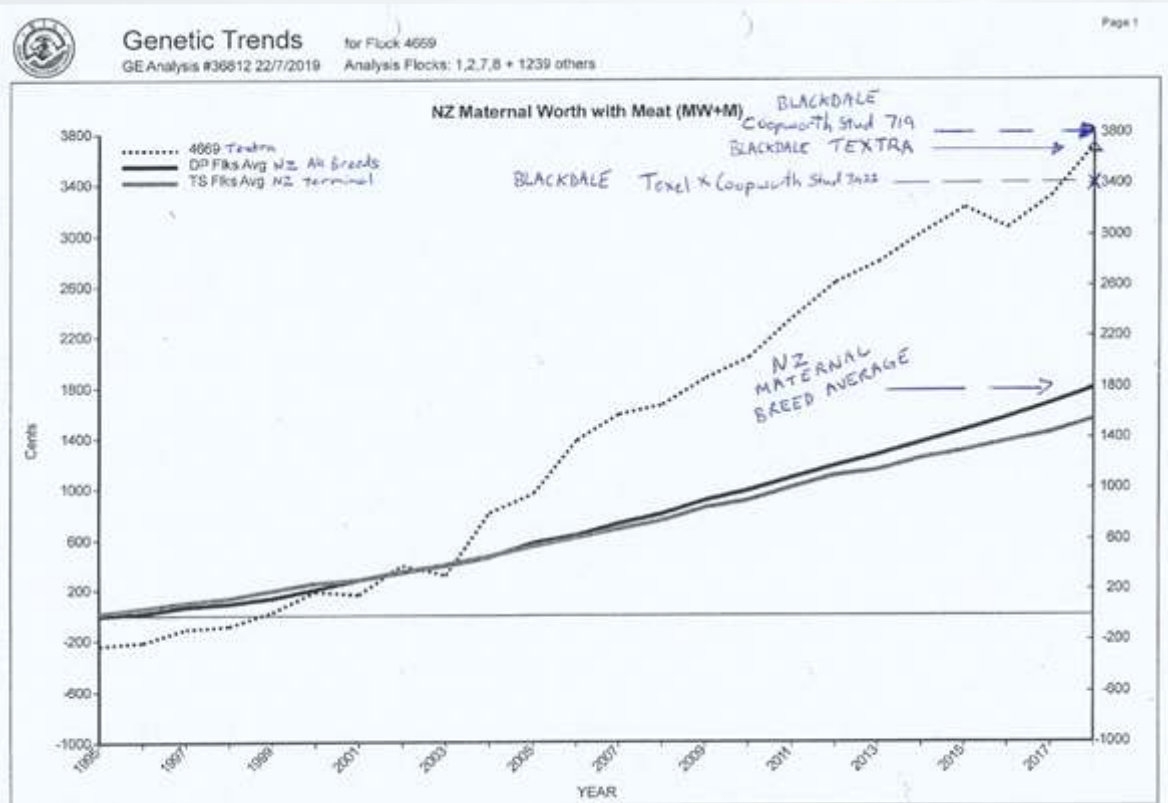
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They are working in very uncertain times and many are doing the only logical thing. Working on the things they control, not government policy, the markets or the like but making sure their farm systems can withstand upheaval, cutting costs and looking for low labour sheep of high genetic ability. It's been really pleasing to see Blackdale genetics do so well in trials over there. After 50 years of performance recording, group breeding schemes, central progeny tests, DNA testing and old fashioned stock inspection it's nice to think our genetics measure up.

Please note the Genetic trends graph on the right - to follow the 'index' is dollars and cents on average to you and your business.

In the November NZ Genetic Evaluation Blackdale has 22 proven sires of the top 100 Maternal Sires + Meat of all breeds NZ wide.



## Ram Orders for 2020

Please return your order form by **20 December 2019** using the enclosed reply paid envelope or emailing to [blackdale70@gmail.com](mailto:blackdale70@gmail.com). Phone orders are welcome on 021 855 106 or try evenings on (03) 224 6106. Please indicate the number of rams required and the preferred price option, also indicate any special requirements we could help you with.

We intend commencing private selling for two tooths in late January/early February while ram hoggets will be offered in March after scanning.



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## Ram Fairs

The Southern Texel Breeders Ram Fair will be held at the Gore A&P Showgrounds on Wednesday 22nd January 2020 with selling commencing at 10.30am. Inspection is prior.

## Brucellosis Accreditation

Blackdale remains brucellosis free following our annual blood tests.

## Blackdale contact details

The Blackdale website is [www.blackdalestud.com](http://www.blackdalestud.com)  
 Blackdale email address. [blackdale70@gmail.com](mailto:blackdale70@gmail.com)  
 Facebook: Blackdale Stud

## Lambing 2019 The Long Wash

From the first lamb to the last lamb we were blessed with 503mls (20 inches) of rain, hail and cold temperatures. Our early lambing Flock ewes (trial) and the Texel and Texel Suffolk stud had the best start conditions late August/early September but even they have not seen much sun and have been well short on pasture cover. We had a young English shepherd Ben Connor (Texel breeder) whose good nature in the face of shit conditions was a real bonus. My niece Brenna helped Mum and Dad at the home place. Son Daniel also enjoyed long days of miserable weather to help out.



*Ben Connor our British Shepherd*

All in all a poorer spring than any here back to 1987 only now at 2.5 times the farm scale.

## Breed Lambs scanned to ewes mated

## Lambs tailed to ewes mated

### EWES

Texel	184%	160%
Suftex	185%	166%
Coopworth	195%	172%
Texel x Coopworth	190%	165%
Textra	191%	167%
Flocks	183%	153%
HOGGETS	114%	84%

(to ram for 23 days)



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## Beltex Trial to date

At Blackdale we are always keen on genetics that might lift your results and would incorporate those into our breeding programme if we think there were benefits to you.

Last year we AI'd some good Texel x Suffolk ewes to Beltex sires (we did this on Texel x Suffolk ewes as they have high growth rates something Beltex are known to be short on). At weaning the  $\frac{1}{2}$  Beltex  $\frac{1}{2}$  Texel x Suffolk lambs were about \$15/head behind the Texel AI lambs of the same age. They looked like meaty animals and as we did not have the numbers to kill opted to test run them on flock ewes this year. The ultrascan data showed they were fatter but not as muscled as our Texel hoggets.

Four  $\frac{1}{2}$  Beltex  $\frac{1}{2}$  Texel x Suffolk ram hoggets were mated to flock ewes (1/3 of the flock ewes). 5 Texel ram hoggets got 1/3 of flock ewes, and a mix of old Texel sires another 1/3 for 18 days.

My observations were that the Beltex x lambs looked very chunky, had great back ends and very vigorous attitude. I think they were a smaller lamb at birth and in the hogget lambing where I trialled them against the Texel x Suffolk were easier lambing. They offer no colour marking and are chubby little buggers. Generally I expected the lambs to yield better as they look to have great back ends BUT the lambs which were born 26 August to 14 September we left untailed and the first draft 19 November of singles had no drench. The second draft 28 November (83 days old) were drenched 2 weeks prior to draft.

## Summary from first 2 drafts:

Beltex x Texel x Suffolk	Texel
30% off mum	35% off mum
57.41% yield	58.24% yield

Both drafts have the Beltex x Texel x Suffolk lambs 11 cents/kg behind the Texel sired lambs.

We will continue with the trial and also have the hogget lamb comparison in the new year however it is looking unlikely that Beltex will add to our clients returns over current genetics available at Blackdale.

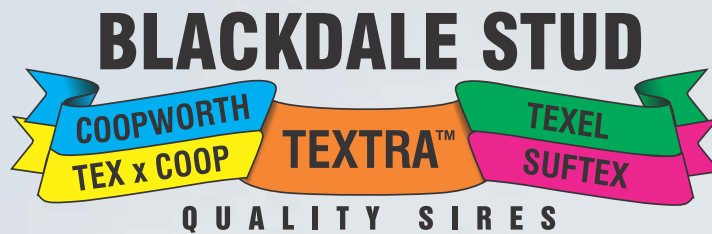
## Hospice

We were pleased to make a further donation to Hospice Southland on the back of Textra 416 (Hos) semen sales. In total we have been able to support Hospice and the wonderful work they do by \$8,321 from the AI collection done by Julia Aspinall and her Genetic Gains team, so thank you all very much



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## Congratulations

We always enjoy our client success, so to see Maurice and Renee Judson and the team at The Ranch pick up the Silver Fern Farms Paddock to Plate award was terrific, well done.

It was also great to read that Andrew and Lynnore Templeton of The Rocks Station success in being named the Supreme winner of the Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards. They also picked up awards for innovation, agribusiness management and livestock.

## A message from Peter

In recent years Leon has written this client letter but for this year I have asked to add a contribution from me.

This year would have been the 69<sup>th</sup> lambing I have done on this farm. I skipped school at lambing time from age 14. It's amazing how much faster the sheep can run now!

Next year will be the 48<sup>th</sup> year I have been selling rams. Coopworth rams in 1972 sold for \$60. I did not set out to be a commercial ram breeder just wanted better performing animals for our own use but discussion group members, neighbours and family wanted our rams so it grew from there. Our clients are our friends so we leave no stone unturned to breed them the best rams possible.

I admire the farming efficiency of our customers and proud to be still selling to sons and grandsons of some of our original clients from the 70's and 80's. The support I have received from Marion has made the expansion of our sheep breeding enterprise possible and allows me to continue.

Likewise having Leon show skill and enthusiasm for sheepbreeding has been very satisfying to me and he and Wendy now have the major part at Blackdale. With the heavy demand to run a successful ram breeding exercise today one could consider handing it on to your son a form of child abuse!

Marion and I now run a 48 hectare retirement block of the farm with assistance from Leon on key procedures and focus on the Texel and SufTex flocks.

My involvement with the Texel breed commenced with the Sheepac group as an inspector for its quarantine stations from 1986 to fronting the selling of the top rams from HopuHopu in November 1990. Hence the success of the Texel as a contributor to genetic improvements of both dual purpose and terminal sire flocks in NZ has been very pleasing to me. Working on genetic improvement is never finished.

We are continually adapting our animals to meet market requirements and adapt to farming practices. In the last three years we have been able to use imported semen from top British sires. The first of these Vorn Yardstick has had a major impact in boosting lamb growth rates. In the NZGE ratings he is now 4<sup>th</sup> highest lamb growth rate sire over all breeds.

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At the Gore Ram Fair last year our four Yardstick sons sold for an average price of \$5375. We have four more sons going to the next fair on 22 January 2020, all in the top 5% of NZ sires for Terminal Worth and Growth.

The Genetic Trends for the Blackdale Texel flock are very encouraging with the NZ Terminal Worth Index \$7.50 above the NZ average and the Maternal Worth + Meat Index \$17 above NZ average. Farmers have a large choice of Terminal sire options with vendors making some overly ambitious claims of their breeding merit. However I strongly believe Texel cross ewes mated to Texel sires leave  $\frac{3}{4}$  Texel lambs which are still the farmers best option for hardiness, management and market return.

We are still incorporating the GDF9 fertility gene into our Texel flock. Results are encouraging with the Texel GDF9 2 tooth scanning 203% and 4 tooth 204% at least 25% above the non GDF9 ewes of the same age. With sheep and lamb prices at record levels I am pleased to see the sheep farming future look good.

Best wishes to all our clients and their families.

## 2019 - the Blackdale Family

Jessica has graduated from Massey University and got the honour of being Valedictorian and is now working for the private Economics Consulting firm in Wellington.

Daniel spent the first half of the year working for a fencing contractor which he enjoyed but has kindly come home to assist us on the farm until we find permanent staff.

Olivia received her Queens Guide award this year - the highest in Guiding. Olivia has just finished school and heads to SIT in 2020 to follow her passion of culinary/cookery.

Maggie has just completed her first year at College and enjoyed playing rugby again in the winter for Riverton.

## Fluffy the end of an era

Some pets are just friends, they have a nature, a personality and a love of chocolate biscuits that sets them apart.

Jessica's 2004 born Textra pet day champion lamb passed away this season just shy of her 15<sup>th</sup> year. RIP Fluffy



*Jessica and Fluffy 2004*

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If you haven't already be sure to have a look at the Blackdale website and facebook page. Our facebook page continues to get more and more followers and likes. We try to keep this up to date and relevant to what we are doing. Any ideas of what you would like to see then let us know.

Our email address was changed last year so please be sure that you are using our current address which is: [blackdale70@gmail.com](mailto:blackdale70@gmail.com) It would be great if you put your email and cellphone contacts through onto your reply form so we can ensure that we have update information.

We always welcome communication with our clients and we would like to wish all our clients the very best for a settled and successful season and we look forward to seeing you in the coming months.

The Blackdale team would like to wish our clients and their families a very safe and Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

Kind regards

Leon, Wendy, Peter and Marion

**Leon and Wendy**

Phone: (03) 224 6106

Leon Cell No: 021 855 106

Email: [blackdale70@gmail.com](mailto:blackdale70@gmail.com)

**Peter and Marion**

Phone (03) 224 6059

Email: [matblackdale@gmail.com](mailto:matblackdale@gmail.com)

## Life on the farm a brief pictorial 2019



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[www.blackdalestud.co.nz](http://www.blackdalestud.co.nz)

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Life on the farm a brief pictorial 2019 cont:



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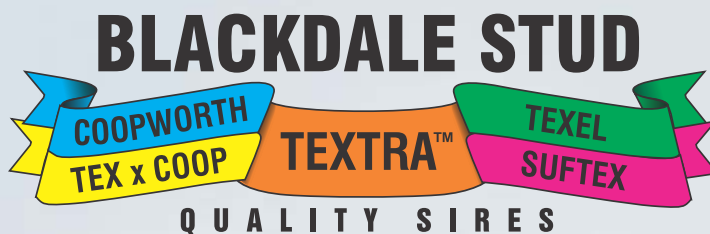


FLOCK 77

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FLOCK 35





**BLACKDALE RAM ORDER FORM Please return by 20 December 2019**

NAME: ..... TELEPHONE NO: .....  
 EMAIL ADDRESS: .....

**NZ Elite Sires (Top 5% in NZ)**

**Maternal Breed \$1500**

Breed:           Coopworth                    Texel x Coopworth                    Textra  
 No of rams required: .....

**Coopworth Orders: -**

No. of Rams required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (range \$600-\$1250): .....

**Texel Orders: -**

No. of Rams required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (range \$500-\$1250): .....

**Texel x Coopworth Orders: -**

No. of Texel x Coopworth two tooth rams required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (range \$600-\$1250): .....

**Textra Orders: -**

No. of Textra two tooth rams required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (range \$600-\$1250): .....

**Texel x Suffolk Orders: -**

No. of Texel x Suffolk two tooth rams required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (range \$500-\$800): .....

**Ram Hoggets for March Pick-Up**

No. of Pure Texel Ram Hoggets required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (\$500-\$700): .....  
 No. of Texel x Coopworth Ram Hoggets required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (\$400-\$700): .....  
 No. of Textra Ram Hoggets required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (\$400-\$700): .....  
 No. of Texel x Suffolk Ram Hoggets required: .....  
 Price bracket requested (\$500-\$600): .....

**TEASERS** available \$300 each - required numbers: .....

**Comment/Special requirements:-** .....  
 .....

