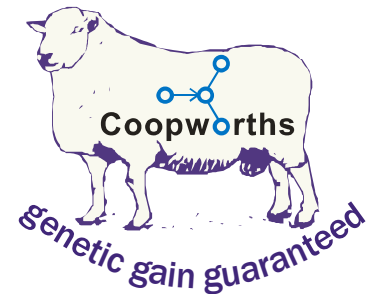


Edward Dinger  
128 Baker Road  
Whitehall, R.D.4,  
Cambridge 3496  
Phone: 07 8278784  
E-mail: rams@ceresfarm.co.nz  
Web: www.ceresfarm.co.nz

# Ceres Farm

Mid-North Coopworth Company

MEMBER N.Z. OVINE REFERENCE SCHEME  
FACIAL ECZEMA TOLERANCE TESTING SINCE 1984



## Newsletter 33, September 2009

In complete contrast with 2008, Whitehall had a very good summer and autumn this year. The Hawkes Bay region suffered another drought, the third in a row.

Winter, with a number of frosts and wet cold windy weather, quickly brought grass growth to a halt. Personally, I generally find these conditions even harder to manage than a drought. With ewes and hoggets in lamb it was a difficult situation and I was glad to have a good supply of silage bales.

At long last the lamb prices seem to be at a more satisfactory level. Let's hope they stay that way. With most economies around the world in recession, we must be pleased that lamb at least has (so far) held its value.

None of the fundamental problems of the last 12 months have tangibly changed though, and as long as the meat industry is based on the best price of the day there will be no integrated supply chains.

Seeking certainty is seeking the unattainable, so you have to be suspicious of the future. You only have to watch the wild fluctuations in the NZ dollar.

### The MNCC Flock

The good summer gave ideal conditions for Facial Eczema and spore counts went through the roof. Spore counts in the district rose to a staggering one million plus! The good grass covers, coupled of course with my flock's high degree of FE tolerance, seemed to have allowed the stock to escape any ill effects. Dose rates this year for the potential stud rams stayed at the same level as the last five years at 0.6mg per kg bodyweight.

Several of my clients have tested MNCC rams for the Myomax gene and, as I suspected, it is present. After running DNA tests on my potential stud rams, it appears that the MNCC flock has about a 25% incidence of Myomax. This is much higher than I suspected.

Myomax is a recessive gene that gives 5% extra muscle and 7% less fat, it also increases the dressing out percentage.

The major meat exporters have promised to start paying on the dressing out percentage at some time in the near future and since a double copy of the gene (aka "Myomax Gold") doubles the advantage to 10% extra muscle and 14% less fat, I have decided to go for it. It will mean that I will have to fork out approx. \$20,000 to have the ewe flock tested and \$2,500 to have the potential stud rams done. The ewe flock will be a once only, but the rams will have to be tested for the next few years. In three generations I should be able to guarantee that all flock rams will have at least a single copy of the Myomax gene and all stud rams should have the Myomax Gold. This also means that in a few years a minimum of 50% of the offspring from MNCC rams will inherit at least a single Myomax gene, regardless of the ewes used.

This new SNP (snip chip) DNA technology opens some new and interesting possibilities and allows the price for DNA testing to come down to a more realistic level. It is just another tool we can use to improve lamb production. Barring the expense it will have consequences for the other traits. Although the BV's for growth and meat should improve on average, the other BV's (e.g. fertility, survival and wool) could potentially also be affected.

### NZ Ovine Reference Scheme

It was a good year yet again for MNCC flock with the top three places taken by MNCC rams and a total of 12 (out of 34 places) on the first page. For the last seven years MNCC rams have had a prominent position in the NZOSR rankings.

It is pleasing for me that other breeders are starting to pay attention, and several stud rams were sold or leased to them.

## SIL

SIL has decided to split the meat Breeding Values (BVs), previously given in the columns Growth with meat (early growth) and Meat with growth (later growth), into three specialised columns. This should make it easier to choose between early and later growth. The new “growth index” will have a greater impact on the overall index with the effect of size moved from meat to growth. Conversely, the new “meat index” will have less impact on the overall index than the old one. There will now be three meat/growth related BV's, with BVs for Lamb Growth, Adult Ewe Size and Meat Value. The latter includes carcass weight and muscle distribution. This latest development was one of the reasons that swayed me to deliberately test and breed for the Myomax gene.

So to summarise, the old BV's DPGm (early growth) and DPMg (later growth) will be replaced by DPL (lamb growth), DPA (adult ewe size), and DPV (meat value). The aim is for easier interpretation of figures by SIL users - both ram buyers and ram breeders.

To my surprise SIL has agreed to changes in their publications of the BV for FE and have even agreed to my suggestion to rename it from “FE Resistance” to “FE Tolerance”.

## Worms

With the arrival of Novartis' new worm drench Zolvix, the other pharmaceutical companies will undoubtedly come out with competing products. This should give us the opportunity to keep worm tolerance at bay for at least another 25 years or more.

Targeted selective treatment, whereby you treat individual animals rather than the whole mob (i.e. leaving the clean “happy” ones alone), provides enough *refugia* (habitat free of drench for non-resistant worms to multiply) to slow down the development of drench resistance. The practice of drenching only the animals that are having trouble with worms apparently does work according to a three year study at Lincoln University.

In tests it was found that the 88% of animals treated displayed a positive response to drench, suggesting that the presence of parasites was the cause of the poorer performance in a majority of animals.

This compares positively with a monthly whole-flock treatment and delays the onset of worm drench resistance. In conjunction with this result, it has also been suggested that the onset of worm resistance can be further slowed by using Zolvix only once as the final drench in the season and only for your replacement ewe hoggets and remaining lambs.

## Ram Prices

To make it a bit easier to assign ram price, prices for the new season will be structured into five preset bands reflecting the ram's closest DPP index.

\$1200	SIL index $\geq$ 2400
\$1000	SIL index $\geq$ 2200 to 2400
\$900	SIL index $\geq$ 2000 to 2200
\$750	SIL index $\geq$ 1800 to 2000
\$600	SIL index $<$ 1800

As most rams for sale will fall between 1800 and 2200 DPP index bracket, the price for most rams will be roughly the same as the 0.4 multiplied by the index that has been charged over the last few years.

The purchase of a quality recorded ram is still one of the best investments a sheep farmer can make.

Well, that's it again from me this year. Wish you all a happy and profitable farming year.

Hope to catch up with you in November.

Please return your order form, phone me, or send an e-mail if you want to purchase any rams this year.

As always, my 2th ram selection list will be up on my website ([www.ceresfarm.co.nz](http://www.ceresfarm.co.nz)) as soon as it becomes available, usually by the end of October.

Edward Dinger

**Return this page to:**

**A.E. Dinger, c/- Ceres Farm Ltd.,  
128 Baker Road,  
Whitehall R.D.4,  
Cambridge 3496.**

**Orders by phone (07 827 8784) or email (rams@ceresfarm.co.nz) are also welcome.**

**Name:**

**Address:**

(Please include street number and your postcode)

**Telephone:**

I need approximately ..... rams from MNCC

