

# Ceres Farm

Mid-North Coopworth Company

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MEMBER OF COOPWORTH GENETICS AND NZOSR  
FACIAL ECZEMA GOLD™ CERTIFIED



## Newsletter 39 September 2015

The Cambridge area had a pretty good year weather-wise with no special circumstances, no dramas. With the very good prices for beef and lamb holding their own, most of us will have had a relatively decent year with good prospects for the coming year. Spare a thought for our dairy colleagues who have seen their incomes drop by around 45% since the highs of 2013.

### The Past

As I indicated in July this will be my final season selling rams and for some of you, this will be the end of an era. It was almost 40 years ago that I first started breeding rams, for the first four years as part of the Mid-North Coopworth Company (a breeding group) and thereafter continuing on my own account.

The very first Newsletter was typed on my typewriter and then multiplied by a spirit duplicator and later by photocopier from our local rural school. In 1980 the typewriter was replaced by a (by today's standards) very clunky Apple II computer equipped with a dot-matrix printer. Now of course we can readily achieve the entire exercise without even leaving the house.

The improvement of the MNCC flock has been pretty impressive too, with large gains in all the five major economic breeding traits plus facial eczema tolerance. MNCC rams have been used nationwide by clients, the NZOSR (NZ Ovine Sire Referencing Scheme) and the CPT (Central Progeny Test), and with semen sent to the USA, Australia and Nepal. Besides winning the NZ Sheep industry awards a couple of times directly, it has been satisfying to see MNCC blood in some of the subsequent winners.

### Facial Eczema

It has been a major disappointment that after 30 years of intense breeding for Facial Eczema tolerance, it is still not under complete control whilst the high inheritance rate would indicate that it should well and truly be a non-issue by now. It is becoming increasingly clear that other factors come into play. Unfortunately the lack of any research in FE means an ideal solution probably won't be forthcoming anytime soon. There is good evidence that annual blood testing the ewe hoggets for natural GGT levels in the autumn, combined with sporidesmin dosing/testing of the rams may give more reliable results.

FE Gold will have a seminar at Ruakura at the end of October to lobby AgResearch to restart research in FE, which stopped about five years ago. The reduction of research in agriculture and the commercialisation of basic research by successive governments (whereby all research has to see a profit within just a few years) has severe shortcomings and certainly hasn't been as successful as promised. If you are inclined to complain to your local MP about this, please do!

The 2015 Beef & Lamb NZ Sheep Industry Awards gave the MNCC flock the trophy for Facial Eczema Tolerance, and MNCC was also a finalist for awards in all the maternal trait categories. It was quite satisfying to see MNCC remains amongst the best maternal flocks in New Zealand.

## The Future

It has been fortunate that Ross Richards (a former client and Coopworth breeder) has been prepared to take 210 odd breeding ewes so that his "Romani" flock will get a good injection of MNCC genes. Many smaller ram breeding units have been assimilated into commercial flocks over the years. In the meantime large commercial breeding companies with big advertising budgets are gaining ground at the expense of the smaller ram breeders - yet it is the individual ram breeders that over the years have made most of the significant genetic progress and discoveries. Ross is a good man and deserves your support and I hope that you will consider buying rams from him.

## Ram Prices for 2015

There are a very limited number of Romney Coopworth crosses available this year (sired by Ross Alexander's ram ARDG 228/12).

Ram prices will follow the moderate lamb prices of the past year. Due to the higher indexes they have been adjusted accordingly:

SIL index $\geq$ 2500	\$1,350
SIL index $\geq$ 2500 to 2200	\$1,250
SIL index $\geq$ 2200 to 2000	\$1,100
Extra for FE tested	\$150

Please keep in mind that a quality SIL recorded ram with FE tolerance, fertility, good carcass and fleece weights (all of which MNCC provides), is a sound investment in the future of your flock. The opportunity to invest in genetics of proven value has never been better.

As usual, this year's 2th Ram Selection List should be available on the Ceres Farm website ([www.ceresfarm.co.nz](http://www.ceresfarm.co.nz)) by the end of October.

Please send me your ram needs by sending me an e-mail or phoning me.

Thanking you for your patronage over the years I wish you a prosperous farming season and as always hope to see you for a last time in November.

Edward Dinger.

