



Hello again

This is our longest newsletter yet and we have put it together like this as Doctor Clive Dalton has kindly let us use some of his very educational material – I'll tell you more about Clive and his background below so read on ...

Welcome to our new contacts from this year's National Fieldays. We had more than double the number of new people interested in what we're doing this year, compared to 2018. We are thrilled to be able to add you to our mail and contact list.



I think this new interest is a direct result of the worsening problem of parasite resistance to the drenches and also to the increasing number of lifestyle block newcomers who are looking at the easiest care of sheep possible.

We are pleased to have sold considerably more rams in the last season so welcome the new clients who choose to purchase from us. With the increased interest we are planning on having a good number more sheep for sale in the 2019 season.



Drench resistance – my rant for the day ...

We are shocked at the number of good farmers telling us of their resistance problems with quite a few saying Zolvix is the only drench working collectively for them.

Ginny Dodunski (my vet) was horrified when I told her about this situation as, she said, this product should be kept as the last resort or as a clean-up drench, rather than being used regularly.

Ginny also tells me too that putting capsules in stock to shore up their resistance to parasites is a real problem as it speeds up the resistance issue.

It all begs the question – how much do a lot of vets really understand about the products and advice they are dishing out to farmers, who rely on them as the 'experts' in the 'dealing with parasites' area?

More specifically, how many of them are choosing short-term financial gain over sustainable long-term wellbeing of their clients, in terms of what they are prescribing with regard to action to keep stock going and boost them up.

I have to be reasonably careful with what I say as I've been in trouble before with questioning financial gain by professionals, versus long-term sustainability of farmer clients. While I don't want to unnecessarily upset anyone, I think the question has to be asked – are we a bunch of shrinking violets who just do what we're told by the faceless corporates who like to make lots of money off us?



Never drenched

This is an issue I have been banging away at for a good while now as it is the basis of what we do.

That said, I must say that we are very pleased with the progress we've made breeding sheep put under considerable pressure without needing to be drenched.

Of last year's progeny, only 12% of our ewe lambs and 15% of our ram have ever been drenched.

Even though I have been specialising in parasite resistance and the practise of refugia for 16 years now, I can still see that we are making progress with increased natural resistance coming through in our stock year upon year and this is very satisfying.

Below this Clive Dalton talks about resistance being inherited and how this was identified by Ruakura Research Station years ago so it is an honour for us to be able to bear testimony to this face.

A mystery unravelled

At a recent Wormwise seminar Ginny was able to unravel another mystery for me and it goes like this ... a number of people visiting the Fieldays said they were mystified by how that, after getting a good test result for a 'Worm Reduction Test', a few months later the result was reversed and they were in trouble.

Ginny's explanation was that, obviously both tests were done when a different species of parasite was present, so drench might have been effective with one parasite but not the another.

So that is something to be mindful of when looking at the results of these tests.

The wonders of wool

We at Fernleaf still believe that wool is a great product that will outlast synthetics once people wake up to the problems that synthetics are causing around the world.

In fact, we have noticed a definite swing amongst our B&B guests towards wool and other natural products. This interest is no doubt spurred on by our lady guests' interest in Carolyn's gorgeous knitting for our wee granddaughter Freya.

Clive Dalton, Hamilton – agricultural scientist / parasite expert extraordinaire

Drench resistance to triples

The news coming from recent Wormwise farmers' meetings about total worm resistance to triple drenches, should not be surprising. It has long been predicted by scientists and veterinarians.

The reasons are not difficult to see. Twenty years ago in our Waikato Polytech Herd Managers' classes at five Waikato towns, I took students into local vet clinics and farm supply stores to see the range of products on sale for internal parasites. The promotions of fishing rods, golf clubs, test match tickets, branded clothing and Christmas hams always appealed to them.

Also, the annual table in farming papers showing more than 40 products from five international companies illustrated the extensive drench range available.

Reading the Wormwise material, you'll find genetics is always at the end – a last resort. It may have been, but the need for change is more than urgent – it's a crisis, and veterinarians must change, even if it means losing a major source of their income.

I was once invited to a Wormwise seminar but told at the start by the veterinarian organiser, that there was no time to raise my hobbyhorse of genetics.

Ruakura research showed decades ago that worm resistance was clearly inherited, so selection for the trait was worthwhile. But identifying resistant sheep that can handle internal parasites has to be done in a proper selection programme on the farm, and this takes time and many farmers will need practical help like they got in the old MAF days from the Sheep and Beef officers. Breeders have to take on this role for their clients – and this is happening.

It's good to see pioneering stud breeders who have made great progress, helping farmers now in big trouble who are desperate for help. These breeders have sheep that have never been drenched, but they have struggled to get recognition, as it was far easier for farmers to buy drench.



It's now time for Wormwise to move genetics to the top of the action list, and for veterinarians to refresh their genetic knowledge to help their clients, before the hills end up in trees and bees.

Movements with our family

We are pleased to have my second son Justin, and his partner Ananda now living on the property and becoming more involved with the farm.

They moved into the house my father Houlton built in 1936 and lived in for 55 years.

It is so good to have their support on a day-to-day business – although Justin runs a fencing business and does a lot of work in King Country area he is able to spend a fair amount of time with Carolyn and I doing some of the grunt and other fiddly work so I can do other stuff – like 'playing' on my BTD6 bulldozer.

When I say play, I do mean work, of course!! – on tracks, etc

Ian (our eldest son) is still teaching at Kaipara College in Helensville. But he comes down regularly and spends some of his school holiday time with us, feeding out and mucking around. He continues to help me write these newsletters too, which I really appreciate.

Our youngest son Campbell is currently based in Auckland and has a very young baby girl so he is not able to spend much time on the farm yet.

However, both Carolyn and I feel so blessed to be able to have our boys in our lives and we are getting a lot out of having them around and being just being in contact with them.



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