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### Merry Christmas!

Another year gone and time to say Merry Christmas to you all and all the very best for the New Year.

And thanks for all your continued support during a very difficult year.



Lamb numbers are down (see following article about how StockCARE<sup>®</sup> farms did) and there are some very mixed messages about lamb prices for this season.

We could expect the processors to be engaging in another procurement battle and the hot and dry period will be putting some pressure on store lamb prices.

### We have rebranded!

As of now Sheep for Profit has been replaced by our new name and brand StockCARE<sup>®</sup>.

This change has been on our minds for a few years and has been done as part of our strategy to get a better fit with what meat eating consumers are saying. They want to have confidence their meat has been raised with care as well as a whole heap of other things.

We recognised some time ago that our system, while designed to help farmers improve their productivity, actually helps you all measure and manage the well-being of your livestock. And that's another reason for the new name – it is for sheep and cattle.

We are sure most of you will have seen that when we look after the stock they will look after you in terms of outputs.

Fiona has been developing our new website (same address) which will go live a day or so after we get this newsletter out.

Apart from the name and website nothing else has changed. However, despite all our efforts we should expect some glitches so please let us know if you find any.

### StockCARE<sup>®</sup> farmers maintain lambing percentage!

Beef & Lamb NZ are projecting the national lambing percentage will be down 10% to 109.6%. The main impact is from the 12% drop in ewe flock performance.

Well, we would like to announce the StockCARE<sup>®</sup> average is 127% for this year compared to 129% last year. Sure we don't have many farms in Southland but they are spread everywhere else so this result is fantastic!

The terrible weather did impact on many farms across the country and in many regions ewes went into mating and winter in less than optimal body condition. We'd like to think that on most of our StockCARE<sup>®</sup> farms a huge effort was made to get the ewes right before mating and this would have been very beneficial during lambing.

## Should we drench ewes around lambing or not?

Some recent publicity about long-acting pre-lamb treatments and oral dosing at docking needs to be considered for what it is worth. These studies were done under the FITT system and have been published by Beef and Lamb NZ.

The long-acting pre-lamb study involved injecting ewes with Dectomax despite no research showing if this is long-acting or not. The lambs from treated ewes were heavier at weaning. The treated ewes had a significant body condition response but no weight gain response. We'd like to know how a ewe can gain body condition but not live weight!

A more recent study by the same people showed an oral ewe drench at docking reduced dags but made no difference to body condition and live weight at weaning. The conclusion – **“Given this result and the proven effect of a ewe docking drench selecting for drench resistance, there is no justification for drenching ewes at docking.”**

It's a pity this sort of information and recommendations comes from your levies. None of the study reports give any indication of the worm challenge to the ewes. Drenches will only give a response if there are enough worms about!

Ewes can be affected by worms at any time of the year – not the whole mob, just some of them in the mob. Not drenching will just make them worse.

Ewes that “need a hand” can, and should, be drenched. Just make sure the drench works and plan for refugia. Either run the treated ewes with the untreated ones or plan to graze the paddocks used for the treated ones with the untreated ones later on.

As an aside many farmers questioned in the Beef and Lamb survey about lambing performance thought worms were a major issue this year.

### Sale lambs – doing it smarter!

Lamb prices eased a bit last season compared to the 2008/2009 bumper year. For this season's lambs, things are looking promising but we believe you should respond to the markets by thinking smarter – it

may not be the heaviest lamb that makes the most money out of your pasture.

Traditionally getting the most out of selling lambs has tended to focus on growth rates. But StockCARE® has identified that “the way the lambs are sold” is a much more significant driver of profit.

Season	Ave Days to sale	Ave Sale LWT	% lambs sold pre weaning
2006/2007	34	34.0	60
2008/2009	120	42.9	13
2009/2010	59	38.2	45

The above table shows the features of what the top quartile farmers did for their sale lamb performance for ALL LAMBS SOLD over the last three seasons.

- The 2006/2007 year was more the traditional high return shoulders early and then later in the season.
- The 2008/2009 year was the bumper year which saw a huge change in selling behaviour and strong returns as the season progressed.
- Last season 2009/2010, the store market was very strong and it was typical of the top quartile farmers to sell the 28-30 kg LWT lamb rather than hang on to finish to 36-38kg LWT.

Despite the good market signals for this year we suggest you keep informed and up to date about the market throughout the season. Work on a dollar value of lamb for your budget, and know your lamb weights to be better able to make the smart decisions.

**It takes about 154kgDM to take a 28kg lamb to 18kg cwt doing 150g/day. That same amount of feed will finish 1.7 28kg lambs to 15.7kg cwt.**

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