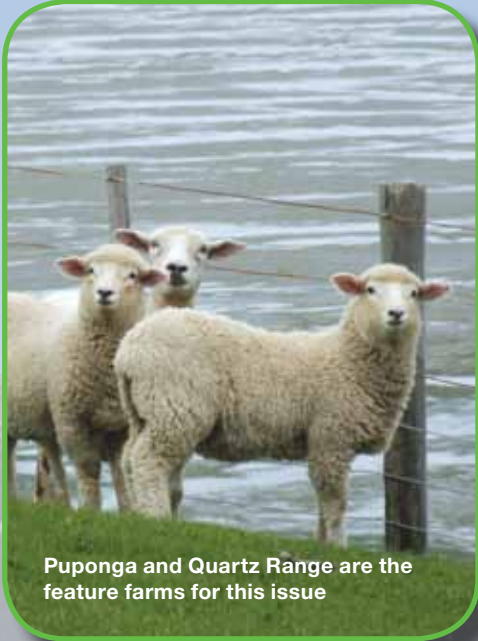




# THE SOUTHERN STAR

News and Information for Lone Star Farms

December 2013



Puponga and Quartz Range are the feature farms for this issue

## IN BRIEF

By Tom Sturgess



“If you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it”. As a Manager, I hated hearing those words because it always meant one more thing I had to do, to be held accountable for or to be in trouble over when I didn’t do it.

I never took it on board as a powerful tool to actually achieve better outcomes. Probably that is why they told me I had to do it. Today I recognise it as a key to success. By measuring I can learn, predict and control outcomes. If I don’t measure then I’m wasting time and money. When I do measure then Planning, Implementation and Review flow from a credible base.

We send our farewell to the Rapleys – faithful stewards of Quartz Range farm for 13 years. Whilst no longer formally on the roster Dot and Len will always remain on the team. Our very best wishes for a delightful future.

*Heather and Tom*



## GM Update

By Boyd Macdonald

This time last year our new North Island property “Hadleigh” was in a severe feed deficit as the widespread drought was taking a firm hold. 12 months on the farm is more like an oasis with the challenge being able to control and utilise the feed. Meanwhile, after experiencing two good seasons, the traditional summer dry “Barewood” property is reminding us why it has that tradition and so the challenges continue.

The nature of farming means the weather is only one of the many variables we need to manage. Planning is crucial to minimise the risks, realise the opportunities, set the trigger points and act in a timely manner. As a team at Lone Star we have had a focus on the planning cycle. One of the important parts of the planning cycle is reviewing. Reviewing our decisions and actions taken gives us the opportunity to learn what went well and should be repeated and where improvements can be made.

I was fortunate to attend a course “Leading for Strategic Success” at the Melbourne business school at Mt Elisa in August. An interesting fact is that 90% of strategic plans are never implemented. A simple plan that everyone in the organisation understands and can relate to is important. Everyone needs to know and understand what part they play in achieving the goal. A simple plan that everyone buys into will be much more successful than a big shiny strategic report that struggles to see daylight. Keeping the plan alive and clear for everyone involved is the key.

Over the next few months, while the challenges of the season will demand some of our thoughts, it is important that we remember our overall company goals. 150% lambing and 3,200 T of meat and fibre, which means keeping all our ewes at condition score 3.0+ throughout the whole year. Keeping this goal in our sights will make daily decisions clear. It is easy during a difficult time to think and look short term. However, farming is a long-term commitment so we need to get up on that balcony and ensure our actions are right for the long term.

I would like to thank all the staff for their efforts and commitment during the year and wish you and your families a great Christmas and some quality time together.

## FEATURE FARM: PUPONGA AND QUARTZ RANGE

### AT A GLANCE

#### Puponga Farm Park

400 hectares (ha) effective  
4000 stock units (su)  
2500 ewes, Perendale base, recently added  
FE-resistant Romney with Texel and Finn  
550 in-lamb ewe hoggets  
84 breeding cows  
Rainfall 1500-2000mls  
Trading stock adds flexibility to this enterprise.  
Usually comprising of 1950 ewes, 900 winter  
trading lambs and 30 trading cattle.  
Some 50,000 people access and traverse this  
property each year.

#### Quartz Range

720ha (420 effective)  
4500su  
2500 Perendale ewes  
650 Replacement ewe hoggets  
50 trading cattle  
Rainfall 3-5 meters/year

Darryl Heaps is the fourth Farm Manager to take up tenure on the Puponga Farm Park found at the northern most point of the South Island.

Prior to 2007 Darryl and wife Sonja spent 20 years successfully working and managing properties in the Wairarapa. With their three boys nearly grown up and moving away, they were looking for something new. An advertisement requiring a manager for Puponga caught Darryl's eye. He could tick three boxes without even thinking about it. Yes he loved fishing, farming was in the blood and he liked meeting new people.

Moving from a family-based set up to a corporate structure has been a little more challenging though. In the beginning, the computer was a foreign tool. It was a surprise to him that you needed so many reporting systems. With Sonja's help he now manages and finds the weekly and monthly reporting systems helpful.

"It means there are no surprises when feed and financial budgets are regularly updated." The reports include updating stock sales and purchases and identifying opportunities and risks. "We can then respond when we need to, rather than react when it's too late," Darryl said. "You are accountable for all your decisions and actions and this makes you perform better."

Lone Star Farms has a grazing licence from DoC for the Puponga property. The land is divided into two blocks: 160ha at Triangle Flat and, five km away, 240ha at Wharariki. It's a long narrow property surrounded by retired DoC land. There is no access between blocks and any stock movement must be done by road. Darryl moves stock before 9am in the morning to avoid the tourist traffic.

Puponga is not only a fully working and profitable farm but is also a farm park that the public can access freely for walking and biking. Other concessionaires include a horse trekking business, privately owned café and information centre. Generally there is no problem with the amount of people that traverse the property however, the odd gate does get left open or not latched properly and stock get mixed up from time to time. To avoid the hassles from boxed-up stock, Darryl now grazes each class of stock in a certain area. For example all hoggets in one block, mixed age ewes in another. The grazing licence allows the Park to be closed over lambing but Darryl sees no need to do this. Apart from the occasional well-meaning tourist depositing a mis-mothered lamb on the door step there are no major problems. The sheep and cattle are so used to seeing people they just get on with their business.

Darryl and Sonja feel privileged they are able to give tourists a unique NZ experience. What the public experience here goes worldwide so all stock must be in good condition. It's best-practice farming New Zealand Inc. on show.

With Len and Dot Rapley retiring in August, Quartz Range was added to Darryl's management. This has enabled both farms to be more closely aligned to maximise production and increase overall productivity. Quartz Range and Puponga grow a similar amount of grass annually but peak at different times of the year. While Puponga tends to be summer dry Quartz Range enjoys the summer rains that come off the West Coast. Darryl's plan is to lower ewe



numbers at Quartz Range and raise all replacement lambs at Puponga. This year hogget numbers will be halved on Quartz Range to allow more feed for ewes and lambs prior to weaning in January. Finishing lambs from Puponga will be transferred to Quartz Range in January to avoid the summer dry. Winter lambs will now be part of the trading option at Quartz Range. Half of the replacement hoggets will be transferred back next season having been mated and scanned in lamb at Puponga. Including a trading component to the system gives greater flexibility and the opportunity to generate more income by taking advantage of market and seasonal opportunities.

Cattle also add flexibility to the system with their job to control and groom the pastures for the sheep. Darryl will be sticking with the Angus breed. Their temperament makes them a safe option to mix with the tourists, he said, as well as growing great beef. The main objective is to finish cattle if conditions allow but if not, they will be sold store or to Five Star Beef.

Weeds thrive in the coastal environment. Two people spend at least one month per year spraying gorse using a tractor and hand guns and another 3.5 hours are allocated for helicopter spraying. When Darryl arrived at Puponga thistles covered a large portion of the farm.

“Each thistle is a mouth full of grass so now we all carry a prill applicator.” It’s a simple matter of releasing the Tordon prills into each thistle as they walk past. This procedure has helped to significantly reduce thistle numbers.

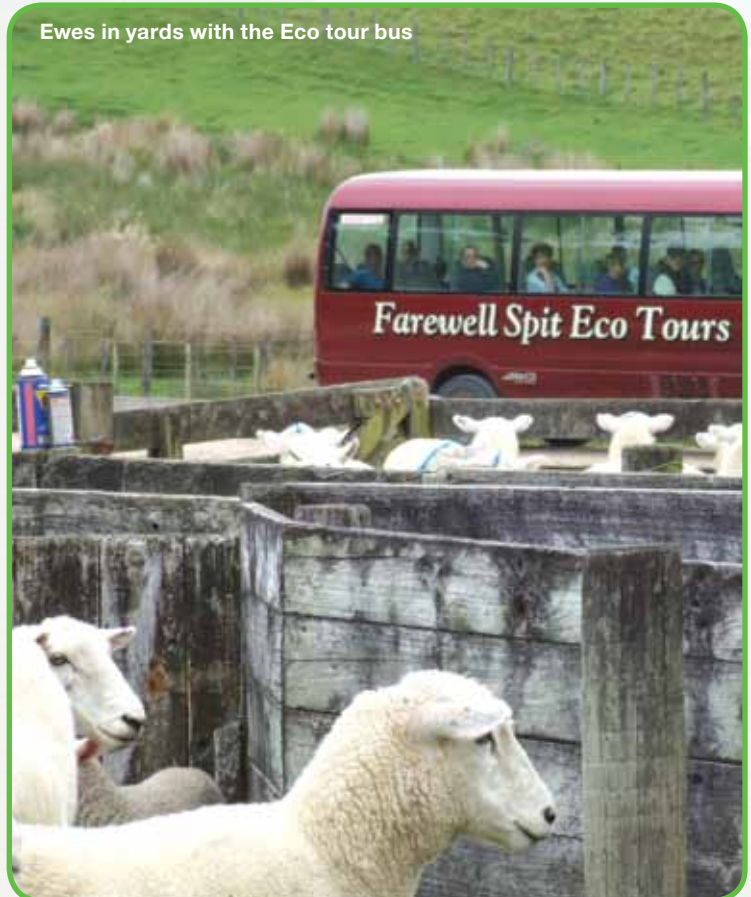
At Puponga 25ha is currently planted in ryecorn but is destined for lucerne. The area will be sprayed early February, replanted in ryecorn through to spring 2014 then sprayed again ready for direct drilling lucerne or a lucerne/grass mix. Porina have been a major problem. The land on the peripheral that has been retired by DoC is a prime breeding ground for Porina. In the past, brassica crops have been affected by Springtails, Diamond Back Moth and Aphids.

Due to the nature of some of the restrictions when farming the Triangle Flat end, cultivation is not an option. Fence posts must be thumped in or replaced with standards. Dead animals must be removed to an offal pit at the Wharariki end of the farm.

Soil tests indicate good fertility levels on both properties. At present 250kg/ha of sulphur super 30 is applied/annum. Applications of lime at 5t/ha should raise the pH on the lucerne block from 5.9 to the optimum 6.2.



Ewes in yards with the Eco tour bus





## FEATURE FARM: PUPONGA AND QUARTZ RANGE Continued



### The Team

As well as Darryl and Sonjya, Ben Cook, together with his wife Rachael and one year old daughter, live at Puponga. Ben has worked for Darryl for four years. He is an Experienced Shepherd who has increased responsibilities now Puponga and Quartz Range come under one manager.

There are now three full-time labour units for the two properties. Clinton Fearn and partner Lee, with their one year old daughter, are full-time on Quartz Range but all three men work together between properties as work-load dictates.

Clinton had previously worked on Quartz Range for Len Rapley and had only moved away when the property was put on the market.

Quartz Range has now been removed from the market and Lone Star Farms was pleased to welcome Clinton back to Quartz Range as Block Manager as he has already shown he has the attributes needed to live and work on Quartz Range.

Both Clinton and Ben are working towards completing their National Certificate in Production Management (Level 4) through PrimaryITO.

## UPDATES FROM FARM MANAGERS

### BAREWOOD STATION Marty Deans

#### 6300 hectares in east Otago

Winter brought challenging times at Barewood, with both stock and staff being tested by the heavy dump of snow. While stock losses were minimal, some ewes were without feed for two to three days. For Marty this has meant ewes were slightly lighter in condition by lambing (about a third of a condition score). It also knocked their resilience to salmonella, with one mob suffering from an outbreak about four weeks post-snow.

Marty had planned for extended supplementary feeding over winter and, as predicted, supplements were needed for 180 days rather than the traditional 120. All in all staff efforts made a huge difference in getting through the snow with minimal effects on production.

As we move into summer, with only 123 mm of rain falling since July (compared to 209 mm average for this period), and lingering frosts through spring, pasture covers are showing the effects of a lack of moisture.

The Animal Health Management Plan has had a full review by Marty and by an external advisor. Marty said it was great to have his plan challenged and new ideas put forward. The hoggets have just had a drench and vaccination and a Faecal Egg Count Reduction Test will be taken to see what level of resistance Barewood parasites have to anthelmintic. The lambs had a B12 injection at tailing and fly-control treatment and will have a tapeworm drench pre-Christmas. The egg count in ewes were being monitored and showed they needed a pre-lamb drench.

Monitoring Porina moths is underway again and Marty is hoping that the smaller flight numbers seen this year will stay small. Following the big investment in autumn caterpillar control, he is expecting to see nowhere near the numbers seen last year.

Barewood's stocking policy is being reviewed, especially in regards to whether hoggets or annual draft ewes are sent to The Wandle. If conditions turn dry there are options to sell either trading cattle or the older ewes with lambs at foot.

Staff news includes two new arrivals. Natalie Nielsen is the new Shepherd, moving down from Hadleigh. Wayne and Donna Marshall and their daughter Charlotte have moved from Caberfeidh to Barewood as Wayne has taken up an Experienced Shepherd position. Daniel Adams has moved on to West Otago to further his career in farming, and James Edgar has become a partner in his family farm.

The mid-winter get together at Naseby for a curling competition was an ideal opportunity for staff to meet, socialise, and trade stories with staff from other farms.

## CABERFEIDH STATION Andrew Harding

### 6000 hectares in the Hakataramea Valley

There have been a couple of significant firsts on the South Canterbury station this year. The mixed-age ewe flock that produces replacement ewes scanned an impressive 195% following the use of Androvax (fertility treatment). This was the first time Androvax had been given to some of the 16,000 ewes at Caberfeidh. The second change was to lamb the triplet-bearing ewes in a separate mob.

Both management decisions seem to have worked in a positive way. The Androvax ewes scanned higher than the non-Androvax ewes put to a terminal sire (190% versus 170%) although the terminal mob ewes were poorer types.

The mob of 790 ewes lambing triplets were able to be fed more than the twinning ewes. Deaths in triplets (no more than for twinning ewes), were mainly from cast ewes while bearing and metabolic issues were largely avoided.

At the time of writing tailing was almost completed. With 22,500 lambs on the ground this equates to a five percent increase on last year making the investment in Androvax worthwhile.

The new water system (with 69 km of pipe and 146 troughs) has been incredibly beneficial in terms of feed utilisation this year. "We can get cattle where we want them without being restricted in our feed management by poor water supplies." Stage three of this scheme will be rolled out this summer with another 150 troughs to go in.

Andrew said the soils are on the edge of being dry so is keen to get the 'flipped' centre pivot going again. The horrendous winds took out three hay barns and 300 trees with the new Fencer General having to repair one laneway three times because of fallen trees.

Although August weather was ideal, September and October were cold. Despite the chill, feed covers are still good, Andrew said. "We will be cutting four hundred hectares for silage, our own use and to sell some as standing feed."

Two hundred rising-one dairy heifers arrived in October and 400 dairy calves will arrive mid-November.

One highlight of the cold weather was that staff got to travel south for a curling competition with other Lone Star Farm teams. Andrew was pretty clear it was the Caberfeidh team that won!

Other staff news includes the appointment of Ian Gregan as overall Stock Manager. Ryan Cameron was appointed as Fencer General and Hamish Andreassend as Tractor Driver. Richard Pledger has been appointed as Block Manager, one of three block managers within the station. Darcy Hooper-Smith moved on after five years, going to a Stock Manager's role at Doug Avery's Marlborough property. In June, Andrew completed the Rabobank Farm Managers Programme run in Melbourne and thoroughly enjoyed it. "It was a good course and I got a lot out of it. Quite a life changing experience."

## HADLEIGH Dan James

### 1496 hectares near Masterton

It's amazing what having feed for stock does to morale. Dan James, Farm Manager, said, "It has been great how the farm has bounced back from the last summer and autumn drought and how enjoyable it is farming with grass."

Pasture covers were 1300kgDM at set-stocking for lambing and spring conditions have been the best he's seen in the North Island. There were only about four frosts over winter and, not surprisingly, the ewes are in fabulous order.

The 1400 hoggets are still at The Wandle which have taken the pressure off feed supplies as well.

Given the feed shortages over tupping, Dan is fairly pleased with the scanning result of 158% in the mixed-age ewes and 153% in the two-tooths. Tailing has shown some lamb losses with a 122% lambs tailed to ewes mated.

The plan for the lamb selling season will be based on lamb weight samples that are currently being taken. At eight weeks of age the singles were 24kg average live weight and the Romney twins 19 to 22kg. The black-faced twin lambs were heavier at 20 to 23kg.

"We will use these weights to see what will be ready by Christmas and help us decide what should be sold store."

Cattle numbers are back to pre-drought levels although the yearling heifers did not reach the target mating weight. They have been relegated to being cull trading heifers rather than put them to the bull too light. Better quality in-calf heifers will be brought in from Barewood, Dan said.



## RAINBOW STATION Justin Thompson

### 27,700 hectares inland Marlborough

Justin Thompson has just clocked up his first anniversary as Farm Manager for Rainbow Station. He said he has really enjoyed the shift to Marlborough high country from Otago, although it had been a huge learning curve.

This winter Justin was expecting feed conditions to be tight but the mild weather in early winter really boosted crop utilisation. This made a big difference to the feed budget. Over winter ewes and cattle were getting up to seven days extra grazing from most blocks.

“Utilisation lifted from eighty percent to about ninety percent off the crop.”

As ewes were in good order leading into lambing mid-September Justin is expecting more lambs to be weaned prime.

“Even triplet lambs look really good; it’s hard to spot the weak triplet.”

Soil moisture levels will guide lamb weaning decisions. Justin updates the feed budget every two weeks and, if predicted covers for January look too low, lambs will be sold before Christmas. The feed budget looks six months out and December and January is the traditional pinch period for feed.

Staff have had a fantastic run at tailing time, tailing nearly all lambs in four days. At the time of writing there were two mobs still to tail and lambs tailed to ewes mated looked to be sitting at about 135%.

November has brought the traditional high wind runs and a delay in spraying out pastures. Contractors may be called in if spraying gets held up further. Last year’s delay in spraying saw some crop yields affected. In one case on the Raglan, yield was probably 50% down as it was sprayed late and couldn’t catch up in production, Justin said. He doesn’t want to see it happen this year as it has a huge effect on feed supplies.

Huge rainfall washed out several river crossings and Justin has been using a tractor to get across to check cows. The tracks have been severely compromised. Despite access issues, groups of North Island farmers visited Rainbow Station recently and Justin is gearing up for another busy summer season for visitors.

For the team, Trevor Lloyd has completed his second year on the farm and has been a great support for new staff. Amy Silcock left in August to lease a farm with Josh Boyack replacing her and off to a great start. Kevin Keehan is the Farm General busy getting critical crops in the ground.



## THE WANDLE Jon McClean

### 2272 hectares in Middlemarch, Otago

The Wandle is now largely set up and ready to go after three years of development installing irrigation and developing new pastures. Jon McClean, Farm Manager, said that all stock policies are being reviewed.

The spring sowing of lucerne and new grass will bring the amount in new permanent pasture or lucerne to 550 hectares. As pasture renewal is largely complete there will be fewer winter crops. At this stage we're unlikely to winter dairy cows next year as they're typically gone by August 1st so this stock class can't be used to control the large spring surplus we're expecting. "We will be looking at ewe and hogget numbers and find stock classes that fit the new pasture growth curve," Jon said.

Last season The Wandle finished 17,000 lambs and lamb finishing will remain at the heart of the system. The farm runs 2000 mixed-age ewes and tailing was completed by early November. Ewes were in very good order at lambing at a healthy 3.5 to 4 condition score average.

Jon is looking forward to getting more live weight information on his lamb finishing mobs with a plan to tag select groups of lambs with electronic tags. A proportion of both home-bred and bought-in mobs will be tagged and weighed, to give an idea of how they are growing on a weekly basis. This information will be used to plan kill dates and make feed budgeting more accurate. It will help show what management practices work best to grow lambs as fast as possible.

Several staff changes happened over winter with three staff moving on and the appointment of Stephen Johnson as Experienced Shepherd/2IC. Cody Beck was appointed as an Experienced Shepherd in October, and Janine Wing as a Shepherd. This summer a Massey University student will be employed to be in charge of moving the K-line irrigation.

The Wandle staff team went head-to-head with staff from Barewood and Caberfeidh in a curling competition. Jon was slightly vague on who actually won but it was a highly enjoyable mid-winter event. Staff from the three properties also visited the restored Hayes Engineering factory in Oturehua.

## MT ALBERT STATION Scott Paterson

### 12,500 hectares at the head of Lake Wanaka

The plan at the Wanaka high country station is to finish 75% of the lamb crop prime without compromising ewe condition and the making of winter supplements.

Last season this was achieved with more lambs retained post-weaning and 70% of the sale lamb crop sold at an 18kg carcass weight. In the past only 30% have been finished through to prime weights.

To ensure lambs keep growing, Scott's goal is to ensure pastures have at least 1700 kgDM/ha up to weaning in mid-January for ewes and lambs. Soil moisture is not an issue at the moment following a very wet October. It rained almost every second day and 17.5 inches fell for the month.

Lamb parasitism will be managed with a pre-wean drench. Integrated pasture management helps too, with ewes and lambs tailed onto pasture previously cleaned up by cattle. Fly-strike is generally not an issue for Mt Albert sheep.

With moist soils and a single spray pre-drill, weed germination can be a problem in summer brassica crops. Scott said that spraying on a weed suppressant at the time of sowing brassicas has shown yield benefits. "We grew another tonne per hectare of yield." The weed control lasts for three months and also helps protect from some insect damage due to having a healthier crop.

Last year 200 trading cattle were purchased to get a return from the surplus summer feed. This season Scott is considering buying up to 350 trading cattle or selling some standing feed as another option.

"Cattle give us options as we can either finish to the works or sell to the feed-lot if feed supplies run short."

Staff news includes the appointment of Paul Campbell as a full-time Experienced Shepherd. Hamish Murray is the other Experienced Shepherd. Scott's wife Rachel is employed part-time on the farm now that their three children are all at Makaroroa Primary School. Contractors are employed to tail lambs.

Scott said staff will have a social get-together over summer with a fishing trip a team favourite.



## LONE STAR FARMS FAREWELL TO LEN AND DOT

Len Rapley retired as Farm Manager from Quartz Range in August this year. He and Dot started with Lone Star Farms in 2000 and for the next 13 years put their heart and soul into the property and community. During that time Len transformed the farm from bull rushes and scrub to infrastructure and pastures that anyone could be proud of.

They say a measure of a man is the way they leave and Len remained fully committed to the farm and business right up until the day he left. Quartz Range was looking an absolute picture in August when he retired.

So thank you Len and Dot for your loyalty to Tom and Lone Star Farms, your pride in doing a good job and your boundless energy to get things done.

Len and Dot are now living in Richmond, Nelson (occasionally), when they aren't travelling to see family and friends.



*Greetings Tom and Heather, all office staff, Lone Star Farms Personnel and Service Providers.*

*In our four months' retirement in Richmond, Dot and I have had time to reflect on our 13 years' employment managing Quartz Range for Lone Star Farms.*

*During our time there we met some fantastic people, made some great friends, and enjoyed the support extended to us by those within the Company and our many service providers.*

*Quartz Range was the most challenging property we farmed during our years on the land, but it did offer me the opportunity to live the passion I had for handling good stock and producing some excellent wool. It also gave me the chance to enjoy working with and training some damn good dogs.*

*We leave our employment so much richer for all the experiences we had in Golden Bay, both on and off the farm.*

*Thanks to you all.*

*Wishing you and your families a joyful Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2014.*

*Len and Dot*