

Hogget Mating for over 30 years

Lovell Land Limited has been sheep and cattle farming in Northland since my grandfather brought the original block in 1929. We've been mating hoggets from our Romney breeding flock for over 30 years. As time has gone on the percentage getting in lamb has been steadily climbing, so that this year we will have close to 900 hoggets to lamb. The farm in 1750 ha typical Northland country, located just north-west of Whangarei and bordering the Wairau River as it leaves the Hikurangi Swamp. The flatter, finishing area was converted to a 650 cow dairy unit 14 years ago, with the sheep and cattle being run and finished on typical rolling hill country. The farming policy is to breed all our own stock with nothing being brought apart from sires and rams. This is done with a 300 cow Angus breeding herd and the keeping of up to 200 Friesian and Friesian x Angus calves from the

dairy unit. All the replacement for the dairy farm are grazed on the sheep and beef unit, along with some of the cows over winter. A flock of 3500-3600 mixed age Romney ewes is run and about 1000 replacements which are all mated as hoggets.

For many years we tried other breeds for hogget mating including Southdown's, Dorset's and Romney, but found we were losing too many hoggets during lambing. On a suggestion by another farmer we decided to try Cheviot rams 6 years ago. We've found that the lambing difficulties we were having have been reduced significantly. When born the Cheviot x lambs are very active with good survival rates.

The hoggets are mated a month after the main flock ewes and begin lambing in mid September. Priority is given to getting the hoggets back into condition and up to weight for mating again as 2 toothers. This



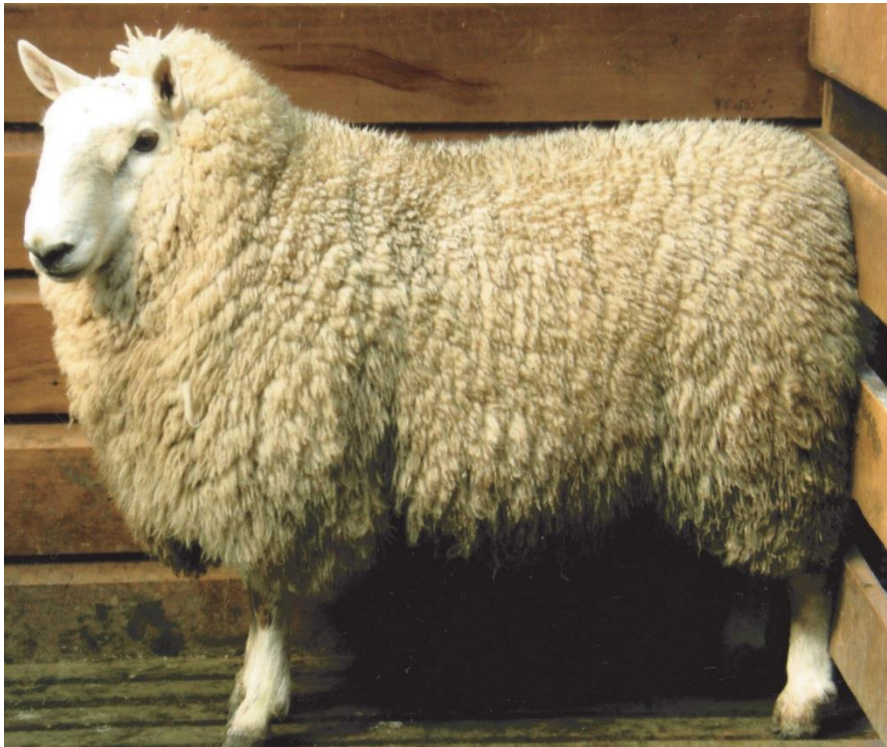
A cheviot ram looking for some ewes

means that the Cheviot x lambs are usually weaned early and carried through summer to be finished from February on. They grow into good, solid lambs which cope well with the common health problems associated with sheep farming in Northland over summer, including flystrike, facial eczema and viral pneumonia. Last season hogget lambs averaged over 18kg carcass weight.

Originally we brought Cheviot rams from Murray Lynch and more recently from John Spellman. We've been very impressed with John's rams and the Cheviot breed for hogget mating.

Greg Lovell

Lovell Land Limited



A ewe hogget with class