



THE SOUTHERN STAR

News and Information for Lone Star Farms

December 2009 Issue 32

IN BRIEF

By Tom Sturgess



A busy start to 2010 for us all! Regrettably, we farewell the Waldrons. I feel somewhat saddened to be losing such a dedicated, hard worker, yet I am pleased that Tom and his family are pursuing their dreams and I wish them all the best in their new endeavours.

We have welcomed Boyd Macdonald to the team and I feel confident that, even in the short time that Boyd has been with Lone Star Farms, a positive energy is transpiring which is seeping across all properties and management teams. To echo Boyd's sentiments, with unity and positivity between us all, we can only but move onwards and upwards to improve and increase productivity, and reap the rewards!

I look forward to another year of continued hard work and also to catching up with you all over the coming months.

Regards

Tom

GM COMMENT

By Boyd Macdonald

Summer Muster

I trust everyone has survived the festivities that celebrating Christmas and welcoming in the New Year brings, and is recharged for the challenges and opportunities 2010 will present to us all.

While finding myself present at some pre-Christmas functions around the local community and further afield, it became very evident when mixing with farmers, the topic always seemed to come back to "the high dollar", "the falling lamb schedule", "the dry weather" etc , and how tough it is being a sheep and beef farmer. At the end of the day, we choose our occupation and, if we don't enjoy what we do, we should try something else. It was also surprising how much energy (negative energy), was being expended on things we basically have little or no control over. Negativity breeds negativity, it is contagious, so don't go there. Surely a much better outcome will be produced if we focus and use our energy on the things we do have control over: high average daily lamb growth rates, hitting the target weights for our ewes at tugging, maximising pasture utilisation and keeping our expenses under control and within budget. These are all areas that will make a real difference. Positivity attracts positivity and is a much more enjoyable and rewarding space to be present in for all concerned.

Yes, we will need to be well planned and organised to take advantage of the opportunities and minimise the effects of the challenges ahead of us in 2010. Within the larger Lone Star Farms' team and businesses we have formed key long term relationships. We therefore have plenty of experience and expertise to call upon, so we can rise to the challenges and prosper from the opportunities ahead of us. By uniting and working together as a team, so much more can be achieved.

Let us make 2010 as good as it possibly can be. I am certainly looking forward to working with you all.

2009, IN BITS AND PIECES

By Ann Poindexter and Klaus Borges

2009, in Bits and Pieces

We receive weekly reports from Farm Managers with updates on weather conditions, soil temperature and moisture, pasture growth, and current farming activities. There are always a few snatches of colour as well, and sometimes high drama. Following are random excerpts from our Farm Managers' 2009 weekly reports.

January 2009

Two staff members had time off over Christmas

I have been forced to find an alternative source of water as the ram system was totally wrecked in the last flood.

Tractor drowned in the river causing motor damage (insurance job). Have investigated snorkels to be fitted to all vehicles

Kevin has "gone walkabout" but should return around the end of the month.

Summer has hit with a vengeance. 40 degrees on Saturday

Bulls fighting and breaking fences

Could do with a good rainfall

February 2009

Jimmy on ACC (bull riding injury)

Extreme difficulty recruiting shepherds

Might be time to get naked and do a rain dance.

WE NEED MOISTURE !!!!

March 2009

Had to get the neighbour's bull out of our heifers on Sunday morning - it had jumped several fences to get to them. Gates left open by the construction team so ewes making their own arrangements as usual.

Kissed and made up with the Café over noise problem.

Rainbow Rage (bicycle race) held during the weekend, and notable was the poor organization this year: No toilets provided until 30 minutes before the race, when two turned up for over 600 people

Bull smashed heading dog's leg. Has to be pinned (approx. cost \$1500). He is too valuable to have put down.

The strong winds at the moment are sucking the life out of everything.

April 2009

The barge brought out petrol, diesel and the new grader blade and took away 30 cows (one escaped off the barge ramp)

Kevin and I caught some good crays on a beautiful Autumn day, the biggest at 3.9kgs took some eating.

Workers vacated premises on Thursday. No goodbyes. Keys just left in house.

Disappointed the way house left. 16-month-old oven bugged – suspect has had a fire in it

Autumn muster delayed by high rivers – driven out of valley by 420 mls rain over first days. Godley River full flood – bank to bank no shingle showing – HUGE

May 2009

No swine flu

Paddock Five and Lake Lucerne half under water – flooded by high lake

Road damage due to heavy rain

Huge rain, 165 mls in 24 hrs, Pipson Creek blew, gravel and mud across the state highway

Water everywhere but where needed. No house or stock reticulated water – now entering second week. Hope to be able to remedy this situation by Tuesday –weather permitting – otherwise will have to temporarily vacate dwelling and travel in and out daily from the local village

The worst two weeks to attempt an autumn muster that I have experienced. Rain, fog, high wind, snow, sleet – one of the aforementioned every day. Not as yet sure if country is clean of sheep – too much fog and snow to tell.

Injured bull recovering slowly after two big shots of duplocillin LA, six injections all up with a 20ml syringe and we are no longer good friends.

We are sick of the wind, 50 knot SE for the last two days and just about as strong from the other direction for most of last week.

Tractor rear window broken again (is it cursed?)

Husband and wife still talking.

June 2009

Red Flag: The ongoing number of people wanting to look at the stranded whale and the number of people coming on to the farm that miss the tide.

Opened silage looks great and smells as good as it tested

14 cows and 8 calves short. Put in 4th Feb and bought back out May – Gone, no address. A little disturbing as appears to be a yearly occurrence.

July 2009

Very strong winds at the beginning of the week from the southeast, have blown over about 15 big kanukas behind the workshop and 3 big pine trees along the beach front through the fence. 7 different fence lines to fix at the moment from trees falling through.

No contact this week with the outside world – head down bum up doing the necessary jobs of feeding stock and repairing breakdowns.

Big loss Monday with burning down of the DOC workshop right next door to our fire station, anxious moments for the

fire crew, saw all appliances and fire engine out with only smoke and water damage to our station. We are still on call.

Last week huge earthquake 7.3, it sure did rattle the house a real rumble. It ran for over 2 minutes. No reported damage, but I was a wee bit concerned crossing the river later.

Put our toe in the water to test the prime beef market with 13 heifers, got out in a hurry, water is far too cold for my liking. Will now have to wait for good spring feed and hopefully improved prices. You can help by eating more steak please!

I've just recovered from what I'm sure was bird flu as we have so many of them around, and think we may now have found swine flu. What next. Has proved valuable for keeping away unwanted visitors (just joking)

August 2009

A modicum of growth with a green tinge showing – somewhat scary this early

First calf born (14 days early) to an R3 heifer, it then managed to fall down a bluff onto the sea shore but luckily I found it and managed to retrieve it and reunite it with the heifer.

Last week I wrote about grass movement looking good, well it's under water. I need a hydrometer to measure the grass this week, good thing it's before lambing.

The spring weather has arrived with endless gale force winds and very heavy rain – just in time for lambing to be in full swing.

A shocking week for lambing and calving weather-wise.

September 2009

Lovely sunshine week, you can hear the grasses growing, ground temp up to 9 degrees

Busy, busy, busy. Working all hours and days with shearing going all weekend.

Finally after four years we have got a piano tuner to come out to the island to tune the piano

October 2009

Third attempt at writing my weekly report as power outages wiped the last two.

Extremely pleased with the way the team are handling the large work load, keen to work and work wisely; last week averaging 12 hours a day for 6 days of the week

A further 18mm of warm soaking rain, perfect. Pivots running, ponds full, grass growing.

Autumn barley crop looks strong, has had urea and fungicides, wheat also looking good.

Apart from a few stragglers, the tailing was completed on Saturday. We had a great turnout from the Collingwood Volunteer Fire Brigade and rugby club members. All participants came here for a BBQ meal afterwards and, of course, the odd ale! They have already booked to come next year!

November 2009

The annual golf match between myself and Rob Glover finished all square.

Headlines in Timaru Herald on Saturday: High Country in Drought. I have never seen irrigated pasture as dry. Pouring water on as fast as I can and still cannot keep up. Constant gale force winds for past 3 weeks, no rain since 10 October.

Winds horrific, hardly a day without them, but we are getting a bit of moisture at times now, which is just keeping the grass growing.

Third place in the sawing semi-finals at A& P show. Need either a saw with a motor or a faster partner.

December 2009

Barewood Xmas party, very good, rail trail excellent for team bonding, enjoyed by all

Meridian have not objected to 5 consents out of 62 on water quality, we are one of the five – Yay

Still been very windy, soil moisture low, summer is here, flat out with irrigation

Lost a whole week with 175 mls of rain, so I'm in catch up. River running huge

Mowed raked baled carted and wrapped 600 bales Lucerne baleage. Mowing took 37 hours continuous, followed by 3 hours sleep and then another 18 hour stint baling and wrapping.

Joined with Puponga for staff Christmas get together at the Mussel Inn.

Mad Xmas rush to get everything completed

BAREWOOD STATION

By Marty Deans

We, along with most other blocks, have had a quarter of mixed weather and cold winds taking its toll and destroying what was an outstanding start to spring during October. We have only received 78mls of rain during this period 125%.

Lambing has been and gone for another year and ewes that reared lambs have done very well. We made a committed effort this year to remove all wet, dry ewes prior to tailing and apart from 500 2th ewes that have been tagged and will be offered another opportunity, the balance don't live at Barewood anymore.

We managed to finish at Barewood in early November 78 R2YR strs at 330kg average plus 48 R2YR heifers that we share-farmed with The Wandle for eight weeks at 284kg average. Freezer ewes have been shorn and sold, 680 lambs have been killed at 17.2kg average pre-weaning and all remaining lambs received a pre-wean and fly dip during December. 12,500 ewes have been shorn.

All cattle received their pre-mating vaccinations and calves marked. Bulls were put out on 23rd December. The second calving cows which will be sold to The Wandle at weaning were mated to Angus bulls and 250 R2YR and R3YR heifers have been mated to the shorthorn bulls. The remaining older cows have been mated with red Angus bulls.

Pete Morrison and Cameron Doherty have made an outstanding commitment in the period leading up to Christmas to getting as much of our regrassing and winter feed direct drill programme completed as possible. They have approximately 120 ha of rye corn and 40 ha of ryegrass left to complete in the New Year. Cory Lambeth has joined us over the Xmas period to assist with weaning and other duties while he waits to start Telford in the New Year.

Notable highlights for the quarter have been attending the Otago ITO awards evening where Brendon Tisdall gained a certificate for completing Level 4. Donna Longley also got Level 4 and Jimmy Longley completed the Production Management course.

A visit from the members of Novartis Australia and being able to give them a quick tour of both Barewood and The Wandle was a privilege after the involvement we have had with them in recent times.

I have been to Minaret Station with Andy Ranstead to view the Headwater rams we are contemplating purchasing and was very impressed with what I saw. Their commitment to breeding and offering rams that have been put through some very harsh environments and testing as younger animals, is commendable. I feel this breed will ensure Lone Star Farms will be more able to reach meat yield requirements.

The Southern Three Staff Xmas function was another enjoyable function. I would like to thank Netty and Wanda for their effort in organising, entertainment and catering for us all. Thank you also goes to the Novartis team for supplying team colour coded hats and cooking the pre-rail trail bike ride BBQ. Darcy and Paul Chambers did a mighty effort biking 27kms into a very strong NW wind. Although some members dispute it, we did bike downhill! The greenstone Southern Three Christmas Challenge Trophy rests at Barewood for the next 12 months.

The Nelson Focus day and Xmas function were again excellent days to be involved in; the discussion and interaction between managers, office staff and our General Manager makes these days well worthwhile.

All staff at Barewood are looking forward to working alongside Boyd with his new ideas, direction, and commitment to taking Lone Star Farms to higher levels.

Next quarter:-

- Weaning, finish as many lambs as climate allows.
- Making the maximum per KgDM as possible.
- Complete The Wandle sheep yard development.
- Finish direct-drilling programme, pre-tup shearing.
- Southern Three Managers' meeting.
- Pray for rain.

CABERFEIDH STATION

By Tom Waldron

Well, another challenging quarter has passed us by and predictably the weather has been just that. September was the most encouraging month with 54mm and some good spells of warm weather. In November we recorded 4mm and December saw another 38mm with a considerable amount of wind from both the Norwest and the cooler Southwesterlies.

Covers for lambing averaged 1,280kgDM/ha and remained at these levels until we saw a spike in December. Feed quality has been good with good clover from the onset of spring. 3,350 tonnes of silage have been made, and a further 245 bales of baleage have been wrapped up allowing for some strategic feed for the shoulders of the season. The second cut of lucerne at Cliffside will give us another 300 tonnes with a possibility of a third cut. We have carried over 400 tonnes from last season so provisions for the coming winter are well in hand.

The ewes have come through the winter well and were set stocked for lambing at 76kg average live weight and a condition score of 3.5 – 4 BCS; lamb losses from scanning averaged 15% including 2ths with our mixed age as low as 9%, so lambing went reasonably well. The ewes did 147% to the ram including purchases of 143% as a true result. The tailing run was like a well oiled machine, and the annual rugby club fund raiser set a new record for the district of 10,996 lambs tailed for the day. As usual, a conscientious effort at the tailing pens saw a big job done well.

Dry hoggets and dry cattle came back from grazing at the end of September in exceptional order; the hoggets averaged 53kgs, were shorn and put to work tidying up rye corn residues and laneways until being put out on to the hill. Mid-December saw our early lambers weaned and lamb weaning weights breached our target by 1.5kgs, averaging 32.5kgs this year. 40% of these lambs travelled to Pukeuri and dressed out at 17.8kgs.

As with the stockmen, the cropping team has put some real effort into keeping the Ag-program on track; the drill has been going pretty much full-time since the middle of August with the establishment of seed and feed oats, new grass, lucerne and both summer and winter brassicas. This hasn't all been plain sailing with the odd breakdown or two putting some unneeded pressure in the lead up to Christmas. Crop establishment again has been good although ground conditions have been a little trying with some paddocks being very hard. All up, 900ha has been sown to date.

The Southern Christmas party this year was hosted by the Barewood and Wandle teams and was a lot of fun with Barewood and The Wandle winning the teams' challenge. The rail trail gave a different perspective of the Strath Taieri scenery and its rail history.

Next quarter:-

As with all other properties the emphasis will be placed on finishing as many lambs as possible and matching feed demand with supply with store lamb purchases. The balance of our weaning will be undertaken in the first week of January, the calf marking will be completed, and we will have begun harvesting. The rye corn will be sown in February, crop stubbles baled and sold, and grain will begin making its way to its respective markets.

This quarter will see a change in the guard here at Caberfeidh Station with Julia, Angus Liam, Conor and I moving off to the coast to our own slice of paradise. It is with some mixed feelings that we do so, as we have greatly enjoyed our time here at Caberfeidh. Julia and I are very proud of our achievements which could not have been done without those who have worked alongside us and as they say, "There is no I in team". We are very grateful for the support and companionship you have all shown.

Many thanks Tom W.

GODLEY PEAKS

By Rob Glover

Reflecting on 2009, I note somewhere someone wrote, 'Change is the spice of life'. That being the case, 2009 has seen so much change it would give you reflux. The pendulum has swung widely from extreme to extreme, product return for lamb has gone, like the dollar, from one extreme to another, beef returns have followed and fine wool against the odds has improved marginally for our micron. The weather, especially moisture, has swung from extreme wet to extreme dry, support staff Nelson based have come and gone, computer systems have been updated, telephone accounts standardised to Lone Star Farms' name and we have had three higher tier management changes. On the farm I have seen just as many changes ranging from a record low lambing 12 months ago to a high this year, a reduction in staff from three permanent to myself for three months, and now back to two permanents, myself inclusive. A consultant change from none to one and back to none, and of course the wildly fluctuating return for lamb from a \$6.00 per kg high to a present low of \$3.90. Couple all that to a record wet in the autumn and a record dry for this quarter, and what a wild ride it has been!

10mls of moisture from 10 October through to 31 December has been a challenge to farm with exorbitant store lamb prices and dry have curtailed lamb trading options to date, but generally, capital stock performance and conditions have never been better. Lucerne baleage made has exceeded previous years at the same point in time and after a couple of huge months, personally on hours worked, we, at Godley Peaks, have ended the year up-to-date with all aspects of our farm schedule but well behind, as per usual, in R and R.

An insight into the work for this quarter is of no relevance at this point as all plans are currently extremely weather dependent, but one thing for sure, is it will rain or get dark before tomorrow and the whole cycle will start again.

May 2010 be a year where all meet their expectations.



PROPERTY PICS...

Mt Albert



Mt Albert cattle muster

Rainbow Station



Rainbow Field Day

Barewood / Wandle



Mike holds onto the prized trophy

below: The three Lone Star Farms' Southern teams



Puramahoi



Lowline Angus on the new block

Paturau



Paturau's new cattle yard under construction

Patuki



A very full barge of prime lambs

Puponga



Chief, Roxy and a new dog on trial at Puponga called "Rusty"



I'm sure I can get away...



...No you can't!!

Rainfall: October 76mls, November 49mls, December 261mls. Mt Albert recorded some low rainfalls through the last quarter and December kept the average up. "Let others tell of rain and thunderstorms, I will only record the shining hours."

Soil temperatures were up between 3–5 degrees on last year. Going into November last year with soil temperatures of around (9.2°C) wasn't making the brassicas grow, and this season's average has been around (12.6°C). Good pasture covers from 1800 DM/ha up to 3000 DM/ha +.

Our biggest challenge has been the consistent Norwest wind slowing our spraying program down. It is just as well Allan Cooper has got a lot of patience to get around them three times with Darren Davidson discing crop paddocks.

The lambing period was just magic. The weather was lovely, with minimal lamb deaths. Lisa Holiday (lambing shepherd) didn't wear out her Swazi wet weather gear. As usual, we had a couple of thunderstorms race through the valley during the height of lambing. Tailing figures were up 7% to 119% to the ram - my goal was 125%.

Mustering the Wilkin and Makarora cows for calf marking in late December instead of splitting the marking to give us more time with lamb weaning. We had nine horse riders wearing life jackets and rivers were just a wee bit high. The lighter M/A cows got multi vaccine, Selenium, Zinc and Copper. Cows are now enjoying going around the WilkinVale paddocks tidying up the pastures before we wean the lambs.

With a heavy snowfall during the winter, we employed local tree fellers (Dave Collett's crew) to take out and tidy up one of the old tree lanes, and under Scott's watchful eye, to upgrade water access and fencing back to pasture.

Visitors to the station: Rob Phiskie working on the development in the Wilkin and Rainey flats. Dick Arnst on brassica's preparation and pastures. The Mt Albert crew wishes Dick all the best in his new adventures; we will certainly miss your warm humour. Bernard Lynch with soil sampling and lime valuation to development.

Boyd Macdonald, the new GM, came to check out the manager and staff and to see the jewel within Lone Star Farms. Ian Mackenzie shoeing the nags once again for another muster; Matt Lang (contractor) brought his flash new one pass multi seeder to the Valley with great success. Mark Blanchard is back direct drilling brassicas between showers and the Wanaka Run boys - Sam Peers-Adams and Mike Natzke are mustering cattle.

Thanks to the Sheppard Agriculture team for advertising for a single shepherd. Returning to Mt Albert Station is Telford student Hamish Murray, as single shepherd with his own dogs. We all look forward to working with you Hamish.

Lastly, I spent eight weeks fending for myself as Lorraine spent some quality time mending in Dunedin hospital after an operation. It's always good to get the cook back.

Agriculture ITO Awards held early November.

Production Management (sheep) Scott Paterson, Richard Blanc.

Farmer Trainer of the Year: Marty Deans. Well done Marty.

Meat and Wool held a Field Day at Rainbow Station. I was very impressed with the development work done since the purchase of Raglan - a credit to Dave and his staff.

Next quarter:

- Ewes and lambs weaning - WilkinVale, Mt Albert.
- Shearing ewes, picking rams.
- Hay, baleage and silage making.

This spring has been the best grass growing conditions that I have had at Patuki with evenly spread rainfall and dull overcast days to make the most of the moisture. All up we recorded 204mm for the quarter and 901mm for the year.

With the good soil moisture, pasture growth has been excellent and has shown no visible effect of the move to bi-annual fertiliser application. We have ended the quarter with more feed on hand than previous years so we are well set up for the summer.

We tailed 3,560 lambs at 129% (ewes to the ram) which was our second best result but still disappointing given that we scanned 172%. We had our usual spring storms and ewe deaths were reasonably high. I feel that on this steep country we may be getting our ewes too heavy. The lambs lacked sun for a while but took off in December and at weaning, we were able to fill a barge with 920 prime lambs that killed out at 17.3kgcw, a yield of 57.4% and 94% of carcasses, meeting Alliance's yield grading threshold. We have also retained all our store lambs as this year we don't appear to be (for the present anyway), a summer dry property. Calving was also discouraging given the better pasture covers we had to calve onto this year. Once

again the steep, exposed country took its toll and we only managed 84%, but the cattle are now thriving with good feed ahead of them and the cows should have taken the bull well.

In other news, the LTSA has given in to public pressure and has allowed for WOF testing to continue on the island, although at the cost of \$120 per warrant. A new set of sheep yards has been built at Waiua with significant upgrading to the fences and with the application of fertiliser in February, it will be interesting to see how the property will respond. The Focus Day in Nelson was the first under Boyd Macdonald's management and a clear expectation for the future of the Lone Star Farms' properties was set out. We also enjoyed two great evenings out: firstly with Ann and Klaus and then with the newlyweds, Tom and Heather.

Next quarter:-

Store lambs to finish, shearing replacement ewe lambs and cull ewes, crutching ewes, marketing the culls, Toxo and campovax for the 2ths, pregnancy testing cows, calf weaning, and flushing and tugging the ewes. Also, bi-annual fertiliser application to Patuki and a capital dressing to Waiua and the usual round of maintenance to fences, roads etc.

PATURAU / PUNA PAUA

By Nigel Clarke

With good weather for the last quarter it had set the farm up for lambing and calving and pasture covers were looking good. This quarter has been a different story with 430.5mm of rain and an average ground temperature of 16.5°C, very strong winds and together with salt on the pasture for most of this quarter, has caused poor pasture growth and poor quality. We have had good rainfall for December which is helping with pasture growth but still the strong winds.

Tailing started in mid-October with good percentages in the mobs which went to the new rams that we are trying and the Perendales were the same as other years. Any days that were too windy or wet over tailing we pulled down and rebuilt the new cattle yard at Paturau; I am very pleased with how well it works. Ongoing maintenance fencing, cleaning troughs and weed control have filled in any other spare time. All the ewes at Puna Paua were shorn in mid-November with lambs at foot to miss the biddy bid problem in December and all lambs drenched at the same time. The one year ewes we lambed earlier this year were weaned in early December, prime lambs and some of the ewes to the works and the rest of the ewes and most of the lambs Interco. New rams were purchased in December; we will wait and see how well the lambs from the new rams do before making any big changes. All lambs were drenched on the ewes from the front country at Paturau in December.

Calf marking was a lot more enjoyable with the new cattle yards; we are down on our marking percentage this year which is disappointing. Bulls went out with the R2 heifers mid-November and the MA cows in early December. The Lone Star Farms meeting in the Nelson office and Christmas parties in November - once again it was good to catch up with everybody and meet the new GM, Boyd. A big Thank you to all the casuals and contractors over this quarter.

Next quarter:-

- Weaning early in January
- Ewes and replacements etc to shear mid January
- Bulls to come out of the cows and pregnancy test the R2 heifers.
- Ongoing fencing and weed control and two new hay barn/implements sheds to build due to wind damage.
- Lambs to sell prime, Interco and some store.
- Ewes to cull most will go Interco

PUPONGA

By Darryl Heaps

October started off with hogget lambing into spring with the usual few problems to start with, but, on the whole, well worth doing.

I have decided to not spray any paddocks out for cropping this year and have direct drilled into paddocks 3kg of chicory, 2kg of plantain and 5kg of Colenso red clover. These paddocks had been eaten out low, then drilled at a depth of 5mm to 10mm with 150kg to the h/a of crop master 20 down the spout. Paddocks were then shut up for baleage to grow. My observations are that very little chicory grew; there was a good strike of plantain and hopefully red clover will come in autumn.

Top quality baleage came off 16/12/09 with most of it being sold in company while keeping some for ourselves. It is certainly a big plus having no paddocks out of production while waiting for crops to grow, as for a number of reasons, we have struggled to both grow summer and winter crops at Puponga, often feeding it to the insects and birds first, then leaving a little for lamb fattening.

October also brought the last of the winter lambs to go prime and the start of new season's lambs away. With the colder and very windy spring we had, lambs were not blooming or packing on the weight as well as we would have liked, but we have gone down to lower weights as the schedule plummeted and feed dried up. By late November we were very dry and had done 700 new season's lambs and got rid of cull ewes. It finally started raining, which turned us around and we could hold onto lambs to put more weight on.

December saw us doing only 130 lambs and buying in 430 store lambs and 200 one year ewes. I have kept 2yr steers and heifers and didn't panic when conditions went dry earlier. These will be a bonus to help keep pasture quality up and will also sell better during summer months as prime.

Our lambing percentage was 142% overall, hoggets 80%, calving 85% and 2/3rds of the Southdown cross lambs were killed prime by Christmas. We also managed to get a pick out of the singles from the Romney Texel cross.

Reflecting back, it seems that although our lambing percentage was back from early lambing ewes, the unknown schedule for early season compared to later, has given us the benefit of creating space for the early lambs and ewes to go sooner, is still the winner in my view.

Thanks to Daniel Heaps and Ben Cook who have been helping both Quartz Range and Puonga run smoothly and profitably during the last few months. Also thanks to Sonjya, who keeps the office running and allows me to get on with the job of farming.

Finally, we welcomed Boyd and Sharon Macdonald to Lone Star Farms at our annual Christmas function in Nelson in late November. Boyd is our new General Manager and we wish him well in his new role.

Rain for the year 1,500mls.

PURAMAHOI

By Bob Garbutt and Sophia Cooke

First of all, a big Thank You to all the crew for the big effort put in this quarter, not only with ongoing property maintenance, but also for the extra effort put in for Tom and Heather's wedding preparations.

Three thatched roof pagodas have been installed in the pool area and along with the new gardens and palms, this area has been transformed. Grubbing of thistles and cutting of gorse continues with a special effort put in to control molenbeccia on both blocks - it has been taking over large areas of canopy amongst the native trees. We also had a big hit on the overhanging willows on the river reserve from the river mouth almost back to the ford. This created a couple of good sized piles of mulch with plenty more to go. A variable lift was done on the euchs and Blackwood forest areas which resulted in a large amount of slash being burnt or carted up to the gully in the pine block. The usual weeding, mulching, propagating, planting has resulted in a good amount of fresh spring vegetables available to the households. As expected, with the heavy pruning of dead and old wood from the pip fruit trees, this year's crops will not be substantial. The new blueberry enclosure is all but finished.

With the destocking on the organic block there is a notable improvement in both pasture and stock quality. Hopefully this will continue after weaning and during the next quarter. 43 R2 steers bought from Quartz Range in June went to Alliance in October. R2 steers bought from Rainbow in November are doing well with these expected to be ready in February. R1s from Paturau have done a great job cleaning up the gullies and the hill blocks. At present, we have bagged 287 bales of baleage and a second cut of baleage and hay is now ready to bale as soon as the weather permits.

The AsureQuality audit was completed in December with new grazing areas added which are now under a transition period.

Gabes and Harley have completed a work base First Aid course. One can only hope that if you're going to have a coronary it will be in the orchard. Steven Williams joined us briefly as a casual and we wish him all the best in his career in the Navy.

Next quarter:-

- Weaning calves and lambs.
- Fencing.
- Weed and pest control.
- Harvesting.
- Building yards.
- Family holiday.

QUARTZ RANGE

By Len Rapley

As well as getting our share of rain during the three months, the quarter has been extremely windy and colder than usual. At point of writing the soil temperature is still only 12 degrees. A consequence of this is that the feed levels have been very tight and the lambs are not doing as well as we would like.

Lambing went well with few storms affecting the survival rate. Our tailing percent was 135 which is slightly better than last year. We were assisted by the Collingwood Fire Brigade and Rugby Club for the physical part of the tailing - the proceeds of the monies earned by the clubs were put into the fund raising currently taking place to improve civil defence communications for Collingwood area, so the whole process was a win/win situation.

Last year's policy change to purchasing calves in March and running them through for 12 months has proved effective. This year we purchased 188 steers/heifers from Patuki, Puonga and Paturau. To date, in spite of not having an abundance of grass, they are steaming along. 12 R3s complete our cattle numbers. The cattle were rotationally grazed through the winter as we have an all grass policy at Quartz Range i.e. we don't grow supplementary feeds. However, we did feed baleage on a daily basis to the cattle throughout the winter and until the end of October.

During the quarter we have replaced several substandard fences and made a start on rush cutting, thistle grubbing and gorse spraying. No fertilizer has been spread on the property for 12 months - we were sitting on our hands waiting for the price to drop - but plans are in place to do an application in February.

It's great to have Boyd on board as General Manager and the two visits we have had to date have been very constructive ones. We look forward to more of the same. We continue to have a good relationship with our consultant, Phil Guscott.

For the last two months we have been fortunate to have Ben Cook here as a casual employee, a reliable and efficient worker and good to have around. We are also continuing to work with Darryl and Sonjya at Puponga which does help to ease the lack of permanent staff. In addition to the aforementioned, we continue to appreciate the support we receive from the Lone Star Farms' office staff. Finally, thanks to Tom and Heather and Ann and Klaus for their hospitality at the end of year function.

Next quarter:-

- Wean lambs. Drenching, weighing and crutching same. Sell primes.
- Shear ewes in January and the ewe lambs in March.
- Get rid of cull ewes and vaccinate 2Tths.
- Weigh and sort cattle into weight lots.
- Continue with gorse spraying, rush cutting and thistle grubbing.
- Roto wipe regrowth rushes.

RAINBOW STATION

By Dave McEwen

Well this last quarter certainly ripped past in bit of a hurry. This may have had something to do with the mass workload and the staff shortage due to our restructure.

I, personally, have spent many hours in tractor cabs either spraying paddocks or drilling paddocks while Brian was working on preparing the paddocks before I got to them. Once lambing was finished Kane Heaps, Tom Curnow, and Travis (a casual), were flat out mustering and tailing lambs which, with only three people doing this task, took a while. Once they completed this they turned around again and had to re-muster everything and drench lambs whilst still on the ewe. At this stage all ewes and lambs were being rotationally grazed trying to get them to grow as fast as possible as we were drying out and feed was becoming very tight.

A very good effort by the guys working far in excess of what would normally be expected by any employer and it was certainly appreciated and recognised by not only myself, but by our consultant (Geoff Dunham) who was also singing their praises saying that you wouldn't get to see this sort of team work very often; working hard, long hours and happy to do so.

The staff shortage has been addressed now and as we welcome Dan and Sarah Burke and three young kiddies to the team based on the Raglan block, we farewell Travis Baigent who worked well here as a casual until the Raglan role was filled. The next staffing issue is coming close to rearing its ugly head as Brian and I have been talking and is contemplating leaving us before the winter as the work is just getting too hard for him now. He has also said he wouldn't leave us in trouble and was planning to leave after a house was built for Kane and Lisa knowing the housing problems we have. It will be a shame to see him go but understandable with his age and health issues. Brian has been here with Kate and I since pretty much the start of our tenure at Rainbow and has enjoyed seeing many changes and the steady progress on the station of which he has been a big part.

In the process of getting through this busy period we had the Lone Star Farms Xmas parties and meeting which was like normal - a good catch up with the rest of the team - followed by the local A&P show in Nelson where Mike and Darryl put their sawing powers to the test in the sponsors' cross-cut sawing race. A good effort by the guys but they were blown out in the semi-finals.

The next crazy idea to fill up all the spare time that we did not have was Rainbow Station hosted a Meat and Wool field day here for two days restricted to 150 people. This certainly was an experience as we took the tour through the river and down the whole length of the Raglan block, having several stops with guest speakers at each stop point. From there we all went up to the local community hall where we had a catered meal and drinks while listening to a guest speaker. Day two went through the property out to the run country. Again, we had several stops with speakers. The first stop at Dip flat where the Air Force address went down very well before we moved on towards the boundary and beyond to Sedgemere huts owned by DOC. Other sponsors involved in the day were Novartis, Martin Farming, Lake Station Herefords, Ravensdown, The Vet Centre and Geoff Dunham as the facilitator. It was a good effort by all and it certainly was great to see so many of the companies we at LSF work closely with here supporting the day and hosting different parts of it.

Next quarter:-

- The money making time of the year.
- Weaning lambs and many prime lamb drafts and all associated work including culling ewes, shearing etc.
- Calf marking and putting the bull out in the run country.
- Get staff to take some annual leave.
- Sort the housing problem.
- (First lamb draft off Rainbow just completed at weaning just short of 300@17.47kg, very pleasing!)

THE WANDLE

By Marty Deans

The Wandle has had a mixture of weather during the last quarter, with the traditional hot Norwest and cooler southerly winds putting the property under a certain amount of pressure. Early spring growth allowed us the ability to fatten and kill 323 R2YR steers averaging 315kg, 81 R2YR heifers averaging 262 kg. We tailed 138% - a higher percentage than we had budgeted on. When you take over a property that has quite a number of trading ewes being purchased to make up stock numbers, it can lead to a few uncontrollable issues. All lambs were drenched on the ewes during the latter part of November which gave us the ability to kill 2,317 lambs at weaning with an average weight 16.95 kg.

As mentioned in the last Southern Star, we had cultivated and resown 55 ha of lucerne into last season's brassica ground. We had an excellent strike with the lucerne only for it to turn yellow and die! With some investigation undertaken by PGG, it was discovered that the previous owners had applied 2 litres/ha of Tordon Max over the brassicas to depress the weeds and this has a 12 month stand down period for sowing of legumes, so this area has been re-drilled into short rotation ryegrass. All brassica, rape, rye corn blocks have been direct drilled. There are over 40 hectares of new pasture still to be sown into a very rocky, awkward paddock which is being left till last, as I know it will test Pete Morrison's and Cameron Doherty's frustrations. The K-line irrigation was another mess that had to be tidied up and I thank Paul and Laurie for the effort and commitment in rectifying this situation.

We welcome two new members to The Wandle: Logan Morris and Dylan Weir and also an addition to the Chambers' household with little Ella being born on the 7th Dec.

We have spent quite a lot of time during the quarter looking at alternative irrigation proposals for The Wandle. We are being slightly hamstrung by the lack of historical data of where and how much water is physically available. This is now being monitored. The necessity for water harvest out of season has also become apparent.

The extensions and alterations to the cattle yards to make them safer and more user-friendly to work in have been completed, and a Racewell three-way auto drafter has been installed. The new sheep yards are still under construction. These will be completed early in the New Year.

Next quarter:-

- Monitor creek levels, irrigation investigation.
- Fattening lambs.
- Mt Albert Interco Lambs and ewes.
- Complete sheep yards.

OFFICE UPDATE

By Monique Bergman

A happy and healthy New Year to everyone!

Well, it has been a very eventful seven months with the company; there have been births, weddings, staff changes and above all, a computer system upgrade!

As you are all aware, there have been a few changes in the Accounts Department. Tania Ferris gave birth to a beautiful, bouncing boy and is now focusing on payroll, with Sandra, Sally and Fiona continuing their great work. With Jo's impending maternity leave in March, we welcome Sallyanne Archibald to the Accounts team. I am sure you will be friendly, supportive, and patient with Sallyanne as she learns "the ropes"!

The Admin Team is busily working away with travel, functions (both on and off the water!), Sturgess Ventures One Projects and HR is a main focus. We say 告別 (Japanese for farewell!) to Sonya and partner Daryl who leave our golden shores on the 11th of January for a three month stint in Japan; hopefully she will be back soon to continue her good work on the environmental/resource matters which are an essential part of our business!

Thank you to everyone for being so friendly, patient, and kind whilst I was learning the "ins and outs" of the Personal Assistant role. I look forward to working with you all this year.

Here's to a great 2010!

COMPETITION!!!

How well do you know the girls in the office???

The girls in the office thought it would be fun to share things with you that you probably never knew! See if you can match each of our names to one of the statements below. Whoever gets the most right wins a \$50 voucher from Whitcoulls! Good luck!

Here goes...who.....

-was painfully shy until around the age of 13; acted in the school play and confidence soared?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?
-would like to live 6 months a year in Southern France?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?
-broke her collarbone in three places playing rugby?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?
- 'regurgitated' all over a normally prize winning crop of potatoes after too much rum and no food?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?
-was born in Cardiff, Wales?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?
-does Indian Bhangra dancing?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?
-can direct a sheep dog from an easy 200 metres away without using a shepherd's whistle?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?
-was busy renovating when a crow bar slipped and hit her in the eye –she thought she needed stitches but the doc said no?
Is it: Jo/Sally/Monique/Sallyanne/Carolyn/Ingrid/Sandra/Fiona?

Fax 03 545 7601 or e-mail Ingrid.penfold@starholdings.co.nz your answers no later than 22 January.