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PERFORMANCE AND MANAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF WAIRARAPA AND TARARUA WOOL PRODUCTION SYSTEMS.

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April 1994

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Agricultural Science in Farm Management at Massey University.
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I accept responsibility for any errors or omissions in this report.
ABSTRACT

In 1992/93 the New Zealand wool industry was based on approximately 52.5 million sheep that produced 255500 tonnes of greasy wool. The New Zealand Wool Board Grower Services Group, among others, provided the 24000 sheep farmers involved in wool production with management advice and technical assistance in growing and harvesting wool which was subsequently sold, exported, processed and promoted by a network of wool industry participants.

The purpose of this study was to:

• compile a detailed database of Wairarapa/Tararua wool production systems.
• compare the database compiled with existing databases to test their suitability for describing Wairarapa/Tararua wool production systems.
• identify management variable that may be important in achieving high levels of wool production and returns.
• identify methods to improve New Zealand Wool Board extension in the Wairarapa/Tararua region.

This was achieved by a combined mail and personal interview survey of a stratified random sample of 75 Wairarapa/Tararua wool producers. Descriptive statistical methods were used to describe the physical and financial characteristics of wool production systems and the management systems employed. Multiple regression analysis was used to estimate the relative importance of different management strategies and farm physical characteristics on wool production and clean wool price.
Few significant differences in mean wool production system performance within farm class, summer rainfall, sheep flock size and summer rainfall/farm class groupings were noted in the study. Thus, the Wairarapa/Tararua region was relatively homogeneous in terms of wool production system performance over the past three seasons. A large range in values for most wool performance parameters suggested that wool production system performance on individual farms was influenced more by management variables than by farm physical attributes.

A comparison of the New Zealand Meat and Wool Boards' Economic Service (NZMWBES) Sheep and Beef Farm Survey and Wairarapa Farm Improvement Club (WFIC) databases with data collected in this study indicated that NZMWBES and WFIC data were satisfactory for describing some, but not all of the characteristics of wool production systems in the region. Therefore, in order to maintain a representative overview of Wairarapa/Tararua wool production systems it is recommended that this study should be regularly updated.

Aspects of wool production systems that could be improved on many Wairarapa/Tararua sheep farms mainly related to: the quantification of sheep breeding objectives; use of objective criteria for replacement ewe hogget and ram selection; improved summer feeding of mixed age ewes (if wool prices improve); and improved marketing (objective measurement and offer of wool to a wider range of buyers) of privately sold wool. These aspects can be addressed by New Zealand Wool Board mass extension activities, primarily through newspapers and free publications. While improvements in management for wool production are likely to increase monetary returns to the regions' wool producers, they should be promoted in the context of assisting individual wool producers to achieve their personal goals/objectives.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter outline  
### 1.1 The New Zealand wool industry
   - 1.1.1 Export earnings  
   - 1.1.2 Sheep farms  
   - 1.1.3 Sheep numbers  
   - 1.1.4 Wool production  
   - 1.1.5 Wool harvesting  
   - 1.1.6 Wool selling  
   - 1.1.7 Wool scouring  
   - 1.1.8 Wool exporting  
   - 1.1.9 Wool price  
   - 1.1.10 Wool processing  
   - 1.1.11 New Zealand wool end uses  
   - 1.1.12 Promotion of New Zealand wool  
   - 1.1.13 Research and development

1.2 The New Zealand Wool Board
   - 1.2.1 Formation and functions  
   - 1.2.2 New Zealand Wool Board activities

1.3 Purpose and scope of the study

1.4 Objectives of the study

## CHAPTER TWO: PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEY

2.0 Chapter outline

2.1 The Wairarapa/Tararua region
   - 2.1.1 Location  
   - 2.1.2 Population  
   - 2.1.3 Servicing industries  
   - 2.1.4 Topography and soils  
   - 2.1.5 Climate  
   - 2.1.6 Pasture production  
   - 2.1.7 Sheep farming systems  
   - 2.1.8 Sheep and beef cattle farm extension services  
   - 2.1.9 Sheep and beef cattle farm performance
2.2 Selection of the survey area and survey farmers
  2.2.1 Selection of the survey area
  2.2.2 Selection of the survey farms

2.3 Schedule of interviews

2.4 Questionnaire design
  2.4.1 Questionnaire layout
  2.4.2 Question preparation
  2.4.3 Pre-testing the questionnaire

2.5 Timing of the survey and interview procedure

2.6 Computer coding and analysis

2.7 Statistical analysis

CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTERISTICS OF WAIRARAPA/TARARUA WOOL PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

3.0 Chapter outline

3.1 The farmers
  3.1.1 Age and farming employment
  3.1.2 Farmer aims
  3.1.3 Farmers' attitudes towards the wool industry
  3.1.4 New Zealand Wool Board performance
  3.1.5 Agriculture-related publications read by farmers
  3.1.6 Agriculture-related events attended by farmers
  3.1.7 Discussion and application of results
  3.1.8 Conclusions

3.2 Land, subdivision and livestock
  3.2.1 Farm area
  3.2.2 Subdivision
  3.2.3 Livestock
  3.2.4 Discussion and application of results
  3.2.5 Conclusions

3.3 Lambing percentage and wool production
  3.3.1 Lambing percentage
  3.3.2 Wool production
  3.3.3 Discussion and application of results
  3.3.4 Conclusions

3.4 Financial returns for wool
  3.4.1 Average clean wool price
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2</td>
<td>Wool income</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3</td>
<td>Wool costs</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.4</td>
<td>Wool return</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.5</td>
<td>Discussion and application of results</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.6</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Sheep breeding</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
<td>Sheep breeding objectives</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
<td>Ewe hogget selection</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3</td>
<td>Ram selection</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4</td>
<td>Discussion and application of results</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.5</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Grazing management</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.1</td>
<td>Pasture shortage</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.2</td>
<td>Feeding priorities</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.3</td>
<td>Grazing management techniques</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.4</td>
<td>Fertiliser application</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.5</td>
<td>Sources of information for feeding/grazing management</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.6</td>
<td>Discussion and Application of results</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.7</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Animal health</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1</td>
<td>Sheep health challenges</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.2</td>
<td>Sources of information for animal health management</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.3</td>
<td>Discussion and application of results</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.4</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Wool Harvesting</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8.1</td>
<td>Shearing policy</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8.2</td>
<td>Crutching policy</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8.3</td>
<td>Clip Preparation</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8.4</td>
<td>Discussion and application of results</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8.5</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Wool Selling</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.1</td>
<td>Method of selling</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.2</td>
<td>Sources of wool selling information</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.3</td>
<td>Discussion and application of results</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.4</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CHAPTER FOUR: INTEGRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Multiple regression analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>Dependent and explanatory variables</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Discussion and application of results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Wool production</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Wool price</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Evaluation of research methodology</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Recommendations in relation to study objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Wool production system database</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>Database comparisons</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3</td>
<td>Important management variables</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4</td>
<td>Improving New Zealand Wool Board extension</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Suggestions for further research</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A:</td>
<td>New Zealand Meat and Wool Boards' Economic Service Farm Class definitions</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B:</td>
<td>Wairarapa/Tararua survey questionnaire</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C:</td>
<td>Individual summer rainfall/NZMWBES Farm Class category wool production system information</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURES

1.1 New Zealand shorn wool sales by month 9
1.2 New Zealand wool fibre exports to major markets 13
1.3 New Zealand wool price and production (expressed in 1992/93 purchasing terms) 14
2.1 Location of the Wairarapa/Tararua region in relation to the North Island of New Zealand 29
2.2 Location of farms surveyed in the Wairarapa/Tararua region 53
3.1 Wool prices 1990/91 - 1992/93 93
5.1 Flowchart of the New Zealand wool industry 149

TABLES

1.1 Classification of New Zealand sheep farming systems 3
1.2 New Zealand breeding ewe and ewe hogget numbers 1960 to 1992 5
1.3 New Zealand wool production 6
1.4 Categories of wool sold at auction 7
1.5 Method of sale of New Zealand wool 1987/88 to 1992/93 10
2.1 Monthly and annual rainfall (mm) for selected Wairarapa/Tararua sites 33
2.2 Comparison of NZMWBES and WFIC sheep and beef cattle farm performance indices for comparable class groupings (1990/91 data) 40
2.3 Comparison of NZMWBES East Coast North Island Production Region and WFIC all farms average performance indices (1990/91 data) 40
3.1 Age and farm-employment details of farmers surveyed 58
3.2 Main aim in farming of farmers surveyed 59
3.3 Perceptions of the future of the wool industry of farmers surveyed 60
3.4 Rating of New Zealand Wool Board performance by farmers surveyed 61
3.5 Agriculture-related publications read by farmers surveyed 63
3.6 Agriculture-related events attended by farmers surveyed 65
3.7 Agriculture-related events attended by farmers classified by number of sheep stock units wintered 65
3.8 Land, subdivision and livestock characteristics of farms classified by NZMWBES Farm Class 70
3.9 Land, subdivision and livestock characteristics of farms classified by summer rainfall category 71
3.10 Land, subdivision and livestock characteristics of farms classified by number of sheep stock units wintered 71
3.11 Land, subdivision and livestock characteristics of farms classified by summer rainfall/NZMWBES Farm Class category

3.12 Lambing percentage and wool production on farms classified by NZMWBES Farm Class

3.13 Lambing percentage and wool production on farms classified by summer rainfall category

3.14 Lambing percentage and wool production on farms classified by number of sheep stock units wintered

3.15 Lambing percentage and wool production on farms classified by summer rainfall/NZMWBES Farm Class category

3.16 Financial returns for wool and costs of harvesting wool on farms classified by NZMWBES Farm Class

3.17 Financial returns for wool and costs of harvesting wool on farms classified by summer rainfall category

3.18 Financial returns for wool and costs of harvesting wool on farms classified by number of sheep stock units wintered

3.19 Financial returns for wool and costs of harvesting wool on farms classified by summer rainfall/NZMWBES Farm Class category

3.20 Sheep breeding objectives of farmers surveyed

3.21 Replacement ewe hogget selection criteria used by farmers surveyed

3.22 Sources of advice/information, used by farms surveyed, to assist in selecting replacement ewe hoggets.

3.23 Ram selection criteria used by farmers surveyed

3.24 Sources of advice/information, used by farmers surveyed, to assist in selecting rams

3.25 Basis of decision from whom to purchase rams

3.26 Month of most severe pasture shortage on summer moist and summer dry farms surveyed

3.27 Livestock feeding priorities at time of summer feed shortage on farms surveyed

3.28 Livestock feeding priorities at time of winter feed shortage on farms surveyed

3.29 Use of grazing management techniques by survey farmers

3.30 Sources of advice/information used by farmers to assist with grazing management

3.31 Impact on sheep production of animal health problems on farms surveyed

3.32 Sources of advice/information used by survey farmers to assist with animal health management

3.33 Lamb, two tooth and mixed age ewe shearing policies used on farms surveyed

3.34 Month(s) of lamb shearing on farms with once-yearly or twice-yearly shearing policies

3.35 Month of hogget shearing on farms surveyed
3.36 Month(s) of two tooth shearing on farms with once-yearly or twice-yearly shearing policies

3.37 Month(s) of mixed age ewe shearing on farms with once-yearly, twice-yearly or eight-monthly shearing policies

3.38 Type of mixed age ewe shearing policy changes made by farmers surveyed

3.39 Reasons for changes in shearing policy

3.40 Hogget, two tooth and mixed age ewe crutching policies used on farms surveyed

3.41 Month of hogget crutching, two tooth crutching and mixed age ewe crutching on farms surveyed

3.42 Number of wool handlers employed per shearer at shearing time on farms surveyed

3.43 Sources of advice/information used by farmers to assist with wool clip preparation at shearing time

3.44 Types of and reasons for, wool selling policy changes made by farmers surveyed

3.45 Sources of advice/information used by farmers to assist with wool selling

4.1 Description of state and management variables included in a multiple regression model to predict average wool production per sheep stock unit

4.2 Description of state and management variables included in a multiple regression model to predict average net wool price

4.3 Simple correlation coefficients between wool production and wool price and explanatory variables

4.4 Variables remaining in the wool production estimating equation after backward elimination

4.5 Variables remaining in the wool price estimating equation after backward elimination