



Perennial Pasture Systems 7th Annual Study Tour New Zealand September 2015



PPS Study Tour supported by



Report compiled by PPS Project Manager Rob Shea from notes supplied by PPS study tour members

PPS is supported by





Perennial Pasture Systems 7th Annual Study Tour
New Zealand September 13-19 2015

Introduction

Since the group's inception in 2007, PPS has recognised the value in members visiting leading farms in other regions as well as being informed of research projects with tours of research facilities. In 2009, PPS implemented an annual study tour as part of the group's extension activities and since then has held single and multiple day tours within Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

At the planning meeting in February, it was decided that the 2015 study tour would be to New Zealand.

The announcement created a lot of interest with ultimately thirty five members going on the tour. The majority of the tour group were from the Upper Wimmera region but there were also members from Casterton, Ballarat, Horsham, Balmoral, Bendigo and Kaniva. Over a quarter of the group were female and the group included two bankers, two agronomists and an ex Dept of Ag sheep industry officer. The mix of people in the group made for interesting conversations both on farm and socially.



Part of the PPS group on route to New Zealand



Featherston township

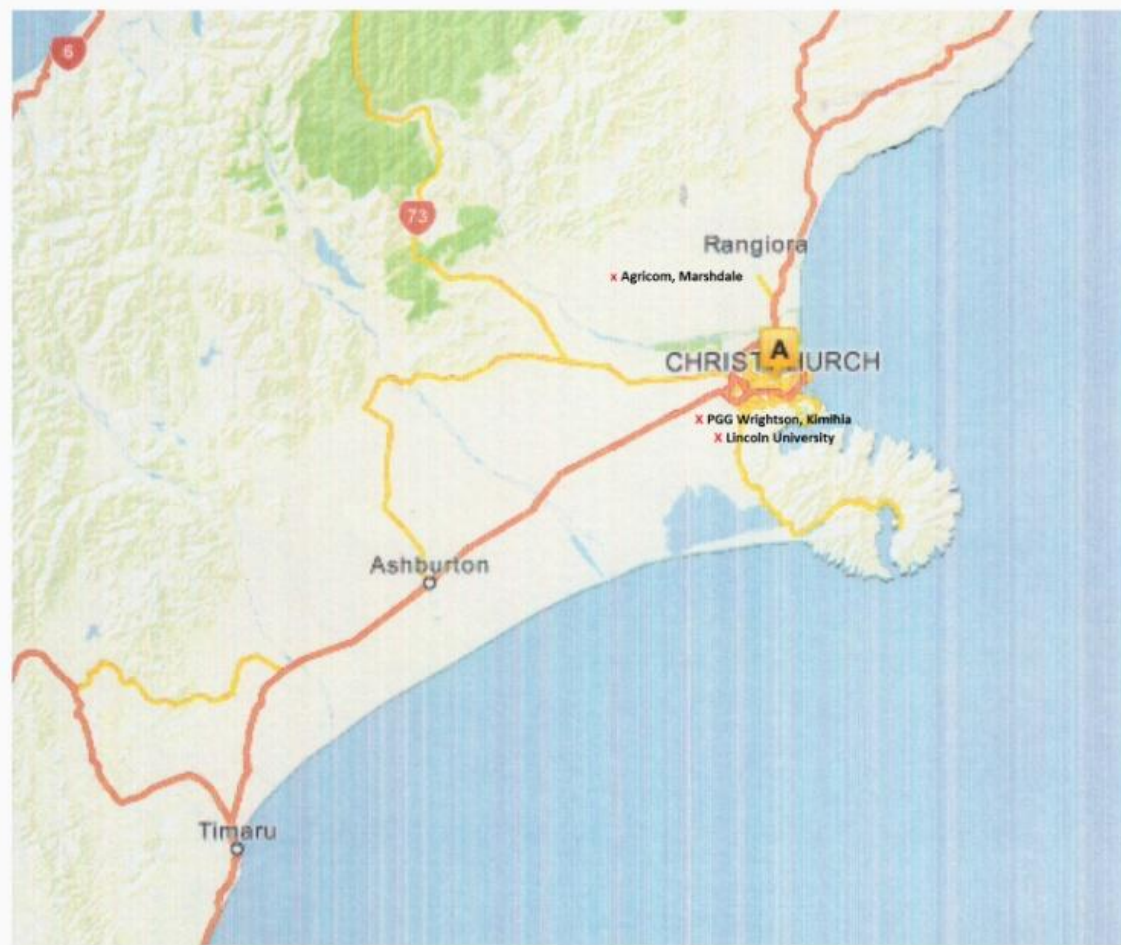


The PPS ladies at Marshdale
(Absent Debbie Shea)

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New Zealand September 2015**



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Day One Sunday 13th September

The tour group met early at Melbourne airport and travelled to Wellington, due to the time difference and lack of directional skills in a couple of the hire cars the group didn't check into the hotel in the city centre until 6pm NZ time. An informal dinner near the Wellington harbour gave ample time for everyone to get together and meet up with members that they may not have known very well prior to the trip.

Day Two Monday 14th September

An early start in Wellington to travel to the Wairarapa region around 100 km North West of the city. A hour's drive through twisting mountain roads saw the group arrive in the village of Featherston for a coffee stop, with a few people showing a green colour similar to some of the productive pastures that we were about to see.

Farm visit 1

Property: Turanganui

Farm Size: 1201 Ha

Enterprise(s): Romney Stud, Lamb, Trade Cattle

Managers: Warren Family

Average Rainfall: 1000mm

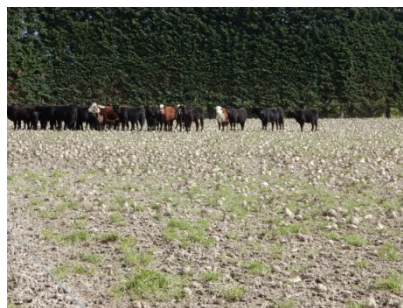
Location: Pirinoa

Labour 5 full time + 2 family

On arrival the group was invited into the house for morning tea compliments of Robyn Warren and her family and it was enjoyed in the park like setting of the Turanganui homestead before Mike Warren and his livestock manager Simon Dennes talked about their enterprise.

They operate one of New Zealand's oldest and largest Romney studs and the 5000 ewes are lambed down in 250 paddocks averaging 5 ha each. Extensive pedigree recording is carried out and the advanced genetics result in sales of around 1250 rams annually. Mothering ability is a huge factor in the genetics and is noted at tagging; bad mothers are culled. Turanganui scans for dries, singles and twins and has 180% at scanning with 155 - 160 % at marking. Pastures are ryegrass and sub clover based. Swedes have recently been sown for summer feed and to clean up paddocks prior to sowing down. There was some irrigation also on the property for finishing.

The group was then taken on a farm tour with the inspection of the highly productive pastures matched with stunning views of Palliser Bay and Lake Onoke.



Turanganui



Turanganui cont.

After the farm tour the Warren's supplied lunch with roast lamb, abalone fritters and salads while taking questions from PPS members; a great introduction to the productive farming and the hospitality of the New Zealand farmers we were to meet on the tour.



Simon Dennes from Turanganui trying to ignore Wayne Burton, Tim Curtis & Charlie de Fegely turning religious and blessing the magnificent lunch supplied by the Warren's



PPS members Richard de Fegely, Wayne Burton, Charlie de Fegely & Mal Nicholson with the Warren family & Simon Dennes

Take Home Messages from Turanganui

High cost for high return

Importance of stock record keeping using EID

Good staff relations with them gaining qualifications and having a career path

Staff doing the \$25/hour work, owner doing the \$100/hour analysis and planning work

Good succession planning

The best grass is "new grass"

Proud of being in agriculture

Farm visit 2

Property: Pahautea

Managers: Matt & Tracey Honeysett

Location: Kahutara

Farm Size: 420 Ha + 266 ha support

Average Rainfall: 603 mm (at least 40mm each month)

Labour: 4 full time

Enterprise(s): 1200 cow dairy

Pahautea is a Limited Liability Partnership set up between five investors including the manager Matt Honeysett; Matt decides farming practices whilst the others are investors including the previous owner of the property.

Matt Honeysett, originally from Wiltshire in the U.K, is a qualified mechanical engineer, he described his background before his entry into the partnership and telling the group about the first year of improvements which included a new rotary dairy, effluent treatment system as well as an under road tunnel to safely move the cows.

Matt Hood from Rabobank talked further about the equity partnership and the business structure which includes a board of the five partners as directors and a chair who meet regularly. The business has low debt giving it the opportunity to expand. The directors each have one vote despite there being different level of equity in the business.

Matt Honeysett then talked about the farm management including regrassing (resowing) pastures and the use of technology to record individual cow performance.

The group then went into the dairy to inspect the milking and the technology in action, which includes it being a one person operation, measurement of milk yield and quality, auto drafting, walk over daily weighing and individual feeding.

An inspection of the calf feeder shed and a look at a highly productive pasture completed the Pahautea tour.



Pahautea



Take Home Messages from Pahautea

Equity partnerships are an opportunity for talented young farmers to get a stake in agriculture
 Equity partnerships; need the right people to be involved
 Good corporate governance
 High level of animal performance measurement using EID
 Grow more grass, eat more grass.



Matt Honeysett and PPS members in a ryegrass pasture ready for the cows.



Matt Honeysett Pahautea, Matt Hood Rabobank and Charlie de Fegely PPS

Ruamahunga River

Matt Hood from Rabobank, who was our tour guide for the day, had asked Brian Eccles from Cash Manager RURAL software to organise jet boating on the Ruamahunga River near Gladstone for the PPS group. Brian and four mates were happy to oblige and most of the group had an entertaining and fairly rapid ride up the rock strewn river; a great finish to day one.



Photos; Mick Greene, Wendy Harrington, Aira Kemister, Gavin Svanosio

Shepherds Dinner

Matt Hood had arranged an invitation from local agribusiness group "The Shepherds" to their monthly dinner meeting. The group has an invited membership of farmers, agribusiness representatives, solicitors and accountants who meet monthly for dinner and a guest speaker. The dinner was held in the historic Lansdowne House and Charlie de Fegely, Rob Shea and Wayne Burton were invited to give a brief overview of PPS before members were invited to spread out among the tables to have dinner with the New Zealand members of the Shepherds.

The Shepherds (est. 1979)

The advancement of agriculture in its widest sense

After dinner, the guest speaker Catherine Reid did a presentation on foreign investment in agriculture in New Zealand; a topic of great interest to the Australians as well as the locals.

Catherine Reid, Special Counsel at Gibson Sheat Lawyers

Catherine Reid (nee Hewitt) is a recognised specialist in New Zealand's foreign investment regime, including the Overseas Investment Office ("OIO") consent process. Catherine developed her expertise at the OIO where she was a senior solicitor and manager. Her roles involved assessing numerous investment applications, including the sale of the Crafar Farms and more recently Lochinver Station. Catherine also briefed the incoming Ministers following the 2014 General Election. Before joining the OIO in 2011, Catherine was a senior solicitor at law firm Chapman Tripp for over 6 years. Catherine grew up on a sheep and beef farm in Ponatahi and attended Victoria University and St Matthew's Collegiate.



Day three Tuesday 15th September

A big day with an early start from Masterton and an hour's drive through hill country to Wairere. The spectacular hill scenery was backed by snow capped mountains as we climbed to Wairere Station.

Farm visit 3

Property: Wairere

Location: Denfield

Labour 6 stockmen, 1 fencer

Owner: Derek Daniel

Farm Size: 1070 Ha

Manager: Simon Buckley

Average Rainfall: 1125 mm

Enterprise(s): Romney Stud, Lamb, Cattle

Wairere is a hill country property with 2% flats, 28% medium hill and 70% steep hill rising to 532 metres above sea level. The main enterprise is a Romney stud operation with 3,000 rams sold in NZ annually and a further 950 are sold from joint ventures in Australia, UK and Chile.

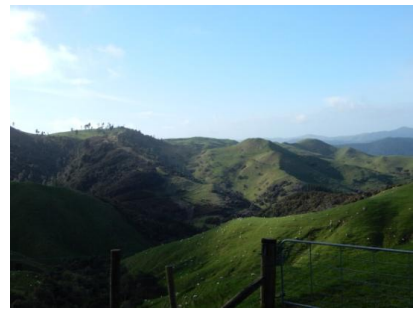
The property runs 5,300 performance recorded ewes on Wairere and a further 15,000 ewes on other properties. Ewes wean 140 – 150% at 90 – 95 days with a weaning weight range of 28 – 31 kg. No supplementary feeding is carried out but nitrogen is applied to boost pasture growth.

A cattle herd of 300 is carried on Wairere, mainly for pasture control.

Fertiliser input is high with annual inputs of 30 kg phosphorus, 30 kg sulphur, 30 kg nitrogen and 500 kg lime per hectare; all fertiliser is spread by plane.

The PPS group did a ridge top drive through the property and it was soon clear why all stock work is done with horses. A visit to the asphalt airstrip completed the tour and no one expressed a sudden desire to become a crop dusting pilot.

Views of Wairere



Take Home Messages from Wairere

Optimise soil fertility

Hills can be improved; if you can't drive on it, chuck it out of a plane

Grow more: Grow fast

Manage your system to take control of the season

Importance of legumes

Don't overgraze lucerne

Good Subdivision; Rotational Grazing

Use 20 – 50% cattle for pasture and parasite control

Good communication with other farmers

Measure, monitor, analyse; improve equity through production gains

Have a clear business direction; watch trends

NZ farming practices not directly transferable to Australia due to climate extremes

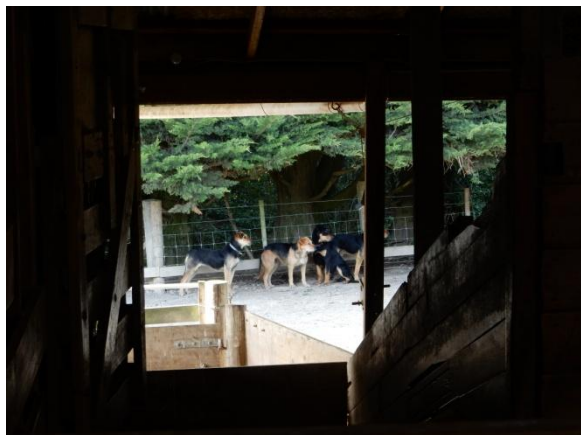
Many Kiwis have had a go at farming in Australia and came home with their tail between their legs



PPS members Aira Kemister, Stuart Robinson and Jodie Greene with Derek Daniel, Simon Buckley and Jacques Reinhardt from Wairere



Wairere stock manager Simon Buckley giving PPS members Alan Howe & Stuart Robinson an overview of Wairere



Huntaways; part of the Wairere team



The airstrip at Wairere

It soon became obvious that our New Zealand hosts were very familiar with the windy, hilly roads, as well as being fans of the NZ car rally champion the late Possum Bourne, as they headed to our next destination. Fortunately the group was able to keep in convoy and arrive at the Wainuioru Hall for a presentation by Will Beetham



Farm visit 4

Property: Beetham Pastural
Farm Size: 755 Ha
Enterprise(s): Lamb, Trade Cattle

Owner: Will Beetham
Average Rainfall: 1115 mm

Location: Wainuioru
Labour: 3 Will + manager & fencer

Will Beetham gave a comprehensive account of the Beetham Pastural operation; Will has leased the farm from the family for two years. He is committed to growing the business and has set out the values and vision that he believes will achieve this.

Will keeps impressive records for use in the planning process and showed the group examples of this using both the Cash Manager financial program and the Farmax farm record and planning system. Will runs 4000 ewes utilising plantain and clover pastures to turn off lambs at 18 – 19 kg at 90 days from an average 150% lambing. Will utilises his highly productive pastures for multiple lambing ewes and hill country for singles. Will uses an automated weighing system to draft lambs into weight ranges as well as weighing the flock regularly to monitor stock condition.

Pasture costs are high but so are the returns; the \$1000 per ha pasture establishment cost can return \$2000 per ha in the first year in the best paddocks or \$700 per ha in the hill country.

After Will's talk the group inspected the auto weighing system at work and took a tour through the farm.



Will Beetham presenting to the PPS Group at the Wainuioru Hall



Plantain pasture at Beetham Pastural

Take Home Messages from Beetham Pastural

Strong values and vision; all recorded

Weigh all flock monthly; minimum

Manage ewes at scanning; aim for score 3

Once a month - look at pasture cover

Plan 3 days work per week (things go wrong), have feed base 3 weeks in ahead and know 3 months in advance (favourite take home message – Janine Curtis)

Farm management computer programs are only as good as the information input

Perfect effort towards perfect outcome.



*Auto draft and weighing at
Beetham Pastural*



*Matt Hood Rabobank NZ, Charlie de Fegely PPS
Will Beetham and Hayden Price PPS*

After leaving Beetham Pastural, it was around a forty minute drive to Spring Valley passing through Masterton on the way. A pleasant lunch, catered for by the Opaki School Ladies, was followed by a presentation from Matt Wyeth which included a session by Brian Eccles from Cash Manager RURAL software.

Farm visit 5

Property: Spring Valley

Farm Size: 1000 Ha

Enterprise(s): Lamb, Lamb Finishing, Cattle

Owner: Matt & Lynley Wyeth

Average Rainfall: 1800 mm

Location: Kaituna

Labour: 5 FT 1 Seasonal

The Spring Valley farms of Matt and Lynley Wyeth are situated around 12 km north west of Masterton. They run 12,500 stock units on hill country that includes about 500ha of steeper contour. The home block, 737ha Spring Valley, is owned by Matt and Lynley and sits on the boundary of the Tararua State Forest. Another 250ha is leased. Matt managed Spring Valley for his parents for a year then share-farmed with them for two years, before he and Lynley purchased the farm in 2001.

With a heavy focus on breeding and finishing sheep, Spring Valley Enterprises wintered 6,850 ewes and 2,500 hoggets last year, along with 220 breeding cows and replacement heifers, 200 R1 cattle and 150 R2 cattle. In addition, about 2,500 ewe lambs are also farmed on contract on other family properties.

It is a very high rainfall area and the land values reflect this, hill country is valued at \$6400 - \$7000 per ha and flat country is \$20,000 per ha. The farm often experiences snowfalls.

The average annual fertiliser is \$300 per ha and the main inputs are p, s, k and lime.

Spring Valley marks 157% in older ewes and 173% in 2 tooths; Weaning is 32.2kg at 90 days.

Up to 1000 ewes will scan with triplets; these are lambed down in a lambing shed. They are divided into ten day lambing intervals at scanning and go through the lambing shed, lambing in single pens.

Spring Valley cont.

Lynley also conducts an orphan lamb operation, where up to three hundred orphan lambs from Spring Valley and other farms are reared on colostrums' from a nearby dairy farm and milk supplements.

During Matt's presentation, he emphasised the value of good staff and spoke about some of the light hearted activities that he implements to build up good relations and to put a bit of fun into the hard work.

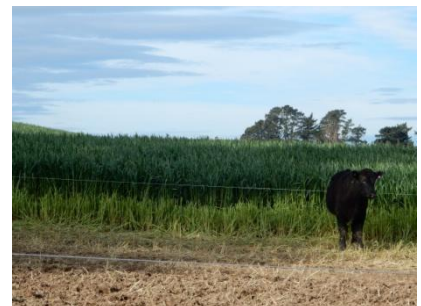
The Wyeth's have appointed a board of advisors, including legal and financial experts to review the business progress and to review investment decisions.

Matt and Lynley are also strong advocates for their farm business as well as NZ agriculture in general; they conduct a facebook page that keeps followers up to date with what is happening on farm. They have a motto for their business which sums up their philosophy.

Spring Valley: Where Efficiency meets farming-Putting the Pride and passion back into farming



Spring Valley



Take Home Messages from Spring Valley

Can't control price; therefore focus on production and product per ha

Ensure good partnerships with suppliers, contractors and staff

Know your financial position at all times

Be prepared to have people from outside assess your business

Take pride in your own farm and agriculture in general



*PPS members & the Wyeth family
at Spring Valley*



*PPS past president Simon Brady passing
on a thank you gift to Lynley Wyeth*

Trans Tasman Challenge

Prior to the arrival of the PPS group at Spring Valley, an international challenge had been suggested and PPS took on the task of representing Australia. At the end of the farm tour and after safety details had been taken care of; the PPS clay target team was selected with Simon Brady, Greg Coburn, Rich de Fegely, Andrew Speirs and Rod Vearing taking on the locals. Despite their best efforts the New Zealanders took victory comfortably, although a couple of our team sensed something not quite right.

The second challenge was a slingshot paintball challenge and while NZ host Matt Wyeth couldn't seem to miss, the PPS combination of Charlie de Fegely, Jodie Greene and Hayden Price made little impact on the scores. Another victory to the Kiwis, but again something didn't seem right!



Trans Tasman Challenge – victory to the Kiwis



The awful truth came out while the locals were basking in their victory when Matt dropped an aluminium “clay” target on the cement and revealed that the Australian’s paint balls had spent the afternoon in the freezer preventing them from splattering when they hit the target.

Naturally the PPS group were shocked at such underhand tactics; surely the first time anything like this has occurred in a sporting competition between the two nations.

Fortunately an international incident was averted by the appearance of eskies (or chilly boxes as the Kiwis call them) full of the local Tui beer and the great hospitality of the locals; revenge is being planned when the Kiwis join PPS in Australia for a reciprocal visit.

The day ended with a superb catered dinner organised for PPS by the Wyeth’s and a pleasant social evening was had; several of the other host farmers from our North Island tour joined us at Spring Valley for dinner.

Dinner at Spring Valley



PPS President Wayne Burton and Matt Wyeth in discussions about the Trans Tasman challenge



PPS members Wendy & Paul Harrington, Rod Vearing and Andrew Speirs with Derek Daniel from Wairere (centre)



PPS members Simon Brady and Rich de Fegely sampling some NZ mussels



PPS members Janine Curtis & Kaye Price

Day four Wednesday 16th September

After two big days to start the study tour, the group was happy to have a bit of time over breakfast to discuss the farm visits and take in the amount of information that had been obtained.

The convoy left Masterton around 9 am, stopping at the village of Greytown for a look around and coffee before heading back over the mountain range to Wellington.

The group was booked on the 2.45 pm ferry across Cook Strait and all vehicles were dropped off at the ferry terminal with plenty of time to spare.

The sixty dollar ferry fare was money well spent as the group enjoyed a windy but uneventful crossing before entering Queen Charlotte Sound and docking in Picton.

After a new set of hire vehicles were collected the group made the half hour trip to Blenheim for the overnight stop.

We were met at the hotel by NZ sheep scanner Jeff Sewell who showed us the way to the Dolce Pizzeria for the evening meal. At the restaurant, we were joined by Jeff's wife Sandra and also Chris and Julia Dawkins, whose farm we were to visit the next day.

An enjoyable meal was had by all compliments of PGG Wrightson who sponsored the dinner.



Cook Strait Ferry



Day five Thursday 17th September

It was back to the early starts and Jeff Sewell joined the group again to lead the convoy to “The Pyramid” property of the Dawkins family. The drive took the group through the Marlborough wine region, known mainly for its Sauvignon Blanc, but well respected for its expertise in other varieties as well.

Farm visit 5

Property: The Pyramid

Owner: Dawkins Family

Location: Waihopai Valley

Farm Size: 445 Ha + 187 ha under offer

Average Rainfall: 780 mm

Labour: 2

Enterprise(s): Lamb, Cattle Trading, Dairy Bulls

Chris gave an entertaining presentation on arrival and talked about the operation as well their analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the business. He also poked some light hearted fun at the Australians for the amount of weeds and pests (including possums) that we had sent to NZ. The Kiwis don't have red legged earth mite or capeweed; so there are a few things we haven't shared with them. .

Although “The Pyramid” is high rainfall compared to those in PPS, the farm was a bit closer to the conditions experienced at home with peak spring growth, dry summers and a definitive autumn break. Chris described their farm as a “ryegrass factory” which contributes to their 160 % lambing and 400 gms/day lamb growth rate. Chris was one of the first in the area to adopt pregnancy scanning.

“The Pyramid” also has a Jersey bull operation with bull calves purchased then on sold when grown out.

Chris talked about clover being an important driver for their system but they have had no success with sub clover persistence, he suspects that the summers are not hot enough to break down the hard seeds of the subs.

Chris talked about a hill property which was under offer for them to purchase, it had been farmed organically for several years and the amount of woody weeds present and its low quality pasture did not inspire the group during the farm tour. Chris was planning to fix it with “spray & pray”, “hoof & tooth” and burning techniques.

The visit finished with an interesting farm tour with spectacular scenery in every direction and a group of young bulls who decided that the hire vehicles were very tasty; fortunately some expert cattle herding by Greg Coburn and David Bain prevented any damage.



The Pyramid

The Pyramid



Take Home Messages from The Pyramid

Good relationships with service providers - scanners, shearers, stock agents - all become part of the system with same values as the family.

Opportunities in increasing lamb survival rates

Reducing animal health issues results in heavier sheep

Good fertiliser inputs result in good pasture production



*Rob Barnes Rural Finance, Simon Brady
and Jeff Sewell NZ*



*New Zealanders Jeff Sewell and
Chris Dawkins*



*Gavin Svanosio Rural Bank
and Ben Greene*



*The organic farm soon to be part
of The Pyramid*



*The Dawkins family, Jeff
Sewell & PPS members
at The Pyramid*

The group left “The Pyramid” and travelled around forty minutes through dry hills country, not dissimilar to the hills of the upper Wimmera. A quick diversion was made off the main road to have a look at the salt harvesting operation on the coastal Lake Grassmere, before tour leader Jeff Sewell turned off the road and into the Avery family “Bonavaree” property. Doug Avery had been a presenter at the PPS Annual Conference only a month prior and all were keen to have a look at their operation.



Grassmere area

Farm visit 5

Property: Bonavaree

Owner: Avery Family

Location: Grassmere

Farm Size: 1500 Ha + 250 ha lease

Average Rainfall: 573 mm

Labour: 5

Enterprise(s): Lamb, Sheep & Cattle Trading, Dairy Cow Grazing, Lucerne Seed

The Avery family met the group with a strong northerly blowing and the expectation from Doug that the current “el nino” would continue the dry conditions being experienced on Bonavaree. Fortunately Doug was mistaken as the farm received 58 mm of rain in the week after the PPS visit.

Doug introduced Fraser who gave a great insight into the operation, which was currently carrying 8000 stock units but can carry up to 12,000-14,000 stock units in good seasons. The Avery’s trade in both sheep and cattle but sheep are the main focus. Half of the sheep are trading stock which makes de-stocking decisions easier.

The breeding flock are Coopworth based composites and lamb at an average of 150%; ewes are 83 kg at weaning time.

Bonavaree has lucerne on the flat and medium slope country, which makes up 25% of the farm, while a variety of grass based pastures are grown on the hill country. Pasture assessments are carried out monthly. Doug was motivated by Dr Derrick Moot from Lincoln University at a field day and he saw lucerne as a “game changer” and set about shifting Bonavaree’s farming system. The Avery’s use lucerne pastures for lambing multiples, while the single lambing ewes go onto the hill country. Fraser estimates an increase of up to 30% when the ewes are mated on lucerne. Brassicas and annual ryegrasses are sown in some paddocks for extra feed supply.

Tagasate (tree lucerne) is grown on the property to provide shelter for bumble bees that in turn pollinate the lucerne pastures.

The Avery’s use the Farmax computer management system but Fraser emphasised that the information obtained is dependent of the information recorded.

Armed with the extensive information on Bonavaree the group had a late lunch, and then set off on a farm tour.

Lunch at Bonavaree



PPS members Wendy Harrington and Rod Vearing



PPS members and the Avery Family



PPS members Gavin Svanosio and Alan Howe



PPS member Paul Harrington with New Zealanders Jeff Sewell & Wendy Avery

Take Home Messages from Bonavaree

Pasture cover assessment is done once a month.

Building a history of the numbers brings knowledge to understand the numbers.

60% of farm measured with plate measure or stick once a month. Same paddocks each time, not cropped paddocks.

Investing in automated sheep weighing equipment to make it easier; can get more information

Focus on producing as much meat as possible

Agriculture needs high value work; investment in education.

Flexibility of stock ready for trading is the key to success

Lucerne converts a litre of water at twice the rate that grass does; effectively doubling the rainfall.

Ewes need salt with Lucerne, it is low in sodium requiring salt licks to boost sodium levels.

Expansion - purchasing land. Invest in productivity gains through pasture improvement straight away to get the new properties up and running and producing quickly.

Contractors were extensively used for land preparation and sowing operations.

Bonavaree

Photos: Charlie de Fegely, Kieran Ransom, Andrew Speirs



The group left Bonavaree in the late afternoon for the nearly four hour trip to Christchurch along the spectacular coastal road with views of snow capped mountains inland. There was a stop on the way for some seal watching before the road headed inland and the group arrived at the hotel in the centre of the city after dark.



The Coastal Highway

Day Six Friday 18th September

Today was set aside for visits to pasture research facilities and the group headed out of Christchurch to the town of Lincoln where we met up with Dr Derrick Moot from Lincoln University. Doug Avery credits Derrick with giving him the inspiration that transformed his farm and gave him the positive attitude that he now passes on through his speaking engagements.

Lincoln University – Dry Land Research Farm Dr Derrick Moot

The research farm is situated on the Canterbury plains and has a 550mm annual rainfall, it is a stony river soil with a water holding capacity of around 100mm. Derrick took the group to the site of some Lucerne research and questioned a few practices associated with Lucerne management, including the method of waiting until 10% of the plant was in flower before grazing it.

The trial was stocked with 14 twin bearing ewes per ha and they are looking at introducing grass systems into the Lucerne stands. Sheep need time to adapt to Lucerne if they are to lamb down on it. Derrick pointed out that Lucerne is very water efficient and produces 30 kg of dry matter for every mm of rain while grasses produce 15 kg/dm.

The tour had a further stop at a clover research site and Derrick spoke about the difficulties in getting sub clover to germinate in their conditions due to its hard seed.

The PPS group was very impressed with Derrick's research and hopes to bring him to talk to the wider group at some stage.



Lincoln University lucerne site



Question Time



Rich de Fegely, Andrew Speirs and Ben Greene inspecting the lucerne



PPS members Duncan Thomas PGG Wrightson and Wayne Burton with Dr Derrick Moot (centre)

PGG Wrightson Seeds Kimihia Research Farm

After leaving the University farm, we travelled a short distance to the Kimihia, the primary base for PGG Wrightson Seeds. It is from Kimihia that most of the NZ Research and Development work is coordinated. This is a summer dry area and is located within the main seed production areas of NZ.

Kimihia is situated on the Canterbury Plains and has an annual rainfall of 600 mm. The PPS group had an introductory talk on the plant breeding program from Andy Dumbleton and Mike Norriss before lunch and then went out into the field to inspect the cocksfoot and brassica breeding program.

The first stop was a paddock where single plants bred from a cocksfoot cultivar were being grown to select the ones that exhibited the desired characteristics. The plants that are assessed to be unsuited for further breeding are sprayed out, leaving only a few to progress to the next stage of testing.

A further stop was at a brassica trial where a cross between radish and kale was being assessed for insect resistance. The visit to Kimihia gave group members a look at an aspect of plant breeding that is important to the development of new cultivars.

From Kimihia, we travelled back through the outskirts of Christchurch to Marshdale around 50 km north west of the city.



Early generation Cocksfoot selection trial at PGG Wrightson Research Farm Kimihia





Brassica Trial at Kimihia



PPS members with Andy Dumbleton and Mike Norriss at Kimihia

Agricom Research Farm Marshdale

The group arrived at Marshdale and were met by Al Moorhead and Glenn Judson from Agricom who outlined the work done there. Marshdale is a 68 ha operating farm in Oxford, North Canterbury and functions as Agricom's research farm. Agricom researches, develops and markets a wide range of proprietary pasture and forage crop seeds to the agricultural industry.

It uses Marshdale as the testing ground for its products and the group inspected paddocks of plantain, cocksfoot, fescues as well as clover mixes and mixed pastures.

Pastures at Marshdale are measured for growth and persistence and animal production is monitored to maximise the amount of meat per ha that can be produced.



Marshdale



Al Moorhead & Glenn Judson Agricom with PPS members



PPS members and Agricom Reps at Marshdale

From Marshdale it was about an hour trip back to Christchurch for a short break before the final tour dinner was held at Fiddlesticks Restaurant. The dinner was sponsored by Rural Finance and a review session was conducted by Charlie de Fegely with the assistance of Jodie Greene at the completion of the dinner.

Day six Saturday 19th September

The final day of the study tour and three of the group had an early start with Wayne Burton, Charlie and Rich de Fegely leaving early in the morning due to prior commitments. The rest of the group had a more leisurely start and spent the morning exploring the Christchurch city centre.

It soon became clear how much devastation was caused by the February 2011 earthquake which took the lives of 185 people. The city has vast areas of bare land where buildings once stood and several that are still intact have been deserted since the earthquake. Many businesses set up in shipping containers after the earthquake and are still operating out of them four years later. The PPS group stayed near the Cathedral and the damage to Christchurch's most iconic building is still very apparent.

By late morning it was time to go to the airport for the flight back to Australia and the return home.



Christchurch Cathedral (photos Duncan Thomas)



Christchurch Cathedral prior to the 2011 earthquake

Further Action

A post conference dinner was held with the study tour participants with a full review of the study tour and to document the lessons learnt on the tour.

A full report of the study tour is to be produced for PPS members who were not on the trip, tour sponsors and other interested people.

Dr Derek Moot is to be invited to be a keynote speaker at the 2016 PPS Annual Conference

Possible workshop on Farmax and other farm recording computer programs

PPS spoke to groups on both the North and South Island about the possibility of hosting NZ tour groups

The PPS ladies on the study tour discussed forming a group to meet occasionally for both social and learning experiences.

Get more information on E.I.D. in livestock for use in commercial operations

Get information on the need for salt when grazing stock on lucerne; this has been undertaken and an article will be produced for the December 2015 PPS newsletter

Proposed Implementation of Lessons from New Zealand

At the post conference dinner held in Ararat, Charlie de Fegely led a session on the lessons learnt in new Zealand and asked what changes PPS members who were part of the study tour were thinking of implementing on their own properties. Some people had already made some changes and others were in the planning stage. The ideas are listed below:

Had a fresh look at own property as soon as we got home (several people did this)

Hired a consultant to help assess pasture growth that we will have between now & Xmas and planned stock sales

Weighed a percentage of each mob at weaning

Planning strategies to deal with limited moisture

Looking to adopt Will Beetham's work planning example: Plan 3 days work per week (things go wrong), have feed base 3 weeks in ahead and know 3 months in advance

Better manage hill country and improve production with strategic use of fertiliser

Improve pasture utilisation

Improve knowledge of Electronic I.D. in stock, implement E.I.D. program

Planting more plantain

Booked another trip to New Zealand

Introducing salt for stock grazing lucerne

Improving record keeping and measuring individual paddocks

Improving lucerne grazing management by not overgrazing

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Jeff Sewell: NZ - assistance with tour planning, tour guide South Island
Warren Family: Turanganui stud – complimentary lunch on the Monday
Matt & Lynley Wyeth: Spring Valley – assistance with catering and entertainment on the Tuesday
Derek Daniel: Wairere – tour guide and morning tea on the Tuesday
Abbigail Surridge: PGG Wrightson Kimihia – assistance with tour organisation
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Drivers – PPS members who took on hire vehicle driver duties in a safe and proficient manner

Sponsors

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All tour costs were met by the participant's contributions and the tour sponsors; no PPS funds were committed to the tour.

Photos

Photos by, Aira Kemister, David Bain, Debbie Shea, Jane Thomas and Wendy Harrington except where other PPS members are acknowledged. More study tour photos are available on the PPS website at www.perennialpasturesystems.com.au

PPS 7th Annual Study Tour Participants

David Bain Stoneleigh	Rob Barnes Rural Finance Horsham
Simon Brady Ryhmney	Wayne Burton Mt Dryden
Greg Coburn Ararat	Rob Cooper Hassad Aust Moyston
Janine Curtis Glenpatrick	Tim Curtis Glenpatrick
Charlie de Fegely Dobie	Richard de Fegely Dobie
Ben Greene Elmhurst	Jodie Greene Elmhurst
Michael Greene Elmhurst	Ken Hall Joel Joel
Paul Harrington Mt Cole Ck	Wendy Harrington Mt Cole Ck
Sue Holden Concongella	Allan Howe Kaniva
Ann Howell Amphitheatre	Peter Howell Amphitheatre
Aira Kemister Balmoral	Geoff Kemister Balmoral
Mal Nicholson Concongella	Graeme Price Eversley
Hayden Price Eversley	Kaye Price Eversley
Kieran Ransom Bendigo	Stuart Robinson Ballarat/Lismore
Debbie Shea Ararat	Andrew Speirs Meridian Ag Casterton
Gavin Svanosio Rural Bank Ballarat	Jane Thomas Ararat
Duncan Thomas PGG Wrightson Ararat	Rod Vearing Ararat
Rob Shea PPS Project Manager Ararat	



The dog team at Wairere Station.



Wairere Station the terrain is too difficult even for bikes, horses and dogs do the work.



Spraying and spreading seed or fertiliser is often done by helicopter across New Zealand.



A common sight working dogs and four wheel Motor bikes.



Ewes scanned with twins, lamb down in the hill country at Spring Valley.



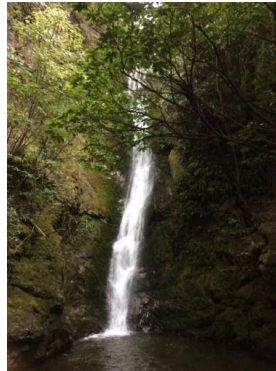
High stocking rates on hill country at Wairere Station.



Palliser Bay at Turanganui



Not all hire vehicles were up to hill driving



The Coastal Highway



Dinner in Blenheim



Shipping container shops in Christchurch set up after the earthquake



Taking in the sea view at Turanganui.



After the ferry crossing; the welcome sight of Picton.



What its all about - perennial pastures at Pahautea.



Dairy bulls at The Pyramid.



What enticed PPS to New Zealand – The Avery Family property, Bonavaree.



Great shot from the final day- very New Zealand.

PPS tour group and Kiwis at Spring Valley September 2015





Perennial Pasture Systems 7th Annual Study Tour New Zealand September 2015