

## Welcome to our Spring 2024 update

**As we move into spring, our next crop of calves and lambs start hitting the ground and our sales season is not far away, we wanted to take the opportunity to update you on the work the Focus Genetics team have been busy delivering on.**

We continue to deliver on our purpose *‘To strengthen New Zealand livestock farming through genetics’*. We are focused on traditional production traits within our herds and flocks, as well as acknowledging the ever-changing environment and expectations for the red meat sector. We are excited and proud to share the areas beyond traditional traits that we are investing and incorporating into our already successful breeding programmes.

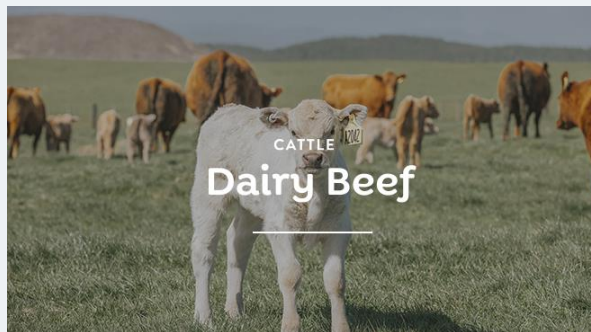
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## Methane Reduction Through Genetics

We are identifying traits that improve feed conversion efficiency and reduce methane emissions in beef cattle and sheep.

- Utilising the AgResearch PAC trailers we have measured methane emissions in our sheep flocks since 2019. We have also invested in measuring Residual Feed Intake to increase our knowledge on the relationship between methane emissions, feed intake and production. This work gives us the ability to select for traits leading to lower methane emissions and improved feed conversion while ensuring we maintain performance.

- Through our partnership with Pāmu we were able to extend our understanding of the relationships between methane, feed intake and body composition by undertaking a raft of measurements on our born 2023 lambs from the Southern Romney flock. Alongside the PAC chambers, this included rumen sampling for microbial communities, fitting accelerometers at pasture to correlate to feed intake measures at the AgResearch Feed Intake Facility and CT scanning for body composition. Building this dataset and understanding these key relationships will have beneficial impacts on the industry in the future.
  - In addition, we have partnered with Pāmu to develop a methane and feed efficiency testing facility for beef cattle in the Central Plateau. This facility will allow for methane emissions and feed conversion efficiency measurements to be taken from beef cattle that will in time provide us with the ability to make breeding decisions to create more efficient sires, reducing methane emissions and improving feed conversion efficiency.
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As dairy farmers look for solutions to capture more value from their non replacement calves, Focus Genetics has continued to create a breeding programme to supply beef genetics for use over dairy cows.

- We have developed a breeding programme within our Stabilizer® herd to produce beef sires that are suitable for use over dairy cows and provide traits that deliver value to calf rearers through to finishing farms and processors.
  - Our dairy beef traits include short gestation, clear colour markings, easy calving suited for dairy cows and calves that have the best meat attributes including robust growth, feed efficiency, and meat quality, which are suited to rearers and finishing farms.
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## WormFEC

The B+LNZ Genetics forum in August had a great session on internal parasites, focused on the different ways we can breed to manage this. Key take outs included:

- No single method (resistance, resilience or tolerance) is the answer and a lot of work will be required to reach a solid conclusion here.
- While this work is ongoing, we are continuing with the approach of measuring worm egg counts (WormFEC) after a sustained challenge. Introduced in a balanced index with a focus on

production, we can breed for animals that continue to improve in production and reduce the number of eggs expelled that contaminate the ground.

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## Facial Eczema

Facial eczema (FE) is a terrible disease that causes significant production losses. Last year a B+LNZ study showed facial eczema spores were found as far south as Otago, and it is anticipated this spread will continue as the climate changes.

- The news that government funding has been put toward combatting FE in NZ, including better tools for measuring FE tolerance for breeding, has been very welcome and we look forward to what that brings.
  - Now in our 34th year of FE testing the Goudies Romney, we are testing at 0.62. The Highlander® flock has been measuring for FE for over 10 years.
  - In the terminals, it is a harder road, especially in the Texel which are the most susceptible, but we've been able to slowly increase the dosage rate – 0.25 in the Texel, and 0.27 in the FocusPrime™.
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## Team Updates

Our small, but highly experienced team continues to develop and we are proud to introduce some changes to the team.

### **Matt Johnson – General Manager**

Matt joined the Focus team late 2023. Having led large scale commercial farming businesses for over a decade and with a background in on-farm management, Matt understands the impact that genetics have on farm performance and the opportunities they present for solving farm system challenges.

### **Ana Marshall – Animal Breeding Scientist, Terminal Sheep and Deer**

Ana originally hails from Brazil and has a background in animal genetics and breeding as well as a multidisciplinary background in animal and veterinary sciences and food technology. She is in the final stages of completing her PhD and has worked extensively both domestically and overseas in the animal science and animal genetics field.

### **Natalie Pickering – Head Scientist**

As Head Scientist, Natalie now leads our genetics programmes and a small team of geneticists. Natalie also manages our research and development programmes, ensuring they are scientifically credible and quantifiable, while delivering outcomes that make good commercial sense.

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## Upcoming Events



2TH RAM SALES



YEARLING BULL SALES

### North Island

Commencing  
mid-November

### Waikite Simmental

Private Treaty from 1 October

[Click here for sale listing](#)

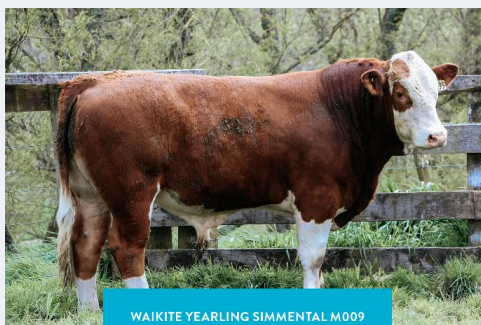
### South Island

Commencing  
late-November

### Stabilizer® and

### Angus Bulls

Available by enquiry



WAIKITE YEARLING SIMMENTAL M009  
LOT 4

We are busy planning our 2th ram sale dates and have just finalised our Yearling Simmental bull offering of 25 top ranked, terminal Simmental bulls.

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