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Media Statement

For immediate Release

Groundbreaking trial seeks links to agricultural GHG emissions

It may seem like a long bow to draw, but a groundbreaking trial at Pāmu's Waikite farm, will test the link between the administration of long-acting drench products in sheep, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Pāmu is working with staff from AgResearch's Animal Health, Rumen Microbiology, Plant Functional Biology and Animal Genomics teams, along with a team from Landcare Research/ Manaaki Whenua, to conduct the trial, which has financial support from AgResearch, Beef+Lamb NZ and the New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Institute.

"The link with GHG emissions is just one of several questions the trial will hopefully answer", says AgResearch principal scientist Dr Dave Leathwick.

"We have multiple objectives based around whether the administration of these long-acting drench products to sheep has unforeseen side-effects.

"Some of the active ingredients in these products have fungicidal and/or antibiotic activity. The trial will look for possible changes in the composition of the rumen microbiome and the production of greenhouse gases as a result of treating ewes with these products".

In addition, all 300 ewes in the trial will be used to test for a possible relationship between sheep genotype, rumen microbiome and production characteristics.

"We will also investigate possible cases of ill thrift (low body condition score) in the ewes, and particularly the role that parasites play in this," Dr Leathwick says

Pāmu Waikite Farm Manager Peter Strawbridge says his staff found the experience of working with a big team of scientists and technicians an interesting diversion from everyday farm work.

"We aren't scientists, but working with the AgResearch team was a fascinating insight into the role science plays in our sector," Mr Strawbridge says.

The Waikite team are no strangers to research work, with previous AgResearch collaboration on anthelmintic drenches over the years. Chris Miller is one of the AgResearch team who is back on Waikite, thirty years after starting Grass Grub research on the farm.

The trial will continue to collect data from the 300 ewes, and their lambs, until weaning in December 2018.

Waikite Station is a 1100 hectare property south of Rotorua, which is busy enough at the best of times. Farm Manager, Peter Strawbridge, and the team are a Genetic Breeding Partner for Focus Genetics, breeding and growing Simmental, FocusPrime and Texel sires for Pāmu and the industry.

The team at Waikite produce over 50 of Australasia's top ranking Simmental bulls every year and over 300 rams. This year's ram sires are 85kg at 8 months old and the 18 month old bulls are already over 700kg and getting ready for the bull auction on 18 May.

Demand for the stud stock is growing, so Waikite is increasing the size of both the sheep and cattle studs this year, which means more mobs and more work.

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Editor's note:

Pāmu is the brand name for Landcorp, a Stated Owned Enterprise, and one of New Zealand's most innovative farmers and food businesses. It is also the name given to the quality products created by the company.

Photo - The AgResearch team assemble for their Health & Safety induction with farm manager Peter Strawbridge.

