

Sherana Sheep Report No 11
“Green Sheep in the Brave New World”
May 2008.

1. The Big Diversion

People have been sending emails and phoning to ask Mother of All Things “Why have the sheep newsletters stopped - have you sacked that useless Rouseabout?” Nope, he is still here - just easily diverted.

And what a diversion.

Rouseabout was foolish enough to look into the global warming arguments and has been indignant ever since. “Those fools say that carbon dioxide, the rare but crucial natural atmospheric gas that sustains all life, is a pollutant that is going to cause the world to fry. Worse still, they want us to stop using carbon fuels (wood, coal, oil, gas and candles) and eliminate our farting and belching friends, sheep and cattle.”

Can we have volunteers of those who want to freeze and starve in the dark? (In case you had not noticed, neither wind power nor solar power produces energy during the long still winter nights).

So, you will have to bear with some ranting – we will get to some sheep news eventually.

2. All Sheep are Green.

Let’s look at sheep. Sheep are composed of fat, protein, bone and the spark of life. Speaking loosely, fat is largely carbohydrates, protein is carbohydrates plus nitrogen, and bone is calcium phosphate, plus some carbon minerals and tissues. Humans are built similarly. Notice the common thread – “all life is a carbon equation”.

Now you all know that damara sheep are the smartest sheep on earth. But not even damaras are smart enough to produce carbon out of nothing. Nor do they eat coal or drink diesel fuel. To grow, they must get a continuous supply of carbon from somewhere.

We have no cultivation on Sherana, no carbon fertiliser is applied, we do not feed grain to our sheep and they exist most of the time on natural grassland pasture. But every nine months, every ewe delivers a carbon copy containing a few kilos of brand new carbon. Some even produce three carbon copies:



“Carbon Copy”



“In Triplicate”

Where does all that new carbon come from?

Is it from the soil? Raw soil is just broken down rocks and minerals and seldom contains organic carbon. Carbon gets into the soil by the activity of plants and the associated life in worms, fungi and miscellaneous microbes.

We try to improve our pastures every year, we fix erosion gullies, we rotate our grazing flocks to rest the pasture, we return every unused bit of organic matter to the soil and we replace the minerals we ship off in sheep bones and muscles, so largely the soil is a stable feature (“sustainable” is the right buzz word). Sustainably managed soil does not add to or subtract from the world’s carbon reserve. It is a stable storehouse of carbon – it gets used and replaced.

But notice every clump of pasture – it has its feet deep in the earth digging for moisture and minerals, and its branches begging for sustenance from the sky. What does it get from the sky? Two things mainly - solar energy from that big nuclear power plant called the sun, and carbon dioxide, the gas of life, from the air. Plants combine these two natural ingredients with nitrogen (also from the air) to produce the sugars and proteins that all animals live on. After they have extracted the carbon from carbon dioxide, they expel the oxygen they don’t need back to the atmosphere for the benefit of all those dependent on oxygen (mainly the whole animal kingdom). All these benefits depend on the CO₂ in the air we breathe, the dreaded carbon dioxide that some ignorant people want to tax and bury.

And where does the air get its carbon dioxide from? Nature is a big emitter and the rest comes mainly from the combustion of carbon fuels:

- Nature emits a huge and unmeasured amount of carbon dioxide from volcanoes, gas seeps, rotting vegetation, autumn leaves, peat deposits, coal seams, fault lines and submarine vents. And living, breathing oceans, lakes, ponds and streams emit CO₂ when warmed and absorb it again when cooled. Even live plants emit CO₂ at night.
- All animals use internal combustion (digestion) to get energy from plant material like grass, legumes, lettuce, sugar, bananas, beer and buns; and from animal material like roast lamb, hamburgers, bacon, eggs and butter. Their front emissions are largely carbon dioxide and their rear emissions are largely methane, both natural atmospheric gases. Methane get oxidised in the atmosphere to carbon dioxide and recycled by plants.
- Plant material is also recycled via open air combustion in bushfires, via closed combustion in our pot bellied stove or via termites and many other natural scavengers.
- Internal combustion of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) produces most of our machine energy – electricity and power to move generators, machines, cars, trucks, ships, trains and planes.

Every method of combustion of hydrogen-carbon fuels produces the same two gases – water vapour from the hydrogen part and carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the carbon part. Both go into the air. One gas forms clouds and rain and is the basis for all things we drink, the other forms organic matter and is the basis for all things we eat. Both also form an insulating blanket for the earth, moderating extremes of temperature. Neither is a source of earth heating. (The only natural primary heat sources for the earth are geothermal heat from nuclear fires deep within the earth and solar heat from that big nuclear furnace in the sky.)

Sheep and cattle grazing natural pastures are very efficient harvesters of solar energy and more deserving of solar subsidies than the inefficient, expensive and depreciating metal monstrosities starting to uglify many sunny or windy places.

What happens to all the carbon our pastures extract from the air? It ends up as roast lamb on your plate, muscles on your growing kids, fat on some roaming dingo and some gets eaten by maggots and returns to the soil. Some is returned quickly to the atmosphere via emissions from both ends. There is no possible addition to the world supply of carbon dioxide because of the activities of sheep (or cattle or goats or elephants) – they all merely recycle whatever they can extract from the air during their life.

The carbon police in Canberra claim that the NET emissions from livestock represent 10% of Australia's NET emissions. This is rot. Every atom emitted by every ruminant was extracted from the air no more than one year previously. There are ZERO NET EMISSIONS, except for short term ebbs and flows as the pastures grow in summer and then get eaten in winter.

So the moves by politicians in Australia and New Zealand to tax the emissions and motions from cattle and sheep are not based on good science and have nothing to do with climate or warming – **IT IS A BLATANT TAX GRAB**. And it is staggering that most of our farm organisations are meekly accepting this nonsense. We urge every livestock owner to understand this process and agitate for some sense from Blunderland.

We also hear a lot about another big word these days “sequester” – it is a fancy word for “bury” as in cemeteries. Trees are hailed as carbon sequesters. But trees are no better than grass or sheep – they all extract carbon dioxide from the air and store it in their bodies for as long as they live. If those bodies die in a drought, flood or cyclone or get burnt in a bushfire, the carbon is returned immediately to the air. If they rot slowly, other life takes up the carbon, some going to the soil and the rest returning to the atmosphere.

Some trees live a long time and lock up their carbon. But a mature forest eventually stops extracting carbon – old trees die and give it back, giving new trees room to grow and extract it again. It is only a net carbon sink if some carbon in timber gets “sequestered” into girders, poles, houses and fence posts. In this way the valuable carbon is locked up for a long while. So why are the alarmists not promoting forest harvesting to reduce atmospheric CO₂? (*Hint: It does not suit their other agendas.*)

What about sheep? Our oldest sheep is 8 years old, much younger than most trees. But very few sheep die and rot on the place. Most sheep carbon get transferred into human bodies which then sequester it for three score years and ten (as long as most poles and timbers last). Even after that, it gets securely sequestered - buried deep down below in the Rosevale cemetery (some enlightened people return their borrowed carbon by asking for cremation). So, and here is the punch line:

“Sheep are as Green as Trees, and neither should face a carbon Tax.”

Here is the proof:

“All Sheep are Green”.



Cows are also green – if you doubt that, see:

<http://carbon-sense.com/2008/04/06/all-cows-are-green/#more-72>

As an aside, what happens to the extra CO₂ mankind is producing in power plants, cement factories, steel works and motor vehicles?

There are only three places for it to go – into the atmosphere, into the oceans and lakes, or locked up in living organisms.

- Some is added to the atmosphere. Since 1900, the CO₂ in the air has gone from about 300 to about 386 parts of CO₂ per million parts of air. Imagine the atmosphere is a huge flock of 2,500 sheep – just one sheep is CO₂, yet that one sheep is supposed to have more influence on the temperature of the flock than the other 2,499 sheep, or the hot and cold winds, or that big ball of fire in the sky, or huge restless ocean, or the clouds and storms that come and go. He is some hot stuff sheep, that one lone CO₂ sheep – it must be a damara?
- A large amount of CO₂ gets dissolved in the oceans to feed ocean plants or get sequestered into the ocean floor as limestone, dolomite, magnesite, siderite, corals, bones and shells. This CO₂ gets lost to the life cycle for millions of years until the limestone gets turned back to soil or calcined by man or nature to produce cement or lime.
- As CO₂ levels in the atmosphere rise (usually because of rising temperature in the sea) plant growth is miraculously increased. It is no surprise that food production and world population has grown in step since the end of the little ice age in around 1860. As temperatures went up, CO₂ was expelled from the oceans, and evaporation increased. More warmth, more moisture and more CO₂ produce more food, which feeds more population. So a lot of the CO₂ produced by man has ended up in those 6.5 billion warm bodies now walking the earth, and the food stocks that nourish them. (Since 1900, world population has increased by about 5 billion, containing about 166 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.)

Some carbon is tied up in soils, but increasing cultivation and poor grazing practice liberates this, so on balance, farmed soils have probably lost carbon since 1900. Better farming and grazing practices could and should reverse this destructive trend.

3. Emissions Trading

Emissions Trading is a way of taxing and trading in hot air. It will be the new bubble industry. If farm animals are included (and Kiwi politicians have already threatened their farmers with this suicidal policy) every sheep will pay a tax that subsidises the planting of a monoculture of woody weeds on farmland somewhere else. If we are lucky, the tree planting “industry” will be in our own country, but more likely it will be overseas. Even more likely is that our emissions tax will go to some Asian landowner who promises to NOT clear his land. In this case nothing changes except Australian producers and consumers pay hard cash to a foreign landowner for the right to emit hot air. Due diligence, auditing and litigation will soak up real resources as these scams are exposed. Everyone interested in tomorrow’s food should look at the cost of these emissions trading rorts.

Anyhow back to the real world of sheep.

4. The Brave New World

Not for the first time, political hysteria is going to change our world. Moreover, the real climate is also going to change, as it always has changed since the days of the trilobites. This is my vision of the Brave New World emerging:

- Carbon taxes of some sort are going to spread across the world like a deadly virus. There are too many people who will benefit to stop it soon. Politicians slaver at the power it will give them over every aspect of our lives. Environmentalists will welcome a return to the noble savage era. And Asia, Russia, Brazil and the undeveloped world see it as a heaven sent opportunity to get massive carbon credit money from those guilt ridden and scientifically illiterate fools running the once powerful West.

- Carbon taxes cannot be “revenue neutral” there are winners and there will be losers. And on balance we will all be losers because a huge amount of community resources will be spent producing fewer things of real value. The whole society will be worse off, some worse than others. Prices for everything will soar – food, energy, water, transport, building materials, metal products, chemicals, plastics, cement and cars. Consumers, workers and old people will suffer everywhere. The world will shrink. Family and neighbours will become important again. Big cities will not be nice places and grog and gambling will flourish.
- It will become costly to move anything anywhere, so everyone will try to live local. Tourism will be shattered. People will again look to get a veggie gardens, and a few chooks, cows and sheep to supplement family food supplies.
- The real climate may become even more unkind. No one can be relied on to forecast the climate reliably. However, despite the warming scare stories being spouted by Al Gore and the computer models, the best evidence I have seen suggests world climate is more likely to get colder and dryer.

For those interested in the possibility of cold weather see:

www.carbon-sense.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/solar-cycle-24-implications-for-the-united-states-archibald.pdf

For those worried about rainfall see:

<http://carbon-sense.com/2008/05/26/alexander-2008/>

If you thought warm and moist was bad, I assure you that cold and dry will be worse. Food production will plummet and famine will stalk the world. The warm moist periods are always referred to a “Golden Ages” and the cold dries, for good reason, are called “the Dark Ages”.

Damara sheep, as one of the hardiest survivors in the world, will become even more attractive. Pampered artificial breeds that cannot survive without feedlots, irrigated pastures, diesel and chemicals will shrink to the lord’s manor, but the peasants will rediscover the old hardy breeds, selected by natural selection, not by judges in a show ring. These sheep will need to thrive in their environment with no chemical assistance, no vaccinations, no grain feeding, no expensive irrigation, and survive whatever climate we get.

Here is the sheep of the future:



This picture is by courtesy of Helmut Lang in Canada). Can you imagine Canadians being scared by the prospect of a bit more global warming? Has the whole world lost its wits?

So, we are trying to breed two useful sheep – pure damaras, with as many of the old survival genes preserved as we can manage; and our composite breed, Sherana Meatmasters, using Dorper blood to quieten the shy and flighty damara, and Wiltshire blood to improve feet and wool shedding ability. The final article may even have just a touch of the hardy old merino. This is a slow job, but we are making good progress. (Even the despised woolly sheep will have a place in the dark new world as the price of synthetics and cotton soars. Synthetics and cotton both need petroleum. Woollies can survive on solar energy.)

(We are seeking the same qualities in our cattle, using the Braford cow base infused with Senepol genes. We are pleased with progress there too, but improving cattle genetics is so much slower than fast re-producing sheep.)

5. Paddock to plate - the secrets producing delicious and nutritious sheep meat.

In the Brave New World, people will re-learn how to raise and prepare their own meat. Old skills will be re-discovered. Producing tasty, healthy, nutritionally dense food will be a source of pride.

Sheep and goats were probably the first farmed animals and still form the major protein source for much of the human race.

Getting good sheep meat on the plate is a combination of:

- Genetics – breeds are different
- Nutrition – affects tenderness and nutritional value
- Age - affects taste and tenderness
- Sex – (not before dinner.)
- Slaughtering technique – can cause stressed meat.
- Hanging/aging – the key to tenderness
- Cooking – can make or break it all

Every factor is important.

Genetics.

There are differences between breeds. We have eaten pure damara, pure dorper, damara-merino cross and whatever you get when you order “lamb” at the butcher (probably merino-border Leicester cross fattened on grain). Without any doubt, we believe pasture fed damara and damara/merino produce the best meat.

Damaras store their fat in the tail, so normally most of the fat is there. But there is a sufficient layer of fat over and through the meat to give it a good flavour. And like humans, if overfed (especially on grains and sugars), damaras will get over-fat.

Damara fat is quite different from all other breeds - on the body it is softer, oily, more gelatinous and translucent yellow. The fat in the tail is white and harder, and it does make beautiful cooking fat. Other sheep fat tends more to harder white fat throughout. Damara meat does not leave a fatty taste in the mouth, and does not smell like other sheep meats. We know of Middle Eastern people who demand damara above all else. Some Asians and Mexicans have the same view. It is in a class of its own.

Dorper meat tends to be drier and the fat is distributed throughout the meat. It looks, tastes and smells different, and leaves a fatty taste around the mouth.

Our preferred meat without doubt is damara, followed by damara/merino cross. Damara and dorper are quite different, because of the different distribution of fat and the type of fat.

We believe damara meat we have eaten (our own) is better than "normal" lamb or mutton you can buy, better than dorper. Meatmaster lies between damara and dorper. Many others who have tried them all have the same view - damara is famed for soft sweet meat and a much nicer soft tasty gelatinous fat.

Nutrition.

Sheep nutrition is very important in affecting meat quality. The best meat always comes from animals that have a thin layer of fat over the meat and are on a rising plane of nutrition when killed. It is also an advantage if they have not suffered a nutrition set back in their lives – ie no bad drought.

We believe pasture only (no grains, no urea) plus natural mineral supplements produces the best most healthy meat.

Re: Omega 3 content. That depends more on how the sheep is fed, rather than the breed. Pasture fed animals are always far healthier with more of the good oils in their fats – they have a more healthy omega 3/6 ratio. Feeding grains at any time reduces this. We have read that Damaras have a better ratio than some other sheep fed similarly but we have no proof of this yet.

Age.

Older tends to be tougher, with stronger flavour.

Age probably affects tenderness, but we have eaten an old ewe who broke her neck (probably 4-5 years old) and a 2 year old ram and both were very good. But a 6 year old damara ewe in poor condition was a bit tough. A poor old ram would probably be dog meat. If all other things are equal, younger is probably tenderer, but for most people older meat has better flavour. Old sheep men often say an old ewe in good condition is the best meat. The modern trend is to eat very young meat with great tenderness but no flavour.

The oldest ram we have eaten was a pure damara about 2 years old, who had not been working with ewes. It was lovely meat. I am told that old Billy Goats are terrible to eat. Maybe old working rams of any breed have a strong flavour.

Sex.

Rams, ewes and wethers are different People are always surprised to learn that we eat ram all the time. But we have not yet eaten old working rams - I imagine they could develop a strong taste, but that is not confined to damara - when did you last eat an old, stressed merino breeding ram?

They say the best meat comes from prime young females, but wethers that have been castrated early are probably similar. We break all anti-discrimination laws and generally eat only males, and prefer them a bit older when the meat has more flavour and character. We once ate an over-fat barren ewe of mature age. She was beautiful (although the apprentice butcher cut off too much fat.)

Adaptation is the only Feasible Option.

“The optimal way to deal with potential climate change is not to strive to prevent it (a useless activity in any case) but to promote growth and prosperity so that the people will have the resources to deal with any shift”.

Thomas G Moore 1995 “Global Warming – a Boon to Humans and other animals” Hoover Institution, Stanford University 1995.

Slaughtering.

Stress before slaughtering is a key factor in getting good meat - stressed meat is dark and tough.

Damaras, along with goats and Brahmin cattle, are easy to stress during the long process of being yarded, loaded, transported, yarded again, and forced into slaughter houses. They are not stupid and can smell and sense it all coming. Or if a damara is chased around the yard, grabbed, separated from his mates, wrestled to the ground and his throat cut, you can be sure the meat will be stressed, dark and tough.

Dorpers are more docile sheep and thus probably less susceptible to stress.

This is our usual butchering procedure, designed to produce the best meat eating quality:

1. Bring a small mob into a familiar yard at dusk and give them feed - nothing threatening in that.
2. Next morning at dawn, move them quietly into a small forcing yard, and catch and hold the chosen sheep. I even stroke him and speak nicely to him as I hold him while waiting for the others to go (the Halal blessing probably serves some purpose.) I don't let him see the others leaving.
3. Judy lets the rest of the sheep out quietly and I immediately apply the stun gun to the sheep - one minute he is with his mates, next minute (literally) he is unconscious/dead. Bleed him immediately.

Another possibility is to shoot him quietly in the paddock. The main key is to make sure the sheep is not stressed before slaughter and the killing is as quick, painless and humane as possible.

I am not saying our industrial process line can operate this way, but that means that all of our animals are stressed before slaughter, and it affects all meat. Some like damaras, goats and Brahmin cattle react worse to stress, especially when neither the truckies nor the abattoir handlers understand the animals. Damaras are different to all other sheep breeds.

Hanging and Aging.

Preparing good meat also extends to the butchery and the cold room. The bare essentials you need for butchering are a sharp knife, a steel for keeping it sharp, a band saw and some meat hooks.

Skin and gut the carcass, wrap it loosely in a sheet and let it hang in a shady cool place. (Most meat is frozen too quickly - it should hang at room temperature at least until rigor mortis sets in, but Moat the Meat Inspector usually fusses to put them into the cold room prematurely). At home when I was a kid, animals were killed in the afternoon and hung outside on the veranda all night - we had no fridge or cold room anyway. Dad always covered the carcass with a sheet so that passing travelers could not see we were getting our own meat without the appropriate food ration card.

Put into the cold room at about 2 degrees and hang for at least a week. Then cut up and freeze/eat.

Beat That? The Sheep Olympics

- ***Champion Damara Ram – “Leopard” aged 8.1 years, with 361 lambs.***
- ***Champion Dorper Ram – “Chilla” aged 4.4 years, with 166 lambs.***
- ***Champion Damara Ewe – No 132, aged 7.7 years, with 12 live lambs on the ground.***
- ***Youngest Ewe Mother – “Eve” a Dorper ewe, had her first lamb at age 11.2 months.***
- ***Oldest Sheep – No 211, aged 8.5 years and with 12 lambs***
- ***Booby Prize – “Jane” loafed around for nearly 3 years before she had her first lamb.***

Cooking.

Rouseabout, our amateur butcher, produces only two cuts of meat – roasts or chops. And the professional cook has only two cooking utensils – a casserole dish and a slow cooker/crock pot.

Barbeques murder most meat, and are suitable only for cooking mince patties and sausages, and burning onions.

Roasts are best cooked in a covered casserole dish with a bit of damara fat or good oil (olive, coconut, lard). Cook 3-5 hours at 150 deg from frozen. The best roast has a thin layer of natural fat over it. A Serbian told us that they take the fatty skein off the outside of the stomach and wrap the roast in it for a superb tasting roast.

We do roast chops in a covered casserole dish with damara fat or oil, balsamic vinegar, garlic, red wine, salt and herbs.

Chops or shanks go well in casseroles – add chops, tinned tomatoes, herbs and spices, onions, vegies, salt and seasoning, then cover with water. Cook 6 hours in crock pot at low heat (or 2-3 hours in a casserole dish in the oven).

And for all the scrappy and boney bits, make soup and bone broths in the stock pot. Same recipe as casserole plus thickening (dust the meat in flour or use rice, potato, barley, lentils, peas). Some dried peas and bone broth need a lot of slow cooking. Making bone broth is a lost art and the result is here to be seen – epidemics of osteoporosis and other bone deficiency diseases. And those finicky cooks/eaters who reject all the gristle and tendons have caused another epidemic – arthritis and joint disease. Let's hear if you would like a bone broth recipe (or ask your Grandma).

What about the Tail?

Here is a comment from a chef looking for a regular supply of damara tails:

"Why I need the tail fat - first of all, it's unique in its cooking qualities and is invaluable in many middle-Asian, Afghan and trans-Caucasian dishes (e.g., rice 'pilau', etc), as you might have heard before. Unfortunately I was not able to find one here, in Australia, so far.

"So, one goal is to just to be able to obtain some amount for our cooking. Another thing is that potentially I will take part in opening a restaurant business in Sydney, as a partner, so we will definitely need a good supply of this ingredient. What's more, I am sure there is a demand for this fat, and it's not explored in full."

Where to Get Damara Meat?

The only place I know where you can get guaranteed damara meat is a top hotel in Perth (Parmelia?), which gets its sheep from Hall Damara, one of the Australia's first damara breeders. Queensland's biggest damara breeder has bought the Pittsworth abattoir and the Killarney abattoir and a few butcher shops in Brisbane but we do not think he has geared up yet to regular branded damara production. Another breeder in Melbourne supplies exclusively to the Jewish community who demand damara above all else. Hopefully, more lucky ordinary consumers will soon be able to say "Damara Please".

Drought.

A wheat farmer in the Mallee has had drought for 11 years now, one failed crop after another. He rang the local radio station, 3AW, and was talking about the blessing of some recent rain.

**Then he said that things were looking up generally,
as his wife had just delivered them a healthy 8 ounce child.**

The 3AW guy said "You mean 8 pound?"

"Nah," said the farmer. "With the drought, you're lucky to get your seed back".

6. Predators and Parasites

No we are not talking about the carbon tax men – we are referring to dogs and worms.

For years we have been solemnly warning people who buy our sheep “Sheep have only two enemies – dogs and worms. And with both, it not a matter of whether, it is just a matter of when.” And we smugly thought we had the dog problem licked. We should have taken more notice of our own advice.

One day recently, it was cold and showery – too miserable for fencing. So we decided to slip into town for a coffee and some shopping – Mother-of-all-Things went to Woolworths, Rouseabout to Hughes Welding. Left at 10am, shopped, lunched at McDonalds (just don't eat the buns or mayonnaise), and got home at 2pm for siesta. All looked well.

But then at 4pm MOAT went up to the hayshed and was shocked to find four dead and mauled ewes in corners near the yards. Phones rang, sirens sounded, dogs barked and Rouseabout started looking for the keys to John Howard's guns cabinet, the ammunition cabinet and all the other bureaucratic lockups.

A terrible story emerged as we gathered the remnants of the terrified and injured Cross-bred Mob in the gathering darkness. Following the trail of death to its source, it was clear that the mob was surprised in the corner of their paddock by a pack of dogs who immediately slashed into them. There were five dead sheep there. Some sheep got thru a hinge joint plus barbed wire fence and escaped. They were lead to safety by Con our big heavy Dorper ram – for once we were pleased with the fence negotiating ability of dorpers – he also lead them through a couple more fences.

Then the terrified mob rushed the dogs, escaped up the hill and headed for the safety of home. One ewe got caught in a trough yard corner and was killed and abandoned for the fun of the chase. The mob raced about 1km home, seeking safety, but found a gate shut across the lane and they were trapped again. Dogs caught up and slashed into them again, killing another four. Others died later or had to be put down.

Where were our defenders? Sheba the White Wolf was on the other side of the last gate and would have been going berserk, but luckily she was unable to attack the pack or she would have been outnumbered and also injured. We suspect that what ended the slaughter was Chad, the guardian llama of that flock. As the flock fled, he would have fled with them. But once they were cornered, he would have turned and attacked the tormenters, and he can be very agile and aggressive. We suspect that our camelid hero then chased the pack back up the hill, and protected the flock for the rest of that terrible afternoon.

We spent til dark collected stragglers and finding bodies. It was not until next morning that some were discovered, and 30 hours after the attack our dingo hunter found 3 live sheep stuck in a fence between the barbed wire and the netting. At dawn next morning, Rouseabout found a pack of 4 dogs feasting on remains. And of course, the gun chose that time to misfire three times! They were domestic or dingo cross dogs.

The next day was spent collecting bodies, and applying triage to the survivors. Then treating survivors and disposing of dead for another 10 days.

We discovered later that the pack had probably attacked the ram mob first, in another paddock. They caught one slow trusting dorper ram, and a Meatmaster. But the ram mob generally escaped unscathed. Why? We run the rams with the spare bulls, and we think the bulls attacked the dogs, who decided to find easier prey – a benefit of running sheep and cattle together.

By the time it was all over we had lost 2 ram and 28 ewes. About 5 badly injured ewes survived. Two have had lambs since the ordeal.

We have extracted some retribution. Fixit took up arms and became “Trapper Jim”. Dale the Dingo Howler in camouflage gear prowled the hills in the misty dawn. Rouseabout took to wandering the Wedge Tail Track with gun and predator call (resting watchfully under shady trees every now and then). For the first time in her life, MOAT now gets armed before she ventures out at daylight. Results: two dogs shot, our neighbour killed another with his Ute on the road, and we set traps and laid baits. All is quiet again, but the bush up the back has become a dark ominous place to the wary X mob.

Dingos usually attack at night and we bring ewes home at night, so we thought we were safe. But these were domestic dogs that roam during the day and attack anything that runs from them. It would be hard for one Maremma or one Llama to defend against a pack.

So, shepherds beware. Dogs know no barriers. (Even night-loving dingos may wander a bit on rainy days – it becomes too uncomfortable to sleep in the rain).

Next newsletter we may discuss what else can be done to reduce the chance of dog attack. We had a distraught email from a customer recently who had sheep killed by a wedge tail eagle. So tell us your stories about predators and strategies for dealing with them.

7. Watching Pink Bottoms

Moving the Dorper flock out in the morning takes patience. Like a reluctant school-boy trudging to school, they wander along at their own pace, stop for a puff and a bite off any bit of greenery, so you have plenty of time to study “Bottoms” (Mother of All Things allows them to wander - if the Rouseabout gets punished by copping the Dorper drive, he sneaks a whip along. After two days of lessons, they move along quite smartly).

But, back to the story of studying bottoms.

A couple of weeks back MOAT complained “Two of those dorpers are just so slow, and their bottoms are ivory white – I think they have worms, you should drench them”.

“Yes Maam” replied Rouseabout promptly.

So all the weaners got mineral drench and the Ivory bottoms got Closal drench also. (Their eyelids and gums were also deathly pale, so Moat’s diagnosis was correct.)

In about a week she mentioned “Well, those dorper bottoms are pink again.”

We are now submitting a proposal for MLA funding “An investigation into instant visual diagnosis of parasite burden”. We reckon \$50,000 would be a good start to pay for research assistants (Rouseabout), a laptop to record results, maybe a pair of opera glasses for close inspections, and funds for a clerical assistant to fill out the forms”.

Amateur signs of worms are:

- Sheep become slow and tired, straggling home at the end of the flock.
- Sheep develop a “bottle jaw” – a soft puffy swelling about where their Adam’s apple should be.
- Pink skin turns white.
- Gums turn white.
- Blood veins disappear in the white of their eyes (under the top eyelid).

More on worms next newsletter. We are trying various mineral supplements and pro-biotics with some success. We would like to hear of other strategies and successes.

8. More Global Warming?

“The Winter from Hell”

Last week, virtually unreported in Britain, the extraordinary winter weather of 2008 elsewhere in the world continued. In the USA, there were blizzards as far south as Texas and Arkansas, while in northern states and Canada what they are calling "the winter from hell" has continued to break records going back in some cases to 1873. Meanwhile in Asia more details emerged of the catastrophe caused by the northern hemisphere's greatest snow cover since 1966.

In Afghanistan, where they have lost 300,000 cattle, the human death toll has risen above 1,500. In China, the havoc created by what its media call "the Winter Snow Disaster" has continued, not least in Tibet, where six months of snow and record low temperatures have killed 500,000 animals, leaving 3 million people on the edge of starvation.

Christopher Booker, The Sunday Telegraph (UK), 9 March 2008

9. Sheep for Sale (Green Bulls too)

We have a lot of very pregnant ovine ladies waddling around, so, as usual, as the dry season progresses, we will have many hungry mouths searching for carbon fuel. So, if you want some sheep to prepare for or cope with the brave new world, send an email or phone. Damara, Dorper and Meatmaster rams, ewes and wethers usually available at a range of prices and qualities. We also aim to breed moderate framed docile polled cattle that are suited to survive without much help in the Queensland environment. We have two nice young Senepol/Braford bulls for sale now. They are also deep green. We will soon wean more cattle.

Mailing Lists

Every time we send out a Sherana Sheep Report, we get too many emails returned because they are “Unknown at this address”, “left address” or their email is "Full" or "Over Quota". So Please:

- Advise promptly of change of address
- Empty your email box
- Advise if you wish to be taken off our mail list
- Please give us an email address if you have one – profit margins and Rouseabout time do not support too many postage stamps and envelopes

Otherwise, like all unproductive pests (except those multiplying under government protection) “You will be Culled”.

10. “And Carthage Will be Destroyed”.

In the days when Rome and Carthage were engaged in a life-and-death struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean, and to keep the main goal forever in their minds, every Roman Senator ended his oration with the words – “*And Carthage will be Destroyed*”.

We in the ruminant industries are engaged in a similar life and death struggle with people dedicated to decimating farmers and their livestock. If you doubt that, read “Livestock’s Long Shadow” by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. This report aims to highlight “the very substantial contribution of animal agriculture to climate change and air pollution, to land, soil and water degradation, and to the reduction of bio-diversity”. There is no doubt that poor grazing management can produce bad effects on land and sustainability. But sheep and cattle emissions are as much part of the natural world as kiwis, koalas and wattle. They are not causing build-up of CO2 nor are they causing global warming.

So we need to understand the carbon cycle, improve our grazing management, and end every discussion with the Shepherd’s Oath:

“All Sheep are Green”.



Bye for now.

(PS. Pls let us know if you wish to also get our Cattle Report, or no more newsletters whatsoever.

Best Wishes for an early warm wet spring.

From Mother-of-All-Things, Rouseabout, Fixit, Trapper Jim, Sheba the White Wolf, Hero Chad, Big Max the Senepol and all the other Ovines, Bovines and Camelids.

Viv & Judy Forbes

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And for more brain warming stories have a look at www.carbon-sense.com

Please feel free to argue, comment on or question any point raised above. We think we know more than Al Gore on the science of the carbon cycle of life, but that is not saying much.

The Green Bubble

“The twin elements of a bubble are euphoria and roguery, with the proportions varying from case to case. The coming green bubble, which is already attracting large amounts of venture capital and government money, displays both.”

Nigel Lawson, Ex Chancellor of the Exchequer, UK, Time 21 May 2008