

Motu-nui Rams

Newsletter - September 2026



BREEDING FOR THE FUTURE

It's been another productive year at Motu-nui, with strong results across fertility, survival and our first CARLA testing. With demand for well-bred stock continuing to grow, we remain focused on breeding hardy, productive sheep that can handle the challenges of New Zealand hill country.

Above: Hoggets at docking
Below: Hoggets with lambs

A YEAR OF STRONG DEMAND



It has definitely been a year to remember. Strong returns across the sheep and cattle markets have been encouraging, with well-bred stock attracting significant interest. Seeing 2-Ths reach $400 is a positive sign and gives us confidence in the value of investing in good genetics for the years ahead.

We believe this could be the beginning of a period where demand for quality breeding stock continues to grow. For us, that makes the work we are doing now even more important, as the decisions made each season will shape the flock and the genetics available to our clients in the future.

FERTILITY: FINDING THE BALANCE

We are stoked with the progress we are making on flock fertility. Our main focus is finding the "twin sweet spot", to keep scanning rates up while actively breeding out triplets.

This year's scanning results show the genetics are heading in the right direction:

- **Hoggets (112%):** A strong start for the young sheep while they are still growing.
- **2-Th (173%):** An ideal result, keeping triplets to just under 4%. Out of 815 stud 2ths, only 32 are carrying triplets, proving we are locking in the right traits.
- **MA (189%):** Exceptional fertility, though still sitting at 15% triplets. We will work on bringing that triplet number down over the next few seasons.

LOOKING AFTER THEMSELVES

When our 2-Th ewes lambed as hoggets, we only drenched those with a low condition score at docking. The rest had not received a drench since May as lambs, giving us a good indication of which sheep are able to maintain themselves without relying on regular treatment.

The most important thing is keeping them alive. That is something we pride our ewes on, and our MA ewes are well capable of docking 165% to the ram. We want to keep building a flock that can maintain strong fertility while also being able to look after itself in challenging conditions.



MOTU-NUI SCANNING	
Hoggets	112%
2-th	173% (<4% Triplets)
MA	189% (15% Triplets)

We want to keep scanning rates up while actively breeding out triplets and improving survival.

Above: *2-th with lambs*
Below: *Shifting MA and 2-th twin and triplets on rotation*



CARLA TESTING

What CARLA saliva testing means for Motu-nui

Internal parasites remain one of the biggest challenges facing sheep farming. Drench resistance is continuing to develop, meaning we need to look beyond simply treating the problem and keep improving the sheep's own ability to deal with parasite challenge.

This year we introduced CARLA saliva testing as another tool in our breeding programme. CARLA stands for Carbohydrate Larval Antigen. The test measures the immune response a sheep produces against infective worm larvae picked up while grazing. A stronger CARLA response indicates that an animal is better able to resist worms establishing in the gut.

This is different from simply identifying an animal that can continue growing while carrying a worm burden. Resistant sheep generally shed fewer worm eggs back onto pasture, helping to reduce the parasite challenge for the wider flock.



Sale rams 2025



351
RAMS TESTED

98%
MEDIUM OR HIGH

66%
HIGH RESPONSE



Top: Hogget lambs at weaning
Bottom: In lamb commercial hoggets

WHAT DID THE 2026 TESTING SHOW?

On 6 May 2026, 351 Motu-nui rams from the 2025 drop were saliva tested. The flock report recorded 230 rams (66%) with a high CARLA response and a further 115 (33%) with a medium response. Only five rams recorded a low response, while one had no antibodies detected.

Overall, 98% recorded a medium or high response, giving us a strong result from our first test. Medium and high results indicate an active CARLA antibody response, with the report indicating these animals typically have up to 30% lower faecal egg counts and better growth during periods of parasite challenge.

CARLA gives us another way to measure and breed for natural parasite resistance.







Top Right: 2-ths. Bottom: Nice wide ass

MORE DATA BEHIND OUR SELECTION

Each result can be linked back to the individual ram's tag and SIL record, allowing us to consider parasite resistance alongside pedigree, growth, reproduction, survival, ewe efficiency, body condition, soundness and dag score and the other traits required in a practical hill-country sheep.

That is important to us because there is no single number that defines a good hill-country sheep. We want to bring all of these traits together to identify animals that can perform commercially in the environments our clients are farming in.

CARLA is not being used in isolation, and it doesn't replace good parasite management. Age, exposure and timing can all influence the result, while faecal egg counts, drench efficacy testing, grazing management and close observation of stock remain important.

What CARLA gives us is another measurable trait to consider when selecting our next generation of rams.

ANOTHER LAYER OF CONFIDENCE

For clients selecting their next rams, these results provide confidence behind the Motu-nui breeding programme. Alongside the performance and traits we already select for, CARLA gives clients useful information when choosing genetics to help build a flock better equipped to handle parasite challenges.

A CHANGE OF SCENERY

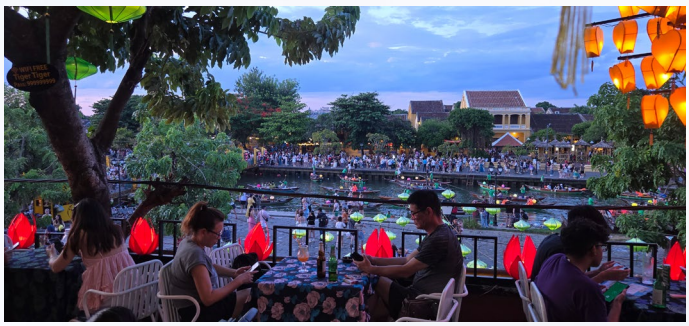
Something I've done lately that I never thought I would was head to Vietnam with Vebz. I thought my limit was the South Island pig hunting, but what an awesome trip it was. We met some amazing people and got to see a country that is developing incredibly quickly.

One thing that really stood out to us was the lack of New Zealand lamb or beef on restaurant menus. In fact, we saw very little imported lamb or beef from anywhere.

It was a good reminder of the potential that exists in growing markets around the world. New Zealand produces some of the best red meat in the world, and as countries and their middle classes continue to grow, there is plenty of potential for the future.







KIERAN'S HARD WORK

We couldn't have taken time away from the farm without an excellent team around us. Kieran does an exceptional job running things throughout the year and has the stud ram lambs looking great.

For anyone who has visited Motu-nui, you'll know we run the stud rams hard, allowing the best to rise to the top and the lower performers to drop away. The ewes are looking great too, with a bit of cover underneath them for a change, which is nice to see. We're looking forward to seeing how that comes out at weaning.

Kieran's attention to detail, passion for what he does and strong work ethic make a real difference. His work helps ensure that, year after year, we have a strong line of rams for our clients to select from.

Next year, we'll get a few words from Kieran as well, sharing his thoughts on the season and what's happening around the stud.







CLIENT PROFILE: TURNBERRY

Willie and Jen Forbes farm Turnberry, a 700 ha/eff property in the Alfredton district.

Their journey with Motu-nui began in 2011. In 2017 they moved to Romney/Coopworth Cross rams, and in 2022 they introduced Romney/Coopworth FE rams. These rams now go over 2,500 2-th/MA ewes.

Turnberry also uses Motu-nui Suffolk/Texel terminal rams over their 5 and 6 year old ewes, which are sold with lambs at foot, as well as over approximately 1,000 replacement hoggets. Willie and Jen have found these lambs have good colour and growth rates.

The results from their maternal flock have been particularly impressive. Their Romdale ewes previously scanned at around 150% and docked at approximately 120–130%. They are now consistently scanning between 190% and 213%, with 150% lamb survival to sale for the last five years.

They were also recently recognised for their wider farming performance, winning the Keinzley Agvet 2026 Wairarapa Farm Business of the Year award.

Congratulations to Willie, Jen and the whole Turnberry team on an outstanding achievement. Head along on 15th October to see their great operation.

"We've found Motu-nui Genetics to be extremely solid, no feet issues, great mothers, nice wool and good lamb size and survival. We are now scanning 190–213% consistently and have had a lamb survival to sale of 150% the last 5 years running.

"Ben and the team are great to deal with and always look after us. We fully believe they and their genetics have been an integral part of helping us to achieve the goal and honour of winning the Keinzley Agvet 2026 Wairarapa Farm Business of the Year award."

Willie & Jen Forbes
Turnberry, Alfredton



2026 RAM ORDERS:

We're now taking orders for 2026 rams. Fill in our online order form to secure your requirements for the coming season.

www.motu-nuirams.co.nz/order-form

Motu-nui Rams

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For further information please contact us, or visit our website - www.motu-nuirams.co.nz