



30 April 2014

Dear Ram Breeders,

We are writing to you to express our concern at AgResearch's plan to relocate most of Invermay's scientists, including all of its geneticists, to Lincoln.

We head a group of Otago/Southland civic and other leaders who are opposed to this aspect of AgResearch's restructuring plans.

In brief we hold the view that AgResearch's plans will result in the destruction of a Dunedin based genetics cluster that has delivered remarkable production gains in pastoral agriculture over the last three decades, especially in sheep farming. It will deliver more continuous improvement in coming decades if left intact.

At the heart of this cluster is the science capability at Invermay, as well as Otago University and several private sector companies, principally Abacus Bio and Zoetis.

We do not hold any informed view about other aspects of AgResearch's plans, though at first glance we see merit in collocating scientists somewhat more with New Zealand's two agriculture focused universities.

By contrast our considered view is that transferring the existing genetics cluster in Dunedin to Lincoln as part of the formation of a proposed 'hub' is unarguably a bad idea. Otago University has the largest genetics capability of any of the Universities in New Zealand, easily; Lincoln one of the smallest. Abacus Bio which has considerable genetics capability together with strong industry relationships is not shifting to Lincoln. Most of the leading geneticists at Invermay have said publicly or privately that they will not shift to Lincoln.

We believe the repeated assurances from AgResearch that they will remain capable of delivering the necessary science are implausible. We believe they have made a straight forward error of judgement that will damage your industry.

Of course we happen to be writing as Otago/Southland leaders so the question of our impartiality will properly be raised. Our response is to say that jobs come and go in our neck of the woods on pretty much a weekly basis. Presumably that is the same everywhere.

But these jobs are unlike others. They are strategically important to New Zealand's primary production, [a fair chunk of which happens to occur here] so our concern is much broader than the loss of jobs. That is why we have been regularly meeting and organising for the past six months, and will continue to do so.

Prior to your AGM you may wish to further research the issue. We have a website called 'Save Invermay' [www.saveinvermay.co.nz](http://www.saveinvermay.co.nz) which we commend to you. There is a wealth of information on the topic, including analyses from AgResearch's own staff (the CMT report) which specifically recommended the plans for animal genetics be dropped; in fact they recommended that more of AgResearch's animal scientists be relocated to Invermay. You may also wish to read economic report from BERL on the lackluster business case.

Of course ram breeders have already spoken strongly against this plan. One of the Save Invermay Group and a previous Director of Invermay, Dr Jock Allison, has



already conducted a survey of your opinion. The results and methodology are summarised below. You are overwhelmingly opposed!

**Table 1: Summary of responses to retaining scientists at Invermay**

Number of Breeders	Retain Invermay	No	Abstain	No Response
394	363 (92.1%)	5 (1.3%)	11 (2.8%)	15 (3.8%)

NB: of the 5 No votes, one from Lincoln University, and one assumed from AgResearch.

Yet that opposition is not registering with decision makers. For example Minister Steven Joyce has already dismissed a call from a meeting of around 100 farmers in Gore on March 12 that he review AgResearch's plans. The following day the AGM of Beef and Lamb in Fielding agreed that AgResearch consult with ram breeders. But AgResearch will interpret that motion as only a need to 'better explain'.

In other words AgResearch intends to proceed. It will try and convince as many ram breeders as possible that they have nothing to worry about. For AgResearch's management, the plans are too far advanced to reconsider. That is why they dismissed their own CMT's advice and it is why farmer opposition to date has been ignored.

So it is time to consider a more strident response. AgResearch WILL listen to a strong motion such as a vote of no confidence. If they do not, then shareholding Ministers Joyce and English will. They have more or less said as much.

It is time to stop this part of AgResearch's plans, before irreversible damage is done.

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