



Jock Allison

M.Agr.Sc. Ph.D ONZM
AGRICULTURAL AND
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

5 Arthur Street, Dunedin, **NEW ZEALAND**

Telephone: 64 3 477 2903

Fax: 64 3 477 2933

Mobile: 64 21 363 337

Email: jock.allison@xtra.co.nz

Letter to Ram Breeders :

You know the results of the survey to which you contributed in January / February re keeping the Invermay Sheep Genetics and Genomics Group (SGGG) at Invermay, not shifting them to Lincoln.

Summary of responses to retaining Sheep Genetics Staff at Invermay

Number of Breeders	Yes	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.

This is accompanied by a letter from Dunedin’s mayor and the Chairs of the Otago and Southland Regional Councils. At a meeting in Gore March 12th organised by the Southern Texel Breeders AgResearch presented their proposals for shifting 85/115 positions from Invermay to Lincoln and 180/270 out of Ruakura. There were three contrary presentations showing little industry and almost no AgResearch staff support for the proposals.

Significantly BERL’s economic analysis showed no benefits, even though high staff losses hadn’t been factored in. A Vote of No Confidence in the AgResearch Board and Management was narrowly averted, and left “to lie upon the table”. A proposal for an independent external review of the process and the result the AgResearch FFP plan, was immediately rejected by Steven Joyce. AgResearch haven’t indicated any changes will be made. It is no surprise therefore that the motion of No Confidence in the AgResearch Board and Management has been “retrieved from the table” and will should pass in the week starting 28th April.

The FFP Business Plan states “there will be no reduction in science capability as a result of the project, and some capability would grow significantly”. This is simply not achievable. 70% plus of the deer and SGGG Invermay staff won’t move, and many of Ruakura staff won’t move. In the last few weeks two of AgResearch’s most senior scientists have resigned because they are not prepared to move. With seven Invermay staff resigning in the 3 weeks prior to Christmas the attrition of scientific staff is well underway.

The result for you as ram breeders is the best scientific brains will be lost, and the service through SIL will be diminished. This is a national problem. AgResearch don’t understand that the most skilled scientific brains are the most important resource in the company. Losing upwards of 150 staff will be

crippling, the company. With 70% of scientific staff recruited overseas, it will take many years to get up to speed, and building the necessary personal relationships will be difficult.

The AGM of Beef & Lamb in Fielding on March 14th passed a resolution

“ That AgResearch is requested to extend its level of consultation for the move from Invermay of sheep and deer genetics research and consult with commercial ram breeders in the North and South Island”

You will get a letter from AgResearch’s Chair Sam Robinson outlining the advantages of the FFP, and promising to provide better resources to ram breeders. There must be some magic? How this will be achieved when most of the key staff refuse to shift to Lincoln isn’t obvious.

This is all very tiring I know, I would have thought that 92.1% of all breeders expressing preference to keep the SGGG at Invermay, that the most important players in sheep production had spoken. There will be more of the same. AgResearch will tell you about the advantages, and in the light of criticism, they will tell the same story again. No serious discussion of issues.

The sheep industry has spoken, why destroy a effective hub working well :

The Dunedin “hub” vital to your industry consists of

- a) AgResearch Invermay, about 40 scientific staff
- b) AbacusBio, more than 30 staff, highly qualified,
- c) Otago University, Genetics capability – best in NZ.
- d) Zoetis, markets gene tests for productive traits,,
- e) Beef & Lamb Genetics, combines the Central Progeny Test, SIL, and Ovita,

Why pull the Invermay group out of this cooperative grouping and send them to Lincoln,

- a) few people with whom to cooperate,
- b) minimal land and animals,
- c) 350 km north of their main client groups in the south,
- d) \$18 million at least required to replicate the existing new Invermay building, and most importantly .
- e) most skilled staff won’t move,

AgR’s FFP doesn’t make sense. Don’t let their rearguard actions, change your mind – you will be used as demonstrable support from industry. More information available on www.saveinvermay.co.nz and contact me if you wish to discuss further.

AgResearch have no intention of changing anything, so your direct communication to politicians would be a useful addition to the campaign.

Thank you for your consideration.

Good farming, hopefully those high genetic worth rams are all doing their job.

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