

RUSTIC EUROPEAN DAIRY BREEDS

DO THEY HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE NZ DAIRY SHEEP INDUSTRY?

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WHY SHOULD WE DISCUSS RUSTIC BREEDS?

NUMERICALLY - MOST EWES MILKED IN EUROPE ARE FROM RUSTIC BREEDS = LARGE GENE POOL

RUSTIC BREEDS - GRAZE OUTDOORS IN A WIDE RANGE OF CLIMATES

INDOOR/INTENSIVE BREEDS - REQUIRE SOME DEGREE OF HOUSING

OUTDOOR GRAZING :

- MORE WELFARE FRIENDLY
 - MAY BE LOWER COST
- WILL REQUIRE LESS STARTUP CAPITAL
 - MAY REQUIRE LESS LABOUR
 - MAY BE MORE PROFITABLE

EUROPEAN DAIRY BREEDS

INTENSIVE/SEMI INTENSIVE

BREEDS

- LACAUNE
- EAST FRIESIAN
- ASSAF
- IMPROVED CHIOS

CHARACTERISTICS

- INDOOR/HYBRID SYSTEM
- SOFT, NEED GOOD MANAGEMENT
- HIGHER YIELDING > 350L
- MEDIUM TO LONG LACTATION 170 – 330 days
- FORAGE, CUT AND CARRY CONCENTRATE
- OFTEN INTRODUCED TO THE REGION

Assaf – A great Indoor ewe for warm climates

Assaf ewe – Full udder



Indoor Assaf flock



Lacaune – best suited to indoor / hybrid

High yielding Lacaune ewes



Intensive Indoor Lacaune



RUSTIC EUROPEAN DAIRY BREEDS

EXTENSIVE

MOST NUMEROUS BREEDS.

- SARDA
- COMMISANA
- MASSESE
- MANCHEGO
- CHURRA
- LAXTA
- MANECH TETE ROUSSE/NOIR
 - BASCO-BEARNAISE
 - CHIOS

CHARACTERISTICS

- OUTDOOR SYSTEM
- LOW YIELDING <250L
- SHORT LACTATION: OFTEN <180 DAYS
 - GRASS, FORAGE BASED
- WALKED OUT WITH A SHEHERD
 - REGIONAL
- TRADITIONAL TO THE REGION
- ARE MORE FORGIVING WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RUSTIC BREEDS

- LOW YIELDING <250 LITRES
- SHORT LACTATION <180 DAYS
- GOOD UDDER CONFORMATION
 - GOOD FEET AND LEGS
- OFTEN (NOT ALWAYS) HIGH TOTAL SOLIDS
 - MAY HAVE HORNS
 - THICK BIRTH COAT
- USUALLY NON SEASONAL AS LAMB IN AUTUMN

RUSTIC BREEDS: LIMITS TO PRODUCTION

MILK PRODUCTION MAY BE LIMITED IN EUROPE :

- GENETIC POTENTIAL NOT STRETCHED
- ONLY A SMALL % HISTORICALLY WELL RECORDED
- NOT ALL MACHINE MILKED
- GRAZING POOR QUALITY PASTURE → MANY STEPS PER MOUTHFUL
- GRAZING → ENERGY EXPENDED KEEPING WARM OR COOL
- POOR QUALITY GRAZING IN SUMMER MONTHS → SHORT LACTATION

RUSTIC BREEDS IN NEW ZEALAND - PROS

- ADAPTED TO WALKING – GOOD FEET AND LEGS
- ADAPTED TO GRAZING - GOOD TEETH AND MOUTH STRUCTURE
- ADAPTED TO LAMBING OUTSIDE – GOOD BIRTH COAT ON LAMBS
- OFTEN BETTER PIGMENT / HAIR COVER OF EARS - LESS SUNBURN
- VERY GOOD UDDER CONFORMATION – NO SAGGY UDDERS
- OFTEN HAVE HIGH TOTAL SOLIDS - GOOD FOR CHEESE MAKING
- MORE TOLERANT OF TOUGH CONDITIONS AND POORER PASTURE

RUSTIC BREEDS IN NEW ZEALAND - CONS

- LOW MILK YIELDS
- SHORT LACTATIONS
- SOME HAVE LOW BODY WEIGHT = UNSUITABLE CARCASS LAMB
- OFTEN HAVE HORNS
- OFTEN VERY POOR QUALITY CARCASS

WHAT ROLE CAN RUSTIC BREEDS PLAY?

CREATE A HYBRID WITH HIGH PRODUCING INDOOR BREEDS

- RUSTIC BREED PROVIDES FUNCTIONALITY AND HARDINESS
- INTENSIVE BREED PROVIDES MILK YIELD, SIZE AND GROWTH RATE

The Manech cross in New Zealand

Manech x Lacaune



New Zealand Experience to date

- 100% survival from birth to weaning of 60 Manech x pregnancies scanned
- Rain not a problem
- Short ears, no sunburn
- Brown feet
- Good constitution

(Art and Jill Eastham, Masterton 2019)

ITALY: Assaf x Massase

Massese (black) and Massese x Assaf (white) ewes waiting for milking



Information

- Massese are non seasonal, have very high total solids, very good feet, legs, udder conformation.
- Yield 150-250 litres in 180 days after suckling lamb for 30 days.
- Assaf x Massese yields 50-100 litres more per lactation and has a meatier faster growing lamb.

Assaf x Massese – a new cross coming to NZ

Massese and Assaf x Massese ewes grazing



Assaf x Massese lambs



Italy: Comisana – cross with Assaf or Lacaune

Comisana milking



Comisana ewe hoggets



ALSO CONSIDER

NEW ZEALAND WILL HAVE BETTER PASTURES:

= MORE MOUTHFULLS of GRASS PER MINUTE WHEN GRAZING

= MORE MILK FROM RUSTIC BREEDS AND THEIR CROSSES THAN IN EUROPE.

PARTS OF NEW ZEALAND WILL HAVE AN EASIER CLIMATE

= WARMER WINTERS AND COOLER SUMMERS

= MORE MILK.

Good Pasture = More Milk

Italian Pasture April (mid Spring)



NZ Pasture Nth Island November



The future

High yielding pure Lacaune or East Friesian will not suit every system.

Which Rustic cross will be best suited to New Zealand conditions?

- Manech x Lacaune ewe hoggets will be milked on two sites in 2020.
- Massese x Lacaune, Massese x Assaf and Sarda x Lacaune embryos will be implanted in 2021.
- Ultimately time will tell. Possibly a 25% Rustic, 75% intensive breed hybrid might be best suited.
- Manech x Lacaune rams are available from Matt Jones 021 502 480 and Art and Jill Eastham 027 419 8760.

THANK YOU



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