

# Top season for monitor farm

By Blair Ensor - Marlborough



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New hill country development could not have come onstream at a better time at the Marlborough Monitor farm.

Mt Adde, Greg Harris' 800-hectare property stocked with 1500 Corriedale sheep and 150 Angus cows, has had a record lambing season with 144 per cent of lambs tailed to ewes mated.

"It's been a magnificent lambing," he said.

DEREK FLYNN

New Zealand Meat&Wool South Island manager Gary Walton had signalled the major focus of this round of the monitor farm programme was unlocking the potential of unutilised country. "The reality is you have got to do it sooner or later or write it off ... the development is always cheaper yesterday."

So far this year Mr Harris had added 20 hectares of productive hill country to his property by removing gorse. About the same land area is scheduled for development next year. The 20ha block was sprayed in spring last year and then burnt off in March. It was then seeded with rye grass and boosted with fertiliser. "It's been a little bit cold, once it warms up I think the hill country will kick away quite nicely," said Mr Harris.

With the additional feed he hoped to be able to get all his lambs away to the works by Christmas. Mr Harris said he was also focusing on the benefits of adding lime to his property to raise the soil's pH. Over the last five years about 75 per cent of the property had received 300 kilograms per hectare of Nodulated Stack Dust (NSD), a by-product of Holcim's Westport Cement Works at Cape Foulwind.

NSD is a form of lime that is water soluble and broke down relatively quickly, he said. Mr Harris said raising the pH allowed pasture species to compete against tap-rooted weeds which could reach alkaline soils easier.

It had improved pasture composition and allowed him to introduce more legumes.