



## CASE STUDY

# Sam and Cathie Bell

### At a glance

Sam and Cathie Bell

Location: Benlea, Windwhistle, Central Canterbury

STOCK: 4800 Romney ewes, 1200 ewe hoggets

FINISHING: 400 Friesian and Friesian-cross bulls a year

RapID tag

### Challenges

- Being able to auto draft and manage their A and B flocks
- Future proofing their farming operation

### Benefits

- The additional cost of an Allflex EID tag, compared with a normal ear tag, relative to the value of a breeding ewe, is insignificant
- EID offered a quicker tagging system than the one they had, with the tags coming in a continuous strip

**Central Canterbury hill country sheep and beef farmers Sam and Cathie Bell say they started EID tagging their sheep flock last spring with a view to future proofing their farming operation.**

### Tag cost no barrier for future-proofing farm

With ewes tagged as lambs, it will take about seven years before all age groups are EID tagged. "Price-wise, we believe that the additional cost of an Allflex EID tag, compared with a normal ear tag, relative to the value of a breeding ewe, is insignificant," Sam says. "We are future-proofing. We are not expecting anything major out of the EID tags yet, but we do want to be able to auto-draft."

Their 1100 hectare property Benlea, at Windwhistle on the north bank of the Rakaia River, runs a breeding and finishing operation farming Romney ewes lambing at 155 per cent. While Benlea used to farm a herd of Angus cattle, it now runs Friesian and Friesian-cross bulls, turning over 400 a year. Bought at between 300 to 400kg, these are sold at 600kg.

The Bells said that being able to auto-draft would make it easier to manage their A and B sheep flocks. Their A flock was put to a Romney ram and the B flock to a terminal Suftex ram. "We want to be able to put those A and B ewes together after weaning and run them as a mob and be able to auto-draft



Livestock Intelligence™

MSD Animal Health Intelligence

them back out again. This is our only expectation from EID at the moment.” While two years of young sheep were Allflex EID tagged last spring, from now on it would be each year’s ewe lamb replacements.

The Bells believe that eventually all sheep will be required to have EID tags, something which was already compulsory for some sheep in Australia, which had a much bigger national flock than New Zealand.

Technology gains would also continue to be made, in terms of gathering and utilising data. The Bells had auto-drafted for weight for 20 years, but needed to invest in an EID panel reader to have the ability to draft on tags. They would also be checking the durability of tags and their retention rate. They were also looking for a quicker tagging system than the one they had, and EID offered a quicker tagging system than the one they had, with the EID tags coming in a continuous strip, rather than having to reload for each individual animal.

In terms of their Romney flock, the returns are all coming from lamb at the moment, with the breed’s strong wool only a cost. Lambs are weaned pre-Christmas, with some drafted straight off mum, and most lambs gone by June, with the Bells aiming for an average 20kg cw.

The Bells are getting good results from adding greater diversity into their feed crops, using a base of rape or ryecorn and adding a mix of grasses, legumes and annuals. In a snow and rain belt, Benlea could be hit with one metre of snow, although this hadn’t occurred for five years. At Benlea, Cathie and daughter Katie also host garden and farm tours, as well as renting out a cottage to travellers and skiers. Travellers from 20 different countries visited the property last year. Visitors enjoy having an authentic farming experience, Cathie says.



Allflex Livestock Intelligence, part of MSD Animal Health, is the world leader in the design, development, manufacturing and delivery of solutions for animal identification, monitoring and traceability. Our solutions empower farmers to act in a timely manner, to safeguard their animals’ health, while achieving optimal production outcomes for a healthy food supply.

Through its commitment to the Science of Healthier Animals®, MSD Animal Health offers veterinarians, farmers, pet owners and governments one of the widest ranges of veterinary pharmaceuticals, vaccines and health management solutions and services. MSD Animal Health is dedicated to preserving and improving the health, well-being and performance of animals and the people who care for them.

[www.allflex.global/nz](http://www.allflex.global/nz) | [custserv@allflex.co.nz](mailto:custserv@allflex.co.nz)