

Kawhia & Coast Mid-winter Event 19th July 2023

The Kawhia and Coast Mid-winter wellbeing Event was held at the Te Waitere Boat Club on the 19th July. We kicked off with a lovely winter Roast meal for the “punters” which set the scene for the highlight of the evening, an informal talk from Owen Bartlet and Liz Robinson.

The Share Mongolia Programme evolved a few years ago when Paul Brough was trekking in Mongolia and came across a mob of sheep and some locals cutting the wool off with large scissors. As he found out, it was 900 ewes and at 30 sheep per day, about a month’s work! He went away thinking there must be something he could do to help.

Back home in NZ he discussed what he had observed with colleagues and clients and they eventually decided to organise some training with modern equipment from New Zealand.

In early 2023 four Mongolian Shearers arrived in New Zealand, offered work, lodgings and shearing gear to develop new skills to take home. Bart and Liz spent two days with these shearers, without any language communication, by simply showing them how to do it. At the end of their ten-week stay, the four shearers could shear 250 sheep per day!

The Share Mongolia Programme has sponsored two shearing trailers, fitted out with New Zealand shearing equipment, with local farmers now operating them efficiently in Mongolia.

In July 2023 Bart and Liz had three weeks in Mongolia, as part of a New Zealand group to teach shearing to the Mongolian farmers, they have recently returned home.

In Mongolia the land farmed is owned by the Government, the farmers are able to use it for grazing and they make about \$1,000 per year, which a family can live on. It is a big paddock with 30 million sheep and no fences. When the sheep are ready for shearing, all the families come together to help run them into a make shift yard, there being a portable shearing platform nearby. The wool is poor quality and often left to decompose into the pastures. The Kiwis were able to show the locals how to class their wool, so that they might improve their income.

The Mongolians highly value education, their children go away to school from Monday to Friday and have a place to board, then home for the weekend.

There are a lot of horses, they are able to withstand the very cold conditions and maintain their meat with good fat content and of course they are also used for recreation. Other farmed livestock include beef cows and their progeny, camels and yaks, which yield cashmere fibre that they can sell. There are abattoirs to slaughter their beef, however they are not automated.

The contour is flat to rolling, but of course the climate is harsh in winter and can be minus 40 degrees. The country looked beautiful in the photos, quite green and very

picturesque. There is one main sealed road, which was built by Russia many years ago.

During the presentation, the crowd were very engaged and asked lots of questions. I have a sense that people were quite proud of the Kiwis that, in a small way, are giving some of the farmers in Mongolia, a bit of a leg-up!

Robyn Williamson

Coordinator Kawhia & Coast catchment groups