Abstracts – Sheep Milk NZ Conference

**#15 2015-2016 Season review**

A Gunson
110 Glenross Road, RD9, Hastings 4156

Andy and Kat Gunson have been running a four-year pilot dairy sheep operation in Hawkes Bay. The pilot’s key characteristics have been; a secured path to market for the milk, fixed negotiated milk price, common goals in developing products, market, and open communication with processor. Milk is supplied three times a week. The pilot has been based on a 5 ha platform – annual rainfall 1000mm-1200mm, all at the wrong time of the year. Initially the forage has been made up of 1 ha lucerne, 1 ha plantain/clover, remainder in cocksfoot/Italian rye/clover. Changes to the system in 2015-2016 have included; a forage mix change to 2 ha of lucerne, 0.7 ha lucerne/chicory and 2.3ha plantain/clover, monthly test days (morning and night milking), reduction in stocking rate. The results of the final year of the pilot are as follows: 15% increase in daily average milk production to average of 1.65 L/day/ewe, and total of 16577 L, with a 9% reduction in the number of ewe milking days.