



Deputy Commander Yang, Professor Ma, Professor Yan, Professor Stuart Morris, Professor Yu, Associate Professor Alex Chu, Professor Gao, Professor Hugh Blair, Professor Li, Professor Dai, Professor Zhao, (soldier unknown).

### Lambs without daffodils

New Zealand lamb could be produced in quantity year-round realising a price premium if a partnership between Massey and China's Peking and Shihezi universities is successful. The three universities are working together to identify gene markers that allow non-seasonal lambing in selected breeds of Chinese sheep.

"We know that tropical breeds have a greater chance of breeding year-round because, of course, they don't have a winter," says deputy head of veterinary animal and biomedical science Professor Hugh Blair. "We were in Xinjiang last year in August – our equivalent of February climate and season – and there were lambs on the ground."

In New Zealand, most sheep breed between February and June, with some minor breeds breeding between November and August. "For most of our breeds, as daylight hours are decreasing the animals come into cycle and that means they will drop their offspring in the spring. This is sensible from an evolutionary point of view but for farmers it's a huge spike in supply and the work is also very seasonal," Professor Blair says. "If New Zealand farmers are to adopt an intensive lambing system that requires ewes to get pregnant at any time of the year, we require access to genetics that are not currently in New Zealand."

The Chinese Hu-Yang sheep is of particular interest, although the breed is too small to be economically viable in New Zealand. "What we need to do is find the genes that enable the year-round breeding and then move them to any breed we think is suitable," Professor Blair says.

The partnership is working with the International Sheep Genomics Consortium to gain access to their genetic tools, and Professor Blair has been made an Honorary Principal Investigator in the Chinese Academy of Science to enable him to represent the Chinese partners in the consortium. A target date of 2011 has been set for proving the marker genes that correspond to out-of-season breeding exist.

"But the work is likely to also find other things of interest," Professor Blair says. "We may find out about disease resistance or meat quality characteristics for example – there's always a degree of serendipity when you explore. We're also seeing opportunities for our staff and master's and PhD students, and for Chinese staff and students to travel to Massey."

The Chinese Government has funded the project by around \$750,000.



### Good sports

There are a number of measures by which the prowess of Massey's sportspeople can be measured. One is Olympic representation: of the 185 athletes representing New Zealand this year, 23 had ties to Massey, as did many of the sports scientists accompanying them.

Another is Prime Minister's athlete scholarships: 67 of this year's 320 Prime Minister's athlete scholarships, which pays tertiary fees and a living allowance, went to Massey students.

For its part, Massey supports elite student athletes through its Academy of Sport scholarship programme and – in an initiative launched this year – the Elite World Travel Awards.

The travel awards provide assistance of up to \$3000 to elite Massey athletes representing New Zealand at international sporting events. The six inaugural award winners are:

**Mike Dawson**, who was selected to represent New Zealand at the World University White Water Canoe Championships in Slovenia and finished 18th overall in the Men's K1 event.

**Rob Eastham**, who competed at the Beijing, Munich and Milan shooting world cups before heading to the Beijing Olympics, where he placed 8th equal giving him a final placing of 14th in the qualifying round of the 50m rifle.

**Samuel Gregory**, whose performance as a member of the New Zealand team at the World DTL Clay Target Shooting Champs in Ireland won him a silver medal.

**Khord Kopu**, who was a member of the New Zealand men's team at the World Inline Hockey Championships in the United States, where it finished 15th.

**Mark Yungnickel**, who represented New Zealand at the World University White Water Canoe Championships in Slovenia, finishing 16th in the Men's C1 event.

**Struan Webb** (pictured), who competed in the World Duathlon Champs in Rimini, Italy winning gold in the under-19 age group.



During celebrations for his 90th birthday, Dr Jim Pollok stands beside a presentation plaque. Dr Pollok was an institution for generations of Massey students and staff says Director of Massey Agriculture Professor Jacqueline Rowarth. "He was known to generations of students as 'Podzol Pollok', an affectionate nickname and reference to his favourite soil type. In his own words, he taught pretty well the whole gamut of soil science to agricultural diploma students." Dr Pollok worked at Massey from 1955 until 1983.