2000/N09

Producer Research Support

Prime Lamb Profit Workshop - Identifying Future Directions

Carbin Services

The Carbin Services project group wished to understand the role of pastures, genetics and flock management in driving profit in a prime lamb enterprise.

Separately lambing comparative groups and identifying lambs, then comparing live weight and fat scores from each group selected for slaughter, provided valuable comparison of breeding and management systems.

This group is now considering completing an EDGEnetwork module on benchmarking.

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The project

The Carbin Services project group wished to understand the role of pastures, genetics and flock management in driving profit in a prime lamb enterprise.

A workshop on benchmarking and profit drivers was conducted, with the aim of encouraging workshop attendees to participate in a benchmarking group.

Identifying further research and development opportunities was seen as a priority of the group, but group activity did not proceed because of drought conditions.

Objectives

1. identify the profit drivers of prime lamb production; and
2. identify further field research projects (other than the sire evaluation study being undertaken by the group) to profitably design lambs to market requirements.

What was done?

Two groups of Border Leicester X Merino first cross ewes (of similar ages but from different locations), were joined to two groups of Texel rams stratified for age, meat index and percentage of Texel breeding.

The two groups of ewes were lambed separately and the lambs identified at marking when the two groups were boxed. Lambs from the two groups were run together through weaning to selection for delivery.

All lambs that survived to final selection were delivered, except those that were crippled or otherwise unfit. As lambs were delivered, more pasture was available to finish later lambs.

The lambs were dropped over six weeks and selected and delivered over 53 days, with the dates determined by kill arrangements, rather than growth rates. Lambs were selected for delivery as heavy trade, and export lambs by live weight and fat score in millimetres, after overnight curfew. The live weights and fat scores were recorded by group and sex for each delivery.

Lambs from the later deliveries were sent to two different abattoirs, and kill and dressing details for each carcase recorded.

What happened?

The first group, Group A, marked 7.9 percent more lambs to ewes mated, had a higher percentage of lambs delivered to ewes mated, and the lambs had higher average growth rates with 7.9 percent more lambs selected for the first delivery. This was mainly due to the lower live weights of the ewe portion in the second group, Group B.

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Producer Research Support

MLA Producer Research Support offers support funding of up to $15,000 over three years for groups of producers keen to be active in on-farm research and demonstration trials.

These activities include:

- Producer Initiated Research and Development
- More Beef from Pastures demonstration trials
- Prime Time Wean More Lambs demonstration trials
- Sustainable and productive grazing grants.

Contact Stephen Feighan - MLA Project Manager, Producer Delivery and Adoption.

Tel (02) 9463 9245 or
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MLA also recommends

EDGEnetwork

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Higher fertility of Group A ewes was the only significant economic advantage found in this trial.

There were no significant differences in average live weights or fat scores of the lambs selected from each group at any delivery.

Trim varied with deliveries due to misfortune, and a higher proportion of diseased animals present in later deliveries. Trim for arthritis, CLA and bruising was similar for both abattoirs. Contamination from skin roll back though staple length and wool density was a significant for all deliveries. Trim of flaps and briskets were heavier at the abattoir without a steam vacuum system.

Discussion

There were significant differences in fertility and lamb growth rates between the two trial groups, but no economic advantages associated with either genetic variables for growth in the two groups of lambs, or for fat or carcase traits.

As a result of the trial, group participants gained a greater understanding of desirable lamb attributes for meat buyers and processors, enabling them to focus their production in a manner that optimises returns. Supplying lambs to meet the requirements of the processing business minimises penalties and wastage, improves dressing percentages and therefore profitability.

Next Steps

Separately lambing comparative groups and identifying lambs, then comparing live weight and fat scores from each group selected for slaughter, provides valuable comparison of breeding and management systems.

These results would be further enhanced if carcase details at slaughter could be tracked to their respective groups.

The project group is now considering completing an EDGEnetwork module on benchmarking.