

94/WA05



## Producer Research Support

**Finn sheep show the way in breeding  
prime lamb mothers**

Beacon Prime Lamb Producers



Dr Fred Wilkinson who worked on the Finn and Booroola Leicester project on behalf of the Beacon Prime Lamb Producers Group, said there had been considerable interest in the Merino-cross ewes from prime lamb producers at field days and other events where their work had been presented.

### The project

Finn and Booroola Leicester sheep have been successfully trialed in Western Australia to produce F1 mothers for the prime lamb industry.

Progeny of Finn sheep rams over Merino ewes have come up trumps as the preferred combination for new age F1 prime lamb mothers.

At two years of age in a WA trial they had produced 240% lambs and cut 7.05 kg of wool.

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### Objectives

1. Evaluate Finn x Merino and border Leicester/Booroola x Merino crossbred sheep for sheep meat production;
2. Develop management systems utilising legume crops and stubbles for sheep meat production; and
3. Extend results of the project to as wide an audience as possible and encourage implementation of efficient sheep production systems.

### What happened?

At the first lambing of Finn and Booroola Leicester maiden ewes, both produced 80% lambs at 12 months of age.

At their second lambing they recorded about 160% and 140% lambs respectively.

The Finn-cross ewes produced fewer triplets which was regarded as a significant management advantage.

The Booroola Leicester-cross ewes produced more wool but this was four microns broader, while the wool from the Finn-cross was two microns broader than straight Merinos under comparison.

It was predicted that by the January shearing and by the time the current lamb crop was sold they would have produced \$120 income per ewe from three wool clips and two lamb drops, using July-August lambing and weaning lambs onto lupin stubbles.

There was, however, little interest from Merino breeders in breeding Finn or Booroola Leicester first-cross sheep.

### Key points

- Finn Merino-cross produces 240% lambs, cut 7 kg wool as two-year-olds.
- Finn-cross ewes produce fewer triplets than Booroola Leicester.

### Contact details

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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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### Finn sheep show the way in breeding prime lamb mothers

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Among the reasons given for this lack of interest were:

- The information about the project's second lambing was only available in September 1997. This was not long before mating for the 1998 lambing and after most breeders had bought their rams. Finn and Booroola Leicester rams were not readily available.
- Potential breeders weren't convinced they would receive a sufficient premium for the twinning crosses.
- Government agencies had tended to ignore information about Finn and Booroola Leicester sheep.

The Beacon Prime Lamb Producer Group has attended many field days, conducted radio interviews and organised feature stories in weekly newspapers to communicate their work.

## Discussion

"All except one member of the BPLG are producing prime lambs," Dr Wilkinson said.

"Six members are using Finn or Booroola Leicester genetics."

Two members produced 20-23 micron  $\times$  Finn-1/4 Merino rams for sale to producers wanting to mate them to Merino ewes to produce dual purpose sheep. In 1999 they sold 60 rams and expect to sell 200 in 2000. The progeny of this cross would be 5/8 Merino and 3/8 Finn with attributes similar to the half breeds in the project but with wool only about 1 micron broader than their Merino mothers.

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