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Producer Research Support

High fertility Merinos outpace first cross ewes at Dubbo

Prime Lamb Genetics and Centre Plus



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The project

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Objectives

1. Quantify the benefits of high fertility Centre Plus (CP) Merino ewes as prime lamb dams compared to first cross ewes when joined to Prime Lamb Genetics White Suffolk rams; and
2. Initiate a strategic business plan to develop an integrated marketing alliance between PLG, CP, prime lamb producers and industry processors.

What happened?

High fertility Merino ewes joined to performance measured White Suffolk rams provide a profitable pathway to prime lamb production, this project concluded.

And with any improvement in wool prices, the gross margins in favour of the Centre Plus Merinos would be higher.

CP Merino spokesperson Ross James, Dubbo, said other Merino bloodlines selected for high fertility would provide similar returns.

He said the trial results had also shown that high LAMBPLAN index values provide increased returns, although results showed that environmental effects early in life have a large effect on genetic expression and final product.

This issue has been taken further by Prime Lamb Genetics (PLG) and Centre Plus (CP) through an investigation of lamb finishing systems.

Mr James said an important part of any marketing alliance was quality assured finishing of lambs prior to processing.

He said results showed a commitment to objective measurement and performance breeding provided PLG and CP members with genetically superior stock that were providing profitable returns.

Key points

- Producers demonstrate how to initiate their own market development.
- Productive alliances can be formed between different sectors of the sheep industry.
- There are further opportunities for other producers to become involved in the development of a strategic, quality assured, integrated market.

Contact details

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MLA also recommends Sheep Genetics Australia

Sheep Genetics Australia (SGA) is the national genetic evaluation service for the Australian sheep industry. It is built around the world's most comprehensive sheep genetics database, and will deliver genetic information on a fee-for-service basis.

Tel (02) 6773 2493 or
www.sheepgenetics.org.au

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July 2006 / PIRD OUTCOMES

Discussion

Since the Producer Research Support trial and the communication of results, the demand for PLG White Suffolk rams and CP Merino ewes has increased. Many animals are now forward sold.

Average auction prices for high index PLG rams increased by \$482, and \$181 for flock rams.

Centre Plus Merino ewes also increased in value by about \$15 a head.

These price premiums were based on a two-year gross margin analysis that showed CP Merinos at Wellington and Condoblin returned \$15.53 and \$3.65 respectively per ewe more than first-cross ewes.

"The overall bottom line effect of this trial has increased returns for PLG and CP Merino stock to the extent that they are now achieving the consumer demand and sale price premiums these animals should for their genetic worth," Mr James said.

Members of the two groups quickly adopted the first year's trial results. The CP members bought PLG rams and vice versa.

"The full impact of the trial is yet to be realised," Mr James said, "but market alliances with other commercial lamb producers, finishers and processors are already being developed."

Mr James said the development of alliances between CP and PLG members would provide further opportunities for other producers to become involved in the development of a strategic, quality assured, integrated market.

"This will enable lamb producers to source superior genetics for the production of lambs and the option for finishing lambs themselves or relocating them to finishers.

"It will also provide them with the opportunity of being actively involved in a market alliance which provides profitable returns for quality assured product."

Mr James said the trial had demonstrated how producers would initiate their own market development and that productive alliances could be formed between different sectors of the sheep industry.