

95/S04



## Producer Research Support

Nutrition crucial to improved lambing percentages

Strathalbyn Prime Lamb Group



### The project

Low lambing percentages and a lack of knowledge of what actions need to be taken to raise these percentages were tackled by members of the Strathalbyn Prime Lamb Group.

Most of the group members have gained useful information from activities conducted during this Producer Research Support project, including how to raise lambing percentages.

### Objectives

1. Increase lambing percentages to 100% for 90% of the Strathalbyn prime lamb group by December 1998; and
2. Increase lambing percentages by 10% for top 10% of the Strathalbyn prime lamb group by December 1998.

### What was done

The project involved recording and analysing information relevant to the reproductive management of the prime lamb flocks on several of the group members' properties.

This information included time of lambing data, liveweights of ewes pre-mating and through to lambing, collection of tailing percentages from different lambing times and data on rates of supplementary feeding of the ewe flock, as well as general descriptions of flock nutrition from pre-mating to lambing.

Gross margin analyses were conducted on about ten of the group members' properties for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98. It was expected that this analysis would provide useful information on the costs and returns of the various prime lamb flock management systems being used.

The main outputs of the project were the reports produced mainly by the consultant. These reports provided information on the analysis of data which had been gathered and analysed by the consultant. Recommendations based on these results were also provided.

Prime lamb production is still a major sideline industry in the district but most producers have in the last few years switched their emphasis from lamb production to cropping.

During the last few years the group has commenced two activities which, though not part of the PIRD project, are significant in promoting the prime lamb industry in the district. These are a lamb carcass competition and a lamb and wine tasting evening.

The carcass competition has been run in each of the last two years and will most likely become an annual event. The lamb and wine tasting evening was well received and will be repeated.

Low lambing percentages and a lack of knowledge of what actions need to be taken to raise these percentages were tackled by members of the Strathalbyn Prime Lamb Group.

Most of the group members have gained useful information from activities conducted during this Producer Research Support project, including how to raise lambing percentages.

### Key points

- Nutrition of ewes from pre-mating to lambing is crucial to improved lambing percentages.
- The results of the project clearly demonstrated that lambing percentages can be improved by switching from autumn to spring lambing.

### Contact details

Barry Blucher  
PO Box 67  
Strathalbyn SA 5255  
Tel (08) 8536 2343

## 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  
sfeighan@mla.com.au

## MLA also recommends

### EDGEnetwork

EDGEnetwork offers practical field-based workshops to improve productivity and profitability for the long-term.

Workshops cover breeding, nutrition, grazing management, marketing and selling.

Call MLA on 1800 993 343 or  
www.edgenetwork.com.au

## Meat and Livestock Australia

Level 1, 165 Walker Street  
North Sydney NSW 2060

Tel (02) 9463 9333

Fax (02) 9463 9393

Free Phone 1800 023 100 (Australia only)

www.mla.com.au

### Nutrition crucial to improved lambing percentages

JULY 2006 / PIRD OUTCOMES

## What happened?

Awareness by members of the importance of the nutrition of the ewes from pre-mating to lambing in achieving higher lambing percentages was one of the key outcomes. Managing ewes during this period is facilitated by weighing them at appropriate stages.

The results of the project clearly demonstrated that lambing percentages could be improved by switching from autumn to spring lambing.

The final report of the project prepared by the consultant shows that lambing percentages increased from 92 to 96% over the life of the project. These percentages are the average of the lambing percentages achieved by about ten members.

This improvement fell short of the target because of the poor season during 1997–98, and because most of the producers who provided the data for the analysis are still lambing a portion of their flock in autumn.

However, one of the members interviewed, who only lambs in spring, said his percentage was 35% higher in 1997–98 than it was in previous years.

While some of the group members now only lamb in spring, those who are continuing with a split lambing do so to enable them to supply lambs for a greater period in any year. This helps to spread income and, in some years, is a risk management policy.

The group has about 23 members with 15 attending group meetings on average.

The group has considered starting a newsletter as a means of keeping members better informed of group activities. With the completion of the PIRD project and the reduction of emphasis on prime lamb production by most members, it is planned to continue the group but with only about four meetings per year.

Future group activities will be planned and organised by a small committee as has occurred in the past.