



final report

Project code: B.PRS.0421
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Gascoyne (WA) Fat Tail and
Alternative Sheep Growers
Date published: 29.02.2008
ISBN: 9781741914979

PUBLISHED BY
Meat & Livestock Australia Limited
Locked Bag 991
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Gascoyne (WA) Fat Tail and Alternative Sheep Growers

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

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2004/W02 - Gascoyne (WA) Fat Tail and Alternative Sheep Growers

Fat tail and alternative sheep breed

Bruce May

Yaringa Station

via CARNARVON 6701 WA

MUTTON

BUDGET \$14,896.00

Aim:

Improve growers management and skills into the production of sheep meat from the rangelands in relation to the processed sheep meat industry.

Objectives:

To have 12 growers in the Gascoyne area of WA evaluate and investigate the potential processed sheep meat market for alternative sheep breeds grown in the range lands.

The objective is to increase the current meat type lambs from the group from 10,000 to 30,000 this would include sheep suitable for the shipping trade, as well as feeder type sheep.

Co-ordinator's Comments

- 21/02/2007 Group had very tough conditions for this PIRD and with great persistence from a few members and Matt Young. Their Field Day really helped many understand the markets for these new sheep breeds and will enable them to better focus on the customers' requirements. Due to the drought conditions MLA covered only the cost of the Field Day.
- 25/09/2006 Very dry Field Day held, will need an extension.
- 13/07/2005 The dry has held up this project, but a field day is now planned for 2nd Sept. Draft program and budget received. The outcomes will be breed and feeding trials if the group are keen to run them.
- 19/01/2005 Group is widely dispersed and hard to 'get together". They are planning a workshop in May and will be back with further details.



PRODUCER INITIATED RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

2004/W02 - Gascoyne (WA) Fat Tail and Alternative Sheep Growers *Fat tail and alternative sheep breed*

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❖ *What did the Group set out to do? (The project Objective.)*

To investigate the production and marketing options for meat sheep breeds run under current management conditions in the Southern Rangelands of WA. The application in full was not accepted but the Evaluation Committee offered to support a local workshop/ field day budget to \$3,500. Their request was that the workshop/ field day focus on what is required to make the sheep meat industry profitable in the WA rangelands. MLA would then look favorably on plans for further work as a result of the workshop/field day.

❖ *How the Project was done? (The Methodology.)*

A Field day / workshop was held at Meedo station near Carnarvon WA 2 September 2005 (see attached Pastoral Memo and Farm Weekly reports). The field day combined aspects of developing meat sheep and rangeland goat enterprises. A total of 53 people attended which included representatives from the processing and live export industries, MLA, Department of Agriculture and Food WA, Gascoyne Development Commission, Stock Agents, Private Consultants as well as representatives from 17 pastoral and 3 farming businesses.

❖ (Analysis of the data) what was achieved?

The field day addressed the following topics relating to sheep meats:

- Practicalities of running a sheep meat pastoral enterprise using the Damara breed
- Market descriptions for the Middle East and the Saudi live export market and the associated new protocols
- Future market developments and the necessity of managing the animal welfare issues
- Requirements for delivery of rangelands sheep meat breeds to a feedlotter
- Carcass characteristics of the Damara and their unsuitability for the domestic market
- Opportunities to improve carcass by crossing with the Dorper

❖ *What did the Group learn by doing the trials? (Discussion.)*

- The group learned that there many unanswered questions in regard to the sheep meat industry in the Southern Rangelands of WA in terms of the actual reproductive performances, growth rates on various rangelands pasture systems and their impact on the rangeland condition.

- The group learnt from industry representatives what were the marketing limitations of such breeds as the Damara and their lack of suitability for the domestic market.
- The group learnt that the exotic sheep meat industry is the very early stages of development of a sustainable and profitable production systems and the QA systems to suit the range of market opportunities
- As a result of this workshop/ field day and on-going discussions with producers, two representatives of the Landcare District Committee are participating in the PIRD being conducted by the Lower Murchison Pastoral Bestprac Group.

The PIRD has the objective to improve both lambing and weaning rates by effectively aligning seasonal stocking rates with carrying capacity. This activity will enable Damara producers to determine the reproductive performance of Damaras in this environment, their growth rates through to live export weights and their impact on the rangelands and the profitability of a mob in a particular management unit. In particular it will provide an appreciation of the seasonal stocking rates that can be accommodated in specific seasons while maintaining or improving range condition.

The group developed interests in the following subjects as a result of the field day:

- investigating various methods of finishing pastoral lambs to avoid the seasonal risk factors i.e. perennial pastures in the agricultural areas.
 - The opportunity for feedlotting on stubbles with Damara sheep
 - The opportunity to visit processing works and live export depot
 - The benefits of developing a quality assurance program to improve both productivity and ensure on-going market access
- *Trial measurements. Have these enabled you to show the economics of the outcomes and what benefits [dollar] members may be able to gain? How have/will members improve their bottom line?*

These measurements and outcomes will be delivered through the involvement of the Damara producers in the Lower Murchison Pastoral Bestprac Group's PIRD.

- ❖ *Please describe any open days, field days etc and how many attended?*
(see above)
- ❖ *Was the Group satisfied with the results of the project?*
Yes

- ❖ *How could you have done the project better?*
Being less ambitious about developing a stand-alone sheep meat PIRD. Ensure there is adequate administration support before embarking the project.
- ❖ *Is the group interested in doing another project?*
Participating with the Lower Murchison Pastoral Bestprac Group's PIRD meets the group's needs.
- ❖ *Would you recommend other Groups run their own trials?*
Yes, when there are sufficient support resources and time and commitment for membership involvement.
- ❖ *How would the Members sum up their experiences in doing the MLA PIRD project? (What was the bottom line?)*
This initiative enabled sheep meat producers to hear about the realities of the Damara carcass characteristics from a domestic and export processor and what needs to be done in order to develop a long term sustainable and profitable rangeland sheep meat industry based on the Damara breed.
- ❖ Comment on the organisation and management of PIRDs, this will assist MLA in better management of future projects.
The organization and management of PIRDs has been very supportive and encouraging.

Financial position

A sum \$3,000 was originally allocated to this PIRD for the conduct of the workshop/field day

Approximately \$1,600 was expended in the conduct of the field day.

Contact person for PIRD, Mr Bruce May of Carnarvon has managed the finances and has financial records associated with the field day expenditures. Mr May is on vacation, returning early in the new year. It will be recommended that the remaining funds be forwarded to MLA, along with the final financial report.