

94/N01



Producer Research Support

Heavier, leaner lamb carcasses from LAMBWEST producers
LAMBWEST



The project

Prime lamb producers in mid-west of NSW are adopting technology at a rapid rate to produce maximum growth in merino and merino-cross lambs to produce 22 kg carcasses, fat score 2–3.

Objectives

1. Foster and support improved production and marketing of merino-cross lambs for meat in the NSW grainbelt;
2. Obtain maximum growth of merino-cross lambs by aiming to produce 22 kg carcass weight and fat score 2-3;
3. Commit 10,000 lambs per year to sale by objective selling methods (CALM or OTH) from producers in central-west NSW;
4. Facilitate producer understanding of the requirements of specific markets, Trim Lamb and export specification;
5. Investigation the markets for sheep by-products — skin fellmongered wool and quality parameters for these markets; and
6. Encourage production of larger lean lambs over winter months.

What happened?

"This Producer Research Support project was very successful in technology transfer to a large number of lamb producers," said Chris Dadd, Secretary of LAMBWEST and NSW Agriculture district livestock officer (sheep & wool based at Parkes). "That technology uptake is continuing," he said.

Mr Dadd said this positive conclusion was based on the results of a direct mail survey of 300 Mid West lamb producers. The survey received 83 responses, a 30% return. The survey showed:

1. Monitoring of lamb weight gains on farm has been widely accepted over the past two years, as a result of activities conducted by NSW Agriculture during '94 and '95;
2. Thirty five per cent of those who responded had attended lamb lotfeeding field days; 40% were monitoring lamb weight gains on farm; 35% had attended lamb assessment field days; and 52% had attended meetings to discuss lamb production and marketing; and
3. Nearly all lamb producers (91%) have received some information on lamb production. Eighty-four per cent of producers surveyed received the LAMBWEST Newsletter funded by the PIRD. This has been the predominant source of information because it is regularly mailed to 300 producers.

About 40% received the booklet 'Managing and Marketing Merinos for Meat'.

Prime lamb producers in mid-west of NSW are adopting technology at a rapid rate to produce maximum growth in merino and merino-cross lambs to produce 22 kg carcasses, fat score 2–3.

Key points

- Producers are turning off larger, leaner lamb and use scales to monitor weight gains.
- 83% sell through the saleyard; 6% over-the-hooks and 10% in the paddock.
- 33% of producers now own a set of scales.
- 13% said they produced some cryptorchids with 7% saying they would produce more if the season was assured.

Contact details

Chris Dadd
PO Box 149
Parkes NSW 2870
Tel (02) 6862 1000



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.

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Call MLA on 1800 993 343 or
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Level 1, 165 Walker Street
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Fax (02) 9463 9393

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Discussion

There Mr Dadd said most lamb producers learnt a lot about lamb assessment, weaner nutrition and the importance of meeting market specifications.

He said as a result of the Producer Research Support activities the changes producers have made are generally related to better feeding to produce a larger, leaner lamb and the use of regular monitoring of weight gains. He said the technology adoption is on target with the Lamb Industry Strategic Plan. The average number of prime lambs sold by members of Lambwest is 817 with a range of 100 to 6,000. About 18% sell more than 1,000 a year.

About 83% sell through the saleyard; 6% over-the-hooks and 10% in the paddock.

Only 1.3% were using CALM and just 0.3% contract. Thirty three per cent own a set of scales.

Thirteen per cent said they produced some cryptorchids with 7% saying they would produce all cryptorchids if the season was assured.

"This is a low acceptance rate for cryptorchids," Mr Dadd said. "Some of the local focus group comments indicated producers would like to know more about cryptorchids however the unreliable pasture growth in the central-west would not allow cryptorchids to reach their full growth potential."

Twenty three per cent of producers were using LAMBPLAN figures to select their rams. The national average for use of LAMBPLAN figures is about 50%.

Mr Dadd said the reason for the low 'yes' response may mean ram buyers don't associate objective measurements of weight and fat scores as LAMBPLAN data. "There needs to be more education of what LAMBPLAN is."

About 61% said they bought their rams on growth; 44% on leanness and 31% on eye muscle area.

Mr Dadd said the high 'yes' response to these questions indicate that ram buyers consider them important production factors.

Of the lamb producers who did not buy rams on LAMBPLAN figures, 35% considered ram growth rate, 11.8% considered leanness, and 5.9% considered estimated eye muscle area when purchasing.

Next Steps

Since the Producer Research Support funding expired, Mr Dadd said activities were continuing.

The Bogan Gate Focus Group sought the development of an alliance with a lamb finisher because seasons have been disastrous in the mid-west over the past few years.

A field day attended by 70 producers was held at Colin Baldocks Birangan feedlot in December 1997.

Producers were able to discuss alliances to supply lambs to the feedlot.

The Tooraweenah, Tomingley and Bogan Gate lamb focus groups have indicated a need for cost of production information.