

# A clear breeding objective helps manage risk

## Producer Case Study

A long-term focus on growth rate and buying rams with favourable ASBV's has created a sheep enterprise with much more than one string in its bow. For Lyndon and Sharon Kubeil their merino enterprise has always been about more than just the wool.

'Our breeding objective has increased the emphasis we place on growth rate and reproduction, with less pressure on some of the carcass measures and wool cut. It's just a recognition that you can't have it all when setting a breeding objective; there is always going to be an element of compromise. If I want to increase the focus on growth rate, then what am I prepared to trade off – in our case it's been a reduced focus on the kgs of wool cut.

For Lyndon, his flock has always been good enough for wool cut and micron – where they needed to improve was in growth rate and reproduction. It's a fair assessment that this merino enterprise has a strong focus on meat, as much of the classing occurs post shearing.

The result has been a flock that is geared towards risk management, not all the eggs are in one basket. 'There's so much flexibility in what I can sell and when I can sell it – and while some dates are locked into the calendar (such as targeting the Benalla first cross ewe sales in November) other sales can be in response to seasonal conditions.' That said, the November ewe sale works well for their environment as it equates to an end to their growing seasons, 'Beyond that it's up to us if we sell store lambs earlier in the piece or run them through to heavier weights ourselves.'

Further to the increased weight in both retained and sale ewe lambs, the focus on growth has given an increase in returns from kilograms of meat sold in cull ewes. Additionally, the focus on reproduction gives a larger number of ewe lambs to select replacements from as well as greater number of sale animals.

'While our business direction has always been pretty clear, with a breeding objective to match – however, as we don't record pedigree there is always a bit of unknown around the genetic potential of our sheep. I think I know where our sheep are strong, but it's always nice to actually know what the genetic potential is. Yearly performance can vary with the season but having an understanding of their genetic potential lets me know exactly where our sheep are strong or where they need to improve.'

Through their involvement with the Lambs Alive group run by Jason Trompf, and specifically an MLA and Agriculture Victoria funded Producer demonstration site project looking at the use of breeding objectives in commercial sheep flocks, the Kubeils are excited to undertake some further testing of their sheep. 'This is the first year that we will undertake a flock profile of our sheep. Whilst we place a great deal of selection pressure on the rams we use – it is going to be really interesting to see how well that is reflected in the genetic strengths and weaknesses of our ewe flock.



# A clear breeding objective helps manage risk

## Producer Case Study

Whilst this year is about establishing a genetic ‘baseline’, the really exciting project activities will come when we start to track improvements and differences. ‘What we really want to look at is testing a future drop of ewe lambs to see how much any change in selection pressure is able to alter the genetic potential of our sheep. It’s an old adage, but while one data point may be interesting, having multiple data points is where we can really start to track any changes happening on farm.’

This Producer Demonstration Site is funded by Meat & Livestock Australia and Agriculture Victoria.

---

### For more information

Name	Nick Linden
Position	PDS project facilitator
Email address	<a href="mailto:Nick.Linden@agriculture.vic.gov.au">Nick.Linden@agriculture.vic.gov.au</a>