# Focus on multiples delivers Moore lambs

## Producer case study: David Moore

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| **Name:** | David Moore |
| **Location:** | Jamestown, SA |
| **Area:** | 1150ha arable, 750ha nonarable |
| **Enterprise:** | Mixed farming 1600 ewes joined |
| **Pastures:** | Winter cropping program, vetch for pasture, permanent enhanced native grassland hills grazing |
| **Soils:** | Red clay loam |
| **Rainfall:** | 480mm average annual (180mm in 2024) |

When the Moore family of Jamestown, SA, expanded their mixed farming enterprise to include a neighbouring parcel of forestry, it not only increased their grazing area but also provided the perfect location for containment infrastructure.

Initially established to carry livestock through the feed gap between March and the seasonal break expected in late April, the investment proved to be an integral part of their drought management program and allowed them to better maintain ewes through 2024's unprecedented and prolonged dry.

David Moore, who farms in partnership with his parents Lynn and Lynnette, and wife Bec, participated in an MLA-funded Producer Demonstration Site (PDS), run by Upper North Farming Systems (UNFS), which focused on the benefits of containment feeding twin-bearing ewes and singles separately.

"Containment feeding has become an essential practice in our business, as we have to balance cropping and pasture," David said.

"We rely on containment between the end of stubble grazing and the seasonal break to maintain sheep condition score, conserve energy and allow ground cover time to establish in our hills before grazing."

Image 1 Talking Livestock consultant Deb Scammell condition scores sheep with Jamestown sheep producer David Moore (left) and his livestock manager Jamie Clapp.

### Flock management

The Moores run a self-replacing dual-purpose Merino flock, on Kiandra bloodlines. Surplus ewes are joined to White Suffolk rams for prime lamb production.

They aim to breed fast-growing lambs, while at the same time increasing wool production, for overall increased productivity and profitability.

David conducted flock profiling in 2022 as part of another UNFS project supported by MLA.

"The flock profiling provided us with a benchmark of how our flock is currently performing, so we could identify areas for improvement," he said.

“Our maternal flock was productive for meat and wool, but there is still space for improvement.”

David and his livestock manager, Jamie Clapp, collect data from electronic identification (eID) tags. Their focus for 2025 is to track the performance of lambs, using eID to monitor and manage their growth rates. In the future, they would like to use eID to profile the flock and identify poor performing animals to cull.

David recently introduced the AgriWebb farm management software into his business, which was been a useful tool for flock and paddock management and allocating tasks. This is especially useful in a mixed farming enterprise, helping balance the often-competing priorities of cropping and livestock.

## Containment infrastructure

The Moores have been containment feeding since 2016 but their original containment area, while having a slope for effluent run-off, had no shelter and only a 600-head capacity.

The new site is nestled between established gum trees on a gentle slope –ticking the boxes for both drainage and shelter. The new set-up includes four 0.5ha containment pens with post and ringlock fencing, and a permanent water point in each pen.

Alongside the containment pens are three 3–5ha paddocks for lambing into. In 2024, David added three pens for finishing lambs as part of the complex.

Image 2 The Moores containment fed 1,620 sheep in 2024.

## Ewe management for lambing 2024

In 2024, the business fed 1,620 sheep in containment during a year which delivered only 40% of their anticipated rainfall.

Ewes were joined to the White Suffolk rams in mid-November 2023, and the self-replacing flock were joined to Merino rams in January 2024.

Each joining ran for six weeks, and the mobs were preg-scanned ~90 days after the commencement of joining. The timing is aimed at optimising the ability to scan for twins, so ewes can be separated for preferential management.

All ewes were inducted into the containment pens in late March.

Dave also purchased an additional 300 Merino ewes in January 2024, which were scanned in lamb to Suffolk rams (but not scanned for litter size).

For the PDS, there were three cohorts of ewes in containment:

1. **Purchased Merino ewes – joined to Suffolks:**

- 300 scanned in lamb

These ewes lambed into containment in early April.

2. **Merino ewes – joined to Suffolks:**

- 300 twin bearing ewes
- 285 single-bearing ewes

The multiple-bearing ewes were lambed in larger containment pens (3–5ha) and the single-bearing ewes lambed in the paddock, in mid-April/May.

3. **Merino ewes – joined to Merinos**

- 386 single scanned ewes
- 350 multiple scanned ewes

These ewes were moved out of containment in late May, into hill paddocks for lambing in June. As they lambed onto dry feed (500kg/DM/ha) they had access to barley in self-feeders.

## Containment nutrition

Talking Livestock consultant Deb Scammell provided guidance on condition scoring (CS) for the PDS, which was conducted regularly throughout containment period. The target was CS 3 for single-bearing ewes and CS 3.5 for twin-bearing ewes.

Ewes received lime/salt/magnesium supplementation throughout pregnancy, which was replaced with Magforce for the final few weeks before lambing.

Image 3 Talking Livestock consultant Deb Scammell condition scores sheep with Jamestown sheep producer David Moore (left) and his livestock manager Jamie Clapp.

The main difference between multiple and single-bearing ewes was that the ewes scanned with multiple lambs had access to more grain for the last few weeks of gestation, as well as better quality hay for the duration of their containment to meet their higher energy requirements.

## Results

The very dry conditions and no green feed in the lead up to, and during, lambing had a downward impact on lambing rates, with only 74% lambing for singles and 108% for multiples achieved with the Moores' ewes in 2024.

This compares with a five-year average of 98% for singles and 140% for multiples.

"Sourcing hay was difficult in a tight market with the incredibly dry season in 2024 across SA and that was compounded by a longer-than-planned supplementary feeding program," David said. "This meant condition scores in late pregnancy were lower than optimal, due to the extenuating seasonal circumstances."

Despite the lower than desired lambing rates, the PDS demonstrated the productivity benefits of preferentially managing ewes based on preg-scan results.

For example, in one of the mobs of purchased ewes (which were not separated based on litter size), the marking rate was 92%. However, in two other mobs which were segregated, the multiple-bearing ewes had 144% lamb marking.

"We realised we could increase lambing rates by identifying multiple-bearing ewes and managing them accordingly," David said. "That included implementing small mob sizes and increased grain rations, compared to the single-bearing ewes and the purchased ewes which weren't segregated."

## Challenges

Although running sheep in containment allowed regular monitoring to identify any health concerns, David and Jamie observed a higher rate of prolapse in ewes in 2024 than previously seen.

Deb advised this could possibly indicate a calcium deficiency. However, in the future, autopsies and further investigation would be worthwhile to determine if there were any other contributing factors.

Maintaining a balanced diet was a challenge in 2024, due to the variable quality and constrained availability of hay supplies. The Moore's produced all their own barley for feeding, and hay is either produced on-farm or purchased.

The ongoing poor seasonal conditions resulted in no hay being produced in 2024, so David sourced hay and straw in preparation for containment feeding in 2025.

## Opportunities

As they continue to embrace the opportunities from eID, David and Jamie plan on recording ewe and lamb mortality data.

"This will allow us to troubleshoot what is likely to have gone wrong and also identify the best lambing paddocks for lamb survival," David said.

He said a well-designed containment yard has delivered many benefits to their business.

"A single, central set-up near feed stores has reduced labour, and the addition of laneways, permanent water supplies and good fencing has streamlined livestock management during containment.

"Although the unprecedented conditions did impact lambing rates for 2024, overall, we saw ewe condition coming into lambing and lambing percentages significantly improve since introducing containment feeding, with excellent results in previous years.

"Key learnings from the tough season in 2024 is to source feed early, maintain ewe condition score as early as possible (because it's hard to catch-up when condition drops), and to lamb twin-bearing ewes separately in small mobs."

## David's lessons learned

- Source sufficient feed as early as possible, in case supplies dry up in tough years.
- Scan for multiples/singles and separate ewes so they can be managed accordingly.
- Small mob sizes are especially critical for twin-bearing ewes.
- Monitoring condition score throughout pregnancy is a valuable management tool

## Additional information, resources & training

**MLA's Producer Demonstration Site Program**

Visit the **Lotsa Lambs PDS project page** for more information, including additional producer case studies and insights from the project.
mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/search-pds/pds-data/lotsa-lambs---improving-reproduction-success

Explore **MLA's PDS Program**, discover how producers are improving productivity and profitability.
mla.com.au/pds

**Making more from sheep**

Making More From Sheep is a one-stop-shop for the latest sheep industry research, tools and information on husbandry and management – a package of resources, videos, apps, technologies, podcasts and fact sheets – for Australian sheep producers, developed by Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).
makingmorefromsheep.com.au

**MLA's Containment feeding hub**

Access MLA's Containment Feeding Hub for a comprehensive collection of resources to support producers. Find national procedures and guidelines for intensive sheep and lamb feeding systems, along with practical information on containment feeding.
mla.com.au/containment-feeding

**Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM)**

The Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) training program was developed by the AWI-funded Lifetime Wool project and Rural Industry Skills Training (RIST) and commenced in 2005/06.

The nationally accredited Lifetime Ewe Management course allows sheep producers to monitor and demonstrate the effects of nutrition and management on a mob of their own ewes in their environment.
wool.com/ltem

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