



March Newsletter

I have attached a report from the Elmore ewe trial conducted last year. The details of this trial are explained in the report. In this newsletter I will discuss the results relating to the crossbred and composite ewes in the trial. It is important to realise that this trial was conducted independently of anyone connected with the Multimeat company.

The simplest data to examine first is that on wool value where the value of wool cut was \$32 for Border (BM) and Multimeat merinos (MM) and \$16 for the Cashmore Oakley (CO) composites. This is a huge difference in returns and you would need a lot greater return in lamb value to offset this. It is important to realise that when you read the index value for most maternal rams that, this index has no value for wool at all. It is considered to have no value and consequently the wool returns for most composites do not even cover the costs associated with shearing, crutching and flystrike. In the Multimeats we are putting a lot of emphasis on wool value and you will see rapid progress in this attribute over the next few years. If you are going to shear the sheep it has to have some value. We are also developing a clean shedding prolific ewe for those producers who would like to do away with shearing altogether. Call me if you have an interest in these genetics.

The second attribute I will discuss is the scanning and lambing percentages. In this trial the ewes are monitored several times daily and all lambs that die are collected and autopsied. The conclusion of the supervisors is that there is a large difference between the numbers of lambs scanned and born. So although the MM ewes scanned at 268% only 215% of lambs were born. This is an important point because our detractors of which there are plenty would like to tell you about enormous lamb losses which is not the case as I will go on to explain.

The BM ewes lambed at 153% and reared 116%. This gives a mortality rate of 24%.

The MM ewes lambed at 215% and reared 158% so the MM lamb mortality rate is 26%.

The CO ewes lambed at 136% and reared 117% giving a mortality rate of 14%.

The average lamb loss over the sheep industry is about 25%. So it is true that the MM ewes lose more lambs but it is not extreme when they are managed according to our management booklet.

The third and most important factor is the number of lambs weaned and their weights. The number of lambs weaned by the BM, MM and CO ewes were 116%, 158% and 117% respectively. The MM ewes reared 40% more lambs than the other two genotypes. This is not new knowledge, these results have been replicated several times before on private farms and research centres.

The average weights of the lambs in December were BM 44.3kg, MM 41kg and CO 44kg. So the MM ewes weaned 40% more lambs but were only 3kgs liveweight less in December. The percentages sent off in the first draught were 56%, 51% and 66% for the BM, MM and CO ewes respectively. However although the other ewes had a greater percentage of lambs in the first draught the total number of lambs sent off in the first draught was greatest for the MM. Our promotional material claims a \$10-15 advantage from using the Multimeat genetics but in this trial the advantage will be close to \$40 over the CO ewes.

The other day I had a conversation with a stock agent who looks after one of our clients who weans in excess of 160% . I asked how it was going and his big worry was that there was not a greater number of lambs going off in the first draught. One of the biggest handicaps to the advancement of our industry is the lack of financial understanding of some of our stock agents.

This trial will run for at least another 3 years. The results over these years will reflect those achieved last year. I know this because I have compared MM, with BM ewes on properties across southern Australia for many years. I have fewer comparisons between MM and CO ewes but the results were very similar to those reported above.

The management of Multimeat ewes is different than normal ewes and we provide a management booklet to guide you through the system. We also provide one on one, free advice to get you started.

We will be at the Lucindale Field days on the 17th and 18th of March and would like to see you at site 328. If you have any questions I am happy to speak to you anytime on 0428647457.