

Strength in ewe numbers

(Calga Dohnes Newsletter June 2013 - Jason Southwell)

The settling in phase of the Uardry Stud at Calga is all but complete. The first Uardry lambing is just over and another drop of Calga lambs are about to be weaned.

To date I have been particularly impressed by the early weight gain in the Calga lambs and the quality of the wool on the hogget rams at shearing.

The Uardry maidens marked just under 100% of lambs which is a pleasing result considering joining took place virtually as they came off the truck.

As the ram selling season approaches it is now back to business. The business of ensuring ram clients have continued access to the leading Dohne Merino genetics in Australia.

For a classer genetic improvement is all about numbers. The selection pressure that can be placed on the combined Calga/Uardry ewe base of over 2000 ewes is very high and rapid genetic progress can be made.

Seed stock producers must ensure that their breeding objective is all about providing genetics that improve profitability. At Calga it is all about balance with the aim to derive 70% of income from meat and 30% from wool. This will be achieved by focusing of the following key components:

- Number lambs weaned – The higher the fertility of a flock the greater the profitability. From the 2013 joining onwards a high fertility family will be established for ewes that continually wean high performing multiple lambs and have positive EBV's for fat. Scrotal circumference measurements for rams will also be taken.
- High weaning weights – Aim the increase lamb growth rates to ensure earlier turn off of whether lambs whilst maintaining adult body weights.
- Wool quality – continued improvement in wool quality through visual selection and yield measurements
- Wool cut/hectare – maintain wool cut/head but increase wool cut/hectare through greater fertility and growth rates.

I look forward in the future, meeting all the Calga clients and catching up with the Uardry clients when the opportunity arises.

To be offered the role of Stud Master at Calga along with the opportunity to continue my involvement with the Uardry Dohne Stud is a great honour, and one which allows the overseeing of one of the biggest Dohne Merino ram breeding flocks in the world.

Jason Southwell

Calga & Uardry Stud Master