

**Gracemere Merino rams are now available for sale by private arrangement.** We have a number of young rams to select from that perform well in commercial conditions.

We are pleased to note that our flock performed very well in the national Flock DNA Profile testing. Details to follow.

It never rains but it pours, that's the ironical and frustrating conditions I have seen or heard from clients in recent months. Our rainfall for the 12 months to date is 20 % down and SW Vic is clearly the best for grass growth. And as we all know it's more than just the total, but the timing because small showers in summer add to the total, but are often evaporated.

To adapt to the challenging climate this year and maybe the next, we have sold all our wethers, including the weaners. This has allowed us to do two things –

1 To make more room and grass for the ewes, the engine room of the business.

2 To use those funds from the wethers to invest in high quality grain to maximise the milking ability and growth rate of the lactating ewes and ewe weaners. The grain feeding is covered by extra wool growth, but produces heavier maidens that are more fertile, and more valuable classed out 1 yr. ewes with their higher live weight.





## AUGUST 2018 NEWSLETTER

The ewe scanning went well this year with the stud ewes from 1.5 to 6.5 yrs. producing a 140 % result. There were 53% twinners, 38% singles and 9% dry. This shows the marking potential of our type of sheep – plain bodied, high fleece wt., with positive fat and muscle figures. We highly recommend pregnancy scanning because of the many benefits. One of the major benefits is giving the twin bearing ewes extra room on the best paddocks to allow them to produce lambs that are closer to their single born cousins. It also allows you to identify with a tag/notch the twin born ewe lambs so at classing the following year you know their birth status and can take that into consideration. They have the identical genetics as the single born lambs but are often discarded at classing because of their inferior appearance.

A growing trend in the industry is the culling of any ewe of any age that is dry at scanning or lamb marking. This we feel is too hard on them in these variable seasons. A ewe that gave you two sets of twins then dry that is culled is in fact more profitable than a ewe that had three singles but stays. Our simple system is to tag/notch the dries and if they repeat at any stage then they can go then. The feeding system explained below will greatly reduce the number of dries because it is mostly nutrition related especially in these erratic rainfall patterns we see.

A very interesting and beneficial scientific development that is available now is the Flock Profile test. From a simple blood test on unclassified ewe weaners the results compare a flock's attributes to the Australian Sheep Breeding Values that several studs use across Australia. We undertook this test last year and are happy to report that our big picture features of fleece wt. , body wt. , growth rate fat and muscle were all well above the average of the national data base. And it will help us fine tune our breeding objectives by focusing on features that need a little focus. Our elite group of stud ewes and sires would of course be considerably higher than the result we achieved for our commercial flock ewes. For example some of the stud sires in use here are ranked in the top 5 % in Aus. for fleece wt. alongside high growth rates.

In October 2017 the stud ewes marked 105% lambs giving us plenty of young rams to offer this year. They are August drop and May shorn. Deliveries will be available from early October. We will also be offering cast for age and classed out 1 yr. ewes later in the year after weaning.

At weaning this year (and before weaning) we will be feeding barley to the ewes and lambs. Feeding the lambs post weaning even while on green feed improves their rumen function and feed conversion, which will reduce the risk of wt. loss and ill thrift. Starting at just 200 gms per hd per day to the lambs and slowly increasing will maintain that all important growth rate. Drafting of the weaners at this age and allocating better feed to the lighter ones will help produce an even crop of one yr. ewes regardless of their birth status and age of mother. Feeding the ewes straight after weaning puts wt. back on to make sure they are at the critical condition score 3 at joining to maximise fertility. With the current high wool and sheep prices supplementary feeding gives a very good return on investment.

We are happy to provide all year round consultancy for our ram clients.

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