

# AMS lambing lesson taught at college

THE WA College of Agriculture Cunderdin have recently been conducting a trial on increasing lambing and weaning percentages in AMS bred Merino's and have come up with some interesting results.

The study which began in December last year and will continue until the beginning of October, involved the use of two groups of 150 Merino ewes run under different management systems.

The first group of 150 ewes acted as the control group which were run under the College's normal management system with 2pc AMS rams in for six weeks.

The second group posed as the trial group and the variables included 3pc rams which went out for four weeks and not the standard six weeks with teasers being introduced prior to the introduction of the rams to synchronize the cycling of the ewes.

All the ewes were then supplementary fed with lupins from days 12 to 25 from when the rams were introduced and after 100 days were pregnancy scanned.

Once this was completed the students then separated the ewes that were being detected as pregnant with twins from the trial group and they were then run separately.

Throughout the combined groups that were lambing, the ewes were consistently fed barley, lupins and hay which allowed the students to obtain some hands on experience throughout the trial.

After pregnancy scanning all the ewes in both experimental groups, the



Taking a look at the "twin" paddock at the WA College of Agriculture Cunderdin, students Rowan Tindal (standing), Dylan Lucas (left), animal production teacher Maggie Paltridge, Aaron Middleton, Leighton Walling, Verity Morgan, Cairn Green and agricultural teacher Wayne Laird have for the last seven months been conducting a trial on increasing lambing and weaning percentages.

school expected a 120pc lambing percentage from the trial group and a 112pc lambing percentage from the control group with the overall farm average lambing percentage being 110pc.

Results indicated that the timely extra feeding, presence of teasers prior to putting in the rams and 3pc ram ratio were relevant factors in increasing lambing percentage in a flock.

Now that most of the lambs are on the ground, the students and teachers next step will be to get them to weaning.

Another experiment conducted by the students in conjunction with the trial was the design of three different types of shelters and windbreaks for the newly born lambs.

The idea was hatched after students attended the Brookton "Sheep for Profit" seminar and after designing the shelters using cloth, they discovered ewes did not necessarily lamb behind them but used them after their lambs were born as shelter which highlighted the need for good shelter from the weather for ewes before and after lambing.

Students have an on-going assessment on the trial to record how many lambs will be weaned at the conclusion of the trial in October and will be actively involved with the tagging, mulesing and weighing of the lambs.

The school has been functioning under the AMS program since the 1980's when it decided that there were too many inconsistencies within the school flock.

Animal production teacher Maggie Paltridge said that AMS provided long term breeding goals and scientific selection methods to take away flock inconsistencies.

"We use all AMS rams and ewes and worked with Chris Richardson at the AMS to set up the trial," she said.

"An on-going aspect of the trial will be comparing the results of the trial with cross bred rams and looking at the increase of profit margins along with the lambing and weaning percentage results."

The students will also be calculating the cost of extra feeding.

Future trials for the school will include the year 12 students studying the relationship between the microns of twin and single lambs and their fleece weights.