

CENTRAL NUCLEUS BROOKTON

Ingle Report – Ashley & Lucille Hobbs

This year's sale rams have had two very different seasons to contend with. From conception to birth was extremely tough but from then on they have had a reasonably comfortable run. In fact they have been tested for fleece faults due to over 500mm rainfall on them in the last 12 months, we and them have been very fortunate.

Testing

I was expecting to be able to test for worm resistance early this year, in June, as early May levels were two thirds of the way to being high enough. A monitoring check in June revealed the rams had fought back as levels had collapsed to almost nothing, which is great as long as you don't want to do worm egg count tests. The rams are now almost back to early May levels so hopefully we can have sufficient levels before Distribution Day to get a meaningful test done.

We have just completed wool sampling, dag scoring, scrotal circumference measuring, taking blood samples and crutching. So now we just have to get them shorn, have the muscle scanning done and hopeful be able to do a worm resistance test.

2008 lambing (4 week mating)

We have almost finished lambing. This year we mated for 4 weeks for a 93% conception rate resulting in 114% fetuses per 100 ewes joined from using 2% rams. I think that in smaller mating flocks it probably would be a good idea to up the ram mating ratio to 2.5% for a four week mating period as in 2008 these were our lower conception flocks. Feed definitely hasn't been short for lambing but there has been 2 weeks of pretty ordinary weather that has caused quite a few mortalities in one paddock. Once ram breeding flock lambs are tagged we will happily consolidate back to 2 flocks from the current 20 for sire referencing purposes.

Lamb marking and mulesing

We are planning to mark our lambs in the last week of August. I have ordered the new tail docking iron that has been developed by AWI and Te Pari (a New Zealand company). It is supposed to stretch the skin on the top of the tail when it is being docked therefore stopping wool from growing down to the tail tip. Obviously this will only be useful when you stop mulesing. We aren't mulesing because I think the sooner we start exposing our sheep to the non mulesing environment the better. However, if I was a commercial grower I would keep mulesing until the deadline unless there was a proven financial benefit.

Electronic tags

We have electronically tagged all mature sheep in the ram breeding flocks and all ram and ewe hoggets. So far we have had some good results and some frustrating ones with using it. The frustration is mainly coming from having to rethink how some operations are performed, getting to know the equipment and what to expect from it. In the ram breeding flocks I'm sure it will be very beneficial for saving labour and in eliminating data recording errors.