

PRESS release



Along with running the Barloo and Willemenup Merino and Poll Merino studs at Gnowangerup the House family run a significant commercial Merino enterprise.

Merinos are a pivotal part of the House family's farming operation and they are constantly striving to ensure increased productivity and profitability in their commercial Merino operation.

The family's farming enterprise is roughly a 50:50 split between cropping and sheep, with the sheep enterprise being made up of 2500 stud ewes and 10,000 commercial ewes.

Stud principal Richard House said the key focus of their sheep enterprise is to have productive sheep that are flexible with any system and the genetic potential to suit any management practice, whether it is turning off lambs as suckers, growing out wethers to put over the hooks or retaining to shear and sell later as mutton.

As a way of seeing how their new genetics are performing the House family use ram lambs each year over in their commercial flock.

Mr House said using the ram lambs provides a good indicator of the genetics performance and also to see if the commercial flock is performing in alignment with the stud's breeding objectives.

The stud's breeding objectives are focused around the maintain profit drivers for any sheep enterprise - fertility and production.

Mr House said they are continuing to strive to increase lambing percentages while retaining wool cut per head.

This year the enterprise achieved a lambing percentage of 107 per cent for ewes mated across both its stud and commercial ewes.

Mr House said in the past couple of seasons they have used confinement as a management strategy to efficiently prepare ewes pre lambing by feeding them Barfeeds pellets to ensure all their energy and mineral requirements are met.

"However using this system not only are the ewes getting all their energy and mineral requirements, it also allows pasture to grow in the lambing paddocks," Mr House said.

"Generally we confinement feed the ewes post scanning for six weeks, before letting them out two weeks prior to lambing.

"Once lambing starts the ewes require minimal attention and are rarely checked."

This year the Houses also did their first 28 day joining and Mr House said they were impressed with the results.

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“We scanned 92pc ewes in lamb and 150pc embryos, which included maidens,” he said.

“The shorter joining proved to be very valuable, allowing for tighter management around marking and weaning and more flexibility around average mob size as ewes are in their lambing mobs for shorter periods of time.”

Another large profit driver of the family’s sheep enterprise is their wool clip.

The family’s commercial ewe flock year on year cut about 7.5kg per head of 19.8 micron wool while their ewe and wether lambs are shorn at 10months and cut 5kg of 18 micron worth \$20 clean.

After shearing they finish their wethers lambs in a feedlot for four to six weeks on Barfeeds finishing pellets, before turning them off at 60-65kg.

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The improved growth rates and early maturity are evident in the ability to turnoff off their lambs from the feedlot.

“We believe it is also proving beneficial in the fertility of the flock with scanning percentage increasing alongside the growth rates,” Mr House said.

To ensure the stud continues to improve the House family has been doing an extensive AI program each year with elite sires, selected for the desired traits to continually increase the productivity and profitability of

their stud and commercial flock.

Mr House said their current commercial system that has been developed and improved over time, has a sheep enterprise with a gross margin of \$1300 per hectare.

“This value just highlights the value of the sheep enterprise to the overall farm operation,” Mr House.

If you want to work toward these gross margins then make sure you head to the Barloo/Willemenup on-property ram sale.

In the sale on Wednesday, September 21st the House family will offer 330 rams.