

Thursday, 14 May 2009

### Scanning sheep workshops driving increased profits

New research is showing that ultrasound scanning to detect empty, single and twin bearing ewes can be used to drive productivity and increase profits.

Increasing numbers of Merino and prime lamb producers are using scanning to more accurately target ewe nutrition and to inform culling decisions; industry estimates are that over 100 contractor businesses are now scanning almost 30% of the national ewe flock.

NSW DPI Sheep and Wool Officer and scanning expert, Chris Shands, has been running a series of workshops for producers on behalf of the Sheep CRC, to help them get the most out of their scanned ewes.

"Different management of single and twin bearing ewes is vital to optimise lamb survival and flock reproduction rates," Chris said.

"The pregnancy status information provided by the scanners enables sheep breeders to accurately target nutrition and to differentially manage single and twin bearing ewes, and to better manage their dry ewes.

"The workshops provide valuable information for all sheep breeders. If you are already scanning your ewes, attending a workshop will show you how to get the most out of the information your scanner can provide. If you are considering scanning but not sure if it will do anything for your bottom line, the workshop will help you evaluate the cost/benefit for your production system," Chris said.

"A recent Sheep CRC analysis of a 'typical' self-replacing Merino flock – 5,000 ewes, in south-west Victoria lambing in August/September – showed that managing these groups separately after pregnancy scanning increased profit by nearly \$9,000, or \$1.80/ewe.

"Scanning is particularly useful in poor years where stocking rates are tight. Separating dry, single and twin bearing ewes means that you can feed budget more accurately which can save money on feed requirements and increase productivity."

The half day workshops have been run in partnership with local scanning contractors. Participants examine the options of managing scanned ewes and to specifically improve their knowledge of nutrition of twin and single bearing ewes in late pregnancy which leads to improved lamb survival and lifetime performance of the progeny.

Workshops have been run in Victoria, SA, NSW and Qld over the past few months, with over 150 producers in attendance.

Scanning contractor Jay Bray from Linton in western Victoria has sponsored three workshops for his scanning clients and fully supports this initiative by the Sheep CRC.

"This is exactly the type of information my clients need to get the most out of the scanning information I provide for them. The management targets suggested during the workshops give some guidelines for producers to aim for with their flocks," Jay said.

For producers interested in attending a workshop, contact your local scanning contractor or Chris Shands on 02 67301900.

Caption: Chris Shands demonstrates condition scoring to producers at the Managing Scanned Ewes workshop. Photo: James Bray

*<ends>*

Media contact: Janelle Holzberger on 02 6773 2927