

Spring Dohne

Dual-purpose performers



Dry times dampen success

HIGH meat and wool prices are marred by one thing, dry conditions, says Clunes Dohne breeder Lachlan McLennan, Tourello.

Tourello run about 2500 ewes, including a portion of 180 first cross and 350 pure Merinos – the remainder are Dohnes.

"It's pretty tight at the moment, we are looking for some rain," Mr McLennan said.

"A lot of people are worse off than us but we haven't got that subsoil moisture we would like."

While prices were good, he said "if only we could switch some water on and off" and hoped seasonal conditions would improve to capitalise on market conditions.

Mr McLennan said the Tourello fam's team chose to use predominantly Dohnes for its lambing percentage which he estimated was 10 to 15 per cent better than their Merino paddock mates.

Marking rates were around the 90-95pc, he said, and contributed to the operation's switch to the "low maintenance" Dohne flock.

"I like the look of them, they are a straight forward, no fuss sheep, with a nice, square head," he said.

"I like the way we can turn them off as lambs and get around \$100 for them."

But he said there were some

"diehard" Merino graziers who were taking a little more time to convince.

"We've got a few diehard Merino blokes in the area, they look over the fence and say they reckon we are on the wrong track," Mr McLennan said.

While the sheep's greatest value was in meat production, there was still a solid return on their wool.

"We are still averaging 19-microns, the wool stays pretty fine, although you haven't got the weight of the Merino," Mr McLennan said.

"You can't have it both ways, although we are trying pretty hard."



Classed hogget ewes at Chris and Lochie McLennans, Tourello, Clunes.

■ Rod Seers.



Dohnes' do-ability simplifies operation

By ANDREW MILLER

HAVING an income from both wool and prime lamb attracted Clunes grazier Rod Seers to the Dohne breed.

Mr Seers runs a flock of 2500 Dohnes at Clearview, in the Glengowrie district, having switched from Merinos five years ago.

"We like the wool idea of the Dohnes, which produce really good quality wool – we were half Merinos and half first cross but I am just simplifying the operation by having all Dohnes," Mr Seers said.

"We do put the pure Dohne rams back over the ewes and we also put them over some Border Leicesters."

He said it was the first year he had put pure Dohne rams over the Border Leicesters and the aim was to market the first cross ewes at one and a half years old.

"They are a good, easy animal to look after – I like dealing with them," Mr Seers said.

He said the property aimed to have lambs drop in April, with wethers turned off in February or March, to be shorn as hoggets the next January.

"The wool is equally as good a quality as the Merino we were growing before, but it is slightly less a cut."

Mr Seers said he expected the prime lamb market to hold up for some time yet – "it looks pretty good for a while, I can't see it falling in a hole," he said.

"I have no regrets doing what we have done with our flock, compared with the pure Merinos – we might have got 70 per cent lambing from our maiden ewes, out of them, but we are getting 100pc out of our Dohnes," he said.



Golden year for Dohne breed

IN the Dohne breed's 50th year, the 2016 Global Dohne Conference will be held in Australia.

To celebrate the breed's golden anniversary, marking 50 years since the Dohne Merino Breeders Society of South Africa was established, an educational and fun program is in the works.

The Australian Dohne Breeders Association is now seeking expressions of interest from breeders interested in attending the global event, which is slated for July 15 to 23, 2016.

The conference and tour's program will be educational for both stud and commercial breeders and will provide participants with an exciting opportunity to view quality Dohnes, visit associated industry businesses, network with other sheep breeders/industry personnel and have the opportunity to visit Australia.

Subject to the level of interest from international Dohne breeders, the nine-day conference would see the group travel to the Australian Sheep and Wool Show in Bendigo; to the Bendigo saleyards to view a lamb sale and to leading Australian stud and commercial Dohne operations.

Another highlight of the proposed draft itinerary, would be a conference with representatives from South Africa, South America, Russia, New Zealand and Australia, to speak on topics that might include the breed's global appeal, genomics, dual-purpose economics, different farming systems and animal welfare issues.

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