

Move to Dohne pays off

Quality carcass traits lift returns

AUSTRALIAN
DOHNE BREEDERS
ASSOCIATION

BY KYLIE NICHOLLS

ADVERTISER CONTENT

THE dual-purpose traits of the Dohne breed have significantly boosted the productivity of the Argent-Smith family's sheep flock in New South Wales, improving fertility as well as the early growth and carcass quality of their lambs.

Based at Rankin Springs in the state's northern Riverina, Richard and Sally Argent-Smith and their family, along with Sally's parents Bruce and Penny Black, currently run 1800 pure Dohne ewes in the mixed farming operation, Yaccabri Pastoral Company, alongside a 2500-hectare cropping program, comprising wheat, barley, canola, vetch and lupins.

Traditional Merino breeders, the family experimented with a Dohne/Merino-cross before making the decision to transition to a pure Dohne flock about five years ago.

"Although we were getting about \$10 less for the Dohne wool compared with Merino wool at that time, we were receiving at least \$50 more for the lambs and I based my decision on those returns," Mr Argent-Smith said.

"The Dohne is the perfect dual-purpose sheep, it's an easy-care, robust breed that fits in well with our cropping operation, handles our harsh



Sally and Richard Argent-Smith, Yaccabri Pastoral Company, Rankin Springs, NSW, made the change to a pure Dohne flock about five years ago and continue to be pleased with their performance. Pictures supplied



The family sent a line of Dohne lambs to Gundagai Meat Processors, with 71 per cent achieving the GLQ5+ bonus.

environment and the lambs do very well when finished on barley in a feedlot."

With assistance from sheep classer Angus Munro, Mr Argent-Smith has been sourcing his rams from the Macquarie Dohne stud.

Their mature Dohne ewes currently average 20-micron with a wool cut per head of between 6-7 kilograms.

CONSISTENT PERFORMERS

Value-adding to their

sheep enterprise, Mr Argent-Smith has established an on-farm feedlot. The family joins their ewes in November to start lambing in April, with shearing at the end of July.

Lambs are weaned in early September, shorn after harvest in early December, and then enter the feedlot from January onwards at around 45kg live weight.

They are fed a ration of barley and lupins, all sourced on-farm, with

barley straw supplied for roughage.

"We are targeting a heavy export lamb averaging 28-32kg dressed weight," Mr Argent-Smith said.

"The first draft of lambs is usually ready after five weeks, while the lighter lambs might stay in the feedlot for up to two months.

"We want to have the feedlot emptied by the end of March ahead of the cropping program."

Mr Argent-Smith introduced eID tags with the 2024-drop lambs, allowing him to more closely monitor individual performance and track their weight gains through the feedlot.

"We are definitely achieving better weight gains with the Dohnes, averaging about 2kg of live weight gain per week," he said.

"But the biggest thing we have noticed is the consistency of the lambs, we don't have the tail that we used to get with the Merinos."

CARCASS BONUS

Mr Argent-Smith has generally sold his lambs through the Griffith Livestock Marketing Centre, NSW, but this year he decided to trial sending a line direct to Gundagai Meat Processors, keen to receive detailed carcass feedback.

"We sent 214 of our second line of lambs to Gundagai and they averaged a dressed weight of 29.84kg and returned \$243 per head.

"What we were very pleased with was that 71 per cent of the draft received the Gundagai Lamb Quality 5+ score bonus which is worth 80 cents/kg, equating to a price of \$8.36c/kg.

"We also received \$8.50/hd for the skins, bringing the total return to \$251/hd."

The Dohne lambs had also been shorn with the return from their wool averaging \$25/hd.

"For us the results have confirmed that we're producing the right type of

Dohne lamb that fits the bill for the Gundagai Lamb brand.

"We'll definitely try to send some more next year."

HITTING THE SPECS

According to Gundagai Meat Processors supply chain manager Dr Michelle Henry, Dohne and Dohne-cross lambs have been performing well through the Gundagai Lamb grid.

"We process a reasonable number of Dohne and Dohne-cross lambs through the Gundagai Lamb brand each year," Dr Henry said.

"They are good meat Merinos that have a cleaner body which is good for processing, and we enjoy seeing them come through the brand."

Dr Henry said as with any breed, the company has seen both high-quality and lower-quality lambs processed, as producers and livestock agents continue to learn more about what is required to meet the Gundagai Lamb grid specifications.

"This does result in variability in the percentage that achieve the GLQ5+ score, which measures intramuscular fat and lean meat yield," she said.

"The Dohne and Dohne-cross lambs that are performing well have higher average intramuscular fat that ensures they are receiving a higher GLQ score, combined with a lean meat yield percentage that hits the middle of the grid."

Dr Henry said the lambs achieving a higher GLQ5+ percentage also tend to have a higher average hot standard carcass weight, ranging between 26-28kg.

"This emphasises the importance of Dohne and Dohne-cross lambs coming to us well-finished with good levels of subcutaneous fat cover."

Open Your Eyes to the Breed that's Ticking all the Boxes!

FERTILITY - Non-seasonal breeders with a high libido and fecundity.

ASBV's - Embracing modern up-to-date performance breeding strategies.

MATERNAL - Lambing ease with excellent milk production.

EASycare - Self-replacing mules-free flock with high-performance meat and wool productivity.

MEAT - Lean and high-yielding carcasses with even fat distribution.

WOOL - Apparel wool averaging 5-6kgs at 18-21 micron-quality AAAM.



AUSTRALIAN SHEEP & WOOL SHOW

DOHNE MERINO MARQUEE EVENT PROGRAM

FRIDAY 18TH OF JULY

9am - 10am - Marquee Fleece Judging
10:30am - 2:30pm - Education Program (Longerenong College)
4:30pm - ADBA AGM

SATURDAY 19TH OF JULY

9am - 3:30pm - Sheep Judging
1pm - Fashion Parade - Ethical Outback Wool
3:30pm - 5pm - Champions & Supreme Dohne Exhibit

Scan the QR code to discover more



dohne.com.au

