

# JOINING EWE LAMBS FACT SHEET



## Key Messages

- Joining ewe lambs requires careful planning and management, with particular attention to genetics, nutrition, and the management of joining, lambing, and weaning.
- Ewe lambs can be successfully joined at 7-10 months of age provided they have achieved a live-weight of 45kg, but joining requires additional labour and management plus conception rates are often less than 50%.
- Joining ewe lambs at 7-10 months of age rather than 18 months can increase the productivity of those ewes by 20% over their lifetime if kept to six years of age. This also allows more rapid rebuilding of flock numbers and increases the speed of genetic gain through smaller generation intervals.
- Preliminary research suggests that joining ewe lambs does not affect subsequent ewe performance if managed properly. Many of these projects are ongoing and conclusions may not have been drawn yet.
- Lifetime studies of ewes joined as lambs are being undertaken to determine the effect of early joining on the growth and development of ewes as well as any impact on wool production.
- If considering joining ewe lambs, ensure that other livestock profit drivers such as stocking rate, ewe reproductive performance, twin lamb survival and pasture utilisation are already being maximised.

Research and survey data indicates lambing percentages for ewe lambs joined at 7-10 months will range from 30-60%. The information provided in this fact sheet will improve the chances of a ewe lamb successfully joining and raising a lamb.

### GENETICS

- Ensure ewe lambs have the genetic potential to cycle and conceive by 7-10 months. They must also have the genetic potential to produce, deliver and wean a lamb while growing themselves.
- Sheep breeds will vary in their potential ability to successfully join and deliver a lamb when joined early.

ASBV's that influence successful joining age include:

- Maternal weaning weight (MWT).
- Eye muscle depth (EMD) and Fat (FAT).
- Number of lambs weaned (NLW).
- Scrotal circumference (SC).

### NUTRITION

- Ensure adequate quantity and quality to allow ewe lambs to grow and develop while producing a lamb.
- Provide pregnant ewe lambs with the best available feed.
- Supplementary feeding may be required.



## JOINING MANAGEMENT

- Use 3-5% rams.
- Use experienced, healthy rams and join for 6 weeks to encompass 2-3 oestrous cycles.
- Utilise the “ram effect” by exposing ewes to rams for two weeks after a period of exclusion from rams.
- Join in small paddocks that allow close proximity and maximum interaction between ewes and rams.
- Scan ewes after 7-10 weeks and give preferential treatment to pregnant ewes.

## LAMBING MANAGEMENT

- Provide ewe lambs with dedicated lambing paddocks that have adequate quantity and quality of feed in addition to adequate shelter.
- Wean lambs at 8-10 weeks.
- Provide preferential feeding to ewes in order to recover condition prior to re-joining.



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