



Kevin Moyle

FORMER grain farmer Kevin Moyle has found a one-stop shop for reliable high performing maternal and prime lamb genetics at Matt and Tanya Tonissen's Chrome Sheep Studs near Hamilton.

Up until nine years ago -- before he moved down to Heathmere in the Victoria's south-west to "scale things back a bit" -- Kevin Moyle cropped mainly cereals at Hopevale, though also joining a few Merinos with Poll Dorset and Suffolk rams for prime lambs.

Sheep were a minor part of the Mallee cropping operation, but when Kevin made his move south he started buying sheep to stock the Heathmere farm, trying several types and breeds, including First cross, Composite and Coopworth ewes.

But it was the purchase of about 150 maternal Chromedale ewe lambs at the 2013 Hamilton crossbred ewe sale that has proven to be his best buy and his Chromedale blood ewes have continued to outperform all other ewe options for production, hardiness and temperament.

"They've been excellent ewes -- last year they produced me 173 percent of lambs marked and in 2014 and in 2013 they did 168pc.

"Last year I had a 141pc lambing average over every ewe, this year I'm down a little bit because of the dry autumn, so I've had 130pc over all my older ewes, not counting the maidens," he said.

"I've been buying Chrome rams for four or five years and it has certainly proven that his program is working for me."

These figures easily exceed the 110-115pc lambs marked from the Merinos of his cropping days and his Chromedale ewes have consistently outperformed the fertility any other crossbred ewes on his property by 10-20pc.

He now runs about 1800 ewes over about 340 hectares of freehold and leased land. About 60pc of the ewe flock is Chromedale blood and the remainder are first cross, composite and Coopworth cross ewes he has bought or bred. He joins his Chromedale ewe lambs each year and normally marks about 60-80pc lambs.

"Those few extra lambs you get is money in the bank, isn't it?"

Kevin also loves the outstanding maternal instincts of his Chromedale ewes, even with their first lamb. He expected to mark about 100pc of lambs from a mob of maiden Chromedale blood ewe lambs this year, despite their lambs dropping during a cold snap about three weeks ago. He lost only a few lambs.

"For a maiden ewe to sit with new lambs for about three days after it died is not a bad effort."

Kevin said he bought some White Suffolk-Corriedale-East Friesian cross ewe lambs on AuctionsPlus this year after missing out on a draft of Chromedale ewe lambs at the last Casterton sheep sale earlier in the year. But the composites proved to be “wild”, he said.

“I’ve been driving through the paddock with them for two months and they still run away from the vehicle, whereas with the Chromedale ewe lambs, the second time I drove in the paddock they just stood there and watched me.

“I can drive through the paddock within five yards of a young ewe lamb with a lamb sitting beside her and they just sit there and look at me – so that’s just a difference,” Kevin said.

“If I get 40pc lambing out of them (the White Suffolk crosses) I will be fairly pleased and the mothering instinct is just not there – if you go too close to them they just race off from their lamb.”

Kevin said he had also bred some of his own commercial Coopworths, but some of them also did not have the quiet temperament of the Chromedales.

“So all Coopworths are not all the same.”

The Chromedales also handled the area’s 890mm average rainfall and often wet low-lying improved pasture on his Heathmere land, unlike the first cross ewes he bought about four years ago.

“I couldn’t wait to get rid of them.

“It took them 12 months to get acclimatised, then they had foot problems and then in that real bad autumn about four years ago they got fly-struck on the shoulder.”

Also the first cross ewes did not produce as many lambs as the Chromedales.

Kevin said the heaviest of his June-drop Chromedale wether lambs are sold in the Hamilton saleyards off their mothers before Christmas each year, with the rest finished on lucerne and improved pasture for autumn sale.

Last year the Chromedale wether lambs sold before Christmas – about half the drop -- averaged around 25kg cwt and sold for around \$160 in the saleyards.

After missing out on buying surplus Chromedale ewes from the Tonissens in recent years, Kevin said he is now determined to buy or breed his way into 100pc Chromedale flock.

“I’ll just keep putting my finger up until I get ‘em.”



12 month Chromedale ewe with twins