

CLIENT PROFILE



Neil and Jo Ham "Knockshinock Partnership"

For Beaufort prime lamb producer Neil Ham, the shift to Chrome Sheep Studs as a source of genetics in 2018 has paid big dividends. Neil had been running a traditional 1st cross ewe and cropping operation on his 1,800 acres of both lease and freehold country but thought there was room for improvement in his sheep operation.

Neil initially started by using Chromedale rams over his first cross ewes and has self-replaced his flock since then. Now running roughly 3,000 mixed age ewes and 1,000 ewe lamb replacements, Neil has reduced his cropping area in favour of sheep and is continually impressed by the Chromedale blood lambs stating "The thing I like about Chrome rams is the consistency of the lambs, it makes a more even line. We tried a couple of other different strains

of maternal rams from other suppliers but found they didn't stack up. Chrome rams have better skins, higher performance and are preferred by our meat buyer".

Neil marked over 150% from his mixed age ewes this year which is a solid result. "We've used teasers for the last 3 years on all our ewes and cut the joining period back from 6 weeks to 28 days. The lambing period was tightened up which meant lamb marking was timely and all the lambs are very even".

Ewe lambs are mated at 7 months of age to lamb down at about 13 -14 months after being teased for 14 days prior to the rams going in. Neil likes the ICON Southie rams over his ewe lambs and has been most impressed by the easy lambing attributes and the tight sappy skins they hold. "Our ewe lambs have been consistently scanning around the 130-135% mark and any that are scanned empty are sold".

The key to any good breeding program is feeding and Neil's pasture program includes the sowing of annual ryegrass and clover in Autumn on a portion of his farm to provide bulk feed for lambing and then lambs after weaning.

"We put our ewes in containment for about 8 weeks over autumn this year which allowed us to create a feed wedge for lambing ewes. A lot of others in our district have been feeding all winter-but our feeding gear was back in the shed long ago". That early feed surplus has carried the ewes and lambs through winter well and has also enabled Neil to look towards getting paddocks locked up for silage to get some nice early cuts.

"The installation of automated feeding system in Feedtech has been a great investment. "The record rainfall events in the spring of 2022 meant clover didn't prosper like it normally did leaving us and most of Western Victoria with an abundance of unfinished lambs." Neil normally grows summer crops for growing out ewe lambs and finishing the Southie cross spring drop lambs, but it was too wet to get on paddocks to spray them out, let alone sow them until it was too late in the year.

Most years we get about 60% of our lambs straight over the hooks off grass but the big difference between forward stores and proper finished lambs and 22 kg plus carcasses prompted us to put some in the feedlot. "We find our lambs are really smart feeders and adapt really well to feed"

Neil started with a home mixed ration but wasn't happy with 260 grams per head of weight gain so changed to a more expensive, bought in premixed ration from Rex James Stockfeeds at Nathalia. "The lambs quickly jumped to over 400 grams per head a day which made it a cheaper option and easier than our home grown stuff" he said. "The lambs also yielded exceptionally well (49-50%) which meant we had lambs going overweight" The benefit going forward was less time on feed enabling quicker turnout time and less feed consumed.

