

REDBANK FX RAMS

CARCASE+WOOL
+REPRODUCTION

#1 / 2023

A journey towards greater profitability with FX genetics

Welcome to the latest edition of the Redbank FX newsletter.

Well its been a tough season. Low rainfall has resulted in poor Spring pasture growth. The significant deficit in long term average rainfall of around 200mm resulted in feed drying off around 6 weeks earlier than normal. As a result we weaned our lambs a little earlier and got them onto some lupins a bit sooner than planned. Lamb shearing is completed and they are looking good.

We have a long, hot summer ahead, but are eager to see the 2023 drop of Redbank FX ewe lambs and ram lambs in action early in 2024.

In this edition:

- Reference flock
- Lamb survival - the 3 F's approach
- Using pain relief at marking
- Triplet management
- Silage for sheep - why, when, how
- Shearing 2023



Rams in the Resource Flock

We were lucky enough to have 3 of our 2022 drop Redbank FX sires selected for use in the 2024 MLA Resource Flock joining.

This will give us excellent linkage, increase ASBV accuracy on key traits and also the meat quality traits. Even methane output will be measured.

These 3 sires were used as ram lambs in our stud flock and will be extensively used in our 2024 joining program. two of these sires have outstanding wool, one with 23.3 micron wool and the other an amazing 17.9 micron.



Lamb survival - the 3 F's

FOXES, FEEDING & FENCING - THEY ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

Whilst I'm sure our lamb survival would be through the roof if Sarah was there to cuddle them all, unfortunately that is not a practical way to go about it. This year we made a conscious effort to lift lamb survival after a pretty poor result in 2022.

We employed the 3 F's approach for 2023.

1 - Foxes were controled through baiting and shooting. We shot a lot of foxes and had a lot of baits taken in a coordinated program with all our neighbours. Whilst government departments suggest foxes dont predate on live, healthy lambs, we tend to disagree. Controlling fox populations increases lamb survival.

2 - Feeding appropriately to ensure ewes were in the right condition score for their pregnancy status at time of lambing by scanning for single, twins and triplets, and foetal aging for early and late lambing. Condition scores were done at pregnancy scanning, and lighter ewes were drafted off and fed to their ideal CS for lambing. Silage played a critical role this year.

3 - Fencing off smaller paddocks to reduce mob size and ensure shelter in as many paddock as possible. We ended up with twin lambing mobs of no more than 50 head, which was our target.

And the end result 89% lamb survival in 2023, turning our 158% scanning into 141% lambs weaned to ewes joined.



Pain relief

IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO

For lamb marking 2023 we chose to use Butec (meloxicam) pain relief. This was administered at the side of the jaw and is an analgesic (a bit like nurofen). It gives long-acting pain relief associated with the marking process.

The lambs definitely looked in less discomfort this year. We feel this is the right thing to be doing from an animal welfare perspective.



Triplet management

HOW DID WE GO IN 2023?

For 2023 we had enough triplets to split off into a separate mob so we could manage them more effectively. Unfortunately the best paddock available for this mob was near the road, so disturbance was going to be an issue, but size, shelter and FOO was good. We were happy with the 72% survival in this mob, but we can improve.

Silage for sheep

MAKING SILAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME WAS DAUNTING, BUT THE RESULTS WERE WORTH IT.

Why - We grow a lot of grass in September, with pasture growth rates over 100 kg DM per ha per day. We could not utilise all this grass at that time so we wanted a way to conserve this high-quality grass for feeding over our long dry Summer and Autumn period. In addition, we found sheep waste a lot of hay. Unlike cattle, they don't like the stalk material in oaten hay, and are very good at picking through to find the seeds and leaf.

How - Instead of planting an oat crop for hay, we decided to plant a ryegrass/clover pasture mix, which we could graze in winter when feed on offer is limited, then lock up for August and September to produce high-quality bulk for silage. This worked extremely effectively, with nearly 300 round bales of silage off 30 ha. Costs for that quality feed were well below grain prices. We also are able to graze the regrowth, as we cut it earlier than we do for hay, so there is still soil moisture available. We grazed 700 weaner lambs for an extra 2 weeks on the 30ha of regrowth. A win-win result.

When to feed - For the ensiling process to be effective, the bales need to ferment for 8 weeks minimum before use. A feed test was undertaken after that time to determine nutritional content. The results were good with over 11 MJ ME per kg DM, so we started feeding in mid-December to our ewe lambs, in combination with lupins in lick feeders, to boost their liveweight gain before joining. Ewes were fed silage from late December at the start of joining to be putting on some weight over the joining period. We found the silage worked really well, with very little wastage and high consumption levels, ensuring ewes were in good condition at lambing.

What about the plastic waste - We were worried about this, and it is an issue with silage. However, we pressed up the plastic wrap in our TPW Woolpress into just 2 bales for easy and neat disposal.



Shearing 2023

DONE & DUSTED FOR ANOTHER YEAR

We put a great team together for shearing this year. Whilst it was a couple of weeks later than ideal, with a little bit of fly strike around, the results were good, with nice sound wool, and some good quality fleeces coming through the FX (fine cross) breeding program.

The wool price received was significantly better than last year due to the improved quality of our clip. We are looking to continue to improve our wool clip in the coming years as more Redbank FX rams make an impact on the ewe base.

@redbankfx | redbankgrazing@gmail.com

WWW.REDBANKFX.COM.AU