

To wean or not to wean

Enhanced Producer Demonstration Site

Demonstration goal: To evaluate and demonstrate potential production benefits for both ewes and lambs by weaning lambs at 12–14 weeks from the start of lambing, as opposed to not weaning the lambs and leaving them on the ewes until they're at a marketable kill weight.

Site location: St Arnaud

Producer group: St Arnaud BestWool/BestLamb

Group coordinator: Steve Cotton

Agriculture Victoria coordinator: Rachel Coombes

Duration: 2018–2022



Group members condition scoring ewes



Group members assessing pastures and Feed on Offer

What are we aiming to achieve and why?

This demonstration aims to determine whether weaning lambs at 12–14 weeks is more efficient than not weaning lambs until they're at a marketable kill weight.

Method

Traditionally, producers in the St Arnaud area sell sucker lambs direct from the ewe at the stock agents' request. This demonstration compares the growth weights of weaned and unweaned lambs until the point of sale, as well as the condition of their weaned and unweaned dams.

At weaning, the condition score of the ewes is recorded, all lambs are weighed, and ewes and lambs are split into three mobs.

The three mobs include:

- weaned lambs
- unweaned ewes and lambs and weaned lambs
- unweaned ewes and lambs and weaned ewes.

The mobs have similar stocking rates and are allocated paddocks with similar pasture composition and Feed On Offer (FOO). Feed quantity and quality are monitored.

At six weeks post-weaning, participants have the option to sell their sucker lambs or keep them on ewes until they wish to sell those lambs. At the point of each sale draft, lambs are weighed to ascertain daily growth rates and, where possible, abattoir kills sheets are analysed for yield. Ewe condition is also recorded.

Partners: This demonstration is conducted with Agriculture Victoria and co-funded by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

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More information

agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/on-farm-demonstrations

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