

BestWool/BestLamb – Improving ram performance

Pyrenees and Smeaton groups, December 2019



Picture: Workshop participants during the hands-on condition scoring at Scott Howell's property, 2019

Coordinator – Neil James, Agriculture Victoria

Pyrenees (Avoca) Group – 25 businesses

- Members are located between the towns of Beaufort and Lexton and along the Sunraysia Highway to Stuart Mill
- Main enterprises are fine wool and prime lambs on predominantly sedimentary soils with rolling hills and valleys

Smeaton Group – 30 businesses

- Members are located from Ascot down to Mount Elephant and across to Mount Mercer
- Main enterprises prime lamb production, mixed farming, cereal and potato crops on grey basalt plains

Best practice and ram performance

Members of the Pyrenees (Avoca) and Smeaton BestWool/BestLamb groups recently participated in a practical on-farm workshop, 'RAMping Up Repro'. Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) in partnership with Zoetis have developed this hands-on workshop which focuses on the importance of ram health and pre-joining management.

Delivered by Rob Inglis from Elders, the workshop covered best practice ram management in the months leading up to joining including, nutrition, ram condition, animal health, the "4 Ts" (teeth, toes, tackle and testicles), assessing structural soundness, and general ram management.

Rob emphasised the need to keep rams on an optimum plane of nutrition and avoid stressful events, such as shearing, prior to their introduction to the flock. Joining three months after shearing ensures that spermatogenesis is not affected, preventing poor performance.

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Workshop host Scott Howell, along with his father and son Daniel, run 4000 composite ewes at Mount Lonarch, in South West Victoria. Scott said the workshop has prompted some changes to our business such as using teaser rams and feeding for ram performance. Rams will now be fed a higher protein diet six to seven weeks out from mating. Scott plans to change the timing of ram shearing and will also implement annual ram assessments following the RAMping Up Repro workshop.

Scott said ram assessment is a necessary part of effective joining practices and continual monitoring of ram health.

Heidi Sutherland from Zoetis discussed the importance of vaccination and vaccination technique. She focused on the importance of changing needles regularly and making sure the appropriate needle length for the vaccine being administered is used.

Scott agreed that learning the correct technique was vital for safely administering Ovine Johne's Disease vaccine, Gudair, as part of his routine vaccination program.

For more information on RAMping Up Repro please visit: www.wool.com/breedingleadership



Picture: Ram assessment, Scott Howell's property, 2019

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