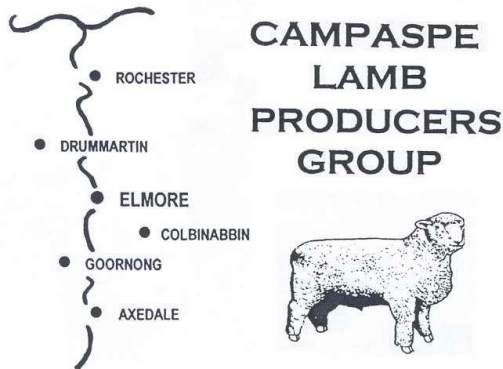


BestWool/BestLamb – Active participation

Campaspe Lamb Producers Group, November 2020



Campaspe Lamb Producers Group

Coordinator – Erica Schelfhorst

Group – Campaspe Lamb Producers Group

- Rochester, Elmore, Colbinabbin, Mt Camel, Goornong

Enterprise mix

- Mixed sheep and cropping enterprises with both irrigated and dryland country

Members of the Campaspe BestWool BestLamb group have initiated, supported, participated and increased awareness of several productivity trials held in conjunction with the Elmore Field Days (EFD) since the group formed 25 years ago. The EFD is a community-owned and run, not-for-profit organisation that strives to maintain its fundamental purpose – an unbiased service to agriculture and community with the flow-on economic benefit to regional areas.

The trials that the group have been involved with over the years include:

- 1995–2003: Elmore Field Days wether trials
- 2003–2006: Merinos to Match wether trials, part of then DPI statewide initiative of linked wether trials
- 2005–2010: Carcase competitions, with lambs and carcasses on display at the field days
- 2013: Pasture on-farm trail: Early Autumn/Winter feed reviewing cereals versus brassicas.
- 2014–2016: Pasture on-farm demo: Establishing/maintaining legume varieties in the sheep cropping zone at Elmore and recording livestock performance.
- 2009–2014 Ewes for the future – lambs, wool and profit.
- 2015–2018 Ewes for the future – fertility, lambs and wool.

The two ewe trials aimed to answer the question: What is the best sheep type for a combination of prime lamb and wool production? They compared five crossbred and six Merino types to provide unbiased information to help improve overall meat and wool profitability. The ewes were joined annually to terminal sires for prime lamb production and run together as one mob.

2019: The current trial '*The Long and the Short of it – Shearing Merinos*' aims to assess the merits of shearing merino wethers annually versus every six months over three years. The long tradition of shearing adult merino sheep once per year is changing and no longer 'the norm' on some farms due to heavier fleeces and longer staple lengths from newer merino

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**BETTER
BEEF**



**BESTWOOL
BESTLAMB**



awi

Australian
Wool Innovation
Limited

genetics. In northern Victoria, several farms now shear adult sheep every six months while others shear at eight monthly intervals or three times in two years.

In order to assess the practical and economic effects of more frequent shearing, this trial will assess and compare (1) wool growth and characteristics, (2) lamb and sheep (adult) growth and (3) carcass traits on two merino wether types, a wool focused type and a dual-purpose type.

Questions that the trial hopes to inform include:

- Does an extra shearing of young sheep increase their body growth and condition?
- How much extra wool do sheep grow as a result of their extra shearing and is the wool quality better? What are the changes in clean fleece weight, wool yield, staple length and strength, micron and vegetable matter contamination?
- Is the management of sheep easier with the extra shearing? For example, sheep in shorter wool may be easier to manage, and six-monthly shorn sheep may not need crutching.
- How does shearing adult sheep more than once per year affect the overall farm profitability? Are there extra costs, such as the extra shearing, yet are other costs lower, for example, no requirement for crutching? Is there a premium or discount for shorter length wool? Is there a price discount for over length annual shearing wool of 110 mm plus?

The annual shearing takes place at the EFD field day each October, while the six monthly trial wethers are shorn in March / April and October.

The results will have widespread application elsewhere, particularly for farmers in the 350/500 mm rainfall area of the southern Riverina of New South Wales and Northern Victoria and then further across other sheep farming areas where there is keen interest in dual purpose sheep.

For more information about the Campaspe BestWool BestLamb group and the trials that they are involved with contact Erica Schelfhorst (group facilitator) on 0429807689 or Kieran Ransom on 0419 320 824 for trial results.