

Sheepvention 2009 : Managing Change

EWE WEANER COMPETITION ADDS SOME MEAT

Times are changing, as is this years Ewe Weaner competition (EWC) at Sheepvention. The new "Dual Purpose" meat and wool section will allow a range of breeds to participate, highlighting the importance and balance of wool & meat in commercial flocks around our district.

Fraser McKenzie, Arcadian Wool Brokers, believes many merino breeders will be surprised at the potential meat value of their flocks. Dedicated breeders of recognized "all purpose" flocks such as Dohne, Corriedale and Comeback now have an opportunity to compete on a fair playing field, more in line with their own breeding aims.

Developing an equitable competition is the task to which industry experts, Stephan Spiker (Advance Livestock Services) and Anita Morant (DPI) willingly applied their knowledge and expertise. The computer program blends well with the existing Ewe Weaner competition wool format. The new section introduces objective analysis for weight and muscle / fat depth. Confirmation and carcass value will be assessed by an industry expert. The format is designed to recognize the ewe's commercial value, and her maternal potential to breed on in a self replacing flock.

Not necessarily will the biggest ewe group win: age and expected growth rates are factored into the program. Wool weights and shearing dates are already adjusted in the wool section.

To enter this section the criteria remains the same as the Ewe Weaner competition. Additionally ewes must be a minimum 30 kgs live weight. Two ewes shorn on the day are entered, allowing entrants from the wool sections to compete in this and a wool section. Breeds other than merino can enter in all wool sections as well as this one (Class D), allowing more flexibility and wider interest. Growers choosing to enter only in this section bring two ewes along, not the four which are shorn as with Classes A, B & C in the EWC.

Selecting and tagging ewes on property and for the Ewe Weaner competition has changed also. Now the 10 best ewes are selected from the ewe mob. On the day of tagging 5 are randomly drafted by the officiating person who then tags and samples those. Further change allows any 4 of the 5 to be entered into the Ewe Weaner competition. This decision can be as late as when loading the ewes to bring to Sheepvention and can be based on the test results received from the official testing laboratory, Hamilton Genetics Pty Ltd. which is testing all wool samples.

Our belief is these changes bring added commercial reality and interest to the Ewe Weaner competition, whilst the integrity and history which makes this competition a unique feature of the Sheepvention landscape remains.

Thanks to those in the past who have entered and made this competition an important feature of Sheepvention. If you wish to become part of all this just call, we'll support you all the way.

Entry forms can be downloaded from www.sheepvention.com.

Gary Simpson, Arcadian Wool Brokers