

First cross ewes doing the job

Border Leicester first cross ewes continue to deliver the goods across a wide range of climatic conditions. The upper southeast area west of Coonalpyn on the Meningie road may not be an area readily identified with first cross ewes. Try telling this to the Long family, with lambing percentages between 150% to 165% from their crossbred ewes over the last few years they could not be happier.

Ray Long said that first cross ewes fit in well with their cropping and hay making operations. The ewes lamb in August so as to make maximum use of the feed available in the spring. Lambs are weaned in early November on to paddocks of ryegrass and vetch that has been sprayed to control grass seeds. From here they are moved on to legume stubbles and then on to lucerne with some supplementary feeding of lupins and oats as well as good quality vetch hay at the end of summer, early autumn.

The lambs are shorn in early January and the first lambs are sold from mid to late March onwards. Lambs are weighed and only those estimated to dress 25kg or more drafted off for sale. This year Ray took a forward contract with T & R Murray Bridge for just over half the lambs and while he said he missed out on the big money on these they were happy with the price. With the later consignments of non-contracted lambs averaging \$103 this boosted the overall average to what Ray described as a very satisfactory result.

As you can see Border Leicester Merino ewes have the ability to produce large numbers of quality prime lambs in a wide range of climatic conditions. From its more traditional wetter areas to those not normally associated with first cross ewes, they continue to do the job.