

# CASHMORE OAKLEA SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021 Edition

**CASHMORE OAKLEA**



*Welcome to the 2021 Spring edition of the Cashmore Oaklea Newsletter. It has been a busy time here on the stud, with lambing well under way in the mature ewes and the ewe lambs just starting to drop. The winter hasn't been without its challenges. July saw some extreme weather coming through right at the peak of lambing, and the ewes were really put to the test, fortunately we were able to shift the mobs to better protected paddocks to help alleviate the risk of losses. All in all, we are very happy with our lamb numbers so far. We have been collecting a lot of data on the stud rams in preparation for the sale which is on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October. It looks to have been a good season in most areas and we hope that you have had favourable conditions and are producing plenty of lambs!*

## Data Quality

We have always taken great care to ensure that our sheep's performance recording is timely and as accurate as possible.

LAMBPLAN recently prepared a paper called RAMPing Up Genetic Gain. The aim of the report is to provide breeders with better information on the variables that impact the rate of genetic gain in their flock. These variables include the amount and quality of pedigree, the quality of the data and how efficiently this data is used.

We did extremely well in this benchmarking exercise which showed that our flock selection efficiency and gain is 4 index points per annum compared to a national average of 1.4 index points. Our index accuracy is at 49.5% compared to the national average of 40.3%. The depth of pedigree known within our flock is 91.6% compared to 75.7% for the national maternal flock. Our generation interval is also very low with our sires average age of 1.9 years compared to 2.6 years for the rest and our dams at 2.4 compared to 3.3 years for the rest.

Our flock structure is such that all stud ewe lambs are mated regardless of age or weight, from then on about half of each age group are demoted into the flock, only dry ewes and obvious culls are sold. The ewes that are demoted still have their adult body weights and pregnancy test results recorded annually. This means that a 5 year old ewe has had at a minimum her pedigree, birth and rearing type, weaning weight, pre mating weight and

fat and muscle scan, post mating weight, pregnancy scan and 1st years lambing results recorded. After that if she is demoted into the flock she will have her 1.5, 2.5, 3.5, 4.5 and 5.5 year old pre mating weights and pregnancy test results recorded. This means that most of every sires daughters have good records for number of lambs born and adult weights, thus there is less bias for some sires over others.

We have also become heavily involved with DNA testing, this year we have tested 2,500 sheep and last year we tested over 4,000. As we go forward and are able to identify gene markers for more traits this will give us a higher level of accuracy for the various traits and in particular those that are hard to measure.



Alex undertaking some DNA sampling of the ewe lambs.

[www.cashmoreoaklea.com.au](http://www.cashmoreoaklea.com.au)

Contact: John Keiller 0409 804 638 | cashmoreram@gmail.com | Don Pegler 0417 851 466 | pegler4@bigpond.com

**Self Replacing Performance Maternals**

Offering **500 Maternal Rams** And **100 Nudie Rams**

**MATERNAL \$ INDEX 164 - 178**  
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- Our sale rams deliver \$23.50 per ewe mated above industry breed average
- Our Stud and Commercial Ewes scanned 185%, under high & challenging stocking rates
- Many Stud Sires are now 90% below breed average for worm egg count

**Open Days (ram inspections) 10am**

- Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October, Oaklea, Kongorong SA
- Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October, Cashmore Park VIC

Please register your attendance

**RAM SALE**  
Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October, 10am

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## What's happening on the farm at Cashmore Park

An excessively wet July didn't set the lambing paddocks up very well. We had 225mm creating a month of moisture and endless mud which has continued on. 2.9 CS (condition score) singles were set stocked at 11.5 ewes / Ha on 1000 kg DM Ha, mob sizes 250-400. 3.2 CS twins were set stocked at 8.5 ewes / Ha on 1200 kg DM Ha, mob sizes 50-120. 3.3 CS triplets were set stocked at 7 ewes / Ha on 1300 kg DM Ha, mob sizes 40. Daily lambing rounds are the norm with 3/4 people involved tagging 150 to 250 new born stud lambs each day. The ET and AI lambs came in a rush, then some order to life returned. Dam ID, birth and rearing type, DOB, sex, birth weight, maternal behaviour and general comments are collected. Once daily observation of commercial ewes for cast/ dystocia/ death, comments collected also as these ewes all contribute to useful data. 2020 drop sale rams shorn, fleece weights and micron collected, yearling weight, dag score and wool shedding score assessed as went through the scales. Some early shedding Nudie rams evident. 900 head in single mob on rotation has put some pressure on a few. Just when you think it's all over 1500 flag tags have been applied to the pregnant 2020 drop ewe lambs. Some

early puberty ewes have their first lambs on the ground at 342 days of age. Twinning cows commenced calving, with some nice medium size solid black and red calves evident. Twins have a 6 day shorter gestation so seem to come first. General comment is that stock have held up well, pastures have continued to grow through the wet, perhaps due to well established perennial plants that came through the wet / mild summer. Appears to be low clover content in pastures, so expecting slow lamb growth rates— John.



*Top ewe in the flock 1500992019192508. As an ET donor she supplied 10 A grade embryos and then produced nice twins by a back up ram.*

## What's happening on the farm at Oaklea

The June drop flock lambs have been marked and survival rates were very high (scanned 171% marked 150%). The lambs are growing like mushrooms and should easily reach their target weight of 25kg dressed by the 1st week in November. The July drop flock lambs out of 2 year old ewes have been marked and are doing well, we would expect about half of these to go with the June drop lambs.

The mature stud ewes lambled in July and their lambs have been marked and electronic tags that correspond with their birth tags have been put in. Lambing went well except that 61% of the ewes decided to lamb in a week when we had gale force winds coming straight from the South Pole (we are only 200 metres from the Southern ocean), on top of the wind we had 104mm of rain for the week. Knowing that these gale force conditions were coming we put the ewes in the best sheltered paddocks we have yet we still lost 32% of the lambs that were born that week. The ewes lambled at 202% and reared 136%.

For the rest of the lambing we had 140mm of rain over 37 days, the ewes lambled at 200%, lost 18% of their lambs and reared 165%. There is a lot of luck in when the lambs are born and we have previously had big losses in June, August and September. If the lambs are born during the day when there is a bit of respite in the weather and they get that 1st drink, many of the problems are alleviated.



The ewe lambs have started lambing and all is going as well as expected. The youngest ewe to lamb so far was 353 days old and has a nice set of twins.

Whilst some of our country is still very wet the pasture growth and quality is as good as I have ever witnessed.

Last year we purchased 85 angus heifers for \$650 and mated them, we ended up with 60 with calves and we sold the 25 dry ones this week for an average of \$2,375. A lot of luck involved there - Don.

*Super mum rearing quads*



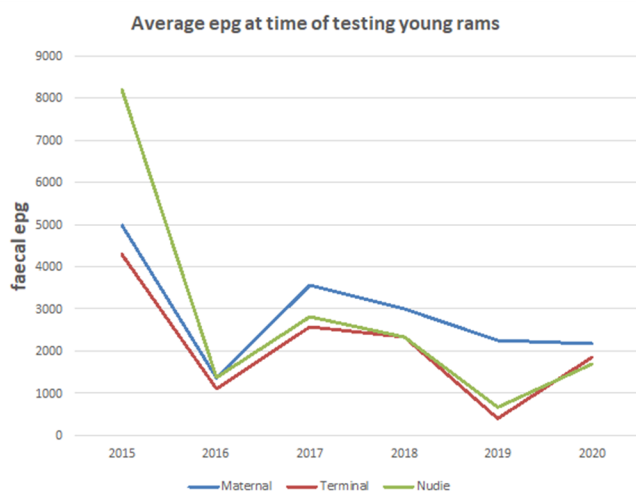
## Faecal Egg Count Data

The Cashmore Oaklea flocks have made huge gains across time due to the breeding directions and goals set by Don and John, and supporting this has been extensive data. Going as far back as 1995 we have animals with FEC records in our data base, which was when the NEM-ESIS low worm program started in NSW, administered by the DPI. At the time Australian and NZ discussion debated if you could actually breed high performing animals that were resistant to internal parasites. This has well and truly been put to rest with outstanding performance sires also being bomb proof in high parasite load environments. In the last 26 years Cashmore Oaklea have collected 19,696 individual samples directly from the rear of a sheep. I guess this is preferable to much more drenching! These have comprised 12,119 samples at EPWT (140 days), 6,350 samples at PWT (210 days), and 1,227 samples at YWT (365 days).

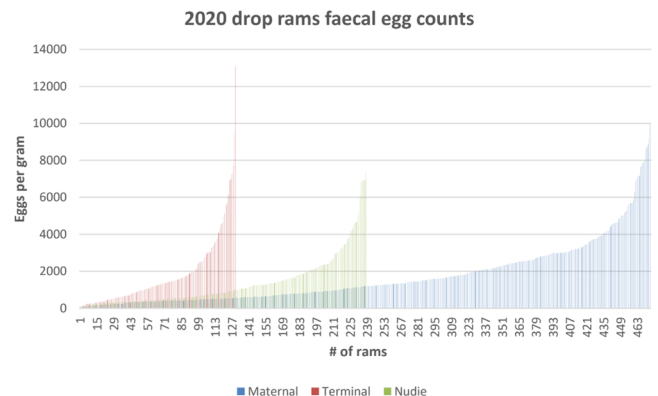
The below graph shows the average epg at time of testing at Cashmore for the 3 flocks. Due to various on farm management group activities don't use it to draw conclusions regarding the relative performance of the flocks, the EBV's do a much better job at that.

The point to note is that rams have been under continual challenge leading into testing, so in effect they have had to express resilience to the parasite load, and keep performing, (surviving and growing) and resistance to the actual parasite challenge.

At Cashmore we FEC sample commercial and stud mobs at various times each year to determine if drenching is needed. The average epg across adult ewe mobs since December 2019 has ranged from 80 to 430, with a 100 % variance, so some individual mobs are approaching 900 epg at certain times in the year.



The below graph is from the 2020 drop single, twin and triplet born rams from adult ewes all run together from weaning up to time of test. The key point here is that the tail of the mobs really shed a lot of eggs, perhaps the bottom half shed 2/3 of the total output.



***“Cyclone Trust”, operated by Donny, Rory and Zak Natrass run a high stocking rate lamb breeding and finishing system in lower SE SA and at Lyons, Victoria. With access to centre pivots they maximise the tonnage of herbage grown, but importantly then need animals that can consume it and thrive in a high stock density situation. Like Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger often do, Don asked the question, “what is the worst thing that could go wrong” and came down with a worm outbreak as having potential to derail his system. They are finding that the mass of data behind the Cashmore Oaklea maternal composites has made them very hardy and parasite resistant sheep.***

## Cashmore Nudies

We had a great turn out to the “Becoming a Nudie “presentation day with 130 in attendance. Presentation topics centred around Current markets, how to transition to a

Nudie Flock, practical experience by those who have done it, the mental process involved in making change, economic analysis comparison wool vs no wool and the genetics of wool shedding. In case you missed it the power point and audio presentations have been loaded into the Cashmore Park web page and can be viewed on YouTube.



Cashmore Nudie stud ewes on muddy wet flats during lambing August 2021.



John, Megan and Greg with the stud lamb tagging “fleet”. Plenty of mud and rain involved in tagging 250 new born lambs each day.



## Ewe Lamb Performance

Cashmore Oaklea have been lambing down ewe lambs since 1990 (32 years) and in that time we have learnt a lot about their performance and management. By using improved and proven genetics and better management practices we have seen massive production increases in our ewe lambs not only in their 1st year but also in subsequent years.

Andrew Thompson from Murdoch University recently conducted an extensive research project on our ewe lambs. In this study there was 11,599 of our ewe lambs that lambed down from 2010 through to 2017.

Some of the major findings where:

Ewe lambs that were heavier at the start of the breeding period weaned more lambs than lighter ewes, but if ewe lambs reached 45kg their weaning rate was within 5% of their maximum for a given age. By contrast, the effects of age at breeding on weaning rate was linear and increased by 0.4% per day. Within the range from 35 to 45kg liveweight and 6 to 9 months of age, a 1kg increase in liveweight at the start of breeding had the equivalent effect on weaning rate as an extra 7 days of age at the start of breeding. This understanding of the trade off between age and liveweight at breeding will assist farmers to optimize the management of ewe lambs, given the earlier they can be bred successfully the easier they can be integrated with the breeding of the adult ewe flock the following year.

We have been doing a lot of work on early sexual maturity and we now have ewe lambs lambing when they are less than 360 days old whereas a few years ago it was very rare to have them lamb at less than 390 days old. By

having our ewe lambs lambing earlier it will make it much easier to have them lambing down at the same time as the rest of the flock in subsequent years plus we are getting much better results from the ewe lambs out of ewe lambs.

Every year after pregnancy testing we do some analysis of how the daughters of the sires we have used are performing. We looked at 2 mobs of ewe lambs ran on different properties that were out of mature ewes and born in the 1st 42 days with AI and ET ewes removed. The 1st mob consisted of 541 ewe lambs sired by 11 different rams, they were 249 days old at mating and scanned 141%, each sires daughters pregnancy scan results ranged from 100% through to 180%. The 2nd mob consisted of 1111 ewe lambs sired by 22 different rams, they were 240 days old at mating and scanned 108%, each sires daughters pregnancy scan results ranged from 63% through to 147%. 4 of the sires were used in both mobs and had similar rankings in both.

The most important practises for lambing down ewe lambs are use good genetics, have them on a rising plain of nutrition during mating, they should be gaining a minimum of 100 grams per day, wean their lambs early and get the ewes back up to score 3.5 prior to their next mating. We have seen an increase of 40% scanning by putting an extra 15kg on our 1.5 year olds.

Andrews paper also showed that our weaning rate had improved by 5.5% per annum over the study period. Once the peer review has been completed we will make it available through our network.

## Ram Sale

Our annual sale of 500 elite maternal composite and nudie rams will be held on October the 8th.

The sale will be conducted exclusively on Auctions Plus with the 1st sale commencing at 11 am Vic

time, 2nd sale at 12 noon and 3rd sale at 1pm. The sale will be the same format as last year.

We have made this decision due to the fact that nobody knows what is going to happen with covid, and we do sell rams to most states in Australia.

We will be holding open days at both Oaklea on 1st

October and Cashmore Park on 4th October. All

sale rams will be on display in groups with tags identifying their lot number. Many clients found this very beneficial as they could get a much better view of the rams and see them walking around with no straw hiding any faults.

Our catalogue will again have extensive information on the ASBVs and phenotype of each ram. The rams will all be videoed and shown on Auctions Plus.

If any further information is required feel free to contact Don or John.



John Keiller 0409 804 638 [cashmorepark@bordnet.com.au](mailto:cashmorepark@bordnet.com.au)

Don Pegler 0417 851 466 [pegler4@bigpond.com](mailto:pegler4@bigpond.com)

[www.cashmoreoaklea.com.au](http://www.cashmoreoaklea.com.au)

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