Split Joining reduces risk & provides options

What is Split Joining?

Split joining means mating a proportion of a Merino flock to terminal sires for two weeks in summer to provide a uniform line of prime lambs born in mid winter. The remaining flock and ewes scanned as non-pregnant are joined to Merino rams in autumn for spring lambing.

An important reason for using Split Joining is to add flexibility and reduce risk in all-ewe operations. With all-ewe flocks and spring lambing, there are few options to sell stock if spring cuts out early. Spring born lambs and lactating ewes can be of limited sale value.

In a dry spring, July born lambs can be weaned and sold as store lambs and if necessary, ewes sold after weaning. Early sales can significantly reduce overall feed consumption and allow later lambs to be maintained through to acceptable weaning weights.

► Split joining reduces risk and provides options to deal with variable seasons.
► In an average spring, lambs can be kept on to heavier weights utilising spring pasture.
► Split joining allows targeted feeding and management of the winter lambing ewes and a uniform line of sale lambs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>July lambing</th>
<th>September lambing</th>
<th>Split Joining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% to terminal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential ewes/ha</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Gross Margin ($/ha)</td>
<td>$335</td>
<td>$448</td>
<td>$427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-08 average Gross Margin (all failed springs)</td>
<td>$53</td>
<td>-$6</td>
<td>$105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Comparison of different times of lambing and Split Joining

Summary

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