



CASE STUDY

Glenwood Merinos the Multi-Purpose Tool in Tassy

RAPID growth rates, a larger frame, superior wool and low management costs are key drivers for ensuring profitability in the grazing component of Tom and Inge Dowling's diverse farming enterprise 'Mayfield', at Cressy in Northern Tasmania.

By utilising leading genetics from **Glenwood Merinos**, located at Wellington in New South Wales, the family have focused on developing a self-replacing Merino flock of 5000 ewes with approximately half joined to terminal sires to produce saleable export-market lambs within a 6-11 month time frame.

There is no room in Tom's business for non-performers or nursing stock along; the sheep – which make up 18-20 per cent of the operation - pay their way and perform their function as a kind of multi-purpose tool for the operation, which includes 280 hectares of irrigated poppies, 150ha of irrigated peas and 200ha of irrigated Lucerne.

"Cropping is certainly our main focus, but the sheep play an important role in maximising our production whereby they are integrated into the crop rotation to graze during short, peak periods. This delivers production boosts not only on the crop development front, but also for our goal of efficiently turning off sucker lambs at 22 kilograms," explains Tom.

Sheep are rotationally grazed at Mayfield in big mobs with small splits, to take advantage of feed wedges and crop growth production curves.

Lucerne has been developed as a key enterprise for Mayfield, with Tom involved in an annual feedlot contract with a group of producers, which sees him supply a weekly delivery of Lucerne to satisfy a local feedlot.

“The key for us is matching stock capacity to shoulder production. We have subsequently introduced a split lambing to complement the traditional feed growth curve. We lamb in winter and spring so that we can have terminal breed lambs hitting new lucerne growth in September to finish and merino lambs growing out on perennial pasture before moving through to the late Lucerne growth in April-June, to finish.”

Tom says that after using traditional Merino genetics and running crossbreds in his operation in the past, he is certain that the SRS® system has provided “the best solutions” for his business.

“In pursuit of sub 21 micron wool we faced the challenge of losing frame and carcass characteristics that supported our meat production objectives.

“Selling market weight stock is important in this operation, so we decided to try Glenwood genetics around five years ago and we knew that their wool, among many other attributes, was particularly good.

“Glenwood's Merinos certainly give us a better mother for terminal breeding. The principles of Norm Smith's system, whereby rams are reared and presented under commercial conditions resulting in more vigour and fertility to get more ewes in lamb, combined with selection based on ASBVs leading to superior wool and carcass traits, mean that we are able to run a highly profitable and efficient sheep from a management and production point of view.”

Indeed since utilising Glenwood genetics, Tom has witnessed a continual downward trend in micron with a current flock average of 18.4, improvements in frame and

carcase traits, lower management costs, the potential to cease mulesing with the Merino flock and consistently higher lambing percentages.

“We are now recording lambings of at least 100% consistently in the Merino flock with natural lambings taking place. While its been necessary to retain some first cross ewes to build our numbers for the split lambing, I have not been impressed with their lambing percentages under our system, around the 110% mark. The dual purpose production and profitability from a merino mother in both the terminal and merino situation gives me confidence to move towards an all merino ewe base that will accommodate the winter and spring lambing programs.” says Tom.

“In addition to higher fertility, we have noticed that the Glenwood Merinos produce lambs with higher birthweights, better growth rates, high dressing yields and strong skin values – they really are an ‘all purpose’ animal that delivers increased profitability from meat, wool, lambs produced and the associated reduced management costs.”



FIGURE 1: (Tom Dowling, pictured) Sheep are rotationally grazed at Mayfield in big mobs with small splits, to take advantage of feed wedges and crop growth production curves.

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Figure 2: Lucerne has been developed as a key enterprise for Mayfield, and matching stock capacity to shoulder production is a key focus. A split lambing has been introduced into the enterprise to complement the traditional feed growth curve.

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