GLEN HOLME

DOHNE Solutions

BIOSECURITY

Biosecurity and Flock rebuild

Dohnes can be a key part of increasing farm biosecurity.

Because Dohnes can be used as a self-replacing ewe flock in wool production systems, they have a huge potential application in tightening up biosecurity at farm level. Any system that only requires rams to enter the property and flock is at much lower risk of disease, parasite or weed incursions than one that relies on annual purchasing of ewe mobs.

A large sector of the Australian sheep industry is the terminal lamb production system. Frequently this relies on purchasing a stable number of merino type young ewes annually. Sometimes the alternative strategy is to purchase older breeding ewes that have less productive life ahead of them.

Where a ewe flock is used for terminal lamb production, by definition, the ewe portion of the drop is sold along with the wethers to the lamb trade. Ewes are not put to wool producing rams for breeding replacement ewes.

It is this system that is increasingly as high risk of biosecurity issues.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Lice
- Weeds
- Footrot
- OJD
- Ovine Brucellosis
- Drench resistant worms
- Other communicable or exotic diseases
- Contamination due to contact in saleyards or during transport.

With minor shifts in focus, a sheep breeder can easily move from a high risk, high cost system to a self-replacing one. The above risks are proportionately minimised. Saleyard stress is eliminated.

Increased biosecurity risk also comes through sourcing ewes from sheep traders rather than directly from breeders, as animals purchased this way may have been exposed to contact with sheep from many different flocks. Risk of weed or disease contamination in paddocks and yards is high.

If ever exotic diseases like FMD (Foot and Mouth disease) arrive in Australia, the movement of livestock will be an important vector in the spread of the disease. Minimising property to property transfers will be key to the control of any such outbreak.

Benefits of a self-replacing flock.

There are side benefits to this concept as well. Sheep that are born in any environment are adapted to that environment. Purchase of “out of region” replacements can mean a period of adaptation; and brings with it a productivity pause. Injury risk in transit is also restricted to the incoming rams.

The Australian ewe flock is at its lowest level in many years and is dangerously close to being unable to recover. Wool growing maternal ewes are the solution to this huge threat to our industry.

Not unlike the concepts in the “Breed more Merino ewes” programme, mating Dohne rams to Dohne ewes will provide a lucrative solution to the problem. Prime lambs can be marketed from the wether portion, and the best ewe progeny can be retained whilst the balance can be offered into the premium ewe hogget marketplace. Equally, putting Dohne rams over merino ewes is highly likely to increase farm income through increased fertility and kilograms of lambs weaned

Minimising risk through good practices.

Many good operators have an excellent protocol that they follow when introducing new sheep on to their properties. It may include vaccination, drenching, dipping or even isolation for a period.

Good stud sheep breeders have compulsory safeguards in place prior to their sale programmes.

Registered Dohne breeders need to keep their Brucellosis free accreditation current. Most choose to either maintain MN3 status or vaccinate with Gudair to minimise risk of Ovine Johnes Disease (OJD).

At Glen Holme we maintain high standards of health through genetics, isolation and observation.

Our vaccination protocol includes protection against OJD, the major clostridial diseases including pulpy kidney, and treatment for intestinal worms. Our goal is to increase genetic resistance to worms and blowfly strike. We have implemented long term strategies to achieve these ends.

Our programme is aimed at providing a robust protocol that maximises protection for our flock and those of our clients from biosecurity risks.