

does the sums on Dorpers



HIGH FERTILITY RATES: White Dorper ewes and lambs from the Darling Downs Dorper Stud, Artunga, Omanama, Inglewood.



WELL CHOSEN: Darling Downs Dorper stud manager Andrew Clark-Dickson with some of his flock.

ing around \$30 per head, which is a marked improvement on \$7.”

In 2003 Mr Waters shifted his operation from Tenterfield to Artunga, a 7030-acre property near Omanama, 80km west of Warwick and 30km east of Inglewood.

“We made the decision to completely convert to meat sheep in 2006 and initially bought in 20 stud ewes,” he said.

Today his Darling Downs White Dorper Stud is managed by Andrew Clark-Dickson and runs 500 stud ewes and 2500 commercial ewes.

The business is operated along the

“*We have significantly less costs and our turnover is fairly quick***”**

same lines as prime cattle production with careful attention to genetic selection and traits like length, height and muscle.

“As part of our commercial operation we sell about 1000 wethers a year through Warwick or to Inglewood Meats,” Mr Clark-Dickson said.

“These wethers are seven or eight months of age, weigh 45kg live-weight, and bone out at 22 to 23kg to return a minimum carcass average of 500c/kg.”

He said 70% of the commercial ewes were retained as replacement stock.

The stud and flock rams are sold

each year through paddock sales for figures in the price range of \$1000 and \$800 respectively to buyers from throughout Queensland.

“We are still in the stage where we need a clean-up shearing from time to time,” Mr Clark-Dickson said.

“But as our line evolves there will be no need for shearing, mulesing, fly strike treatment or crutching and the associated infrastructure.”

He said the Dorper’s ability to perform well under extreme environmental conditions and fatten on pasture also added to the breed’s appeal and suitability for Australian condi-

tions. “You do need good fencing, because these animals will go anywhere for a feed,” he said.

And while the industry continues to battle the wild dog problem on a broad front, Mr Clark-Dickson said to date the Artunga operation had not had an issue.

“We do front the Cunningham Hwy and I think that could be a deterrent as it is a very busy, major road,” he said.

“So to date we have been very fortunate.”

In the immediate to long term the Darling Downs Dorper Stud seems destined to continue to grow its reputation as a seed stock producer for the growing sheep meat industry.

Amid predictions from MLA chief economist Tim McRae, who has forecast continued growth in the sector after this year’s record national prices for prime lamb, Mr McRae expects the national sheep flock to climb from its current 73 million head to 75 million by 2015, with a significant portion of the growth in the sheep meat sector.

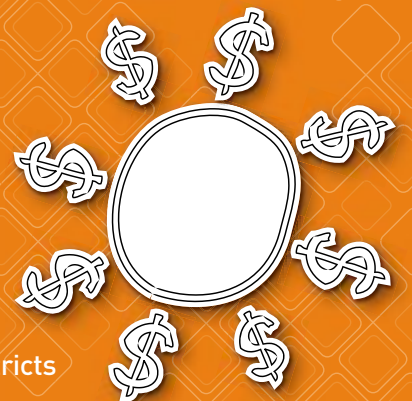
At a local level Mr Waters is optimistic much of that growth will come from the Dorper and White Dorper breeds.

“I think the White Dorper will continue to grow in popularity, because it enables prime lamb production with low input, particularly in country better suited to sheep than cattle.”

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