



What is the benefit of setting up my own ram breeding program?

Managing your own ram breeding program can be very rewarding and allows you to be in control of the genetic direction of your flock. It is not for everyone and should not be attempted simply as a measure to decrease the price you are paying for rams.

The benefit of breeding your own rams comes from having control and breeding them to suit your own goals, objectives and farming system.

Ram breeding does require more work compared with buying rams into the breeding operation. It is also essential that you have good attention to detail, as you will be reading animal ear tags, collecting measurements and making decisions based on those measurements.

When clients contact us wishing to breed their own rams, we ask the following questions:

- Do you have an interest in breeding your own rams?
- Do you enjoy fiddling with your sheep? Do you enjoy collecting data?
- Do you have a minimum ewe flock size (in the commercial flock) of around 2000 ewes – this is necessary to prevent problems with inbreeding in the future.
- Do you have good facilities for monitoring and measuring your animals' performance?
- Do you want to be bothered with handling 100 or so a few times rams each year?
- Are you prepared to measure all ewe hoggets each year?

If you answer "yes" to all these questions, you can consider undertaking a ram breeding program.

The profits from ram breeding accrue from:

1. Ram sales
2. Within – flock genetic gain
3. Savings on ram purchases.

Most farmers think that there are big savings on ram purchases to be had by breeding your rams. This is not the case. Studies indicate that the cost per ram used when you breed them yourself is about \$200 - \$300, depending on whether you do artificial insemination each year.

Before you embark on such a program, it is essential that you are dedicated to doing it properly. A half-hearted breeding ram breeding program is about as useful as sand in the Sahara!

The other factor is to be realistic about prospective ram sales. Don't budget on becoming bigger than the biggest ram seller in Australia. There are many ram producers who are trying to sell rams with little success, and more than likely you will add to that list.

The benefits of undertaking a program arise from you having control of your breeding program. You can breed rams, which match your breeding objective. You can take control of your genetic progress.