

## SHEEP COMPENDIUM

# Accurate data lifts maternal success

BY KYLIE NICHOLLS

## Business Profile

**W**ITH selection focused on fertility, growth and resilience, the Dorahy family is successfully using a range of technologies to drive the performance of their Cloven Hills composite sheep stud at Nareen in Victoria.

Established in 2007, Chris and Kate Dorahy's Cloven Hills stud consistently achieves more than 20 per cent of the top 150 rams in the Sheep Genetics Maternal Carcase Production (MCP+) index, including eight sires currently ranked in the top 10.

According to the pair, a key factor in the stud's genetic gains has been their extensive data gathering and recording, including the use of electronic identification tags to monitor individual ewe and lamb performance.

"You can't physically see all of the key elements required for successful prime lamb production, such as intramuscular fat, fertility, shear force," the pair said.

"This technology has enabled us to efficiently record the performance of large numbers of animals and then apply selection pressure for the traits we want to keep."

The operation now joins 5500 stud and commercial ewes, based primarily on Coopworth (50pc) with 10pc East Friesian and 40pc terminal breeds, comprising White Suffolk (20pc), Poll Dorset (15pc) and Texel (5pc) for growth and carcase.

During the past five years, Cloven Hills has focused on increasing weaning and post weaning weight, while keeping an adult ewe weight of 65 kilograms across the flock, at a condition score of 3.2.

"This is in-line with the overwhelming market desire to manage adult weight in maternal sheep, whether for stocking rate, ease of handling or cost of production, while maintaining condition score and survivability in multiples," they said.

"Our breeding program has focused on producing ewes and rams with the ability to



**GENETIC GAINS:** Increasing ewe fertility and lamb survival is a priority for Cloven Hills, Nareen, Vic. Photo: Karla Northcott Photography

## CLOVEN HILLS COMPOSITES

### Nareen, VIC

■ **Principals:** Chris and Kate Dorahy

■ **Contact:** Chris 0428 798 519 or Kate 0409 784 340

■ **Sale:** Open day on September 24, 2020, Ram sale on October 6, 2020, on-property and Auctionsplus

■ **Sheep on offer:** 250 rams

drop lots of lambs on the ground that grow like steam then pull up.

"Those lambs are 'curve benders' where the adult weight index is less than the post weaning weight index, under Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs)."

This approach has resulted in a pregnancy scanning average of 182pc (including dries) across 3074 Cloven Hills stud and commercial ewes after only a 20-day joining. This includes 35pc hoggets, lambed down as ewe lambs.

Cloven Hills currently sells about 400 rams each year and the Dorahys are pleased with the quality of this year's line-up of rams

which includes progeny from their three top ranked sires in the Sheep Genetics maternal sires database.

The number one ranked ram in Australia is Cloven Hills 18-191 featuring an impressive MCP+ index of 185 with growth, fertility and scrotal circumference in the top 1pc.

"This ram is sired by Cloven Hills 17-188, who is currently ranked number three on the maternal database, while his dam's side features great longevity," they said.

"Cloven Hills 17-188 has had a significant influence on our stud and also has more than 650 progeny on the ground across more than 12 other stud flocks in Australia."

"Cloven Hills 18-1487 is currently ranked number two with a MCP+ index of 179 with post weaning weight growth, fertility and faecal egg count in the top 1pc."

The Dorahys also pride themselves on their willingness to share information and customise ram selection to suit individual clients.

"One size does not fit all when it comes to farming, everyone has a different starting point in terms of their farm and ewe base," they said.

"It's important to work with clients to

help them select rams which will meet their performance and production targets."

## IMPROVING LAMB SURVIVAL

Approached to carry out Cloven Hills' ram sales in Tasmania, Webb and Woodiwiss Livestock director Mark Webb was so impressed with the quality of the sheep that a selection of Cloven Hills rams have found a home in his own composite flock.

Mr Webb runs 2300 composite ewes on his 380-hectare property at Whitemore.

"The Dorahys are obviously very good with their data collection and are measuring all aspects of what people are looking for within the prime lamb industry, it makes ram selection very simple," Mr Webb said.

"Cloven Hills genetics are producing a ewe around 65kg, without losing the fertility of those ewes and they are weaning 75 to 80pc of their body weight."

"We needed a sheep that was tough, that could withstand our weather conditions, had good worm resistance and good lamb survivability."

"Last year, using Cloven Hills genetics, from scanning to weaning we had just 9pc foetal loss, which was an outstanding result."



# CLOVEN HILLS

## RAM SALE TUES 6 OCT 2020

OPEN DAY THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2020 | 10:30AM TO 4:30PM



## TOP RANKED MATERNAL GENETICS MODERATELY SIZED EWES

Purpose bred for greater lamb production | "Flexible, profitable, sustainable"

Fertility | Growth | Carcase | Hardiness (OJD Vacc. Abattoir 500 -ve, Bruc. Accred)

**FOR INFO/FARM TOUR OR RAM/EWE ENQUIRIES CONTACT:**

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