

# Ewe Grazing Management

## 1 day vs 4 day shifts from mating to lambing

**objectives** ► *to look at management to reduce bearing incidence, ewe nutrition and feed planning through pregnancy*

### KEY MANAGEMENT protocols when planning 4 day shifting

There are some important criteria when planning a shift to 4 day breaks for ewes post tupping:

- Know ewe liveweight to determine maintenance ration (average lwt and range of lwt)
- Know the BCS (average and range)
- Formal NOT informal feed planning is required
  - \* Pre tupping: Determine if there is enough feed for winter
  - \* Allocate to achieve the required intake on each 4 day block (allow for the residual grazing level as well)

### KEY MESSAGES - *from the data*

- Target **BCS 2.5 – 3**
- Identify the range of BCS and liveweight in ewe flock
- Objective is to maintain BCS from tupping to lambing
- Monitor BCS and trends and make decisions on BCS and Liveweight early
- Preferentially feed light ewes
- BCS more important than liveweight (apart from absolute weight for feed planning)
- A ewe BCS 0.5 higher at lambing equates to 30g/day improved lwt gain in lambs to weaning
- Bearings – no worse and potentially less on 4 day grazing rotation
- Target an even BCS profile (feed planning and allocation)



***Start at the correct BCS pre tupping and maintain it***

## KEY MESSAGES - *from the farmers*

- 4 day shifting
  - \* ease of management
  - \* less work
  - \* easier on gear (no trailer needed on bike)
  - \* less fences required
  - \* lower cost
  - \* peace of mind when wet
- immediate behaviour change in stock – more settled
- need to know correct maintenance requirement – measure ewe liveweight, know BCS, allocate feed correctly
- feed planning – ensure there is enough feed for winter, proactive not reactive management
- understand feed budgeting and identify issues early
- understand the impact of residual DM on intake (affected by dead material/ stalk etc)
- ideal cover for 4 day shifting – **2500kgDM/ha**
- high covers (3000kgDM/ha+) are wasteful and harder to manage. It means high numbers of animals need to be on a small area for 4 days which reduces the benefits of a 4 day break.
- Plan forward (weather forecasting)
- Triplet bearing ewes – these ewes need to be managed separately at higher maintenance intake as they can lose BCS very quickly. It isn't possible to allocate higher levels of feed effectively when they are run with the twin bearing ewes.
- Stock health appears to be better with 4 day shifts as animals are not in such close contact (reduce stress, disease transfer and deaths). This is the farmer's perspective only as the data wasn't well recorded.
- Continue to check stock on 4 day breaks (cast ewes as pregnancy nears) as farmers found they had a tendency to relax and not check stock as frequently
- 4 day shifting provides the opportunity to increase the number of mobs run and manage properly.

