

Phil Kemp runs Prime Lamb Australia feedlot on the Darling Downs and has some advice for sheep producers who may consider finishing their lambs in a feedlot. With a brighter seasonal outlook, producers restocking, exclusion fences being erected, some very positive lamb marking percentages as well as lower grain prices the outlook for feedlotting lambs is looking much brighter than in recent years. Phil's tips for successful feedlotting are:

- \* The weight governs the price but a lamb 30kg+ live weight is feedable.
- \* Introducing lambs to grain before sending them to a feedlot is not necessary. Most feedlots do not pay more for lambs just because they have been fed in the paddock.
- \* There has to be time for the feeder to finish the lambs before they start cutting teeth. Often on Auction Plus or in the Warwick Saleyards there are hoggets already in a mob. The producer can lose a lot of money if selling lambs at 10 months maximum age and they start cutting teeth before they are finished in the feedlot.
- \* We prefer to buy lambs in the wool. Our facilities and location allows us to shear lambs a lot easier and more cheaply than most western producers. There are some concerns raised with regards to trucking woolly lambs but providing they are strong and given a reasonable curfew we have never had a problem. The worst case scenario is for the producer to shear the lambs and then give them 6 weeks to freshen them up before selling them. We would have to shear them again. We would discount heavily any lambs with greater than 3 week's skin.
- \* Lambs that have had a good start and then have a severe setback are more difficult and more expensive to feed. The greater the setback the greater the cost to feed, therefore, we would rather lighter lambs that are fresh. Too often producers hang on with hope that they will improve. Remember the old adage, "sell and repent but sell".
- \* I strongly advise producers to give their lambs a course of Clostridial 3 in 1 vaccination, especially if they are shorn and then trucked. I have seen 20% losses from tetanus in lambs trucked after shearing (not here thankfully).
- \* Stress has already been mentioned. This is a big issue. Consider that young animals are mustered, drafted, curfewed, trucked, unloaded into a strange place, shorn for the first time and then put into a yard with unfamiliar feed. Handling stress is 95% common stock sense and it does make a difference, especially in the number of losses.
- \* When selling on Auction Plus, it is common that the tail is not taken off or a minimum is removed. Usually this detracts from the whole mob and priced accordingly. Consider that keeping a few light stragglers may be a better option.
- \* Be honest with the weight assessment of the whole mob. There have been occasions where we have been told that the mob has a minimum weight of 33 kg and what turns up on the truck is a 32 kg average weight. Depending on a few considerations such as distance, lambs will lose 10% of their bodyweight between weighing in the paddock to their start feeding weight even with wool cut taken into consideration for eg. 35 Kg LW lamb, 2 kg wool cut, start weight 30 kg.
- \* The past few years have seen the store market very strong with anything with 4 legs and some wool mostly making good money. The greater number of ewes joined this year may impact on the supply and demand situation and the difference between under supply and over supply is not very great.