# The Maidens Monitor (Oct-Dec 2024)

The Making Maidens Weight producer demonstration site (PDS) is exploring ways to improve lamb marking rates from maiden ewes in central west Queensland. Conception rates of maidens in the region are generally good, however, converting these foetuses to lambs remains a challenge. The demonstration properties are exploring condition scoring, weighing, supplementation, scanning and udder assessment of ewes to improve their marking percentage. As part of this, demonstration sites are collecting individual animal data with electronic identification (eID) in large-scale, commercial operations and highlighting how this data is useful for decision-making.

## How are we using WhatsApp?

The Making Maidens Weight WhatsApp chat continues to be a great way for producers to engage with the PDS. This quarter was quieter in the chat with discussion centring on supplementation and containment feeding decisions.

## Demonstration sites

Both demonstration sites have been busy leading up to joining, collecting weights and body condition scores (BCS) of ewes. For Dunblane, the decision around continuing to feed all weaners in the yards or to release the heavier ewe lambs into the paddock with grain feeders was explored. Important considerations factoring into the decision includes:

- Amount of grain on hand
- When summer rains might arrive
- Can containment feeding be managed
- Cash flow situation (cost of feed)
- Is agistment an option? E.g. looking at the current markets, is agisting light lambs an option to focus on feeding heavy ewe lambs at home to set them up for joining next year?

SME Dr Gordon Refshauge (NSW DPIRD) reminded the group that reproduction has been hampered this year, so it is crucial to minimise losses as much as possible to retain flock structure and the numbers for selection. Looking after light ewes is particularly important in seasons following poor lambing.

If you'd like to read the most recent producer newsletter (October 2024) to learn more about what the demonstration flocks have been up to, please contact David Counsell on 0427 073 606 or davidjcounsell@bigpond.com.

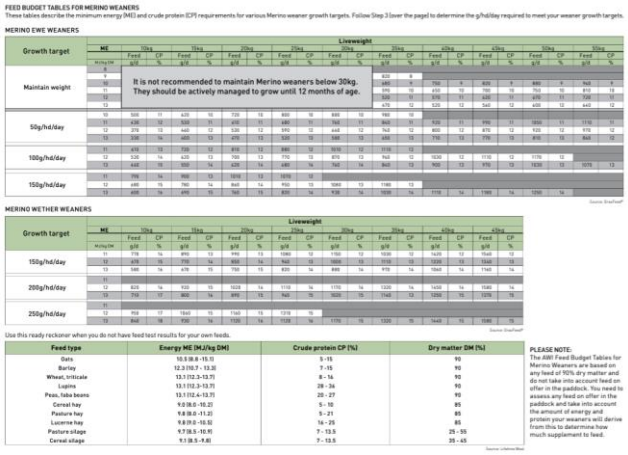
Image 1: Dunblane pasture conditions in mid-August (Image: David Counsell).

## Topics of discussion in the chat

*Nutrition & supplementation – key messages*

- Commence feeding early, while pastures still have some nutritional value (i.e. still have some green). Supplementing early makes best use of the pasture and feeding smaller lambs requires less supplement, which is cheaper than trying to put condition back on animals that have been in a deficit.
- Ewes must be in a positive energy balance at least 2 weeks prior to joining. Understand the energy provided by the pasture and the gap that needs to be made up from supplementary energy.
- Ensure ewes are gaining weight leading into joining as a maintenance ration will not support adequate reproduction outcomes.

- Green pick from early falls of rain will provide light ewes a good boost in nutrition before joining.
- Ensure protein and energy requirements are being met. Ewe weaners need to be growing consistently and as much as possible before they're joined as older lambs. Consequences of poor growth in the weaner phase of life can result in lost lifetime productivity and reproduction. If you're interested in learning more about weaner management through a Winning With Weaners (1-day) or Weaners for Profit (12-month) course, please contact Millie Sheales (details below). Check out AWI's Winning With Weaners feed budget tables as a start.



FEED BUDGET TABLES FOR MERINO WEANERS

These tables describe the minimum energy (ME) and crude protein (CP) requirements for various Merino weaner growth targets. Follow Step 3 lower the page) to determine the g/hd/day required to meet your weaner growth targets.

MERINO EWE WEANERS

| Growth target | ME | Liveweight 10kg Feed g/d | 10kg CP % | 15kg Feed g/d | 15kg CP % | 20kg Feed g/d | 20kg CP % | 25kg Feed g/d | 25kg CP % | 30kg Feed g/d | 30kg CP % | 35kg Feed g/d | 35kg CP % | 40kg Feed g/d | 40kg CP % | 45kg Feed g/d | 45kg CP % | 50kg Feed g/d | 50kg CP % | 55kg Feed g/d | 55kg CP % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MJ/kg DM | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % |
| Maintain weight | 8 | It is not recommended to maintain Merino weaners below 30kg. They should be actively managed to grow until 12 months of age. | | | | | | | | | | 420 | 9 | | | | | | | | |
| | 9 | | | | | | | | | | | 480 | 9 | 700 | 9 | 820 | 9 | 880 | 9 | 940 | 9 |
| | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | 590 | 10 | 850 | 10 | 980 | 10 | 1050 | 10 | 810 | 10 |
| | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | 540 | 11 | 870 | 11 | 840 | 11 | 870 | 11 | 930 | 11 |
| | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | 470 | 12 | 520 | 12 | 540 | 12 | 650 | 12 | 640 | 12 |
| 50g/hd/day | 10 | 500 | 11 | 620 | 10 | 720 | 10 | 800 | 10 | 880 | 10 | 960 | 10 | | | | | | | | |
| | 11 | 430 | 12 | 530 | 11 | 610 | 11 | 680 | 11 | 760 | 11 | 840 | 11 | 920 | 11 | 990 | 11 | 1060 | 11 | 1110 | 11 |
| | 12 | 370 | 13 | 460 | 12 | 530 | 12 | 590 | 12 | 660 | 12 | 740 | 12 | 800 | 12 | 870 | 12 | 930 | 12 | 970 | 12 |
| | 13 | 330 | 14 | 400 | 13 | 470 | 13 | 530 | 13 | 580 | 13 | 640 | 13 | 690 | 13 | 770 | 13 | 810 | 13 | 860 | 13 |
| 100g/hd/day | 11 | 610 | 13 | 720 | 12 | 810 | 12 | 890 | 12 | 970 | 12 | 1110 | 12 | | | | | | | | |
| | 12 | 520 | 14 | 620 | 13 | 700 | 13 | 770 | 13 | 870 | 13 | 960 | 13 | 1030 | 13 | 1110 | 12 | 1170 | 12 | | |
| | 13 | 460 | 15 | 550 | 14 | 620 | 14 | 680 | 14 | 760 | 14 | 840 | 13 | 900 | 13 | 970 | 13 | 1030 | 13 | 1070 | 13 |
| 150g/hd/day | 11 | 790 | 14 | 910 | 13 | 1010 | 13 | 1070 | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 12 | 680 | 15 | 780 | 14 | 860 | 14 | 930 | 13 | 1080 | 13 | 1180 | 13 | | | | | | | | |
| | 13 | 600 | 16 | 690 | 15 | 760 | 15 | 820 | 14 | 930 | 14 | 1030 | 14 | 1110 | 14 | 1180 | 14 | 1250 | 14 | | |

MERINO WETHER WEANERS

| Growth target | ME | Liveweight 10kg Feed g/d | 10kg CP % | 15kg Feed g/d | 15kg CP % | 20kg Feed g/d | 20kg CP % | 25kg Feed g/d | 25kg CP % | 30kg Feed g/d | 30kg CP % | 35kg Feed g/d | 35kg CP % | 40kg Feed g/d | 40kg CP % | 45kg Feed g/d | 45kg CP % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MJ/kg DM | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % | g/d | % |
| 150g/hd/day | 11 | 770 | 14 | 890 | 13 | 990 | 13 | 1080 | 12 | 1150 | 12 | 1230 | 12 | 1420 | 12 | 1540 | 12 |
| | 12 | 670 | 15 | 770 | 14 | 850 | 14 | 940 | 13 | 1000 | 13 | 1110 | 13 | 1230 | 13 | 1340 | 13 |
| | 13 | 580 | 16 | 670 | 15 | 750 | 15 | 820 | 14 | 880 | 14 | 970 | 14 | 1060 | 14 | 1140 | 14 |
| 200g/hd/day | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 12 | 820 | 14 | 930 | 13 | 1020 | 14 | 1110 | 14 | 1170 | 14 | 1320 | 14 | 1430 | 14 | 1540 | 14 |
| | 13 | 710 | 17 | 800 | 14 | 890 | 14 | 960 | 14 | 1020 | 15 | 1140 | 13 | 1230 | 15 | 1270 | 14 |
| 250g/hd/day | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 12 | 950 | 17 | 1060 | 15 | 1160 | 15 | 1270 | 15 | | | | | | | | |
| | 13 | 840 | 18 | 930 | 16 | 1030 | 16 | 1120 | 16 | 1170 | 15 | 1300 | 15 | 1440 | 15 | 1540 | 15 |

Use this ready reckoner when you do not have feed test results for your own feeds.

| Feed type | Energy ME (MJ/kg DM) | Crude protein CP (%) | Dry matter DM (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Oats | 10.5 (8.8 -11.1) | 5 - 15 | 90 |
| Barley | 12.3 (10.7 - 13.3) | 7 - 15 | 90 |
| Wheat, triticale | 13.1 (12.3 - 13.7) | 8 - 14 | 90 |
| Lupins | 13.1 (12.3 - 13.7) | 28 - 34 | 90 |
| Peas, faba beans | 13.1 (12.4 - 13.7) | 20 - 27 | 90 |
| Cereal hay | 9.0 (8.0 - 10.2) | 5 - 10 | 85 |
| Pasture hay | 9.8 (8.0 - 11.2) | 5 - 21 | 85 |
| Lucerne hay | 9.8 (9.0 - 10.5) | 16 - 25 | 85 |
| Pasture silage | 9.7 (8.5 - 10.9) | 7 - 13.5 | 25 - 55 |
| Cereal silage | 9.1 (8.5 - 9.8) | 7 - 13.5 | 35 - 45 |

PLEASE NOTE:
The AWI Feed Budget Tables for Merino Weaners are based on any feed of 90% dry matter and do not take into account feed on offer in the paddock. You need to assess any feed on offer in the paddock and take into account the amount of energy and protein your weaners will derive from this to determine how much supplement to feed.

Figure 2: Winning With Weaners feed budget tables highlighting the minimum energy and crude protein requirements for different Merino weaner growth targets (AWI).

*Containment feeding*

The discussion around containment feeding continued throughout this quarter. Given the high level of interest, the PDS ran an online discussion session with Brett Littler (NSW Local Land Services) and Benjamin Gilmour (DPI Intensive Livestock Unit).

This webinar covered:

- What containment feeding is and when it might be useful
- Considerations for site selection and design
- Practical examples
- The legislative side of containment feeding

Visit the Queensland Sheep Producer Groups webpage on the Leading Sheep website to watch the recording.

NSW Local Land Services have developed a guide to confinement feeding sheep and cattle in NSW that provides great scope and detail around management and elements of design for containment feeding areas. If you are considering containment feeding in any capacity, please seek professional advice.

**More information:** Millie Sheales (DPI, Longreach) **M** 0428 102 841 **E** Email Address