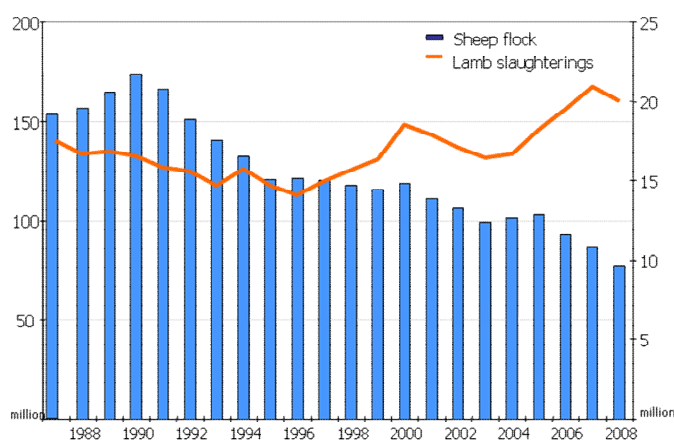


Lifetime Ewe Management

more lambs, better wool, healthy ewes

The Situation - Sheep and lamb turnoff and live exports exceeds number of lambs produced annually



National flock trends

The national sheep flock has declined in the last 20 years to levels that threaten the future of the sheep industry and the established markets for lamb and sheep meat.

National flock changes in last 20 years:

- from over 170m sheep to less than 75m sheep
- from over 75m ewes to less than 43m breeding ewes
- increased lamb slaughter rates to over 20m lambs per annum

Since 1990 the national lamb marking rates have not improved (Table 1) and with the current turnoff rates of sheep and lambs the national flock will continue to erode. To maintain the current sheep population and continue the turnoff of meat and live exports, marking rates need to increase by 12%.

Table 1. Trends in average marking rates since 1990

Enterprise sector	Av marking % (1990-1999)	Av marking % (2000-2005)
Prime lamb specialists	84	85
Sheep specialists	73	71
Mixed sheep enterprise	75	74
Sheep industry total	77	77

The solution- Lifetime Ewe Management delivers on-average a 15% increase in marking rates

The **Lifetime Ewe Management** (LTEM) program has addressed the industry challenge by improving producers understanding of the impacts of ewe nutrition on the performance of the ewe and her progeny. LTEM has developed producers' skills and confidence to manage their ewes to achieve condition score targets that have optimised stocking rates, increased lamb survival, improved animal welfare and greater whole farm profitability (Table 2). The gross value of these productivity gains was about \$50/ha or \$50,000/farm.

Table 2. Changes in productivity among LTEM participants

	2005 (pre- LTEM)	2008 (post- LTEM)
Stocking rate (dse/ha)	12.2	13.9
Lambing % (Crossbred ewes)	111	126
Lambing % (Merino to Merino)	73	84
Lambing % (Merino to other)	82	92
Ewe mortality per annum (%)	4.5	2.5



What producers think of LTEM

Over 300 producers that manage almost 2 million ewes have participated in LTEM since 2006. Independent evaluations have found;

- an overall satisfaction rating of 8.6 out of 10 (ranging from 7 to 10)
- 91% of participating producers have recommended LTEM to other producers

'By following the data and recommendations, we have in one season been able to lift our performance by an average of 25% or 4000 lambs'. (Gordon Dickinson- Nareen Station, Casterton).

Key changes in management practice

LTEM is structured to maximize knowledge retention and practice change. The program has had profound impacts on the management practices undertaken by participants (Table 3).

Table 3. Trends in management practice among LTEM participants

Management practice	% of producers	
	2005 (pre- LTEM)	2008 (post- LTEM)
Condition scoring ewes	5	96
Assess pastures- quality/quantity	33	98
Pregnancy scan for multiples	17	64
Joining length of 5 weeks or less	35	80
Manage ewes to condition score targets at key times	9	98

Profitability changes through LTEM

An independent financial analysis* found the benefits for producers from participating in LTEM are;

1. improved understanding & management of the grazing system through
 - a. the knowledge gained about animal requirements and pasture growth
 - b. the monitoring of feed-on-offer and animal performance on their farm
 - c. discussion with other producers on how to implement this in their farm system
2. meeting the condition score targets of the ewe flock over the reproduction cycle which leads to
 - a. decreased ewe mortality
 - b. increased lamb birth weights and hence lamb survival
 - c. the progeny cutting more wool that is finer

This can increase profit even for producers who are operating at optimal stocking rates. The benefit of managing ewes to the optimum condition score profile can be up to \$5-7/ewe for Merino enterprises and \$10-12/ewe for prime lamb enterprises.

**J Young, Farming Systems Analysis Service, Western Australia*

For more information on LTEM

Local LTEM Facilitator

LTEM Program Leader Darren Gordon- 0408114656

www.sheepcrc.org.au www.rist.com.au

