

**Western Division  
DAMARA SHEEP BREEDERS SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC**



**WELCOME DAMARA GROWERS OF WA  
Newsletter May 2009  
Editor Matthew Young**

## **Introduction**

The Damara as you all know has played a significant role in the Australian sheep industry since their introduction from South Africa in the mid 1990's. Although the breed has met with a huge amount of unfounded criticism the breed is having a major role in the breeding of composites such as meatmasters and the opportunities it is giving growers in lower rainfall and pastoral areas. There are many Damara characteristics that breeders are looking to introduce into their flocks such as shedding, mothering, herding ability and hardiness.

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Since the completion of the three year ewe productivity trial hosted by the Merredin Research Station from 2005 – 2008 which studied pure Damara, Dorper, Merino and fourth cross Wiltshires, there has been much interest and discussion on these breeds and their fit in the farming system. Although the Damara did not perform to its reported ability, the trial did demonstrate that for pure animals there is a requirement to keep the ewes lean so to minimise extreme fat tail production which can inhibit conception success, and accelerated mating systems are required to increase reproduction rates rather than an annual mating system. For those Damara producers that have infused Dorper or Wiltshire into their breeding program, the cross-bred lamb produced is acceptable to the domestic market which at current lamb prices is a great opportunity to turn off early lambs. For a full copy of the report please contact Tanya on the above contact details.

Over the past six months Tanya has contributed to the development and trial work of an Honours student project from Murdoch University. Keshia Hilliam (an ex-South African by chance!) has been comparing White Dorper, second cross White Dorper and Merino ewe weaners grazing barley stubble during summer. Early indications are that the White Dorper (pure and cross-bred) weaners have retained condition during the summer grazing months which may have some excellent applications to finishing systems on cereal stubbles. The project analysis will be completed over the coming months. Tanya and Matthew Young attended a two-day training course during March in Narrogin for the Sheep's Back program. Although much of the emphasis was on the Merino or Merino – cross-bred lamb production systems, there was certainly a change in the air for the worth of the fleece-shedding meat breeds in farming systems. Bob Hall and Andrew Ritchie from Icon Agriculture provided the interesting and informative training to sheep industry DAFWA staff which had a particularly strong financial focus.

Current indications in the Sheep Meat Industry are that over the coming 18 months there will be reduced sheep and lamb supply for domestic processing and live exports. However with the high prices currently being received and that which are likely to remain for some time, producers of fleece-shedding sheep are in a prime position to increase production of lamb for various markets. If you need any advice on production systems and markets please do not hesitate to give Tanya or Matthew Young at the Geraldton DAFWA office a call.

**Annual general Meeting of the Wheatbelt Damara Growers Group Inc Including the Western Division Damara Sheep Breeders Society Of Australia inc Held on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at Greenham st Koorda**

The following office bearers were elected

President Matthew Young ph 0899568506 [email myoung@ agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:myoung@agric.wa.gov.au)

Vice President Colleen Scally ph 0896841314 [email colleen.scally@cbh.com.au](mailto:colleen.scally@cbh.com.au)

Secretary Len Cargeeg ph 0896851274 [email len.cargeeg@bigpond.com](mailto:len.cargeeg@bigpond.com)

Treasurer Gerry Pauley ph 0896841393 [email g.pauley@bigpond.com](mailto:g.pauley@bigpond.com)

**The Future Direction**

The future direction of the group was discussed. It was felt that the name Wheatbelt tended to exclude the Pastoral Industry who form a considerable portion of the Damara Industry in WA. It was decided that the organisation operate as the "Western Division, the Damara Sheep Breeders Society of Australia"

**Market Information**

It is very pleasing to see that "Wellard Rural "have released a forward contract for live shipments until the end of 09 and the prices quoted **Damara** 38kg live weight \$65 **Male and Females** this is very significant as we all know in the past there has been a limited number of females that have been shipped. This contract puts a floor price in place for shipping Damara type sheep. Prices will be higher for heavier animals, so contact your agent or shipper for further information

**Any Feed Back Regarding this newsletter and any information for a future newsletter would be much appreciated**