Fleece weight: the best culling guide

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia
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Flock owners' thoughts are now turning towards culling. Culling should remove the worst sheep and keep the best to fill the bales and breed replacements.

A valuable aid to this annual task is Culling by Fleece Weight during shearing.

Remember when using this method—

(1) Its greater accuracy is proven. Your gains are immediate. The average cut per head is increased and the most profitable sheep kept.

(2) It should be applied to maiden ewes at the shearing before they enter the breeding flock. It would also pay to cull a young wether flock by fleece weight.

(3) A minimum primary culling is first carried out in the yards to remove obvious culls—deformed sheep, bad mouths, poor conformation, and so on.

(4) The ewes are identified by numbered ear tags—either permanent plastic or temporary alligator ear-tags.

(5) As the sheep is shorn, the number is recorded on a card.

(6) When finished, the fleece (and belly) is weighed and the weight recorded on the card.

(7) The fleece is then thrown, skirted, and classed in the usual way.

(8) Any fleeces of very poor type are recorded on the card.

(9) When shearing is completed, the lighter cutters and the few with inferior wool are culled according to the percentage you desire to cull, having in mind profitable stocking rates.

(10) To avoid shed confusion, carry out this work at the beginning or end of the main shearing.

(11) It is essential that the sheep are the same age, same wool growth, and have been run under the same conditions.

(12) Mark culls so that they can be identified when it is time for disposal.

Officers of the Sheep and Wool Section of the Department of Agriculture are available to demonstrate and instruct in this technique. Applications for a demonstration should be made to the Officer in Charge, Sheep and Wool Section, Department of Agriculture, South Perth, or your nearest Agricultural Adviser.
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