Accurate weighing of ewes critical to improve profits

Like most experienced sheep producers, Damon Soster has a good eye for judging the weight of a moving merino ewe, but he says his farm profitability has increased dramatically since using the Clipex Sheep Handler to weigh his flock. The Cassilis farmer runs a 5,500 hectare Hereford Stud, “Dalkeith”, in the Upper Hunter Valley, where 500 commercial cows and 8,000 merino ewes enjoy a generous, annual rainfall of 610 mm. “We used to just eyeball the sheep, but to be able to get accurate weights quickly and efficiently pays for itself - it just takes the guess work out of it,” explained Damon. “The Clipex Sheep Handler is fantastic for weighing - it is so efficient. One person and two good dogs can manage the whole process – you could weigh 550 / 600 in an hour if you are having a good run.” Damon said he purchased the Clipex Sheep Handler two years ago to decrease labour costs. “Labour costs are our biggest challenge. In our district the mines take a lot of the casual labour – even kids coming out of school want 10 or 20 times what we used to pay,” Damon said. “With the Clipex Sheep Handler you’re saving money on having people during those peak times and you’re making good money at the end of it having a good line to sell.” The innovative farmer said he trusts the Clipex brand, since first using the Clipex fencing system to erect fences throughout his property seven years ago. “I am constantly looking at innovation. I am a big believer in moving forward, rather than doing things how we have for the past 30 or 40 years,” Damon said. “The two main challenges for us in the fencing system were labour and longevity. A lot of the other products on the market are very labour intensive and you could see the other products were wearing out after 10 years.” Damon said he first saw the Clipex Fencing System at a field day and knew it would save time. “I liked the formulation of the clip. I knew it would be a labour saver and, having used the product now for eight years, it proved that it was,” Damon said. “Once we got the fences up and erected, I haven’t done anything to the fences at all. We have a kangaroo and feral pig problem here and it has stood up to that really well and the maintenance is minimal.” Damon said the products have also improved on-farm safety. “With any of these new technologies it makes life easier and takes away that hard labour component - the Clipex fencing system is not back breaking,” Damon explained. “The old technology in weigh crates resulted in jammed fingers. For keeping staff morale, if you are running things more efficiently and safely then people are happier. And, if it’s not hard on your back and your fingers, it just makes things safer.” The after-sales service has also been impressive. “I think an important thing with this company is that it is family-owned - you can talk directly to the people who are innovative and making the products. It’s a massive plus and driver for me to use the products,” Damon explained. “I’ve used their products for eight years and I have promoted their products to other producers in the region. I’m not afraid to preach it at all – they are great products.”