

Ovastim injection tipped as vital component of national flock rebuild

Australia's farming industry may be facing its smallest sheep flock on record, but strong lamb prices and promising weather conditions are making this an ideal time for farmers to begin rebuilding depleted stocks. With the Eastern States Trade Lamb Indicator (ESTLI) recently climbing towards 900¢/kg carcass weight (cwt) for the first time, a fecundity vaccine produced by animal health company Virbac Australia has been identified as a key component to capitalise on these unprecedented gains. As Technical Services Manager at Virbac Australia, Dr George Cox explains, Ovastim is a practical and economical method to help increase lamb production. "The vaccine directly influences a ewe's fecundity, increasing the amount of eggs available for fertilisation by immunising the animal against the hormone androstenedione, which alters ovarian function. That in turn leads to an increase in the number of twin births, which is by far the single most important factor in boosting lamb numbers." Reproductive efficiency is the single most important determinant of the profitability of most sheep enterprises – and Dr Cox goes on to explain how Ovastim can increase a flock's ovulation rate from 18% to 45%[1]. "Trials in commercial flocks have shown an average birth increase of 20%, primarily through an increase in the number of twin births. With good management practices, more lambs on the ground will result in improved sales, to further benefit a farmer's bottom line – especially now prices are so strong." Because Ovastim does not affect seasonality, but only the ovulation rate of animals already cycling, normal practices (such as the use of teasers for out-of-season breeding) still apply. Yet because the product works on natural principles, doesn't adversely affect lamb survival rate or growth it's considered one of the best tools to create higher lamb marking percentages and boost profits. It is essential to manage the flock as a twin bearing flock. Adequate nutrition, shelter and supervision must be provided to ensure maximum survival or prevent mismothering. Ovastim should not be used in merino flocks where multiple births are not desirable. NSW sheep producer Anthony Hoolihan has been using Ovastim within his herd of 3,000 breeder ewes since late 2018, and says he has since produced more lambs than ever. "Usually during our June lambing we would get a 110% lambing rate – but with Ovastim, combined with a continued focus on ewe management and good predator control, we've managed to increase that percentage to 155%, which is a fantastic result. I can see great potential for increasing lambing percentages considerably during early lambing periods by using this product." For Dr Cox, the benefits are undeniable. "Ovastim can have a tremendously positive impact on high yielding lamb production systems for the rapid breeding of replacement stock. Rebuilding Australia's lamb stock will ensure the sustainability of our industry. To find out more about Ovastim, visit au.virbac.com Ends Media Enquiries: Kate Munsie - C7EVEN COMMUNICATIONS (02) 6766 4513 / 0421 935 843 kate.munsie@c7even.com.au Photo caption: Increase lamb production with Ovastim Healthy lambs [1] Virbac Data on file: Ewe Fecundity of Merino X Border Leicester ewes treated with Ovastim (Kojonup WA 2009)

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