

JOE AND TRACEY DAHLITZ ROEMAHKITA POLL MERINO STUD CUMMINS, SA



It took two years for seedstock producers Joe and Tracey Dahlitz to fully embrace MERINOSELECT.

The co-principals of the Roemahkita Poll Merino Stud at Cummins, on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, had been collecting and entering data for that period while coming to grips with what the results were saying about their flock.

"It took me that first couple of years to understand and believe the information," Joe said.

"It changed when we spent \$10,000 on a ram with good ASBV (Australian Sheep Breeding Values) figures in 2005.

"You want more eye muscle and a rump as big as you can and MERINOSELECT can help you achieve that."

"He had better figures than our sheep but to look at him he didn't have a good carcass and seemed a bit small for his age.

"Well, he bred very well so we starting taking more notice of the figures. It took a big leap of faith to buy him but the figures have backed up that decision."

The Dahlitzs established Roemahkita in 1991 and are now selling up to 180 rams a year, including 80 through their on-property sale. The sheep have been bred from a Collinsville base with Wallaloo Park and Leachim genetics used since the late 90s.

Kamora Park genetics have also been added to improve carcass qualities and Joe

said MERINOSELECT has helped improve carcass traits that can be hard to assess visually.

"We're well on the way with our wool and would back it against any stud but we wanted MERINOSELECT information to help improve our carcasses.

"We aim to breed plain Merinos with 7-8kg of 19 ½ to 20 ½ micron wool with great carcasses that compare well against other Merinos and SAMMs and Dohnes."

Utilising ASBVs, the Dahlitzs look for positive figures in eye muscle depth (EMD), fat and up to +10 for body weight. They also visually assess the wool and structure.

"If you have a figure of +8 for weight, that gives you 2 or 3 kilograms more on your lambs. At \$4.50/kg, that's more than \$9 per head. At 60 lambs per ram per year, you'll get at least another \$4250 over the life of a ram by spending an extra \$500."

MERINOSELECT has helped attract new commercial clients who want evidence to reinforce his claims.

"There is a bit more work involved with the testing but people are trying to attract new clients all the time and we now have the facts and figures to promote our sheep. It's not just our opinion.

"Some of our new clients use British breed sheep so the data has attracted clientele previously dissatisfied with the Merino industry.

"They look for measurements to improve their gross margin or profitability and ask for evidence why our sheep are better than where they are buying from."

MERINOSELECT has also made the Dahlitzs more aware when selecting rams or semen for their breeding program.

"You look for finer details as you have more traits to look for. You can see how a potential ram balances your breeding program in some areas. Although he may not be as good in others, you can assess whether you can handle that as your ewes may be strong in that area of deficiency.

"One client asked me the difference in the length of the loins and said he would have got four more loin chops from a particular ram and that's the high value cut.

"You want more eye muscle and a rump as big as you can and MERINOSELECT can help you achieve that.

"You can really fine tune your program and commercial blokes are doing it better."

Roemahkita continue to show and sell their rams at the Royal Adelaide Show and have placed in the top three of the meat and fibre class for two tooth autumn shorn rams in two of the last three years.