

Confinement feeding at Pier Pier, Coonamble

CASE STUDY

Snapshot:

“Pier Pier” is a corporate-owned station 70km north of Coonamble.

During the drought the station team built a cost-effective feedlot to early wean 7000 lambs.

Area: 31,603 ha

Enterprise: Merino sheep, dryland crops and trade and agistment cattle.



The animals:

Lambs weaned at approximately seven weeks old and 12-15kg were introduced to the confinement feeding setup after being trail fed while still on mum to introduce them to feeding.

The setup:

Eight pens in total were established of 90mx100m or 100mx100m each with 90-150 animals per feeder.

Sheep were allocated to pens based on five kg liveweight increments with one pen dedicated to shy feeders or unwell animals.

The location was chosen due to the proximity to silos, hay shed and yards.

The feed:

Lambs were fed a barley/lupin mix. The percentages of each depended on the liveweight of the sheep being fed and the aims of the feeding program.

Lime and salt tubs were present in all pens at all times.

One water trough was constructed in the centre of each pen.

The process:

Lambs were put into large pens for 10 days and fed out of long troughs.

Shy feeders were identified and put into separate pens.

Lambs were then vaccinated prior to going into smaller pens 10 days after vaccination.

Lambs were marked four weeks after weaning, with no sound made at marking.

The lambs were sexed into different mobs once their tails started to fall off.

Results:

- Reduced time and labour costs
- Reduced lamb losses
- Lambs ave. 5kg heavier on marking than previous years



Key learnings:

- Confinement feeding was a successful drought management strategy in this situation with a good setup, carefully considered process and well fed sheep.
- High risk animals such as early weaned lambs need to be managed very carefully with regards to nutrition, pen size, shy feeders, trough space and animal husbandry
- Feeding in confinement reduced the time travelling around the property to feed livestock during the drought.
- Confinement feeding also meant ground cover was maintained over the rest of the property.

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