



# Genetic influence to

By JAMIE-LEE OLDFIELD

**P**RODUCTIVITY and profitability are the aim of Murnong Farming's newly-adopted genetic breeding facility at Inverleigh.

Running as a mixed farming operation, Murnong Farming requires each area of production to pull its weight.

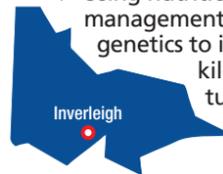
For their prime lamb operation that meant an increase in kilograms of lamb turned off from each ewe kept on farm.

On-farm comparison trials with imported New Zealand Primera and Highlander rams achieved good results and has seen the operation enter into a partnership with genetics supplier Focus Genetics, NZ, and marketer Paringa Livestock, Yea.

Murnong Farming manager Josh Walter said the farm's piggery had

## At a glance

- ◆ Murnong Farming, Inverleigh
- ◆ Mixed farming operation including cropping (1000ha), lucerne hay, prime lamb production and free-range piggery on 1600ha
- ◆ 1100 head crossbred and composite ewe flock, to produce a 19-23kg lamb carcase
- ◆ New genetic breeding facility for imported Highlander and Primera rams
- ◆ Using nutrition, management and genetics to increase kilograms turned off from each ewe



taught them what could be achieved with the right balance of nutrition, genetics and management.

"How can we get sheep more like the pig operation - that's where we started the technical thinking," he said.

"We found as nutrition got better, production improved and having sheep in good condition all year

made the flock easier to manage.

"So we had the nutrition and management down pat, but we needed the genetics.

"With Paringa Livestock and Peddie's of Peshurst we travelled to NZ to see for ourselves their genetics program and, as a result, we both imported Primera and Highlander rams in 2010 and

carried out our own on-farm trials comparing them to what we could source within Australia."

Trialling imported Primera rams, Murnong found the property was getting greater numbers out the gate from their 1100 head first-cross and composite ewe flock, on 15 per cent less feed input.

Scanning percentages had also increased by 18pc, while lambing survival was up 10pc and lambing assistance down by 2pc.

Sourcing 1075 embryos from Focus Genetics through marketers Paringa Livestock for an extensive embryo transfer program last year, Murnong has now established a flock of the maternal Highlander sheep.

"When you take into account all the possible variables that affect lamb production, our own trials indicate we could likely achieve a further 25pc increase in kilos per

The changed focus has us turning off lambs three weeks earlier, with 49 per cent yield – that is a big cost saver there – as well as getting more lambs on the ground.

– JOSH WALTER,  
Murnong Farming



■ August 2013-drop Highlander rams to be sold on-property at Murnong as hoggets in February 2014. Murnong farming will be a genetic breeding facility for Paringa Livestock, who have marketing rights to the Highlander and Primera breeds in Australia. Genetics have already been sold across the country in the past 18-months, with about 200 rams going to Victoria, Tasmania and NSW.

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