

## Considering Breeding Stud Dorper or White Dorper Sheep?

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Even with low maintenance breeds of sheep, stud sheep breeding requires a lot of work, knowledge and the right infrastructure.

### Points for consideration if you are thinking of setting up a Dorper stud.

- **Love of the breed.** First and foremost a preference and love of the breed is imperative. If you don't really like the sheep, nor believe in their potential then you will not make a success of a stud Dorper operation.
- **Situation of property.** It is not much good running a stud hundreds of miles from your potential markets. Many Dorper Stud breeders in NSW initially had to quit their Dorper studs and change to White Dorper studs, as the biggest meat processor in NSW didn't like exotic sheep breeds, especially coloured exotic breeds of sheep. ( he also owned a large wool scouring and fellmongering plant).
- **Quality of grazing.** Stud animals will need to look in tip top condition.
- **Supplementary feed.** The production potential of property or accessibility to a source of supplementary feed supply. This is necessary once again so that stud animals can be kept in top condition.
- **Good stock water supply.** Once again animals need to be well watered in order to maintain top condition.
- **Good handling, yarding and if necessary shedding facilities.** These will be necessary for the frequent yarding and handling of animals that needs to be done with stud stock.
- **Good subdivision.** Subdivision of the property into several paddocks is required. This is necessary so that rams and ewes can be kept apart unless the stud master puts them together for breeding purposes. The studmaster needs to know the parentage of all lambs born to run the stud properly.
- **Record keeping.** The studmaster must be prepared to keep detailed and precise records for each animal from the time of the dam's mating with a particular stud ram. In many cases for records to be accurate, this requires tagging all lambs as they are born; a time consuming job, even with smaller numbers of sheep.
- **Financial resources.** You must have access to a fairly substantial amount of money, especially in the beginning, in order to finance the initial purchase of the quality stud stock which will form the basis of your stud. Spending money on quality stock is a good investment at this stage. If you think to save money by buying lesser quality stock at bargain basement prices, think again. Such behaviour will probably prove to be a poor investment in the long run as lesser animals will probably prove to be more difficult to sell if not unsaleable.
- **Long term investment.** Stud breeding is a long term investment, so if you are looking to make a "quick buck", think again!
- **Willingness to learn.** A stud breeder must be willing to continually work to improve and develop his flock. To this end he must be willing to learn, broaden his knowledge and keep abreast of new trends both with his chosen breed and within the sheep industry in general.

**Breeding program.** The studmaster needs to set breeding aims and develop a breeding

program which will enable him to achieve those aims. Good skills will be necessary in planning, decision making and care of animals, to enable the breeding program to be implemented in such a way as to be successful.

- **Good communication skills.** The studmaster will also have to have good communication skills in order to be able to deal successfully with prospective customers.
- **Society membership and animal registrations.** It will be necessary to join the breed society (Dorper Sheep Society of Australia Inc) and then pay the annual membership fee to remain a member of the society. Animal registrations cost \$6.60 per animal. Animal transfers (required when animals are sold from one breeder to another) cost \$6.60 per animal. All animal registrations and transfer are done through the Breed Society.
- **Downgrade inferior animals.** Be aware that not all offspring of stud animals will be of stud quality. This is a trap that I have seen many small studs in other breeds fall into. They have kept all rams lambs and tried to sell them off as stud sires, thus putting the genetics of inferior animals into the breed and downgrading the breed. Those breeders who are working hard at breed development will be especially hard on their stock and only the very best will be deemed to be stud quality animals. Other animals will be either sold as commercial animals, castrated or sold as culls into the meat market. For the posterity of a breed this is the way it should be.

If you think that you have the requirements to be a successful stud Dorper breeder then you need to proceed slowly. You need to learn as much as possible about the breed, and what characteristics to look for in quality animals before you invest in the best stud animals that you can afford. If done well a stud Dorper operation can be both personally satisfying and financially rewarding.