

FINISHING LAMBS WITH FINISHER PELLETS

Kojonup Feeds have developed **Feedlot Starter & Finisher Pellets** to provide producers with a simple, cost-effective option for finishing lambs. The pellets contain macro-minerals, trace elements, and vitamins to balance total nutrient requirements for lot-fed lambs. Yeasacc® is included to stabilise the rumen.

INTRODUCTION TO FEEDLOTING

Lambs introduced to a feedlot need to adapt physiologically to high grain rations, socially to an intensive management system, and behaviourally to a novel feeding system. With appropriate planning and design, the same facility can also be utilised for confinement feeding of sheep for deferral of grazing or protection of ground cover. Adhering to the following management guidelines and precautions will facilitate social interaction, sound feeding patterns, safe introduction, and use of Kojonup Feeds grain-based pellets.

SITE SELECTION

- Environmentally sustainable site that will not cause unacceptable odour, dust, or contamination of waterways or groundwater
- 2-4% slope is optimal for run-off and erosion control
- Well-drained or compacted base
- Protection from prevailing weather
- Pens located conveniently to handling facilities & feed storage
- Avoid inclusion of existing trees but consider planted shelter belts

FACILITIES

- Weigher/drafter unit helps precision and ease of animal selection
- Sheep handler facilitates husbandry procedures
- Shearing shed allows flexibility with animal selection and wool length

FACILITIES - CONTINUED

- Shearing shed allows flexibility with animal selection and wool length
- RFID facilitates management and monitoring
- Facilities thoughtfully integrated with each other maximise efficiency

FEEDLOT SET-UP

- 3 to 5m² per head, allowing the greater area for winter feeding. High stocking density minimises cost, facilitates social interaction, and minimises erosion and dust
- 50 x 30m is a convenient pen size. More than one pen allows flexibility of group management
- Allow for future expansion
- Consider ease of movement of stock and vehicles
- Allow 2 to 5cm of self-feeder space per head. Lower allowance for circular feeders, lighter lambs, and larger group sizes
- Choose feeders with sloped trays and restricted ingress by the lambs
- Slides on feeders limit amount of feed in trays to minimise contamination and accumulation of 'fines'
- Hay racks reduce wastage of forage
- Place water well away from feed
- Shade area 0.4m²/head, location west and orientation north to south are recommended by industry guidelines. Do NOT shade self-feeders or water troughs.
- 'Ringlock' type fencing is ideal
- Gates secure, preferably double latched
- Consider 'environmental enrichment'

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GROUP MANAGEMENT

- Segregate groups on sex (entires), breed (Merino vs Xbred vs exotic), liveweight, body condition, and possibly source
- Draft INTO the feedlot rather than OUT
- Remove any 'shy feeders', 'poor doers', and sick lambs as early as possible for appropriate treatment
- Try to NOT disrupt group structure once feeding has begun

LAMB SELECTION

- Determine 'what the market wants'
- Typically finish lambs at 45 to 50kg, BCS 2.5-3 for 20 to 22 kg carcase (varies with curfew & genetics). Monitor results
- 2nd cross lambs are more efficient and yield highest, followed by 1st cross, followed by Merinos
- Usually target no more than 10 kg liveweight gain in the feedlot
- Gain of 8-10kg at rapid growth rates has associated increase in BCS of 1 unit, so typically select lambs at BCS 1.5-2 to meet preferred targets
- Minimum individual liveweight of 35 kg on entry
- Moderate growth rate prior to entry (60 to 120 g/d) if possible
- Select sires for desired traits including temperament

PRE-ENTRY TREATMENT

- Wool length <25 mm, minimum 7 days off-shears if possible
- Full vaccination against 'pulpy kidney' and 'cheesy gland' needs 2 shots 4-6 weeks apart. Booster for 'pulpy kidney' if >3 months since previous vaccination
- Vitamin A D3 & E injection if limited access to green feed in previous 2 to 3 months
- Vitamin B12 injection if in low BCS or off feed for >24 hours
- Drench

BUDGETING

- Target 300+ g/d growth rate for crossbreds & SAMMS and 200+ g/d for Merinos
- Budget 6:1 FCR (DM) for crossbreds and 7:1 for Merinos and aim for better
- Profit is in efficiently 'value adding the whole animal' rather than weight gain. Heavier lambs with faster growth rates are more efficient
- Expect up to 5% 'shy feeders' and 1% mortality and aim for better
- Profit margin is very sensitive to the purchase price of feeder lambs

WATER

- <3000 ppm TDS is ideal. Up to 5000 ppm is suitable depending on the mineral/s present (magnesium is not so good)
- Low volume troughs with good recharge rates are best. Wedge end is preferred to a bung for easy cleaning
- Locate troughs at lower end of pens so drainage from leaks and cleaning go directly to the perimeter
- 4 to 8 litres per head per day typical intake
- 1 metre trough access per 100 head
- Ensure cool supply and bury pipes
- Clean troughs frequently
- Do NOT use dams

FEEDING

- Make palatable hay available ad-lib for 24-48 hours until lambs are settled and full and keep available for 7-10 days
- Once lambs are full, make Lamb Starter Pellets available ad-lib in self-feeders
- After 7 days from introduction, transition from hay to straw and keep straw available ad-lib for the duration of feeding
- After 5-7 days from introduction, if lambs have all established intake of pellets, transition to Lamb Finisher Pellets by filling self-feeders when approximately 2/3 empty. Maintain constant supply of Finisher for the duration of feeding
- If pellets run out, make hay available for 24 hours before re-introducing pellets and consider stepping back to Starter Pellets

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