CONFINEMENT FEEDING

The resources for confinement feeding can be the same as those for lot feeding lambs.

Aims

- Preserve existing ground cover
- Facilitate pasture establishment
- Deliver feed resources to meet animal requirements

Site Selection

- Conveniently located near handling facilities, feed storage and water source
- Located far enough from residences to avoid nuisance
- avoid pollution of waterways and groundwater
- 2-5% slope to allow run-off but limit erosion
- Preferably on a soil type that facilitates compaction
- Pen size of approximately 1500m^2 is optimal
- Allow for modular expansion
- Exclude existing trees or provide protection to the drip line.

Group Dynamics

- Allow approximately 5m^2/head for adult sheep
- Segregate sheep into cohorts likely to compete comfortably e.g. weight range <10%
- Group size preferably <350 head
- Identify, segregate and manage any sick or poorly adapted individuals as early as possible

Feed Troughs

- Allow 2-5cm/head self-feeder space with ad lib access
- Allow 30cm/head trough space with adequate capacity
- Design troughs to prevent soiling e.g. bars or strained wires to prevent ingress

Water

- Water is a valuable resource in dry times
- Low volume, rapid recharge troughs are preferred
- Place water troughs near the bottom of the pen, well away from feed
- Allow 1cm/head access
- Water requirement will typically be 4-6 litres/kg dry matter

Nutrition

- Kojonup Feeds Finisher Pellets can be used to provide energy, protein and mineral requirements
- Kojonup Feeds Confinement Pellets are a safer option where full adherence to these management guidelines is not practicable
- Kojonup Feeds pellets are grain-based products and feeding practices need to follow established grain feeding guidelines to ensure a good outcome
- A separate source of roughage should be available at all times. Hayracks will avoid a lot of wastage; they can be as simple as a perimeter of weldmesh
- Once feeding of pellets has begun they should be available at all times (self-feeders) or consistently available according to the feeding schedule (troughs)
- If pellet feeding is interrupted, re-introduction should be followed (self-feeders) or feeding rate temporarily decreased to an appropriate level (troughs)
- Introduce sheep to confinement feeding by placing ad lib, good quality hay/haylage in the pen for the first 7 days; allow 24-48 hours to allow sheep to familiarise with the environment and fill up on hay; when satisfied that sheep are settled and full, fill the feeders with pellets or feed the allotment of pellets in troughs
- From 7 days provide good quality straw in place of hay/haylage
- Feed pellets at a rate to maintain body condition or meet the desired level of performance

Nutrition Continued...

- Pellet allowance should typically be increased gradually in 50-100g increments every day to second day over a 14day period; pellets can also be trail fed as an introduction prior to confinement

Animal Management

- Recommendations will vary according to wool length
- Ensure full vaccination for enterotoxaemia (initially 2 shots 4-6 weeks apart); if sheep have not had a shot for >3mths before entry administer a booster
- Drench if indicated; sheep may have little resilience due to nutritional stress &/or may have been close grazing prior to entry, causing an increased likelihood of a worm burden
- Transition from confinement to pasture should be appropriately managed

Animal Health

- Shy feeders are those that fail to adequately adapt to the system. Numbers are minimised by following sound management principles
- Acidosis ('grain poisoning') can occur if introduction to pellets is too abrupt or there is interruption to access to pellets
- Enterotoxaemia ('pulpy kidney') can cause insidious deaths of the best individuals in a group or an outbreak in sheep with inadequate immunity
- Salmonellosis can occur due to faecal contamination of feed by birds, vermin or asymptomatic carrier sheep
- Pregnancy toxaemia can occur in individuals with inadequate feed intake

Animal Health Continued...

- Hypocalcaemia can occur in late pregnant ewes depending on the level of intake of various feeds. The pellets contain a high level of calcium but provision of a loose lick is justified for heavily conditioned ewes carrying multiples in the last month of pregnancy

Pellet Storage

Pellets are a manufactured product that require handling and storage different to grain. The raw materials are milled and re-constituted so pellets lose the protective coating and integrity of whole grains.

Moisture and heat are added during processing and these need to be allowed to dissipate. It is therefore imperative that pellets be stored in vented silos or feeders. They need to be able to breath in storage. This can be achieved by attaching either a 'witch's hat' (weather cowl) or 'whirly bird' to the top of the silo.

Pellets are rarely attacked by weevils but they are very popular with grain beetles. Storage hygiene is therefore critical to ensure minimal chance of infestation. High pressure water cleaning of silos and feeders on an annual basis is a reasonable guideline with special attention to seams and crevices. Ensure that OH&S guidelines are followed.

Pellets should not be placed in storage and subsequently left to sit without moving. Movement will break up the surface layer and allow the silo to breath. Endeavour to program orders so that product is used within 6 months of manufacture.

Pellets do not have the same flow characteristics as grains. The angle of the silo cone needs to be at least 45° to ensure that pellets flow freely without bridging

More Information

- Google "Feeding and Managing Sheep in Dry Times" published by the Department of Agriculture and Food for comprehensive guidelines or go to the URL below:

https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/bulletins/112/

KOJONUP FEEDS

WHERE QUALITY COUNTS

CONFINEMENT FEEDING

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