

# Merino Matters



## Tactical decisions for this year's lambing

There have been reports of higher than expected lamb mortalities in some early lambing mobs. From farmer observations, these lambs have been concentrated around feeders and have been lighter lambs. Reports also suggest that many mobs have scanned up to 50 per cent of ewes carrying twins.

The key drivers of lamb survival are lamb birthweight and good ewe lamb bonding.

- Poor ewe condition, especially in twin bearing ewes will result in low lamb birthweights.
- Too many lambs born in a mob per day can lead to an increase in mismothering and associated decrease in lamb survival. This is exacerbated in twinning mobs, where twice as many lambs are born over the same period, and are more prone to being left behind, especially if supplementary feeding is occurring. Smaller mobs can increase twin lamb survival by around 20 per cent.
- Multiple feeders in twinning mobs can increase the risk of mismothering. Aim for twin 200 ewes in a mob with one feeder at adlib rate. Alternatively provide adlib trail feed. When using grain, supplement good hay for roughage.

Additionally pregnancy toxaemia and hypocalcaemia can always be an issue, so minimising unnecessary stress, providing good nutrition, and a source of calcium prior to and during lambing is recommended. If feeding pellets that contain a complete range of minerals, fibre and calcium will be under control. Remember the vital factor that determines performance is the amount fed.

Lamb mortality is a major determinant of marking rate and you can reduce lamb mortality. For further advice please contact your local DAFWA livestock officer or livestock consultant.

**Information can also be found at the More Sheep website: [moresheep.org.au](http://moresheep.org.au)**

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