

FREDDIE SCHMIDT EXCELS IN THE NATIONAL SHEEP FARMER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

(Henri Londt – Dohne Merino Breed Society of SA)

Freddie Schmidt, the 2007 national winner of the Sheep Farmer of the Year Competition is an experienced animal breeder who understands the principles regarding the genetic improvement of beef and dairy cattle as well as woolled sheep. He is also very competitive in the National Top Breeder Competition of the Dohne Merino Breed Society where productivity of participating studs are evaluated according to an objective set of standards. He has won the Regional Competition five times and the National Competition in 1992.



Commercial flock:

The commercial flock is mated in two groups at different times of the year. The first group gets mated during May to lamb in October. Natural mating is practiced for 32 days with 2% rams on natural grazing and a balanced lick is provided. This group lambs in October on sour veld grazing with a balanced lick. Weaning percentage is 130% with a weaning weight of 32 kg at 100 days. Wether lambs go to the feedlot and are marketed at 45 kg live weight. They dress on average 47% and 95% grade A2 and A3. Replacement ewes go back on natural pastures until they are old enough and ready for selection and mating.

The second group of breeding ewes are mated in September to lamb in February. As in the case of the first group natural mating is applied with 2% rams on sour veld grazing with a suitable lick. Ewes lamb on natural sour veld grazing with an appropriate lick. Due to the severe winters these lambs are weaned earlier (60 to 90 days) and their live weights vary between 26 kg and 29 kg. Replacement ewe lambs go to green feed pastures and the wether lambs go to the feedlot from where they are marketed at 45 kg live weight. This group usually dresses on average 47% and 95% grade A2 and A3.

Kromspruit and Stormhoek Fine Wool studs – Phenotypic Comparisons

Freddie has two registered Dohne Merino studs and operates an open nucleus system which is registered on the Foundation Flock Register of the Dohne Merino Breed Society. The Kromspruit stud was founded in 1978 and the Stormhoek stud in 2002 when animals with the highest body weights and lowest wool fibre diameter were selected from the Foundation Flock and the Kromspruit stud. In the five years that followed the selection norm for animals in the Stormhoek fine wool stud was based on high body weights with low wool fibre diameter. An analysis of the production traits

Phenotypic values of Kromspruit Stud				
Year	BWT/kg	CFW/KG	FD/micr	REV (R/c)
2002	49.9	2.3	18.5	-0.62
2006	56.3	2.4	17.7	7.12
Sel/Dif	+6.4	+0.1	-0.8	+7.74
Table 1				

of the two studs is summarised in **Tables 1 and 2.**

The result in **Table 1** shows a substantial increase

in body weight (BWT) of 6.4 kg, a decrease in fibre diameter (FD) of 0.8micron and an increase in the relative economic value (REV) of R7.74. These changes can largely be attributed to the use of rams from the Stormhoek fine wool stud with high body weights and low wool fibre diameter in the Kromspruit stud over the last two years.

Phenotypic values of Stormhoek Stud				
Year	BWT/kg	CFW/kg	FD/micr	REV (R/c)
2002	54.7	2.21	17.5	5.19
2006	56.9	2.56	16.9	10.60
Sel/Dif	+2.2	+0.35	-0.6	+5.41
Table 2				

The selection differential column (Table 2) reflects positive progress in

terms of all production traits for the Stormhoek fine wool stud for the time as indicated. Noteworthy is the fact that animals show high body weights (BWT) with low wool fibre diameter (FD) with a slight increase in clean fleece weight (CFW). By applying goal orientated selection these results clearly illustrate how traditional ideas (i.e. that sheep with low wool fibre diameter are smaller), are proven to be incorrect. It further illustrates that optimum production, and the subsequent increase in farming income, can be successfully achieved through the application of modern breeding practices.

One of the objectives of the breeding policy of the Stormhoek fine wool stud is to produce animals with rapid growth rates and low wool fibre diameter in order to add value to both the feedlot as well as the wool component. Due to the positive correlation between body weight and fertility the increase in body weight is therefore conducive for improved reproduction.

Public ram sales:

Freddie has not only achieved good results on public sales. (Table3). The distribution of genetic material

Production Sales			
Term	Average No. rams	Average Price ®	Top Price ®
2002 - 2007	50	4,546	38,000
National Sales			
2004 - 2007	3.5	16,000	60,000
Table 3			

from the Kromspruit and Stormhoek studs also has a positive impact on the national Dohne flock in the RSA. This is but one of the many Dohne studs in the RSA and countries like Australia which contribute in a meaningful way to the improvement of the productivity of woolled sheep flocks.

With achievements like this we look forward to many future winners of the national Sheep Farmer of the Year Competition from the ranks of our Dohne studs in the RSA