

# Dorpers prove themselves

BUTLER Tanks farmers Gary and Janice Fiegert have realised the value of breeding white dorpers in the last few years.

They were 90 per cent continuous croppers growing wheat, barley, peas, lupins and canola, and ran merinos with white suffolk rams, but after a run of poor seasons with low yields and low prices, including three "very low" yielding years in a row, it was time for a change.

To reduce risk they decided to stop growing peas, lupins and canola and concentrated on wheat and some barley, and went back to a self-replacing sheep flock.

In August 2008 they bought 200 scanned in lamb F2 merino and white dorper cross ewes.

Mr Fiegert said because the opportunity was not planned the ewes were run in a feed lot until harvest finished and they were fed lupins and barley straw.

But they went on to wean 100 per cent lambs, he said.

"After this experience we then bought in several lines of F3 white dorper cross ewe lambs," he said.

The ewe lambs have gone on to produce impressive lambing rates, but that is not all they like about them.

"We like the clean white appearance of the white dorper and the fact that we can drive right through the mob without disturbing them," Mr Fiegert said.

"They are good mothers with plenty of milk and are very protective.

"The lambs are small and strong when born and very mobile soon after birth allowing for very easy lambing."

Mr Fiegert said they no longer needed to worry about all that is associated with shearing, crutching or mulesing.

"We can lamb any time of the year and not revolve around a shearing date," he said.

Mr Fiegert said some people compared the breed to cattle, but with a much faster return on your money.

And with an early maturing carcass, it makes the meat in high demand from restaurants and meat processors.

"With the ever increasing demand for meat and the increasing cost of labour, the white dorper has a big future ahead in the meat industry," he said.

Local sheep breeding consultant Bill Richardson said he was impressed with the meat per hectare production the white dorper achieves.

"While wool prices are currently at a high level the ability of the white dorpers to produce lots of lambs with a lot less input, no crutching, shearing or mulesing, means that they are a very productive unit," he said.



**BREEDERS:** Janice Fiegert among white dorpers on the Butler Tanks property.