

# Manual helps market-focused production

## FAST FACTS

- North-west New England sheep producer Alistair Yencken finds the *Making More From Sheep* manual a handy all-in-one resource.
- The manual's 'Market Focused Wool Production' module aims to help woolgrowers maximise their returns from wool sales.

It's a long way from the sheep's back to the final consumer, so producing a wool product that meets market specifications is not as simple as it sounds.

But help is at growers' hands in the 'Market Focused Wool Production' module of the *Making More From Sheep* manual, published by AWI and Meat & Livestock Australia.

Sheep producer Alistair Yencken, from the north-west New England region of NSW, says he finds the manual a handy all-in-one source for practical information and advice for running a profitable sheep business in Australia.

"The sheep industry is always evolving and information comes from all different sources - from outside the industry as well. I'm constantly using outside information in my business and *Making More From Sheep* is a great collection of information."

The 'Market Focused Wool Production' module of the manual suggests several ways sheep producers can develop their enterprises to produce a better product and meet market demands, such as:

- reducing wool micron while maintaining fleece weight
- increasing supplementary feeding in autumn to reduce the chance of tender wool
- changing shearing dates or lambing times
- increasing stocking rates.

Alistair, who runs more than 16,000 Merinos on three properties (totalling 5700 hectares) that he owns and leases near Tamworth, says that, like most sheep producers, he aims to produce the best clip possible.

"We are sheep meat and fine wool producers and for our wool enterprise we select our rams based on the softness of the wool they're producing. Our aim is to



New England sheep producer Alistair Yencken says he uses forward-selling as his preferred marketing method for his wool.

produce a very soft-handling wool that we can visually select into certain lines to meet the market," Alistair says.

"Crutching is my first and most important priority to remove any stain from the fleece before shearing.

"I try to keep vegetable matter in the wool down as much as possible through paddock management and pasture selection.

"I also pay attention to clip and shed preparation and make sure I have enough of the right staff in the shearing shed to deliver the best clip. I make sure everyone is aware of our quality-control procedures and understands our wool-growing goals."

The 'Market Focused Wool Production' module also introduces several wool-valuation tools that provide a basis for considering the range of options for managing price variability and selling your clip.

Alistair says he uses forward-selling as his preferred marketing method for his wool.

"As the manual suggests, first you need to know your cost of production (COP)

because you have to build in a price that will cover your COP and let you make a profit," he says. "I know what sort of yield I'll be getting and the micron and wool types - that stays fairly stable from year to year other than major drought years.

"So I monitor when the market is falling or rising. If the market is booming then I forward-sell. I might buy a series of contracts for 5000 kilograms at 19 microns, with specifications for vegetable matter and strength, and certain penalties if I don't meet them.

"I know my COP and I know what price I'm getting. It's been a very good way of managing my wool enterprise budget." ◀

**More information:** *Making More From Sheep - A sheep producer's manual* is made up of 11 modules that cover all aspects of sheep management and production. The manual costs \$65 (+ GST) for AWI levy-payers and can be ordered from the AWI Helpline, 1800 070 099, or on the program website [www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au](http://www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au)