

Flock management on Kars during the prolonged drought 2017 onwards...

Our Wiltipoll flock had increased over the years to 6000 breeding and 2000 weaner ewes. When drought set in towards the middle of 2017 the flock including lambs at foot had reached 15,000 head.

Our policy in dry times is not to supplementary feed but to reduce stock numbers starting with animals not vital to the nucleus of the flock. As the country started to dry off we sold larger lambs to market along with cull ewes and cast for age rams. They were trucked to markets in the south reducing our flock to 6,300 head.

In early 2018 we sold another 3,000 head of lambs and as the drought intensified, we continued to reduce grazing pressure on the property by mustering and selling a large mob of 1,300 feral goats.

With no rain falling for many months our earth tanks were dry with sheep were watering exclusively from bore water. Feed deteriorated and gradually diminished, leaving saltbush alive but with fewer leaves. The ewes were able to maintain condition and to rear lambs every year of the drought which we were able to sell off as they reached marketable size.

On Melbourne Cup day last year (2018) we received severe thunderstorms which replenished many tanks. Rain fell across several paddocks, producing a small green pick and attracting a huge population of starving kangaroos from neighbouring properties. Our green feed did not last very long.

Towards the end of 2018 we sold another 2,000 mainly lambs to continue reduction of grazing pressure.

On 22nd March, 20mm of rain fell over part of the property. This helped rejuvenate saltbush and a number of tanks caught water. On 2nd May 28mm of rain fell enough to grow some native pasture.

We've held on to 4,000 breeding ewes during the drought and will rebuild the flock when more substantial rain falls. The Wiltipolls have amazed us by consistently producing 70% to 80% lambs which we've continued to sell - keeping our business going.



Wiltipoll lambs produced and reared in the drought



Helicopter is used to muster sheep and feral goats