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complimentary of the Jilakin Downs stock and the service the Wilsons provide.

"The Wilson's rams are very good because they are commercially run and don't fall over when you get them back home and into the paddock," John said.

"We really like that Keith and Sara are prepared to invest in the genetics they need to improve their own breeding flock and they provide great knowledge on the breed."

John said due to their ram selection they could generally get away without having to shear first crosses before they were marketed.

"We've found that the blacks aren't as good at shedding but with the white first crosses we don't generally have to do anything with them," John said. "And if we don't have to do anything that means our labour times and costs are reduced."

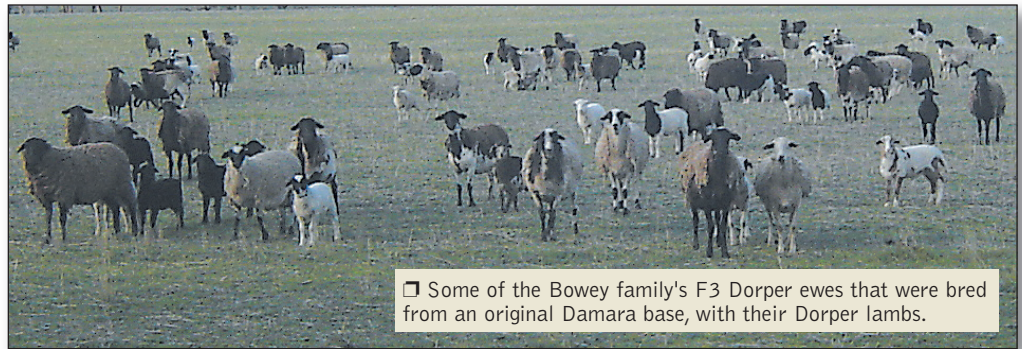
"All we do is mark, wean and then get them in again to go to market; there's nothing to it."

"Plus shearing crossbreeds is dead money as you don't get anything for the wool."

So far this season the Boweys have marked their lambs and found satisfying lambing percentages.

One mob of Merino ewes mated to White Dorpers achieved 118pc lambing while a second mob achieved 115pc.

Recent years have seen the



Some of the Bowey family's F3 Dorper ewes that were bred from an original Damara base, with their Dorper lambs.

returns from sheep production dim in light of high grain prices and as a result, large numbers of stock have been quit throughout the state.

The Boweys believe this may be a positive for producers like themselves who have remained committed to livestock.

"Twelve months ago sheep weren't making much and people got rid of their stock in droves but now the price of fertiliser is scaring everyone," John said.

"I think in the next few years we will see the 60 to 70 per cent cropping ratio slide back to the 50:50 ratio for livestock and cropping because you just can't accept the price of fertiliser as it is."

"So at some point over the next couple of years there will be a shortage of stock as there is always going to be demand for prime lambs as abattoirs still have to kill."

"I also think the demand for non-shearing ewes for prime lamb production is also going to increase as a result of industry

issues."

While the Bowey family doesn't have any current problems sourcing shearing teams they believe the ageing shearing workforce and lack of youth entering the industry is going to be a problem.

Coupled with the mulesing debate, the family believes their progression into White Dorpers will have benefits in years to come.

Looking to the future, the Boweys are considering keeping more of their White Dorper numbers for their non-shearing and mulesing attributes.

"At this stage we won't mate our Merino ewes back to Merino rams but rather put a Dorper sire over them," John said.

"We would have kept going down the same line as we have been with a pure Merino line and a crossbred line, but with the current mulesing debate we are not prepared to drop our current Merino wool clip to breed out the wool around the breech."

"In our environment we need to be breeding six to eight kilograms of wool on a big framed sheep otherwise it's not worth it for us in terms of DSE."

"If we could run at six to eight

DSE we could probably drop some wool cut, but we have spent so long breeding to get where we have," Alan said.

"We cut more wool and a better product on a big frame."

John said that the mulesing debate had devalued wool even further and with the cost of management including shearing costs it didn't make sense to keep producing wool if it wasn't making a profit.

The Bowey family said they are unhappy with Elders decision to start marketing and selling non-mulesed wool before the 2010 deadline.

"Elders haven't supported their growers in this case and all that does is push people like us out of Merinos as we are not going to put up with it," Alan said.

"We aren't happy either with some of the farmers who have non-Merino based breeds making comments in the media that they haven't mulesed for a period of time."

"Their comments are not helpful to the industry and all they are doing is pushing their own interest."

"Farmers need to be sticking together, not splintering off into groups for their own self gain."

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