

Commercial Mohair Production In Australia

There appears to be an upsurge of interest in commercial mohair production in Australia. Commonly asked questions are – is commercial production of mohair feasible? Is it profitable? Is it sustainable? One particular problem facing a newcomer to the industry is the availability of starting stock. Graziers considering entering the mohair industry are often given incorrect advice by stock agents, primary industry staff, and even people in the mohair industry who should know better, when they are told that angoras cannot be purchased in commercial numbers. While obtaining a starter flock of say 500 angoras may not be as simple as going to the weekly sheep sale, they certainly are readily available to anyone who makes the effort. My experience over the past eighteen months has been that stock are fairly readily available in mobs of between 20 and 100 with prices comparable to merino sheep for good quality commercial stock. The obvious first contact would be Australian Mohair Marketing Organization (www.ausmohair.com.au) or Mohair Australia (www.mohair.org.au) for contact details of significant mohair producers. The Australian Goat Report ([email ausgoat@netwit.net.au](mailto:ausgoat@netwit.net.au)) is also a good source of information on angoras for sale. Good quality commercial bucks are also very readily available from most studs with prices equivalent to rams.

The next question is often infrastructure requirements. Standard sheep yards are adequate for angoras. The only modification required in most shearing sheds is the replacement of one pulley wheel to allow the shearing plant to run at two-thirds speed. Fencing that will control crossbred sheep will control angoras. In my experience standard merino sheep fencing, if tight, will control most angoras in extensive situations provided the goats are not hunger stressed. Mohair producers running large mobs in cell grazing use from 2 “hot” electric wires, to five wires with 2 “hot”, to adequately control angoras. The most important consideration when considering a property for mohair production is the degree of vegetable fault on the ground. In fact mohair production should not be considered in areas subject to high levels of vegetable fault such as clover seed and burr.

The profitability of mohair production is self-evident. Average mohair prices are roughly equivalent to average prices for superfine merino fleece lines on a clean basis. An important consideration here is that mohair producers are paid on a greasy basis and average sale prices include outsorts such as skirtings, stain, and fault lines. In my experience gross returns from mohair production compared to superfine merinos shows an advantage of at least \$20 p.a. for the angora. In a truly commercial mohair production situation where animals are well managed, crutched, professionally shorn and fleece correctly classed with full emphasis placed on fibre production, average sale price should be considered as an easily achievable benchmark. In recent times this average has been between \$10 and \$12 per kg.

From a land care perspective mohair production is not only sustainable in its own right but may make a significant contribution to the sustainability of other farming enterprises. Trials conducted by the Department of soil and water conservation have shown that goats are the preferred species to use in fragile landscapes. I have personally used angoras to control briar, blackberry, variegated thistle, lantana, and a range of woody weeds and timber regrowth. It has been my experience that where goats are not overstocked and pasture is allowed to regenerate at strategic times, considerable improvement in pasture composition and production may be obtained. I have found a mixture of angoras and cattle to work very well, with each species complementing the other in grazing preferences, while at the same time giving a degree of internal parasite control.

While there are a number of major differences in the management of angoras compared to sheep or cattle, the skilled stockman will have little difficulty. Apart from newborn kids and freshly shorn animals the angora is extremely hardy if well nourished and relatively free of internal parasites. Obtaining sound reliable advice on angora management may be a problem for newcomers to the industry. Once again I would suggest the first port of call to be the Australian Mohair Marketing Organisation. Get to know mohair producers in your area, in particular growers producing mohair in commercial quantities. Most producers will welcome genuinely interested people and will be happy to show shearing, classing, and husbandry techniques. For more information I can be contacted at kwsykes@bigpond.com.au.

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