

## **Quobba moving with the times**

*By Fiona Shallcross – Appeared in Northern Guardian, 2002*

Tim and Sara Meecham of Quobba station are not only busy managing a tourism enterprise, they are also embracing the advantages of new sheep breeds and trialing innovative ideas to improve water quality.

Quobba, located on the coast north of Carnarvon, has traditionally been a sheep station. However with changing times the Meechams decided to invest into Damara meat sheep in 2000.

“We couldn’t really grow wool well on the coast – the yields are so low. However I was very impressed seeing how the Damara and Dorper performed in Africa during a Department of Agriculture study tour 3 years ago” Tim said.

“We bought our first Damara rams 2 yrs ago and we only had a 15% first cross lambing percentage last year due to the drought and ewes already pregnant to Merinos. This year we increased the ram numbers when the drought broke and hope for a 70-80% lambing percentage off the Merino ewes.”

“Since we bought our rams 2 years ago only 1 has died which we found had been hit by a car on the main road into Quobba” Tim explained.

The Meechams have been equally impressed by the sale prices the young rams have attained with entire F1 ram lambs achieving around \$70 at only 6-7 months of age. Similarly although no figures have been recorded yet, Tim has noticed that the twinning rate seems to be higher than with pure merino lambs just from observing them in the paddock. Tim expects that their F1 Damara Merino cross sheep will need shearing however as the F2 animals start to breed up the need for shearing will be eliminated due to their natural shedding characteristic. Eventually Tim hopes that there will be no need to shear any sheep on Quobba thereby cutting out a large cost.

The Department of Agriculture’s Gascoyne Murchison Strategy is also trialing a water treatment unit at Quobba which manufacturers claim has a beneficial impact on water properties by rendering salts, minerals and metals inert and non-active and thus improving stock performance.

“We have set up a video monitoring system at the trapyard recording animal behaviour on two troughs, one which has the water treatment and the other just normal. I had never seen or heard about this setup before so will be interesting to see if any results” Tim said.