



## Finishing merino lambs on planted pastures

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### Introduction

Finishing lambs on planted pastures is one of the options available to sheep farmers in the East Griqualand area of KwaZulu-Natal. There is a huge potential of research to be conducted on finishing of lambs on planted pastures and their profitability. Planted pastures require high production inputs to be produced, while it is the cheapest feed available to the lambs during winter months. Weaned male lambs play a key role in maintaining cash flow of the enterprise. However, it is essential to optimize lamb performance from planted pastures to improve profit margins of the sheep enterprise.

### Post weaning lamb management

Lambs were born at the beginning of April 2017 and weaned at 90 days. Post weaning, 40 male lambs were randomly selected from the flock. Lambs were then allocated into two treatment groups: oats & Japanese radish mix grazing and stouling rye & Japanese radish mix grazing. Two paddocks of 1.6 ha were used for this demonstration trial and further

divided into sub-paddock of 0.8ha. Temporal electrical fence was used to demarcate small paddocks. From July to October of 2017, lambs were reared on oats/ stouling rye pasture mixes for 90 days. All lambs were weighed monthly for the duration of the demonstration. Production data from lambs were collected for initial weight at 90 days, final weight at 180 days, and average daily gain (ADG) calculated at the end of the study (Table. 1). These lambs did not receive any supplementary feed during demonstration trial.

### Results & Discussion

At the start of the demonstration trial, initial live weight (90 days) was similar in both treatment groups. At the end of the demonstration trial (180 days), Oats & Japanese radish mixes achieved (5.6 kg) more live weight than the stouling & radish pasture mixes (Table.1).

Lambs grazing on Oats & Japanese had a higher (57.5g/day) average daily gain (ADG) than stouling rye & radish mixes.

**TABLE 1. Performance of lambs on two pasture mixes**

Production data	Stouling rye-Japanese radish mixes	Oats-Japanese radish mixes
Initial weight -90 days) (kg)	26.0	26.4
Final weight -180 days(kg)	32.2	37.8
Average daily gain (g/day)	68.9	126.4

## Conclusions

In conclusion, it is evident that Oats & Japanese radish pasture mixes can finish merino lambs even though the demonstration trial results are only for a short-term (3 months). In future, there is a need to repeat this demonstration trial in order to obtain clear conclusive trends.

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## Contact

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