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## Joining strategies

The region and climate in which you are situated will determine the time of joining/lambing and this should tie in with the optimum time to sell flock rams. The important thing to remember is that a short condensed lambing is more desirable than an extended one. This will result in a more even mob of flock rams at sale time with little evidence of immature or stunted animals in your mob due to vastly different age groups. From the point of management and selection issues, it is much easier to work with a group of lambs that are similar in age, and the visual effect it will have on clients selecting rams will benefit your reputation as your rams will always look very even.

The manner in which you join ewes will depend primarily on the number you have. A small mob of ewes may either all be joined to a single ram or put through an artificial insemination program then one ram used as a backup at some time later. If you have the rams available or have a larger mob, there are substantial advantages in using more than one ram. Not only does this give you a much greater genetic diversity to draw on in future generations but it will also provide an opportunity to make accurate comparisons between the genetic merits of the sires you are using. If you are only using the one sire, these performance comparisons are not able to be made accurately, unless you are using across-flock performance recording systems.

How you select which ewe will be paired to which ram is largely the ‘magic’ that will determine how well you will succeed and how you will be regarded as a stud breeder. There is no set rule. How you approach this exciting phase of stud breeding is what will make you different from all other stud breeders. You will already have in your mind the type of sheep you want to breed, and you will have