

Kangaroo Island Landscape Board - Containment Feeding Case Study



Containment feeding area case Study: Rick and Annie Morris - Karatta

- **Location:** 5790 South Coast Rd Karatta, Kangaroo Island
- **Annual Ave Rainfall:** 575 mm
- **Farm size:** Approximately 1,000 hectares
- **Enterprise:** Self replacing Composite flock

Why did you make the decision to build a containment feeding area?

This containment feeding area came about as a result of the bushfires in 2020 when we set these pens up. We tried to set them up so we don't ever have to drive into the pens at all.

Describe the size and features of the containment area:

It's an island set up, you'll see it is 100 m by 100 m by 100 m, which gives us about enough headspace to feed 900 ewes roughly. We get 1,000 in here when they're shorn. Not having to go into the pens saves us a lot of time and diesel.

We started with cement troughs, but they were requiring cleaning too often with the dust in here. So we went to the PVC pipe troughs to minimise the dust getting into the stock water.

We copied a design of flipping the ring lock wire upside down, you'll notice the big squares are at the bottom.

We drive around with our yellow kelpie feed cart with a short auger on it. We auger the grain over the fence, sometimes onto the fence. There might be a little bit of spillage outside, but the sheep are able to pick that up by sticking their heads through the bottom of the ring lock fence.

What are some of the advantages of building a containment area?

We are able to feed sheep easily from the outside of the pens, we don't have to open any gates, which saves time, diesel and grain. We have more control over the containment ration being fed to the sheep. Just being able to get stock off the property for us is good. It's when we reach our ground cover minimum which for us is 800 kg of feed on offer. When the sheep have come close to eating it all, we start to consider bringing them in.

What are some of disadvantages of building a containment area?

Animals can be more susceptible to disease in a confined area. We have had an issue with *Campylobacter* (or *Ovine campylobacteriosis* - formerly *ovine vibriosis* - an infectious disease of breeding ewes causing abortion in late pregnancy) This disease was brought in from contaminated feed after the 2020 fires.

So that is something to keep in mind. I would encourage anyone who's getting into this for the first time to run a blood test with a vet and just see where they're up to with campylobacter. If the flock is naïve, then I would get into a vaccination program, it's just something to look out for in a containment feeding situation.

Containment area design

What we tried to set up was a copy of a friend's containment feeding area in the southeast, who set up these shade cloth feed bunks. We had an outrigging wire with just iron droppers pegged in the ground. It was a failure because no matter what we did, the outside wires were rubbing on the droppers and wearing and breaking, so we've got to come up with a different design.

We've parked this for now, but it's a great idea in that it keeps the feed up off the ground. If there are any showers of rain, that obviously drains through the shade cloth and you don't get any wastage of grain. We can still drive around the outside of the pens and feed them. The sheep are not treading on, urinating on or contaminating the feed, so there's minimal wastage with this set up. We have even used the pens as the lambing paddocks – and even bred in these pens.

Learning for next time:

If we did it again, we'd just use plain wire instead of ring lock around the pens, as its very time consuming to cut those verticals in the ring lock and twist them up out of the way so the wire doesn't injure the sheep. I think plain wire would be a better option for setting up these pens and the feed bunks.

A low-cost alternative to establishing a containment feeding area is to move stock onto kikuyu paddocks if you have them. This keeps stock off annual pasture paddocks that will lose cover and become susceptible to erosion if heavily grazed.

We now have much greater control over the amount of feed we are supplying the sheep. Yeah, it just gives us total control.

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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DROUGHT RESILIENCE ADOPTION AND INNOVATION HUB

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