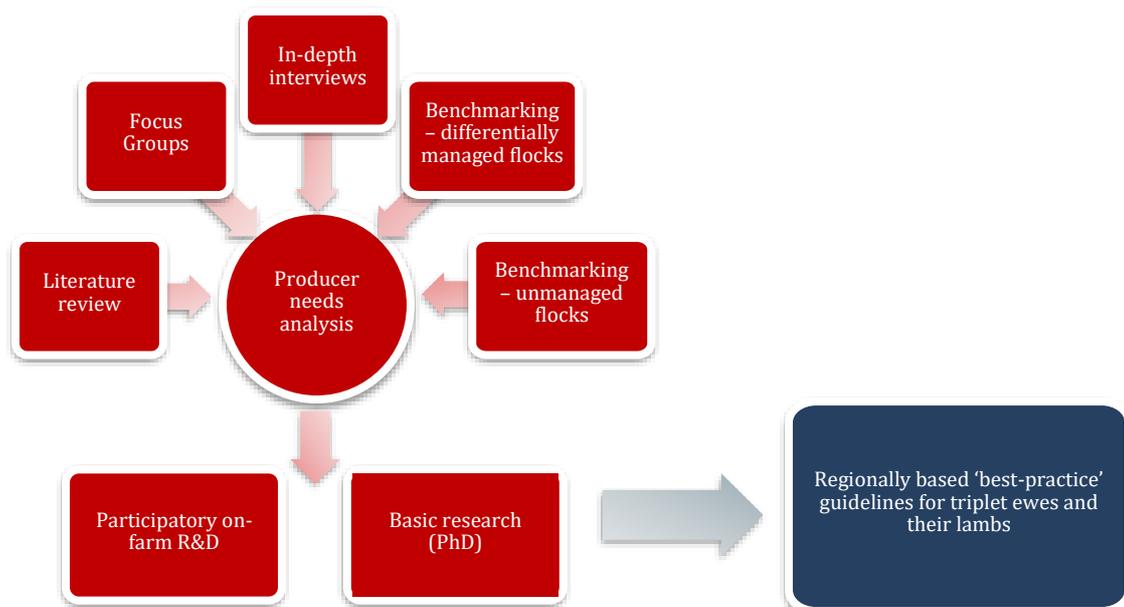


# Mums with Multiples

## Managing fecund flocks to improve the performance of triplet dams and their lambs

There has been a significant increase in scanning rates, which has led to an increase in the percentage of triplet bearing ewes. Triplet bearing ewes and their lambs are at higher risk of mortality and other animal welfare issues. Although only about 5% of ewes are currently scanned for triplet fetuses the precise magnitude of the risk associated with excessive mortality of triplet bearing ewes and lambs is unknown. The project is seen as an important step for the industry in order to mitigate risks associated with this cohort of animals.

Stage 1 of the project was to undertake a producer needs analysis, this included an extensive literature review, 5 focus groups in Australia and New Zealand, 16 in-depth interviews and 87 benchmarking surveys from both farmers who manage triplet bearing ewes separately and those who don't normally manage triplet bearing ewes separately (figure 1). Key research priorities were ascertained during every stage of the process. The findings from this process were presented at 5 regional forums and 1 webinar, again key research priorities were gathered from farmers. The findings from these workshops and webinars are displayed below in table 1. The collaborators would like to thank all farmers for their involvement in this process.



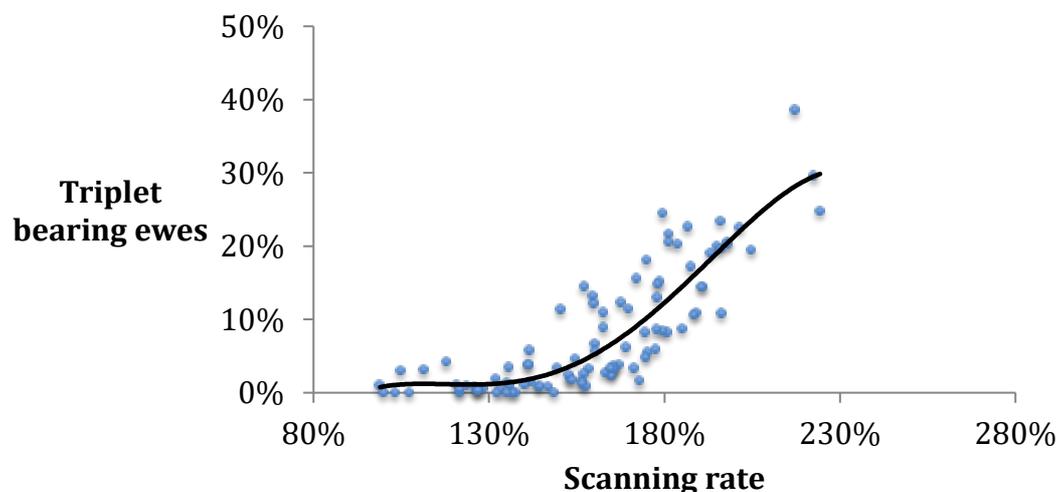
**Figure 1- Summary of producer needs analysis**

Research Priorities	Workshop Results	Survey Results	Overall rank
Mob size and Stocking rate	2	1	1
Condition Score	1	2	2
Feed on Offer (FOO)	3	4	3
Mineral Supplementation	4	6	4
Supplementary feeding	7	3	5
Pasture Composition	5	9	6
Foetal losses	10	5	7
Shelter options	9	7	8
Alternative Pastures	6	9	9
Mid-pregnancy shearing	8	9	10
Shepherding	11	7	11
Lamb Fostering	12	7	12
Specific nutrients	13	9	13

**Table 1- Summary of research priorities from farmers involved in both workshops and benchmarking surveys, with 1 being most important.**

## How to be involved?

The next stage of the project is to test the top 4 research priorities as identified by the producers involved in the project thus far. We are planning on doing on-farm research on 80 farms across Australia in both 2019 and 2020. To be involved all you need is a minimum of 80 triplets and willingness for some treatments to be imposed on your farm. The exact research and treatments done on each farm will depend on many things and we are happy to accommodate farmers where possible. If you are unsure about whether you will have enough triplets we would like you to consult your scanner and ask him to have a look, which we have funds to pay the extra to scan for triplets. From the benchmarking survey data we saw that at a scanning rate of 160%, there was between 1-15% triplet-bearing ewes (figure 2), which indicates that getting your scanner to have a look to see where your sheep are at is definitely worthwhile.



**Figure 2- Scanning rate (%) versus Triplet bearing ewes (%) on all farms surveyed in 2018**

To be involved please contact your regional coordinator whose details are below:

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