

Prime time for the Dorper, the ‘Angus’ of the sheep world



'It's not just good-eating meat but it ticks all the ethical boxes for modern consumers,' says Jamie McTaggart of Dorper lambs. Picture: Kelly Barnes.

- The Australian
- 12:00AM July 30, 2016
- [SUE NEALES](#)



Reporter - Rural/Regional Affairs
[@BushReporter](#)

Jamie McTaggart has had enough of consumers thinking all lamb is the same. The specialist sheep meat producer — who has turned his back on his family’s long Merino wool heritage in favour of breeding 50,000 South African Dorper meat lambs a year — knows it is just not true.

He also thinks it is time Australians who love throwing a lamb chop on the barbecue — or a marinated slow-cooked lamb shoulder in the oven — were given a greater right to choose the quality of lamb meat they want to buy.

“Think about when you walk into a butcher’s shop or supermarket — there is all this high-priced beef branded as top-quality Angus or wagyu, distinguishing it from the rest, yet all we sell is lamb like a bulk commodity,” Mr McTaggart said yesterday from his outback property near Quorn, 39km northeast of Port Augusta.

“Consumers now, especially the Chinese, are so brand-conscious and want to know that if they pay a higher price for a particular brand or breed of beef, it will always be top quality; we should be doing the same for Dorper lamb.”

The hope of the Australian Dorper Sheep Society backed by Meat and Livestock Australia is that the Dorper breed can become the “Angus” of the sheep world.

The Dorper society, of which Mr McTaggart is national president, has seized the initiative to become the first lamb “brand” for consumers.

More than 600 farmers across Australia who breed Dorper sheep have banded together to develop a Dorper lamb logo brand for use only on lambs that meet a prescribed quality, fat score and meat quality standard.

Queensland Dorper producer Donna Emmerton said it was vital to supply a consistent branded lamb product to all markets, if Dorper lamb were to build a top-quality reputation.

“All producers must be on the same page, producing the same product consistently,” she said of the sheep breed that has soared in popularity in the past two decades because of its hardy, easy-care nature and good meat-eating properties

“We feel consumers don’t always distinguish between our lamb and other breeds and if we want Dorper to become the lamb of choice — the Angus of the sheep world — we think it’s important to make that brand distinction to create more demand.”

Mr McTaggart said Dorper lamb tastes so good because it is naturally lean.

Even better: “It’s not just good-eating meat but it ticks all the ethical boxes for modern consumers; it’s all grass-fed and, because there’s no wool, the lambs don’t need shearing or mulesing — you don’t even need to dock their tails.”