

ASHEEP NEWS



Case Study: Mixed Farming with Ben & Esther Creek

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

It's always a pleasure when an opportunity arises to catch up with ASHEEP members located outside the Esperance Port Zone. Whilst the bulk of our members farm in this area, we have a growing number joining us from further afield in WA. Recently, ASHEEP's Executive Officer Sarah Brown stopped by Boyup Brook to meet Ben and Esther Creek, and we thank them for giving us an insight into their farming system.

Ben and Esther Creek farm Tintara, an enterprise that consists of 1800ha across two farms in Mayanup (just south of Boyup Brook, on the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook Road). They run a 50:50 mixed farming system. The livestock consist of 7000 Merino breeding ewes and 1500 hoggets (mated to Merino rams for replacements and Suffolk rams for the crossbred market), as well as 70 South Devon cows. The cropping program is a rotation of canola, barley, oats, followed by either lupins or back to canola. The Creeks have also started adding in wheat for chemistry reasons.

The land is 85% arable, with predominantly gravel-loam soils and some red loam over clay. Some of the farm is ex blue gum and has been brought back into work over the last 5 years. Average annual rainfall sits at around 550mm.

Up until 2021, Ben worked as an agronomist part-time, as well as farming. It's clear that the agro experience serves him well. He has a passion for experimentation with seed varieties and has several trials currently running on the farm. The Creeks run long-term pasture paddocks with a ryegrass / clover base as the main feedbase for their stock.

Image: Views across Tintara, farmed by Ben & Esther Creek, 9/9/23.

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Image: Ben, Esther and Theo Creek.

Tintara is a second-generation family farm, bought by Ben's father Richard Creek 44 years ago when he moved out from England where he had been a beef, cropping and potato merchant. Management of the farm has now been taken on by Ben and Esther, with Richard still involved.

What are your key focuses for running a successful operation?

"Number one is family involvement and family time. The second focus is timing and discipline; being prepared with early sowing, planning key jobs like crutching and shearing, having chemical on hand early, etc. Don't be afraid to admit to failures and never stop learning from them", said Ben. "I also think it's important to be proactive and think outside the box. At the moment some are worried and off-loading sheep, but we have taken a different approach and hope to run 800-1000 of our dry sheep at a 120ha long-term lease block we have just taken on in Margaret River."

This lease is a strategic move for the Creeks. With the mutton market currently low, they'd prefer not to be forced to "give the cull ewes away". Therefore, having shorn the white tags, they will be run in Margaret River with other dry stock (such as maiden ewes that have not got in lamb and hoggets). This may give the Creeks the opportunity to get a better price if the market lifts, but also frees up space to expand their cropping program.

2023 Seasonal Conditions

Seasonal conditions at Tintara are comparatively dry this year, with 335mm at time of interview (9/9/23). Ben commented, "There was a great break at the start of April, but it was too early. About 45mm rain fell between mid-to-late April, then nothing much more until 31st May. The cropping program benefits in dryer seasons; in higher rainfall years it can get too wet. So, from a crop perspective it's looking really good, but has been a challenge for pastures due to our heavy stocking rate. We were feeding sheep up until the end of July. I should have pulled out a paddock of crop, but cropping prices were strong, the price of urea down, it was attractive to put more in."

Despite being caught short on pasture this year, the Creeks were able to keep the stock going with supplementary feed, confinement feeding, and tried more crop-grazing. "We grazed our early-sown Bannister Oats as a back-up and the Harpoon Barley. Most of the Harpoon will be fine, you can hardly notice. Crop-grazing is an area we're learning about. We have to build our confidence to graze without impacting yields badly. You get nervous of losing yield on year where sheep are not worth as much and we'll have to see how the economics of it stack up."

Feedbase

"We run long-term pasture paddocks. The only reason that we will pull out of pasture is if the paddock fails, for example too much silver grass or if the clover is dying down. The dearest part of the pasture program is the re-seeding, you don't get the density in the first years until it's established. We started seeding pastures mid-April this year.

That involves topping up existing pastures as well as seeding those that have been pulled out of crop."

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Farm Snapshot

Business Name: B&E Creek & Co

Enterprise Mix: 50% cropping, 50% sheep / cattle.

1800ha Mayanup (south Boyup Brook)

- Soil: Gravel loam & red loam over clay
- Av. Annual Rainfall: 550mm

120ha Margaret River

- Soil: Loamy

Stock: 7000 Merino breeding ewes, 1500 hoggets, Suffolk & Merino rams, 70 South Devon cows.

Feedbase: Ryegrass / clover pastures, oats, stubbles, containment feeding.

Team: Ben & Esther Creek, Richard Creek, Mike Jones, + 2 casuals & seasonal staff.



Above & Below: A paddock of Harpoon Barley that has been grazed three times. Ben noted that the paddock has had challenges with net blotch despite two fungicide applications, although the timing of the second application may have benefited from being earlier, but it clashed with a holiday to Tasmania. Ben expects 2-3 tonne p/ha from this paddock. It doesn't yield the same as mainstream barley varieties.



“We used 25kg p/ha Bells pasture seed mix (Persian Clover, Sub Clover, Balansa Clover, Wicher Ryegrass, Fantastic Ryegrass) plus 50kg p/ha barley (preference is Harpoon or another forage barley). We have grown forage barley for about 18 years now and we also grow a seed crop for Rob Bell. It has great vigour. We have found that Harpoon hangs on longer in the season”, said Ben.

Feed gaps are in early winter due to cold, and summer / autumn. As the season dries off, the Creeks run stock on dry pastures and then open them into adjacent crop stubbles straight after harvest, allowing sheep to go back and forth. Stubbles last through December and January and sheep are fed supplementary lupins to top up the stubbles (500g p/hd p/wk). Around March, a mix of oats and lupins is trail-fed. “Several years ago, we invested in a sheep feed trailer with an auger, split bins and scales that is able to wirelessly connect to a mobile phone, so that can tailor the exact mix to each mob.”



Above: 9/9/23 Ben Creek in a grazed paddock of pasture sown 10th April 25kg p/ha Bells pasture seed mix, 50kg p/ha forage barley. Dry seasonal conditions have impacted growth. This paddock was in blue gums 5 years ago and was in canola in 2022.

Sheep Program Overview

Merino ewes with 19-20 micron wool are the backbone of the Creeks’ 7000 head breeding flock, of which 2500 are Dohne Merinos. Ben explained that his father Richard wanted to retain the Dohnes and it has been interesting to run them in comparison to the main Merino flock.

“The Dohnes last well, but they have been cutting about 1kg less wool per head and lambing percentages have been similar. Their lambs are quicker growers and can be sold at crossbred prices. We like having them in the mix.” The flock is mated to produce replacements and crossbred lambs. “It can be complicated, but there is a good balance”, said Ben.

Terminal sires are drawn from the Creeks’ own Suffolk flock (35 ewes) with extras bought in from other studs. The Creeks don’t currently sell their Suffolk rams, but when the opportunity to buy stud ewes came up, they built it in as a risk management tool to run a closed flock if future need arose. Dohne rams are sourced from Far Valley Dohnes (Arthur River) and Merino rams from Quailerup West Merinos (Wickepin). ASBV’s contribute to ram selection; “Esther loves them. We get the ram books pre-sale and mark out the rams we are interested in and then cull on visual inspection.”

Below: 9/9/23 Paddock of pasture established around 6-7 years prior.

Continued over page.



Regarding animal health, the Creeks have been vaccinating for OJD for the last 10 years and the whole breeding flock is now covered. For arthritis and clostridial diseases, this year they transitioned to using Zoetis's new GlanEry combination vaccine. To combat flystrike, they are thinking about moving genetics toward sheep that will not need to be mulesed, with Ben noting "We're definitely not rushing stopping mulesing, we're waiting to get our genetics right. People have made the change too quickly and fly strike has been an issue. In the meantime, we use Tri-Solfen for pain relief during mulesing." "We strive for highest animal welfare standard that we can. We love our animals, love livestock, whilst they are on the farm we make sure they get looked after really well."

Joining kicks off on 1st January for the crossbred mobs, followed by the Merinos and Dohnes on 15th January. The rams start getting fed supplementary grain 6 weeks prior to joining and are mated at 2% of ewe numbers. Ewes are flushed pre-joining with lupins.

Shearing is in mid-February annually, crutching in late August / September. "We've been 25 years or longer with the same shearing run, they go above and beyond."

Ewes are scanned for wet and dry, and the Creeks have started scanning for multiples and singles. Lambing starts in June. Merino lambs sit at 108% marked and 115-120% for crossbred lambs. Lambs are weaned at about 12 weeks old.

Crossbred lambs are sold finished or as stores to feedlot. "Last year we finished 30% of them but it can vary. If the price of grain or pellets is low we will keep them on and feed them. In the past we have sent a sample of our grains to Dr John Milton and also to Henry Strating (Superior Livestock) who advise on a ration mix including supplements."

The Creeks have been using the live export market to sell merino wethers and don't want to see the industry phased out. "The phase out impacts the whole market. It has not been banned yet and we are already struggling. We've made some changes including not buying merino rams this year and we are planning to mate fewer merinos. We still need to breed replacements though. We'll join more ewes to terminals and run a younger mob. We're pulling back numbers slightly by selling the white tags when ready, and orange tags with broken teeth or bad udders will go. We won't rush them off the farm though."



Above left: Suffolk stud ewes and lambs. Right: Newley weaned crossbred lambs, 12 weeks old.

Cattle Program

The South Devon cattle breeding program is mainly run by Richard Creek. They have a fit in the system in wetter areas of the farm and in gully areas that don't run sheep well due to worm pressure. Angus bulls are sourced from Little Meadows (north of Boyup Brook) and the replacement heifers are bred via artificial insemination from an eastern states stud. Richard prioritises EBVs for fat score, low birth weights, and high daily gain. They aim to finish stock prior to selling but will feedlot them if needed.

Areas of productivity improvement focus / efficiency

The Creeks have joined the Towards 90 (T90) program as an exchange farm. The project is being driven by Meat & Livestock Australia and is focused on improving lambing percentages, targeting 90% lamb survival across single and twin-bearing ewes. James Macfarlane (AgricUltra) is the WA program facilitator and has been running producer meetings, using the Creeks' farm as a case study to share information and practice T90 methods.

By being involved in T90 the Creeks are aiming to wean more lambs and improve their conception rate, which used to be 97% wet but has gone back to 92%-93% and they have not yet identified why. Esther is condition scoring stock as a strategy to improve conception and suspects that nutrition could be playing a role. "Mid-joining I scored the ewes at 2.8 and that level of body condition likely impacted our scanning percentages", said Esther.

With Ben's agronomy background, another focus for productivity improvement is pasture and crop varieties. *Cont'd over pg.*

"I love trying new varieties. I've been playing with Pallaton Raphno, a kale/raddish cross that's high in protein and dry matter, known for early vigour and growth. It's ideal to seed it in August, but I seeded 12ha in May this year. I'm aiming to use it in the November-December feed gap to fatten tail lambs. I've already grazed it three times and been impressed with the growth. It had a first graze with hoggets in mid-July. Then it had 700 lambs and 500 ewes in for two weeks in early August, then a second graze in late August for two weeks with the same stock. It could have been grazed longer but I pulled the stock out at that point as I didn't want to flog it. It has been fed about 100 units of Nitrogen and 30 units of Potassium to get that result." "Having said that, there's nothing like a solid dense clover / rygrass paddock in this area if you feed it and protect it", said Ben.

"I just want to go forward in the farm. I need to knuckle down and focus on breeding objectives and high yield. Our barley averaged 6.2 tonne p/ha last year, with areas floating between 9-12 tonne. There is a lot of opportunity to improve that with the hyper-yielding information we are learning from." "Canola we generally average 2.5 tonne p/ha, up to 4 in some areas. Some of the farm is ex blue gum and we had an area of canola that went 1 tonne last year. These areas need significant nutritional work and the country needs time to settle after clearing."

Record keeping & software systems

The Creeks use Mobble to keep track of livestock record keeping, including mob paddock movements and Livestock Production Assurance information including animal health treatments. Mobble includes a mobile phone app that works when there's no service. Ben was involved in beta-testing the software about 2 years ago, but stopped using it as it was missing key functions at that time. Ben reports that's now changed; they recently restarted using it and the improved functionality has been excellent. They also use a CSBP white-board farm map in the shed as a visual display of paddock and bulk mob numbers.

Other programs the Creeks use include Back Paddock for cropping, AgriMaster for the farm business, and WhatsApp for communication. Ben is also an active X (previously named Twitter) user. You can find him at @farmagro1. Ben focuses his account on agriculture, asking questions of other farmers and sharing knowledge.

Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) System

Esther takes the lead on the farm's WHS system using Safe Farms (<https://safefarms.net.au>). The farm went through a CBH audit a few years ago which gave them good groundings on the areas they could improve. Two years ago, Ben was involved in a motorbike accident which has left him with ongoing back issues. Since then, they have fitted all the quad bikes with bars and only certain staff are permitted to ride them. They have purchased a side-by-side for each farm, with Ben commenting that "they are expensive, but not as expensive as someone's life."

Where do you see the biggest challenges being for the farm now and into the future?

"Activism and politics will be some of our biggest issues. Our government doesn't want to support ag. People are waking up to it though and the consumer is slowly being swayed to the farmer, and I think that will continue", said Ben. "Farmers need to come together more. I commend WA Farmers and PGA. People like John Hassel, Tony Seabrook, Mark Fowler, Steven Bolt, Bindi Murray. We have seen what they can do with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act repeal. These people lead the charge, we need to back them. We need more of a voice and we need to be more proactive."

"Looking further, I'm optimistic about the sheep enterprise. People still have to eat. They tell us there is good opportunity internationally. We will ride out the tough times and be there when it comes back. I can see the enterprise mix possibly swinging to 60% cropping but I don't want to go much further than that, we want a diverse system."

"We just want to do what we do and do it well. Raise our family and farm for the next generation as my dad did for me. We love what we are doing, we're passionate to learn, we want to grow and expand. I'm optimistic as a farmer, as a grower, and as an ex-agro. We have great seed varieties, amazing technology and great livestock genetics available to us."



Ben's Farm Phone App Recommendations

- Agora Livestock** - for tracking livestock prices and grids
- WillyWeather** - for wind
- Lambing Planner App** - by DPIRD & ASHEEP
- Farm Weekly Online** - news
- WhatsApp** - communication

Tributes Flow to John Wallace for his Time on WALRC

Esther Price, WALRC

The WA livestock research Council announced a series of new appointments at its AGM this month, with Jason Stokes of Chapman Valley and Dean Wyatt of Pingaring appointed to fill the positions of retiring members John Wallace (Esperance) and Jessica Horstman (Northampton).



Research Institution representation also had some changes with Beth Paganoni replacing Mandy Curnow and Kelsey Pool replacing Dominique Blanch as the DPIRD and UWA representatives respectively.

In announcing the changes, WALRC chair Dr Bronwyn Clarke paid special tribute to founding WALRC council member and Esperance farmer John Wallace. “John has been a fantastic contributor to WALRC. He has helped shape our culture but more over it is his capacity to ask really hard yet relevant questions – that invariably lead to improvements in outcomes, that is his greatest skill,” Bronwyn said. “Our researchers will always seek him out as they know their work will be respectfully questioned and eagerly adopted if proven valuable.”



Bronwyn added that under John’s guidance and influence, the organisation has really settled into its role as a conduit to MLA in helping set the research and extension investment priorities and then providing critical review of the research proposals that come out of that process. “For example, this month we have three of our members charged with the proposal review of the current round of applications that have come out of the southern beef project call. That is a significant responsibility that weighs heavily on us and so part of my job is to make sure our producers involved in reviews are absolutely current in terms of their understanding of what is needed to respond to RD&E gaps.”

Bronwyn said it was a credit to incoming council members Dean and Jason to have made their way through the application process to be appointed to the role. “We ask a lot of our producer members in terms of their time commitment to being across the current suite of RD&E endeavours and to considering the relevance to current farming practises.”

WALRC is currently working towards releasing its next round of priorities to be fed into MLA. The current year’s priority list is available at www.walrc.com.au. More information: Esther Price, Executive Officer, WALRC eo@walrc.com.au

Tool for Grazing Management: Australian Feedbase Monitor

Meat & Livestock Australia have been promoting a world-first tool for grazing management – the Australian Feedbase Monitor (AFM). Producers who have set up their online myMLA account and linked it to their Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) account are eligible to access the tool for free.

AFM is an online grazing management tool developed by Cibo Labs and Meat & Livestock Australia that provides users with a 30-day rolling mean of pasture growth (Total Standing Dry Matter – TSDM), updated every five days. Images are provided at a scale of 1ha and are available for unique property identification codes (PICs).

To use it: 1) Log in to your myMLA account. 2) Click the ‘Access the tool’ button on the banner that appears at the top of the myMLA dashboard – you will be taken through to the Australian Feedbase Monitor page on the Cibo Labs website. 3) Click ‘Get started with AFM’ and proceed to set up your farm.

For enquiries about accessing the Australian Feedbase Monitor, contact the Helpdesk on 1800 865 25.

Meat & Livestock Australia expect that this tool will be a catalyst for a major shift in the objective measurement of producers’ pasture and fodder feedbase.

Access the tool: www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/tools-calculators/australian-feedbase-monitor/

Executive Officer Update

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

It has been a busy year for the ASHEEP team with pasture, cattle, CN30 and shearing projects underway, plus field days, our annual conference, a Tassie tour, a Ravensthorpe / Katanning tour, a working dog school, submissions on the live sheep export phase out policy, and more. A year with some great highlights but also challenges to our industry.

Contributing to the live export phase out discussion has been important to ASHEEP. We've worked to connect producers and industry to the consultation process, made our own submission raising many members' concerns, and contributed to the media discussion. Key to our message has been a strong view that the government should withdraw the policy. A summarised version of our submission is available via our next enews or email eo@asheep.org.au.

I was invited by Sheep Producers Australia (SPA) to spend several days in Canberra in early September as part of a delegation from WA to meet with politicians regarding the phase out policy. It was a worthwhile trip. Other representatives joined from WAFarmers, Pastoralist and Graziers Association (PGA), WoolProducers Australia, National Farmers Federation, WA Shearing Industry Association, Livestock & Rural Transport Association WA, as well as wool / sheep farmers. Meetings were held with politicians and staffers from Labor, Liberal, Nationals and independents. Through many conversations it was clear that at its heart, this policy is driven by politics, not animal welfare. The campaign relies on outdated welfare information and there is a broad range of examples demonstrating that implementing the policy would result in a loss to livestock welfare.

So what can we do?

- Take out a membership with WAFarmers or PGA - organisations that represent agriculture on a range of important issues.
- Contact politicians / join a party. We all chat to each other about our frustrations, but put those thoughts into action by letting the people who make the decisions know.

At the end of September, the consultation panel will present their report to Federal Agriculture Minister Watt. The fight goes on to demand that agricultural policy is set based on facts, not fancy.

Image: The Sheep Producers Australia (SPA) delegate to Canberra. Left to right: Bonnie Skinner (CEO SPA), Sarah Brown (ASHEEP), Bindi Murray (SPA & PGA)



Be On the Lookout for Footrot

Fernanda Richards, DPIRD



As we move toward spring, be on the lookout for virulent footrot in sheep and goats. As the temperatures increase and the moisture persists in our pastures, footrot lesions become much more apparent. Footrot starts as inflammation (reddening) of the skin between the toes, accompanied by moisture and loss of hair. As lesions progress, the signs increase in severity.

Signs include:

- Loss of hair
- Reddening
- Moisture
- Creamy infected material
- Separation or under-running of horny material at the junction of the skin and the horn of the hoof, starting at the heel.
- Distinct 'footrot' smell when toes are pulled apart.
- Lameness (remember not all sheep or goats will show signs of lameness)

Things that you can do to reduce the risk of virulent footrot entering your property:

- Ask for a **National Sheep or Goat Health Declaration** when buying sheep/goats.
- If importing animals from interstate, ensure the footrot inspections are done on time (21-35 days after import and 90-100 days after import).
- **Keep new sheep and/or goats separate** until you have two clear footrot inspections. Use separate yards and equipment for new animals.
- **Observe new sheep and/or goat's feet and check for lameness** before mixing with your flock.

Footrot is a reportable disease if you see any signs of lameness in sheep or that look like footrot you are required to notify a BAMA inspector. To report suspicion of disease or advice please contact Fernanda Richards at the Esperance DPIRD Office: 0456 152 491, Fernanda.richards@dpiird.wa.gov.au

If in doubt, call your local DPIRD Biosecurity Officer, and arrange a visit to inspect your stock.



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Short-Term Volatility, but Input Prices Set to be Contained for Season Ahead



Rabobank

Rabobank Editorial, 8 September 2023

International fertiliser prices are poised to decrease or remain stable for the coming months. However, there will be “ups and downs” along the track said Rabobank farm inputs analyst Vitor Pistoia.

“There is a long way to go before the end of the current Australian cropping season, but the boundaries for the next one are already taking shape, and they look to be much more favourable when it comes to farm input prices,” Mr Pistoia said. “The last weeks of July showed just how volatile the global fertiliser market is. The heatwaves in North Africa and especially Europe caused a spike in demand for natural gas due to increased use of air conditioning, sharply increasing the price of the energy feedstock,” he said. “The price of gas surged 30 per cent only to decline now by more than two thirds from this peak. But not without pushing urea and other nitrogenous (nitrogen-containing) fertilisers on the way.”

Mr Pistoia said it is important to note that each tonne of urea requires around 0.57 tonne of ammonia to produce, which in turn demands 0.86 cubic meters of natural gas on an energy content basis. “So, a substantial price movement for natural gas will directly affect nitrogenous fertilisers, and DAP and MAP as well to some extent. And this did happen.”

The Rabobank analyst said the majority of the urea exporters' references (driven by the countries that set the price for fertiliser) rose between 20 to 30 per cent in the last weeks of July and, as a result, the downhill trend which had been seen in DAP prices stopped.

“Added to this,” Mr Pistoia said “there are some international tenders for urea causing mixed sentiment in the market. The biggest – which may finalise by the end of August – is expected to be at the one million tonnes mark. To give perspective, this represents roughly two per cent of the annual global trade for urea. Clearly, this will become a baseline for the deals following it during the months of September and October. “The apparent bull market for farm inputs, however, is not forecast to be a trend. There are plenty of downsides along the line.”

Mr Pistoia said “First, and more broadly, we have the soft commodity (grain and oilseeds) indicators which are quite volatile after the Black Sea grain corridor deal was not renewed, adding doubts to farmers’ decision-making when it comes to fertiliser use. Some regions like southern Western Australia are benefiting from rising grain and oilseed prices, but this is not the general situation for the Australian winter. And the window to change fertiliser programs is short.”

“Then there are some major food-producing countries, and therefore farm inputs consumers, facing bad weather and its consequences. Namely, parts of Europe, the United States and Canada as well as drought-and-inflation-scorched Argentina,” he said.

“A third factor likely to keep downward pressure on farm input prices, especially for containerised goods such as agrochemicals and machinery parts, is the price of international container freight, which is now back down to pre-Covid levels,” Mr Pistoia said.



“So, despite reduced production since early 2023 – and all the positive demand signals from still-strong soft commodity prices – farm input supply is still greater than demand, both for fertilisers and agrochemicals.

“Hopefully – and assuming no other ‘Black Swan’ event happens – Australian farmers will be able take advantage of these lower prices while there is plenty of supply until later in the year.”

To find out more about other Rabobank research, contact Rabobank’s local team in Esperance on (08) 9076 4200 or subscribe to RaboResearch Food & Agribusiness Australia & New Zealand on your podcast app.

Image: Rabobank Vitor Cacula Pistoia Esperance, March 2023

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Agro Spot: Timing is everything

Theo Oorschot, Esperance Rural Supplies, 0427 715166

Timerite is an AWI funded project that can help predict the optimum spraying time for spring control of Red Legged Earth Mite. This programme was developed by CSIRO and was on the radar by most livestock producers more than a few years ago. I'm writing this article as a reminder of the benefits that could be achieved when you get the timing write. With RLEM present now in pastures, spraying using Timerite will help to minimise the damage now and in pastures next autumn. Canola growers, seeding on a pasture base, will also benefit from Timerite in helping to have mite numbers reduced, along with other preventative strategies you may have in place.

How does it work?

The background is based on applying an insecticide at a specific time in the spring. This timing is when RLEM have stopped laying their winter eggs and before they start producing eggs called diapause. These diapause eggs can withstand the summer heat and become the next generation of RLEM's that hatch in the autumn. Therefore, by applying a strategic insecticide prior to diapause is where Timerite comes into play.

I contacted AWI on their help line and got the following locations with their Timerite date. A more accurate date for your farm can be had by contacting AWI on 1800 070 099. All you need do is provide the exact latitude and longitude.

Location	Date
Coombalbidgup	25th September
Esperance	26th September
Gibson	25th September
Neridup	28th September
Condingup	24th September



Image: Red Legged Earth Mite and damage on pasture.





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Market Update: Wool

Danny Burkett, Westcoast Wool & Livestock, 0418 848 314, 7th September 2023

The Australian wool market has been heading downward over the previous months, on the day of writing, however, we have had our first correction upwards with all microns posting gains this week.



If we look at the merino market in brackets of fine wools and medium wools, it has been the fine wools that have fallen the most. One measure that is used as a guide in the wool industry is the spread in price between 17 and 21 micron. Late in 2022 that spread hit a point of \$10.30 clean one of its highest ever seen, at present the spread between 17 and 21 micron sits at 400 clean cents historically that is still on the high side. This end of the wool market, however, is volatile and gains and losses can be significant in each week. The current quote for 17 micron, places it at the 37th decile over the last 10 years, meaning it has spent 63% of its time in the last decade above today's price. Looking at 19 micron at present this sits at the 33rd decile meaning, 67% of the time over the last decade it has been above today's price. The interesting point about 19 micron merino fleece wool is that it is the least affected over the previous 20 years in supply. As medium micron producers started to produce finer wool they have moved into the 19 micron bracket replacing those producers who were producing 19m that went finer again. This trend has seen this bracket maintain its supply while all other microns have a major changes in their production.

21 micron Merino fleece wool today sits at the 35th decile, so 65% of its time in the last decade above today's price. These wools are less volatile and have been true to form over the previous six months as the swings in price are nowhere near as severe as the fine end of the wool market. These types have been helped in part by the leaching of Chinese uniform orders into the wool market, in years past these orders would hit the market in a block. But recently, however, the Chinese government has taken to releasing these orders more slowly.

One measure used at this end of micron production is the 1500 cent clean barrier. If we look back as far as 35 years 21 micron is only traded above 1500 cents clean for roughly 18 months so any price point close to this 1500 cent mark for 21 micron is a positive sign to sell.

The forward market for Merino wool has been void of any business for some months. However, the first sign of confidence returned late last week when forward orders for 19 micron were put into the market, albeit at subdued levels for the end of 24 beginning of 25. This can be interpreted as exporters thinking the wool market will be in recovery in 12 months' time.



Welcome New Sponsor: WFI

ASHEEP is fortunate to be involved with a great group of sponsors who support and contribute to our work. We would like to extend a welcome and our thanks to WFI who have recently joined as Gold Sponsors.



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Aus Stock Transport is a member of the Livestock & Rural Transport Association of WA (Inc) and a sponsor of ASHEEP.

For all your cartage requirements call:

Peter Holdman on 0419 948 475 or email ausstock@outlook.com



ASHEEP Eastern States Tour 2024!

Planning is underway for a study tour through Victoria and South Australia in 2024.

While we have plenty of details to confirm, the basic plan is to fly into Melbourne catch a game of football before traveling to Hamilton for Sheepvention Rural Expo, one of the largest agricultural field days in Victoria, on the 4th & 5th August 2024. We will then travel across to Tailem Bend and Murray Bridge before going on to Kangaroo Island finishing in Adelaide with another Football game, with a bit of luck.



Tour Dates will be 2nd - 10th August 2024.

The site visits we hope to include are Jigsaw Farms – Carbon Neutral Farming, Cattle in Redgums at the foot of the Grampian Ranges, a dairy visit in Victoria, a Lucerne seed farm near Keith, a large Cattle Feedlot at Tintinara, a plot trial site in the Meningie area, Cropping River Flats at Murray Bridge and a tour of the newly opened Thomas Foods plant or a paddle boat cruise, some site visits on Kangaroo Island, a McLaren Vale Winery lunch and a tour of the Mitchell Wool processing plant to name a few.

The early indicative price for flights, accommodation, bus hire and fuel, KI ferry and organisational time is \$3000 each. Meals and drinks would be at your own cost as well as the paddle boat cruise.

Seats will be limited to 20 so be quick to register your interest as 5 seats are already taken.

Please contact Jan Clawson on 0407 990 497 or email janclawson@bigpond.com.

Weaning for Better Wages

Dr Enoch Bergman, Swans Veterinary Services

If you raise livestock for a living, it is pretty obvious that your pay check is intimately linked to the value of your produce. As such, it is a common perception that the bigger the calves are at weaning, the more profit available to reinvest. However, this is an assumption that may require a bit more consideration.

ASHEEP in conjunction with Swans Veterinary Services and Meat & Livestock Australia is running a Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) project to illuminate some of the benefits of weaning calves earlier than typical for the district.

A number of producers have agreed to remove half of their calves from their dams two months earlier than they traditionally wean. At that time, all cows and calves will be weighed, and the cows will be both wet/dried and have their body condition score estimated. Any dry cows will be excluded from the PDS (their data disregarded). The weaned calves will be managed separately. Those remaining on their dams will be weaned approximately two months later, everything will be weighed again, the cows body condition scored, and the cows will again be wet/dried to ascertain which ones were more likely to have had their calf weaned previously. The body condition score and weights of the wet vs. dry cows will be compared (excluding the cows that were dry at the first round of weaning).

What exactly are we trying to demonstrate? Cows use considerable energy to produce milk, but only approximately only 40% of the energy derived from the food they eat which ends up being invested into milk production ends up staying in the milk as energy available for the calf to attempt to digest. Sadly, there is no way around the significant energy outlay, as milk is simply an expensive product for the cow's liver to produce. However, once it is created, we should endeavour to ensure that none of that precious resource is wasted! Mother nature has helped in that endeavour, as 90% of the energy from milk is absorbed by a newborn calf... until the calf becomes a ruminant! Once a calf weighs over around 150 kgs, their rumen develops and they lose some of their ability to digest milk... however, if left on their mothers they will continue to hit the milk bar as long as we (and their mother) let them.

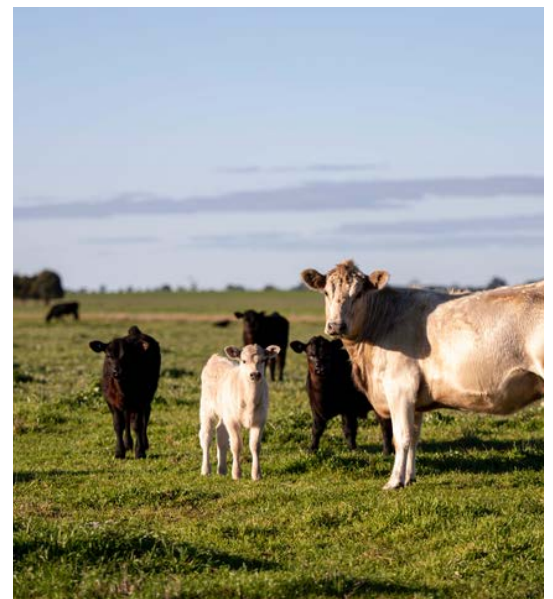
To put it in perspective, it has been calculated that a cow with a calf at foot needs 15.5 kgs of dry matter to maintain her own body condition and feed her calf. If you were to separate the pair, forcing them to fend for themselves, only 9.6 kgs of dry matter in total is needed to maintain the cow and grow her weaned calf to the same extent.

So... in a nutshell... you can budget on reducing your animal's feed requirements by as much as 38% once you wean your calves!

By getting calves off their mothers a bit earlier and before the season finishes, better feed resources can be partitioned to go down the throats of your calves whilst simultaneously allowing you to protect the body condition of your breeding females with far less resources, having dropped the dam's dry matter requirements from 15.5kgs to a mere 6 kg! No wonder cows which fail to raise a calf struggle to fit through the crush!

Keen to know more? Keep your ear to the ground! We have eight local producers scheduled to be involved in the project this year. We will let you know how they go!

Want to be involved? We have two more spots available! Please contact Dr Enoch Bergman on 0427 716 907 or enoch@swansvet.com.



www.asheep.org.au/optimisingageweaningcattle

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*No known published peer-reviewed studies demonstrating *in vivo* imidacloprid resistance in *Lucilia cuprina*. Use products from different chemical groups to control lice off-shears and blowflies in long wool in the same season. AVENGE® is a registered trade mark of Troy Laboratories Pty Ltd, 37 Glendenning Rd, Glendenning NSW 2761, Australia.

SCAN
HERE



Ace for Rams: The do's and don'ts surrounding sedation for shearing

Dr Scott Jackson, Swans Veterinary Services

As genetic selection has gradually pushed for bigger sheep, it is now required by the workers union that rams heavier than 70kg be tranquilized prior to shearing with incentive to reduce injuries to shearers. Our Jackie Howe's might attest to the fact that acepromazine (Ace) is an absolute back saver, though if improperly administered, it can make the work harder and be potentially harmful to the sheep. Following are some important do's and don'ts when it comes to sedation for shearing:

Do	Don't
Administer acepromazine 10mg/ml (Acemav, ACP 10) into the muscle at a dose rate of 0.7ml for medium sized (70kg) merino rams and 1ml for larger (100kg) merinos or cross bred rams	Double the dose. Double dosing may cause: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ram to become a dead weight which makes shearing more difficult 2. A prolonged recovery 3. Death
Administer into the neck muscle only (hands width in front of the shoulder blade)	Administer into the rump or back muscles. This may result in abscess formation which will result in carcass condemnations at the abattoir.
Administer 45 minutes before shearing for maximum effect	Leave rams out in the elements while sedated. Ace affects their ability to control body temperature so it's worth while keeping rams in the shade (sheds) 4 hours post shearing until the drug wears off
Drench rams after sedation has worn off	Drench while still sedated. Sedation retards the swallow reflex so heavily sedated rams might inhale the drench and die from pneumonia.
Wait 12 hours to treat rams for lice with organophosphate (OP) containing products such as Eureka Gold	Treat rams with organophosphate (OP) containing products such as Eureka Gold while rams are sedated. Ace can potentiate the effects of OP's resulting in overdose symptoms such as seizures and death.
Store Ace in a secure, cool, clean environment and take note of batch numbers and expiry dates	Use the product in any way contrary to the instructions on the label.

Acepromazine is a schedule 4 drug and can only be dispensed by veterinary practitioners to bonafide farming clients. Intentional misuse will result in the dispensing arrangement to be ceased. If anyone has any questions regarding sedation for shearing, feel free to contact your local vet for advice.



Swans Veterinary Services
(08) 9071 5777



First Ever Oral Lice Treatment for Sheep Now Available

Flexolt®, the world-first oral lice treatment for sheep, gives producers greater flexibility when treating their flock. The product can be used on both sheep and lambs* with any length of wool, revolutionising lice control.

Flexolt contains a novel active ingredient that works systemically from the inside out, offering producers the flexibility to treat off-shears, short and long wool sheep and lambs with a single, oral dose.

Flexolt also gives producers greater choice over when to treat their flock. It means producers are no longer bound to shearing time for lice control, minimising common management challenges such as labour, weather and time. The product is unaffected by rain, and lambs at foot* or poorly shorn sheep can be treated without the risk of reinfesting the flock in the following months.

Flexolt reduces farm management challenges across the entire flock or individual mobs. Split shearing, which often leads to lice outbreaks, can be avoided as mobs can be treated at once. New sheep can also be treated and quarantined from the rest of the flock.

Fifteen field trials were undertaken to ensure Flexolt is effective across different types of sheep operations, locations and wool lengths. The product has a high safety margin, giving producers full confidence in switching to Flexolt this season.

A lice outbreak is a possibility for every flock. By giving producers greater control over the way they manage the issue, Flexolt will make on-farm processes more efficient.

Flexolt is now available at your local rural retailer.

*Lambs from 6kg body weight



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WHAT THE?

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- ✓ Treat lice in any length of wool
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For more information on Flexolt and Coopers brands, contact MSD Animal Health on 1800 226 511.

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ANZ Agri InFocus – Commodity Insights Spring 2023

ANZ Agribusiness Esperance

Patrick Jannings: 0499 918 738, Jaime Martens: 0447 195 040



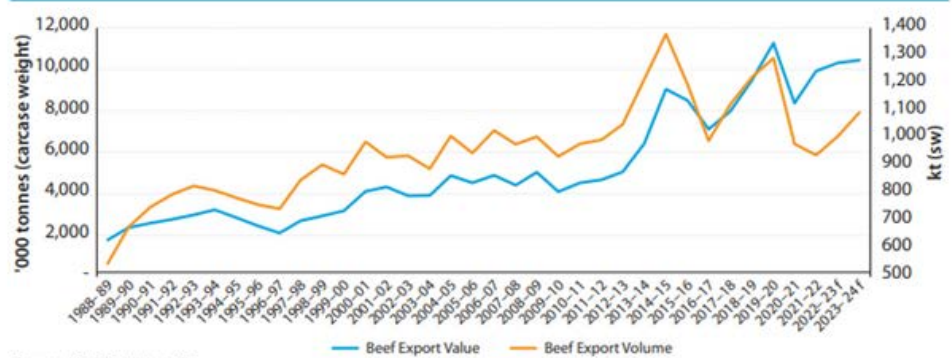
Cattle:

- Australian cattle prices have fallen by around 40 percent over the past year, particularly as the post-drought restocking surge has finished
- Cattle producers remain cautious of the possible impacts of drier conditions over coming months
- With producers wary of having too many stock if water and feed are reduced, many producers are limiting their herd numbers and stocking rates
- Beef exports remain strong, particularly to the US, as its own domestic cattle herd sits at around the lowest levels for sixty years

Sheep:

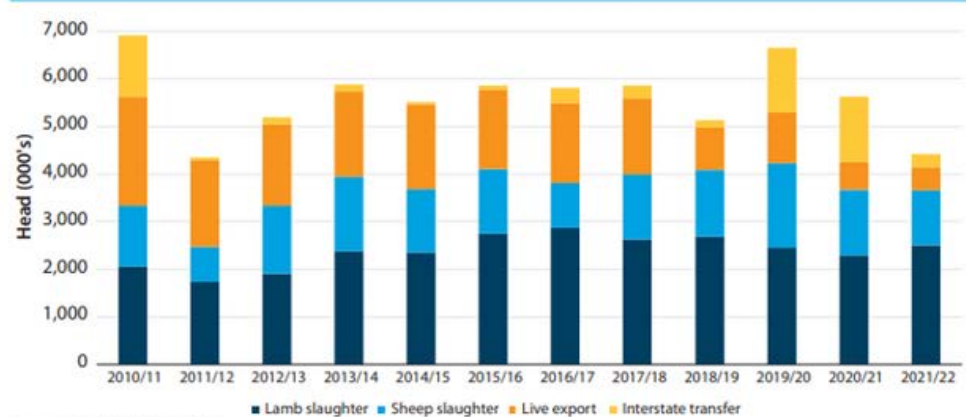
- Exports of Australian lamb and mutton through to July are the highest on record
- Export market dynamics are shifting based on prices and softer demand from key nations facing economic uncertainty
- Prices continue to be pressured by consistently high supply across all categories of stock
- Producers continue to find better prices with well finished stock
- The sale options available to WA producers adapt with changing market and regulatory conditions
- With 60 percent of Australia’s breeding ewe flock located in NSW and VIC, the conditions experienced this Spring in these states are likely to have a major impact on supply and prices.

AUSTRALIAN BEEF EXPORT VALUE VS VOLUME



Source: ARARFS, MIA, ANZ

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SHEEP TURN OFF

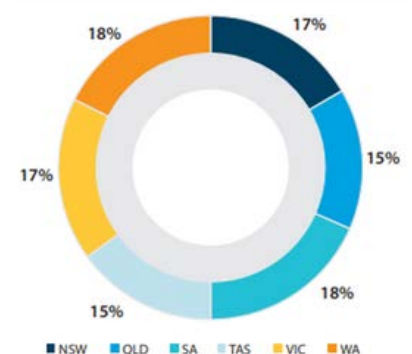


Source: ABS, PIRSA, DPIRD, ANZ

Wool:

- Wool prices found some support leading into the recent winter recess however the trend did not continue upon the re-opening of trade
- 9-21 micron wools continue to demonstrate the most resilience to price falls
- Large percentage increases in exports to India have been recorded albeit off a low base
- Signs of a slowing Chinese economy are not welcome news for wool prices with at least 50 percent of Australian wool processed in China, remaining in that Country for the domestic consumer
- Wool prices are not out of step with other global fibre markets, which are also experiencing downward trends

BREEDING EWES FLOCK BY STATE



Source: MLA, ANZ



Fodder Trial 2023

This season, ASHEEP Esperance have been facilitating a fodder trial with local grower, **Ryan Willing**. The trial has been reviewing fodder quality, palatability and nutrient uptake on an annual seeded pasture of mixed oats, Illabo wheat and abundant ryegrass. A common pasture fertiliser practice, a combination of MAP and urea, is up against the **Grow Safe®** mineral & microbial fertiliser; NPK Crop.

Product	Application	Product Components	Cost per ha*
Blend of Mono ammonium phosphate (70%) & urea (30%)	70kg/ha	N (21.5%) P (16%) S (1%) Ca (1.1%) As soluble fertiliser	\$86.54
NPK Crop + Grow Safe® (GS) Microbial coating	90kg/ha	N (8.5%) P (7%) K (4.5%) Ca (3.2%) S (9%) Mg (0.9%) Fe (2.8%) Si (6.8%) Mn (4200ppm) Zn (410ppm) Cu (375ppm) Co (50ppm) B (11ppm) As sulphates and processed mineral ores	\$117.00

*cost per ha: estimate costing accurate at application

Initial comprehensive soil tests of the trial site identified significant copper, manganese and sulphur deficiencies, as well as a generally low soil Cation Exchange Capacity. The trial includes a number of fodder and tissue testing regimes, accompanied with visual observations and livestock response, to monitor how these limitations affect the overall pasture production.

Testing Metrics	Completed By
Comprehensive soil testing	EAL Laboratories & CSBP labs
Fodder testing	NSW DPI AgEnviro Labs
Biological testing	In-field AMF / Grow Safe



Grow Safe® fertilisers contain a host of trace and ultra-trace elements to continually replenish or 'remineralise' the soil condition. The combination of soil microbes and processed mineral ores improves crop Nutrient Use Efficiency, enabling a lower analysis (%) fertiliser to deliver greater tissue uptake, while addressing trace nutrient deficiencies.

On the 20th of September 2023, ASHEEP will be hosting their Spring Field Day where fodder trial results will be discussed. Registration is available to all, including non-members, through the ASHEEP website. <https://www.asheep.org.au/events>. Grow Safe® would like to thank ASHEEP and Mr Willing for enabling this trial. The **Grow Safe®** team will be at the ASHEEP Spring Field Day and the upcoming Esperance show. For details on the products used in the fodder trial, call Field Advisor **Louis Poiron** on **0488 048 385** or **AMF** on **(08) 9851 7222**



growsafe.com.au

ASHEEP Ravensthorpe Livestock Field Day & Katanning Tour Review

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

Ravensthorpe Livestock Field Day Review

With many of our Ravensthorpe members unable to make our Esperance-based field days, the committee decided it would be a great opportunity to add to the Katanning Tour by including a few stops along the way, which is what we did, very successfully.

The first stop for the day was **Nairup on the South Coast Hwy, Munglinup.**

Zoe Gibson and her family welcomed us at their new **Atlex sheep yards** which includes a **Racewell Te Pari sheep handler**. The yards were completed in November 2022. The idea is to be able to work sheep with one person and one dog, which they have been able to do. Zoe said they have been using eID for three years. She manages the data through the Stockbook Livestock Management Software, she noted that while it is a bulky program, it works well.



Images: Top - Zoe Gibson demonstrating Te Pari handler. Below - The Gibsons' new yards.



Zoe went on to run some sheep through the sheep handler on auto draft. This captures the weight then drafts them to the preset parameters. She also demonstrated the **Revolution Dosing Gun**; a battery drench gun powered by an electric motor that drives the piston forward and back to make drenching a push button operation. It can also connect via Bluetooth to the scales to deliver the correct dose based on the animals' weight, making it easier on the hand, saving product and preventing both over and under dosing.

Following morning tea, where we enjoyed some yummy home cooking, we continued to **Mt Madden, north of Ravensthorpe**. Andrew Penny and his brother Bradon welcomed us at their **confinement feeding and auto feeder complex**. Andrew & Bradon have moved to seeding pastures each year so hold the ewes in confinement while the pastures are establishing. The ewes are out of confinement for lambing. The weaned lambs then go into confinement for finishing.

The auto feeder runs straight from the bottom of a 60-tonne silo to the 21-meter feeder. This can feed 900-1000 ewes for a month. The auto feeder is solar powered with two batteries, it can be connected to the phone via Bluetooth and can be programmed to run on set days or hours to minimise any waste. They feed pellet, barley, lupins, oats mix with adlib silage. They grow their own grain and silage and are getting good value from lupins which they can't sell.

The watering system is a length of 150mm storm water pipe with a low-pressure float. This trough is cleaned weekly with three gutter brushes cable tied together enabling them to maintain fresh water all the time with minimal water wastage. The trough is located away from the feeder which also helps reduce contamination.

Continued over page.

Images: Below - Pennys' Autofeeder. Right - Pennys' watering system & float.



We were rather glad to arrive at the shed to a freshly cooked hamburger and salad lunch provided by South Coastal Agencies, appreciating being out of the cold.

We then went on to the **Duncan's farm Urara** where Jodi manages the livestock while her brother Rian manages the cropping. The first stop was to their operational, but not quite completed, seasonal staff living quarters. Jodi told us that through Covid they just weren't getting all the jobs done in a timely manner and being 250kms from a major centre (Esperance or Albany), attracting seasonal staff was a challenge to say the least, they needed something to offer especially for couples.

Images Below - Duncans' staff quarters.



They also received an important piece of advice which was **“create the environment to suit the type of people you want to attract”**. With all this in mind they now have four transportable buildings, which are way too flash to be called dongas. Two are 3 self-contained double rooms, suitable for couples. The third has the laundry and fitness equipment and the fourth is the kitchen and lounge. The kitchen is design to handle the seasonal cooking if required. The rooms are covered with a shed to help with cooling as well as to protect the rooms. They have Starlink internet and a backup generator. The complex is away from the main workshop complex to reduced noise for those on shift work. While it has been a significant investment, they are seeing the benefit with their casual seeding staff being very happy and in no rush to leave so getting a few extra jobs done with staff on hand.



Image Above - Duncans' serradella.

We then walked out into the paddock which had been seeded with **5-6kg Margareta Serradella** and locked up. Following a good germination, it was affected by an overspray of Overwatch which set it back significantly. Dan Bell from South Coastal Agencies provided some extra information, sighting **Serradella as being particularly sensitive to Overwatch**. While the chemical company often blame the boom spray it should be noted it can also be a residual effect if rainfall was low. When we saw the paddock at the end of July it looked to have recovered although it still hadn't had its first graze.

We then went on to their **multipurpose shearing shed**. The 5-stand shed was built in 2018-19, with the horseshoe-shaped raised board. The shearers and shed staff are happy with the facility which is a machinery shed for 50 weeks of the year and a shearing shed for two weeks. Jodi shears in summer and reported having a good relationship with her shearing contractor from Jerramungup. We finished this part of the day with some very cold RAIN beer and a bit of networking.

Below - Duncans' shearing shed.



A big thanks to our host farmers, South Coastal Agencies and RAIN for promoting the day.

While the RAIN members continued networking, we made our way to Katanning, where following dinner **Geoff Stade from Katanning Energy** provided some background on Katanning Energy, which is a privately owned company with a community focus. He also updated us on the challenges they had faced with establishing standalone power systems. They aim to reduce the regional energy spend and provide a resilient energy system, reducing the reliance on mains power while offering homes and businesses access to quality renewable energy solutions.

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Day 2, CN30 Getting Started on Farm: Creating the Plan!

This part of the tour was supported by the CN30 Getting Started on Farm Project that is funded by Meat and Livestock Australia's Producer Demonstrator Site program. The aim of the day was for the project participants to see the Katanning Research Stations CN30 journey to date and the strategies they are implementing to help identify and develop our own emission reduction or carbon sequestration plan to reduce some of the on-farm emission.



We travelled out to DPIRD's Katanning Research Station where we met **Mandy Curnow, Justin Hardy and John Paul Collins**, plus a handful of bottle-fed lambs making their presence felt. The farm's resource flock were lambing, so staff were busy capturing lambing information.

Mandy started the day with a refresher on **how carbon emissions are measured**. Emissions are measured in three ways.

1. The national/state emission inventories. These are the direct emissions by emission sources and sectors. They are broken into sectors which are: electricity, transport, industrial processes, stationary energy, agriculture, waste and land use, land use change and forestry. We learnt that not all farm emissions are recorded in the agriculture sector, they are also recorded in energy and in land use and land use change and forestry sectors.
2. Life Cycle Assessment. These are usually emissions recorded from inception including all input through to the sale of the product, including processing and transport.
3. And finally, the one we are using, Business or Farm Carbon Accounts which include all levels of emissions to the point of export from the farm gate.

She then spoke on what's happening at a state level including the Katanning Research Station's goal to be carbon neutral by 2023, which she indicated they will come close to achieving. And the potential projects and activities to help the whole industry achieve neutrality. These included determining the actual livestock emissions using the methane shed for sheep as well as portable GreenFeed methane measurement systems for sheep and cattle.

Mandy finished with news of a new **Insetting Methodology from Tree Planting**. This methodology is being developed by Climate Active. It will be a rolling annual account on tree and shrub plantings after 1990. The trees must have a potential to be at least 2 metres tall and reach a crown cover of at least 20% of the planting area. This will enable producers that have already planted trees on their farm to include the areas in their carbon profile as sequestration from tree planting, reducing their overall emissions.

Justin Hardy and John Paul Collins spoke on the **land rehabilitation and revegetation works** they have undertaken as part of becoming carbon neutral by 2023. The project has a multifaceted approach utilising annual legumes, perennial pastures, and shrubs for grazing; revegetation for land restoration and biodiversity; and engineering solutions including surface water control and groundwater systems.

The station has a natural waterway which they drain surface water into. This runs through to a natural lake. They have cleaned out the waterway to get it free-flowing. They have installed silts traps and test pits for monitoring water quality as well as shallow bores and deep bores to monitor ground water and have a production bore that will have a renewable powered desalination plant installed soon.

Images below: Before & After Rehabilitation Section
30 September 2021



6 April 2023



Image: Green Feed Methane Measurement System

The revegetation has included direct seeding and plantings. They have selected 50 species from the neighbouring nature reserve as well as Old Man Salt Bush for the salt lands. It is anticipated the revegetation will stop the drainage in the future and the area adjacent to the rehabilitated area should become more productive from grazing.

We then went for a drive through the area, there has been an impressive amount of work completed including earthworks and tree planting. It will be good to see again in a few years once everything is established.

Next was the **Feed Efficiency shed and the Methane Shed**. Claire McLeay, Brittany Bolt and Amy Bowden spoke on their project to generate new sustainability ASBV's focused on feed intake and methane production traits. They used EID to collect individual data and feed tray weights, and weighed the animals twice a week. Animals spent up to 42 days in the shed.

Continued over page.

Once the sheep had finished their time in the feed efficiency shed, they went to the methane shed for 45 minutes where their methane, oxygen and carbon dioxide production was measured at 15-minute intervals. The sheep were also measured post weaning in a portable accumulation chamber. This information is being shared with Sheep Genetics and will contribute to the development of the sustainability ASBV's.

Following lunch, Daniel Real took us for a look at the **Feed365 project plots** we saw 10 established plots that have been grazed with a varying number of sheep. The plots we saw were all mixed species which included Sub Clover, Rye, Serradella, Triticale, Chicory, Cocksfoot, Tedera and Brassica. It will be interesting to see the results in the coming years.

We then broke into two groups the CN30 Getting Started on Farm Project Group joined **Richard Brake** to consider the next step in the project: creating an emission reduction or carbon sequestration plan.

The first thing to note is the change of terminology. There has been growing confusion between terms like baselines and projects. So, we are now calling the result of your carbon accounting Net Farm Emission your "emissions profile" instead of a baseline. And while ASHEEP is running a project to learn about carbon, a Carbon Project baseline is the starting point for carbon farming and selling ACCU's.

Richard started by asking everyone if they had completed their emission profile, what their number was, and how easy or hard it was to complete the calculator. He went on to suggest participants update their emissions profile annually by choosing a set time of the year to redo the calculator with the latest numbers. Farm review time is always a good time as you have all the figures available.

Mandy Curnow also joined us for this session. Mandy's current role within DPIRD is to lead the development of the **Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategy for the agriculture sector** and to manage the **emissions program within DPIRD for agriculture**. Combine this with Mandy's extensive experience within DPIRD and agriculture generally; she carries a wealth of knowledge on strategies to reduce emissions.

Some of her suggestions included reducing supplementary feeding with pasture improvements, using improved growth genetics for earlier turn off, revegetation of salt lands to increase feed available and to sequester carbon, revegetating non-arable country, increasing productivity through early turn-off and matching land use to land type.

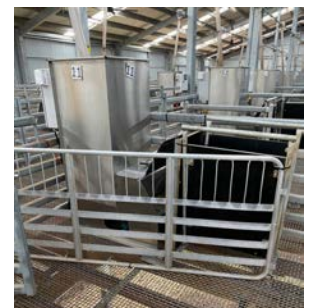
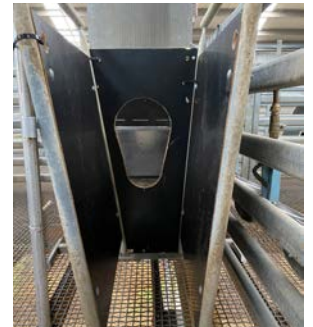
The group went on to discuss what might work on their own farms, what changes they may make, and the steps they will take to achieve the actions. Some actions identified were earlier weaning, reducing the number of older ewes, improved pasture through pest control and soil improvements, selecting feed efficient EBV's or genetics for faster turn off from the feedlot and the use of rotational grazing to increase stocking rate.

Other strategies that can be considered are improving the information you enter into the calculator; this might include weighing 10-15% of the herd or animal class when they are in the yards to capture a more accurate average live weight.

Emission intensity is probably a more important measure than net farm emissions. The emission intensity is the total volume of emission per unit of product produced. This can be worked out by dividing your total emission by kilograms of liveweight sold. We can use production efficiencies to reduce emission intensity.

Others in the tour group headed to the **saleyards for a tour of the facilities**. The new saleyard facility was completed and opened in May 2014. It took about 2 years to build and cost \$26m. The roof cover is 4.2 hectares, and the tarmac area covers 6 hectares. The roof water is collected in 6 tanks totalling 1.5m litres. This water is used for stock water, the truck wash and treated for the canteen use. The tarmac water is collected in a 54 megalitre dam.

The yards have the capacity to hold 26,000 sheep in one sale, for large sales they can sell up to 40,000 sheep in one day. In recent times the average yarding has been 12,000-15,000 sheep per week. On average, they sell 30% crossbred lambs, 20% Merino lambs, with the majority of the remaining sheep sold being older mutton. Approximately 60% of every yarding is sold to processors and 40% to farms or feedlots.



Above: Photo Feed Efficiency Box, Entry, Reader & Water

Continued over page.

Rob Davidson from WAMMCO joined us for dinner before giving us a market and processing update. WAMMCO have the Katanning plant and a plant in Goulburn NSW. They process 50,000 animals per week, 80% lambs and 20% mutton.

The co-op continues to distribute profit back to growers that sell weight and grade, this includes profit from the Goulburn plant. They have paid a rebate for 16 of the last 18 years totalling \$38m. This year they returned 80c per head on lambs and 40c per head on mutton. While there has been concerns with kill space, they have never killed more animals as they crack the 1 million head for the year.

Rob then moved on the markets. He told us that following Covid the Chinese are eating more mutton. Lamb is the meat for special occasions. Sheep meat is definitely a winter food. On average they are eating about 150g per day of protein of which 49% is pork. The piggeries in China are like motels. But the with Chinese licencing system the market can be easily lost by something as simple as an administrative error like getting one character wrong on packaging. This type of error could exclude us for at least 12 months.

The Middle East prefer the leaner cuts, Covid had a huge impact on the market. They are back to weekly orders now although also a winter food as summer is too hot. North America and Canada has increased mostly thanks to Covid and panic buying. They had to try sheep meat and now that they know how to cook it the market has continued. They import 70% of their sheep meat of which 80% is coming from Australia.

Rob then moved on to the Katanning plant for which they face some challenges mostly around putting new technology into an old plant. They would like to move to more robotics in the next 5 -10 years but there are some logistics to get through. With Pacific Islanders in the plant, they are achieving record through put with a current kill rate is 10 sheep per minute. On the sustainability front, they are recycling water and looking at using alternative energy for increased cold storage.

Rob finished on how the processors might managed the end to Live Export. With the current challenges he felt in the next two years producers will decide if they stay in sheep or get out. He identified a couple of the processors that could increase numbers but ultimately it depends on how many stock are available. We would like to thank Rob for the time he spent answering many many questions.

Day Three, The Return Journey

The first stop was **Wayne Pech, North Stirling Downs**. Wayne spoke on his **quest to meet the agriculture net zero by 2023 target**, the changes he's made to date and his tree planting carbon project. Although years 1 to 3 had low rainfall and years 4 & 5 were above average rainfall he has found his overall productivity is up which equates to low emission intensity. So, what has he done? He's using genetics to get his July born lambs off by Christmas, the hoggets then go into confinement for finishing. Even though he dropped his ewe numbers his fertility increased so lamb numbers were the same. He's also targeting a reduction in Lime and Nitrogen and looking for a way of making better use in crop.

His tree planting project is 200ha of trees on non-productive land. Year one had good germination, year two was too wet, so year three also included in-filling the year two gaps. The planting will continue at 20ha per year. He is using native trees species that are suitable for a dryer climate. He used a smaller investor for his Carbon Project who paid the project establishment costs, but they take half of the ACCU's. While the project is for 25 years Wayne has placed a 100-year caveat on the trees land so they can't be bulldozed after 25 years. Wayne estimates earning \$13,000 per hectare per year from his project.

Wayne also touched on the importance of having a good human resources and work health and safety systems implemented. He sees it as a form of insurance. He prefers to be in the paddock so pays for the convenience of having a consultant that is up to date with legislative changes and who is responsible for get it right.

Wayne also uses **eID**, he said initially he was collecting too much data and didn't have time to make good use of it all. He has now scaled that back with a focus on his ram breeding program. Using DNA he is able to join ram lambs to get good genetic gains early.

We then went to his **feedlot**, he uses his feedlot to cover the dry starts and for finishing lambs, which he believes is 50% genetics and 50% management. He feeds young sheep pellets and older sheep his own mix. While he would make some design changes if he did it again, it works well.



Above: Wayne Pech's tree planting project and feedlot.

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A **O’Meehan & Co at Borden** was the last stop for the tour. Paul O’Meehan with his team, headed up by Brett Pages, manages a 3000 head cattle feedlot and market the **Butterfield and Stirling Range Beef** brands. We started by tasting the best steak sandwiches straight off the barbeque.

Brett told us they meet the **MSA grading** 99.9% of the time, of the last 7500 cattle sold only 6 were under grade. So how do they make this happen? The feedlot design is similar to those on the east coast with an ethos of ‘keep it simple’, they use American equipment because it’s easy-to-get parts, electronic scales and sensors and a nutritionist for all feed decisions. They only buy yard weaned cattle, and feed good quality feed because bad hay is not worth it.

The first thing we notice when we drove into the **feed mill** was the smell, the barley silage smelt so sweet, it was like standing in a brewery and the whole area was spotless. They make their own barley silage, which is swatted straight into the pit, they use a road roller to compact it. We drove the bus into the pit, it was massive! Unfortunately, I don’t have any photos as I was driving.

We then drove through the **feedlot**, seeing cattle at different stages, from recent entries to those ready for processing, as well as how they rate the clean-up of the feeders and rate how many cattle come to the feeders at feed time. This is an indicator of the quantity of feed available and if it needs to be increased or decreased to minimise waste while maintaining growth. We then went for a quick crop tour stopping in to look at some Canola as the final stop before taking a very dirty bus home for a wash.



Thanks to Ryan Willing for Chairing the tour and to everyone that joined the tour, our farm hosts, and speakers that all made our tour informative and enjoyable, and I hope worthwhile.



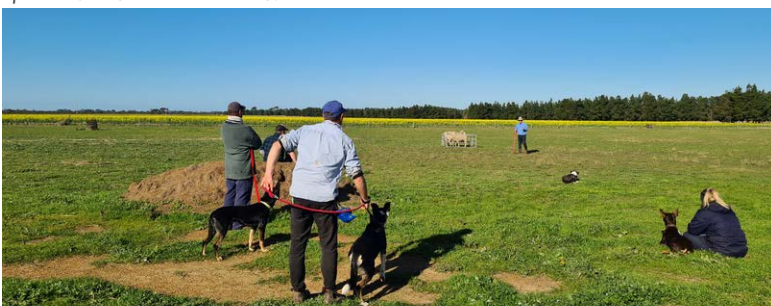
Above left: Mark & Liv Walter in O’Meehan’s canola. Top right: Stirling Range Beef. Bottom right: Steve Bingham with the well-travelled tour bus.

Working Dog School Wrap Up

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

In July, ASHEEP was pleased to welcome back Neil Kristiansen to Esperance to host a stock dog school. The two-day course saw 9 participants with dogs ranging from fresh to experienced. Thanks to Scott & Odile Welke for hosting the school at their farm in Cascade. Neil is considering coming back to Esperance for another school, if you are interested get in touch.

Images: Top Right - Neil Kristiansen goes over training tools with participants. Below - Neil demonstrating how to teach a dog to cast. Bottom Right - Candice Morcombe working with her dog Bolt who showed a lot of promise. Bolt was gifted to ASHEEP as a pup by Neil & Donna Kristiansen in support of the group and was given to Candice after an expression of interest / draw process was opened to ASHEEP members.



Ewe-nique Benefits of eID Soon to be Fully Realised in WA

Michael Britton, Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, DPIRD, michael.britton@dpird.wa.gov.au

Covid-19, and its associated variants, highlighted the ease through which micro-organisms can easily and quickly spread through globalised market chains, causing havoc and disruption.



In the case of livestock, animal diseases are also easily carried and transported by way of animal movements, person-to-animal contact and animal-to-animal contact. In a globalised market, such diseases are never far from any country's shores. Without the proper checks and balances and tracing systems and technology in place, an outbreak of any one of these diseases in Western Australia could have a significant and deleterious impact on industry. This is why all Agriculture Ministers in Australia have agreed to a National Plan to implement sheep and goat electronic identification (eID) from 2025.

In the 2023/24 State Budget, the Western Australian government committed \$25.6M toward implementing sheep and goat eID tagging across the State. This sizeable investment is aimed at ensuring Western Australian sheep and goat producers and operators have easier access to the new technologies required for an eID regime.

Electronic ID devices, or 'eID tags,' allow individual identification of animals, as they contain a microchip that provides a unique identification for each animal that can be scanned. From birth to processing, each animal's journey will be electronically recorded. This makes it quicker and more accurate to trace the movement of sheep and goats and vastly enhances our ability to swiftly respond to disease outbreaks and return to trade as quickly as possible.

As well as benefits to biosecurity, eID tagging has other potential benefits for producers. In a world where data reigns as the currency of industry insights, eID tagging yields a treasure trove of invaluable information that producers can make the most of to optimise their production. These other potential benefits may also include using weight records or individual growth rates to assist in meeting market specifications, tracking specific bloodlines to potentially being able to utilise carcass feedback to inform genetic and management decisions.

The scale of this undertaking, to roll out eID tagging, spanning from technological infrastructure to adept data management, necessitates a collaborative effort involving farmers, processors, technology providers, and policymakers. As such, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPRID) is continuing to roll out education and training initiatives, ensuring stakeholders possess the knowledge and skills to fully leverage the benefits of eID tagging. This work will continue over the next few years. DPIRD has already been implementing a scheme to reduce the retail price of eID tags to help incentivise and support early adoption, and is in the process of finalising an infrastructure grants program to support upgrades to supply chain infrastructure. For more information and the latest updates, please visit agric.wa.gov.au and search for 'eID'.

eID Tag Incentive Payment Extended to 31st Dec

Source: DPIRD Industry Update email, 15th June 2023

"Following a successful pilot of the Tag Incentive Payment (TIP) scheme and funding received via the 2023-24 State Budget, the 2023 TIP scheme has been extended."

"The discount on sky blue breeder electronic identification tags for sheep and goats will be available until 31 December 2023. Fully accredited sky blue tags for 2023 will receive a \$0.75 discount per tag via participating manufacturers."

"At this time, 3 manufacturers are included in the scheme, Allflex®, Leader Products and Shearwell. Please reach out to your usual retailer to place your order and receive the discount as determined by the manufacturer and retailer."



Teaching Staff to Recognise Unusual Signs & Symptoms in Livestock

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

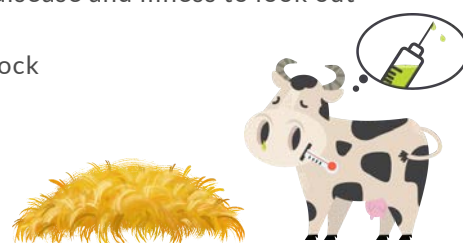
For those who have worked with livestock for many years it becomes almost instinctual to recognise when they are unwell. If you are new to working with sheep and cattle though, it can be hard to pick up. The signs can be subtle. Sheep in full wool can seem in good condition when they are light, early symptoms go unnoticed, could those lethargic animals just be relaxed?

Much knowledge comes with time as people get a sense of how the animals look, act, and eat when they are healthy, and therefore what is unusual. However, if you have new staff, here are some pointers and resources that can help you explain what to look out for to give them a good start.

Observing Animal Behaviour

“We can learn a lot from observing the behaviour of our livestock. In the case of herd animals like sheep and cattle, healthy livestock will generally be curious and face you as you approach them. They will have clear eyes, normal posture and move without difficulty. Some non-specific signs of disease and illness to look out for include”[1]:

- Reluctance to move and/or inability to keep up with the rest of the herd/flock
- Isolating themselves from the rest of the herd/flock
- Droopy ears and/or sunken eyes
- Panting or laboured breathing
- Loss of body condition.



Other signs to look out for:

- Abscesses
- Pale or yellow gums / skin
- Swelling underneath the jaw, also called “bottle-jaw”
- Drooling / salivation / frothing at the mouth
- Discharge from the nose
- Scouring / diarrhea
- Blindness
- Teeth grinding (this is different from chewing cud)
- Standing hunched up – when the rear legs are tucked under and the back appears arched.
- Kicking at the belly
- Coughing
- Lameness – stock that have sore feet dip their heads down or “nod” more than the others when walking, or stand with the weight off one foot, or kneel when eating.
- Abnormal eating habits – for example, if livestock are fed and some animals hang back.
- Animals not chewing their cud when at rest
- Sores on the nose, mouth, or ears
- Abortions
- Lower than expected pregnancy or lambing / calving rates
- An increase to the percentage of animals that represent the “tail of the mob” (animals in poorer condition than the rest of the mob).
- A decrease in condition score (for example, you can score 25 random animals in the mob and do the same several weeks later to monitor change)

Recognising symptoms is crucial to being able to make accurate observations that will help to inform a diagnosis. According to Danny Roberts (Veterinary Officer, Department of Regional Development & Primary Industries), when reporting information to a vet being able to “describe observations without making a diagnosis is key”. “As vets we question producers to get them to best describe their observations after we collect basic information of the number of sheep in a group, number unhealthy, age, sex, and breed.” “Two different people observing the sheep at the start and during a grazing period makes it more difficult record any small changes unless there is good communication.”

Having a conversation about these points with staff is useful. Even if someone’s main job is to drive a tractor, if they can recognise and report issues they see, the production and welfare outcomes are worthwhile.

References:

1. <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/recognising-unusual-signs-and-symptoms-in-your-livestock/>

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Useful Resources:

[Cattle Diseases – The Farmers’ Guide \(Apr 2023\)](#)

[Sheep Diseases – The Farmers’ Guide \(Nov 2023\)](#)

These guides were developed in South Australia but have a lot of cross-over relevance to southern WA producers. They are designed to be practical, quick reference, and break down diseases based on symptoms and seasons. The guides finish off with practical management information covering biosecurity, vaccination, grain introduction, National Livestock Identification System obligations, fit to load guidelines and humane destruction.

Order a hardcopy: Glenside Biosecurity Office, Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA – (08) 8207 7900

Download a PDF: <https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/new-disease-guides-for-cattle-and-sheep-producers/>



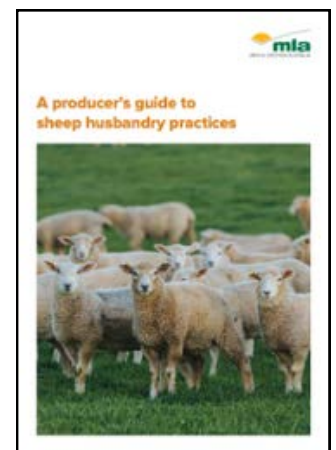
[Producer’s Guide to Sheep Husbandry Practices \(Aug 2022\)](#)

This Meat & Livestock Australia booklet has recently been updated. It covers practical management of sheep including:

- Mustering, yarding and handling
- Identifying sheep
- Mouthing sheep
- Collecting faecal samples for worm egg counts
- Drenching sheep
- Administering capsules, pellets, and boluses
- Dipping, jetting and treating with backline products
- Giving injections
- Horn trimming
- Inspecting and paring feet
- Castrating
- Tail docking
- Humane killing

Order a hardcopy: Meat & Livestock Australia, (02) 9463 9333

Download a PDF: <https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/animal-health-welfare-and-biosecurity/sheep-husbandry/>



[Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle & Sheep \(Jan, 2016\)](#)

Under the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) system, “livestock producers are required to:

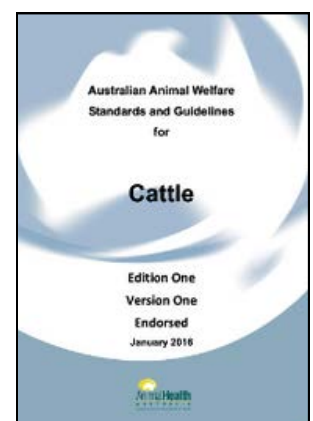
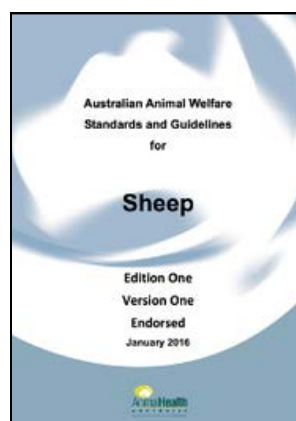
- Have a current copy of the ‘Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines’ for cattle, sheep or goats (as applicable to your property) accessible as a reference.
- Ensure the PIC representative or person responsible for the management of livestock has successfully completed training in relation to the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (complete the LPA Learning Module on Animal Welfare to generate a certificate of completion - available online)
- Ensure staff involved in animal husbandry are familiar with the content of the current version of the Standards and Guidelines for cattle, sheep and/or goats (as applicable).”

The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines cover producers’ responsibilities in relation to animal welfare. This includes feed and water, risk management in extreme weather, natural disasters, disease, injury and predation, facilities and equipment, handling and management/husbandry, castration, dehorning and spaying, breeding management, tail docking, mulesing.

Download a PDF and view the online learning module:

www.integritysystems.com.au/on-farm-assurance/animal-welfare/#welfare-pdfs

Hardcopy: Not available to order in hardcopy, you will need to print the PDF.



WA Shearing Industry Association Update

Valerie Pretzel, WASIA



Wool Harvesting Workforce - Attracting, Training & Retaining

Workforce pressures with lack of shed staff and wool handlers joining the industry has been felt for a couple of seasons. This can result in shed staff with novice shearing training being held back by contractors from getting a learner stand as there is no one to replace them as a wool handler. We have had reports of teams being stood down due to a lack of wool handlers. Traditionally these roles have been filled by young people from farming families, either on weekends, during school holidays, gap years or as a pathway into the wool industry. The wool harvesting industry is also aware that we have an ageing workforce and we are embarking on a drive to attract new entrants.

Our challenges are competing with mining to attract new entrants, attracting people to work in regional areas that are often remote and to attract people that can manage and thrive in challenging work conditions that require strong physical and mental attributes.

Our industry benefits are numerous and are such that successful shearers and wool handlers spend their work lives in a wool industry that they love. The work appeals to people that like physical work, working with their hands, learning and improving a skilled craft (whether that be as a shearer or wool handler), working in teams with strong connections, the ability to travel and work across Australia and internationally and shear all over the world; and if desired the ability to compete in events.



Wool Handling training in Esperance February 2023

Attracting the right people at the right time - WA Wool Harvesting Ambassador Program

To attract the best new, young, quality entrants into the industry we are pleased to announce that WASIA in conjunction with AWI and the WA WoolTAG will this year appoint two shearers and one wool handler as WA Wool Harvesting Ambassadors. They have been nominated across our industry by trainers and shearing contractors. The Ambassadors are young people aged 18-25 years who are into their 2nd or 3rd year and currently working in WA. They will be role models in their work ethic, presentation and conduct in the shed and out of hours, be a team player and demonstrate leadership qualities. They will be an outstanding talent in their field, with the potential to excel & willingness to learn and better themselves.

The role of the Ambassadors will be to attend high schools, agricultural colleges, training courses and events to speak to students, young people and their parents to share their story, their work experiences, how they started and got to where they are and why they work in wool harvesting. As part of their role they get the opportunity to compete at the Golden Shears in New Zealand and attend the pre shears course. The program will be launched at this year's Perth Royal Show.

Training to Retain - Wool Handler & Shearer Training

We are fortunate to have AWI provide a good number of free, timely and effective courses around the state. A range of trainers, both shearing and wool handling trainers also provide in-shed training to novices, learners and those improving their skills. Last month two AWI trainers were in the Esperance region for 10 days - working with local contractors to train in-shed in the teams, providing training to new starters and those working on improving their technique, an industry workshop/grinding days and 4 days at the Farm Training Centre.

Maximising retention and long term sustainability of our workforce - SafeSheds

We have to look after our wool harvesting staff by providing safe work environments and safe work practices to reduce injuries and the toll that shearing and wool handling takes on the physical body. WASIA and AWI developed the SafeSheds Program to assist growers identify potential hazards, improve the safety in their sheds and work with their shearing teams to improve work practices.

Last year we were very pleased to assist over 20 ASHEEP members to review their shearing sheds using the SafeSheds Program. Last month we had reports from AWI trainers that they could clearly see shearing shed safety improvements in a number of sheds around Esperance which is a great start. If you would like WASIA to come back and do more SafeShed Assisted Reviews, get in touch or let ASHEEP know.

ASHEEP is a group member of WASIA, and as such ASHEEP members are welcome to contact WASIA at any time on 0412 227 252 or at admin@wasia.com.au

ASHEEP Mastering Merino Genetics Workshop

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

We recently held our Mastering Merino Genetics Workshop for the year. This is a closed group of commercial Ram Buyers and Ram Breeders as well as Studs that have been using Genetic Flock Profile testing, Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV) and the RamSelect program to firstly benchmark their flock and then using ASBV's and RamSelect to target genetic gain to meet their individual breeding objectives.

This group first came to together in 2008 as part of the MerinoLink project and have continued to meet each year with the continued project now called Mastering Merino Genetics. We also welcomed new members to the group in 2022. The original group have completed two flock profiles which show the genetic gains they have achieved in that time but more importantly they can clearly see the gains in the shearing shed and when finishing lambs in the feedlot.

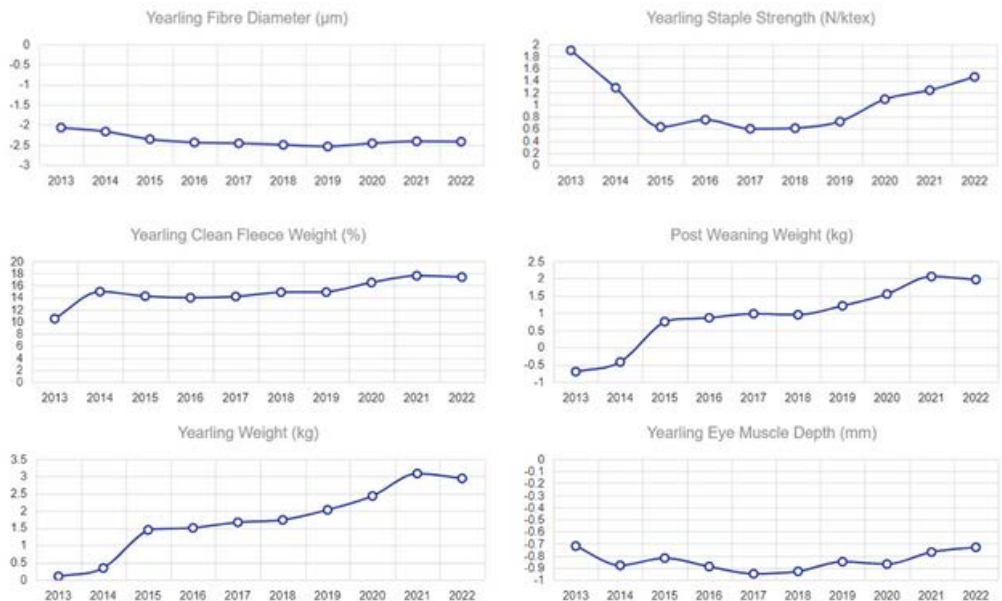
This year Sally Martin from SheepMetriX facilitated the workshop. Sally facilitated the original group and has a wealth of knowledge in the sheep genetics space.

Each year the workshop includes an ASBV refreshers, looks at the current flock profiles, and reviews the current breeding objectives against the ram team to identify the next ram purchases to achieve the objectives.

We know if you focus on a particular trait, you will get improvement, the challenge now for the first group who have achieved there first objectives is to maintain the improvement while improving other traits. For example, those that had a wool focus now are looking to improve the growth or fat traits and vis versa.

Sally also provided some great information on the 5 new indexes currently called MerinoSelect Research Indexes. There is a move to replace to current Fibre Production, Merino Production and Dual-Purpose indexes with Fine Wool, Wool Production, Sustainable Merino High Rainfall, Sustainable Merino and Maternal + Lamb. While they are research indexes now, they are looking to faze them in next year, 2024.

For more info on the new indexes Google: Sheep Genetics Research Indexes or visit: www.sheepgenetics.org.au



DPIRD / ASHEEP Regional Intelligence Meetings

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

ASHEEP and DPIRD have recently started holding monthly online meetings to improve the flow of information between livestock producers and key departmental staff. It is hoped that this line of communication will give DPIRD better information about seasonal conditions, issues growers are experiencing, and opportunities for DPIRD to assist. This is important, as the information we discuss is used by DPIRD to feed into their internal regional intelligence meetings, which flow up the chain and into ministerial briefings. The meetings also give DPIRD an opportunity to flag any new resources or focuses relevant to livestock producers.

ASHEEP Committee Members Mark Walter and Ashley Riechstein are attending the meetings (other Committee Members step in if they can't make it) along with Executive Officer, Sarah Brown. From DPIRD, Brendan Nicholas (Esperance Manager) and Katherine Davies (Livestock Systems Development Officer). This is a new initiative, with only two meetings held to date.

If there is something you think should be raised, please contact us: eo@asheep.org.au or 0409 335 194.

More Dollars From Ewe Lambs With Joining Tool



Meat & Livestock Australia

Joining ewe lambs can increase profitability by up to \$57 per ewe lamb joined – and a new tool has just become available to help producers make informed decisions to maximise gains from the practice.

Developed by Murdoch University, Farming Systems Analysis Service and neXtgen Agri with funding from MLA, the tool provides guidance on the cost-effectiveness of joining ewe lambs as well as management strategies to maximise profitability from ewe lambs joined.

Project lead and Murdoch University's Associate Professor of Animal Science, Andrew Thompson, said the tool enables producers to put a dollar value on joining ewe lambs within their flock. "Joining ewe lambs is not something for everyone – current adoption levels are around 5% in Merino and 30% in maternal flocks. Whether it's actually cost-effective to do will vary from farm to farm and season to season," Andrew said. "It does give you more lambs to sell, but you've got to keep an eye on costs."

Double the decision support

The tool has three separate functions to support decision making around joining ewe lambs at each step of the journey – all starting with whether a producer should join ewe lambs in the first place.

- Helps producers decide if they should join ewe lambs
 - Producers can enter details such as number of lambs weaned from their adult and hogget ewes and commodity prices, and the tool will advise if ewe lamb joining is something they should consider.
- Helps producers who have been joining for a while boost their results
 - Producers can enter information and current targets around seven key factors identified to influence the performance of ewe lambs, such as the liveweight and age of the animal when mated.
 - The tool then provides the producer with a dollar figure estimate of how much extra they could make by shifting their management of specific factors towards what the tool has modelled as the optimum for their specific operating environment.
- Helps inform tactical decision making and enables producers to optimise their management of ewe lambs based on the conditions of that specific season.

Keeping it specific

With a complex range of factors affecting ewe lamb performance when joined, the tool uses a unique method to provide the specific, tailored advice producers need to drive productivity gains. "What's so innovative about this tool is that we have integrated whole farm economic modelling with machine learning," Andrew said. "This means we can provide advice that's much more than generic advice – it's actually specific to the scenario of the individual producer using the tool."

According to co-founder and Director of neXtgen Agri, Mark Ferguson, the tool's use of machine learning will allow it to provide cost-benefit analysis and optimum management strategies for more than 500 million possible scenarios. "The beauty of machine learning is that we can enter 2,500 farm system scenarios into the tool and then it trains the algorithm to fill in the gaps between the scenarios – so it can model something very similar to your scenario in just a fraction of a second," Mark said. "It allows you to weigh up all the 'what ifs' with more precision than just doing a few numbers on the back of an envelope."

Time to talk

Before making the decision to join their ewe lambs, neXtgen Agri's Mark Ferguson recommends producers make sure of the tools and support already available to maximise the success of their breeding season. "Even if it looks profitable on paper to do, there's a few things you need to do well when joining ewe lambs. I encourage producers to talk to a consultant, join the Towards 90 (T90) Program or talk to someone who's already joining their ewe lambs to learn a few tricks," he said.

More Info

About the Tool: <https://www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/tools-calculators/joining-ewe-lamb-tool/>

Access the Tool: <https://tools.mla.com.au/ewe-lamb-decision-support-tool/>

Contacts

- Andrew Thompson, andrew.thompson@murdoch.edu.au
- Mitchell Plumbe, mplumbe@mla.com.au

Continued over page.

Snapshot of Ewe Lamb Joining Tool Data Manipulation Points

Management focus input

Farm scenario

Growing season length 6 months

Number of ewe lambs weaned 1000

Date of joining of adult ewes 14/09/2023

Breed Fine wool merino(18u)

Genetic potential for reproduction 5

Wool price \$1600/bale (clip average)

Lamb price \$9/kg carcass weight

Supplement price \$250/t

Supplement quality 12MJ/kg DM

Flock structure

Sale age of young ewes ~6 months

Sale age of old ewes years 5.5yo

Livestock management

Adult weaning percentage 100%

2-tooth ewes weaning percentage 80%

Strategic management input

Farm scenario

Growing season length 6 Months

Number of ewe lambs weaned 1000

Date of joining of adult ewes 14/09/2023

Breed Fine wool merino(18u)

Genetic potential for reproduction 5

Wool price \$1600/bale (clip average)

Lamb price \$9/kg carcass weight

Supplement price \$250/t

Supplement quality 12

Flock structure

Sale age of young ewes ~6 months

Sale age of old ewes 5.5yo

Livestock management

Proportion of ewe lambs joined 50%

Age of ewe lambs at rams in 8 months

Liveweight of ewe-lambs at rams in 80% of mature weight

Liveweight change during joining 100g/hd/d

Liveweight change during pregnancy 5kg

Liveweight of 2-tooth ewes at joining 100% of mature weight

Management of dry ewe lambs Retained

ASHEEP Safety Spot: Wear a helmet

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

Resources courtesy of Plant a Seed for Safety: <https://plantaseedforsafety.com>



How to get what's his* name to WEAR A HELMET

(*Or her. You're welcome.)

#PLANT a seed for SAFETY

1. CHANGE IS TRICKY.

Ever done your signature with your other hand? Didn't think so... because #why.

Forming new habits is haaaaard yards + requires big-time brain power. Have solid, compelling reasons WHY someone should change their wicked ways... and the more they pull at the heart strings (or can be reinforced by peers) - the better!

#PLANT a seed for SAFETY

2. NO ONE LIKES BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO.

The most powerful way of inspiring change isn't by throwing the book (or procedure!) at someone, but by making them think it was their idea (or 'planting a seed', if you will!).

Ask open* questions + help them come up with their own conclusions on a better, safer way of doing things.

*A question that doesn't assume the answer or illicit a one-word response.

#PLANT a seed for SAFETY

3. DOUBLE STANDARDS ARE THE ANTICHRIST.

"Why should he/she be allowed to do it, but not me?"

People (the kids) look up to others (the old man) + copy them.

It really is that simple. Find the person with the greatest level of influence + start there.

You can't be what you can't see, period.

#PLANT a seed for SAFETY

4. MAKE THE EASY, EASIER.

Broken chin strap? Itchy velcro?

Helmet too big, too small, too old or stored too far away?

Changing habits is hard, but it's even harder when the alternative isn't within easy reach... or there are other things getting in the way. Make the right choice the easiest choice.

#PLANT a seed for SAFETY

5. DID SOMEONE SAY HEAD LICE?

CUE: involuntary itching (hahaha).

No one wants to wear a helmet that's littered with the ghosts of dandruff's past. They can be sweaty, scratchy, hot + downright disgusting... so where's the pride in wearing them?

Spare the 60's relics living in the old man's shed + throw your people a few bucks to buy their own. Voila!

#PLANT a seed for SAFETY

Australian Wool Innovation Update

Jeff Sorrell, AWI



AWI Chairman Jock Laurie visits Esperance

In mid-August AWI Chairman Jock Laurie visited the ASHEEP Esperance Winter Field Walk to speak with growers on a range of subjects including the AWI funded project with the University of Adelaide for net free biological harvesting (using a natural protein to create a weak point in a sheep's fleece so that wool can be removed without shearing).

AWI appoints new WA Industry Officer

AWI has appointed Jodie King as the new WA-based Industry Relations Officer following the departure of Tori Kirk. Ms King is based in Darkan with her husband Nathan, an Elders stud stock agent. Together they have a small sheep farm at Darkan. She is one of the organisers of the Darkan Sheepfest. Ms King joins AWI on 11 September.

2023 AWI Director Election

AWI director elections take place this year with the AWI AGM to be held on Friday, 17 November. Eligible levy payers are encouraged to be shareholders and to vote.

AWI shareholders are able to shape the decision making process of the company via their access to information from the company, and by choosing to vote at Annual General Meetings. AWI shareholders are entitled to one vote for every \$100 of wool levy paid in the three financial years before any vote. A share in AWI is not tradeable and is of no capital value. To become a shareholder, a levy payer must apply. The cut-off date to register to be an AWI shareholder for the 2023 director elections is 29 September 2023. AGM election packs will be sent out in early October.

Becoming an AWI shareholder is free. To become an AWI shareholder, levy-paying woolgrowers should complete the shareholder application form and return it to the AWI share registry at Link Market Services. Enquiries should be directed to Link Market Services on 1800 113 373 (free call).

WA Biological Wool Harvesting Demonstration Day - 27th October (TBC)

AWI will showcase the AWI funded University of Adelaide biological wool harvesting at Katanning on 29th October. This type of biological harvesting does not require nets but rather a weak point is created in the wool and harvesting can occur from that point in the staple. Woolgrowers will hear from the University of Adelaide researchers and see first-hand how biological harvesting works. Free live biological harvesting demonstrations will be held from 11am-12pm at the DPIRD Katanning Research Station, Nyabing Road, Katanning WA. Contact: 02 8295 4117, kevin.wilde@wool.com

Vigilance needed to keep the clip clean

The Australian wool clip is recognised worldwide for its high quality. However, to maintain this good reputation, it is important that Australian woolgrowers continue to be committed to preventing any contamination to their clip during the wool harvesting operation.

Cooperation on Trans-Tasman training

An exchange program between Australian and New Zealand shearer and wool handler training providers got under way in February, when a group of Australian trainers visited New Zealand for train the trainer sessions.

The Australian trainers from AWI and the Shearing Contractors' Association of Australia (SCAA) Shearer Wool Handler Training Inc were hosted by New Zealand's Elite Wool Industry Training (EWIT). Like the Australian training providers, EWIT has a strong group of trainers, all very consistent with the way they deliver training. The visit was very encouraging with good discussion on the best pattern to shear crossbred and composite sheep.

Applications for AWI 2024 Graduate Training Program now open

Applications for the 2024 Australian Wool Innovation Graduate Training Program are now open! The AWI Graduate Training Program provides successful applicants with a thorough understanding of the wool supply chain from fibre to fashion.

The 18-month program starts each year in March and is based primarily at the AWI office in Sydney, where the graduates gain exposure to many areas of the AWI business including On-Farm Research, Processing Innovation and Education Extension, Consultation and Engagement, Global Marketing, Digital, Measurement and Evaluation, and Business Services. Graduates are also given the opportunity to gain global exposure to the wool supply chain through two international rotations. The program also provides the graduates with ongoing professional training and development opportunities, to further enhance their career within the industry. The program is aimed at graduates from a broad cross section of disciplines who have a background in or connection with the Australian Wool Industry.

For more info: careers.wool.com/program-overview/

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WALRC Newsletter



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Esperance Biosecurity Association AGM 29th September 2023

3pm, 33 Degrees, Esperance.
 RSVP: Veronika on 0459084077
 or eba.wilddog@outlook.com

ASHEEP Eastern States Tour 2nd - 10th August 2024

Contact Jan Clawson on 0407 990 497 or janclawson@bigpond.com to register your interest.

OCTOBER

Next ASHEEP Committee Meeting is scheduled for October 2023.

Contact a committee or staff member to raise an item.

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