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ASHEEP NEWS

asheep Esperance

Case Study: Strength in diversity

ASHEEP interviews Trevor, Marie and Jason Schutz

Trevor and Marie Schutz farm with son Jason, across a wide range of country. Their home block is in Dalyup north-west of Esperance, and from there they work their way further north with properties in Cascade, Salmon Gums and Laverton. With that geographical diversity comes both opportunity and challenge and it was fantastic to chat with them about their management approach to a system that incorporates cropping, cattle, sheep and poultry. Strictly speaking, ASHEEP is a sheep and cattle grower group, so it was a refreshing change to learn about the chickens!

The Schutz family have been farming in Western Australia for the past 30 years, with Trevor and Marie moving over to Esperance in 1993 from South Australia. They were well placed to start up a diverse farming enterprise in WA, having come from a background that included chickens, pigs, sheep and cattle. After the wool market crashed and their farm business in SA became stretched, a feeling of having their backs against the wall led them to start looking at other options. Trevor had worked in Esperance for a year after finishing school and was familiar with the region, so with the support of an uncle and vendor finance, they took the leap to sell up in SA and purchase a property in north Dalyup. Marie's thoughts on the move were that "it was tough going but we have never looked back on making the move west. Trevor loves a challenge. He has a habit of seeing opportunity where others may turn away, (especially expanding with a station!)"

The move was initially challenging. They'd seen the property in September looking green and productive, and arrived in February to be met with the dry. The sandy white soils were a stark comparison to the heavy, rich land they had come from. The farm looked to be producing great crops in its first year, then, two days into harvest they lost two-thirds of the barley in one bad windy day.

Image: Shearing at the Schutz's North Dalyup farm.

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Highlights

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Off-farm income kept them afloat, including working in shearing sheds for a few years with Trevor shearing and Marie rousing.

Fast forward to the present, and the Schutz's have expanded their business in WA to incorporate four more properties in the Esperance region and a station in Laverton. The enterprise mix is roughly 75% cropping (wheat / barley / canola / hay) and 25% livestock. Trevor spreads his time between all the farms and travels to Laverton in the off season. Marie runs the office and works with the livestock, plus operates an egg-production business from Dalyup with 200 layers and 200 pullets supplying local businesses under the brand "Banksia Park Farm Eggs". Their son Jason farms with them, overseeing the cropping and spraying, and is increasingly involved in the books. They are in the process of building a house so that Jason and wife Lyndall can live on farm. Lyndall brings her skills as an Accountant to the team and also assists with stock work.

The conditions across each of their properties are vastly different, with big variations between rainfall zones and soil types. The Dalyup farm is largely sandplain / banksia sand, with some areas of heavier soil. It gets good rainfall with an average of around 450mm per annum. The farm in north Cascade is drier, with around 325mm and "typical Cascade clay". Their north Salmon Gums land sees a drop in rainfall to about 300mm and varies from stony country through to loam. Laverton Downs has a "bit of everything" from outback red sand dunes to hard stony flats and breakaway country. The average annual rainfall there should be at around 255mm, but the last four years have brought drought conditions. In 2021, the station had 100mm of rain, and 70mm the year before. This is where the balance between the different farms comes in.

Farm Snapshot

Name: Banksia Park Farming

Enterprise Mix: 75% cropping, 25% livestock

Location: North Dalyup (450mm average annual rainfall)
North Cascade (325mm)
North Salmon Gums (300mm)
Laverton Downs Station (255mm)

Stock: 600 breeding cattle, 1500 merino ewes, 400 hens

Team: Trevor & Marie Schutz
Jason & Lyndall Schutz
Chris Haase, Station Manager

ASHEEP would like to thank Trevor, Marie and Jason for their time giving us insight into their farming operation. Now, over to them for a re-cap of our conversation.

Laverton Downs Station

The station is 100% cattle and is looked after by Station Manager Chris Haase, supported by Trevor who spends about 25% of his time up there. It is currently home to 600 breeders, predominantly a Droughtmaster / Santa Gertrudis cross, but is only stocked at around 50% due to dry conditions, although it has seen some recent winter rain. It is used as a breeding ground but not for finishing. The station is a pastoral lease, crown land with grazing rights. No pastures are grown there, stock graze native bush, there's a lot of mulga. The land is phosphorous deficient which is a problem that we try and offset with licks, but it's a challenge to get the cattle to take them. Despite the current seasonal conditions, the cattle are looking ok, helped by supplementary feeding of hay, and keeping the stocking rate low.

One of the strategies to keep down the stocking rate and take pressure off the cows is to wean early and move the weaners to Dalyup. This is not without its challenges, as the bulls are always in, so calves don't drop in a condensed window. They are also spread across large areas of land with minimal fencing, poor visibility due to the bush, and limited vehicle tracks. Some mustering is completed by air with support from a ground crew, it takes about 7-8 people and a chopper is about $4000-$5000 a day, so the preferred method is by water trap.

Water trapping involves building yards around a water source, with gates that can be set to let stock in but not back out. Most of the time the gates will allow free access for stock to come and go, and when it's time to muster the outlet gate is closed, trapping the animals in the yards. Water trapping is a good option as its low stress for the stock and it only needs 3 staff to be involved. It's an area that we are investing in to build more infrastructure. If it's a wet year though and there's plenty of water around, it won't work, so there's still a place for the chopper.

Below: A water trap at Laverton Downs Station.

Above: Cattle at Laverton Downs Station.

Musters are generally held in September and July, slotted in between shearing, seeding and harvest on the other farms. Weaning is done based on weight, anything above 100kg is removed and taken to Dalyup for 6-10 months for backgrounding on grass or in our feedlot. Cull cows are also brought south to put a few kilos on before sale.

Herd improvement is a focus, including working on adjusting genetics away from the mongrel / short-horn cattle that came with the property by introducing Droughtmaster bloodlines. The goal is to get better growth rates and a more consistent line of animals.

Recently we've been investigating introducing a new stream of income to the station via a carbon-farming project, with the idea being that it will supplement the low numbers of cattle. We were approached by a carbon company to host a human induced regeneration project, which will involve selecting areas where grazing can be managed to achieve greater than 20% scrub cover and to enable existing woody plants to grow greater than 2m tall. It's still in early stages of development and would look to be a 25-year project. Our main role would be to manage grazing, including by controlling camels and kangaroos.

Sheep Program

Sheep are run on the farms in the Esperance region, with 1500 merino breeders and another 400-500 merinos that are joined to white suffolks mostly kept at Dalyup. We have 900 wethers between Salmon Gums and Cascade, we keep them for 3.5 years for wool production, and we also run our hoggets in Cascade. This is to have the dry and low-maintenance stock on the more distant properties and they grow well on the heavier country. The sheep play a role in diversifying our income streams, but we also feel that having sheep is a more sustainable model than full cropping, for example with chemical resistance management. Sustainability is a big focus. We have long term view and want future generations to be able to farm this land.

We have two separate joining times; the terminal sires are joined in October with the aim to meet the lamb market late July before prices fall and to avoid grass seeds, and the Merinos are joined in November. We're then crutching around February - March, lambing March - April, and weaning and shearing merino lambs in August. Our main shearing for ewes is also in August, every 12 months. We used to shear in January, but August is a better fit with the cropping program and means the sheep are at less risk of fly strike coming into the spring fly-wave.

The sheep need to be low maintenance. We are time-poor, so we aim to simplify their management as much as possible. We've classed out fleece rot, have no tolerance for body strike, and have not had to use flystrike preventatives for a long time. We only use it across the breach if there's a delay in crutching. We don't pregnancy scan at this point – we're not ruling it out for future but at this stage we're keeping it simple. The sheep are only drenched once (occasionally twice) a year (we have a low stocking rate and clean paddock rotation that keeps worms down).

The focus for the merinos is to have high value, low micron wool that's stylish and dust-free. We are happy with micron at about 17, and we are working to increase kilos. Last year 18 micron was our highest line, and they were put to terminals. We have been using Wattledale merino rams over the last 15 years and for terminals use Cascade White Suffolks. Our preference is to avoid merinos that are too wrinkly. At this stage we still mules, although in an ideal world we would like to move away from it. But we can't have non-mulesed sheep and end up chasing flystrike. It's good to see research being done to give producers other options. We've been using pain relief for mulesing as long as it has been available and notice that lambs do much better and heal up well – it's worth the cost.

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Pasture / Feedbase

The pasture base is medic in Cascade and Salmon Gums, and in Dalyup on the sand we have serradellas, perennials for the cattle, and vetch in the higher rainfall and heavier soil areas. We grow oats for hay and sometimes bale up serradella.

Red Clover Syndrome took out the sub clovers at Dalyup, we only have 1 or 2 paddocks left with it, so serradella is what we are using to take its place. We grow our own Margarita serradella seed and use it to reseed the pastures every year. It goes out in the super spreader in January. Getting it out early is key. We don't rely on regeneration as it can be hit and miss on the sands and because it's so easy to reseed it. We have done trials previously between spreading the seed and sowing with a disc but found no difference in establishment so have continued to use the spreader as it makes it very simple to re-seed for each pasture phase. It's not inoculated, but it seems to nodulate and the soil testing is showing up the Nitrogen. This year we used 30L less Flex-N, making that decision based on soil testing. Serradellas have been growing here for 30 years, Cadiz first and then Santorini.

We generally have a program of 2 to 3 years cropping (wheat, barley, or canola) followed by pasture, depending on the paddock. 5 to 8 years ago we mouldboarded a lot of non-wetting country and we're now riding on the results of that. We wouldn't get canola to germinate at Dalyup without it.

RM4 Vetch goes well on the heavy high-rainfall soil at Dalyup. We graze it and haven't seen any issues with photosensitisation, there is a bit of ryegrass coming through in the mix. At Cascade and Salmon Gums, the medic is like a weed – you can't kill it. We haven't needed to work with vetch up there.

We've done a bit of crop grazing in the past, but since the arrival of Russian Wheat Aphid and the need to treat the seed, the 10-week grazing withholding has closed off that as an option for early feed.

Above: Serradella pastures at north Dalyup.

What are your key focuses for running a successful operation?

Diversity – don't put all the eggs in one basket. We have a range of income sources, properties with different conditions, and we've built flexibility into the system. On top of the farms, station and poultry, we've also got contract hay and harvesting in the mix.

Alongside diversity, we have a strong focus on keeping all the elements simple and manageable. We have to approach things with time-efficiency in mind and not over-stretch. Each of the farms is set up to work with manageable levels of risk. For example, we don't grow canola on the northern farms where it's higher risk, we put classes of sheep that are lower maintenance in Cascade and Salmon Gums, we keep the breeders around the home block, and we keep stocking rates well within limits.

We do our best to have good, happy healthy animals. A lot of that is in genetics, but also in managing stock so that they are low maintenance. If we were solely focused on livestock we could push harder, put in more time, supplementary feeding, etc, but we back off and run them a bit easier.

Is there anything new you are trialling?

Driving weight gain in cattle is a thing that is fairly new for us in respect to finishing cull cows and backgrounding weaners. We're noticing some genetics work better and we're trialling licks for weight gains. So far, we've been having good results. With genetics we're also looking to improve eating quality with a drive to produce a great product for the market.

We're involved in ASHEEP's Mastering Merino Genetics workshops and are getting more targeted with ASBVs and the genetic profile of the sheep.

What's the outlook? Challenges and opportunities?

The season is going well in Dalyup. Salmon Gums and Cascade are average to good, but we don't have as much moisture in reserve there as we'd like. At the moment, the cattle market has been impacted by the Foot & Mouth Disease outbreak in Indonesia. We don't live export, but it flows down the chain. Processing backlogs are a big issue with sheep right now, we should be selling crossbred lambs in July / August, but it's hard to get rid of them.

In the long term, the future looks positive and we're passionate about supplying local produce. The meat industry looks good with less people producing it, strong demand and good prices. There's a good future in wool, but with a lot less people producing it now than 20 years ago we'll have to watch it doesn't become a niche market. We're grateful that Jason is passionate about farming and sees the fit for sheep in the farming system.

A challenge is the limited number of shearers and shed staff, with a lot of them getting older. We need to do more to attract the younger ones. It's a fantastic industry and shearing contractors and farmers can work with each other to build good, sustainable relationships.

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There's a challenge more broadly with labour since COVID. We've done ok at the station for mustering teams, but it has been harder around Esperance. We normally would have one more full-time person here and we haven't had that position filled for a year. We have casual staff seasonally, but it's a problem when you have unskilled staff like backpackers that you spend a lot of time training and 5 minutes later, they move onto something else.

Social and political pressures are also on our minds. Decisions are being made for agriculture by people who have no understanding of what is actually going on in the industry. Everyone in farming has a responsibility for educating other people in some sense, to stop that disconnect between city and county getting wider. Most people running livestock are endeavouring to do the right thing and that's the story that needs to be told, and to continue to be told better. One way of doing that is to get involved on committees. Trevor is on the Southern Rangelands Pastoral Alliance and the Goldfields Nullarbor Rangelands Biosecurity Association. Through those kinds of roles, you get access to politicians. It has been an interesting experience being involved and hearing the background on policy decisions. We need to be active as farmers and pastoralists to get our voice out there, or we'll be drowned out by the minority of squeaky wheels.

We're passionate about farming, always have been. It's different from a 9-5 job, it's 24/7. The low times make you appreciate the good times.

Looking to the future, what draws you to farming Jason?

I've known for a long time that I wanted to be a farmer. Along with growing up in farming, I studied agribusiness at Curtin for 3 years and followed that up with a trip to the USA for 7 months to do the contract harvesting run. After that I went straight into farming here. There's something about being able to produce food and fibre, being proud of what you grow, and doing it efficiently, with all the data.

Any farming apps you'd recommend?

We use MyJohnDeere for all the cropping data which works well. We don't have a sheep app yet; we've tried a couple but at this stage the little notebook is still working.

Executive Officer's Update

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

Since last newsletter, ASHEEP has been fairly busy. We've held our Livestock Conference & AGM, Cattle Field Day, Winter Walk, Mastering Merino Genetics Workshops, Shearing School, hosted a Sheep Genetics Regional Forum, and supported Western Beef Association to bring down a Bull Select Workshop. We've also hosted a week-long visit from WA Shearing Industry Association who have helped farmers with 23 shearing shed safety checks using the SafeSheds tools (pg23), plus they attended a meeting ASHEEP coordinated with Esperance shearing contractors, ASHEEP representatives, and AWI which resulted in the development of shearing guidelines (pg24).

ASHEEP has submitted four project funding applications to Meat & Livestock Australia, three relating to cattle and one to MLA's Carbon Neutral 2030 target. We expect to hear if we've been successful in late September. As far as ongoing projects, in this edition of the newsletter we have an update from Courteney Pengilly on the Shearing Interval Demonstration (pg26), from Jan Clawson on Mastering Merino Genetics (pg15), and a report on the latest Non-Mulesing Project meeting (pg31).

I managed to slip in three weeks of leave (covered by ASHEEP lynch pin Jan Clawson), plus had a rare trip out of Esperance for work, heading to Sydney to stand in for Dave Vandenberghe at the AWI Woolgrower Industry Consultation Group meeting, and then back via the WA Livestock Research Council's Livestock Matters forum in Perth.

ASHEEP has bid farewell to Demi Vandenberghe as a Project Officer, she is stepping away from the role to focus on her expanding farming commitments at The Oaks. She will be missed, but we still have her as a member and as a Feed365 Trial Site host, so she won't be far away. We're on the lookout for a new Project Officer, so get in touch if you have ideas or are interested.

Before I sign off, one last note: ASHEEP gets a lot of feedback that people enjoy reading the case study articles in the newsletter. If there's someone you would like to see interviewed let us know.

Changes at ASHEEP

Mark Walter (left) with David Vandenberghe.

We've had a few changes with new faces and position holders within ASHEEP's committees recently, so here's a quick summary to get you up to speed and share some brief introductions.

The ASHEEP AGM on 23 June saw Tim Starcevich choose not to renominate for the ASHEEP Committee after serving four years. Members elected Ashley Reichstein to fill the vacancy, with all other committee members remaining the same. Following the AGM, Mark Walter stood down as Chair having come to the end of his three year maximum term. David Vandenberghe was elected to the position, with Nick Ruddenklau as Vice Chair. Alan Hoggart retained the position of Treasurer. The Cattle Sub-Committee also met recently and accepted Matthew Ryan's resignation as he moves to a cropping-focused role. Matt has been involved since the Cattle Committee's inception. Jake Hann was invited to take the vacancy having fulfilled a guest role in past months. A big thanks to all involved for their work in these voluntary roles.

David Vandenberghe - ASHEEP Committee Chair

I have been farming since 1989. The current farming operation is 6000ha with sheep and cereal cropping. In the past we have also run 400 beef cattle. My passion in the livestock industry is to breed very profitable sheep & to be involved in the education of sheep producers to improve sheep operations. I like to point out the myths & untruths of the sheep industry. In the role of Chair, some of my interests will be to facilitate more input from members, look at extending our membership base further into the state, & assisting the shearing industry by strengthening relationships between shearers, farmers and contractors. This will lead to better outcomes for all parties & better welfare for our sheep. Other Committees that I am involved in are South East Merino Breeders Improvement Group, Esperance Stud Merino Breeders, AWI Woolgrower Industry Consultation Panel & Woolgrower Consultation Group, Dryland Legume Pasture Systems Steering Committee, Fire Brigade Captain, Gibson Football Club Committee, Football Coach.

Nicholas Ruddenklau - ASHEEP Vice Chair

I was born and raised on a sheep & beef farm in New Zealand & have now been in Australia for nearly 16 years. I have worked on & managed properties west, north & east of Esperance. I am currently managing a property east of Esperance with my wife & three sons, running around 35,000 merino sheep, 1200 angus breeders & cropping. I am excited to take on the role of Vice Chair to help contribute to ASHEEP. The group plays an important part in the livestock industry in the Esperance port zone. The founding members & all who have contributed over the years have made huge advancements in pasture production & ASHEEP have very close relationships with some of the best researchers in the in the country & even the world when it comes to legume pasture production. I hope we as a committee can continue to help this advancement in the industry. Areas of my interest include continuing with the delivery of the MLA Producer Demonstration Site program which is bringing research into a practical setting, seeing the acid tolerant vetch and pea rhizobia come into our farming system, & seeing the communication of what we do in livestock farming delivered to our customers in a positive light.

Ashley Reichstein - ASHEEP Committee Member

We're situated 42km NE of Esperance in the Wittenoom Hills, Mt Burdett area farming 6800ha arable. We have a winter grazed area of about 350ha on our main home farm. Our YIYO rainfall is around 450mm & our soils are gravelly sand over clay with a pH of around 4.8 to 5. Our flock is a straight merino operation with about 1500 low maintenance breeding ewes. Our objective is to breed a dual purpose animal. We have been on Center Plus bloodline for about 22 years. I see the sheep industry starting to make some very good progress genetically and also in new pasture species. I look at what New Zealand has done in the last 30 years with their selection on ASBV's & can see us starting to achieve good genetic results here as well. I think the merino can become a great dual purpose animal producing great wool & also turning off young lambs at 5-8-10 months age that can compete with traditional terminal sire prime lambs. I'm also keen on finding a productive legume that can be used in a 3 year pasture phase & 2 years of cropping with early feed during autumn. I think our shearing industry standards need lifting. If we supply good facilities & curfew our sheep properly it will make it easier for the shearers. We need to encourage a bit more professionalism back into the shearing industry. I am hosting ASHEEP's 6 verses 12 month shearing trial, now into about its 8th month. We've done our first 6 month shearing and lambing. We achieved a 110% lambing on ewes scanned pregnant, which we were pleased with. I think moving our lambing back by about 6 weeks in to May has had a large influence on this percentage by lambing into green feed. It will be really interesting to see the 12 month shearing. That will give us a good indication on the wool growth comparison.

Jake Hann - Cattle Sub-Committee Member

I grew up on a mixed livestock family farm in the Condingup area, where from a very young age I've been involved in agriculture, & my passion for livestock & in particular cattle has grown. I left school at 16 to work in the family business & was involved in breeding & selling Simmental bulls, & did contract work for various other farms in the area when needed. I left Esperance & the family business in 2014 & worked in the wheatbelt for 15 months, when I got an opportunity to work in a cattle feedlot in Margaret River & within 6 months got an opportunity to manage for another couple of years.

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I really enjoyed doing every aspect of the job & learnt a great deal. I also got another opportunity to move to Katherine in the NT, where we grew fodder all year around & supplied feed for the Katherine holding yards. In 2019, life changed a bit for me & I decided to move back to Esperance & work at Epasco farm, before kick-starting with Nutrien in September 2020 where I became a livestock agent. It's honestly is the best thing I've done. I feel like I can share my knowledge & passion to try & help producers with a whole range of things to get a better return for their livestock. As far as areas of production improvement that I'm interested in, I find it a little hard to focus on just one thing but if I was to choose, it would be on improving our markets & marketing of beef, & looking at possibilities of diversifying in other markets to help get a better return, but also quality isn't compromise. Other community roles see me involved in the Esperance Agricultural Show where I'm junior Vice President and head livestock Steward, & also in the Munglinup Bushman's Society where I help run the back yards for the Easter camp draft & other events if needed.

A full list of ASHEEP Committee Members and Cattle Sub-Committee Members can be found on the last page of this newsletter, along with their contact details.

Sheep Genetics Regional Forum Esperance

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

In July, ASHEEP hosted the Sheep Genetics Regional Forum at the Esperance Bay Yacht Club, which was attended by over 20 sheep producers and ram breeders. Sheep Genetics is the genetic evaluation service of the Australian sheep industry. The purpose of Sheep Genetics is to assist sheep breeders and commercial producers to increase the rate of genetic gain, across a broad range of traits, in their sheep using Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV).

Sheep Genetics was established in 2005 by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI). It was created by the consolidation of several existing genetic databases and services that had been built over several decades. It has two major divisions: LAMBPLAN, the genetic evaluation service for the prime lamb industry, and MERINOSELECT, servicing the wool industry. It also delivers the genetic evaluation for the Dohne Merino breed and KIDPLAN, a goat industry service. Sheep Genetics is now a not-for-profit service operated by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

Each year Sheep Genetics hold a series of Regional Forums across Australia so that breeders can keep updated on enhancements to the analysis, learn how to get the most out of their breeding program and speak directly to Sheep Genetics staff. Thanks to airline delays, Emma McCrabb, Senior Development Officer, single handily presented the very informative program. Some of the key points included in Emma's presentation were as follows.

This year has seen some of the most significant changes to the Sheep Genetics evaluations, so it is really important that producers 're-benchmark' what is considered a good value for each trait and index. To do this producers can use the percentile band tables on the Sheep Genetics website. Weaning Rate (WR) has replaced Number of Lambs Weaned (NLW) as the ASBV used to describe reproduction, and in indexes. Weaning Rate combines the components: conception (CON), litter size (LS) and ewe rearing ability (ERA) into a single value for producers to use in selection.

Currently there is more demand than ever before for ASBVs, with continually growing numbers of animal and flock data being submitted to get ASBVs, and the associated exponential growth in genotyping. Genomic testing is underpinned by the reference populations, which is made up of those animals that are performance recorded and genotyped. For the best return on investment, genomics should be used in early selection for hard-to-measure or later-in-life traits (such as eating quality or adult traits).

Finally, this year Sheep Genetics have started privately reporting a Data Quality score to breeders, which captures how well they are collecting data. This score is reported at a flock level and includes measures of completeness of recording and data structure to provide ram buyers with more information about the quality of a flock's ASBVs. This score is currently only reported privately back to the breeders. Breeders can choose to advertise their score, but Sheep Genetics are not publicly reporting it to all producers yet.

For more information on sheep genetics and ASBV's go to the Sheep Genetics website at https://www.sheepgenetics.org.au/

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Westcoast Wool & Livestock are pleased to officially introduce you to Sam Wakefield, the newest Agent to join our Livestock sales team.

Joining us from South Australia, Sam will be providing guidance and support to new and existing clients on the Southcoast and Esperance/Goldfield regions of WA, while working alongside one of our most reputable and successful livestock agents, Darell Shaddick.

Sam joined Westcoast Livestock in July 2022, bringing a wealth of knowledge gained from over a decade of experience in the livestock & wool industry.

His interest in the industry started at an early age, from growing up and working on his family farm in Southwest NSW to watching the agents work at the local livestock markets with his grandfather. Sam's career path progressed from working in shearing sheds and contract station work to starting his livestock trainee program in his hometown of Mildura in 2012.

Since then, Sam has worked all throughout New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. He will now be working from his home base in Esperance, WA.

Welcome Sam, we look forward to the expertise you will bring to the Westcoast Livestock team.

For all your livestock needs, you can contact Sam on 0436 308 970 or sam.w@wcwl.com.au

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Use of eID Tagging Outside of Studs - Sheep & Cattle

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

Thomas Pengilly is representing ASHEEP in the Sheep and Goat National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) Advisory Group, being run by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). One of the key areas they have been tasked to consider is the introduction of compulsory electronic identification (eID) tagging in sheep and goats. From everything we hear, this is going to occur in coming years, and the group is discussing the planning and impact to industry. ASHEEP members are welcome to get in touch with Thomas if you would like him to pass any ideas, issues or concerns back to DPIRD via this group: 0438 657 739, penrosepollmerino@hotmail.com.

In light of the **impending compulsory eID for sheep**, ASHEEP is seeking to share more information with producers about how eID is being used already in a commercial sense, and what options are out there. Whilst sheep producers with studs are likely to be integrating eID into their systems already, there are fewer farmers who make use of it in solely "commercial" flocks. When eID tagging becomes compulsory for traceability, is it worth your while to start using it to capture other information relating to your flock? Is it worthwhile to integrate the tech right now?

Cattle producers are already required to use eID tagging for traceability purposes. After a quick ring around though, it seems that most farmers without studs don't use the system to record extra information on their animals - the tags are solely used to register stock movements on / off farm.

So, we took a moment to chat to a couple of people about this, and following are a couple of articles that came out of those conversations. The first is from ASHEEP Member James Macfarlane, who in August 2020 wrote an article for the ASHEEP Newsletter with an independent comparison of eID tags and applicators (it's available online at www.asheep.org.au/post/eid-tags-and-applicators). This time around, James has provided his thoughts on eID tag use in commercial sheep flocks, based on his own experience farming sheep in Kojonup and from his perspective as a farm consultant. The second article is provided by Ryan Willing, who is the Chair of ASHEEP's Cattle Sub-Committee and uses eID in his beef herd to inform production decisions.

Electronic tags in commercial sheep flocks: is it worth it?

James Macfarlane, Consultant – AgricUltra Farm Advisors. 0447 99 99 02 / james@agricultra.com.au

With the recent threat of Foot and Mouth entering Australia, electronic tagging has been brought firmly back into focus. In 2001, an outbreak of FMD in the UK resulted in millions of sheep and cattle being destroyed. The severity may have been minimised if they'd been able to trace the original source of infection quicker. It took approximately two weeks, by which time it was out of control. It's estimated that an incursion in Australia could cost the economy $80bn, and it would certainly devastate the industry. With a properly regulated system, it is reported that electronic tags would enable us to bring traceability down from two weeks to just two hours. It is for this reason that the State Government is considering mandating their use. Whether or not WA will receive subsidies like in VIC is yet to be seen, although most think unlikely.

Apart from traceability though, how can a commercial producer benefit from electronic tags over and above a plastic tag? Benefits vary from producer to producer depending on enterprise type, breeding objectives, and scale of operation. An eID tag is not a silver bullet. It does nothing more than a plastic tag. It doesn't even store information, contrary to popular belief. It merely emits a 16-digit number by way of radio frequency, which is why eID tags are also referred to as RFID tags – radio frequency identification. It's that unique frequency that is detected by a stick reader/wand, that then identifies that sheep as a particular individual, in exactly the same way as the vet scans your dog's microchip.

Using the stick reader, panel reader, indicator/weigh scale etc, you can then apply data points against that sheep. Unless you start collecting data and then use it, you'll be throwing your money down the drain. The point is, you need to invest time as well as money to make it start paying for itself. You must collect data but, most importantly, you must use it. Using it to make informed culling and classing decisions is where the benefits come from.

For those with self-replacing Merino flocks, the two most obvious data points to start collecting are fleece weight and pregnancy status, unless of course you automatically cull dries and/or those cutting under an x-kg threshold.

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But what if you needed to differentiate those who've weaned twins twice versus singles, or those consistently cutting above or below your threshold? Are you able to recognise the ewes cutting above 5kg as well as consistently rearing twins? Should you cull a ewe cutting 4kg who's given you four lambs in two years? Do you know if you're removing smaller, twin-born, genetically superior ewe lambs in favour of their single-born bigger, heavier sisters? Are you able to objectively rank your top, middle, and bottom performers? How would you know if you can't reflect back on previous individual records? If you're running a maternal line, being able to track individual early weight gain would be a big benefit. This will help highlight those animals worth retaining as future breeders, and indeed has the potential of tracking sire performance too. Regardless of breed type, if you had to make a quick decision to quit stock (due to disease, drought, financial, or other), do you currently have the ability to knowledgeably select your top 30% to retain? If not, that alone may be a good reason to employ electronic tags.

Your return on investment will be driven by how you use the data you capture. It's now well-documented that you can accelerate genetic gain in your commercial flock far more rapidly by implementing and using electronic data – up to five times faster than those not recording individual data. It is also widely accepted that you can expect a 3:1 return on your investment in a commercial flock, although this has been reported to be as low as $1.87 and as high as $10.60 for each dollar invested. But even at the lower end of that scale, you are still almost doubling your money. There's no question that, due to scalability, the larger the flock the greater the return, but I'm often asked what the minimum size flock is to see a financial benefit. That's hard to answer due to the numerous factors involved, which often comes back to breeding objective(s) and how much value each of those traits offer your own flock. However, anything of 1,000 breeders or more will see production and financial benefits, but only where data is being captured and used.

Apart from the additional $1 or so per tag, the other barriers to adoption I frequently come across are a lack of time and/or lack of technology experience. The thing is, where you spend more time on one task, you'll save it elsewhere. The technology itself needn't be daunting either because you can make a big difference by just using a stick reader (approx. $2,200) and some simple Excel spreadsheets. If Excel isn't your thing, then there are data managers you can outsource this to ☺ Don't let the fear of the unknown hold you back from making improvements.

This is a big topic which isn't easy to cover off in a small article, so I would invite anyone who's interested in learning more to give me a call. I can run you through the very basics through to advanced level data analysis, as well as hardware and software selection and everything in between. Used correctly, you will improve flock genetics far quicker, and you will see greater enterprise gross margin returns. Ask yourself this: would you put a crop in without autosteer? Precision technology no longer belongs in crops only.

Utilising NLIS tags to record data and make decisions in beef cattle

Ryan Willing, Carnigup, 0447 075 650, ryan.carnigup@gmail.com

Ryan Willing is a member of the ASHEEP Committee and is the Chair of the Cattle Sub-Committee. He farms Angus cattle with wife Elisha, 140km east of Esperance.

I started farming myself in 2013, and wanted to measure everything. I bought under-crush scales, an eID reader and scale head, as I wanted to use NLIS tags to their full potential. I tag and weigh everything at weaning, and start to track weights from then. It's important with grass finished animals to track their weights so I can keep them on target to be ready by Spring. Being able to track individual animal's weights and gains gives me greater control to manage them correctly.

The best measurement of cattle health, efficiency and pasture quality is weight gain. Poor gain of a single animal is a good indication it is sick or suffering from parasites. Poor gains of the whole herd is a reflection of the pasture.

Continued.

Following are some of the ways I've been using eID to track animals:

- **To measure the value of pastures, grazing crops, and summer grazing of millet or stubbles**. Weight gain can be used to put a value on those fodder types. Weight gain is the best way to gauge the quality of a pasture, more so than Food On Offer (FOO).
- **To record an animal's parentage on a herd scale.** Knowing if it came from a young vs old cow, narrows down the sire to 3 or so (depending on the herd size). From that I can keep track of genetic gain with younger cows having heavier calves than older cows.
- With the grass finished market having penalties for over weights I've used weight and gain data **to split heavier animals from lighter ones.** I can then give the heavier animals stubble to slow them down a bit, and the lighter ones millet which helps them catch up, giving me a more even line of cattle come spring.
- Utilising eID has also been important in **getting involved in trials**. I've taken part in lots of different trials, like the Multimin Challenge and the Fixed Time AI trial, and recorded individual treatments using eID. In the Fixed Time AI trial we recorded the bull used for each animal and their joining weight, then which animals preg tested empty, and got some great data on the most efficient joining weights. I also run lots of my own trials comparing different treatment protocols / HGP. Using eID for these trials lets me compare control to treated animals, and lets me follow that animal through to slaughter (eID numbers are on the kill sheet) so I can tract the difference in dressing percentage. Heavier animals don't always dress out the heaviest.

You can also use eID to record all of your general treatments, but I don't tend to bother if the whole herd is receiving the same treatment.

I can't give a direct return on investment of this equipment, but I'd highly recommend getting into it and using it to its full potential. Through using this equipment for different trials I've been able to improve efficiency, which has given me a huge indirect return. How do you know if a new technology/ practice you implement on farm is worth it without measuring the outcomes?

Want to get into eID or learn more?

Here are some consultants we have heard of who offer a range of support and advice relating to eID. The services they offer include advice on which equipment to use, how to set it up, help capturing data, equipment hire, advice on measurements to capture, and helping you to use the data. Not everyone will necessarily offer all services - so touch base with them to find out what they can assist with. Your local ag retailer may also be able to point you in the right direction.

Caris Cornwall, Orion Ag Consulting
Data capture using eID, data management, breeding program consultation. orionagconsulting@gmail.com, 0400367641, www.orionag.com.au

Kelly Gorter, KG Livestock Services
Advisory services sheep & cattle on eID tagging, as well as data collection and data management services.
kelly.gorter@hotmail.com, 0409 060 065, Twitter: @kelly_gorter

James Macfarlane, AgricUltra
eID setup and data guidance, based in Kojonup servicing clients around WA. james@agricultra.com.au, 0447 999 902, www.agricultra.com.au

Emily McDonald
eID advice and set-up support based in Esperance, emmcdonald12@outlook.com, 0409 107 466

Courteney Pengilly
eID advice, data capture and support based in Esperance. c.moffat@hotmail.com, 0450 036 093. Twitter: @CourteneyAP

Ed Riggall, AgPro Management
eID setup and guidance, based in Mount Barker servicing clients around WA. 0428 299 007, ed@agpromanagement.com

Belinda Lay, Coolindown
Esperance sheep farmer Belinda Lay (below left) has been using eID in their commercial flock and to assist breeding their own rams. She's not consulting, but she is happy to share her experience in the space with other farmers. 0427 865 981, coolindown@bigpond.com

2022 Shearing & Wool Handling School Report

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

Thanks to the continued persistence and organisation of Basil Parker, ASHEEP together with AWI has run another successful Shearing School. The two-week school was held from the 4th to 15th July at EPASCO Farms, who generously provided over 2000 young sheep for the school.

AWI trainers Amanda Davis (wool handling and classing), Todd Wegner and Kevin Gellatly (shearing) trainers spent the two weeks teaching the student the various rolls within the shearing shed. The students finished with a variety of new skills. Some had shorn before while for others it was all new.

15 students attended most days, 10 of whom went straight into work either shearing or wool handling. The students caught a bus from Esperance every morning. The shearing school ran to normal shearing hours, starting at 7am finishing at 5pm each day. On day one they spent most of the morning completing all the safety and inductions before starting the shearing and wool handling training in earnest.

For the raw new shearers learning from scratch, they got them shearing just the belly then onto the belly and the back legs. The sheep were then returned to the pen for others to finish off. By the end of the first week these new shearers were shearing a whole sheep themselves.

The new shearers are usually shearing about 50 per day by the end of the school. While they probably need a second school to get them up to the 100 per day required to shear on a learner stand, they have learnt enough within the shed to take up a position either as a presser or wool handler. For those who have shorn before, so starting at the 50 per day mark, of which there were 2 or 3 this year, they managed to get up to 80-100 per day after about 6 or 7 days.

Basil said the trainers do a great job of watching the team, when they start to look tired, they down tools and move to pressing, grinding or wool handling to give them a break. In the second week there are less breaks and more shearing as they all improve.

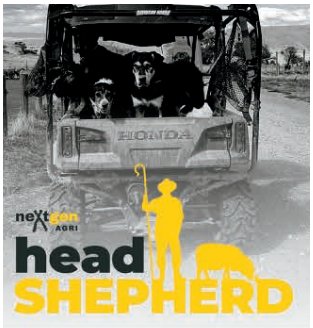
The Esperance School has a success rate of over 60% across the 4 years it has been run. We know there are shearers in the industry now who have come through the Esperance school. While not all the students become shearers, many are taking up other positions within the sheds.

The only disappointment from the last couple of schools is that there have been students who were ready to take up a learner stand but have been held back as shed staff by their employer. This is because of the shed staff shortage. This is a huge opportunity lost. Basil suggested farmers should ask their contractors for a learner whenever they shear to give these students more opportunity to take up a learner stand.

We would like to thank Basil again for all his work, Nick Ruddenklau and the EPASCO staff for providing the facilities and sheep, Bay of Isle Shearing for hiring two busses, and AWI for their continued funding support. We look forward to running the school again next year.

Podcast Recommendation: Ewe Lamb Mating

Two lambings by 24 months - the success factors with Dr Andrew Thompson



ASHEEP Member Liv Walter got in touch recently to recommend an interesting podcast in the ewe lamb mating space. In it, Nextgen Agri's Mark Ferguson shares a presentation by Associate Professor Andrew Thompson from Murdoch University. It focuses on an MLA funded project that involves developing a decision support tool for those considering or currently mating ewe lambs and are keen to understand the economics of various strategies. The audio is a little shaky from time to time, but if you are used to interpreting the 2-way you'll be fine! Find it on your preferred podcast player by searching "Head Shepherd", or visit www.nextgenagri.com/head-shepherd-podcast

Uncertain outlook for the wool sector as rising interest rates & slowing economic activity weigh on the demand outlook for apparel

Article by Rabobank, 31/08/22

Rabobank agriculture analyst Dennis Voznesenski said while pricing for wool in 2022 should still be supported by post-Covid apparel demand recovery, the outlook for 2023 was not so optimistic.

"The storm clouds are gathering momentum for the wool sector," he said, "as inflation, rising interest rates and slowing economic activity weigh on the demand outlook for 2023." "Consumer confidence and sentiment – the canary in the coal mine for demand – declined substantially since June. The main drivers have been China's harsh and widespread lockdowns, and rapidly rising inflation and interest rates in the US."

Mr Voznesenski said in recent months, indicators in both countries – (University of Michigan US Index of Consumer Sentiment (1978) and China's Consumer Confidence Index (1997) reported by the National Bureau of Statistics) – were even below GFC levels. "We are also seeing a divergence in wool demand growth trajectories. While the US is seeing strong post-pandemic recovery growth in retail apparel sales, similar data in China shows sales at below pre-pandemic levels, particularly when adjusted for inflation," he said.

"US retail apparel sales in July were 16 per cent above pre-pandemic July 2019 levels, and up two per cent year on year (YOY). In China, July retail apparel sales were only 2.5 per cent up versus pre-pandemic 2019 levels, and when adjusted for inflation were actually below. Chinese retail apparel sales could see a notable jump, at least momentarily, following lockdown easing, but that's not to say lockdowns won't return."

Mr Voznesenski said the latest (June) woollen suit import volumes into the US, Japan, and France were all up substantially year-on-year – up 112 per cent, 39 per cent and 45 percent, respectively. "While progress is being made to return to pre-covid levels, there is still a lot of work to be done. The US is leading the pack, with import volumes only 12 per cent lower versus June 2019 levels, while France is 1/3 below and Japan's imports are only half of what they used to be."

Australian wool exports between July 2021 and April 2022 were 262 million kilograms, up 18.6 per cent YOY, with 81.6 per cent of wool heading to China, and Mr Voznesenski warned the Australian wool sector needs to keep watch of Chinese market access. "In late June, NATO, declared China as a security threat, and called it out for its strategic partnership with Russia," he said.

"The continued divide between west (including Australia) and east (China and Russia) could impact Australia's wool trade from two directions. The west could theoretically sanction or put further tariffs on China's exports, including apparel, and demand for Australian wool would decline. Or China, of its own accord, could decide to ban exports – though this is less likely, due to the financial impact on its processing industry, importance of the sector to employment and historic importance of the sector in society." At this point, Mr Voznesenski said while neither is yet in motion, it's important to watch.

Trade data shows textile processing machinery exports are increasingly headed to non-China markets like Turkey, Pakistan and India. "However," Mr Voznesenski said, "given how ingrained the processing industry is in China, especially the capital-intensive low-level processing, it will take years before Australia would see any notable diversification of wool exports if the markets are left to natural supply and demand."

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

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Which has Foot and Mouth??

Dr Scott Jackson, Swans Veterinary Services

One of these photos was taken in Esperance of a calf with malignant catarrhal fever, a severe yet non-notifiable disease in Australia. The other is a picture of cow with foot and mouth disease. Can you tell them apart?

With the recent mild increase in the risk of foot and mouth disease finding its way to our shores, it is imperative that producers become aware of the common endemic diseases which can mimic and therefore possibly hamper our efforts of detecting it early and stopping the spread. This article aims to provide a rough guide on which common disease presentations should warrant a veterinary investigation to aid in early exotic disease detection and therefore containment.

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is a picornavirus that affects all cloven hoof ungulates. Cattle are the worst affected followed by sheep and to a lesser extend pigs (though pigs are the highest shedders). Spread via aerosols and also infected bodily fluids (discharge from blisters, milk, semen etc), infected animals will show severe depression, go off their feed, stand in one spot due to painful foot lesions and drool/lip smack from the formation of painful ulcers and blisters in their mouth. The blisters can also appear between the claws and on the teats.

One disease present in WA that can be visually indistinguishable from FMD is malignant catarrhal fever (MCV). Carried asymptomatically by sheep and deer (which is an issue west of Esperance where wild deer are common), the pathogen will cause severe ulceration of the mucous membranes (gums, palate, oesophagus, wind pipe) in cattle. Unlike FMD which has low mortality, MCF will kill almost all cattle that contract it. Pestivirus implicated mucosal disease will present in a similar fashion. Mucosal disease only manifests in animals which are infected with pestivirus in the womb (also known as persistently infected – PI animals as they never amount an immune response). The occasional death due to mucosal disease may be encountered on farms where BVDV is present in the herd. Not all cattle producers will encounter MCF and mucosal disease. However, infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) is a much more common ailment that can also closely resemble FMD. Caused by a herpesvirus, the disease may present in either a venereal form (causing vaginitis in cows and penile/prepuce infections in bulls) or a respiratory form whereby infected animals become depressed, fevered, cough and hypersalivate (much like can be seen with FMD).

For sheep producers, FMD can also look strikingly like scabby mouth. In the event that a flock starts to display signs such as scabbing around the mouth/teats, drooling, lameness and reduced feed intake, a veterinary investigation should be requested (particularly on farms where scabby mouth is not normally present).

Though much anxiety surrounds the recent discovery of FMD in Bali, the risk of an outbreak on our shores has only slightly increased. It has been present in near neighbors such as Vietnam and India for some time and dead virus particles have likely been arriving in imported meat products before we started detecting them (the difference is that we are looking now!).

Lumpy skin disease, however is a more imminent exotic disease threat, particularly for our Northern pastoralists. Possibly carried by an insect vector, we hypothesis that if it were to enter, it would be carried inside of an insect blown over the timor sea by a cyclone.

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Affected cattle will show symptoms of depression, hypersaivation, nasal discharge and eventually the skin will erupt with firm nodules that permanently scar the hide and render them worthless. Two common conditions that can also cause skin nodules and therefore mimic LSD are insect bites and dermatophilosis (a bacterial infection of the skin). Any cattle which demonstrate multiple firm nodular eruptions should be investigated to differentiate LSD from these common diseases.

The message of this article should convey that there are many diseases we may be familiar with yet should not turn a blind eye to, as one day that drooling, depressed, lame animal may be our FMD patient zero. If any of the above disease symptoms are demonstrated in a herd, call your regional veterinary service immediately and the investigation will often be heavily subsidized by DPIRD if certain criteria are met.

Mastering Merino Genetics Workshop 2022

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

In 2018, a group of Esperance ram breeders and commercial ram buyers joined the MerinoLink and University of New England (UNE) DNA Stimulation Project. The project was not just about testing whether genetic tools work, but about building a system of how the genetic tools can be used in industry. The project took the best tools and knowledge from our leading researchers and delivering it through service providers and breeders to commercial producers.

The project used Genetic Flock Profile testing, Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV) and the RamSelect website to firstly benchmark the flock and then drive genetic gain to meet breeding objectives. This project ran for 4-years, finishing with a second flock profile. As well as a final workshop, earlier this year, which compared the two flock profiles and the changes achieved over the 4 years.

Several of the project participants indicated they would like to see the project continue for another 5 years. They have enjoyed the workshops and can see the value in the project. So, with the help of Caris Cornwall, Origan Ag Consulting, we developed round 2 of the project, now called “Mastering Merino Genetics”. We also welcomed new participants to the project who completed flock profile tests on their 2021 drop ewes.

This year’s workshop focused on an ASBV refreshers, looking at the most recent flock profile results, setting breeding objectives and thinking about the next ram purchases to achieve those objectives. To cater for all levels of understanding and business enterprise we split the participants into three smaller groups. The new participants, the ram buyers, and the ram breeders. Each group covered much the same format but with a focus on different aspects of the breeding journey.

For the new participants the workshop was all about setting a breeding objective and identifying the traits required to make the improvement, entering rams into the RamSelect website ‘Team manager’ and how to prepare for the upcoming ram sales. The ram buyers group spent time refining their original breeding objective, reviewing the ram team through RamSelect and preparing for the next ram purchases. The ram breeders group focused on managing the nucleus flock, collecting, and analysing data, ewe selection in the nucleus flock and getting the newest genetics into their commercial flock. The groups will meet again next year just before the ram sales.

Each year, while we have Caris’s expertise in town and available, we run an ASBV refresher. This event is usually in the evening and is open to everyone. We do need at least 10 people to run it, so put a sticky note on the calendar for late July early August next year or let Jan Clawson know you’re interested in attending in 2023.

Image: Ram buyers workshop group.

Market Report: Beef Insights - ANZ

Article by ANZ

Is the fall and bounce-back in Australian saleyard prices only a result of fear of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), or are there other factors at play?

While it's clear that subdued buying activity around the fear of FMD entering the country has played a role in the drop in the EYCI, there are other factors in play which have exacerbated the impact.

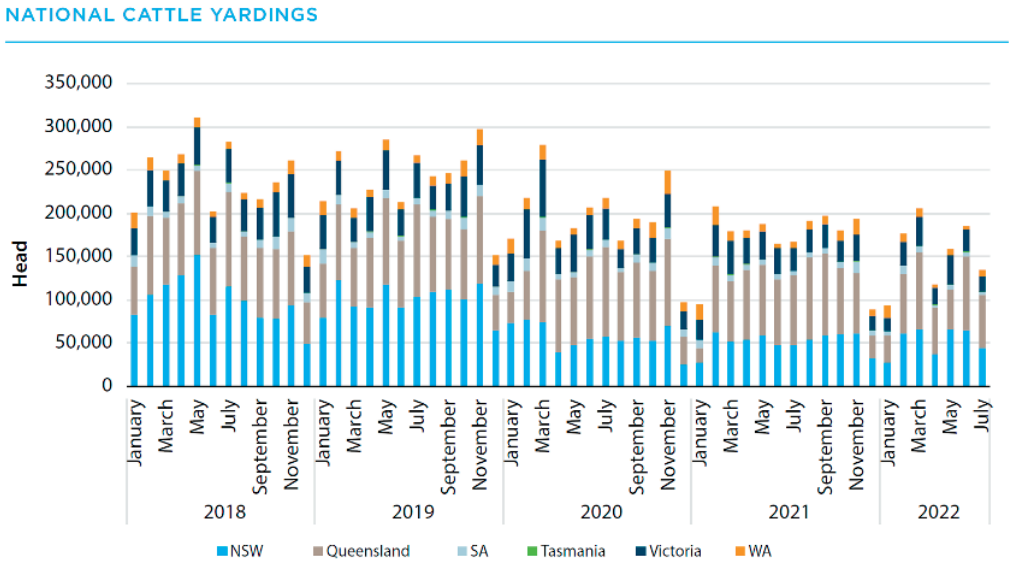
Firstly, the number of cattle entering saleyards and being slaughtered is one of the lowest in recent history. To put this in perspective, for the first three months of 2022, the total cattle and calf slaughter numbers were the lowest on record since 1974. Slaughter numbers in the first three months of 2021 were the 4th lowest on record. Perhaps as a flow on effect from the lack of processor demand, yardings for the calendar year to date are down 7.5 per cent on 2021, which in itself was 17 per cent down on 2020. So what does this mean in practice?

Essentially, it means that both demand and supply are thin –and in this setting, small movements in either factor result in noticeable changes to price.

Also impacting the total number of cattle in the country is the almost complete cessation of the live-export trade to Indonesia. Meat and Livestock Australia are forecasting that for 2022, live exports will fall by 33 per cent. So where are those cattle going? With the number of cattle on feed also increasing nationally to a new record in the first three months of 2022, as well as the continuing high feed grain prices, it will be interesting to see how many are redirected to feedlots, how many stay on farm and how many can be processed by the growing processing sector in the Northern Territory.

Outside of the local market, the Australian industry is heavily reliant on export markets. One of the issues facing the industry on a global stage had been the relative cost of Australian beef compared to other nations' exports. The recent fall in Australian prices and an increase in US cattle prices in light of an increasing cost base has seen US cattle become more expensive for the first time since mid-2020. That's clearly not the end of the story when it comes to the US – the severe drought across much of the south and east of the United States has seen an influx of US beef hitting the international market. It's also clear that this won't last however, as the US position is verging on herd liquidation – with huge numbers of female cattle being sent to market, the US herd will likely take many years to recover which may restrict their export position in the coming years.

Declines have been felt in almost all export markets including Japan, South Korea, China, the United States and Europe. Given that Australia's beef exports have been depressed for almost two years, combined with the influx of US beef on the international market, and subdued global economic growth, there are no real signs of dramatic rebound in export numbers in the near future.



Contact:
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Esperance, WA

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Above - Andrew Johnson's cattle.

ASHEEP Cattle Field Day Review

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

The annual Cattle Field Day was held on 27th July, starting at Esperance Livestock Transport on Myrup Road, from here we travelled to Ryan Willing's on Savages Road.

As Cattle Committee Chair, Ryan welcomed everyone to the field day before giving us a run down on his strip grazing system. On the 28th of April he seeded an Oats, Triticale, Barley mix into a 125hs paddock with a sound Serradella history. On the 11th of July he put 170 cow calf units into the first 25ha cell. He is working on moving them every two weeks until late Spring. This paddock will go into crop next year. Ryan has used a single line electric fence which the cows respect, the calves skip under the fence but never go far. He also provides supplementary feed of hay and straw and a home-made Magnesium, Lime, Salt loose-lick.

We then went on to Andrew Johnson's Bannitup Angus. Andrew talked us through his requirement to have his yearling bulls on higher valve pastures, with the aim of having them gaining 1kg per day over the winter months without needing to feedlot them on high energy pellets in preparation for the bull sales in March.

On 27th April, 20ha of pasture was sprayed with 2.5l/ha of 540 glyphosate. A week later it was sown to 110kg grazer oats and 15kg of amazon ryegrass. A day or so later it was top dressed with 150kg of a mixture of Vigour, Amsul and Urea. It was relatively dry at that point with less than 100mm of rain for the year. Over the next 2 weeks he had approximately 30mm of rain. Germination was fair in the heavier soils but almost non-existent in the non-wetting soils at the top of the hill. Since then, he's had another 110mm.

The paddock was divided into 4 sections and the bulls were put in 5 weeks after sowing, spending 7 days in each section. They were weighed before going in and then weighed again after one circuit of the paddock. The average weight gain was 0.98kg/day, so it's been a success so far.

Images: Below left - Willing's ungrazed area of paddock. Below right - Serradella at Willing's. Above right - Strip grazing at Willings.

Continued over page.

Andrew identified that Guildford Grass was a real problem, this triggered a group discussion on options for managing Guildford Grass and ways to clean up the paddocks. They range from spraying the whole paddock out and starting again, weed wiping before flowering or cultivation and seeding Couch to create competition. Guildford Grass is shallow rooted while the Couch is deep rooted hopefully starving the Guilford Grass of moisture.

Andrew then provided a great description of Bovine Herpesvirus (BoHV) or “exploding penis syndrome” as it’s become known. This is the most common reason for young bulls breaking down. It is a sexually transmitted virus which is passed from the females to the males and can cause severe trauma to the penis. BoHV is most common in new bulls with no prior immunity that are introduced into an infected herd. The bull becomes infected at the highest level of sexual activity during the first weeks of mating, this is when the majority of breakdowns occur.

An early sign of infection is severe swelling of the penis, which would best be described as resembling a knob of polony. If the bull is removed from the females at this stage and given appropriate treatment, recovery is all but assured. The damage occurs when the bull tries to serve a female with the swollen penis. This causes the penis to rupture or “explode,” hence the name "exploding penis syndrome".

Andrew explained his strategy for new entry bulls. He has a policy of pasturing a new bull with an empty cow when he first arrives on the property. This exposes him to any pathogens in the herd and allows them to monitor his response. One of these pathogens might be BoHV which the cow will pass to the bull. The cow will hopefully be off heat by the time his penis swells which ensures he won’t serve her and cause damage. He will also carry some immunity when he enters the herd during mating season. Andrew also vaccinates all young bulls with Rhinogard before use and sale.

We then returned to Esperance Livestock Transport where John Mitchell, CEO, spoke on the Animal Welfare Act and the recent changes which include that an inspector can issue an infringement notice for an offence or perceived offence which can carry a fine between $2000 and $20,000. If you don’t agree with the fine, you have to take the matter to court. Affectively you’re guilty until proven innocent. It’s important you consider this before putting unfit livestock on a truck.

John then went on to talk about preparing cattle for transport, thinking about the distance they need to travel, the stress of being loaded, the journey and way to get the best outcome possible. Grain fed animals are on high energy feed which, like a big sugar hit, can get used very quickly, often before the cattle reach their destination. Providing good quality hay in 24 hours before travel is a good way of ensuring that they have the energy required for the trip. For most cattle being loaded from a farm it will be their first time in the high-pressure situation of being loaded onto a truck, so giving them time in the yards getting used the new environment will help. Good communication with the transport company is also important, providing an accurate description of the cattle you intend to move including their age and weight and if there are any health concerns will all help in the planning phase of the load. Having cattle drafted into age or size groups will also help.

When it comes to loading your cattle, before you start loading let the driver know how many you have to go on the truck, if you have any health concerns with any cattle and discuss the loading procedure. While the farmer or stock agent are expected to do the final inspection of cattle prior to loading, the driver also has a responsibility not to load any animals that are not fit to load, so an early conversion is always recommended. Finally, always wait for the driver to come out of the crate before sending up the next pen.

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bookings@esperancelivestocktransport.com.au
accounts@esperancelivestocktransport.com.au

Continued over page.

John then took us on tour of his yards and ramp. The yards are a Temple Grandin design, while the loading ramp meets the Loading/Unloading Ramp Standard with three-man gates for entering and exiting the yards safely, and sliding gates at the top and bottom of the ramp and the end of the race enabling cattle to be loaded and unloaded from outside the yards.

John gave us a demonstration with young cattle that had only been loaded once before and with people standing just outside the yards. The cattle were so busy watching where they were going, they didn't even notice the people. John then walked them back off the crate just as quietly.

David Swan speaking at the Cattle Field Day

If you think you have an animal that isn't fit to load but may be sound to load, David or one of his team can review the animal and make a recommendation and if appropriate issue a vet certificate. This certificate may have a range of requirements and conditions which may include travel distance, time frame for travel or location within the truck i.e. bottom deck, back pen. These conditions are all to ensure the best possible outcome. This certificate is the Vet taking responsibility for the welfare of the animal during its travel and will not be issued lightly. It's also important the transporter knows early in the planning that there will be an animal with a vet certificate as part of the load and their travel conditions. A copy of the certificate must go with the NVD.

We then moved into the shed for afternoon tea, before Zoetis senior livestock veterinarian, Dr Lee Taylor spoke on Pestivirus and Dectomax V. Lee first became interested in pestivirus in his first veterinary job at Barraba in NSW. He has a photograph of the first case he diagnosed, a case of mucosal disease. This diagnosis spiked Lee's interest in pestivirus and led to him diagnosing many more cases and realising that mucosal disease was just the tip of the iceberg as far as pestivirus was concerned. He subsequently completed his master's degree focusing on the production impacts of pestivirus in beef herds and its impact on BRD in feedlots in Western Canada.

Lee has maintained this interest since returning to Australia and has conducted and published studies and surveillance findings relating to pestivirus in Australian beef herds. Lee has worked closely with Enoch Bergmann on raising awareness of pestivirus amongst Australian beef producers. He told us pestivirus can affect any breed, it is highly contagious and costs the industry about $114m through lost reproduction with less calves or late calves as well as lost meat quality. Pestivirus can be managed via vaccination 2 to 4 weeks before joining and targeting both heifers and bulls.

Lee also provided details on the new injectable drench Dectomax V for cattle. This injectable is Dectomax, with an extra active called levamisole providing dual active efficacy against key parasites, including those resistant to other drenches as well as cattle tick and sucking lice. The dosage rate is 1 mL/25 kg of bodyweight via subcutaneous injection. Dosage must not exceed 10 mL at a single injection site. So, for cattle over 250 kg bodyweight, divide the dose so that no more than 10 mL is injected in one site. For example: a 300 kg animal requires a 12 mL dose which can be administered as 2 x 6 mL doses. It has a withholding period of 35 days. For more information go to the Zoetis website. A big thanks to Ben Fletcher from Zoetis for recommending Lee and organising his travel to Esperance.

The final speaker for the day was Dr Michelle Rodan DPIRD Chief Veterinary Officer. Michelle gave a very comprehensive update of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD). She told us with the two diseases now in Indonesia the risk profile for FMD has increased from 9% in 2001 to 11.9% currently, and for LSD from 8% to 28%. Both diseases would have a profound effect on our export markets.

LSD is harder to prevent because we need to control animals and biting flies or insects. With that in mind ships returning from Indonesia are also being sprayed to prevent hitchhikers. While we think LSD is a problem for northern Australia, we must remember animals and insects can travel south so we all need to be virulent.

Michelle spoke of her involvement in the UK FMD outbreak and provided some of the horrific statistic including the number of people involved in the bring the outbreak under control, the number of animals destroyed and the disposal process. She explained how our markets would be affected and the options to regain those market after an outbreak and what compensation would be available.

Continued over page.

The key take home is that biosecurity is everyone's business:

- Be aware of what FMD & LSD looks like.
- Report any signs of these diseases to EAD Hotline on 1800 675 888, DPIRD or your local vet.
- Have a good Biosecurity plan in place. Returning travellers should not enter farms or have contact with livestock for 7 days and ensure boots, clothing and equipment are clean.
- Livestock traceability. Understand and ensure all livestock movements requirements are met to contain a disease outbreak.
- Don't feed meat or animal products to pigs.

Michelle acknowledged that while DPIRD have been busy ensuring WA is ready for an outbreak and are doing all they can to prevent an outbreak, they hadn't been very good at informing the industry of their activities. All primary producers should now be receiving a **regular Foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease update email**. If not, contact DPIRD to be added to the list.

We would like to thank Michelle for taking the time to answer the many questions posed and enjoying a beer and a burger with everyone at the conclusion of the day. I think everyone felt a little more confident in the future of our livestock industry following the update.

Ryan closed the field day, thanking John Mitchell for providing the venue, the sight hosts, ASHEEP's sponsors, and the speakers for their input. A great day enjoyed by all.

Ram Check Ups - At least 8 weeks before joining

Spring is here. Lambs are being weaned and prepped for sale, ram-sale season is upon us, and it's a good time to highlight a couple of things we can do to set up for a successful joining.

The following is an extract from an article on the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) website, " Joining – setting the potential of your ewe flock", last edited 18/12/2020. www.agric.wa.gov.au/management-reproduction/joining-–-setting-potential-your-ewe-flock?page=0%2C1

The period leading up to joining is important to ensure that rams are healthy and in the best condition possible. Lambing potential is maximised when rams are able to work, and have viable sperm, throughout the joining period.

Preparation should commence at least eight weeks prior to joining because it takes about seven weeks for sperm to develop from initiation to ejaculation. Therefore, treatments to the rams between seven weeks and joining can only influence the proportion of developing sperm which would be delivered after joining has started.

Two actions should be taken prior to mating to ensure success:

- carry out the 'four Ts' health check (teeth, testes, toes and tossle)
- feed high protein and energy grain or pastures for maximum sperm production at least eight weeks before joining.

The four Ts health check

- **Teeth** — check that the ram has a sound mouth, with teeth and gums in good condition. Check for over bite (parrot mouth) or under bite. These defects are highly heritable and any rams with these defects should be culled.
- **Testes and tossle** — rams need maximum testes size to work effectively. Testes and epididymides (the long tubes which run up the sides of the testicles) should be firm and have no lumps. Spongy testes can be a sign of disease, poor nutriton or injury.
- Test all rams with unexplained lumps or swellings in the epididymides for Brucella ovis, a bacterium that can drastically reduce ram fertility. Don't crutch or shear rams during this time as infections from cuts, especially to the scrotum, can stop sperm production. Check the penis and the prepuce for any abnormalities or swelling.
- **Toes** — check and trim any feet as required. Remove, or treat and monitor, any rams with a sign of lameness. Lameness will affect the rams ability to work as well as his output.

Feeding rates for rams pre-joining

To ensure firm, large testes, feed lupins at up to 750 grams per head per day for the eight weeks leading up to joining (feeding rates may be lower if paddock nutrition is very good). Rams should be in at least condition score 3 but no more than condition score 4.

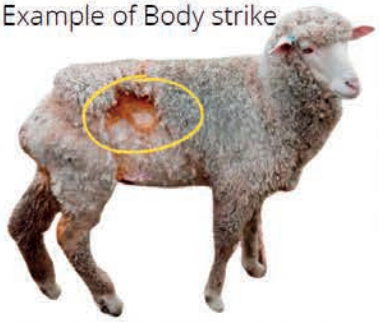
FLY SEASON IN ESPERANCE

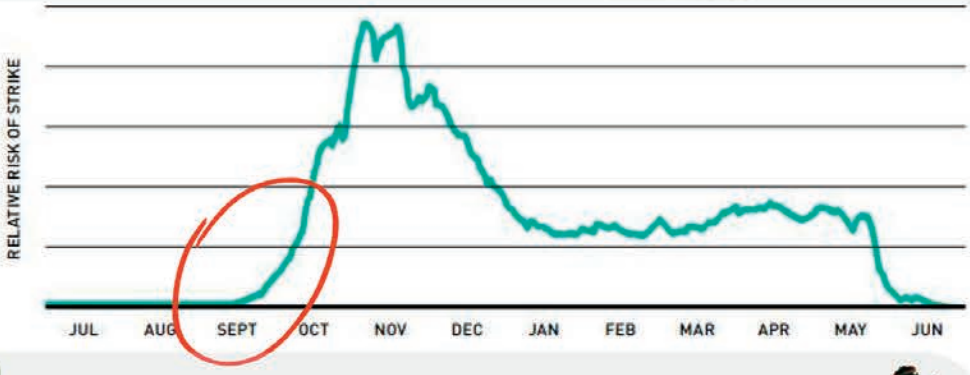
ARE ALL CHEMICAL GROUPS WORKING EFFECTIVELY ON YOUR FARM?

Going off the back of a wet winter there is high potential to have accelerated levels of flies impacting sheep, increasing the incidence of fly strike.

Fly strike has a large economic cost to a livestock enterprise causing productivity loss by constant flystrike treatment and preventative measures to livestock.
If there is not a constant rotation of the chemical groups there is an increased risk of resistance that can build up over years of use. As flies can travel up to 5km, an incidence of resistance can occur on the neighboring property leading to breeding of chemical resistant maggots on your farm!

Example of Body strike





TIME OF YEAR

As we a leaving winter and progressing into warmer temperatures of spring, there is a likelihood of incidence of flies and fly strike. Fly larvae hatch in constant temperatures over 17°C. Optimum temperatures for fly reproductivity is between 26°C - 36°C in moist conditions. Regular rain keep the fleece of sheep moist and can be an optimal harbour for flies to breed. Spring is upon Esperance growers and there are already reports of fly strike impacting producers flocks.

ARE YOU GETTING FULL COVERAGE?

CHEMICAL ACTIVE

- Dicyclanil
- Cyromazine
- Spinosad
- Imidacloprid
- Ivermectin
- Cypermethrin
- Diazinon

Across Australia there is recorded resistance to chemical groups of fly treatment and preventative products.

How do I know if there is resistance on my farm?

- Regularly struck sheep
- when a preventative product is used, and the coverage of weeks is not being met
- Not rotating actives on farm or neighbors not rotating actives on an annual basis.

To identify what products are working effectively on your farm and in you location completing a **Fly resistance test.** Results will indicate what products to use and what to avoid.There are no new chemical groups available so it is vital to protect the current actives.

South Coastal Agencies
A Nutrien Ag Solutions Partner
ESPERANCE • RAVENSTHORPE • SALMON GUMS

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at South Coastal Agencies
Valued at $400
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Darren Chatley
0457 553 969

Barry Hutcheson
0488 590 520

Jake Hann
0429 871 707

SafeSheds: The shearing shed safety program

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

WA Shearing Industry Association (WASIA) with support from Australian Wool Innovation recently spent a week in the Esperance area helping producers conducting safety checks on 20 shearing sheds. This pilot project was driven by WASIA and ASHEEP. WASIA used the SafeSheds checklists, which are designed for producers and contractors to use themselves. The project was designed to spread awareness of the tools, encourage uptake, and help people get started using them.

Darren Spencer WASIA Chairman and Lake Grace shearing contractor, and Valerie Pretzel WASIA Executive Officer, travelled to Esperance on 18th July and visited sheds right across the district. It must be said, much to one participant's disappointment, that no sheds were condemned. While there were things that could be improved, and some sheds needed more work than others, none were deemed too dangerous to enter.

Darren Spencer, WASIA President, says "It was a very interesting week across a wide range of sheds in varying sizes and ages. The growers and their partners were very welcoming to the whole process. As someone who works and sends employees into shearing sheds daily it was encouraging to see woolgrowers embracing the process to make their workplace safer and more inviting for everyone to work in."

At each shed Darren worked through the program check lists with the farmer, while Valerie help set up and manage the SafeSheds app, recording if an item was satisfactory or needed an improvement. The app has provision at each question for notes to be added, photos or short video to be taken and actions to be recorded. At the end of the assessment the shed receives a percentage score as well as a report that can be downloaded and printed. As actions are progressed these can also be recorded as well. This might include the date parts were ordered or when an improvement was started and finished.

At each shed the preferred contractor was invited to participate in the assessment. This provided a great opportunity for question and discussion on expectations. Some common improvements identified included:

- Have a sign posted "Muster Point" away from the shed
- Store ram sedation in a locked cabinet
- Ensure toilets and hand washing facilities are clean and working. A good test for these facilities is, do you and your family use them?
- Clearly sign non-drinkable water
- Remove and replace worn, chipped or broken floorboards
- Have safety rails or a chain on all platforms over 1m high
- If a grinder isn't used or has no guards remove it from the shed

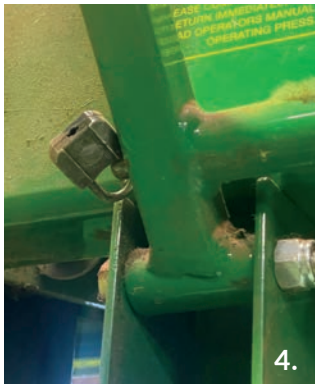
Valerie Pretzel, Executive Officer for WASIA thought the whole week went really well. "Everyone we met with was really open and interested in how they could improve their shed and better manage their risks. I know that quite a lot of people expressed their relief that the required and suggested improvements were manageable and gave them a plan. I even had some saying - that wasn't as bad as we thought it would be!" Valerie reiterated, "We would love to come back and do some more sheds, so please let Jan and Sarah know and if we have a few days worth we can come back."

1. Chute storage at Peter Luberda's shed, utilising space over the chute, keeping the board clear. 2. Darren Spencer & Michael Ietto. 3. Stuart Matthews, Darren Spencer, Ash Reichstein & Al McIntyre at Al's shed. 4. Padlock safety mechanism on wool press to prevent the mechanism being removed. 5. Emergency Stop on wool press.


1.


2.


3.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5.

ASHEEP Shearing Guidelines and Recommendations

ASHEEP has been working with the WA Shearing Industry Association and the local shearing contractors to improve the relationship for everyone involved in the wool harvesting operation. We have developed this set of recommendations and guidelines to help this process.

Drained Sheep for Shearing Guidelines

New Zealand Worksafe have developed "Working with Sheep: Fasting of sheep prior to shearing guide". The key points from the guide are:

- This guideline has been designed according to scientific research and industry best practice
- Shearing empty sheep can help reduce pen stain
- Empty sheep can reduce already significant loads for shearing and woolshed staff to handle
- Emptying sheep prior to shearing will not compromise animal welfare or lamb development

You can download a copy of the guide at https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/agriculture/working-with-animals/working-with-sheep/fasting-of-sheep-prior-to-shearing-gpg/

The recommendations for emptying out sheep prior to shearing are summarised below. The recommendations made in this guideline refer to the minimum and maximum periods of time without feed and water prior to shearing for any individual sheep.

Thus, a recommendation of 20 hours minimum and 32 hours maximum off feed means that:

- The time from when sheep are mobbed up during mustering to when the first sheep in that mob is shorn should be no less than 20 hours.
- The time from when sheep are mobbed up during mustering to when the last sheep in that mob is shorn should be no more than 32 hours.

To meet this recommendation sheep should be in the yards by **9am the day before** shearing.

Recommended minimum and maximum number of hours without feed and water prior to shearing

Ewes (and adult male sheep)	Min feed	Max feed	Min water	Max water	Special considerations
Non-pregnant, non-lactating	20	32	12	24	Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or precipitate clinical diseases.
Early - mid pregnancy 1-50 days	18	30	12	24	Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or precipitate clinical diseases.
Late pregnancy and lactation 100-150 days	12	24	8	20	Where practical, unweaned lambs should remain with their mothers until ewes enter the woolshed.
Hoggets 7-15 months	Min feed	Max feed	Min water	Max water	Special considerations
Non-pregnant, non-lactating	18	30	12	24	Use special care when handling pregnant hoggets. Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or precipitate clinical diseases. Where practical, unweaned lambs should remain with their mothers until hoggets enter the woolshed.
Pregnancy and lactation	12	24	8	20	
Lambs under 7months	Min feed	Max feed	Min water	Max water	Special considerations
Pre-weaning	6	24	6	20	Exceeding these maximums may precipitate clinical diseases.
Weaned	12	24	8	20	

Ref: https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/agriculture/working-with-animals/working-with-sheep/fasting-of-sheep-prior-to-shearing-gpg/#lf-doc-21781

Shed Safety and Improvements Recommendations

Organise a pre shearing inspection each year with your contractors. Use the pre-shearing check list in the SafeSheds program as a guide. If repairs are required use the risk matrix in the SafeSheds program to prioritise jobs; safety issues need to be fixed first. Use the shearing cut out as a time to debrief and ask if there are any jobs that need to be done. The post shearing check list in the SafeSheds program could be used as a guide. It's a great way of finding out about the broken gate chain that may otherwise be missed.

Establishing a Clear Chain of Command

A clearly identified chain of command can save a lot of miscommunications. If your Contractor is not in the shed, they should appoint a Team Manger or Ganger. The positions along with contact information should be listed on a whiteboard in the shed for everyone to see:

- Farm owner or managers
- Farmer's shearing Manager if different from above
- The Contractor
- The appointed Team Manager or Gangers if different from above

Wet Sheep

The recommended process for deciding if sheep are wet is:

- Refer to the chain of command on the whiteboard in the shed
- Three sheep are to be shorn, the classer and the farmer or manager will review their fleeces on the table. If this is still inconclusive, they would run a secret ballot. The Classer to have a vote as they are responsible for what goes into each bale.
- The shearers and classer write their votes on a piece of paper.
- The farmer and classer or team manager run the ballot.
- The default on a draw (e.g. 2 all) is "Shear On"
- The farm owner and contractor, if not present, must be called before the team leave the shed.

Workplace Health and Safety

All issues should be directed to the Contractor by the Farm Owner or Manager.
Some issues identified and courses of action recommended are:

- Footwear – is required in the workplace/shed
- Smoking in the shed – report to the contractor first then the team manager. Smoking is not allowed in the workplace/shed. Have clear visible safety signs up.
- Fit for work & drugs and alcohol – As part of the pre shearing check and the contractor's farm induction ask for a copy of the contractor's drug & alcohol policy. Request for staff to be drug free on your farm. Have a signed agreement on both parties' drug & alcohol policy.
- Children in the workplace – No children in the workplace/shed.

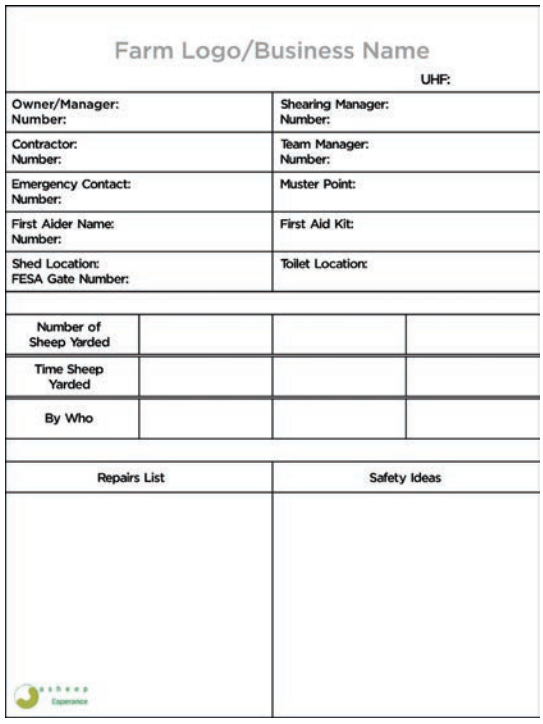
Ram Sedation

Rams need to be well drained before sedation and not fly blown. Also keep rams calm before and after shearing.

Press Maintenance

- Check the press at the pre and post shearing checks.
- Start the press to check the safety or cut out switch is fitted and working.
- Communication with the presser and contractor on servicing schedule.
- There is a professional press repairer that comes around which maybe a good option.

ASHEEP is aware of Kerlie Mobile Press Repairs - Charlie Burnett, 0417949903, Email: cjb1007@bigpond.com
www.kerlie.com.au



Other Information to Include on the Whiteboard

- Emergency Contact
- Emergency Muster Point
- First Aider
- First Aid Kit Location
- UHF Number
- Shed Location including FESA gate number
- Toilet Location
- Number of Sheep Yarded
- Time Sheep Yarded & by who
- Repairs List
- Safety Ideas

ASHEEP has designed a generic whiteboard (right) with all the above information included. This is **available for purchase** from Top Signs in Esperance, as either a standard whiteboard or as a sticker you can place a sheet of tin. To place an order email topsigns@westnet.com.au. They can include your business name / logo.

Request a learner stand

With shearers being in such short supply ASHEEP with funding from AWI have held a two-week shearing and wool handling school each year for the past four years. This school has produced many work ready shearers that need a learner stand to master their newly acquired skills. We suggest you request a learner whenever you shear.

Working in partnership - shearing contractors & farmers

Adopting these recommendations needs to be a partnership. We have an opportunity to develop and be part of a very important change in the industry if we can get it right. It's important that we bring the whole industry along on this journey. For more information on the SafeSheds Shearing Shed Safety Program go to: wasia.com.au/services/safesheds/

ASHEEP would like to thank the WA Shearing Industry Association and our local contractors for their time and good will as we develop these recommendations.

ASHEEP Shearing Interval Demonstration Update

Article by Courteney Pengilly, ASHEEP

With the shearing demonstration over the 6-month mark, there have been a few measure points come and go. We are getting more efficient with the data collection points and seeing some great numbers in the process.

Firstly, thanks to Ashley Reichstein and his team throughout all data collection points. To Jake Hann and Harry Hardey from the Nutrien Ag Solutions livestock team for your yard work and condition scoring to keep the measuring consistent. To Mitchell Greaves and Demi Vandenberghe from JA Russell for the EID reader and XR5000 loan for each data collection point.

Our purple tags ewes have had a couple of collection points with pregnancy scanning (March) giving some great results for Ash. Many thanks to Jonno Thurn from Southcoast Livestock Scan for taking his time to allow us to EID scan the ewes' Allflex tags and register their pregnancy status in the XR5000. The machine that Southcoast Stock scan use is a Ovi6 and this is directly linked to the XR5000. The scanner (Jonno) gives a 0, 1 or 2 foetus allocation to each of the animals coming through, this give us greater data to work with going forward.

***Above** - Pregnancy scanning the purple tags. To record this data the XR5000 is plugged into the Ovi6 for Jonno to assign a pregnancy status. **Below** – Scale set up, to link the wool data to the animal using the XR5000, EID is scanned and Bluetooth printer prints the barcode to ensure that manual entry is a minimum. Scanner reads barcode and brings up animal, staple length manually measured and fleece on the scales. **Right** - Barcodes place in front of animal to be carried with the fleece for scanning. 3 shearers was a good number to keep a steady pace for the day.*

We had the first 6-month shearing happen in July with condition scoring the following week. Top effort to the team at K-D Shearing for filling in on short notice when the original team went down with COVID-19.

2 weeks out from shearing Ashley mentioned he was worried that some ewes might not be able to produce enough staple length. In the end, 79 of the 189 purple tag, 6 month shearing animals fell short of the 60mm ideal 6 month staple length. Considering that this is the first shearing and to have over half meet the staple length criteria is a promising start to the remainder of the project and a good benchmark to progress from.

Data collection for the shearing was a breeze! We had 3 shearers on handpieces, 2 rousies keeping the board clean, Ash scanning and dropping barcodes in front of each animal and myself entering the fleece data into the XR5000. Each animal was scanned as they were pulled onto the board and a barcode printed out to track the fleece from the sheep to the scales. The rousies took a sample from the mid side for me to measure the staple length from and this was recorded into the Tru-test with the fleece weight prior to any skirting.

With all the data entered we can see that the ewes produced an average of 61mm in 6 months and some extreme animals produced more that 70mm. Each dot below in the graph represents one of the 189 animals tested. As mentioned above, 79 of these fall below the 60mm in 6 months aim. The averaged fleece weight of the animals shorn was 2.5kg, which we will compare against future shearings to decide its viability.

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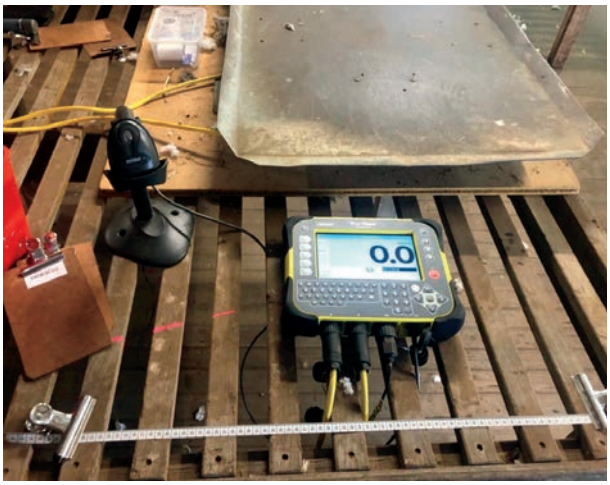
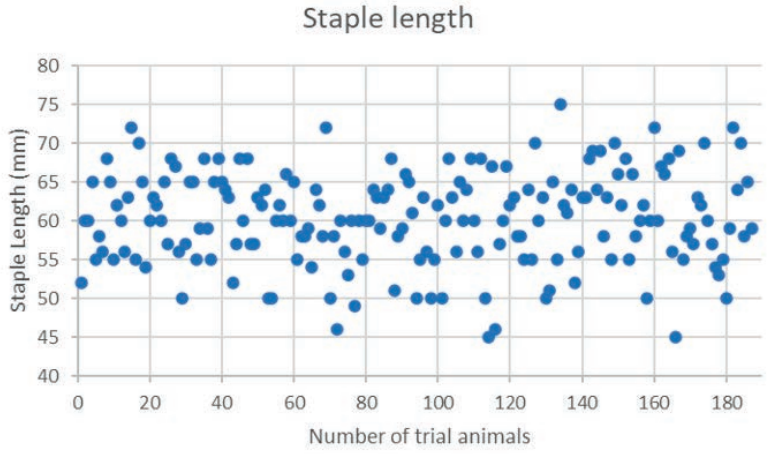
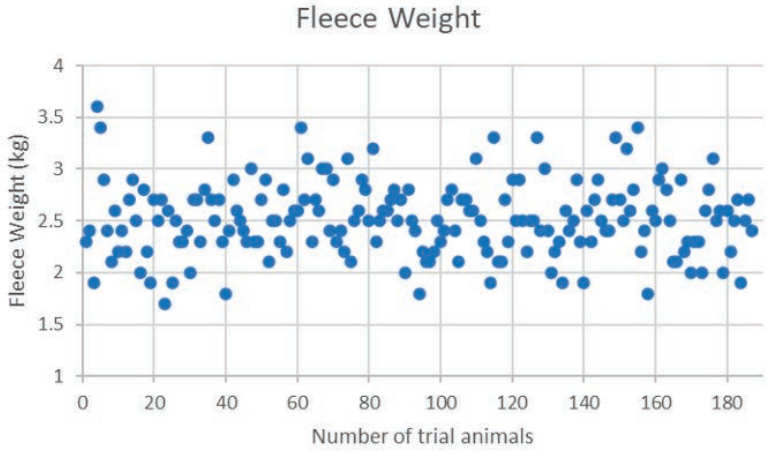




Above - The numerical order of the ewes and their staple length.
Below - The numerical order of the ewes and their fleece weight.



COVID found us again as Jake Hann (Nutrien Livestock) was lined up to condition score the ewes. A critical measurement point in the project for pre-lambing health. Thankfully we reorganised a week later and had the ewes in and scored in no time, before they were released back to their lambing paddocks. Final stats had the ewes averaging a condition score of 2.5 one month pre lambing.

As you read this, the next article is already in the works with a post lambing condition score and weight capture already done. This will complement another condition score and weight capture point at weaning. On completion we will compare how the ewes performed across scanned dry's, singles and twins, looking back to see how their condition score has affected their pre and post lambing results and the difference, if there is any, between the animals shorn before lambing (6 month) and those that have not (12 month).

Until then follow along for updates:
@ASHEEP_Inc on Twitter or Facebook
@CourteneyAP on Twitter

Purchasing or moving livestock: when should producers update the NLIS Database?

Jemma Thomas, Livestock Biosecurity Officer, Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development

Livestock identification and recording livestock movements in the **National Livestock Identification System (NLIS)** and correctly filling out waybills are the cornerstones of our livestock traceability system.

The threat of two significant livestock diseases, foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and lumpy skin disease (LSD) has highlighted the importance of completing livestock movement documentation, including ensuring that the NLIS database is updated within 48 hours of stock arriving on a destination property. These measures are critical in the event of a disease outbreak, allowing industry and government to trace infected or exposed livestock and respond rapidly.

Most producers know that whenever livestock are moved off a property, livestock movement documentation such as a NVD/waybill, is required. But do you know who is responsible for updating the NLIS database when livestock are brought onto your property?

Buying livestock privately

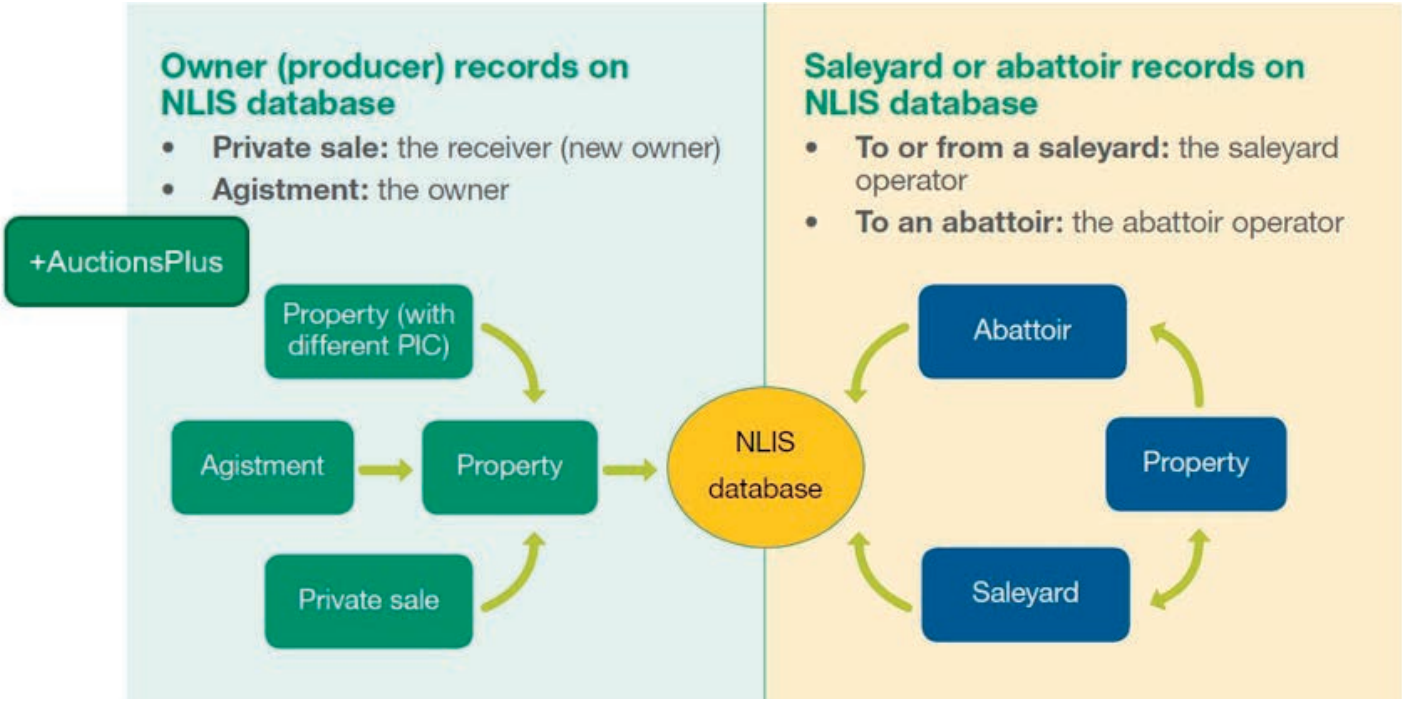
If you purchase livestock privately, including rams or bulls from the eastern states, it is your responsibility to update the NLIS database within 48 hours of the livestock arriving at a destination property.

If you have multiple Property Identification Codes (PICs) listed on your brand registration and move livestock between your different PICs, you must also update the NLIS database.

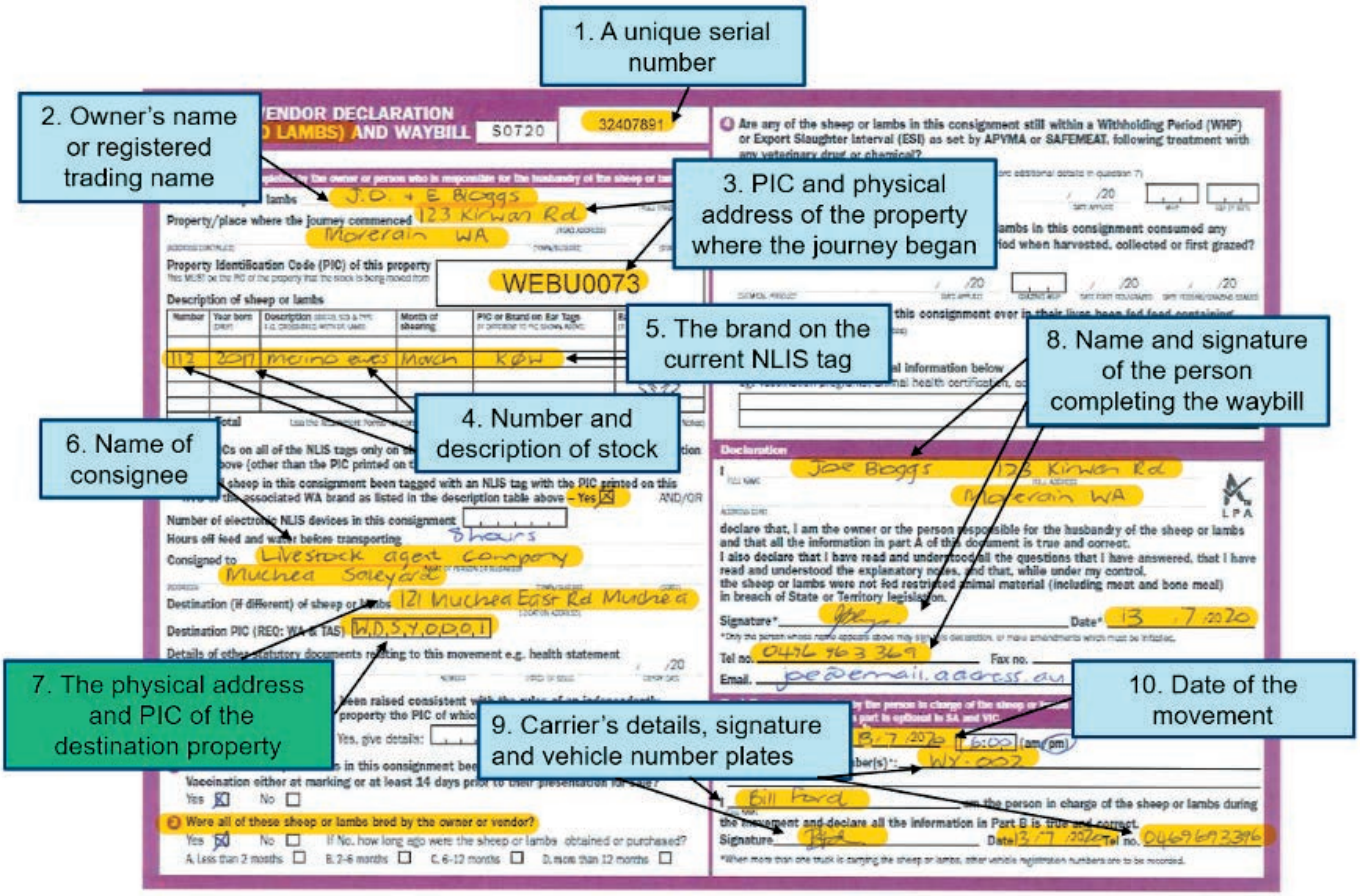
For purchases made on a digital trading platform, such as Auctions Plus, where livestock move directly from the vendor to your property, you must ensure the NLIS database is updated. The vendor or your agent may be willing to complete the upload for you, but they are not required to. To confirm it has been done always ask for the 'Upload ID' as your receipt and record this on the corresponding waybill.

Buying livestock from a saleyard or 'in person' auction

At an 'in person' public auction where livestock are gathered to be sold by an auctioneer, it is the responsibility of the agent to upload onto NLIS the movement in and out of the saleyard. This means the livestock are transferred off the vendor's property PIC, onto the saleyard or showground PIC and then onto the buyer's property. The following graphic illustrates the responsibilities of producers and agents:



10 most important features of a waybill for traceability



For more information visit the **Livestock ownership, identification and movement in Western Australia webpage** or contact the NLIS helpdesk on 1300 926 547 or email nlis@dpird.wa.gov.au.

Generating More Lambs to Sell: Registrations Open

Towards 90 or T90 is a production-based training course with 10 modules, established by a range of partners including MLA and Murdoch University. The aim is to work towards 90% survival at weaning of all foetuses scanned. This differs to weaning percent, which is calculated on the number of lambs at weaning from all ewes joined. Essentially, it's a series of steps for the implementation of best practice management to increase the number of lambs available for sale each year. The course consists of 10 modules to choose from, all with 3, 4, or 5 sessions held on-farm.

The first modules to be released are:

- Mating Ewe Lambs,
- Maximising Ewe Potential &
- Weaning Management

There are different ways in which to participate: in a team, as an observer, or as an Exchange site host. Teams consist of 5 producers. The module is completed on each farm, with a peer learning approach. A consultant will facilitate the sessions. Exchanges are groups of 10 producers observing the module on a single host farm, with the guidance of a consultant. These are a chance to trial and observe the practice in your environment. The learning program and number of sessions for Teams and Exchanges are the same.

All modules for Exchanges cost $220 + GST.
The cost of modules for Teams varies:

- Weaning Management $585 + GST (3 sessions)
- Mating Ewe Lambs $720 + GST (4 sessions)
- Maximising Ewe Potential $630 + GST (3 sessions)

For more information and to get involved, please contact James Macfarlane at AgricUltra: 0447 99 99 02 / james@agricultra.com.au. Find out more about the project: www.towards90.com.au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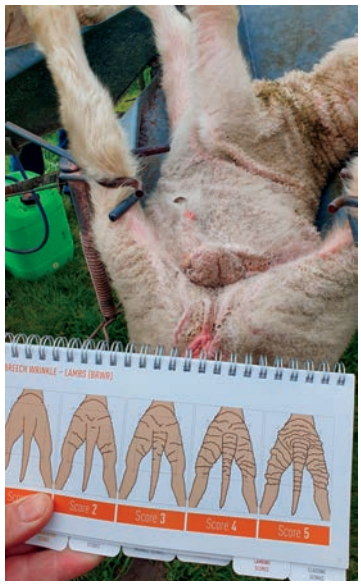
Non-Mulesing Producer Meeting

Article by Sarah Brown, ASHEEP



AgPro Management's MLA-funded Non-Mulesing producer demonstration site project held a producer meeting in Esperance for the ASHEEP group on 24th August. Ed Riggall from Agpro Management facilitated the session, which saw a group of farmers meet with Deon, Belinda, Josh and Emma Lay as they marked a mob of merino lambs from their twin-bearing maiden ewes.

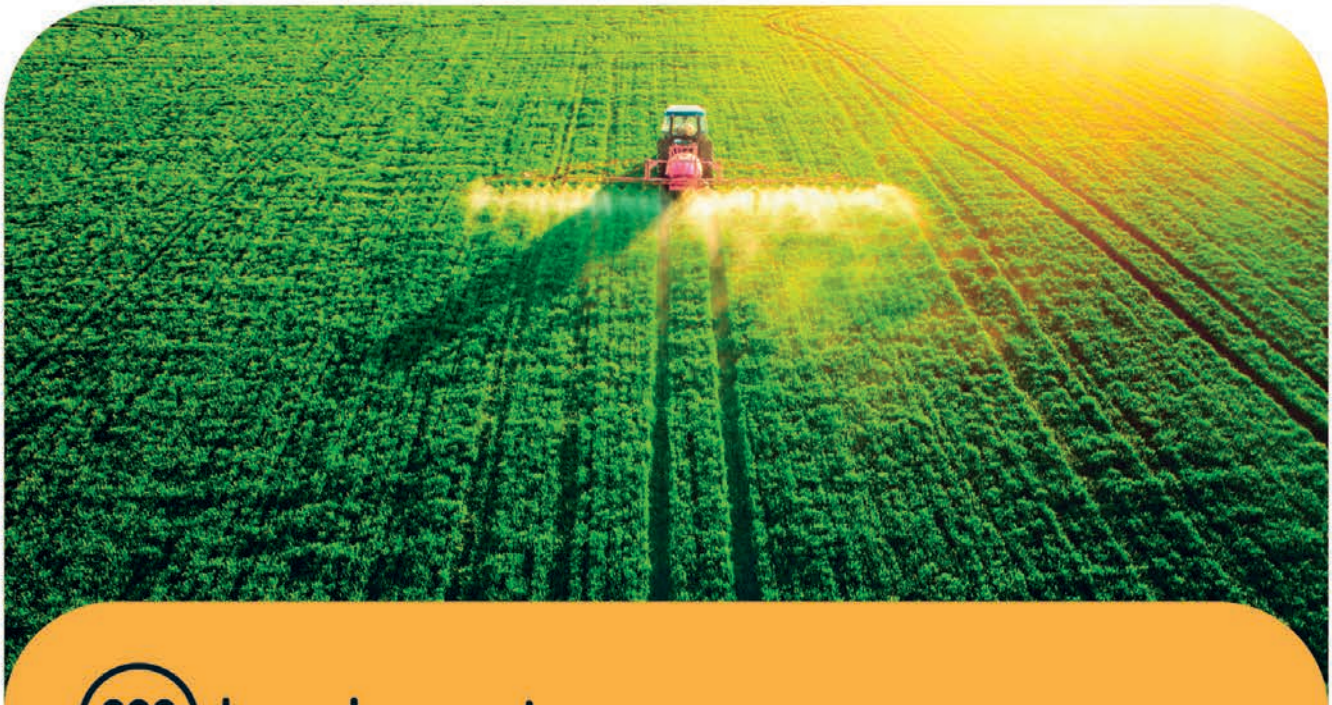
The Lays gave an overview of their transition to a non-mulesed system, which they have had in place for the last four years. They prepared for the change by making genetic adjustments to their flock, including selecting against dags. In the first year they trialled the system by leaving most of their lambs non-mulesed, but still mulesing those that had a higher level of breech wrinkle and were therefore deemed to be at greater risk of flystrike. This gave them an opportunity to work on their management practices and learn about how their sheep would perform, but with a lower level of risk. They found managing changes in feed to be critical. The following year, they left all lambs non-mulesed and they intend to continue on this path.

A broad overview of the Lay's program is that they crutch in September, shear in early January, join on the 1st February for 5 weeks, and pre-lambing treat ewes with Eweguard plus a fly application over the breach and udder. They have included a long-acting drench and an extra "bung-hole" crutch in Autumn for hoggets since going non-mulesed, timed just before the greener feed makes sheep more pre-disposed to scouring.

At lamb-marking, the Lay's include a fly-prevention application sprayed over the lamb's breech. As you can see from the pictures, the project group took an opportunity to discuss breach scoring on the cradle, and it was noted that whilst it was fine to record breech scores at marking, the tendency was not to select based on breech score until the lamb was older and had grown into its skin. If a lamb presented with urine stain at marking however, this was a good opportunity to record it as a cull.

This year at marking, the Lays were using eID to record sex and make the odd cull based on urine stain. Next year they intend to record breech wrinkle scores at marking and then dag scores as hoggets to assist them to make selection decisions.

The non-mulesing project is open for farmers around WA to join, including those who have already stopped, are trialling it, or would just like to learn more. Producers meet locally a handful of times a year, and discuss management strategies, the equipment they use, market opportunities and challenges, meet with researchers and industry, and continue sharing information in the interim via a WhatsApp group. **Contact Ed Riggall for more information 0428 299 007 or ed@agpromanagement.com**



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AWI Update

Article by Tori Kirk, Australian Wool Innovation

Australian Wool Innovation has released a **new campaign**, reminding Australians the world's best Merino wool is produced right here.

The campaign is presented by AWI's marketing arm The Woolmark Company. AWI Chief Executive Officer John Roberts says the campaign has two aims. "We want to shine the light not only on the world's best fibre, but the tens of thousands of men and women who grow it. Many remote, rural and regional communities continue to be supported by Australian wool-growing, with more than 60,000 Australian woolgrowers and many tens of thousands more working in the industry. These are the people who grow your clothes, who grow the best wool in the world."

"We also want to remind Australians to go out and support their industry by choosing Australian Merino wool products. The Aussie woolgrower is the unsung hero of the sustainable fashion and sports movement, and we are seeing an increase in demand for Australian Merino wool as brands transition towards more sustainable and circular products."

Some of the home-grown brands featured in the spot include IO Merino, Merino Country, Sportscraft and Pure Baby. These and more Australian-owned Merino wool brands are available to shop at woolmark.com/shop.

View Campaign Ad here: https://youtu.be/vUl0QqJ9L9k

Another key Issue dominating the media is **Foot and Mouth Disease** (FMD). FMD represents the greatest disease threat to Australia's livestock industries and export markets. It has the potential for rapid and extensive spread. An outbreak would stop the export of all cloven-hoofed animals and their products, at least in the short term. It was recently estimated by the Australian Department of Agriculture that an outbreak of FMD would cost Australia $80 billion over 10 years.

The risk became National news when the disease was found in Indonesia, one of our closest neighbours. While there is cause for concern, the risks are being mitigated across all areas, the highest risk being importation of meat products. AWI encourages you to keep up to date with your local organisations, DPIRD here in WA and ensure your property information is up to date, with the correct contact information.

For further resources please follow the link to AWI's FMD resources:
https://www.wool.com/sheep/welfare/foot-and-mouth-disease-fmd-facts-and-resources/

Recently **South Africa was able to resume their export of greasy wool to China** following multiple outbreaks of FMD in previous years, with another outbreak occurring at the start of the year. Below you can find a great overview of the systems in place managing traceability, in a system of temperature/time treatment of wool to resume exports.

VIDEO - https://agriorbit.com/sa-and-chinese-wool-industry-stakeholders-address-fmd/?fbclid=IwAR0BXXzRO1vXEJkQEGytdErYN4w8B3bZsXcavqcY0qH1APq3u2tfIsBuH0I

Contact: Tori Kirk
AWI Industry Relations Officer WA
0474 875 222
tori.kirk@wool.com

awi
Australian Wool Innovation Limited

News from WALRC

Article by Western Australian Livestock Research Council (WALRC)

Two new producer members join WALRC

The WA Livestock Research Council welcomed two new producer members to council at its AGM this week, with Wagin sheep producer Clayton South and Rangelands cattle producer Debbie Dowden taking up two positions. They will join Richard Metcalfe of Manypeaks and Michael Humphry of Walebing who were both re-appointed for a second term.

Following what was a competitive process of appointments, WALRC Chair Bronwyn Clarke welcomed the new and returning members, noting the increasing responsibility that WALRC producer members must now undertake. "As WALRC has grown into its role as a critical feeder of information into MLA investment strategy, the tasks that WALRC members undertake are increasingly complex and influential," Dr Clarke said. "It is evident that our Council members really relish the intellectual challenge that the role involves and it means we are attracting outstanding candidates to the positions as they become available."

WALRC is an initiative of MLA and its primary purpose is to ensure the research and extension needs of the WA red meat sector are progressed and funded. Its annual report is now available on the WALRC website at www.walrc.com.au

Farm-a-Friend program kicks off at Livestock Matters

WALRC's initiative to introduce a farmer/ag research student mentoring program was launched this (last) month at Livestock Matters in Fremantle with 13 students from UWA and Murdoch being paired with livestock producers spread from Mt Magnet to Esperance.

The program will involve students getting on farm and spending time with their paired farmer over a 12-month period as part of a key strategy to ensure future livestock researchers are well grounded in production issues. WALRC's vice chair John Wallace is one of the hosting farmers, being paired with UWA ag science student Bryce Thomas, from Bullsbrook.

A number of the students in the program are not from farms originally and so their opportunity to gain experience on farm is a significant benefit to their study.

Contact WALRC: Esther Price, Executive Officer, admin@walrc.com.au, 0418 931 938

DWER Update

Article by Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER)

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's Rural Water Planning Program works to boost non-potable water supplies across the dryland agricultural area to provide more reliable agricultural and emergency livestock and firefighting water supplies. The program is administering the Agricultural Area Dams project under the National Water Grid Connections Fund which aims to develop and upgrade 70 non-potable water sites to boost the non-potable water supply network to build resilience in rural communities to prepare for climate change and dry periods. In the Esperance Shire, planning is in progress to upgrade the community/school dam and catchment in Grass Patch and to desilt the CBH dam and pipe it to new tanks for farmers to access. Discussions are underway regarding water source options in Salmon Gums.

The Farm Water Supply Planning Scheme provides a rebate up to $1000 for farmers who undertake a farm water audit. The audit process assists farmers with progressive water source planning to meet livestock and spray water demands and better prepare for dry periods. If farmers are interested in this program please call Tracy Calvert, Manager of Rural Water Planning on 98410122.

We're hiring - Project Officer

ASHEEP is looking for a Project Officer to join our team. It's a casual position, perfect for someone who is organised, a clear communicator, passionate about agriculture, is based in the Esperance region, and has a car. Work hours are generally flexible, with some set hours if data needs to be captured on particular dates. Work from our office at DPIRD or from home. We are currently seeking someone to take on pasture project (average 2.5 hrs p/w) and we may have other projects coming online in October. Contact our Executive Officer Sarah Brown for a position description & info: 0409 335 194, eo@asheep.org.au

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WALRC Newsletter

Subscribe to the WA Livestock Research Council newsletter

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0418 931 938

OCTOBER

Next ASHEEP Committee Meeting is scheduled for October 2022.

Contact a committee or staff member to raise an item.

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