

# ASHEEP & BEEF

## Quarterly



## Case Study: Mixed enterprise sheep & cropping in Cascade & Munglinup

Mark and Liv Walter, TKO Farming

Since 2022, Mark and Liv Walter have been running their own mixed livestock (15%) and cropping (85%) operation, named TKO Farming. The enterprise is on 7,000ha spread across three properties that are 50-60kms apart in the Munglinup and Cascade areas, to the north-west of Esperance.

ASHEEP & BEEF sends a big thanks to Mark and Liv for taking the time to share insight on their operation, including their current focuses, livestock strategies for managing feed gaps and dry seasonal conditions, and plans for the future.

"The 5 year rainfall average we've had is 315mm - 330mm, with 50mm year-to-date in 2025," wrote Mark and Liv. "It's been a hot, hot summer, with high evaporation, and one farm is completely out of water. Given that, **water capture and storage** has been a focus."

"40 dams have been cleaned, all catchments graded and sprayed, 1 new dam sunk, 2 new solar panels purchased, kilometres of pipe laid from a back dam to a closer dam, and 3 new tanks purchased (100K L, 197K L & 275K L) since 2019. A CBH 0.8ha tarp was laid on a key dam in 2024. We were still not expecting to run into this dry situation in 2025. There simply haven't been any significant runoff events since September 2022."

[Continued over page].

Image: Mark & Liv Walter's ewes and lambs being mustered through a paddock of vetch.

### Highlights

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[...] "Luckily, the Cascade community still has enough livestock producers to request a Water Deficiency Declaration through the Department of Water & Environmental Regulation (DWER), which took 8 weeks of emails and phone calls to be granted water and set up."

Mark and Liv's typical cropping rotation is vetch, wheat, canola, wheat, barley, vetch. "**Vetches are sown on the first rain or dry**, into barley stubbles to gain from the early growth of barley providing early feed while the vetch establishes before the winter cold sets in."

"We mainly grow RM4 vetch due to its season length. Seeding is done dry in early March with the hope of rain from then on. We have found that once it germinates it will hang in there until April rains, and then it is away. The early sowing is essential for biomass production. Being involved in the ASHEEP & BEEF MLA pasture trials has helped to put figures around biomass production and the nitrogen that is available for the following crops."

Mark and Liv run a self-replacing merino flock, but recently made some changes to the program. "This year, after many years, the **White Suffolk** made its way back into the older 800 Merino ewes that are due to **lamb in late April**. The remaining younger 2000 ewes were mated to Westwood **Merino** sires and are due **mid-June**."

"We have been **non-mulesing** for 3 years, and Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) accredited since 2022. Shearing is 8 monthly. RWS is the highest accreditation for wool and sheep, with audits the same as ISCC for canola. The last 92 bales sold through a private RWS auction through Westcoast Wools were \$11,506.88 above the market at the time."

Mark and Liv have implemented a range of **strategies that aim to reduce the need to destock ewes** during dryer seasonal conditions. "The 2,800 ewes have been agisted on stubbles on a neighbouring farm, and when the stubbles were finished they returned into paddock confinement and also confinement in non-cropping areas such as pine trees where it has been easy to cart water and feed. In 2022, a drought lot was built near the shearing shed and yards. It has been used every year for confined feeding ewes and finishing off lambs. This has been a key business decision to maintaining stock numbers and maintaining condition score through tight periods. A second-hand Supreme Feed Mixer Wagon was the first purchase in 2022 for the new business. All feed samples get sent away to be tested and ration mixes are compiled through the Nutrien Ag team in Esperance."

"Every year, two years' worth of straw is baled during harvest, barley and ryegrass silage cut and stored in a pit, feed barley grain stored in silos, and hay has been brought in. Unfortunately, since 2022, all feed supplies have been completely used by the end of the year, so it's been tricky to get in front to have a backup supply. Maybe this is the year for another silage pit!"

Mark and Liv have chosen to set up **confinement** areas to have more control over ration cost and to better utilise silage. "Lambs are fed daily with a full ration of hay, silage, barley and wheat. In the past, we have also added beans or lupins but they were too expensive this year. We have had some issues with acidosis from time to time, so have started treating some grain with caustic soda. Straw is added in the pens weekly to help with any scouring and to give the lambs something to do."

## Farm Snapshot

**Farm Name:** TKO Farming

**Enterprise Mix:** 15% sheep, 85% cropping.

**Farm Area:** Cascade & Munglinup, 7000ha.

**Average Annual Rainfall:** 315-330mm.

**Stock:** Self-replacing merino sheep and crossbred lambs.

**Feedbase:** RM4 vetch, early cereals, silage, confinement feed rations.



Top: Non mulesed merino lambs with new water tank in the background. Below: Feed trough.



Continued over page.



[...] "Ewes in containment are typically fed silage, hay and straw to try and maintain their condition, depending on what stage they are at in pregnancy. We try and feed them three times a week to save on time. Minerals are important for the ewes to avoid hypocalcaemia. Lambing in the middle of June means we can keep ewes in containment typically from March through to late April/mid-May. It's good to let the Vetch get away as much as possible before grazing. It also allows us to move ewes around before seeding to eat out sprayed paddocks for better weed control."



Above: Retired CBH tarp on a dam catchment.  
Below: Davina Howse, TKO Farming trainee.



In August last year, Mark and Liv arranged to have CBH **tarps laid on a central dam catchment to improve runoff**. "0.8 ha was laid by the CBH tarping crew on a prepared catchment with tyre walls laid out across them and dirt around the edges. With decreasing rainfall every bit of water needs to be captured. This cost \$13,000, so payback will depend on the longevity of the tarps but it's felt that we will do more dams in the future."

Both Mark and Liv are **active community members** and consider it a high priority given the rural population decline. Liv has recently taken on the role of President of Cascade Town Recreation Association, with the main aim to get the community to socialise and network again. "It's been tough since COVID, but those left out here - mainly staff who don't have a house in Esperance - need a social outlet. So it's been a drive for our committee to make this happen," said Liv. "Recent pool comps and table tennis comps have had good attendance, so hopefully that'll continue going forward."

Since leaving the position of ASHEEP & BEEF Chair after reaching the maximum term in the role, Mark has continued to contribute as a member of the committee. In 2023, he also took on an **active role with WAFarmers** on the Livestock Council and recently became Vice President of WAFarmers Esperance branch. "These organisations are important to keep our voice heard, so I recommend getting involved with our local Esperance Branch," said Mark.

Mark and Liv's four daughters are educated across the state. Tara studying nursing in Mandurah at Murdoch University, Heidi completing year 12 at Denmark Agricultural College, Emily in year 10 at Penrose College in Perth, and Grace in Year 7 at Esperance Anglican Community School. That was 57,000 km of next level logistics for Mark and Liv over the last 12 months!

Mark and Liv enjoy running livestock. It enables them to employ another 2 full time staff all year round, so they have fewer casuals during harvest. They recently employed a trainee, Davina, who is completing her Certificate 3 in Agriculture though TAFE in Esperance. **"The future of agriculture requires businesses to train the future."**

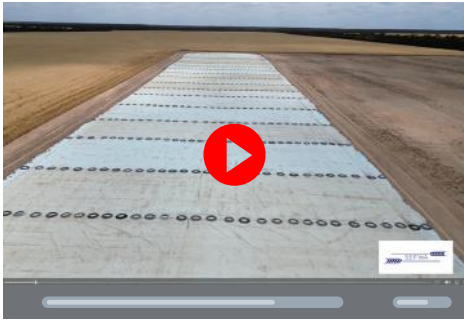
"Josh McKeown has been employed by the farm over the past 2 years and works with trainee Davina in the livestock side of the business. Matt Blackburn and Gabby Tempero have been with us for 8 years and are mostly kept busy on the cropping side. We encourage our staff to be involved with the local community. Gabby was recently recognised by the Munglinup Community, receiving the youth citizen award for the Ravensthorpe Shire on Australia Day."

**"Going forward into 2025**, just add water, a shade over the yards would be a luxury, another tarp catchment for a key dam, good growth to fill another silage pit, good health and good times!"

## Dam catchment liner demonstration sites

If you'd like more information on lining dam catchments with retired CBH tarps, SEWPA is running a project monitoring two demonstration sites aiming to gauge their efficacy in increasing water run-off. One site is in Mt Ridley and the other in Salmon Gums. ASHEEP & BEEF has teamed up to support SEPWA by sharing information from the project with our network. A couple of key resources SEPWA has created are below. David Cook is the project lead and can be contacted for more information: david@sepwa.org.au or 0492 232 440.

### Dam liner results from November 2023



### Catchment liner instructional video



## Executive Officer's Update

*Sarah Brown, ASHEEP & BEEF*

ASHEEP & BEEF has had a busy start to 2025. We kicked off the year with a Summer Field Day in February focusing on confinement feeding and feedlotting. Many thanks to our speakers and to farm hosts Scott Wandel (Dalyup), Tihan Giliomee (Cascade), Jason Schutz (Dalyup). More to come on this next newsletter.

Our projects are all cracking along. We've run the annual workshop with Richard Brake for our CN30 MLA Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) project, free BVDV testing is underway (pg. 29), Feed365 demonstration site results are out (pg. 20), 2024 pasture variety trials PDS results will be in the next newsletter, the second year of optimising age of weaning cattle project data is being analysed for release soon, and we're keen to hear ideas as we put together PDS funding applications for 2026.

The ASHEEP & BEEF Committee has met twice already this year and is drawing together the agenda for our AGM & conference on 19 June 2025. The theme is based around genetics and business structure for future markets.

A lot of the work we do as a group is behind the scenes. I am constantly impressed and grateful for the input of everyone who shares their time, knowledge, ideas and support to drive ASHEEP & BEEF and the industry forward. Some of the less visible work undertaken in the past few months includes contributing to Australian Wool Innovation's and Meat & Livestock Australia's strategic planning, tabling ideas and issues in the federal government's sheep live export funding co-design process, writing to Federal Minister for Agriculture Julie Collins regarding live export and requesting information on her strategy for industry (not much to share from that response unfortunately), and writing to State Minister for Agriculture Jackie Jarvis about issues arising from the delayed progress of the Esperance extension to the state barrier fence.

We also wrote to Matt Lowe, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (DAFF) Policy Group, after he attended a sheep live export funding co-design meeting in Esperance. Matt is the first person from DAFF who has made the effort to engage with our industry in the Esperance region directly throughout the sheep live export phase out discussions. We emphasised key issues for our region, as well as offering Matt a subscription to ASHEEP & BEEF's newsletter, which he has accepted. Our intent is to build on this point of contact to establish a better shared understanding between industry and government, as well as build the relationship with DAFF more broadly. Some of the other organisations we've been focused on sharing information with include grower groups, DPIRD, Regional Development Australia Esperance Goldfields, WALRC, WAFarmers, PGA, MLA & AWI.

We have also had members of ASHEEP & BEEF involved with key industry groups. Some examples include Nick Ruddenklau travelling to Sydney to represent ASHEEP & BEEF at two days of meetings with AWI, Bruce Pengilly performing a role on AWI Extension WA's Producer Advisory Panel providing a great link there, and Mark Walter taking on the Vice Presidency of the WAFarmers Esperance branch.



# Case Study: Production efficiencies decreasing emissions

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP & BEEF

Leigh and Karina West run a mixed sheep and cropping enterprise in the Gibson area. The Wests are part of the first group of farmers in 2023 to join ASHEEP & BEEF's Meat & Livestock Australia Producer Demonstration Site "Carbon Neutral 2030 - Getting Started on Farm". Karina spoke to project coordinator Jan Clawson on their involvement in the project and the emissions results they have achieved.



## Why did you join the ASHEEP & BEEF project?

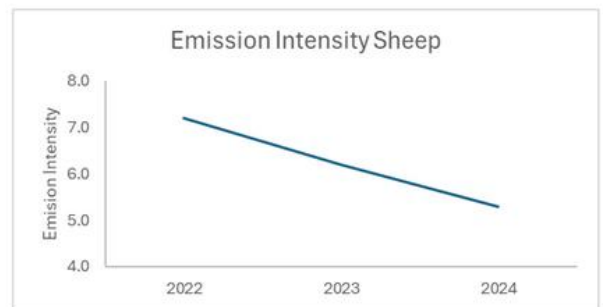
"We had completed the Melbourne Uni calculator a couple of times, but we found all the tabs very confronting," said Karina. "We weren't sure it was accurate once completed, and therefore didn't know what to do with the results." Karina also explained that between that and knowing that requirements to report on emissions were likely coming, they joined the project because they wanted more information.

Fast forward to today, following the third annual workshop the project has run, they are feeling a lot more confident completing the calculator – so much so that now they are making small adjustments while entering the year's figures. Karina said, "In the beginning, completing the calculator was daunting, but that's not the case anymore because most things are the same, so it's just a matter of making a few small adjustments to capture the year's information."

Leigh and Karina had a one-on-one meeting with Richard Brake, Project Consultant, as part of the project, before the 2023 workshop. During that meeting, Richard explained how to record chemical active ingredients. It's not just how many litres of chemical has been used; you need to work it back to kilograms of active ingredients (e.g. Glyphosate 450 is 0.45kg per litre). This, along with the review of the calculator, has given them the confidence to know the calculator is right!

As part of the annual workshops, we review each producer's summary of results from the calculator. Before we reviewed the West's summary, Leigh made it very clear that they are primarily focused on profit drivers and production efficiencies; they don't make decisions based on carbon emissions. Remarkably, we saw that each year their emission intensity had reduced.

Leigh and Karina use genetic selection to select rams for good early growth, focus on good fat and muscle traits, but not too high to maintain fleece weight. They look for early growth with an aim of getting wether lambs off early to avoid feeding longer than required. This along with the crop and pasture rotation, has combined to give them good production while also reducing their emission intensity.



## So, what about results? Do you know what to do with the calculator results now?

Karina said she now knows their emission numbers have value and likes Richard's advice regarding protecting their emission numbers rather than giving them away.

## What's next?

"Our focus will remain on productive legume crops and pastures to enable us to continue to increase production while lowering input costs (fertiliser) and carbon emissions. We need to ensure we are being good custodians of the land we farm to ensure sustainability for future generations." Karina explained that they won't be establishing any registered carbon projects to sell carbon credits, because the advice is that farmers will need to keep those credits for themselves. "I can see Natural Capital Accounting and Sustainability Statements as the next step," she said.

The Wests are a great example of how focusing on production efficiencies can naturally lead to a reduction in carbon emissions!



## Tag retention

Brad McCormick, Shearwell, 0429 932 266

Moving from visual tags to mandatory electronic (eID) tags has led to more interest in tag retention. An animal losing an ear tag is not just the financial loss of the cost of a tag, the loss of traceability or the cost of replacing the tag at a saleyard; it can mean the loss of identity, including pedigree and performance information that reduces the sale value of the animal itself.

Shearwell  
Data

Livestock Systems

**There are many factors that impact the retention of sheep tags:**

### Tag and applicator design

All tags cause invasive damage when applied to a sheep's ear. Tags that are lightweight, easy to apply and cause the least amount of injury can make a difference. Applicators that make insertion relatively quick and easy can improve tag placement, which will also result in better retention. The length of the spike or pin limits the space for the ear – look for a sizable gap that lets the ear breathe.

The size of the puncture hole can also affect the retention rates between different kinds of tags. A loop like the Shearwell SET tag has very little movement if it's properly positioned in the ear, and is less likely to snag on wire, twine or hay netting.

Button tags have a thicker spike to pierce with, and the tags themselves are heavier. Any movement of the tag will enlarge the original puncture, especially if the tag gets caught on something and the animal pulls back. Once the hole becomes loose around the spike then the tag is prone to moving, and the final result might be the entire tag being pulled through the hole and lost.

### Tag handling and placement

Tags are made of Nylon, a type of plastic. While Nylon is essentially an inert substance, it can take up or lose moisture, which can make the tags slightly more flexible or brittle. Newly purchased tags should remain in their ziplock plastic bags in a place akin to your kitchen pantry – dry, cool and away from direct sunlight – until you are ready to apply them.

*Right: correct tag placement in a sheep.*

Dip tags into a disinfectant immediately prior to application to help prevent infection. The disinfectant also provides a degree of slipperiness to the spike of the tag for a smoother puncture.

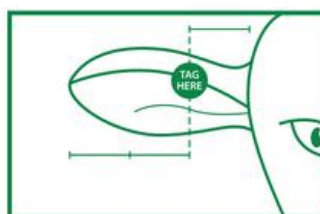
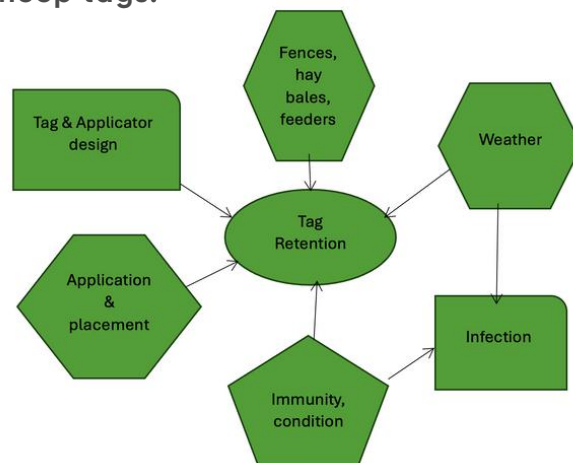
Follow the tag manufacturers' instruction for correct placement in the ear, and only use the applicator provided.

Environmental challenges can lead to tag losses regardless of the **design and placement** of the tag. Fences, old wire, weldmesh, scrub, hay twine and wrap, feeders, yards, water troughs and sundry other obstacles are used by stock to rub, scratch, hook up, cut, damage and/or pull-out ear tags. Containment feeding sites should be assessed and cleaned up of obvious problems. Good tag retention is a shared responsibility between the tag manufacturer and the farmer.

**Infection, individual sheep/ lamb immune status and the weather** are all interlinked. Infections at the tag insertion site are a common source of frustration to producers. Sometimes it needs a detective to get to the bottom of the problem. Was the weather an issue at marking, or were the sheep in low condition and low immune status due to poor seasonal conditions? Was there so much rain that the ears of the sheep were wet for long periods and ripe for water induration? Was the season making for poor colostrum transfers to the lambs, leaving them vulnerable? Were the sheep's ears thicker than normal – some lines of sheep have thicker ears than others.

The healing process after tag insertion takes 4-6 weeks. That is plenty of time for bugs to be introduced, flies to have an impact, or seasonal conditions to turn for the worst.

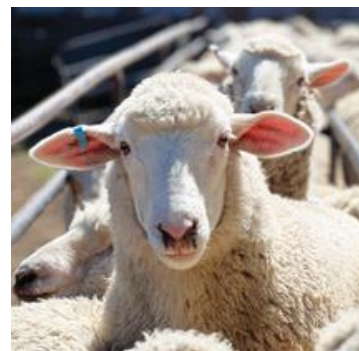
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### Correct application

Position tag 1/3 from ear base and 2/3 from ear tip.

Older, thicker animal ears may require tagging from lower back ear section. Please follow application instructions for welfare of animal.



[...] Weather, feed and environmental conditions vary year to year but using some simple tactics can minimise their effects. Use a sprinkler or hose to reduce the amount of dust in covered yards. On the other foot, if the yard or paddock conditions are wet and muddy consider using a portable cover over the working area. Maintain your applicators and handling gear as free from manure and dirt as possible. If sheep are backward in condition, try to schedule marking when they have lifted in condition. Follow the feeding and management programs that have ewes in good condition at lambing and therefore providing the lambs with a good start.

It is important that you advise your supplier/ manufacturer if you are having tag retention issues – Shearwell for one, will do their best to investigate problems and work with customers to sort out the issues.

Starting with a well-designed tag and applicator combination, Shearwell believes it can help producers to 'keep their tags'.

Tag well with Shearwell.

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## Wool market report

Danny Burkett, Westcoast Wool & Livestock, 20/3/25



The Merino wool market is starting to show positive signs as the realisation of rapidly shrinking supply kicks in. This realisation comes at time of low demand and difficult trading conditions in China for wool which has had the result of the Chinese mills carrying little to no greasy wool stock and also little to no processed stock. The production chain has traditionally been hand to mouth in China however I would suggest even more so in the years following Covid. With this being said it has also meant the Australian Exporter who in effect fund our industry in the trading of greasy product have been reluctant to take a stock position to trade into the China market.

If we look at the market since Covid in two parts, fine and medium, the fine has had a run then come back down and the mediums have traded sideways in the tightest sideways band that has never been seen before, all with flat demand. The value of both fine and medium types has hinged simply on the exchange rate with a very high correlation, that in the previous five trading weeks has been broken.

The forward market also that has been flat for over two years has sprung to life with activity in 19 and 21 micron contracts growing daily, this activity is being driven by non-other than the Australian exporter.

It is possible to form a very strong argument that the Merino wool market has seen the bottom and will now enjoy positive times ahead even with the current world backdrop. We have already taken care of our supply for the next two years as production will not/cannot turn around, breeding decisions last year have accounted for this current season and even if we see a resurgence in production of Merinos it will still take two years to increase the supply of adult wool. Prices have been steady albeit at lowish levels with the supply we have been giving the market, we will simply not be supplying this volume that we have in the previous years for the next two years at least.

Merino wool will be bought back to its definition of a commodity and in 100% of cases in all commodities in all of history supply and demand will play their part and I believe both sit in our favour.

**Contact: Danny Burkett, Westcoast Wool & Livestock, 0418 848 314, d.burkett@wcw.com.au**

## Making money out of wool webinar

Georgia Pugh, AWI Extension, 0408 947 488



### 'Making money out of wool' Webinar

Learn the latest strategies, tactics and economic analysis to help WA woolgrowers overcome market challenges and make more money from wool sheep.

In case you missed it, here is the link to the recent AWI Extension WA webinar on "Making money out of wool sheep"

**VISIT THE QR CODE OR LINK TO VIEW THE WEBINAR**

<https://tinyurl.com/4j8a53rc>

Guest speakers: John Francis, Agrista; Michael Young, Farm Optimisation Group; and Geoff Bilney, Glenpadden Farms

#### Here's a sneak peek of what you will learn:

**John Francis, Agrista** - "There's significant opportunity for WA woolgrowers to improve profitability. There are 4 hard questions you should ask yourself to start turning data into information that empowers knowledge and better decision making."

**Michael Young, Farm Optimisation Group** - "Despite current challenges, sheep farming in WA remains profitable, especially in mixed farming systems. Prime lamb production can be a profitable alternative to shippers but requires optimal nutrition management. Even with lower wool prices, Merino-based flocks, especially Merino prime lamb, can remain highly profitable due to the balance of wool and meat production."

**Geoff Bilney, Glenpadden Farms** - "There is a place and a market for Merino lambs in feedlots for processors. Processors in WA are increasing their processing capacity, indicating a future demand for sheep, including Merinos. Carcase conformation of Merino lambs in feedlots can be as good as crossbreds when managed correctly and reaching the required weight."

Let us know what you think of the webinar here  
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References:

1. Colvin, A. October 2002. Trends in mulesing, tail docking and castration practices of Australian woolgrowers: Results of the 2021 AWI Merino Husbandry Practices Survey. AWI Project No.: ON-00829.
2. Van der Saag, D; Lomax, S; Windsor, P. A.; Taylor, C; Thomson, P; Hall, E; and Whit, P.J. 2018. Effects of topical anaesthetic and buccal meloxicam on average daily gain, behaviour and inflammation of unweaned beef calves following surgical castration. Animal 2018 Nov;12(11):2373-2381.
3. Troy Animal Healthcare Data on File.





## Pasture manipulation and pasture legumes vs herbicide matrix



Luke Edwards, Agronomist, Farm & General

Pasture feed quality is a key driver of livestock performance, with digestibility and dry matter (DM) content being two of the most important nutritional parameters. Digestibility directly determines the proportion of a feed that can be broken down and absorbed by ruminants, which in turn influences the amount of metabolisable energy (ME) available for maintenance, growth, reproduction and wool production. As seen in figure 1 there is a linear relationship between digestibility and ME. Various DPIRD research shows that highly digestible species like ryegrass and legumes often reach digestibility levels above 70–75%, contributing over 10 MJ/kg DM of ME. Similarly, DM content impacts the volume of nutrients consumed feeds with very low DM (like capeweed) may appear bulky but contribute little actual nutrition. To maximise productivity, pastures need to be dominated by species that offer both high digestibility and adequate DM content, ideally maintained in their vegetative stage for peak feed value.

Legume species such as subterranean clover, serradella, medic and woolly pod vetch consistently deliver high digestibility (often exceeding 70%) and protein content, making them excellent quality feed for livestock. The DPIRD data also highlights their role in extending seasonal feed quality and fixing nitrogen, which improves soil health and most importantly benefits crops following a pasture phase. In contrast, weed species like barley grass, brome grass, silver grass, capeweed and erodium often exhibit much lower digestibility, especially as they contribute less than 8 MJ/kg DM of ME. The MLA factsheet further notes these species mature falling below 60% in some not only reduce feed quality but can also cause issues like eye injury, seed contamination, and reduced palatability. These are also the same weed species that compete and limit our cropping systems. Therefore, actively

manipulating pasture composition to favour legumes and reduce weed presence through grazing management, spray-topping, and selective herbicides can significantly improve overall pasture quality, livestock productivity while also benefiting future cropping rotations.

Modern seeding systems, particularly knifepoint and press-wheel configurations, have improved the precision and consistency of pasture establishment. These systems also create a more uniform seedbed, which enhances the effectiveness and safety of herbicide applications providing a valuable opportunity to explore how targeted herbicide strategies can be used to manipulate pasture species composition. With pasture legumes such as Subterranean Clover, Persian Clover, Bladder Clover, Medic, Serradella, and Vetch, there's now greater scope to pair these species with well-timed herbicide interventions that reduce competition from weed species without compromising legume establishment or persistence. In support of this, Farm and General will be undertaking a herbicide matrix trial, evaluating a range of pre-seeding, post-seeding pre-emergent, and post-emergent herbicide applications. This will include both new and older chemistries to identify the most effective approaches for broadleaf weed suppression while maintaining and enhancing legume-based pasture systems. The aim is to give growers practical, locally relevant recommendations for optimising pasture composition and productivity through integrated weed management.

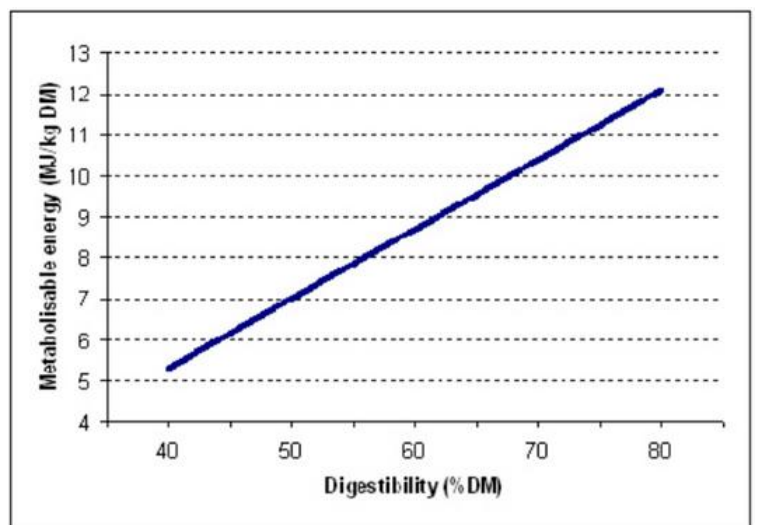


Figure 1: Relationship between forage Digestibility and Metabolisable energy. DPIRD 2024

Below: Agronomist Luke Edwards.



Contact Farm and General on 08 9072 0888.



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# Flybuster now available in WA

## Milne Feeds

Milne Feeds is pleased to distribute **Flybuster** in Western Australia. This innovative, eco-friendly fly baiting system provides livestock enterprises with a cost-effective solution to manage fly populations and build a **fly barrier** around dairies, feedlots, sheds, and stables.

Whether it be nuisance flies or the biting stable fly, these pests remain a challenge for livestock operations. With an exponential breeding cycle, fly populations quickly get out of hand and cause havoc in livestock and farming operations. Fly strike in sheep and the spread of disease are well recognised, but the ramifications for loss of production should not be overlooked. Animals trying to escape flies will often herd together, generating extra body heat or engage in constant stomping, skin twitching, tail flicking, and head shaking—all of which burn energy that could otherwise go into **milk production or weight gain**.

Flybuster was originally developed in Israel, where intensive farming operations, in close proximity to human populations, led to the development of a fly management system that was not only effective but easy and safe to use. The **plant-based bait** used in Flybuster ensures no foreign pathogens are brought onto the farm, while the **one-way trap** means there is no need for pesticides or poisons—the flies simply drown in the liquid. The smell, warmth, moisture, CO<sub>2</sub>, and protein contained in the trap mimic animal attractants and draw flies away from livestock and into the trap. Once inside, flies lay eggs and die, thus **breaking the breeding cycle**.

### What is Flybuster?

- An **innovative bait & trap** designed to combat fly infestations using only plant-based ingredients.
- The **bait formula is based on fly behaviour**, using natural mechanisms to attract flies.
- The **one-way trap** allows flies to enter but not escape.

### How Can It Help You?

- Reduces the risk of **fly-borne disease**.
- Assists with **preventing flystrike** in feedlots.
- Minimises aggravation & stress to livestock and handlers.
- Helps reduce **fly-related eye irritation** in animals.

### Flybuster Applications:

Flybuster attracts all filth fly species, making it suitable for:

- Dairy farm operations
- Beef & Sheep feedlots
- Pig & Chicken farms
- Horse stables
- Market gardens
- Abattoirs

Each trap has a capacity of **three million flies**, making it suitable for large-scale farming operations. It is **cost-effective, requires little maintenance**, and is **safe to handle**.

### Ordering Information

Flybuster is available now from Milne Feeds.

**Traps:** Boxes of 10

**Bait:** 15kg buckets (each trap uses 250g per month)



One bucket of bait will fill 60 traps for one month. For more information, speak to your Milne Specialist:

**Jonno Langan (Dairy & Beef):** 0407 766 444

**Paul Nenke (Sheep):** 0407 720 040

**Michelle Meylan (Equine):** 0429 107 790

Stock now available at our Esperance Depot: Esperance Grain Handlers





Steers on the auto weigher 24/3/25.

## Case Study: Remote cattle auto weigher

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP & BEEF

At ASHEEP & BEEF's Spring Field Day in 2024, Gallagher took us through a new StrongBo remote auto weigher unit for cattle that they have partnered in. Producer Simon Fowler (Chilwell Farms) went on to purchase one of these units and we've recently had one of our members request a follow up interview to find out how it is going. Many thanks to Simon for his time speaking with us, as well as to staff member Daniel Walker who has been operating the auto weigher within Chilwell's livestock team.

### When and why did you decide to implement the auto weigh unit?

Simon: "The system arrived mid-December 2024, so it is still new to our operation. With the spread-out nature of the farm it's hard to visually check all the animals on a regular basis. Having the ability to monitor them with technology, from a distance, and have an accurate indication of performance is crucial."

Daniel: "Chilwell took up the eShepherd virtual fencing system for cattle over the last year, and we have been using it to strip-graze paddocks with the aim of improving feed utilisation and management. The auto weigh supports that as it should have the ability to push the grazing potential of the virtual fencing system harder."

### How are you currently using it?

Daniel: "The auto weigh system arrived last year after weaning. The first thing we did was to set it up with the top steers (the heaviest animals, aged at about 9 months at that time). We had the steers running in the virtual fence system strip-grazing hail affected cereal stubbles. Once they finished with those stubbles we moved them into strip-grazing millet, which they have just come out of to go into confinement. We have kept the weigh unit with them through each of these moves. The idea was to monitor the steers' daily gains in real time to assess how effective our grazing management was, and now that they are in confinement how effective the ration is."

"Whilst this is our current use for the system, the main benefit we can see for it is going to be strip grazing spring pastures in conjunction with the virtual fence system to optimise finishing cattle."

"The auto weigh unit we have is a transportable, stand-alone weigh system that we drop in the paddock with the animals. It's solar powered. It works by using an attractant (we use mineral supplement licks) that encourages the animals to stand on a platform to access the lick. It reads their eID and records their individual weight, which is calculated based on their front two feet being on the platform. The unit uses an algorithm supported by artificial intelligence to calculate the full body weight from that."

### Farm Snapshot

**Farm Name:** Chilwell Farms

**Enterprise Mix:** Sheep, cattle, cropping.

**Farm Area:** Howick, Condingup, Beaumont, 50,000ha.

**Average Annual Rainfall:** 400-650mm

**Stock:** 30,000 merino ewes, 2000 ultrawhites, 2000 Angus breeders.

**Typical Rotation:** Pasture, canola, wheat.



"It takes a while for the weights to start becoming accurate. The more animals it weighs and the more individual animals it repeatedly weighs improves the accuracy of the system. So far, out of a mob of 409 steers, 341 have been weighed over a 3-month period. Some of those animals weighed have gone to it 85 times, some have gone to it once. There seems to be quite a range in how often they use it. The background software uploads this data along with a traffic-light colour code system to indicate how accurate it believes the weight to be."

"Gallagher said to us that it would take about 3 days for the cattle to start using the auto weigher and that was pretty accurate. Within a week the system was reporting that it was getting more confident in the accuracy of weights."

"The mineral lick on the auto weigh is currently their only supplement in the paddock, so it's also giving us information on lick consumption. Interestingly enough, it has shown us that only 85% of the mob have accessed that supplement and some of them only a handful of times. Something we could consider in future is using this information to understand if there is difference in animal performance based on lick consumption, or making a more targeted approach to correct mineral deficiencies. This wasn't information we were planning on getting from the scale, but it's interesting to consider."

Simon: "I'm not worried about the variability in lick consumption at this point. But I will be worried in the spring when it comes to magnesium lick. In the future, we will likely have lick trailers in the paddock as well as at the auto weigher to make sure that there is plenty of opportunity for them to take up the lick. That might reduce the animals going on the auto weigher, but there should still be enough going on to it to give us the mob averages that we need."

**What have you learnt along the way? Any tweaks or bugs you have ironed out?**

Daniel: "The unit was very simple to set up and on the whole issues have been minimal. Murray Green from Gallagher set it up for us and there were some initial issues with connectivity to some of our phones depending on what version operating system we had, but that was resolved pretty quickly. There was no issue accessing the software via a laptop. Since then, in the 3 months following, we've basically only had to shift it with the animals and top up the lick. It has been pretty easy to use. Nothing on the unit has been broken by the cattle. It's new equipment for Gallagher, so they have been making updates to improve the software along the way, including to improve the accuracy of the weights and refine the software interface."

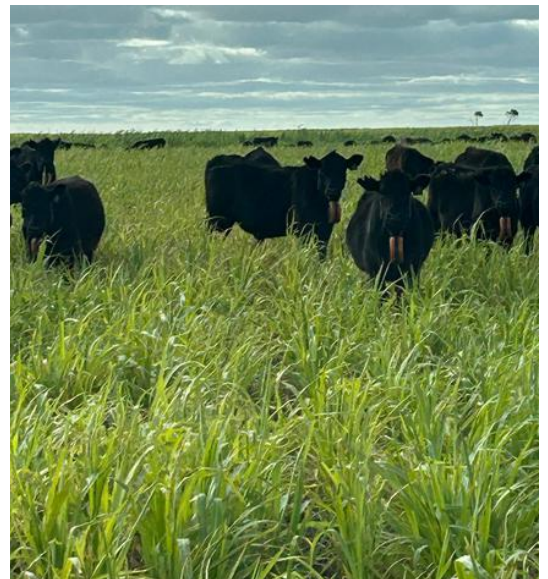
"A learning for me was when we noticed a downward trend in their daily gains. We were trying to get the most out of the stubbles before we moved on to the millet. The feed still looked good, so we were surprised about their daily gains not being as strong. Simon picked up that their water quality was reducing. Looking back through the data we probably could have picked that up a week earlier from their decreasing weight gains, but you could not have picked it visually."

"We have just put the steers through our scales in the yards whilst we were adjusting the virtual fencing neckbands. That gave us a mob average that was 3kg heavier than the paddock auto weigh scales had been reading. So it seems to be producing a reasonably reliable figure."

Simon: "We have learnt to trust it, which is good. That's what you need from your technology. It would be nice to have more units with more mobs, but the cost of the hardware is prohibitive at about \$20K per unit. I think we'll need to share the system between mobs. Whether that's a weekly rotation to get the data we need between 3-4 different mobs, I'm not sure yet, but that's something I'm considering."



*Top: Steers on hail damaged wheat stubbles 27/12/24. Below: Grazing millet 13/2/25.*



**Why did you go with that unit in particular?**

Simon: "We went with the StrongBo because we have a good working relationship with Gallagher through our virtual fencing equipment. Since we've been using that there has been a good support network. The auto weigh software doesn't directly integrate with the virtual fencing system, so using Gallagher's auto weigh is not necessary from that perspective."

**Has the system added value?**

Simon: "Yes. I think it was really important that when we put the steers in the hail damaged wheat, with 1000s of tons of heads on the ground, we could see that their performance was not being impacted by too much wheat. I think it has added a lot of value."

Daniel: "We've talked about getting a second unit to track separate mobs, so that we have more animals getting tracked and also so we can compare the performance of different feeds."

Simon: "The cost of the unit is a consideration there. There really will be value in having it in with the steers, breeding heifers, first calvers. A lot of value for a lot of mobs."



*Shifting the virtual fence boundary to open a new break while strip grazing millet 4/3/25.*

**Any thoughts for other producers who may be considering setting up an auto-weigh system?**

Daniel: "I can see it being handy for those looking to finish cattle. For three months we have had weights on animals without having to bring them into the yards. When finishing cattle, it has the ability to reduce the number of times you need to handle them."

"I think it's cool. Especially on the stubbles, because you can look at the paddock and get a feeling of the feed that is there, but looking at the data you can build a better picture of when to shift a break or move them to a new paddock. Even if there is still feed there it doesn't mean that they are putting on weight."

"It's also useful for people who have less experience with cattle to be more confident in managing grazing – you might not be able to visually pick up subtle shifts in the cattle on a day-to-day basis, but the data gives you confidence to back up decision making. I'm really enjoying using it."

Simon: "I see real potential in getting an auto weigh system for the sheep. Weaning lambs on the south coast is quite hard and there is a period of poor performance. If we could have a unit to monitor the weight of lambs post weaning there could be great gains to be made there."

**How has the season been shaping up for Chilwell this year and anything else on the horizon?**

Simon: "It has been a very dry summer, which has been good for the quality of the dry feed and stubbles. We have had good stubble utilisation. Now, all the pregnant ewes are in confinement or heading there to be confine fed for the next 6 weeks. We are very busy with feeding cattle, feeding ewes in confinement, feeding lambs in the feedlot, preg scanning sheep, crutching ewes pre-lambing."

"As far as what's on the horizon, what we are in the process of doing is building a lot more confinement pens to make the confinement feeding process easier. That's a big part of where we are heading with the sheep. On the pasture side, we've seeded vetch with all our ryegrass pastures for the first time. So, we're placing a lot more reliance on vetch and a lot less on clover. We've gone with RM4 vetch because we harvested 130 tonne of our own seed last year, so that is what we had on hand. It seems to perform well."

"I think I can see some really positive price indications on the sheep side of the operation. We're seeing improving lamb and mutton prices, so we are fairly positive for the sheep operation. Even wool is around \$15p/kg clean, so historically quite high. Let's just hope it rains now!"





# Want more resources on auto weigher systems?

## Cattle demonstration sites with cost benefit analysis

Gallagher started distributing the StrongBo system for cattle in 2024, also on the market is a unit by Optiweigh. **Stirlings to Coast** grower group has been running a Meat & Livestock Producer Demonstration Site with an Optiweigh unit since 2023, aiming to utilise it on properties in southern WA to demonstrate the value of in-paddock cattle weighing systems for improved labour efficiency, monitoring animal weights and optimising compliance with target market weight specifications. You can find details on the project and resources via their website: [www.scfarmers.org.au/optiweighdemo](http://www.scfarmers.org.au/optiweighdemo). A couple of key articles they have written are:

**2023 case studies on the Bradshaws & Slades.**



**2024 case study on the Gilmores' Irongate Wagu.**



## Two new sheep auto weighers available



Optiweigh has recently released an auto weigher for sheep (pictured above and right). It's a double bay, fully portable unit, solar powered and connects remotely through 4G, NB-IOT or satellite. Max Laurie at Optiweigh shared some information about the unit after ASHEEP & BEEF got in touch regarding possible interest in running a Producer Demonstration Site with the equipment. Max explained that sheep access it voluntarily, being encouraged onto the platform by an attractant such as mineral lick. "Optiweigh weighs a sample of sheep to give accurate insights into the mob," said Max. They now have 80 sheep units in the field, so far 5 of these are in WA. "Units are mainly out in the paddock or in the feedlot pen with lambs whilst some users are using the units to monitor ewes for joining," said Max. "Both mob and individual data is available." Retail price is around \$17,500. Max provided the usage statistics in the grey box below.

**Session Information**

Today	Past 5 Days	Past 10 Days	Session Average
Records:	Total Records	2665	
	Animals Weighed	465	
	% of Mob	54%	
Weight:	Min	26.5	
	Avg	37.0	
	Max	48.1	

**Individual ADG Calculations**

Last	ADG(kg/day)	Animals	Days
14 Days:	0.18	308	10
30 Days:	0.19	458	24
90 Days:	0.16	480	62
180 Days:	0.14	81	96
All data:			

### Feedlot Average Attendance

65% in 5 days. Av. mob size 430 hd.

### Paddock Average Attendance

37% in 5 days. Av. mob size 902 hd.

For more information about Optiweigh contact Max Laurie on 0487 598 117, [max@optiweigh.com.au](mailto:max@optiweigh.com.au).



Another system for sheep released in the last year that may be of interest is one being made by Justin Dunn in Temora NSW called the **Shepherd Feedlot Auto Drafter** (pictured below left). This unit is designed to automatically monitor and draft containment fed lambs into the right weight pens, without the need for additional labour. Justin runs a feedlot and explained that they have a series of adjacent pens with a unit set on each dividing fence. It operates as a turnstile system allowing heavier lambs to progress into the next pen. They might have one pen set at 45kg entry, the next at 50kg, so when the right market grid opens up they know that the lambs in the pen between those units are within the 5kg band. Instead of mustering, weighing and drafting all the lambs across the feedlot, they simply take lambs from the pen that meets the grid. Lambs are attracted to go through the unit with a lick, but Justin said that in a feedlot environment they seem to go in anyway out of curiosity. Contact Justin on 0428 771 105 or via [www.autofeeder.com.au](http://www.autofeeder.com.au).



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## Vet Spot: SDI's - Making the best of a bad situation



*Dr Scott Jackson, Swans Veterinary Services, (08) 9071 5777*

Sudden unforeseen livestock deaths are always an outcome we lament, however investing a small amount towards a significant disease investigation (SDI) can help to make the best out of a very bad situation. Three recent SDI's we have performed for local sheep and cattle producers have actually delivered benefits in addition to diagnosing the primary causes of production losses.

It is true that the first goal of an SDI is to decipher what has caused deaths in the first place. Sometimes we can assume the cause and the SDI simply brings peace of mind: For example, we guessed that a sheep producer who was seeing sudden deaths in partially vaccinated animals was experiencing break through enterotoxaemia (pulpy kidney). The investigation confirmed this was so. However, another SDI into some weaner calf deaths demonstrated the contrary, that sometimes our most educated guesses can be wrong.

These calves were grazing a summer pasture of sorghum (super sweet sudan). Sick animals presented with extreme lethargy, in respiratory distress and foaming at the mouth. Others were found dead. Due to drought conditions, it was assumed that pasture stress had resulted in the toxic accumulation of nitrates or cyanide in the sorghum and that fatalities were from one of the two above toxicities. The investigation, however, revealed these animals died of Histophilosis, a common opportunist pathogen we think is spread through close contact at yard weaning, carried chronically and emerges sporadically during times of stress and low immunity. The SDI testing, which is 100% subsidised by DPIRD, includes thousands of dollars of lab tests. In this case, both summer sorghum pastures were tested as part of the subsidised SDI for levels of cyanide and nitrate. One pasture was deemed to have unsafe levels of cyanide while the other was deemed safe. As a result, the safe pasture could continue to be grazed, a valuable outcome considering the scarcity of feed this summer.

Another example of how an SDI can incidentally assist our husbandry, was seen when we investigated neurological signs (stargazing, blindness, recumbence) in a weaner calf for a client on a small coastal hobby block west of Esperance. It turned out the calf was suffering from vitamin B1 deficiency, a disease commonly seen from gorging on grain or lush green pasture. It can also arise sporadically in cases (such as this) where plants containing thiaminases (vitamin B1 destroying enzymes) are accidentally grazed. The additional benefit of conducting this SDI was that a full trace element analysis was conducted on the liver sample. It found the calf to be very deficient in copper (commonly seen in the Esperance coastal district), cobalt and selenium. Though this calf did not die from said deficiencies, the producer then went on to supplement the other calves with trace element injections that will be followed by rumen boluses. A quick note on copper supplementation: If livestock have severe copper deficiency, it is hard to correct with injections alone. The copper in 2 oral bolus's is equivalent to administering 2 injections of copper per week until the bolus dissolves around 9 months later.

These are few of many examples of how investigating livestock deaths can help make the best of a very bad situation. We encourage farmers to contact their veterinarian regarding any livestock losses (especially if multiple animals are deceased over a short time period) to see if they qualify for the subsidy.



## Got ideas for a producer demonstration site?

Did you know cattle and sheep producers can apply to Meat & Livestock Australia for funding to run a Producer Demonstration Site (PDS)?

MLA has recently opened applications and ASHEEP & BEEF is in the process of considering ideas that have come through from our network to submit applications. If you would like to discuss an idea please get in touch with Sarah Brown in the next couple of weeks - [eo@asheepbeef.org.au](mailto:eo@asheepbeef.org.au) or 0409 335 194. We have until 12 May 2025 to get applications in. If you would like more information about the PDS program, visit [www.mla.com.au/pds](http://www.mla.com.au/pds).

# FEED365: Esperance demonstration sites

## 2024 results

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP & BEEF



### Project Background:

The FEED365 Project is a collaboration between the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Meat & Livestock Australia. Its purpose is to research and redesign livestock forage systems to fill feed gaps, develop new feed base options and integrate them into grazing systems.

The bulk of this research is happening at DPIRD's Katanning Research Station, where more than 20 forage treatments have been established and assessed between 2021 – 2025. The work is being led by pasture research scientist Dr Daniel Real, alongside a team including Dr Angelo Loi, Paul Sanford, Clinton Revell, and Claire Payne. These trials are now in their final year and results are expected in late 2025.

ASHEEP & BEEF's role in the project has been to coordinate demonstration sites in the Esperance region, in 2024 this included:

1. Establishing and measuring grazing of a long-term regenerating pasture mix of triticale / cereal rye / balansa clover at the Esperance Downs Research Station, hosted by Josh and Tegan Sullivan who lease part of the site.
2. Monitoring and attempting to graze a teder site established in 2022 at The Oaks, hosted by Mitchell and Demi Greaves.

A big thanks goes to Josh, Tegan, Mitch and Demi for hosting sites, and to producers Mark Walter and David Vandenberghe who have been involved in the project team.

Read on for the 2024 results from the Sullivans' Esperance Downs Research Station site. Further reporting on the teder will be shared later this year as grazing was not able to be measured in 2024 due to an unplanned grazing of the paddock in summer.

### 2024 Pasture Mix Results: Triticale / cereal rye / balansa clover

**Location:** Esperance Downs Research Station, Gibson

**Host:** Josh & Tegan Sullivan

**Profile:** Soil samples 0-40cm, loamy sand / sand, subject to waterlogging, 5.7-6.2 pH(water)

**Paddock History:** Long-term regenerating pasture with brome grass, silver grass, geranium, rye grass, sub clovers.

### Objective

The original objective for this paddock was to establish a permanent pasture system that will reclaim a run-down paddock. This included establishing a system that would be suitable for potential waterlogging and suppress unwanted grasses such as brome and silvergrass, and provide early / late feed options.

In **2022** this paddock was sown with a pasture mix and then divided in half, with one half grazed and the other kept for hay. A deep rip strip was included for comparison purposes. Barley grass and brome grass remained problematic and required slashing and later spray topping.

In **2023** the site was split into halves (7ha each). Two experimental pasture mixes were sown on 22nd February, ideally to provide autumn feed, spell over winter and then graze again through late spring. Seasonal conditions were very challenging. With a very dry start, the aim to graze during autumn was not met. Later in the season waterlogging occurred and the only species to survive was balansa clover. Plans to conduct grazing measurements were abandoned.

Results from 2022 & 2023 can be found at [www.asheepbeef.org.au/feed365](http://www.asheepbeef.org.au/feed365).

### 2024 Plans

In October 2023, Dr Daniel Real and Dr Angelo Loi visited Esperance and met with Josh Sullivan and other members of the project team to make plans for this paddock for the 2024 season. Angelo was particularly interested in trialing a mix that had shown promise under tough conditions in the Katanning FEED365 trials and the project team agreed to proceed with the following mix:

*Continued over page.*



- Triticale 40kg /ha - A mixture of Speedee (early cv) and Wonambi (late cv)
- Cereal Rye 30kg /ha - Fastfeed or Vampire
- Balansa Clover 10kg p/ha

The mix was intended to create grazing windows early and late in the season, with the Balansa Clover included as a backup due to the potential for this paddock to be waterlogged. Note: Angelo recommended the Balansa clover at a higher sowing rate than usual because it was to be sown dry and he advised that under these conditions losses can be up to 50%. If budget was an issue, he suggested the Balansa ration could be brought back to 7.5kg/ha, but if not an issue (e.g. if someone was growing their own seed and had access at low cost) he'd recommend up to 15kg/ha dry sown.

## 2024 Establishment

Of course, the best laid plans often test us!

Sourcing seed for the desired varieties of triticale and cereal rye was problematic. Speedee could not be sourced. Fastfeed and Vampire could only be obtained from interstate and as a result were very expensive. In discussion with Daniel and Angelo, the **final mix** was set as follows:

- **Triticale 40kg /ha - Wonambi (late cv) - \$2.73 p/kg ex GST**
- **Ryecorn 30kg /ha - \$2.18 p/kg ex GST**
- **Balansa Clover 10kg p/ha - \$6.50 p/kg ex GST**

The trial site was intended to be dry sown prior to the break of the season to give the Sullivans an opportunity to get it in the ground prior to their main seeding program and to give it the best chance for grazing in the autumn feed gap. The idea was that early rains would create an opportunity for weed control, but a very dry start to the 2024 season meant that there were no opportunities to conduct a knock-down spray. (Researcher Paul Sanford noted that dry seeding mixes such as this in a clean paddock is preferable in order to maximise autumn feed, but our aim with this site was to improve a paddock already in permanent pasture).

We re-assessed and with advice from Angelo agreed that ideally the mix would now be sown no later than mid-May. Again, the best laid plans... !

In early May, Josh reported light rains (around 7mm), but with minimal weed germination it was determined best to wait. In late May, the project team got the WhatsApp message we were after from Josh: "G'day gang, finally got some rain to get a germination, is the plan still to put this trial in even though we are not fitting the autumn feed gap now?" The circumstances had shifted from our ideal plans, but it was decided to move forward.

Josh got the knock-down spray out and **seeded the mix on 12 June 2024** using a John Deere air hoe drill with 10 inch spacing and 50mm splitter boots.

Below: Seeding 12/06/2024.



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21mm of rain fell on the day of seeding which was topped up to make a total of 53mm for June, followed by 76 mm in July.

Right: 3/7/2024.

Below: Winter Field Walk 31/07/24 with Paul Sanford (DPIRD), Josh Sullivan (site host), Nick Ruddenklau (Field day Chair).



### 2024 Results

With establishment completed and the autumn feed gap behind us, our revised plan was to commence a measured grazing in early August 2024, comparing the demonstration paddock to a nearby "control paddock" of regenerating pasture that is typical for the farm. Grazing cages were placed in each paddock.

Our thanks to Jake Hann, Nutrien Ag Solutions, for capturing the sheep condition scores and weights and to Farm & General for taking pasture measurements.

### Demonstration Paddock Measurements

On 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2024, pasture cuts were taken of the demonstration mix showing low levels of N, and adequate levels of P, K and S.

Prior to grazing, a visual estimate of the Food On Offer (FOO) was taken to calculate the stocking rate to achieve a minimum of 3 weeks grazing. See images below taken 5th August 2024 of the demonstration paddock with FOO estimated at **1700kg Dry Matter/ha** by Daniel.

Below: Demonstration paddock pre-grazing 5/8/2024.

Pasture cuts of the demonstration paddock were taken for **nutritional analysis on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2024** at Independent Labs (Dr. John Milton). Results showed that the Phosphorus and Potassium levels were very high as might be expected for a crop at this stage of maturity, especially if it was well fertilized with these two important elements. The Calcium and Magnesium levels were not that high, as is often the case for a Cereal dominant forage. The level of



Calcium would be considered too low for good growth of lambs, especially with the Ca:P ratio at 0.94:1 being well away from the desirable ratio of 2:1 for bone growth. The Magnesium at this level may be considered Ok for growing lambs, but the very high level of Potassium and the very low level of Sodium may impact to impair the absorption of Magnesium, especially with the high level of CP. The level of Sulphur would normally be considered Ok for growing lambs, but in conjunction with the high CP of this forage the Nitrogen:Sulphur ratio was quite wide for lambs, especially wool breeds. This wide N:S ratio and the ME at this level may act together to lower the utilization of the CP consumed. The Chloride in this forage was reasonably high and fortunately its potential to negatively impact on the bone mineralization of growing lambs was probably masked to a large extent by the high level of Potassium. The levels of Copper, Zinc and Manganese should be adequate to support good rates of growth of healthy lambs, but the Copper and Zinc levels may be marginal if the absorption of these elements was impaired to some extent should the lambs continue to scour while grazing this lush forage. The level of Iron was well above that needed for high rates of lamb growth. Molybdenum was quite low and at this level in concert with the reported levels of Sulphur, Iron and Zinc is unlikely to disrupt Copper metabolism in growing lambs.



After grazing concluded (5<sup>th</sup> September 2024), pasture cuts were taken on 12<sup>th</sup> September for biomass, showing inside the grazing cage 1239.56g wet, 511.42g dry, 41.2% DM and outside the cage 356.13g wet, 76.3g dry, 21.4% DM.



Above: Post-grazing 5/9/2024 demonstration paddock pasture and ewe hoggets, with Jake Hann taking weights and condition scores.

Stock measurements are shown in the table to the right.

Once the measured grazing of the demonstration paddock was complete, the paddock was put aside and cut for hay on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024. Josh noted that the uneven grazing pattern of the sheep had become very evident, as shown in the images below.

Stock Movement – Ewe hoggets		Stocking Rate (sheep/ha)	Condition Score Average	Weight Average (kg)	Average Daily gain (kg/hd/day)
08/08/24 210 added to the paddock. Weights and condition scores of 43 of these animals taken to represent the mob average.		15DSE	2.43 Range 2-4	44.2kg Range 34.5kg – 58.0 kg	
05/09/24 210 sheep removed after 28 days grazing. Weights and condition scores of 46 of these animals taken to represent the mob average.			3.15 Range 2-4	52.8kg Range 44.5-64kg	0.307kg/hd/day
Comments	Average condition score increased by 0.72 Average weight increased by 8.6kg Stock losses: 0				



Above: 23/09/24 during hay cutting: Two thirds of the paddock had been grazed more heavily as shown left, compared to the remaining third which was as per the image on the right.

On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024 the paddock was baled, yielding 4T/ha. Samples of the hay were taken on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024, with the results showing a good quality hay with ME = 8.6 MJ/kg) and WSC of 10.1%.

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Above: 8/10/24 hay baling.



Continued.

**Control Paddock Measurements**

This paddock was located nearby the demonstration paddock, and consisted of an established regenerating mix primarily including Geraldton subclover, wimmera ryegrass, and weeds including cape weed, erodium and brome grass.

Visual estimate of FOO was taken to calculate the stocking rate to achieve a minimum of 3 weeks grazing. See images to the right taken 5<sup>th</sup> August 2024, with FOO estimated at **1250 kg Dry Matter/ha** by Daniel.



Above: Control paddock 5/8/2024 pre-grazing.  
Below: Control paddock pasture and ewe hoggets 5/9/2024 post-grazing.

At the conclusion of grazing pasture cuts were taken for biomass, showing inside the grazing cage 815.29g wet, 168.17g dry, 20.6% DM. There was insufficient pasture outside the grazing cage to take a cut.

Nutritional analysis of this paddock could not be taken.

Stock measurements are shown in the table to the below.



Stock Movement – Ewe hoggets	Stocking Rate (sheep/ha)	Condition Score Average	Weight Average (kg)	Average Daily gain (kg/hd/day)
08/08/24 110 added to the paddock. Weights and condition scores of 31 of these animals taken to represent the mob average.	6.1DSE	2.40 Range 2-3	41.0kg Range 31.0kg – 53.5kg	
05/09/24 110 sheep removed after 28 days grazing. Weights and condition scores of 42 of these animals taken to represent the mob average.		2.74 Range 2-4	46.96kg Range 37.5-55	0.213kg/hd/day
Comments	Average condition score increased by 0.34 Average weight increased by 5.96kg Stock losses: 0			

**Results Analysis**

Stock rate in the demonstration paddock was 15 DSE/ha vs 6.1 DSE/ha in the control. Sheep in the demonstration paddock gained an average of 2.64kg more (or 0.094kg more weight per day) than those in the control paddock. Demonstration paddock stock gained a 0.38 additional condition score compared to those in the control paddock.

Despite missing the early grazing due to seasonal conditions, DPIRD has been pleased with the results from the demonstration paddock. The paddock was able to carry a significantly higher stocking rate than the control and the animals demonstrated good performance. Daniel noted that DPIRD has been getting similar results in their FEED365 trials at the Katanning Research Station where they have been measuring comparable mixes to a control of sub clover and ryegrass.

The seed itself was expensive to purchase, however there is the potential for producers to grow their own seed to reduce the associated cost. DPIRD will be conducting economic analysis of their Katanning research trials and we will look forward to sharing this when available.

Continued over page.



From Josh’s point of view, the cost per hectare for the seed was a point that would frighten people away from the mix. “I think I could have got the same return from a barley / vetch / serradella mix, much of which I have on hand, as what I can out of the trial mix,” said Josh. “In comparison to putting 60kg p/ha of Neo barley in, or whatever you have in the shed, that could do the same if not better. The seed mixes have to be user friendly.”

“Maybe if there had been a good early start and a true autumn seeding to get an early grazing, that could be the fit that would make it worth spending the money on it. That could have been a different story. It would have been good to see that in the trial, but that’s not the season we got. Maybe in that situation you could see that a barley would not do as well. The seasonal conditions have made it hard to demonstrate.”

The total seed cost was \$239.60 p/ha ex GST. The balansa clover (\$65 p/ha of that total) was included as a backup because the paddock had been waterlogged in the past and the project team did not want the Sullivans to be left with a bare paddock during the trial.

“For the trial, we went ahead with late seeding because there were still things to be learnt, but in a commercial situation it would be better to put it in the ground if there were early rains, but if not, leave it in the silo and put in something else.”

“The pasture it produced was quite strawy – the sheep ate the leaf matter at the bottom, but they did not eat the stem of the plants. If that was barley they would eat the lot. Without strong grazing pressure it tended to grow away from them.”

“The hay results were quite good. It’s nearly all gone now and the sheep have eaten it to the ground and not wasted any. Perhaps it could work as a true hay crop.”

“We’re letting that paddock regenerate this year, there was some reshooting after we cut the hay but it was a dry spring. We’ll see what comes from that.”

“It was a worthwhile exercise, there is always something to learn.”

## eID tag implementation dates for WA

The rollout of compulsory eID tags in sheep and goats is underway. Here are the key dates:

Milestone dates			
eID Tagging		eID Scanning	
Prior to 1 Jan 2025	From 1 Jan 2025 onward	From 1 July 2025 onward	From 1 July 2026 onward
Sheep and goats born prior to 1 January 2025 do not require eID tags unless leaving a property from 1 July 2026 onward.	Sheep and goats, born from 1 January 2025 onward, to be eID tagged before leaving their property (or within 6 months of birth).	Saleyards and Abattoirs required to scan any sheep and goats with eID tags.	All other properties or facilities required to eID scan all sheep and goats upon arrival.

Sheep and goats, born before 1 January 2025 will only require an eID if departing a property or facility, from 1 July 2026 onwards. Sheep and goats born prior to 1 January 2025 and departing a property prior to 1 July 2026 only require a visual tag.

Sheep and goats born from 1 January 2025 onward will require an eID when leaving the property, or when they reach 6 months of age, whichever comes first.

Saleyards and abattoirs will be required to start scanning any eID tagged sheep and goats from 1 July 2025. Saleyard and abattoirs will be able to continue processing visual tags, for stock born prior to 1 January 2025, until 1 July 2026.

All remaining properties or facilities receiving sheep or goats will be required to scan all eIDs from 1 July 2026. Visual tagging will no longer apply from this date.



## Confinement feeding sheep this autumn

*Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development*

As stubbles run out, many producers are looking to contain stock for feeding (if they haven't already). Confinement is a useful way to manage nutritional requirements by reducing overall energy demand as stock are not walking the paddock seeking feed, and has added benefits including reducing erosion and labour to feed sheep in paddocks. Depending on the timing of the season break and lambing, some producers can use confinement as a useful way to defer pastures, allowing them to get away after the break.

Here are some key considerations for sheep producers planning to confinement feed.



### 1. Site selection and setup

If you don't already have a confinement area set up, you'll need to consider a few things before deciding on location and configuration. The ideal location is easily accessible to water, silos and yards, on slightly sloping ground to aid water run off without it contaminating water ways. Pens will need to be large enough to accommodate 200-500 sheep allowing 5-10m<sup>2</sup> per head.

Many different feed troughs are used by farmers, from lick feeders through to rubber belts. For a double sided trough, allow 15cm per lamb and 20cm per adult. For a single sided trough, allow 30cm per lamb or 40cm per adult. The key thing is to make sure feed is off the ground so it can't be contaminated by urine or faeces. Also consider using hay racks to reduce wastage.

Water access is a key issue. Make sure that the troughs are able to refill fast enough to serve the sheep. Be vigilant for blockages. It's not ideal to have dams within confinement areas as they can become boggy.

Shade and shelter is necessary but fence off the base of trees to ensure they can't be ring-barked by sheep.

### 2. Feed

A full supplementary ration will be provided to the sheep. This will vary depending on the class of stock in confinement and their pregnancy status. Ewes in late pregnancy will require higher energy levels than dry ewes, and lambs will need high levels of energy and protein. Manage sheep in similar mobs, for example, pregnant ewes, lambs, and dry sheep separately to ensure they receive the correct ration. Consider feed testing to ensure correct ration formulation, and be aware that high grain diets may require supplementation with calcium and vitamin E.

It's important to always make sure animals have time to adapt to any new changes in diet. During the introduction phase, ensure sheep are fed daily and slowly increase the grain portion of the ration until the full amount is reached. Oats and lupins have a lower risk of acidosis, so are a useful to feed as the ration or to help slowly transition to barley or wheat. Sheep will require access to roughage throughout this period.

Roughage is vital to a sheep's diet, with a minimum 10-15% effective fibre required to ensure that the rumen operates effectively, and reduces the risk of acidosis. Inspect manure regularly, there should be clean pellets. If there is runny, mucous covered manure, then acidosis may be an issue and roughage intake too low. As a general rule, if 40% of animals are chewing cud at one time, fibre content is adequate. Consider what you have on hand and feed costs when deciding on supplementary feeding – [DPIRD's feed cost calculator](#) can assist. Visit [www.agric.wa.gov.au/feeding-nutrition/feed-cost-calculator](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/feeding-nutrition/feed-cost-calculator).

*Continued over page.*



### 3. Water

Water is paramount while confinement feeding. A guaranteed supply of good quality water is required that can provide up to 10 litres of water per head per day in hot weather. When sheep are drinking large amounts, it's critical that troughs can refill fast enough to meet the demand. The trough space isn't as crucial as the flow rate, as sheep will take turns to drink water, however we recommend a minimum trough length of 30cm plus 1.5cm per sheep for mobs of up to 500. Monitor water and ensure any stoppages are less than 20 hours.

Hot water will reduce sheep's water intake. Reduced water intake also means reduced feed intake so shade the water troughs wherever possible. Troughs need to be maintained and clean to prevent contamination as this will also reduce intake. Ideally water should be located away from feed to reduce contamination.

### 4. Monitoring

It's important to monitor stock while in confinement. Increased stocking densities can result in shy feeders, behavioural problems and spread of infectious diseases. Inspect and treat for any parasites (worms, lice) and make sure they're up to date with vaccinations for clostridial disease such as pulpy kidney. Keep an eye out for infectious diseases such as salmonellosis. Remove any sick animals and treat separately until they are well enough to return to the mob.

Monitor condition score and/or weights of stock throughout confinement. This will ensure that classes of stock are on track to meet their condition score or weight targets before turn-off or release from confinement.

### 5. Release from confinement

Reintroducing sheep to the paddock, especially if they are going onto green pasture, must be managed carefully. Sudden changes in diet can cause issues such as pulpy kidney, pregnancy toxemia and hypocalcaemia. If sheep have been in confinement more than 3 months, a pulpy kidney booster should be given.

It is not recommended to lamb in confinement areas as mismothering is more prevalent. Ideally, pregnant ewes should be released from confinement 2-3 weeks before lambing.

It's important to make sure sheep are released with a full stomach. In the days leading up to release, provide unlimited hay to ensure gut fill, this will stop excess feeding on green pasture before the rumen can adapt. Continue to offer hay and supplement after release to aid in this transition.

More information on [confinement feeding](#) is also available on our website. Visit [www.agric.wa.gov.au/autumn/confined-paddock-feeding-and-feedlotting](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/autumn/confined-paddock-feeding-and-feedlotting) via the QR code:



Article contact: Katherine Davies, DPIRD, (08) 9690 2169.

## Biosecurity: Starling update

*Sarah Brown, ASHEEP & BEEF*

Last newsletter we reported that the team at Chilwell Farms, east of Esperance, had sighted starlings and that DPIRD had been out to eradicate them. Live starlings are still being found and destroyed in the area, so keep an out.

Suspect bird sightings, particularly in the Hopetoun and Esperance areas, should be reported to DPIRD's Pest and Disease Information Service (08) 9368 3080 or [padis@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:padis@dpird.wa.gov.au), or through the department's MyPestGuide® Reporter app.



Above: Courtesy of Simon Fowler showing a bird found at Chilwell Farms. Left: Supplied by DPIRD as a general example of a starling.



## Local insights from local bankers.

Our agribusiness team has strong connections to the farming community in Esperance. Many of us grew up on farms and some of us still farm today. We have a deep understanding of the Sheep and Beef industry because we're a part of it.

Speak to one of our agribusiness bankers.



Kristy-Lee Perry  
Agribusiness Executive  
0417 963 562  
kristy-lee.perry@cba.com.au



Chad Holten  
Agribusiness Executive  
0472 879 085  
chadwick.holten@cba.com.au

[commbank.com.au/agribusiness](http://commbank.com.au/agribusiness)

Things you should know: If you have a complaint in respect of this information, the Commonwealth Bank's dispute resolution service can be accessed on 13 22 21 or [commbank.com.au/support/compliments-and-complaints](http://commbank.com.au/support/compliments-and-complaints). Commonwealth Bank of Australia ABN 48 123 123 124 AFSL Australian credit licence 234 945





# You are probably BVDV free! Let's keep you that way!



*Dr Enoch Bergman, Swans Veterinary Services*

We are entering into the third year of ASHEEP & BEEF's Meat & Livestock Australia Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) project focusing on demonstrating the value of implementing "Annual Heifer Pre-Mating Screening for Exposure to BVDV (Bovine Pestivirus)". Within the project, Swans Veterinary Services will collect blood samples from 5% or a minimum of 6 of your replacement heifers, preferably a couple of months prior to joining. **Get involved!** Read on to understand both the why and the how.

BVDV is the most economically significant infectious disease of cattle within the Esperance district in my opinion. **If you don't know your BVDV status, now is the time to find out.** With assistance from MLA in funding this Producer Demonstration Site project, from IDEXX to subsidise the cost of testing, and with some free vaccine for participants from Zoetis, now is the perfect time to investigate BVDV within your herd.

The results from the PDS have been surprising so far! It appears that there is far less BVDV in the district than there had been historically. The results have shown that BVDV is controllable, that we can eradicate it at the individual herd level, and, if we work together, that we could eradicate or at least minimise it within the district, allowing us all to enjoy the benefits of BVDV freedom.



*Image: Taking a blood sample for BVDV testing.*

Almost 20 years ago, Swans Veterinary Services ran a project across Esperance in conjunction with the Department of Ag and Pfizer Animal Health (now DPIRD and Zoetis). On close to 150 properties across Esperance we collected samples from a small number of heifers or young cows and had the samples tested for exposure to BVDV, Lepto, Neospora, and Vibrio. From that survey work, 75% of the properties had evidence of exposure to BVDV at that time! Since then we have been working with individual producers to help them control BVDV, now thanks to this project, we can start helping you!

Over the last two years, as part of the PDS, **we have been conducting free blood testing of replacement heifers for properties across Esperance and we are continuing to offer that free testing this year** in what may be the final year of the project. Contact Sarah Brown or Swans Veterinary Services to take part.

By simply blood testing a small proportion of your replacement heifers, we can accurately identify groups of heifers that have been exposed to a PI (or wherein a PI still remains) vs. groups without any immunity to BVDV (conclusive proof that none of the replacement heifers are a PI). If a group of heifers has a PI within its numbers, it can be a serious risk to other management groups on your property and conversely if they have no immunity, should other management groups on your property still harbour a PI, they could be at risk. By screening your replacement heifers prior to joining, as is the thrust of this project, you can invest in the best strategy to progress towards BVDV freedom. By screening them annually, you will be in control of your properties BVD status and will be able to maintain BVDV freedom. Get involved!

*Image: Dr Enoch Bergman taking blood tests with the BVDV project's lead producer Todd Quinlivan (Quintara).*



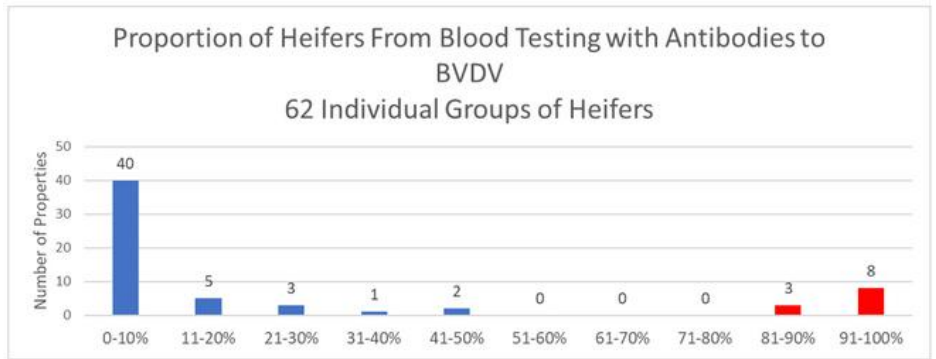
**Get involved & access FREE testing for your replacement heifers pre-joining!**



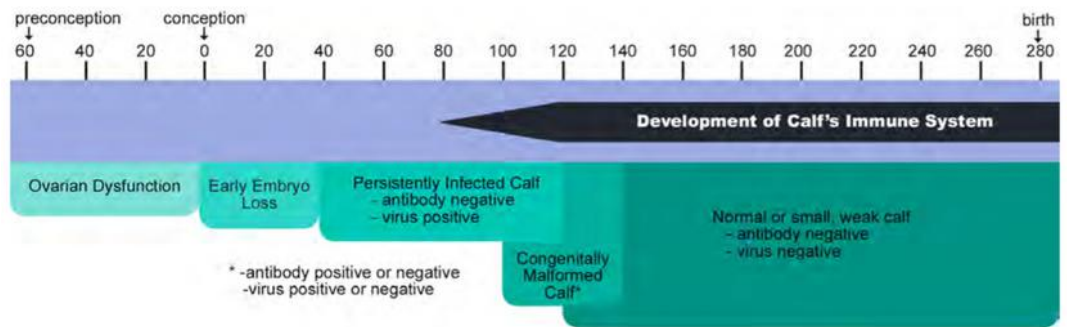
**Contacts:**

- Swans Veterinary Services (08) 9071 5777
- Sarah Brown, ASHEEP & BEEF, 0409 335 194

Remarkably, of the properties surveyed in the first two years, the heifers tested on 63% of the properties yielded no antibodies to BVDV at all! This means that the heifers on well over half of the properties in Esperance had never met an animal persistently infected (PI) with BVDV and in most cases, those properties are likely to be BVDV free. Further, of the 62 properties screened, only 11 had evidence that one or more of the heifers could be a PI animal! The graph below shows the distribution of the percentage of heifers found to be immune to BVDV at screening within individual groups of heifers.



## So what are the benefits of eradicating BVDV?

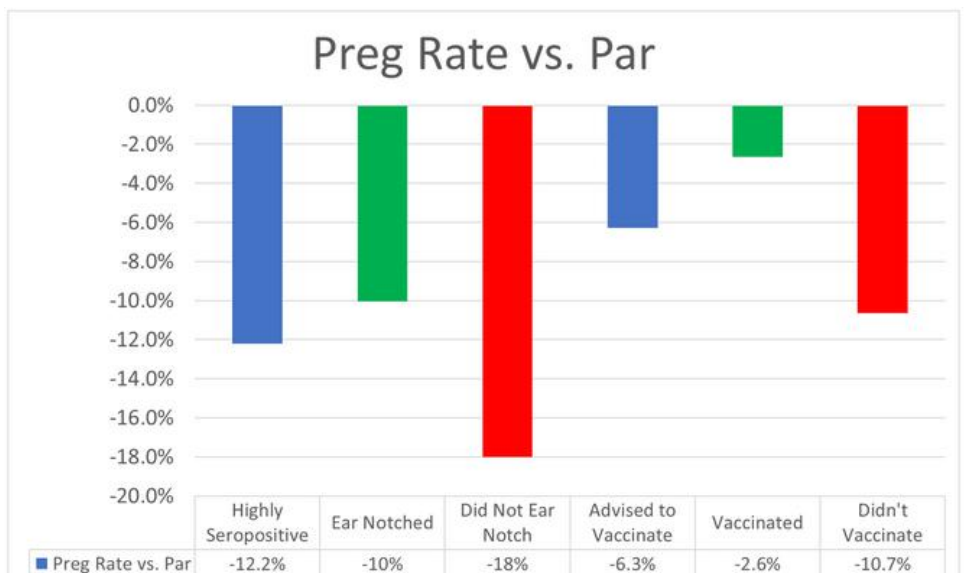


Exposure to an animal persistently infected with BVDV leads to transient infection with BVDV. Animals transiently infected with BVDV will suffer mild to severe immune suppression and potentially, reproductive losses, before recovering and developing immunity. The timing of exposure changes the outcome, from infertility, embryonic loss, abortion, congenital defects, or the production of another PI calf.

Analysing the raw data from the PDS's survey work, pregnancy rates were lower than expected on properties which had heifers with evidence of past exposure to BVDV (Immunity, Seropositivity, Positive Blood Tests), and within the exposed properties, those which did not remove PI's (ear notch) their heifers had the lowest pregnancy rates of all. Within the management groups without immunity to BVDV, properties which chose to vaccinate their heifers with Pestigard had better pregnancy rates than those which did not vaccinate.

Mother natures has made the last two years difficult for joining heifers, so pregnancy rates were lower across all groups. The differences in pregnancy rates between groups were expressed as variance from "par" working on a 60% pregnancy rate per joining opportunity. As an example, heifers joined for six weeks are expected to achieve 60% plus 60% of the remaining 40% (24%) for a total expected (par) pregnancy rate of 84%. In this way, properties with 9 week vs. 3 week joinings could be compared. The raw numbers and a graph are expressed below, combining data from both year 1 and 2.

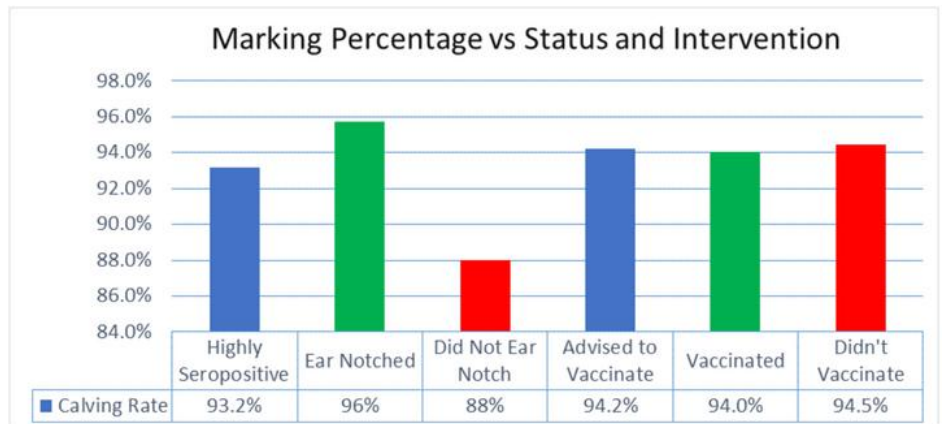
Management Advice	Preg Rate vs. Par
Highly Seropositive	-12.2%
Ear Notched	-10%
Did Not Ear Notch	-18%
Advised to Vaccinate	-6.3%
Vaccinated	-2.6%
Didn't Vaccinate	-10.7%





Marking rates garnered from survey work told a similar story. Marking rates from properties with evidence of exposure were 93.2% vs. 94.2% amongst those without evidence of exposure. Within the properties with evidence of exposure, those which chose to remove PI animals by ear notch testing all of their heifers enjoyed a 96% marking rate vs. 88% from those which did not hunt their PI heifers. Within the unexposed groups vaccination survey results only showed a small difference.

Management Advice	Marking Rate
<b>Highly Seropositive</b>	<b>93.2%</b>
Ear Notched	96%
Did Not Ear Notch	88%
<b>Advised to Vaccinate</b>	<b>94.2%</b>
Vaccinated	94.0%
Didn't Vaccinate	94.5%



## How is BVDV propagated within and between individual production systems and how can we go about controlling it cost effectively?

BVDV is propagated almost exclusively by Persistently Infected (PI) animals. PIs were infected with the BVDV virus whilst still in utero, and their developing immune system mistakenly believes the virus to be "self". Because PIs are "immuno-tolerant" to BVDV, they never clear the infection and shed enormous amounts of the virus into the environment for their entire, typically shortened, lives.

If a PI survives to breeding age, if she produces a calf, it will invariably be born a PI. However, most PIs are actually born when a PI meets a pregnant animal. If the pregnant animal which met the PI is at the right stage of gestation, if the foetus is not aborted, and if the dam herself lacks prior immunity, the calf will go on to be born Persistently Infected itself. The cycle can then be repeated.

Controlling BVDV centres around identifying and removing PI animals, providing immunity to animals without prior exposure to the virus, and simple biosecurity steps.

Paramount to controlling BVDV is screening replacement heifers prior to their first joining to define their specific "BVDV Risk". Heifers can then be optimally managed to ensure they are mated both immune and PI free.

The Australian Cattle Veterinarians, a special interest group of the Australian Veterinary Association developed a set of guidelines for the management of BVDV within Beef Herds. The charts in this document, and the strategies employed within the PDS are based upon that document.

By blood testing 5% or a minimum of six animals from each management group of replacement heifers (having been in constant contact for at least two months and being at least 8 months of age), producers can accurately predict which management groups contain PI animals (representing a threat to other management groups) and which management groups have poor pre-existing immunity (other management groups represent a threat to them).

If over 80% of the animals screened have evidence of exposure to the virus, the entire management group is more likely to contain one or more PI animals. Vaccination would be of little benefit, however, by ear notching each [...]

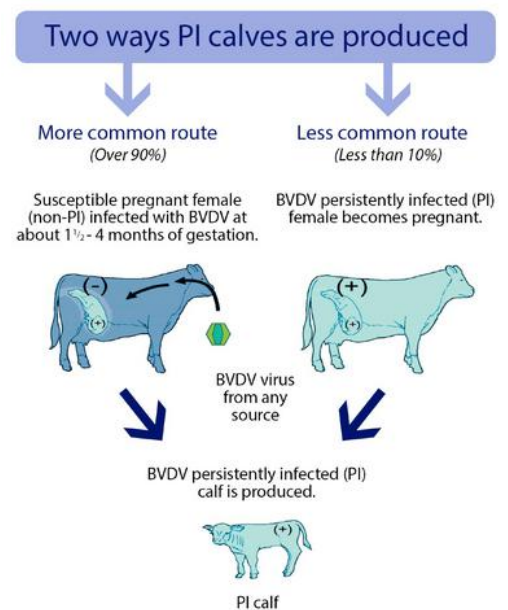


Figure 1.

[...] individual heifer (collecting a small bit of ear tissue like an ear mark), all PI heifers could be identified and culled prior to mating.

If less than 50% of the animals screened have evidence of exposure to the virus, the entire management group is unlikely to contain a PI, and vaccination would instead be a better investment.

If the seroprevalence falls between 50 and 80%, further veterinary investigation is warranted.

Producers who consistently annually screen their heifer prior to mating for exposure to BVDV can then invest in the most effective BVDV intervention strategy. By ear notching the immune groups and vaccinating the groups without immunity, each producer can ensure that each new group of heifers they produce will go into their first mating both immune and PI free.

By implementing screening annually, producers can ensure their entire breeding population becomes immune and PI free. In this way, herd level eradication of BVDV is both feasible and achievable.

Following the guidelines developed by the Australia Cattle Veterinarians, 18% of the properties had evidence of prolonged exposure to a PI, resulting in a recommendation to ear notch each replacement heifer to diagnose any PI heifers. The other 82% of the properties were advised to consider vaccination.

**ANNUAL HEIFER PRE MATING SCREENING**

Heifers must be at least 8 months old and have been in stable contact for at least 2 months.

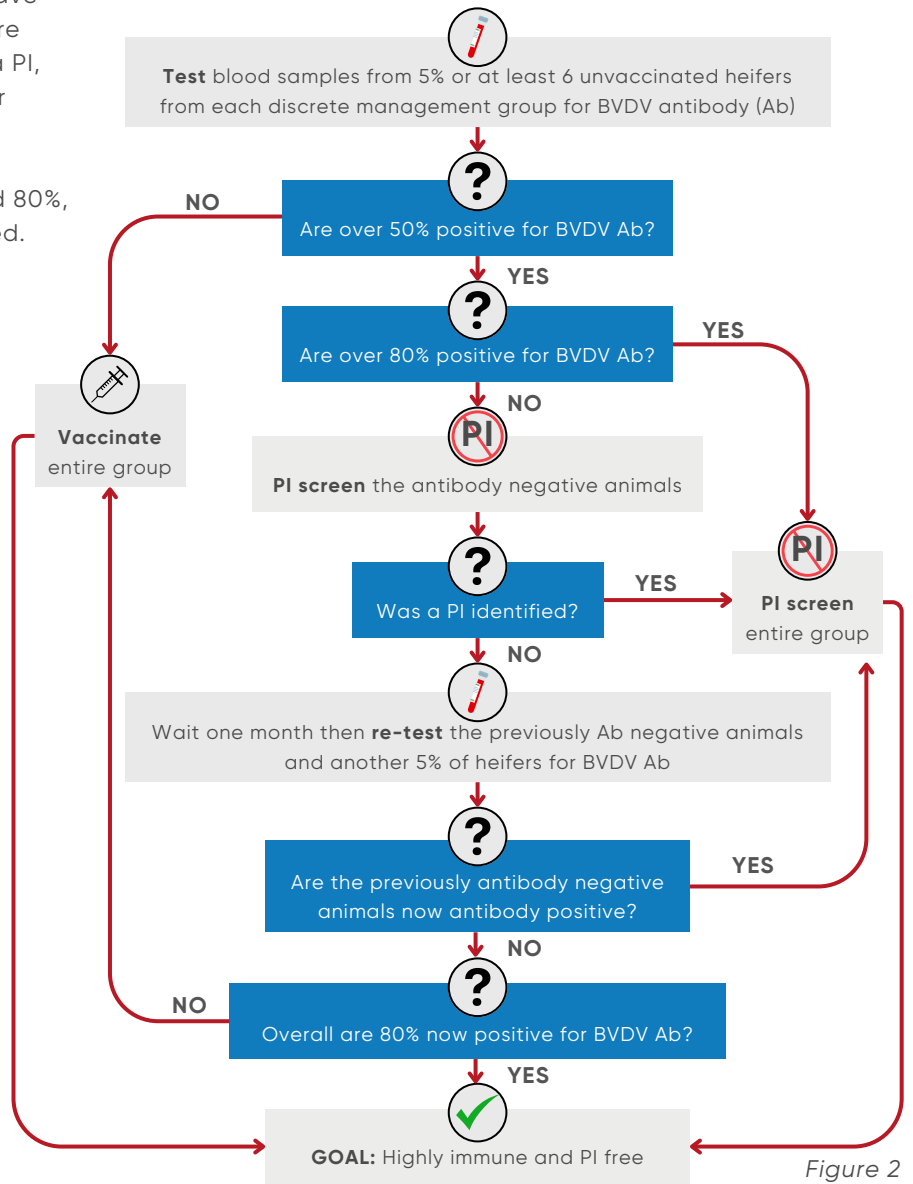


Figure 2

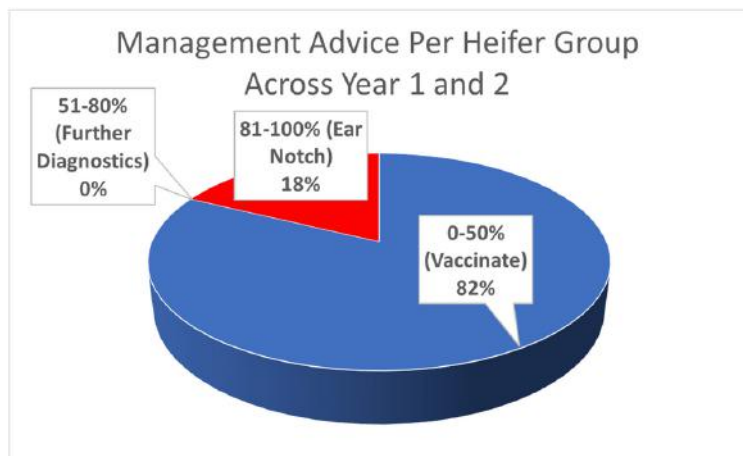


Figure 1: Compliments of the Academy of Veterinary Consultants Mallory Hoover, Veterinary Medical Illustrator and Bob L. Larson, DVM, PhD. Coleman Chair, Livestock Production Medicine Kansas State University.

Figure 2: Compliments of Australian Veterinary Association BVDV Management Guide: Beef Edition Version 1.0, published 20.07.2015 and Enoch L. Bergman DVM, Swans Veterinary Services.

Globally BVDV is considered one of the most economically important diseases of beef and dairy cattle. Simultaneously, the tests developed to control it are remarkably accurate and easy to sample for. Numerous countries overseas have eradicated BVDV successfully, and many more are under way. Controlling it at your own herd level relies upon understanding the "risk" within your breeding population. As PI's tend to die out over time, replacement heifers represent the perfect management group to target for control of BVDV. If we are able to ensure that no PI is allowed to be retained as a replacement heifer, and further if we shore up immunity to BVDV where beneficial, we can begin to control BVDV, instead of leaving its control to chance. Get involved in the PDS to better understand Bovine Viral Diarrhea and your herd's BVDV options.

Continued over page.



## Useful BVDV resources

### Cattle production webinar covering progress on BVDV, bull breakdown and weaning PDS projects

Get the latest progress on our 3 cattle focused Meat & Livestock Australia Producer Demonstration Sites on weaning, BVDV & bull breakdown. Talking us through the projects is vet Dr Enoch Bergman with producers Simon Fowler, Ryan Willing, Nick Ruddenklau. Webinar recording: [https://youtu.be/5Oh\\_KkYFla0?si=WyLN-tsbonZc6aiA](https://youtu.be/5Oh_KkYFla0?si=WyLN-tsbonZc6aiA)



### BVDV blood testing video

Dr Enoch Bergman takes us through the process of taking blood tests for BVDV. To find video search for "Pre-Breeding BVD Screening YouTube", or follow the QR code to this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPFMeFyRp4M&pp=ygUOcHJILW1hdGluZyBidmQ%3D>



### BVDV discussion video

Dr Enoch Bergman chats BVDV with vet students. To find video search for "Poo Cast One YouTube", or follow the QR code to this link: <https://youtu.be/NPLzFrHPvMI?si=4QZQtdd1BzuvhIDo>



## Now is the time for BVDV testing!

The best time for BVDV testing replacement heifers is pre-joining.

Free testing is available through the project.

To book in contact Swans Veterinary Services (08) 9071 5777.

For more information on ASHEEP & BEEF's BVDV PDS contact:

- **Project Facilitator:** Dr Enoch Bergman, 0427 716 907
- **Project Lead Producer:** Todd Quinlivan, 0428 720 097
- **ASHEEP & BEEF Project Coordinator:** Sarah Brown, 0409 335 194

# Safety Spot: Farmsafe Report 2024

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP & BEEF

Farmsafe Australia recently released a report highlighting a sharp increase in farm fatalities across Australia last year. The report identified side by sides with 14 deaths, quad bike with 10 deaths and tractors with 8 deaths as the leading cause of fatalities. These statistics underscore the urgent need for improved safety measures. What are some of the safety measures?

## Side by Side Safety on Farms:

- 1. Wear protective gear.** Always wear a helmet and seatbelt when driving or riding in a side-by-side. Helmets can help protect against head injuries, and seatbelts reduce the risk of being ejected during an accident.
- 2. Understand the specific limitations of your vehicle.** This including weight capacity, terrain capabilities, and speed limits. Don't overload the vehicle.
- 3. Drive Responsibly.** Avoid high speeds, especially on uneven terrain or in areas where visibility is poor. Be cautious around sharp turns and slopes, which can cause rollovers.



## ⚠ WARNING



## Quad Bike Safety on Farms:

- 1. Fit an Operator Protection Device (OPD).** All general use quad bikes must be fitted with an OPD or have one integrated into its design. OPDs help prevent fatalities by holding the vehicle off the ground creating a 'crawl out space'. These can be retrofitted to older bikes.
- 2. Wear protective gear.** Always wear a certified, well-fitting helmet to protect against head injuries. Wear gloves for better grip and durable boots to protect your feet and ankles and long sleeves and pants to help protect against abrasions in a fall.
- 3. Ensure the quad bike is the appropriate size for the rider.** A bike that's too big can be hard to control, while a bike that's too small won't offer adequate protection.
- 4. Avoid speeding.** Maintain a safe, controlled speed, especially on rough terrain. Speeding increases the chance of losing control, especially when turning or navigating obstacles. Stay in control. Keep both hands on the handlebars and both feet on the footrests to maintain full control of the vehicle.

## Tractor Safety on Farms:

- 1. Ensure that the tractor is equipped with a Roll-Over Protection System.**
- 2. Wear your seatbelt.** This helps keep you securely in place during a rollover.
- 3. Never jump off the tractor while it's in motion.** Always come to a complete stop before getting off the tractor.
- 4. Set up clear boundaries around the tractor.** Establish areas where no one should enter when the tractor is in motion. This helps minimise the risk of someone being accidentally run over or struck by the tractor.

We may already be aware of most of these safety measures, but this is a reminder that by implementing strategies, we can create a safer environment for everyone while collectively addressing the challenges faced in farm safety.

## USEFUL RESOURCES:



The Farmsafe Australia website has a great range of freely available resources, from toolbox talks to child safety and everything in between. Visit their website at: [www.farmsafe.org.au](http://www.farmsafe.org.au)



## CATTLE SUB-COMMITTEE

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 Enoch Bergman - 0427 716 907  
 Simon Fowler - 0428 750 012  
 Wes Graham - 0427 992 793  
 Jake Hann - 0429 871 707  
 Ian McCallum - 0427 715 205  
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## e-News Spotlight



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 National peak body of sheep meat producers.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- AgriBalance Workshop for agriprofessionals**, 10 & 15 Apr (Perth), 7 May (Dalwallinu), 17 Jun (Dumbleyung)
- ASHEEP & BEEF AGM / Conference**, 19 Jun (Esperance)
- Esperance Zone Innovation Pre-Accelerator**, 4 Jul (Esperance) - 1 day program for development of AgTech ideas in the region.
- Australian Grassland Association Symposium**, 8-10 Jul (Adelaide)
- Dowerin Machinery Field Days**, 27-28 Aug (Dowerin)
- AgriBalance Workshop for agriprofessionals**, 31 Oct (Narrogin)
- LIVEXchange Conference** - 26-27 Nov (Perth)
- LambEx Conference** - 8-10 Jul 2026 (Adelaide)

• May •

**Next ASHEEP & BEEF  
 Committee Meeting is  
 scheduled for  
 MAY 2025**

Contact a committee or staff member to raise an item.

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