

ASHEEP NEWS



Case Study: Lambing onto stubbles

ASHEEP interviews David Styles

The Styles family have bucked the trend of lambing in winter and have been dropping lambs in February onto cereal stubbles. The main benefit to this system is that the lambs are well and truly weaned and gaining weight in early spring when the prices are good.

David and Suzie Styles lease 800ha out of Condingup where they run a mixed farming system - crop, sheep and cattle. Our thanks to David for taking some time to run us through their approach to lambing.

David aims to have all current season lambs sold before the end of the calendar year before hot summer weather in January. With less animals being held over summer there is less pressure on water sources and ewes can be spread out over stubbles at a lower stocking rate for at least 6 weeks prior to lambing. This means that the ewes are settled into their lambing paddocks and on a rising plane of nutrition as there is grain in the header trails (not too much!) as well as some green pick if there has been summer rain.

Lambs are not exposed to the cold winds which can have an impact on lamb survival when cold fronts pass through during June and July. Surveys have shown that historically this is the main cause of lamb mortality in the Esperance district during winter lambing. Having said that, summer/autumn lambing does increase the risk of heat stroke but standing stubbles do provide some shelter from hot winds and the Styleses have not experienced any heat-related disasters so far.

Continued over page. Image: The Styles' ewes lambing onto stubble paddocks.

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Lambs are weaned in the first week of July at 4 months of age. This allows them to be weaned onto either green pasture, or sometimes a grazing cereal crop. This is timed to coincide with shearing for the ewes, who are shorn annually. Lambs are shorn in late September / early October.

Joining

The Styles' sheep flock consists of 400 Merino ewes that are split up for joining (around the end of September). A selection go to Merino sires and the remainder to Suffolk rams. David explained that they have gone with black-faced Suffolks, as after joining all the ewes are run together. The distinctive face on the cross-bred lambs makes for an easy ID when they are separated out.

David has made the decision not to use teaser wethers and runs their joining for longer than usual at 9 weeks. Part of the strategy behind this is to spread lambing out so that they don't all drop at the same time. This helps to manage the risk of a heat event during lambing.

Joining occurs during the spring flush and with plenty of green feed around the sheep are set up to be in good condition. Sheep are checked for worms.

Gestation & Pre-Lambing

Post-joining the flocks are intermixed and ewes are scanned in order to remove dries. David estimated empties to be at about 8-10% last season. One of the challenges with joining in September is that it is out of line with the ewes' mating season. In the past they have tried Ovastim to promote ovulation, but found that this produced too many twins and triplets which the ewes could not adequately support. David has an interest in trialling Regulin in future, which helps to stimulate a spring breeding cycle via the hormone Melatonin.

In the lead up to lambing the ewes are fed a Pre-Drop supplement produced by Elanco (previously under the Bayer label). David advised that the supplement was recommended to them by local Veterinarian Dr Enoch Bergman. It is fed out 6-8 weeks prior to lambing and is designed so that once the sheep have had their quota there is no need to keep feeding it out. Last year David said he bought a couple of bags of Calcium Sulphur lick so that they still had something available to them, but that generally they wouldn't eat it.

David also flagged that Copper deficiency could be an issue in their area, but that they sprayed it onto the crops which avoided the problem. They have had cattle blood-tested in the past and the results indicated no Copper deficiency.



No feed supplementation is given pre-lambing but the Styles make sure to leave a cereal stubble paddock with good shelter ungrazed that the sheep are moved into just prior to lambing.

Ewes are crutched 3-6 weeks prior to lambing and injected with Eweguard (pre-lambing vaccination combined with wormer and B12 / Selenium supplement).

Lambing

David reports that with these management strategies in place, lambing tends to be reasonably smooth, with no stand-out animal health issues. He stresses that ensuring that the lambing paddock has good shelter, in their case trees, is important. The lambs will receive some shade from the stubbles but something more is ideal to protect against heat events.

With shade covered off, as far as lamb losses go, David flagged fox predation as an issue. Ewes that lack condition would also benefit from being drafted out and managed separately.

The Styles target a style of Merino with medium micron wool, good frame size, bare face and a bare breach. They have been running this lambing system for about the last 10 years and find that it works for them, enabling them to meet the market when lamb prices are strong.

Farm Snapshot

Location: Condingup, 13km N/E

Enterprise Mix: Cereal & canola cropping, sheep and cattle

Feedbase: Serradella-based pastures, perennial grasses (Couch & Veldt). Red Clover Syndrome has been an issue with sub clovers.

Stock: 400 Merino ewes, mated to Merino and Suffolk (black-faced) sires. 140 Angus-cross cows.

Team: David & Suzie Styles

Market Report: Wool

William Davidson, Westcoast Wools

Report for week ending: 19/2/2021

Contact: Danny Burkett, Westcoast Wools, 0418 848 314, d.burkett@wcw.com.au



Most Chinese thought the market would be cheaper leading into their holiday celebrating the Year of the Ox, however by Saturday they decided to buy some fleece 18.5 to 21 micron as there were strong rumours that the Chinese military will have a large uniform order soon. So by Tuesday the market had worked itself into a mini frenzy and the result was a nice dear 3 days. The WMI was up 58 to 1372 and the EMI was up 43 to 1318. Our dollar was strong most of the week and hovering around the mid .77 usc mark.

In USD terms the prices being paid are not that far from the last high so they have not made new highs yet on this rebound.

There was strong demand for 19.5 and 21 fleece which is good as they had been languishing behind the 17.5 sector. The rumoured army uniform orders will be using these microns and they say that nearly 3000 tons of tops will be needed. That amounts to approximately 40k bales which is a good order and will put a floor under this micron category as mills look to replenish stocks.

Further good news is that Cotton yarn prices are moving up again and more than raw cotton. Strong yarn prices are a very positive indicator for the cotton and more broadly apparel fibre markets. With raw cotton not increasing by as much gives the processors a larger margin when selling higher priced cotton yarn – a nice reprieve from years of struggling. As you know from our previous reports cotton and wool are quite well aligned so any improvement in cotton is a good sign for the merino apparel industry.

This is direct from our office in Biella which has been almost redundant since March last year due to the dreaded COVID. “Seems that Verrone Mill (Schneider) closed the year 2020 down 38% saved partially by their special division which is cashmere, Vicuna, alpaca, mohair. At present they have a lot of tops in warehouse and some greasy. In November and December they worked only 1 week per month. Their big advantage compared to Romagnano (Reda/Barberis mill – New England Wools principals) is a wider number of clients. Romagnano seems that they closed the year 2020 down 50% on volume so they have produced in total 3.5 million ks compared to normal 7 million. They have decided that from now on they will not work anymore on Saturday and Sunday.

Various clients have had reductions in their volumes by 30 to 60% and it is only the use of speciality fibres like cashmere etc. that has kept the mills working. Many have had to reduce staff in order to cut costs to stay afloat. Some weavers have targeted China, Japan and other Asian countries where the COVID effect is not as bad as Europe. These markets are new to many weavers in Italy.

Marzotto, the largest weaver in Europe and which we are normally a large supplier to, states the situation is still very difficult as their main markets Europe, Germany and USA have disappeared and they are not strong in China. Maybe in March/April they will be forced to restart buying at least few greasy bales as otherwise they will have a problem not having anything to comb in their Egyptian combing mill. Possibly main focus will be on fleece 20.2 with some 19.2 and 18.1. Finer microns they will wait a bit more as they still have some stock. At present only orders they receive from clients are for RWS wools.

In general – the Italian situation:

- Man suiting (classical) is dead (considering also that people that work from home do not need to wear a coat and tie).
- Hosiery/knitwear is going slightly better with few demand but difficult to reply favourably as prompt delivery is often needed and in addition is a market highly price sensitive and is practically in hands of a few Chinese suppliers
- A good demand seems to be for hand knitting yarn but here market is very small and very price sensitive (mainly NZ and British coarse wools)
- It seems there is a strong demand in Cashmere.”

Really is quite depressing reading above as the effects of this pandemic has been catastrophic on almost all of Europe. Maybe late this year or 2022 we will see some normality and the Italians will come back to support India and Czech as the next biggest buyers.

As we move into the coming weeks we will have all Chinese back on deck not that it seemed to matter this week anyway. Cannot see any major market reduction as the demand is there presently. However we have 52k bales on offer next week so we will need all the support we can get and maybe the market may rest a little. Long term still promising. Good luck!

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Field Day Follow Ups

After a cracking year of field days in 2020, dodging the COVID-19 pandemic, ASHEEP had a chat with the hosts of some of the sites we visited to find out how the season finished up.

Multi-species pasture & Canola / Tillage Radish with Ryan Willing

First stop at the Cattle Field Day in July 2020 took us to Ryan and Elisha Willing's out of Condingup. Thanks to Ryan for giving us some insight into how his pastures turned out.

My multi species pasture worked out really well for me throughout last year. It consisted of the following:

- 15kg Planet barley
- 10kg Pascal wheat
- 5kg Tungoo oats
- 15kg Abundant rye grass
- 8kg RM4 vetch
- 2kg Prolific Persian clover
- 4.5kg Cadiz
- 15kg Charano
- 2kg Tillage Radish
- 1kg 970 CL Canola
- 9kg each of type C, S and F Alosca



Photo: Pasture at Ryan Willing's, 02/07/2020.

I ended up grazing it continuously in a rotation grazing system for 6 months from mid June until it ran out of moisture in January. My initial plan was to blow it out in spring as I thought that would be my only weed control option. But rotational grazing the paddock gave me excellent weed suppression up until October, then I did a double spraytop with Paraquat a few weeks apart to stop any grasses setting seed, without killing any of my pasture. The wet Spring helped with this too, the legumes, 970 canola and ryegrass kept powering on until December. It ended up grossing \$1340.30/ha in liveweight gain on the grass finished yearlings and 2020 drop calves, not including the value of any nitrogen fixing for next year's crop or weight gained by adult cows grazed on that paddock through the spring. With operating costs of \$508/ha it is an expensive pasture to grow but still very profitable if grazed to its full potential. I am very happy with this system so far and with some tweaks will be doing it again this and every year on at least a quarter of my farm. The hardest part of this pasture is being of such high value, full utilisation of the feed on offer is very important. I kept adding cattle to the paddock to keep up with the pasture growth but with a limited number of steers it meant at one point keeping 3 different herds separated whilst still rotating them. I added the highest value stock first so the grass finished steers, then cull heifers and cows with calves at foot. The graph below shows the stocking rate of the 98ha paddock throughout the 6 months.

Pros:

- Profit.

- **Animal health benefits**, with a great mix of species the yearlings got all they needed from the pasture to reach their full potential with an average weight gain across the herd of 2kg/ day/ head from the day they went in until they were finished in mid-September.

- **Weed suppression** was far better than I thought it would be, with some capeweed throughout early in the season it seemed to get grazed / smothered out by spring. This was evident in a seeder head blockage strip in the paddock that just grew heaps of capeweed and wireweed. There was enough Broome and Silvergrass to warrant a double spraytop in spring to ensure a clean base for next year's crop.

- **Nitrogen fixed by the legumes.**

- There are **many other soil health pros** from growing these types of pastures from organic carbon building, keeping more microbes alive for longer with a diverse root system, to breaking up hard pan with different depth root types but are hard to measure in one year.

- The **970CL Canola is the biggest surprise** in the mix, it seems to have a massive root and is the only thing still green now in early February. It grew so much feed and being a winter active didn't try to set seed until late spring, just kept producing feed.

Cons:

- **Expensive**, I am looking to reduce the cost by \$100/ha this year by using grown on farm pasture seed that I grew last year. And using peat inoculation rather than Alosca which gets too expensive when needing 3 types of rhizobia.



- **The temporary fencing** (electric tape and stand in plastic posts) I used for rotational grazing does not like strong winds, it would often need restraining and standing back up after a 40km/hr plus wind. I plan to weld longer spikes on the posts to hold them in the ground better this year. I want to keep the fences temporary for ease of seeding bigger paddocks and flexibility to match the cell's size to the size of the herd.

- **Some varieties performed poorly in the mix**, Pascal wheat offered very little biomass so will be replaced by Endeavour Triticale this year. Illabo wheat would also be a great fit I think. Prolific Persian clover has a massive leaf and competes quite well but seems very susceptible to red clover disease, nearly dying twice last year as soon as it got a bit dry. Will replace with Balansa this year. Also the hard seeded Serradella didn't compete well so I'll leave that out of the mix completely from now on.

- **Needs to be seeded every year**, I am planning to seed this like a crop each season rather than let or rely on the pasture setting seed for self regeneration. I believe this is more reliable for what I want and need the paddock to do, just means it is another paddock to seed at the same time as crops need to go in.

- **Not as much legume content as I would have liked to see**, the tough start didn't help but I plan to up the seeding rates to 10kg of Cadiz and RM4 and 2kg of Balansa.

The next stop that Ryan took us through at the Field Day was cows and calves grazing Canola and Tillage radish.

This did not turn out to be a good plan and I will not be grazing Canola again with cattle or grazing straight brassica pastures, but we try these things. The 170 cows and calves ended up grazing the 65ha for 3 weeks before I pulled them out with animal health issues ending the trial. The major problem is with a DM content of only 9% in tillage radish and 14% in canola, the cattle struggle to eat enough to get their energy requirements, they essentially fill up on water. To combat this, I was feeding them hay and straw but they were needing 3/4 of what they needed on Kikuyu plus I still had trouble with bloat in the cows. The canola grazed ended up yielding 300kg/ha less (2.4t/ha) than the ungrazed section (2.7t/ha) of the same paddock which would have paid for a lot of hay. I think Brassicas and canola like the 970CL have a lot of benefit in all grazing systems growing so much biomass early in the season but must be grown with grasses or cereals to give the stock a healthy mix of feed plus still fed unlimited straw.

Illabo Wheat with Nick Ruddenklau

The Cattle Field Day also made a stop at EPASCO Farms where Nick Ruddenklau had a paddock of Illabo Wheat being grazed by Angus heifers.



Photo: Heifers grazing Illabo Wheat at EPASCO, 02/07/2020.

How did the Illabo go, were you happy with it as a feed option Nick?

We had a lot of success with our paddock of Illabo. We didn't do any weights in and out but visually the cattle were noticeably better when they came out of the crop. They were the bottom half of the mob that went into the crop and when they came out they had passed the top half easily. So as a feed option it was great and especially last year with the shocking start to the season. We found they transitioned well and didn't have any animal health issues, we fed some hay and straw but will feed more straw this year as I think we would get better growth rates if we can add some more fibre to their diet.

Did you take it through to harvest?

We did take it to harvest and were very happy with the approx. 4.2 tonne. The quality was also good with all being APW1 or H2, it did have a bit lighter test weight compared to our Septer but not by much. It stood up well and was relatively easy to thrash. Overall as a wheat variety it ticked all the boxes for us. The late rain may have helped as I feel we were maybe a couple of weeks late sowing but I still think we were in the window. The quality was good with the inputs in line with our current practice. Agronomically it was good with no major disease problems.

Does it have a place in your system moving forward?

Next year we will be expanding our program definitely, with our business being majority livestock the option of grazing and not affecting yield and / or quality, and having extra grazing late autumn / early winter is a no brainer. We will be doing some trials in a lower rainfall environment further north to see if it performs in that space as well.

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Lanza Tedera and Vetch with Michael Maganotti

The Winter Walk was held on 19th August 2020, kicking off with Michael Maganotti hosting us at his property in Salmon Gums. Michael showed us through a deep-sand rehabilitation site planted out with Lanza Tedera, before heading down the hill to look through some vetch growing alongside it.

Has the Tedera continued to work well for you Michael?

Our Tedera was looking really good and there were plans in place to harvest it for the first time. Unfortunately we had a frost event early October and it seemed to take all the flowers out and consequently we decided to leave it and do its own thing. As a rehabilitation plant, I think it is a bit too early to say yes or no to that question. It hasn't nodulated very well and I think that can be put down to a dry start after seeding. The plants seem healthy enough and are well established.

What kind of management has it needed?

It was sprayed for bugs and it had a couple of liquid applications. I put liquid fertiliser on because the sand is quite low in nutrients.

- May: I sprayed with 200mm Alfa, as a green bridge to the vetch. With that I put some N in the tank.
- July: sprayed 800mm Jaguar and some K
- August: another liquid spray of N, Zn and K. I was going over the vetch with that spray so decided to continue on to the Tedera.



Above: The effects of frost on Tedera.

Will you continue on with it?

We will be continuing to have it grow. It's very susceptible to the frost, but if we can just jag a frost-free end of September into October it will produce a lot of seed. Tedera is proving to be a very tough plant. I checked it early February and all the spray trials done by Dan Bell had all come back and looked like they have never suffered. I think once this plant is established it can be an excellent forage plant that can give many years of use. I am looking at slashing it down low and going in with a selective soon, certain weeds seem to be taking over. We are learning new things all the time with these plants and chemicals is certainly at the top.



Above: The recovery from the chemical trails on the Tedera site. The marker in the middle of the image was sprayed with 500mm MCPA Amine. Left of the white peg was not sprayed.

And what were your thoughts on the performance of the vetch you had growing nearby?

Being the first time to grow vetch I can only go on what other people say. That is, it's very good at improving your soil. We did harvest that vetch and had a nice surprise when we got 5.5t cleaned grain out of 18ha. By my calculations comes to 0.3 t/ha. Very happy with that considering there was a bit of sand movement and a dry September. I sprayed it with some Ecopar in June and that also knocked it around for a little while.

Our plans are to go in with wheat and see what the yield and quality will be like after vetch. Vetch will become part of our legume program and this year we will be putting some aside for desiccation for soil improvement.

Continued over page.

The Spring Field Day in September 2020 took us through a number of stops including Scott Wandel's silage and confinement feeding system. When ASHEEP spoke to Scott recently he had plans to weigh the stock coming out of the system and we look forward to a future update on how that has gone.

Long Season Cereal Variety Grazing Trial Results with Dan Bell

The Spring Field Day also took us to agronomist Daniel Bell's Long Season Cereal Variety Trial for Nutrien Ag Solutions. Follow-up results are now in, thanks to Dan for providing the below update.

Our long season cereal variety trial at Coomalbidgup was harvested on the 3rd of December with some exceptional yields achieved by all varieties. The highest yielding variety was Planet Barley at 7.7t/ha which had one grazing just before first node (Z31). Surprisingly, the ungrazed plot yielded 450kg/ha less which could be attributed to a "moisture conservation" effect. A positive yield response to grazing was also evident for Flinders Barley and the long season winter wheat Accroc. Overall, the influence of grazing on yield performance for all varieties combined was a reduction of 160kg/ha, however, the average Dry Matter produced was around 1t/ha.

In regards to the overall economics of variety performance in a grazing situation, Planet Barley gave us the highest return with a total production value (Dry Matter and yield) of \$2327/ha. This was followed by Illabo and DS Pascal. However, we should mention that the longer season winter wheat varieties, Bennett and Accroc, may have allowed a second grazing opportunity which was not captured in this trial. We could assume that another 1t/ha of Dry Matter could have been produced increasing their total "value" by \$200/ha but this would still mean a lower nett than Planet, Illabo and DS Pascal. As 'feed' varieties, Bennett and Accroc will find it hard to compete with varieties of greater quality and higher commodity value.

For more information contact your local South Coastal Agencies store:

Esperance (9071 1211), Ravensthorpe (9838 1081), Salmon Gums (9078 5024)

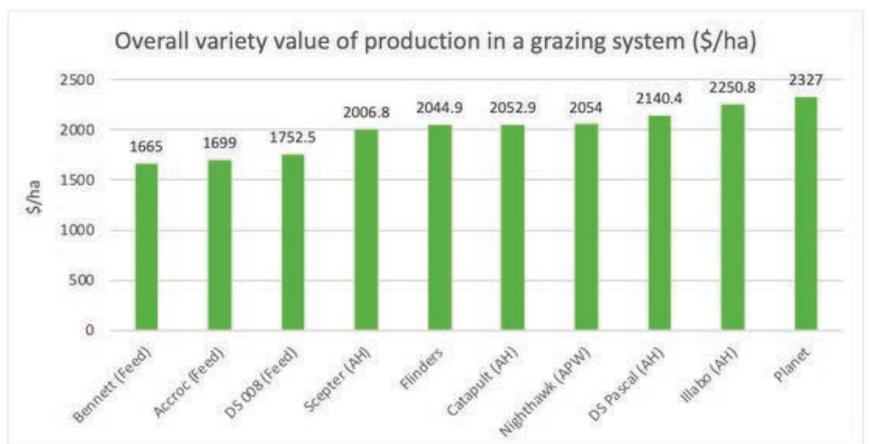


Figure 2; Total production value of each variety, including Dry Matter and Yield. (Grain values used; AH \$330/t, APW \$320/t, Feed \$250/t, Barley \$270/t)

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RM4 Vetch with Leigh and Karina West

Next stop for the Spring Field Day was to Leigh and Karina West's in Gibson to a stand of RM4 Vetch that had been grazed by twin-bearing ewes and then weaned lambs.

Did you graze it any further and were you happy with the overall result as a sheep feed pasture?

No we didn't graze that paddock again as it was locked up to harvest for seed. We did continue to graze the other paddocks, we are really happy with the biomass that can be produced in a short amount of time.



Above: The West's vetch (grazed) at the Spring Field Day, 24/09/2020.

How did it go as a hay crop?

It was good as a hay crop, sheep eat every bit of the bale as opposed to cereal hay of which they leave some at the end. Spraying regrowth is required before baling as the vetch continues to grow vigorously even after hay cutting. Too much green to rake and bale!

What sort of results did you get from harvesting it for seed?

It can be hard to get a good clean sample, there is plenty of pod in the sample. Maybe it needs to be harvested on a hot day and/or desiccated as well.

Planet Barley, Illabo Wheat and Grazing Oats with Brett Whiting

The Spring Field Day also took us to the Whiting's property at Gibson. Thanks to Brett for giving us an update on how the cereals and oats they had been grazing finished up.

In September last year we visited a paddock of grazed Planet Barley. Were you happy with the results?

Yes, definitely. We were very surprised with how well it came back after how heavily it was grazed in some areas. Even in the more heavily grazed areas we didn't see any yield loss. Having said that, ideally one thing to change would be to strip graze or split the paddock into smaller segments so that the sheep don't camp on the sandy areas, which were fairly hammered. We can't do this as it doesn't fit in with our broadacre cropping system, but it would be of benefit. We ended up pulling the stock out because about 10% of the paddock seemed to be getting hit too hard. The harvested crop averaged 6.2 tonne per hectare. The areas that had been camped on (they were the areas that had been spaded the year before) looked worse, but recovered very well.

And how did your Illabo Wheat work out?

With the Illabo Wheat as a whole, even in the paddocks where it was not grazed, we were not as happy. It looked like it should have yielded more than what it did.

The Illabo that was grazed did recover well. The grazing took out a lot of the biomass, which kept the canopy cleaner and therefore it dried out more easily. In some of the ungrazed crop, the heavier canopy made it easier for disease to develop. There didn't seem to be a difference in the yield between the grazed / ungrazed crop, it came in about 4.2 – 4.5 tonne per hectare. Looking at it you would have thought it would push 6 tonne, but it did not get there.



Above: Brett Whiting and Mark Walter in the Whiting's Planet Barley, 24/09/2020.

What about the Grazing Oats, did you get any of that through to harvest?

As a grazing option the oats are hard to beat, even without the harvest. You can't really argue it. We did end up harvesting some for seed, getting about 30 tonne off 15 hectares - it was very heavily grazed. We had sheep in there for 130 days or longer and they are back in there now on the stubble. We took the sheep out for 1 month to let it grow for seed, we made the decision late to pull them out as there was a bit of rain coming in the lead up to harvest that we thought might be enough. It has been a very high-producing variety.

Below: Grazing Oats at the Whiting's, 24/09/2020.



Were there any animal health considerations or issues that came up?

Not for us, but I have heard that there can be issues with spreading fertiliser causing toxicity in the plant that can impact stock. Hypocalcaemia can also be an issue, but we put out a loose-lick calcium sulphur mix to avoid that.

As far as managing those varieties as grazing crops, did you learn any lessons or would you do anything differently next time around?

No, not really, although one thing to be mindful of is that you have to manage timings for grazing. It could be the difference of a week that results in damaging yield potential.

Barley was the most profitable crop, with the grazing factor it gave two bites of the cherry. Illabo opens up a new window of timing, allowing you to get going earlier and get feed up. We will keep with the Illabo despite it not yielding as much as thought. It was our first year growing it, it's a winter wheat so needs to be managed differently from standard varieties. We will also run the grazer oats again. We used Grazer 80 Oats in 2020 and we also have some Grazer 85 seed to trial this year. We are also putting in some canola that we plan to try grazing.

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Balancing pasture growth for grazing

Summit Fertilizers

In nitrogen (N) deficient pasture situations, ryegrass will respond well to autumn and winter applications of 1-2 units of N/ha/day. We'd recommend farmers let their ryegrass grow to 2.5 to 3 leaves/tiller before grazing, not only for better overall pasture production, but also for animal health reasons.



Deferring grazing of ryegrass reduces the risk of grazing animals contracting HypoMagnesia (Grass Tetany - when serum magnesium levels fall below a critical level) and Hypocalcemia (milk fever - reduced blood calcium levels).

That's because important cations (positively charged ions) like potassium (K), calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg) compete for uptake into small ryegrass plants. K uptake occurs readily from the soil if supply is good and this is usually to the detriment of Ca and Mg uptake.

K is usually in abundance in small ryegrass plants. As the ryegrass plant continues to grow and is allowed to reach the 3 leaf stage, Ca and Mg concentration in the plant increases, effectively diluting the K concentration, which in turn reduces the risk of animals grazing the ryegrass succumbing to the metabolic issues mentioned above.

Clover in the pasture

Many growers like to see clover in their pastures and believe 30 to 40% legume content provides a more healthy and balanced diet than a straight grass pasture.

Regular applications of N fertilizer or N released by soil mineralisation generally favours grasses and broadleaf weeds at the expense of legumes, and the legume content will be reduced by this faster growing competition.

Another factor to consider is that including legumes in mixtures with grass lowers the amount of N fertilizer required for the pasture. Growers need to adjust their rates to accommodate for this and make sure phosphorus (P), K and sulphur availability is good.



Analysis

So when considering the nutritional needs of pastures, it's difficult to generalise without knowing the location, soil type, growers objectives and any occurrence of specific nutrient deficiencies. Soils are inherently variable due to both geological processes and historic fertilizer applications.

For these reasons, soil and plant testing is essential to determine which nutrients are needed and in what amounts for optimal production.

Summit has an extensive range of pasture fertilizers that can be viewed on the Summit website, or growers can contact Ralph Papalia or Mark Ladny for more information.

Contact

Tim Donkin – Area Manager: Esperance West
 Mobile: 0408 092 355
 Email: tdonkin@summitfertz.com.au

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Agro Spot: Vetches, the new pasture for the Mallee!

Theo Oorschot, Esperance Rural Supplies, 0427 715166, theoagron@bigpond.com

I'm suggesting this "tongue in cheek". Vetches are really getting some mileage not only in the mallee but south onto the sandplain. Table 1 is an update taken from a paper written by Stuart Nagel from a presentation he delivered during the 2020 Hart Field Days. Stuart has replaced Rade Matic, the so called "father of the vetch breeding programme" at SARDI.



Table 1. Characteristics of selected vetch varieties

Variety	Maturity	Yield potential		Flower colour	% of pod shattering	% of hard seeds	Disease reaction*		
		Grain	Dry matter				Rust	Ascochyta	Botrytis
Common vetch varieties (<i>Vicia sativa</i>).									
Blanchefleur	Mid	High	Mod	White	5-10	5-10	VS	MR	S
Studentica	Very early	High	High	White	0-2	0	R	MS	S
Morava	Late	High	High	Purple	0	0	R	MS	VS
Rasina	Early-mid	High	Mod	Purple	0-2	0	R	MR	S
Volga	Early	V. high	High	Purple	0-2	2-5	R	MR	MS
Timok	Mid	High	V. high	Purple	0-2	0-2	R	MR	MS
Purple vetch (<i>Vicia benghalensis</i> subsp. <i>benghalensis</i>)									
Popany	Very late	Low	High	Purple	20-30	5-10	R	S	VS
Woolly pod vetches (<i>Vicia villosa</i> subsp.)									
Haymaker	Late	Low	V. high	Purple	5-10	20-30	R	S	VS
Capello	Late	Low	V. high	Purple	5-10	15-20	R	S	VS
RM4	Mid	Mod.	V. high	Purple	2-5	2-5	R	MS	VS

VS: very susceptible
S: susceptible
MS: moderately susceptible
MR: moderately resistant
R: resistant

The Angelo Loi/ Ron Yates/ Brad Nutt formula on N production from legumes (providing there's good nodulation!) is very simple. One tonne of biomass is equivalent to 20 kg/ha N above the ground plus half that below the ground, of which roughly 30% is available to the crop next year. Thus, John and Michael Bertola's vetches at 6 t/ha DM, produced about 180 kg/ha N, of which 60 kg/ha N was available for the following year's wheat.

As the table shows, vetches are divided into three groups, commons, purples and woolly pod and probably need no further explaining. New is Studentica a common vetch variety with a white flower and will be available this year. It is the earliest flowering and earliest maturing of all the common vetches, at 85-90 days to flowering compared to Rasina (95-105 days) and Volga 7-10 days less than Rasina. Like all the other common vetches it has poor botrytis resistance but excellent rust.

The research suggests that Studentica has reasonable frost tolerance. It was bred for the very low rainfall areas, and like the other common vetches can be used for grain/seed, grazing, hay/silage or green manure.

The following photos show some of the successes I have been happy to be involved with.



John Bertola, Beaumont, Rasina vetch. Photo taken 24th July 2017. 6 t/ha DM production at the time of the photo. Topped at 8 t/ha DM. Grain harvested yield 1.4 t/ha. 2019 vetch hay was analysed at 33.2% CP with an ME of 11.7 MJ/kg DM. Quality hay! 2020 seed production went 990 kg/ha.



Parmango Road, North Beaumont, Lyndon Mickel, Brett South and myself, standing in Volga vetches, 4.8 t/ha DM as on the 28th August and topped to 6 t/ha a couple of weeks later. These vetches were sown 31st March. Grain harvested 940 kg/ha.

Continued over page.

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Alister McIntyre, Neridup, standing in last year's woolly pod vetch sown 18th January. Photo taken 17th September 2020. Taking vetches to the sandplain!

As for the grazing value and weed control via the competitive nature of vetches that can be another article to write up. For further information or pasture agronomy advice please contact me.

Theo Oorschot, Esperance Rural Supplies
0427 715166, theoagron@bigpond.com



Vetch Toxicity Reminder

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

As per Theo Oorschot's article above, vetch is becoming an increasingly popular pasture choice. However, as we have learnt at past ASHEEP field days, it pays to exercise caution when selecting the type of vetch and managing grazing - there have been a number of instances of Woolly Pod vetch poisonings within the Esperance region causing sudden death in cattle.



ASHEEP spoke to Veterinarian and local producer Erica Ayres, who explained that cattle have also been known to experience "more chronic forms of poisoning causing an itchy dermatitis, diarrhoea, weight loss, laboured breathing and death after days or weeks."

Although toxicity is reportedly less likely to occur in sheep, Erica advised that it is still a possibility and therefore regular monitoring whilst flocks are on vetch pastures is advisable. A local producer has advised ASHEEP of experiencing issues with Photosensitisation in sheep grazing vetch as a monoculture.

Management options for grazing vetch include selecting a variety that is less or not likely to cause toxicity issues, avoiding grazing flowering plants (it is the seed that causes toxicity issues) and exercising caution feeding hay and silage that contain vetch seed. One local producer has reported that grazing cattle on RM4 vetch planted in combination with grasses has helped to mitigate their risk after experiencing deaths when grazing it as a monoculture.

Chatting with a handful of local producers who grow and graze vetch, some have experienced issues and others have not. So have a good conversation with your agronomist and vet to get some advice about what will work for you and how to manage it.

Vet Spot: Calving Tool Kit

Dr. Katie Kreutz BSc BVMS, Swans Veterinary Service

With Calving Season rapidly approaching we want to ensure our producers have the tools and knowledge they need to assist their herd when possible. Having the right tools creates better outcomes makes the difference between an straight forward pull or a back breaking inconvenience. Some basic tools include:

Tools

Obstetrical lubricant – Use liberally to simplify manipulations and extractions.

Calving chains and handles – Easier to sterilize than ropes and loops allow for easy attachment to a pulley. Ensure these are placed appropriately onto the calf's legs. Make the first loop above the joint (fetlock) and a half hitch second loop below the joint. This ensures all the pressure not applied over a single joint when pulling - which can end in deformed or broken legs.

Pulley – Reduces the force required to pull. This is especially handy if you are on your own and need a good amount of strength. The pulley also has a quick release lock so it can hold traction in between pulling. Attach the single wheel to a sturdy pole down low so pulling is in a downward motion to help the calf come over the pelvic brim. Clip the end with the double wheels onto the calving chains which have been properly put onto the calf's legs.

Easy Boss Oral Distractor – This tool can be used to distract the cow from pushing against you while attempting to re-position the calf and pull. Insert the distractor down the side of the cheek to instigate chewing and distract the cow from straining.

Medications

Syntocin – Stimulates uterus to contract **AFTER** calving. Given to all cows **after calving where assistance was required** to reduce the incidence of prolapses, reduce bleeding, and expel membranes faster. **Dose: 8 mls intra-muscularly per cow after calving. Withhold nil.**



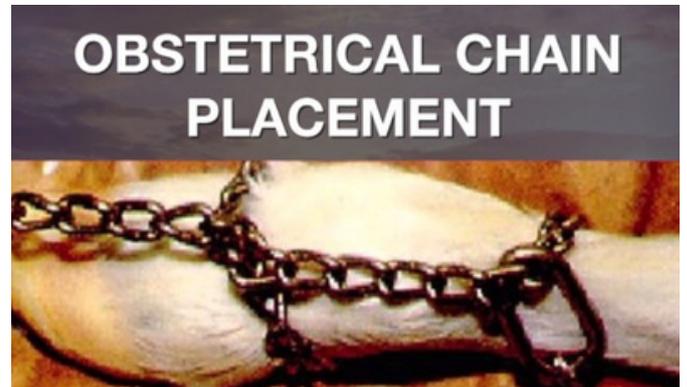
Below: Easy Boss Oral Distractor.

Utozyme pessaries – An antibiotic intra uterine tablet which also aids in the removal of membranes. Use in all difficult calving cases involving a dead calf, vaginal tears or retained afterbirth. **Dose: 1 Pessary deep into the uterus repeated every other day as needed. Withhold 14 days.**

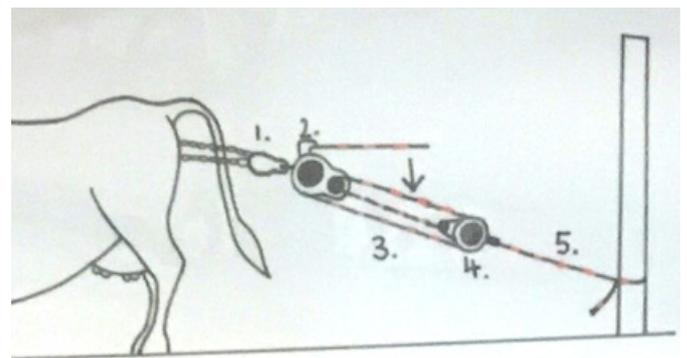
Meloxicam – A Pain killer & anti-inflammatory agent which improves nervous function and reduces swelling. Used for the treatment of down, paralysed cows or calves with swollen heads and tongues. Useful in all situations where there is pain, infection or inflammation. **Dose: 2.5 mls per 100kg's under the skin. Withhold 12 days. ESI 21 days.**

Alamycin LA 300 – Antibiotic used for traumatic calvings, prolapses, caesareans, or any other instance where infection exists or is likely. **Dose: 1 ml per 10kg intra-muscularly in the neck repeated in three days if needed. No more than 10 mls per intra-muscular injection site. Meat Withhold 28 days. Export Slaughter Interval 35 days.**

Minbal 4 in 1 (500ml packs) – Calcium/Magnesium/glucose supplement. For treating cows down with milk fever. Give 2 packs under the skin. Repeat in 8 hours.



Below: Illustration of a pulley set up to assist with calving.



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Scenarios

Easy Calving – Give 8mls Syntocin after assist.

Difficult Calving – i.e. Dead calf, vaginal tears or bruising. Give Alamycin, Syntocin, Meloxicam & a Pessary.

Paralyzed Cow – Give Alamycin, Syntocin, Meloxicam & a Pessary

Dummy Calf – Give Alamycin and Meloxicam

And when all else fails or you know you are out of your depth don't hesitate to ring the clinic for veterinary assistance!

Dr. Katie Kreutz
08 9071 5777
katie.k@swansvet.com



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OJD Update: Australian Study Supports Ongoing Use of Gudair



Zoetis Technical Information Update

Researchers at the University of Sydney have found that whilst Gudair reduces the prevalence of OJD within a flock, ongoing vaccination is essential to ensure the prevalence of OJD within the flock remains low, minimising losses due to this disease.

Background

Ovine Johne's disease (OJD) is an insidious disease which continues to cost farmers through lost productivity, increased stock losses and reduced trading options. Sheep infected with OJD can be actively shedding the bacteria for years before clinical signs are seen. These "shedders" will continue to be a source of infection on a property, and in a region, for many years.

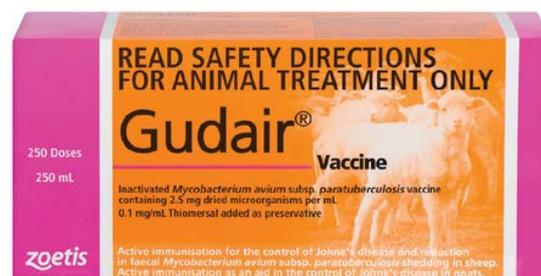
In a recent Australian study researchers followed 41 self-replacing Merino flocks infected with OJD. These flocks had been consistently vaccinating lambs with Gudair for at least five years. Estimates of the prevalence of OJD within the flocks before the vaccination program commenced were compared to the prevalence of OJD within the flocks following five or more years of vaccination. In addition, the farmers were surveyed to identify which risk factors increased the likelihood of having a high prevalence of OJD infection within a flock.

Results

Dung samples were collected from all flocks to determine their OJD status and the level of OJD bacteria being shed in dung and contaminating pastures.

The key findings were:

- Gudair significantly reduced the prevalence of OJD within a flock.
- Shedding of the OJD bacteria was still detected in **over 80% of flocks** even after five years of consistent vaccination.
- Those flocks with a high level of OJD shedding reported that they had **introduced new sheep or had straying sheep** in the past five years.
- Farms where sheep were introduced were **three times** more likely to test positive for OJD, despite ongoing vaccination.
- The authors concluded that **ongoing vaccination with Gudair is essential**.



What does this mean?

Gudair has been shown to reduce deaths due to OJD by 90%. The vaccine has also been shown to reduce shedding of the OJD bacteria in the dung of infected flocks by 90%. However, Gudair does not completely prevent bacterial shedding in all vaccinated animals.

As many farmers with an OJD-infected flock see the benefits of a Gudair vaccination program, in the form of a reduction in visible disease and stock losses, there may be a temptation to cease vaccination.

The study reported here has shown that after five years of consistent vaccination of lambs with Gudair, there was evidence of continued shedding of bacteria in over 80% of the flocks examined. Therefore, should vaccination cease, any unvaccinated stock on the property are at risk of developing clinical disease and dying due to OJD.

In addition, buying in stock was found to be the primary risk factor in having a high prevalence of OJD within a vaccinated flock.

Conclusion

To control OJD it is important that flocks continue to vaccinate their lambs, take care when sourcing stock for purchase by requesting a sheep health statement and ensure any bought-in stock have been vaccinated, preferably as lambs.

Don't risk your flock, your neighbours' flocks or your trading options and ensure that all lambs are vaccinated with Gudair at marking.

For more information call Zoetis Veterinary Operations on 1800 814 883 or contact your local Zoetis Professional Sales Representative.

References

1. Windsor PA, Eppleston J, Dhand NK, Whittington RJ (2014). Effectiveness of Gudair® vaccine for the control of ovine Johne's disease in flocks vaccinating for at least 5 years, *Aust Vet J*, 92(7): 263-268.
2. Reddacliff L, Eppleston J, Windsor P, Whittington R, Jones S (2006). Efficacy of a killed vaccine for the control of paratuberculosis in Australian sheep flocks, *Veterinary Microbiology*, 115: 77-90.

Animal Health Services

- Faecal Worm Egg Counts (FWEC)
- Cattle / Sheep serology & mineral testing
- Hay coring / Grain / Fodder/ Silage sampling and analysis
- Water quality / toxin testing
- Power Doser servicing
- Farm plans / Breeding Plans
- Nutritional / Supplementation Advice



South Coastal Agencies

Esperance – Ravensthorpe – Salmon Gums

Contact Sinead O’Gara on 0427 084 016 for more information

Advantages of Pregnancy scanning in Ewes

Pregnancy scanning is a key production tool to assist with efficiency management of a reproducing flock. Pregnancy scanning allow a grower to benchmark results against other WA reproducing flocks on reproductive rates. The benchmarking tool is zones specific, cereal sheep zones and medium rainfall zones allowing for location variables per region.

Ultrasound scans at 90 day mark can determine if the ewe is bearing single or multiple lambs. If a producer does not require this level of detail, an ultrasound at 40 days post ram removal can determine a wet or dry status. This allows a producer to draft off wet and dry ewes from the flock. Allocating feed needs for the pregnant ewes and future outcome for the dry ewes. Dry ewes may either be sold as deemed low fertility or re-joined at a later date if outstanding variables inhibited conceiving.

Benefits to scanning at the 90 day post ram removal provides more information for a grower to make crucial management decisions. At 90 days not only can multiple or single lambs be identified but also if conception was early or late in the oestrus cycle. Best practices would entail drafting off four-ways post scanning to early multiples, late multiples, early singles and late singles. Detailed drafting of pregnant ewes allows efficient management of feed allocation to meet the needs of all pregnancy statuses. A tighter lambing window is also achieved with detailed scanning results.

Scanning is also benefitable in early identification of failed joining if there is a high percentage of ewes that have not conceived. There are several reasons for a failed joining such as:

- Ewe or Ram low Body Condition score
- Ram infertility (Ovine Brucellosis)
- Extreme heat events, leading to stress
- External stresses: Poor pre joining management (lack of nutritional supplementation, late disease/parasitic control, late shearing)

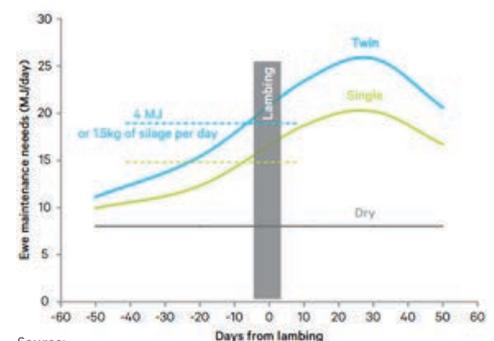
Is it worth the cost?

Benefits to a producer to scan is economical feed cost allocation. The cost of scanning varies from each specialist from 60c/head to \$1.00/head depend on location, demand and competition.

Costs are recouped through information on ewes pregnancy status where best management practices and resourceful feed allocation can be implemented dependent on specific group status. Reducing feeding to maintenance level to ewes that failed to conceive and were drafted at 'dry'. This is a cost saving as these animals will require less feed to maintain Body Condition Score than a reproducing ewe. An additional cost advantage would be to sell off these non-productive ewes increasing income and increasing flock fertility. Scanning for multiples is valuable at lamb marking time compare if the ewe scanned as a multiple but only raised a single. If EID tags are implemented on farm a record can be kept on scanning and lamb bearing results for individual animals over their lifetime.

Implementing best feeding practices to a reproducing ewe is benefitable to the lamb in utero reducing the likelihood of developing disadvantages later in life such as, slower growth and muscle development, compromised immune system and lower reproductive performance in adulthood. Meeting nutritional requirements of a multiple bearing ewe reduces the distance ewe’s will travel to graze and enhance her mothering ability which then increases the chances of twin survival rate. When there is a higher twin survival rate the follow through is an increase in lamb weaning numbers and increasing farm income.

If single bearing ewes being over allocated feed supply the down fall is increased risk for dystocia at lambing. There is also an increased risk of embryo loss in the early pregnancy stages with ewes at a BCS of 3.5+. These risks associated may lead to a decrease in lamb survival rates and therefore lower weaning percentages and reduction of farm income.



Source: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/EweNutritionFactSheet.pdf>

Pregnancy Class	Adequate Feed allocation	Lower than adequate feed allocation	Higher than adequate feed allocation
Single Bearing	Increasing plane of nutrition to meet demand ↑ Lamb survival rate	↓ in BCS ↓ lamb survival rate ↓ Adult health status of progeny	Dystocia ↑ BCS (<3.5) could lead to aborting embryo
Multiple Bearing	Increasing Plane of nutrition to meet demands ↑ Lamb survival rate	↓ in BCS ↓ lamb survival rate ↓ Adult health status of progeny	Dystocia ↑ BCS (<3.5) could lead to aborting embryo
Dry	Maintain BCS	↓ in BCS ↓ fertility status for future joining	Above optimum BCS ↓ fecundity

Continued from previous page.

Ewe Pregnancy Scanning Reimbursements:

- Efficient feed allocation for different pregnancy classes
- Cost savings on feed, not over feeding
- Early identification if there are fertility issues in ewes or rams
- Increase in mothering capacity and increased lamb survival rates
- Increase in flock fertility with removal of dry ewes
- Individual record of ewes' reproductive performance over lifetime using EID's
- Record of number of lambs scanned vs the number of lambs marked

Scanning therefore is seen as an investment into progeny's future health ensuring that lambs avoid starting life at a disadvantage due to ewe poor nutritional status by not meeting feed requirements. Cost savings to Producers in efficient feed allocation to the animals to meet specific nutritional requirements according to pregnancy classes. It also allows to cull sheep that are not meeting reproductive quota, dry ewes and infertile rams, allowing for these animals to be sold. Farm income is benefited by cost savings on specific feed needs and increasing income with high lambing percentages and resourceful management for high lamb survival rates.

Continued interest in confinement feeding of sheep

Danny Roberts, Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development

Another growing season with below average rainfall has resulted in more of the landscape being at high risk of wind erosion. In response, more sheep producers are now considering confinement feeding their young sheep and/or pregnant ewes.



**Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

Bare loose soil within 600m of a paddock water source is a common occurrence during summer and autumn, with very high wind erosion risks.

There are benefits in having permanent confinement feeding facilities that allow the removal of sheep from affected paddocks: wind and water erosion risks are reduced; supplementary feed is used more efficiently; monitoring livestock condition is simplified; the use of equipment and labour is more efficient.

There are tools available via the DPIRD website to help plan feed and water budgets before commencing confinement feeding.

Many producers have learnt how to effectively confinement feed sheep in recent years, and provide a pool of experience for others to tap into when designing permanent facilities. Confinement areas may be pens or small sacrificial paddocks, and different classes of sheep will require different design parameters and different rations. Analysis of feed ensures the correct rate of supplementation for each class of sheep and provides some scope for least cost diets.

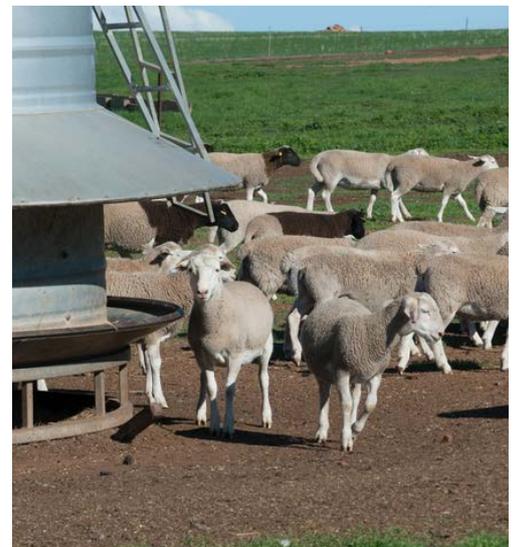
Confinement feeding is different from feed lotting. Young sheep need to keep growing slowly over their first summer and ewes need regular increases in energy throughout their pregnancy while restricting intake. This process requires ongoing monitoring of live weight or condition score to achieve targets, while minimising problems while in confinement.

It is important to supply sufficient good quality, cool water. In the next 2 months, continuation of high ambient temperature and windy conditions will lead to higher evaporation rates from dam water supplies. Water intake by sheep is also expected to be higher.

Allow a minimum 14-day introduction period for safe adaption to a cereal-grain diet. Ensure sheep get their second clostridia vaccine within six months of entry and drench with vitamin E. Draft on condition score on entry and continue to monitor 50 sheep per pen monthly. Use the condition score app to record and analyse this information. During confinement, add lime if feeding cereal grain and provide further vitamin E supplementation every six weeks. These practices should be conducted in addition to normal husbandry procedures. Lambing in confinement should be avoided.

Carefully monitor changes in the diet of animals during and when leaving a confinement feeding system. Changes in diet can result metabolic disorders leading to death. Pregnant ewes should be released to graze green pasture at least 2 weeks before the start of lambing.

Danny Roberts, Veterinary Officer
Livestock Research and Industry Innovation, DPIRD
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Vigilance required to protect crops from new pests

DPIRD Media Release

Western Australian grain growers have been warned to prepare to take action to protect crops from two additional, significant grain pests this spring – Russian wheat aphid and fall armyworm.

The warning was delivered at the Grains Research and Development Corporation's Grains Research Updates 2021 conference in Perth today by researchers from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).



Image: Grain growers have been warned to monitor crops for the potentially significant pests fall armyworm (left) and Russian wheat aphid (right) this spring and report observations to DPIRD.

Russian wheat aphid and fall armyworm were detected in WA for the first time in 2020, with numbers predicted to increase this growing season.

DPIRD research scientist Svetlana Micic told the conference while the impact from Russian wheat aphid was limited to the Esperance region in 2020, it was important for growers to remain vigilant this season. "Russian wheat aphid surveys of a total of 121 sites throughout the Grainbelt in 2020 found the pest at 24 sites only in the Esperance region," Ms Micic said. "The pest was found on early and late sown barley and wheat crops in low, medium and high rainfall areas at levels of less than one percent of tillers infested with Russian wheat aphid, which was well below control thresholds."

Climatic modelling by a collaboration of scientists from across Australia and New Zealand predicts Russian wheat aphid has the potential to persist in all broadacre growing areas of the WA Grainbelt. "Though the pest was not found outside the Esperance Port Zone in 2020, it is highly probable that it will migrate beyond that area and spread throughout the entire Grainbelt," Ms Micic said.

Fall armyworm moths were detected at trap sites near Geraldton and Gingin but none were found in 70 pheromone traps in the Grainbelt during the 2020 growing season, however, larvae were confirmed at Gingin. Department research scientist Dustin Severtson said as the pest was highly mobile and could fly vast distances, it was possible it could pose a risk to cereal, canola and pulse crops this spring.

"While fall armyworm was not detected in grain crops and pastures in 2020, growers should remain observant and report any suspect caterpillars to the department to confirm identification of the pest and attain control advice," Dr Severtson said.

Information on the department's fall armyworm and Russian wheat aphid surveillance programs has been extended to the industry via its PestFax newsletter, with co-investment from GRDC, which supports research on these pests in other parts of Australia.

The national technical committee, the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests has concluded it is not technically feasible to eradicate either Russian wheat aphid or fall armyworm from Australia. Landholders are encouraged to monitor crops for the two pests and to report any suspect observations, including photographs, to the department using its MyPestGuide Reporter or PestFax Reporter apps. Alternatively, call the department's Pest and Information Disease Service on 9368 3080 or send a photograph to padis@dpiird.wa.gov.au. Samples should only be sent if requested to do so.

A range of control and management options are available for Russian wheat aphid and fall armyworm on the department's website agric.wa.gov.au. Information is also available on the GRDC fall armyworm portal. Following the Perth Update, GRDC 2021 Regional Updates are scheduled to be held in each port zone. For details visit the GRDC Updates and events page.



Message from Esperance Livestock Transport

John Mitchell, Esperance Livestock Transport

On the 4th February we hosted the first Esperance Angus Bull Sale at our freshly completed cattle scale and yards complex. We thank those of you that joined us. The feedback on the day was very encouraging and the positive comments were much appreciated.



Our facility is designed to add value to our customers in conjunction with our transport service. We can assemble lines, feed and spell cattle during transit. We have a fully certified cattle scale which we can weigh cattle in their lines with agreed curfews, acting as an independent third or fourth party. This is exclusively available for our customers via our trucks.

The Esperance Livestock Low Stress Stock Handling School is on again. The school will be at Wongutha Caps on the 16th & 17th March and will involve both sheep and cattle.

This school is an absolute MUST for anyone looking to take their livestock enterprise to the next level with increased profitability and ease of management. I would encourage owners or managers attend first, within your business, it will mark a significantly positive change to your business.

Finally, we are in the process of employing a full time young local, Halina Patti. You may receive a call from her on our number. We are looking forward to her involvement in the business and her development in the role.

John Mitchell
0418 420 880

Supporting shifts to non-mulesed systems: Annual Summary

Georgia Reid-Smith, AgPro Management

Contact: 044 752 3110, georgia@agpromanagement.com

We all know that mulesing is becoming socially unacceptable, and worms are increasingly resistant to current drenches. Many producers who have stopped mulesing have been successful, but it is fair to say that many have also failed to sustain the change because the management issues were too difficult. The approach to shifting to non-mulesed systems is a complex one, involving genetic selection, worm, dag and fly control, husbandry timing and sheep management. The approach and suitability also varies based on environment- there is no 'one size fits all'. Among producers, therefore, we can find a mix of success stories and horror stories. Part of the problem was that there were no support networks to help the transition.

In response, AgPro Management has begun a project to help producers assess non-mulesed systems, how to transition, and support this shift if they chose to. The MLA-funded project involves groups of producers (or grower groups) across the medium and high rainfall zones of W.A., aiming to demonstrate how non-mulesed systems works, and equipping them with tools and skills so they can gain confidence in the changes in practice and management before they try it themselves. The project is not to force change, but rather to demonstrate what the system looks like, and enable producers to learn and decide for themselves. The non-mulesed project began in autumn 2020, and will continue for another three years- you are welcome to join, either trialling or as an observer.



Over the next 3 years, producers will trial one non-mules mob, comparing it to a mulesed mob. These sites will be used to show involved producers and the wider industry the impact of shifting to non-mulesed enterprises on not just management and practices, but also measurable production. Each site will measure weaner weight and survival, wool value, animal price, and husbandry costs to determine financial impact compared to traditional management, while also capturing qualitative data to analyse the social impact and changes required to management.

Results from the project so far show that the non-mulesed mobs were on average 0.78kg heavier than the mulesed at weaning time. This ranged from no difference to a 4kg advantage, while one non-mulesed mob was 4kg lighter than the mulesed mob. The average weaning weights for each mob ranged from 23.9kg to 36kg, and unfortunately birth type was not taken into account, with many producers not having EID. This would have had a large impact, with properties showing that a mulesing twins averages 15kg and singles 19kg, which would influence weaning weight significantly. Producers have reported similar or lower marking to weaning mortality in the non-mulesed mob compared to the mulesed, however we do not have a strong enough data.

Flystrike rates are measured at an average of 3.4% across Australia, however producers involved in this project reported an average of 0.93%. This could indicate that we are missing many cases, have good control, or are simply bad at record keeping! So far, flystrike occurrence within both the mulesed and unmulesed mobs is low, averaging 0.35%. Producers point out that key times of challenge are yet to occur, wool is short, and there has been little opportunity for dags to develop.

Part of the project involves a cost-benefit analysis, however wool cut and prices are missing as many producers are yet to shear. So far, there has been no noticeable differences in fleece weight. Anecdotally, the main difference in costs and benefits so far is the cheaper price of the non-mules procedure, and having one less labour unit on the marking cradle. Most producers have not differed husbandry for their non-mules mob compared to the mulesed, and if they have it has been focused on chemical use at marking or weaning. Three producers did have to do an extra crutch or bunghole to get through to late summer shearing. Differential management may become more common as the season progresses and new challenges arise, and more animals are sold which will give us a better indication of how sale price is impacted.

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Overall in this project, we have found that the qualitative data has been more valuable than the measurable data! Much of this has come from involved producers who have shifted to a non-mules system in the past. Below is the key messages from these producers:

- Don't bother to make the transition unless you have the right genetics.
- Dag management is key-through every tool you have at your disposal. It's all about working your way towards a clean flock.
- Dag score cull ewe hoggets at 12 months. Culling starts with the 5's- its up to you and the flock numbers you aim for to decide how hard to go.
- Others cull the first 10-20% that develop dags before the others.
- Worm management important to reduce dags- but make sure not leading to drench resistance issues.

Producers who have made the change or trialed in 2020, also noted the following:

- WA sheep have been bred towards non-mules options for a while: Existing fly pressure has already driven a lot of genetics towards a non-mules option, partly due to body strike vulnerability. So there is only so far we can go with some genetic traits. However, it has also been recorded that WA uses ASBV's for all non-mules traits at a higher rate than other states, including WEC, wrinkle, and dags.
- Main roadblocks to transition aren't fly related, its selling culls and the fear of discounts or a reduced market, concerns about shearers and crutchers.
- Definition of non-mulesed when it comes to tailing: there can be no scarring other than where the tail has been cut- ie. no scarring either side of the tail

ASHEEP welcomes Esperance Quality Grains as a new Bronze Sponsor

Esperance Quality Grains Pty Ltd can supply the following;

Sheep Finisher Pellets	\$445 ex GST
Sheep Starter Pellets	\$450 ex GST
Cattle Finisher Pellets	\$445 ex GST
Lakeside Minerals	1 Tonne Bag
Sheep/Cattle Mineral Mix	\$550 ex GST
Lakeside Minerals	25kg Bag
Sheep/Cattle Mineral Mix	\$18.50 ex GST



We can also supply Lupins, Wheat, Barley, Legumes 2nds or any feed grain required.

Lot 626 Beckwith Road, Esperance WA 6450

Ph: +6148 90720055

Email: daryl@qualitygrains.com.au or jessica@qualitygrains.com.au

Upcoming Grain Legume Rhizobium Workshop

AGENDA

Understanding Rhizobia & Nodulation Ron Yates, CRS/DPIRD

- What are rhizobia?
- Specificity of rhizobia
- What is nodulation & biological N fixation?
- What is detrimental to rhizobia?
- Inoculants & inoculation of legumes in Australia
- Activities at the Centre for Rhizobium Studies

Do's and don'ts of legume inoculation Chris Poole, CRS

- Inoculation in practice
- Accessing the effects of herbicides application
- Acid soil tolerance & desiccation

Rotational benefits of grain legumes Mark Seymour, DPIRD

- Cereal yield comparisons from + or - legume residue?
- Break crop benefits
- N efficiency analysis
- Opportunity/profit analysis

Q&A PANEL DISCUSSION

Thurs 11th Mar 2021, 2pm

GRAIN LEGUME RHIZOBIUM WORKSHOP



**SEPWA, PASE &
ASHEEP INVITE YOU
TO JOIN US**

**ASK ANYTHING YOU
WANT TO KNOW
ABOUT RHIZOBIUM**

**EBYC, ESPLANADE
ROOM**

2.00-5.00PM

**FOLLOWED BY
SUNDDOWNER**

**THIS EVENT IS
SUPPORTED BY
DPIRD & GRDC**

RSVP FOR CATERING

by text to

Sarah Brown

0409 335 194

by Tues 9th Mar



WA Shearing Industry Association Update

How to make sheep easier to shear

Did you know there are some common issues and simple changes that growers can implement to make their sheep easier to shear:

1. Keep sheep off lupin stubble until shorn if possible, keep the sand out of the wool.
2. Draining sheep adequately overnight.
3. Spray top to keep seeds out of the wool, there is a financial benefit as the shearing is quicker and lower VM in the wool when selling.
4. Clean from dags and flies.
5. Sandy hocks in feedlots that don't need to be shorn, saves cuts to the legs.
6. Sheep in a sandy feedlot gets belly wool full of grit and damages the shearing gear.
7. In penning sheep no yapping biting dogs to stir up the sheep.

Statement about shearing pay rates

NSW and parts of Victoria are experiencing pay rate increases to attract shearers, driven by increased flock size and staff shortages in these areas. Any such increases are not to the Award itself and is non-binding.

WASIA's policy continues to be that the Federal Award is a minimum and that individual contractors can, and do, pay rates above Award as determined by the working conditions and size and condition of the sheep. There is nothing restricting employers from paying their staff more. WASIA's view is that paying rates above Award or at the award level is an individual business decision and we do not feel that recommending an amount to be paid over the award is necessary in Western Australia. As such the Association will not be issuing or recommending any specific or other Pay Rate Schedule apart from the minimum rate set out and legally specified by the Fair Work Commission Pastoral Award.

WASIA's position is that more work is required to increase the size of the shearing workforce and to improve shed safety and working conditions. Our continuing focus is to increase training opportunities, attract workers to our industry and retain workers by improving working conditions.

SafeSheds - the Shearing Shed Safety Program

A reminder to get the SafeSheds guide and self-assessment tools developed to provide woolgrowers and shed staff with a better understanding of the risks and options to mitigate those risks.

In addition to the document and paper checklists there is also an app that provides the SafeSheds checklists in a mobile, digital, interactive format. The SafeSheds iAuditor tool allows woolgrowers and shearing contractors to self-assess their wool harvesting workplace and work together to identify and rectify safety hazards from their mobile device. It allows you to add photos; create tasks and record actions based on improvements needed; record and document the assessment results with date and time stamps; share reports and track changes over time.

Details can be found at www.wasia.com.au/services/safesheds

ASHEEP is a group member of the WA Shearing Industry Association and full details of WASIA services are available from the website www.wasia.com.au or you can contact the WASIA office by calling 0412 227 252 or emailing to admin@wasia.com.au.



**WA SHEARING INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION (INC)**



Australian Wool Innovation Update

Thanks to Ellie Bigwood, Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) Industry Relations Officer, for providing the following snapshots of current resources from AWI. Ellie's position has recently been relocated from Sydney to Narrogin, providing a great opportunity for local growers to have better access to the AWI team.



AWI Change Makers Episode 4; Ewe Condition Scoring

AWI Change Makers is a ten-part video series centred around sheep reproduction. The most recent episode focuses on ewe condition scoring. Condition score can tell you so much about your sheep and their performance, and is simply done by hand, measuring the fat and muscle cover over and around the short ribs. Join Nathan Scott as he outlines the benefits of recording and managing ewe condition scores, practical management tips and expected productivity gains.

Find it at: <https://www.wool.com/about-awi/media-resources/awi-change-makers/>



Photo credit: Posnov

Grazing sheep on modern crop stubbles Episode 158; The Yarn podcast

In many mixed farming areas of southern Australia, crop stubbles play an important part in feeding sheep flocks during summer. With new crop cultivars and harvesting equipment, modern crop stubbles are notoriously variable in quality. A new guide for sheep producers provides up to date information on the nutritional value of stubbles and chaff piles.

Read more & download the "Grazing Modern Stubbles Booklet at <https://www.wool.com/stubbles>

Listen the to Yarn Podcast: <https://www.wool.com/about-awi/media-resources/the-yarn-podcast/>

Contact: Ellie Bigwood
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It's Fly Time Webinar Available online now as a recording

Flystrike: prevention, monitoring and treatment all play key roles in flystrike management, but what is the right course of action? A recent AWI webinar, 'It's Fly Time!', provides info to manage high-risk fly conditions, plus tips for prevention, prioritising sheep for monitoring and treatment options.

Find it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfiBcj5WFUI&feature=youtu.be>



SafeSheds The Shearing Shed Safety Program

AWI and the WA Shearing Industry Association (WASIA) recently launched SafeSheds, The Shearing Shed Safety Program. It is a national best practice guide and assessment resource, aiming to improve workplace conditions by making them safer for all and allowing woolgrowers and shearing contractors to identify safety hazards or improvements in sheds.

Find it at: <https://www.wool.com/safe-sheds>



Upcoming ASHEEP Events

ASHEEP is gearing up for the 2021 line-up. Early in the year we are planning:

- **Working dog training school** - 25th & 26th February
- **Rhizobia Workshop** in conjunction with PACE & SEPWA 11th March
- **Low Stress Stock Handling Course** with Esperance Livestock Transport - 16th & 17th March
- **Autumn Field Day** - 31st March
- **Saltland Masterclass** with the Gillamii Centre and all kinds of experts in the field - Date TBC.
- **Annual AGM & Conference** - 24th June

The Committees are also underway making plans for a Cattle Field Day, Winter Field Walk and Spring Field Day to be held in the second half of the year. There are also ideas circulating for another South West Tour.

New Sponsors

ASHEEP would like to thank Esperance Rural Supplies and Westcoast Wool & Livestock who have recently taken on Platinum Sponsorship. Thanks also to continued support through Gold Sponsorship from recently rebranded Chatley & Hutcheson and South Coastal Agencies. Welcome to new Bronze Sponsors Esperance Quality Grains and Troy Laboratories Australia.

WALRC Newsletter



Subscribe to the WA Livestock Research Council newsletter.



www.walrc.com.au
admin@walrc.com.au
 0418 931 938

MARCH

Next ASHEEP Committee Meeting is scheduled for 18th March 2021.

Contact a committee or staff member by 10th March to raise an item.

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Troy Laboratories Australia | WAMMCO International | WSD Agribusiness

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