

ASHEEP NEWS



Case Study: Fine Wool & Pasture Legume Systems

ASHEEP interviews Glen & Justine Quinlivan, Quinella

Glen Quinlivan kicked off his farming career working with his parents, who cleared land in the Esperance area in the 1960s. Today, Glen farms Quinella, in partnership with wife Justine and with help from son Patrick. The operation is a combination of owned and leased land, farmed under three different systems. This includes the Gibson home-farm purchased in 1994 (phase farmed), a farm located near Esperance Airport in a higher rainfall area (fully pastured), and a leased farm (continually cropped).

The overall enterprise is roughly 2/3 crop to 1/3 pasture, with a flock of 1800 self-replacing merino ewes forming the core of the livestock operation. The majority of the cropping is share-farmed with Tim Creedon, and runs through a rotation of wheat, barley, canola, plus RM4 vetch/oat mix for hay and the occasional legume (e.g. beans). Now, over to Glen:

Quinella's three farming systems:

- 1) Our leased land is in **continuous cropping** with sheep grazing stubbles.
- 2) The home farm is run in a **phase farming** system:
 - Three years crop.
 - One year new mixed pasture, maybe combined with some cereal if there's seed left over. If the pasture mix gets going really well, the cereal can be sprayed out so that the Nitrogen (N) will be there for following year's crop.
 - One year crop that makes use of the N.
 - Two years' pasture (regenerating). Some pastures are regenerating well and don't need to be resown, but we do use a portion of new pastures.
 - The first year of cropping following this pasture is canola to manage weeds.

Image: Quinella farms focus on fine wool production at 18.5 micron. Article continued over page.

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3) The block near the airport is in **constant pasture** with a Kikuyu base plus legume / grass mix. It's the most productive land stock-wise and has high rainfall. When it was bought the first thing was to put on a good fertiliser mix. We run dry sheep there. One learning has been that you have to hammer it hard so that it regrows. It carries about 1200 wethers and wether lambs year-round on 120 ha, we push its limits and supplementary feed hay and grain when needed.

The sheep program

We run a 100% merino flock with a focus on fine wool (around 18 microns). I class the sheep myself each year based on fleece, conformation and if they've had a lamb. There are about 1800 breeding ewes, 1300 – 1600 lambs, and we maintain around 1000 wethers for up to 2 years to get the wool production. Our ram source has been Wattledale for the last 25 years. All ewes are wet and dried every year. Maiden ewes who don't lamb in the first year may still be kept on characteristics. If they don't lamb in the second year they go.

Ewes are joined on 20th December for 8 weeks – we don't use teasers (although have done in the past). Most ewes tend to lamb earlier in the window, but I don't mind the longer spread of lambing and it reduces the risk of losing lots of lambs in bad weather events. I'm also not trying to sell all the lambs quickly as I'm retaining the wethers and a selection of the ewe lambs. The ewes are preg-tested each year, but we don't test for multiples.

Lambing is in May / June. We run small mobs with maximum 300 ewes separated into age groups. They go wherever the best feed is - into the best stubbles or pasture paddocks. We don't lamb into crops, but we do graze them. Conception rate sits at 97% and lambing percentage at 90-100%. Lambing percentage is about 85% in the maidens; merinos are notorious for being poorer as young mothers.



The drive is to keep things simple. Have weekends off, get out in the boat. Have good infrastructure and equipment so that the stock can be left, knowing that they have what they need and can look after themselves. Having livestock in the mix spreads the risk. People say sheep are hard work – they're not if you do it properly with good equipment and systems.

I don't want to sit on tractor all the time and the share-cropping arrangement with Tim Creedon works well in that respect. It means that I'm not making as much money, but I'm also not running the bulk of the cropping operation. It has worked better than having a contractor because a business partner needs to care, whereas a contractor can't always be there when you need them. You have to trust the person you are farming with, which I do. There's still an element of risk with the costs, but as a rule I don't buy a lot of machinery. I still do a bit of our own cropping on the home farm, but the general operation is outsourced, with Patrick helping to drive the gear for them.

Improving the pasture base

Red Clover Syndrome became a problem and there were a couple of years where the sub-clover was wiped out. It really can struggle with it. Sub-clovers are the base of most pastures, so it has been important to add other varieties into the mix – if I have something else growing and Red Clover Syndrome becomes a problem there's a back-up, something else is growing and it's ok.

The main pasture type we work with is Biserrula (around 30-40% of the pasture has this in the mix) and medics. We have sown Bladder Clover in the past, but it tends not to persist. On the block near the airport we have kikuyu-based pastures, with serradella (combination of older and newer varieties), sub clover, and grass. The majority is a sub clover / medic / grass mix – an annual type of pasture. We have been adding to the mix with new varieties over the years, including Biserrula, Bartolo Bladder Clover, Paradana Balansa Clover, Persian Clover, Scimitar Medic and Kikuyu. Balansa Clover has been one of the more successful clovers of the lot, especially in wet years. Persian Clover has also been good in wet years. Anything that persists that can handle heavy grazing will be kept. We've grown SARDI 10 Lucerne in the past with varying degrees of success, I've been thinking of giving it another go.

The most improved paddock

In around 2016 we did some trial work with Angelo Loi and Brad Nutt. We picked the lightest paddock that we had – sandy and gravelly, it used to grow cape weed, clover and grass. The paddock had been in crop for two years which had cleaned up the weeds and it was in barley stubble at the time. The first year of pasture development has to be treated like a crop. We put in 50ha of Biserrula and Bladder Clover in March, sown into moist conditions. Adding the Bladder Clover was my idea and that was questioned, but the thought was that if one fails then the other will be there. The time of sowing was also questioned, Neil Ballard was dubious it would get the start it needed – was enough moisture there? It has to be sown dry or be wet enough to keep it going. Fortunately, the trial was a huge success. Phenomenal. ASHEEP did a tour to look at it.

Farm Snapshot

Location: Gibson, 1500ha owned & leased

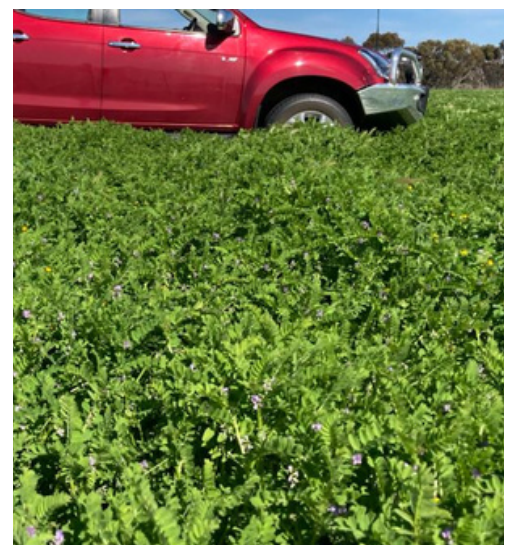
Av. Annual Rainfall: 450mm

Enterprise Mix: 2/3 crop, 1/3 pasture

Stock: Merino, self-replacing

Crop: Wheat 30%, Barley 30%, Canola 30%, Oats for hay 10%

Soil: From heavy clay to duplicate gravel / loam, small portion of sand



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The advice from Angelo, Brad and Neil was that we would have to crop the paddock the next year to use up the Nitrogen. So, the next year canola went in with 80kg of compound fertiliser and no Urea all year. That was our highest yielding crop that year. Following the canola it went into wheat, once again with minimal Urea (50kg) and 80kg of compound fertiliser. No Urea was added after that. Once again it was one of the better crops.

We then let it back into regenerating pasture and it was predominantly Biserrula that came up because the sheep had eaten out most of the Bladder Clover in the first year. Biserrula is bitter. When we put the lambs into the regenerated pasture, it became almost a pure stand there was a huge problem with photosensitivity and lambs lost ears to it. That lesson was learnt and now there's a focus on having a mix. If there is some sort of cereal left over that gets put in, and it can be got rid of if needed. We keep an eye on the pasture composition and watch out for the first signs (sheep tend to start walking with heads down and get pink around the lips). At certain times when they get like that, we get them out. Removing them from the pasture sorts them out quickly.

At end of last year, I sprayed the pasture out with Roundup and sowed millet in September / October. That was awesome over last summer. This year it is back to a Biserrula mix, self-regenerating. Next year I'm thinking a grazing wheat like Illabo that will be put in early, and we'll see what it does. The big thing I learnt from field days is that sandy country with cape weed is low production. Biserrula and Serradella love sandy country and are well suited. Having said that, it's all dependent on rainfall and you don't have control of that. There is an element of luck to have a good establishment, but it's prolific when it gets going. It does need rain - last year with a very dry start everyone struggled with pastures.

The observed benefits

- **Profit:** Yes – run more sheep, make more money p/ha, less inputs.
- **Weeds:** Use the sheep to control them – I've got 5000 lawnmowers. That is the strength of Biserrula, it's the last thing they eat, and they eat the weeds first. Eliminate as much grass as you can in the final year of pasture before cropping (but that can impact carrying capacity without grass in the mix).
- **Nitrogen:** Yes. Soil test to check what is in there and dig plants up to see if they are nodulating. Older pastures may look great, but half the time they are not nodulating. On the lease farm we run 100% cropping and N is always the issue – there is none. The home farm seems healthier and the nutrients are high normally.
- **Soil improvement:** Yes, as above. You must crop to get the benefit. The block near the airport where we don't crop at all, I'm pushing it to the limit. I do grow a bit of hay there.
- **Risk:** Watching for photosensitivity, and having rain at right time to establish (that's why there's a mix to reduce risk).
- **Animal health:** If they are eating high protein feed, they are doing better. Better lambing, better mothering, and it's also good as dry feed. When it dries off now there is quality dry feed around. You do need to keep on top of worms.



Grazing strategy

The strategy is heavy grazing and spell as needed. Try not to graze down to bare dirt. We supplement feed as needed prior to lambing. The stubbles get grazed heavily (also for weed control during summer rather than summer spraying). I've not been overly concerned about compaction. On the odd occasion I'll deep rip if the pastures are too hard when we're looking to seed crops. Because we don't have a huge landholding, I look at grazing as way to make as much money per/ha as possible. With 100% cropping there's 4 months of the year when the land is not productive. With sheep in the mix, I can draw some of that added value out. It's a symbiotic system.

Thoughts on the Dryland Pasture Legume System variety showcase site on your property this year?

They all looked pretty good. The medics were the early starters (Scimitar looked the most prolific early on). The new Bladder Clover really took off and was impressive. Serradellas are probably not suited to that type of country. The Scorpiurus was really slow to get going but now it's looking really good and is still green. It has just been sprayed by Rob Harrison for seed collection.

There were aphids in the trial and Rob wanted to spray them out – my thought was don't, see what can take the pressure. Rob didn't end up spraying for them and it was interesting to see that the Bladder Clover got hammered but the damage was not too noticeable in the rest of it. I want to be able to grow pastures that can look after themselves.

This season

This season has been bloody fantastic – a welcome change compared to last year. Last year was our toughest year as far as rain and feed. This year has been awesome, not too wet and with rain at about the right time. I've noticed that despite the rain there's not been a huge amount of run off into dams – we didn't get heavy rain but it has been long soft spring.

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Wrapping Up: Future challenges & opportunities

I don't have grand ten-year plans and I work from year to year. Shearing is probably what is becoming an issue as far as access to contractors when you need them and the shortage of staff. It is the one thing that needs to dramatically change. I have had a team of repeat shearers that have been coming for years, but when I sit and have a drink with them, they are all getting older and saying it's time to get out. This year I did the pressing and it was great, I love to see the wool come off the sheep. Another issue is for those wanting to expand - the cost of land / lease are exponential, but as long as commodity prices go up at same rate, it's ok.

There's big opportunity with technology and measurement in cropping and livestock. The potential for genetic gain is huge. We've seen it over the last ten years in crop yield, wool growth, and fiber diameter. This is something that I really like to see and am passionate about. The world has strong focus on clean and green at the moment, and wool is one of the cleanest and greenest products you will get. One of the challenges we have is carbon and how we will manage that. If we can present as carbon neutral that would be a good thing. The scope for wool is what makes me keep producing it.

Mulesing is another issue but I'm not looking to stop right now, I would be mad. We are not going to win the argument that it's cruel, if there was something as effective and efficient that would be good, and I'd take it up. I use Tri-Solfen for pain relief; bringing in pain relief is fair enough. My advice to my young bloke is to come up with good ideas that are better for the animals and the people, and that's the goal.

Huge thanks to Glen Quinlivan for this interview. Glen is President of the South East Merino Breeders Improvement Group (SEMBIG), an Esperance-based wether comparison group coming into its 30th year. They plan to celebrate in Feb / March 2022 and invite people who have been involved over the years. If you want to reconnect contact Glen: 0427 879 903.



Case study produced by ASHEEP for the Dryland Legume Pasture Systems Project



Demi Vandenberghe joins the ASHEEP team

My name is Demi Vandenberghe, I have just joined the ASHEEP team as a casual project officer, and am very excited to be involved with ASHEEP.

I grew up in Scaddan on a mixed farm where the family prerequisite is a love for sheep, this fostered my passions for livestock and agriculture. I currently work with my partner at The Oaks in Dalyup, both on farm and in the office, and for South East Agronomy Research (SEAR) in a casual role, on their research projects. Previously I have worked at Swans Veterinary Services as a Vet Nurse and field technician after gaining my vet nurse qualifications in Perth.

I believe I have lots to learn from ASHEEP as a progressive knowledge sharing platform, and from my future involvement in projects. We have an exciting future with agricultural technology and the future of farming and I believe working with ASHEEP is my best bet to be involved.

Demi Vandenberghe
Project Officer, ASHEEP



Assessing Phosphorus Requirements in High PBI Soils



Summit Fertilizers

With global prices of many fertilizer commodities at or near record highs, soil testing for the 2022 season is set to be more important than ever. At Summit Fertilizers, our inSITE Soil Analysis program is delivered by our team of experienced Area Managers and has been designed to ensure that you get the most out of your fertilizer investment.

Summit inSITE continues to evolve, and we have recently introduced the DGT-P soil test, which has the potential to redefine crop phosphorus requirement predictions on soils with a high phosphorus buffering index (PBI) that rapidly fix phosphorus and make it unavailable to crops and pastures, such as forest gravels.

Traditional approaches to predicting plant available soil P, through analysing the Colwell P and PBI values can sometimes be problematic and overestimate available P on certain soil types, including calcareous or acidic soils, or where iron or aluminium are present in high concentrations.

The DGT-P test however mimics the action of plant roots, meaning that the inherent properties that govern P availability in the soil determine the test result. This can in turn provide a more accurate way of assessing how much phosphorus needs to be applied to the soil during seeding to achieve target yields.

In the DGT-P test an iron oxide gel disc is placed on a saturated soil sample. The gel acts as a sink, binding forms of P that are able to diffuse through the soil solution and through an additional gel membrane, just like a cell membrane in root uptake. The amount of P bound to the gel is then measured.

Through working with our laboratory partner APAL, the DGT-P test is available through Summit's inSITE Soil Analysis. In addition to receiving raw test results, growers also receive product recommendations that are based on our extensive Field Research program, with close to 200 crop nutrition trials across WA over the past 6 years.

To get started with your soil testing program, speak to Nick Donkin and Tim Donkin.

Nick Donkin – Area Manager, Esperance (East) – 0428 715 045

Tim Donkin – Area Manager, Esperance (West) – 0408 092 355

Soil samples undergoing a DGT-P test.

Image supplied courtesy of Dr Sean Mason, Agronomy Solutions.

To learn more about the DGT-P test and Summit inSITE, scan the QR code below.



Agro Spot: Great Spring!

Theo Oorschot, Esperance Rural Supplies, 0427 715166

It's been a great Spring in terms of building up soil moisture for sowing down lucerne and summer cropping. Some growers have seized the opportunities presented, and below are just a couple of examples.

The ASHEEP Cattle Field Walk on the 30th June this year incorporated a visit to Greg Hard's property on Merivale Road to have a look at Greg's impressive lucerne stand. I thought it would be timely to see how the stand was looking.



Since the visit Greg has had two further grazings and included an opportunity to spray out the broadleaf weeds. An application of SpraySeed plus Diuron helped control capeweed and marshmallow. Greg opened up discussions about the possibility of "thickening up the stand" by scratching in some oats or ryegrass, which never eventuated. The below photo was taken 16th November, and Greg had just put the cows in the paddock. Rainfall to date has been in excess of 600 mm this year.



Greg Hard in his stand of lucerne sown August 2020

Boyd Eime farms with his father Stuart, on the Merivale Road, east of Mt Merivale. This is his fourth year of summer cropping. The 2020-21 summer crop of Shirohie millet finished 800 White Suffolk cross lambs on 35 ha. This year Boyd has sown Shirohie as the majority, but, is experimenting with Pearler hybrid millet. The area sown was Blue Gums up till 2015. Since then it has returned to bullrushes, lovegrass, reeds and guildford grass. He will be top dressing 150 kg/ha TekPhos 3:1 in the next couple of days.

In the case of millets, experience has been that a number of broadleaf weeds, namely wireweed, marshmallow, blackberry nightshade and radish, tend to germinate with these forage crops. There are a number of broadleaf herbicide options available in conjunction with grazing.

Mark Tyrrell farms 20 km north of Esperance on the Norseman Road. A painter by trade, his hobby includes farming 250 ha and running beef cattle. He sowed lucerne on the 26th August this year after knocking down the paddock on 8th August. The variety sown was L56, a variety considered being a "semi-winter active". For ease of management, SuperPotash 5:1 was top-dressed at 130 kg/ha on 11th October. A previous application of SuperPotash 5:1 at the same rate was applied 13 April.



Mark Tyrrell in his stand of L56, 17th Nov 2021



Boyd Eime in a stand of Shirohie millet sown at 5.4 kg/ha on 17th Oct 2021, photo taken 17th Nov 2021

V&V Walsh Update: Incidence of *C. ovis*

Hannah Matthews, V&V Walsh

This season we have observed an increase in the incidence of *C. ovis* in carcasses.

C. ovis, commonly referred to as sheep measles, is the intermediate 'larval cystic' stage of the parasite *Taenia ovis*, a common tapeworm of dogs and other canine species (including foxes). Tapeworms produce eggs that pass out in tapeworm segments in the dog's faeces. If present in pasture, these can be ingested by sheep or goats in which larvae develop and migrate through the gut wall, travel through the body and localise in the muscle, particularly the heart and diaphragm. See Figure 1.

Unexpected outbreaks can happen due to climatic conditions that favour the survival of eggs in pastures or the activity of dogs or wild canids that carry the disease.

Disease pictured at the abattoir

C. ovis cysts are typically found in around 4% of sheep, and cost the industry \$2.4 million annually due to trimming, carcass downgrades and condemnations. If five or more cysts are found in the muscle, the whole carcass must be condemned, as per the Australian Standard (see Figures 2&3). *C. ovis* is a quality issue, and does not affect food safety.

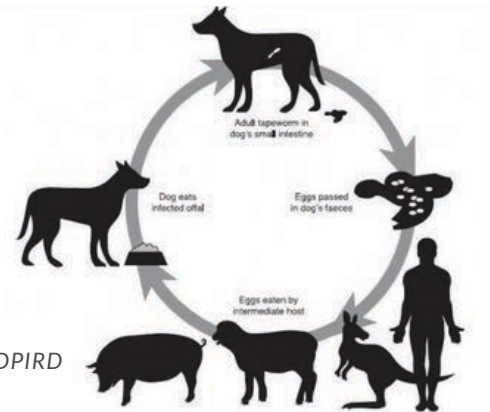


Figure 1: The lifecycle of *T. ovis*. Source: DPIRD



Figure 2 (left) extensive *C. ovis* cysts in the abdomen; and Figure 3 (above) extensive cysts in the thick skirt.

Prevention and control

At the current time, there is no available treatment for cysts in sheep or goats; control is based on breaking the life cycle. Control measures include:

- Worming all farm and house dogs, monthly with a wormer that contains the active ingredient praziquantel. Contractors with dogs should provide evidence that their dogs have been treated at least 3 days, and no longer than a month before they come on to the property.
- Feed commercial packaged dog food to dogs and don't feed or allow access to sheep or goat carcasses.
- Secure dogs at night to stop scavenging and remove sheep carcasses to stop access for domestic dogs, wild dogs and foxes. Consider burying, burning or creating a fenced (dog proof) offal pit.
- All home killing of sheep should occur in a dog proof enclosure.

Because of the ability for eggs to spread some distance, control works best when organised on an area basis.

What to expect from a control program

Even after a control program is commenced, sheep may still become infected for up to a year due to existing viable eggs on pasture. Cysts are present in sheep for life, so once the lifecycle has been broken it may take many years to turn over the flock and remove the last infected animals. In some areas wild dogs and foxes may play a part in the maintenance of sheep measles in the sheep population. Control of foxes and wild dogs also has on farm welfare and production advantages and will help reduce the level of infection.

More information on *C. ovis* can be found on the DPIRD website under the 'livestock parasites' tab, or by consulting your local department veterinary officer. V&V Walsh would like to thank producers who have been proactive in acting on our feedback so far, please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

Case Study: Eagle Strategies & Lambing in Confinement

ASHEEP interviews Simeon Roberts, Lortleaze Farms

Simeon Roberts farms Lortleaze Farms, a family-run, mixed farming operation located in Cascade. Lortleaze is predominantly cropping-focused (70%), and the livestock component of the business has been structured to work with and benefit the cropping program, as a grass-free legume rotation that grows well on heavy alkaline clay soils. They run the vetch pasture with the intent of producing biomass and of harvesting them.

Lortleaze runs a 100% merino flock, mated to merino rams, which Simeon chose to transition to after past work with dorpers did not achieve desired overall fertility / lambing rates, and to create a system that was less reliant on day-to-day labour. The farm's location can be subject to marginal rainfall, and the team there has become adept at farming in a way that reduces risk and gives flexibility when faced with dry conditions.

Simeon has been focused on improvements in his lambing program, including mitigating the risk of eagles and establishing a lambing in confinement system. Thanks to Simeon for giving us an insight into his learnings in the area.

Reducing Impact of Eagles

Eagle pressure when lambing on Rollond Rd (Cascade), has been big problem for some time. It is common to have prolific numbers when lambing (often 15 to 30 eagles hanging around a mob of lambing ewes). We have land that shares a boundary with the bush and we are first in line as eagles leave their habitat in search of food. Over time this has placed significant pressure on lambing percentages, but we have found a strategy that has reduced the impact on our flock.

For many years we have lambed 30% of our ewes early (March to April) and the majority at the start of June. In 2018, it was a bone-dry start (low summer / autumn rain) and the March drop did not have any green feed. The ewes and lambs were fed via grain self-feeders plus hay in paddock during lambing, and then creep fed on good hay and silage to get the lambs big enough to wean and sell. After the 2018 experience we were running with very low stubble cover, and I decided to put all lambing back to mid-June to increase the chances of having a solid pasture.

2019 also started with low summer rain. Lambing commenced in mid-June, and it was noticeable that the eagle pressure had dropped dramatically. It's like they are sitting on nests as the weather cools off, and the numbers are around 3 per mob at this later time of year.

As we know, there is always a trade-off. While eagle pressure is reduced when we lamb at this time, the compromise is that we have a shorter season and a reduced period to bring the lambs up. Merino lambs also have a longer finishing time than terminal / cross-bred breeds, so lambs tend to be sold as stores.

Lambing Comparison 2019–2021: Confinement & paddock systems

Over the last three years Simeon has adjusted the Lortleaze lambing operation to accommodate seasonal demands including food on offer. In 2019 and 2020, very dry conditions and extremely challenging seasons led to the development of a lambing in confinement system. Without available feed in the paddocks, the solution found was to bring the ewes into confinement to give them the nutrition required.

2021 has been far kinder and there were some exceptional pastures and crops on display in the Cascade area, allowing the Roberts family to return to a more traditional paddock-lambing system. Simeon has made notes comparing the three years and the learnings that have arisen, shared as follows. In all three years the sheep were preg-tested, including for multiples / singles. Lambing percentages quoted are on a preg-tested basis.



Farm Snapshot

Location: Cascade

Av. Annual Rainfall: 360mm

Enterprise Mix: Mixed farming – sheep / crop

Stock: Merino flock to merino sire

Feed: Grass-free legume rotation

Soil: Heavy alkaline clay



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Scooping dams

In 2019 and 2020 we experienced two very difficult seasons with late starts and low stubble levels in paddocks from poor cropping results. We also scooped 45 dams over this time and worked hard to pump water around via pipe / tank and poly to keep sheep going. With limited available feed, we made the decision to fence off several areas that had bush / trees growing plus some clearings, and made confinement zones to lamb in. We also lambed in existing feedlots that had smaller confinement zones.

The larger zones were between 4-8 ha, and the smaller ones around 1 ha. We set them up with a tank and a trough each. Mob-size was based on 500 ewes per large confinement zone and we put the twins in the zones with more bush. All the areas we used had some form of shelter, and I wouldn't lamb in confinement without it. Being able to provide shelter is one of the benefits of lambing in confinement compared to open paddock, we used some yate swamps that worked well giving privacy to ewes and shelter to lambs.



End of June, north Cascade with low ground cover



12ha fenced Yate swamp that lambed 500 twin-bearing ewes



Wind erosion, July 2020



8.3ha fenced area around dam, NO shelter here meant LOWER lambing



2ha confinement zone



9.7ha confinement zone that was divided into two halves and lambed 500 single ewe mobs per side, poly tank with a water trough + two Moylan feeders per side

The feed system was two Moylan grain feeders per 500 ewes. The grain ration was by volume 25% lupins / 50% oats / 25% barley and 1 bag of Calcium-Sulphur mix per 3 tonne of grain. Once filled, the feeders were good for about a week to ten days. Something we did pick up is that the lambs have a tendency to go underneath the feeders and get stuck. We solved the problem by using an occy stray to secure garden edging around the base of the feeders and prevent access (you can get this from Bunnings in a 9m roll, inexpensive).

In addition to the feeders, we provided ad lib 50% quality hay / 50% low-quality barley straw. To supplement mineral
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Garden edging to prevent lambs going under feeder

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... intake we put out tubs made from the end on an enviro drum at a rate of 1 per 100 ewes, filled with a combination of our own gypsum / lime / molasses / salt mix (3/4) plus a bag of Calcium-Sulphur mix (1/4). The enviro-drums worked well and in rain the siphon hole allows the water to drain away.

2019 - Confinement lambing including maidens

At the start of June, ten days before lambing, we put all the ewes in the confinement zones. The mature ewes did well, with a 90% result on singles preg-tested and 130% to 135% lambing on multiples preg-tested. Losses were around 5%. The maidens, however, did not perform well in this situation, and we had a 40% lambing result. Once a week we went through and removed any stock that we had lost, where we could amongst the trees / scrub. It looked pretty untidy. Our overall lambing was 77%.

2020 - Confinement lambing mature ewes only with maidens in paddock

In 2020, we ran a lambing in confinement system again, but this time we left the maiden ewes out of confinement. We trail fed them in a bare paddock with grain mix (lupin / oat / barley) and they also had access to ad lib hay / straw. Mob size was set at 250 and their lambing percentage was 90%. We consider this to be a good result with losses around 2.5%. The mature ewes went back into confinement and lambed at 90% single and 135% multiples.

I've noticed that the lambs trail-fed in the paddock seemed to do better than those on feeders. The trail-fed lambs learnt from their mothers, while those using feeders were competing with the ewes for access and it's a harder system for them. The aim is to get them out of confinement as soon as possible after lambing finishes to grow out, you can try to supplement for green feed with silage but it is not ideal to raise a lamb in confinement and it can result in losses.

At the end of July, we were able to let the sheep out into vetch paddocks to be mulesed. It's important not to mulese in confinement – if I couldn't release them, I'd probably skip mulesing and tail only with rings to avoid infection. It is a compromise but avoids significant risk.

Our overall lambing was 109%.

2021 - Paddock lambing on vetch & oats

2021 was a text-book year for pasture. We had early rain that got the vetch going quickly, our RM4 Vetch was sown in the first week of March and came up. We confined the ewes for 6 weeks and let them out at the end of April and they went onto to lamb in vetch pastures, which were a foot high. The mob sizes for single bearing ewes were around 600 to 800, twin-bearing were set at 500 per mob, and maidens at 500 per mob. The lambing percentage overall was 107% on a preg-tested basis. The losses were around 3% - we had significant losses in ewes at marking time due to Hypocalcaemia.

A side-note on vetches: We put in about 2100 ha this year and had very low stubble cover. To compensate we used a spreader to put out about 20kg p/ha of oats before the seeder (knife points) followed with the vetch. It resulted in a really good inter-row grass, whilst the vetch still had the furrow. The quick-growing oats gave cover for the vetch, plus they could be later sprayed and grazed out with a selective grass herbicide application in June/July.



Mineral trailer and tubs



Confinement feeding 2020



End Sept 2020 - the confinement worth it as we put sheep out onto a well-managed pasture finally, with maybe 3-4 t of biomass

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Another thing that we do a little differently with vetches that we do not use phosphorous on them. Others in the area do, but for some years we've worked on the theory that the soils have a good enough P profile and so far it has not had a noticeable impact. We don't use rhizobia either, but that is because we have a good rhizobia background in the system now.

We put out a preventative insecticide regime when spraying grass selective application. For consecutive seasons when things get dry and stressed in spring we have had significant pressure from Bryobia and Balaustium mites killing large areas of RM4 that would normally bulk up when we receive late rains post a dry spell. RM4 has a great ability to out compete difficult weeds. One in particular is that it tends to shade-out Stemless Thistle which is a great thing in the alkaline soils. We have seeded early either wet or dry in the first half of March for more than a decade and 2020 was the only year where some paddocks died off due to being too dry.

Summary

- I was expecting a much higher lambing in 2021, however, in my view, the lack of paddock shelter limits our ability to go much higher.
- Confinement lambing is a good option for experienced lambing ewes if set up well with shelter.
- I think 8 ha is enough for 500 twin bearing ewes and 5ha for 500 single bearing ewes.
- Maidens are a **NO** as a confinement lambing option, they are better off in paddock with more space.

ASHEEP's thanks to Simeon Roberts for the time and thought put into this article, some very useful take-aways for those who need to consider lambing in confinement.



Late July, 2021 - RM4 Vetch, no oats, died off post grass spray and vetch bulking up



RM4 Vetch with oats inter-row in late April 2021



Vetch competing well with stemless thistle



A mob of 400 sheep lambed in 18ha of March-sown Sparticus, 2021



July 2021, RM4 Vetch with oats, grass selective applied



Mid October - RM4 Vetch going late with weaned merino lambs going well. Good result after a tight year.



Lamb benefiting from shelter in confinement zone



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MerinoLink... The Project Continues

Article by Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

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

The project used Genetic Flock Profile testing, ASBV's and the RamSelect program to firstly benchmark the flock and then using ASBV's and RamSelect to target genetic gain to meet breeding objectives.

The current project is in its final stages with the second lot of flock profile testing being completed and the final workshop and results being presented in March 2022.



We have had several of the current project participants indicate they would like to see the project continue for another 5 years.

The continued project would run with the same format of flock profile testing the 2021 drop ewes. We will conduct half day workshops in August each year. These workshops will consist of ASBV refreshers, looking at your current breeding benchmarks, setting your breeding objectives and thinking about the next ram purchases to achieve those objectives.

We will run 3 workshops to cater for everyone starting with an introduction to ASBV's, commercial rams buying and breeding your own rams including managing a nucleus flock.

The project will be full cost recover paid at the beginning of each year. It's estimated the first year will cost \$500 plus the flock profile test of \$800 and RamSelect subscription of \$27.50 per year.

If you would like to join the project or would like more information, please call Jan Clawson on 0407 990 497 or email janclawson@bigpond.com so we can organise the flock profile testing.

Shank & Show Results

In our last edition we advertised a Shank & Show Competition put together by Jake Hann, Nutrien Ag Solutions, and run at the Esperance Show in October 2021. It was the first time this competition was held and it was great way of creating some interest in the sheep shed and contributing to the show.

Jake has reported that there were a total of 4 nominations - 40 lambs total with 30 crossbreds and 10 merinos. A selection of carcasses from each entrant were professionally judged prior to the show by Rhys Devitt (V&V Walsh), the lambs on show were for display. It came down to the wire with Vandenberghe's coming through with the win (crossbred lambs) and the Fowlers at Chilwell in second place. Jake noted that the surprise for him was to see how well the Penrose merinos sacked up against to the crossbred lambs.

Jake plans to run the competition again next year and hopes to build participation. Moving forward there will be two categories - merino and crossbred - and he is working on figuring out a plan to include the lambs that are brought to the show in the judging.

A nod to Jake for driving the competition, to the sponsors, and to the producers who took part. It would be great to see more involved next year to knock Vandy off the post!





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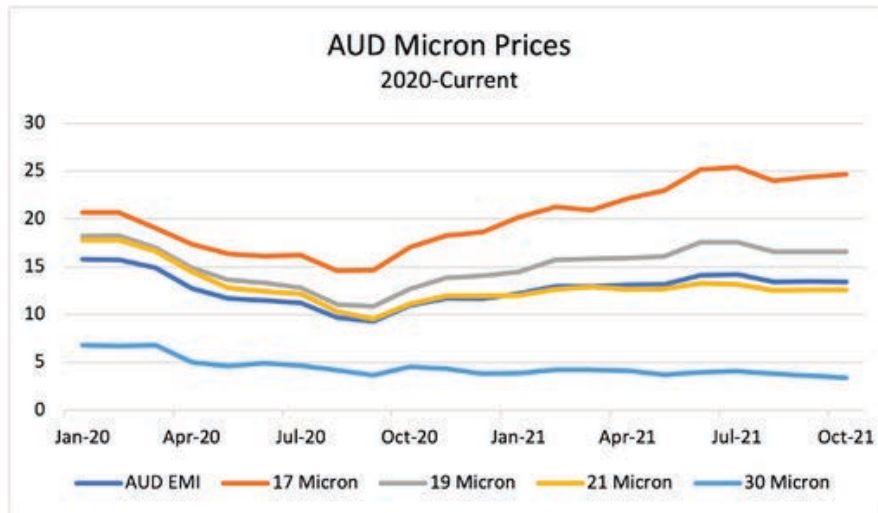
AWI Wool Market Intelligence

Ellie Bigwood, Australian Wool Innovation

AWI provides various information services to its partners and woolgrowers. By undertaking a broad review of the global market for wool and competitor fibres, we can provide wool production forecasting, retail and trade market reports, consumer insights and trend monitoring, along with fibre market research.



Market intelligence for November is now available



Since January 2020, before the pandemic the Australian EMI was at 1,578 Australian cents, and now as of October 2021 is at 1,341 Australian cents, which is a 15% drop. In US Dollar terms, the EMI has declined only 4%, which is somewhat a truer indication of the market. Therefore, the EMI is only slightly off pre-pandemic levels.

Read more about the wool production forecast, apparel trade and China domestic consumption: www.wool.com/market-intelligence

Modular sheep delivery unit to eliminate catch and drag

As part of a new AWI project, a mechanical system is under development that delivers the sheep to the shearer, thereby eliminating the catch and drag from the pen. This minimises the chance of injury to the shearer and the sheep whilst also maximising productivity with significantly reduced handling times.

Read more on the AWI website by searching for 'modular sheep delivery unit AWI' or listen to [Episode 198 of AWI's The Yarn podcast](#).



Make the Label Count; action on wool's eco rating challenge in the EU

AWI is working to ensure that European Union (EU) policy makers rate wool's environmental credentials appropriately in its Product Environmental Footprinting (PEF) methodology, to prevent the introduction of a poor environmental score for wool on clothing labels across this very important market for Australian wool.

AWI, with international fibre organisations and NGOs, has launched a new campaign called Make the Label Count – to help ensure the European Commission's proposed sustainability labelling for clothes is credible. The campaign aims to prevent the introduction of inaccurate and poor environmental scores for natural fibres such as wool.

Read more by searching for 'Wool's eco rating challenge in the EU AWI' or listen to on [Episode 200 of AWI's The Yarn podcast](#).

Meat Market: WAMMCO Market Review

WAMMCO

The global market for lamb and mutton is showing strength and resilience in a world still dealing with impacts of COVID 19. For WAMMCO, this means customers in North America, China, the Middle East, and most other markets are buying significant amounts of high-value lamb products, and in many cases sales volumes and prices have been steadily rising. A combination of strong demand and limited supply has helped push selling prices to new records as distribution channels compete to secure enough product.

In North America WAMMCO's ownership in The Lamb Company has been intrinsic to success in this market. With processing operations in Los Angeles, New Jersey and Toronto as part of WAMMCO's share in this business, lamb from WA is distributed to top-end retail and food service customers across the USA and Canada to well-known customers such as COSTCO and Loblaws supermarkets to name a few – both with high reach and strong market share.

The market in China is also making important contributions to WAMMCO's business, as well as the broader industry. The high prices and value being achieved for lower-end offcuts such as breast and flaps, bones and trimmings is contributing strongly to the overall return on every carcass processed through WAMMCO's Katanning and Goulburn processing facilities. And recently, it's not only offcuts being exported to China. This market now has regular demand for higher value products such as lamb legs, and shoulder meat, again providing good returns.

Another important region for WAMMCO and WA is the Middle East. While sales into important tourism markets such as Dubai did dip during COVID restrictions, now we are seeing a good recovery in demand and weekly sales. Other countries, like Saudi Arabia, didn't experience the same downturn, and in fact sales volumes are stronger than ever this year.

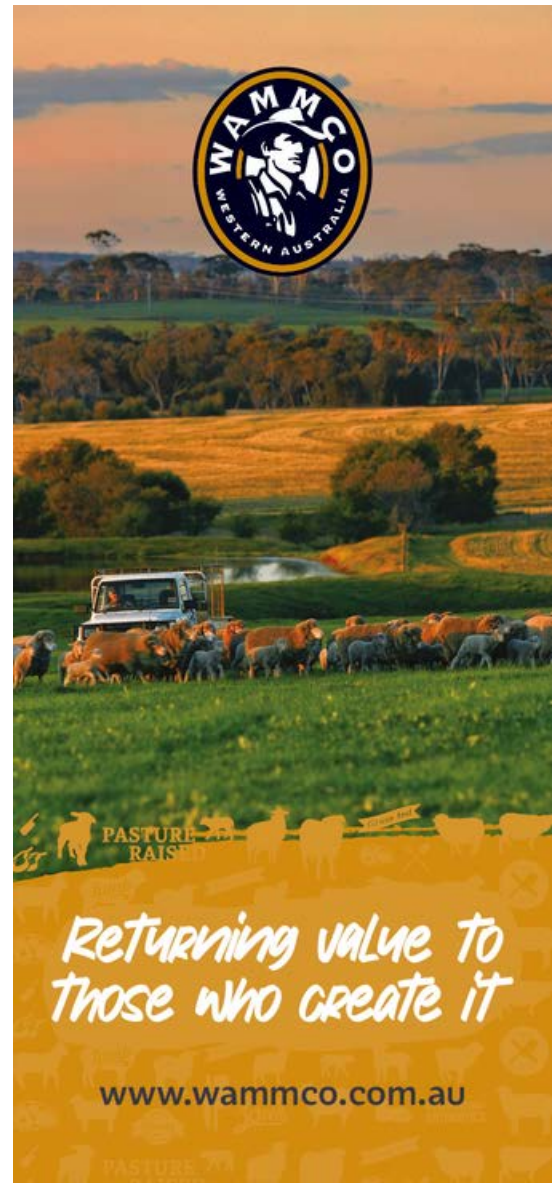
Let's not forget the domestic market here in WA. Domestic sales make up an important share of WAMMCO's chilled lamb business. You may know that WAMMCO is the supplier to some major WA retailers such as ALDI and COSTCO. ALDI has 48 stores in WA with more due to open in 2022. Products are packed for ALDI under the Killarnee lamb brand. COSTCO also plan to open a second warehouse in 2022. WAMMCO is the dedicated supplier for COSTCO in WA, packing lamb under the Kirkland Signature brand. This follows a long association with COSTCO in America and Canada spanning close to 20 years.

With a diverse array of customers and markets around the world, all showing ongoing demand for our products, we can't help but be positive about the future of lamb. This follows a period of industry stability and prosperity which has helped WAMMCO distribute \$22.8 million in bonuses to Co-operative members over the past 8 years.

The current high prices may face resistance from customers at some stage, and of course we can't predict the future impacts of COVID. However, with world leading product quality and dedicated customers in all corners of the globe we expect a bright future for WAMMCO and our Western Australian producer-members.

For further information please contact:

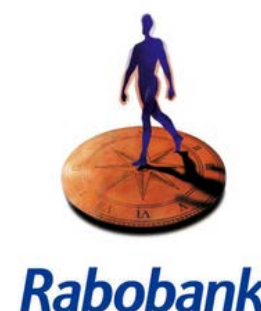
Rob Davidson – WAMMCO Supply Development Manager, 0429 380 195, rdavidson@wammco.com.au



Carbon abatement a potential income source for livestock producers

Rabobank

Australia's vast agricultural land holdings, combined with the rising price of carbon credits, could offer livestock producers the opportunity to tap into another source of income, according to agribusiness banking specialist Rabobank. That said, the bank warns producers to understand their own carbon footprint and assess their future requirements before considering the sale of carbon credits.



In its podcast, titled Making Sense of All the Green Noise, senior animal proteins analyst Angus Gidley-Baird and head of sustainable development Lachlan Monsborough say the livestock industry has a vital role to play in Australia's commitment under the Paris Climate Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below their 2005 levels by 2030.

"Agriculture accounts for about 14 per cent – or 75 million tonnes – of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions," Mr Monsborough says. "And around 61 million tonnes of that comes from the methane emissions of grazing animals, so the livestock sector has a key role to play heading into 2030 and beyond."

The analysts note that the Australian government's approach to reaching its climate targets makes carbon an important commodity for agricultural producers to consider when planning for the future, but they must understand their own carbon balance sheet first and consider any market or regulatory commitments they may be required to meet in the future.

"The Australian Carbon Credit Unit price has crossed \$20 per tonne in the last six months, which is up from \$16 per tonne a year ago," Mr Monsborough says. "Because of the size of our grazing landscape, Australian producers have the potential to sequester serious volumes of carbon, which could be a big competitive advantage compared to other beef and sheep supply chains in the future."

Consumer preferences for "carbon neutral" red meat is also becoming increasingly important as a selling feature in both domestic and high-value export markets, according to Mr Gidley-Baird, which makes the race to quantify and verify carbon emissions critical.

"Meat & Livestock Australia's CN30 program is working with industry to reduce emissions from grazing management, lot feeding and processing, while increasing carbon storage in soils and vegetation," Mr Gidley-Baird says. "Large commercial operators across the supply chain - including JBS, Coles and McDonalds - have their own carbon reduction programs in place to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the next few decades."



The analysts note that the need for a uniform and consistent approach to environmental standards – similar to what livestock producers are used to with Meat Standards Australia and the National Livestock Identification Scheme – is critical to the future competitiveness of Australia's red meat industry.

To hear this podcast or find out more about other Rabobank research, subscribe to *RaboResearch Food & Agribusiness Australia & New Zealand* on your podcast app.

Left: Rabobank Senior Animal Proteins Analyst, Angus Gidley-Baird.



Case Study: Advocacy, Non-Mulesed, Worms & Weaners

ASHEEP interviews Emily Stretch, Stretch Enterprises

Image Above: Weaners going into oats, November 2018

Emily Stretch holds the role of Livestock Manager in her family's farming operation Stretch Enterprises, located in Moberup, near Kojonup. They run a mixed farming system that is typically around 50% cropping, 50% sheep but can vary pending seasonal outlook and market signals. Rather than having a unified breeding objective for the flock, they run two lines of merino ewes with one geared toward wool production and the other to a more multipurpose style of sheep.

On top of having a key role in the farming business, Emily has a passion for agriculture that has led her to become an active advocate for the livestock industry. In watching the divide between the farming and non-farming community grow, Emily has become a proactive voice via Instagram, Facebook, and blogging in a way that aims to give transparency to her farming operation and to help people understand the industry. More on that later. Emily recently joined ASHEEP as a member, we'll hand over to her to continue the conversation.

Operation overview

Our farm is based in Moberup, with an annual average rainfall of 550mm. There is a lot of variation in the soils. No paddock has one uniform soil type. Some paddocks go from gutless white sand, to loam, to ironstone ridges, to loamy gravels. Our biggest issue soil types are Jarrah non-wetting gravels, and leaching yet non-wetting white sands.

Pastures are a mix of winter grasses, ryegrass, sub and aerial clover. Not to mention the cape weed, corkscrew and other unmentionables we all fight. We have strategic kikuyu paddocks for summer. We use them for Vitamin E top-ups on weaners primarily. They also function to hold together the sandy low-lying country, and to use up water in those low spots. We haven't needed to crop graze yet but it's something we're keeping in the tool belt for tight seasons. The stubbles are canola, wheat, barley, and oats.

We are a full merino enterprise and run two types of non-mulesed wool merinos, one being wool driven and the other being multipurpose (meat and wool) to pick up what the crossbred lamb operation was doing. We also buy and sell wethers to supplement or reduce numbers. We are currently running 15,000 head. 5,000 of those are breeding ewes, 4,500 are weaners and the rest are dry ewe hoggets or wethers. We don't mate ewes until they're 2.5 years old.

Our breeding objectives are to keep our 18.5 micron and 5-6kg cut wool traits stable, while trending towards an easy-care breech and strong worm resistance and resilience. All our wool ewes are classed harshly at lamb marking, weaner shearing, and hogget shearing. Any of the culls move into the multipurpose line instead. If we need to offload ewes, we can choose which side of the enterprise to sell from. We also know which mobs will be most susceptible to fly and can intervene/apply preventatively there first. Improving lamb marking rates and fertility are also a focus, but primarily via management at this point.

We meet most markets with our livestock because we run shipper wethers, meat lambs, mutton ewes, and wool breeders. We aim to produce the highest quality product in any given area, and we stay flexible on the specific market we sell into.

Farm Snapshot

Location: Moberup - Kojonup

Av. Annual Rainfall: 550mm

Enterprise Mix: 50/50 sheep & crop with seasonal variation

Stock: Merino, currently 15,000 head

Feed: Winter grasses, ryegrass, sub & aerial clover, kikuyu

Crop: Canola, wheat, barley, oats

Soil: Variable - white sand, loam, ironstone ridges, loamy gravels, non-wetting gravels



Continued over page.

Key operational focuses include:

- **Sheep** - Preventative action wherever possible. This means a lot of microscope work to keep worm egg counts at bay, and therefore reducing dag on a non-mulesed flock. We run sheep on condition once they're past hogget age, not age groups. Eventually with individual management I'll be able to pinpoint the animals that are always in the low condition mob and start removing them.
- **Crops** - We adapt to what the season throws at us instead of running with a strict prescription.
- **Pastures** - Deferring from the first rains to the full break, and keeping ground cover in summer.
- **Labour** - Make the busy times simple, for example, fodder crops for weaners during harvest.

How this season stacks up

We are looking at 600-700 mm of rain this season depending on the block of land. Water-logging has been an issue in crops, although no more so than a typical wet year. Our waterlogged areas are generally valley areas and as such don't stretch further into the paddock with more rain. Our clovers are looking fantastic with an early germination in February that we managed to defer until proper rains set in. The majority of the clover is still pumping now in mid-November. It's been a long season for labour fatigue as unskilled workers just couldn't be trained in treacherously wet paddocks.

Feed base improvements & managing gaps

The winter feed base is clovers, ryegrass and winter grasses. The summer feed base is mainly stubbles plus the fodder oats for weaners and kikuyu as Vitamin E top-ups are required. The only 'new' thing we've been doing is finally getting some new clover and rye grass varieties seeded. Balansa clover fits really well in our water logging areas, and that's very apparent this year! Otherwise, we try to have a good mix of species so something is always growing given our varied soil types and moisture zones. We are trying saltbush this year, which is less of a new strategy and more of a tool to implement given what we know about saltbush already. Any tips are greatly appreciated!

Autumn is our main feed gap, but we also have a lull in July / August when temps get low enough for pastures to go dormant. Autumn is managed via supplement feeding (lupins, barley, oats and hay if necessary, generally hay is a last resort if we have a really late break). Once we have had a late summer or autumn rain we do a form of containment feeding. We bring all the sheep into the paddocks that will be cropped (this has generally already happened given the stubble feed value). Eventually I end up with the paddocks being seeded to oats (which are last in our system) having all the sheep on them. This lets me defer the pasture paddocks until the winter rains set in. The lambing paddocks ideally stay deferred until we preg-scan in May to keep them worm free, this also keeps the pastures pumping to hold them over until the warmer temperatures kick in August. The deferment system is as much to reduce worm load and drench needs as it is to keep the pastures pumping. Our wethers and ewe hoggets were drenched in April this year and didn't need another drench until September. Without deferment they probably would have needed a drench in July. I'm hoping saltbush will give me another autumn tool to keep the pastures deferred.



Kikuyu / balansa paddock pre-weaners



Same paddock mid-summer post weaners, kikuyu has taken off further since photo

Animal Health – Worms & resistance

The biggest animal health issues, outside of biosecurity measures when buying stock in, are in chemical resistance. We've seen resistance to some lice and fly products, we regularly do drench resistance tests to maintain the longevity of our drenches. Do be aware that weaners with no refugia animals going onto fodder crops can breed resistance to new drench molecules within a year! I now leave leader ewes undrenched and run an undrenched adult mob across the oat paddock after the weaners to drop worm eggs that can dilute the population.

Technology & equipment

To be honest, in this space we are just picking and choosing what seems to be improving efficiencies in other operations. We run auto steer (no brainer, I know), we use a combi clamp in the yards, we've upgraded to EVO shearing heads. However, when we see game changers we jump on them – we didn't shy away from expensive new molecule drenches, because the more modes of action we can rotate or mix together, the longer we can keep them functioning. We were part of the first GM canola trials, we trialled occlusion clips (alternative mulesing option), and we're currently using Numnuts which is vastly improving our welfare standards. None of these are out-there technologies, but they have all given us a lift in some way or another. If anyone is trialling new fly treatments I will put my hand up immediately, as we need better / more options in this space.

We have trialled beachport liquid minerals on the weaners this year. My gut feel is it's helped them move out of adrenaline mode and switch their brains on faster, but my trial certainly wasn't scientifically rigorous!

Continued over page.

Carbon neutral?

Continued.

Not yet, we're certainly aware of it and essentially waiting for a recognised standard of measurement and some better protocols around it all before we jump in. While it's politically charged, I can't see it being something we can ignore long term.

Animal welfare priorities

I'm a big fan of low stress stock handling, or 'fast, efficient' stock handling. This starts as lambs. Lambs are given time to use their brains when they're with mum to learn. We imprint feed, train them through the yards, and the shearing shed when I have time while they're on mum. As weaners, they're walked through the yards gently and allowed to think their way through it. My weaner mobs in the paddock are picked up and walked in the paddock each day for a few weeks - with a motorbike, ATV, dog, and on foot. This sets them up to move respectfully for the rest of their lives. It's very easy to undo this training with one operator who doesn't employ the same principles, drill it into your workers!!



Why did you take up an active livestock advocacy role & how has that gone?

I grew up in a country town where there were differences between me and my town friends. I went to boarding school where that was even more pronounced. I watched knee-jerk decisions from government which again highlight those differences in experiential understanding. I tried as an 18-year-old to blog about my experiences to help provide that understanding, that stopped when I discovered how brutal the internet can be. In 2020, I did the Livestock Leaders course after a gentle poke from a respected industry leader. I now have a better understanding of the internet and 'protocols' to deal with the trolls and bullies. I also have a network of other Livestock Leaders to help me vet what I do and don't post, and to help moderate comments when something goes viral. We all support each other. How am I trying to make a difference? By showing my experience and how to understand an animal without giving them human characteristics. Showing the tears, the joys, and most of all the care we all have for animals.

I have Ag friends all over the world now, which is amazing for a new perspective. The network of like-minded people is also grounding and uplifting. The challenges are knowing when to quit with people who genuinely won't change their beliefs, and staying motivated when you're not sure if you're reaching your target audience. I have 890 Instagram followers, that's a drop in the bucket of humanity. If each farmer has 890 followers - that's almost a splash and the ripple effect becomes powerful for bridging the knowledge gaps. In saying that, it's not for everyone. I thrive off interacting with people who are eager to learn more. If you thrive off face to face conversations, then practice that. If you thrive off improving tech, then practice that. We can all make a difference in our own way.

Do you get hard questions?

I don't tend to struggle with the questions, because if I don't know an answer, I find someone who does. There are times when I struggle with the people. I would love to help every person see the world from my perspective, but some of them just aren't willing to try. Sometimes my energy is better spent elsewhere, but it sucks making that call.

How can other farmers and people in the livestock industry get started as advocates?

Step one: listen! Step two: Ask! Repeat steps one and two three times. I've had some enlightening conversations with people in real life and online by actually listening to their point of view and asking questions to understand their 'why'. Too often we throw our own perspective at someone without understanding their perspective fully. Embrace their 'why' not their 'what' and we actually start to make change. A person who doesn't eat meat might have a good reason. Perhaps they're allergic - to assume they've been brainwashed by vegans turns them offside. Listen and ask!! There are also millions of ways to advocate. An article, a letter to the editor, a blog post, an image, a short story, a conversation, an art piece, an event - any of these are advocacy if you stay open to people's 'why's' and create a space where questions can be answered by you.

Future challenges for farming?

I think the biggest challenge is going to be keeping policy and legislation relevant and stopping them becoming prohibitive. The answer to that lies in supporting our policy groups PGA and WAFF and making sure the city constituents can see how we operate, which takes us full circle back to advocacy.

What do you love about being in the livestock industry?

Personally, understanding animal behavioural psychology. As an industry, watching the way our understanding of animals is fast becoming the core of best practice. Our connection to our livestock and any animal is how we know what they do or don't need, and from that we create best practice.

Fodder oat system

If anybody wants more info on our fodder oat system I did an article for DPIRD - Google "Ovine Observer Sept 2020 Emily Stretch"



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Reserved for my farm industry questions- this is where you'll find me asking questions, not answering them!

Our thanks to Emily Stretch for this interview!

Field Day Follow Up: Grazing Brassica

Mark Walter, ASHEEP Chair

Location: Cascade
Soil: Komi to gray clay
Rain: 340mm year to date,
 260mm growing season

This year's Winter Field Walk on 20th July took us to Mark & Liv Walter's farm in Cascade, where Mark took us through his Leafmore Brassica. This is one of the varieties that we have been working with in the ASHEEP / MLA Pasture Variety Trials and it was great to see it being put to use on commercial scale. ASHEEP's thanks goes to Mark for providing an update on the progress of the brassica as the season progressed.

The photo to the right was taken 9th May 2021, as I let sheep into the paddock. I'd sown 500 ha of Leafmore Brassica into paddocks that had a good history of medics. It had received 25kg of MAP fertiliser and 2kg of seed. It grew fast early and was ready to graze 2 to 3 weeks earlier than vetches. We put it in to bulk up the medics for early feed, as we couldn't obtain enough vetch seed.



The second photo on the right was taken on 26th July. The paddock (220 ha) had been set-stocked since the first photo with 900 hoggets and 700 preg-tested single ewes. I'd also fed out loose mix mineral supplement and straw, which they hadn't eaten. The stock showed no signs of any scour and had lambed well. They were just starting to show N deficiency signs.



The image below was taken 6th September. The medic was coming in and I'd started to see that higher seeding rate was probably beneficial for companion plants, and was glad to see the medic doing well. It was still stocked right up until this photo with same ewe numbers. Moth damage had kicked in and was becoming quite severe.

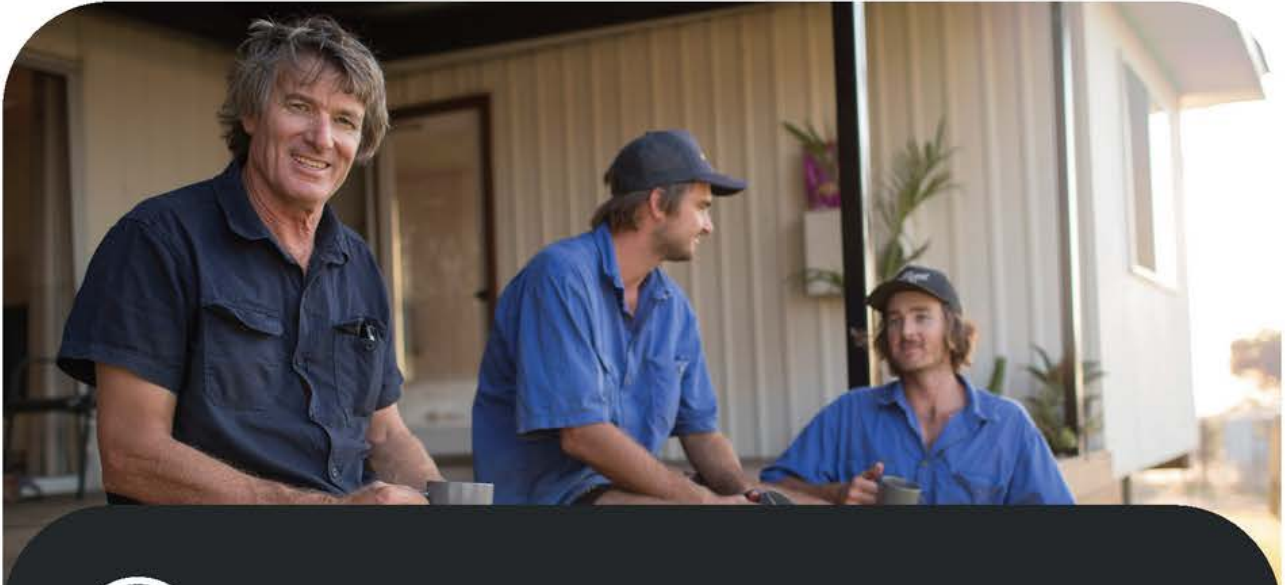


The next photo, to the right, was captured 4th October. The Diamondback Moth had all but killed the brassica. I'd taken the sheep out two weeks prior. I'd say that the brassica is a good option in a mix, sown in February. It has phenomenal early growth but as Theo has told us many times, the moths are going to flog it from late Spring. Not much is left in the paddock once stock have eaten the leaf off.

Bottom right shows a photo taken on 29th November, after having sprayed out the paddock with 2ltr RUP and 500 ml ester. It has grown back from the base. The plants numbers are pretty sparse but they look very healthy after a bit of rain in November.



I would grow it again in a mix with vetch, for early growth.



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Size matters (or does it?)

James Macfarlane, ASHEEP Member

When assessing rams, it is important to understand their age. There may be two concurrent sales with similar lines for example, and you could be naturally drawn to the one presenting the more impressive-looking, larger rams, although they may only be larger due to age, with the smaller ones in the other sale soon to catch up anyway. Which rams have the best genetics? Size won't tell you that, without additional data. There's probably more variation in the age of rams between sales than you might expect, and age will naturally dictate the size of rams, to a degree. During this year's sale season, I noted a 5-month difference from youngest to oldest rams offered, which considerably advantaged the older rams in terms of their size at auction.

Environmental conditions contribute greatly to size and condition of sale rams too. One line may have experienced an initial set back, but this won't always have a lasting effect. Birth type – single, twin, triplet – also adds to the equation. Without sound data, would you know by sight whether a smaller ram was triplet-born to a ewe lamb – a potentially superior purchase to a larger, single-born counterpart? And what about nutrition? Were the rams pasture-raised, or fattened in a feedlot? If they're big and fat at the sale but deflate like an old balloon when you get them home, you may end up disappointed.

In this day and age, with ASBVs being well and truly a norm within the genetic selection process, it's baffling to think that the old school mentality of 'bigger is better' continues to persist. These days, we're able to objectively assess a ram's genetic potential without ever setting eyes on him, although a visual inspection is always advised too of course. Once upon a time however, when Australia was riding on the sheep's back, big sheep with big horns and more wrinkles than you could count were seen as the pinnacle of perfection, like the Bungaree Merinos pictured below, developed by my family. Size and wrinkle was, of course, all about skin surface area for wool production, and horns too share a positive correlation with wool cut.

Much has changed since then though, and the modern Merino is considered much more of a dual-purpose animal. With this has come the plaining of bodies, reduced frame size, and a huge move towards polled Merinos – 66% of the national flock and 74% in WA. So it's fair to assume that the rams presented at sales now are going to be of smaller stature to that of their forebears. There will always be some variation in size, between and within lines – even those of the same age and nutritional background etc – and phenotypic selection will always be crucial in the buying process, but let's not be so concerned by size because there is so much more consider when it comes to purchasing new genetics. I've not mentioned the economics of frame size either, which considers \$/ha more than \$/head, but I'll save that for another time!



"A group of Bungaree stud rams in the 1910s"

Source: [Bungaree: Land Stock & People](#) by Frankie Hawker and Rob Linn

Cattle Sire Evaluation & Comparison Workshop

The ASHEEP Cattle Committee are running a workshop on the afternoon of Thursday 16th December 2021 in preparation for the bull sales. See what is on offer, learn how to align it to your breeding objectives, market update, buyers advice and more. Esperance Bay Yacht Club, followed by drinks.

More info & register at www.asheep.org.au or contact Sarah Brown on 0409 335 194, eo@asheep.org.au

16 Dec

Driving our business into the future

John & Lisa Mitchell, Esperance Livestock Transport

Hello to the ASHEEP folk – there are some topical items to share in this article.

Firstly, as you can see from the photo Hendo's new truck has arrived. It was a centre piece at the recent Brunswick Show promoted Rural Trucking and the Esperance region. The unit really stood out on the main oval, receiving great exposure with well over 25,000 people coming through the gates.



We all know the labour shortage is debilitating for all our businesses. We have decided to meet the challenge head on! We have embarked on a recruitment programme that will unearth some 'rough diamonds and some gems' to forge or continue their career in livestock transport. Youth or experience is what we are chasing, we can further develop the less experienced drivers provided they have a passion for livestock.

We are offering a sign on bonus, so people understand we are serious about having good folk enjoying a seriously attractive income in transporting livestock. We also recognise the most professional and competent operators should be recognised and rewarded accordingly while getting the work-life balance right. There has never been a better time to be involved in our business.

Three months ago, Tanya Lloyd joined the Esperance Livestock Transport team as the main point of contact for the business. Tanya moved to Esperance with her partner about 3 years ago. She has a livestock farming background and has run a horse transport business. This experience gives Tanya a good understanding of the livestock transport industry and all that's involved. She has embraced the challenge of a steep learning curve with support from Steve and Jan when required. Please call Tanya on 0429 396 054 with any of your transport enquiries.

Lastly, as always thanks for your support through the year and remember you, the customer, gets to choose who carts your livestock.

John & Lisa Mitchell
0418 420 880





Oake Marsh Farms: Bluegum Regen & Agritourism

ASHEEP interviews Andrew Middleton & Renae Poot

Image Above: Andrew Middleton explains silage to guests of their agritourism venture.

Andrew Middleton and Renae Poot farm Oake Marsh Farm, a predominantly livestock-focused enterprise northeast of Esperance. Along with their sheep, beef, cropping and bluegum program, they have recently opened a new side to the business – in agritourism. Esperance Farm Experiences is a unique offering for the area and presents as an interesting option to diversify, contribute to Esperance's profile, and to help give the public a better understanding of how a farm works. Bridging the consumer divide is key concern for farmers, and as the article goes on we'll get Renae's take on what that looks like at Oake Marsh Farm.

First up, we managed to catch Andrew Middleton in the midst of harvest for a conversation about the broader farming operation, including the work being undertaken to rehabilitate bluegum country back into production.

Operation overview

Oake Marsh Farm has an average annual rainfall of 550mm, and we're mostly working with sand over gravel in a very coastal area near Esperance. The enterprise is largely focused on merino production, this year we will be joining 2000 ewes. Two-thirds will go to merino sires (focus on fine wool and a self-replacing flock), and the remainder to terminal sires (combination of white and black suffolk for prime lamb production). In 2020, this ratio was reversed as we didn't need as many replacement ewes – we adapt joining to suit the market and our needs. We also run a herd of Black Angus and Angus / Gelbvieh-cross cattle. We've just mated 54 cows and heifers.

Alongside this we have a small cropping operation (about 200ha canola / barley this year), fodder production (hay and silage), the new agritourism business, and bluegum plantation for wood-chip which we are gradually rehabilitating the farm away from. Renae's focus is on building the agritourism branch of the business and running the Esperance Farm Experience tours, whilst I'm referred to on tour as "Farmer Andrew" and run the farm with assistance from off-sider Rod Tait. The whole farm is about 1430ha, but there are still bluegums to come out and there's a creek system running through the middle that we get marginal grazing from. As the trees come out we've been increasing our cropping program and livestock numbers.

The pastures are predominantly a ryegrass / clover mix, plus your annual weeds like cape weed. We've traditionally had a clover-based pasture but have been hit hard in the last couple of years by Red Clover Syndrome. To counter that we've been adding some serradella into the mix (Santorini and Eliza). We crop-graze some years, but this year has been too wet to graze most of the crop. We did manage to graze a bit of barley early on. Fortunately, there has been enough pasture around we haven't really needed to rely on the crops for grazing. In 2020 we grazed canola and barley – if the crops are in early they are a handy back-up for feed.



Farm Snapshot

Location: 25 km northeast Esperance, 1430 ha (some in bluegum)

Av. Annual Rainfall: 550mm

Enterprise Mix: Sheep / beef / fodder / crop / wood chips / agritourism

Stock: Merino sheep & Black Angus & Gelbvieh cattle

Feed: Pastures ryegrass / clover mix with serradella to improve. Some crop grazing. Silage / hay

Crop: Barley, canola

Soil: Sand over gravel

Continued over page.

Bluegum rehab

One of our current key focuses is returning land into production from bluegums. We've just cleared another 100ha of blue gums and there's 130ha to go next year. We're having to spend a bit of money to sort the bluegums out. The process has been to pick up the big stuff and burn it, going through with a root rake to move the interrow rubble onto the stump lines. We use a stump grinder and a mulcher, grinding to 150mm below ground. Then we start leveling with a two-way disc and scarifier with smudge bars. We do that with and across the rows. Trying to get it level is hard work and a bit painful.

Once the area is prepared, we put out 150kg of TEK Phos (super potash with trace elements) and, if I can get hold of it, an off-spec CSBP compound (made up of super-dust sweepings from ships or blended fertilisers from the plant). The compound is full of lumps and dust, it's hard to handle but half the price. We put out about 250-300kg p/ha of that, the lumps are so big a lower rate is hard to achieve as it can't get out of the spreader. That's topped off with 3 tonne of lime from Chip Murray. We plough it to work everything in, then we've been going in with a barley crop to start the rotation.

The normal cropping fertiliser goes onto the barley, plus a heap of Urea - the major issue is that there's no Nitrogen in the soil. We've actually been able to get reasonable crops from land coming out of bluegums as there's low disease and a low weed burden. With the crops we're starting to get some biomass on ground and then we run the sheep through the barley stubbles which spread nutrients in their manure. The barley is followed by canola and then we move into establishing the pastures.

I have a block that I purchased from my parents that was one of the early areas that we cleared out of bluegum. That land has come back into pasture well now with some nice serradella / ryegrass mixes and we're also doing some cropping there this year.

This season

It has been good really, there are a few patches that are a bit wet, but we've not lost more than 3-4ha of crop. The pastures have done really well, we still have 6-inch green clover stands and the sheep are loving it. At times during the season I thought the wet was a bit much trying to get around, but we've never been short of feed which is fantastic. We had one paddock of barley that really fell in a hole with waterlogging, but the clover underneath it took off and was a foot tall, thick as you like, with ryegrass and some barley that survived in the mix. We grazed it twice and then turned it into silage. That's the beauty of livestock - you don't have to worry so much as you can still use it. As always, we've had to be careful and monitor worms. There has been evidence of barbers pole in sheep recently and we've responded to that by bringing our summer drenching program forward. Jetting the lambs and getting them crutched in good time has also been a focus to avoid fly with the wet warm weather.



Agritourism & advocacy - Esperance Farm Experiences

Moving on to the agritourism business, ASHEEP caught up with Andrew's partner Renae Poot who has recently launched Esperance Farm Experiences, offering visitors the opportunity to tour the farm. After working more than 30 years in the health industry, Renae was keen to use long service leave to launch a change in career direction with the aim to set them up for 'active retirement'. Renae expressed her belief that growing up on a farm is a privilege and she has revelled in sharing her experiences with friends and visitors to her parent's farm in Newdegate and now Oake Marsh Farm. She believes that there is a lot of negative media around agriculture and when people don't know the truth, they believe the worst. "With our farm tours we aim to provide an authentic experience and demonstrate agriculture as we see it. There are so many people in our rural community that do not have much knowledge of the major industry in their area and this gives them an opportunity for a really positive experience." Over to Renae:



Hand-feeding stock is a highlight for visitors

Setting up

Being focused on the end goal has helped. Whilst we picked up some fabulous mentors early in the game who really opened our eyes to the tour bus industry, there was always going to be lots we were not prepared for. Working through the necessary compliance issues with the Shire - ensuring our farm buildings were safe for the public, working through the necessary certifications and gaining adequate insurance were key areas. We were excited to gain WA Tourism accreditation and Shire certification in July 2021, and have been steadily increasing the number of tours.

What do the farm tours involve?

In short, we focus on **fun, food and learning**. We love the inquisitive mind. We have a vast array of machinery, all necessary on a working farm. We encourage hands-on experience: from climbing on to machinery for a closer look; to meeting and greeting our pet bull Brandon; pet ewe Donna Kebab; always eager to please working dogs; and the numerous array of other friendly animals; natural flora and fauna on our farm.

Continued over page.

We provide a half and full day experience:

- **Half Day** - We open our farm gates and invite visitors to experience life on a mixed agricultural enterprise in Esperance WA. We produce prime lambs for market and fine micron wool for clothing. We aim for highly marbled Black Angus and Gelbvieh beef and grow / harvest blue gums for high grade paper. We focus on quality fodder production and progressive land care management and holistic animal husbandry on Oake Marsh Farm.
- **Full Day** - We showcase our farming neighbours who have chosen to diversify their farming practices who also welcome tourists on their properties. Our full day includes a visit to Esperance Stonehenge where cattle wander amongst the pink granite stone of the amazing full-size replica. After time on Oake Marsh Farm and a farmer style morning tea in the shearing shed, we visit Yirri Grove, who not only produce incredible tasting olives and award winning evoo, but have a rocking restaurant which is a hidden Esperance gem. We serve a delicious crisp dry Chenin Blanc from our local Condingup Winery with lunch and finish the day with a tour of the Esperance Distillery Co, where local father and son duo focus on producing the best range of spirits based on our local native botanicals. Their distinct gin blends are turning heads in the city and accolades are flowing.

Customer Focus – Locals or tourists?

We do not discriminate. We love sharing our farm with others and think that every farmer has a story (or several) to share. Obviously, we are catering to the holiday makers who visit our town and are looking for things to do during their stay here. However, we believe there are a number of locals who have not had the chance to visit a farm despite living in a rural area of which the major industry is agriculture.

Each tour the farm turns on something special. Our visitors delight in the unexpected, such as finding a snake-skin – and a live one, watching a fox dart across the road, or a rabbit jumping out of the sheep yards. We generally see some kangaroos and emus, and sometimes our resident wedgetail eagle casts a cursory eye. Every tour is different – some are amazed at the machinery, the variety, the size and the cost. Some are enthralled to see the sheep yards and shearing shed and hear the shearing stories. Others love interacting with our animals, including the working dogs who sometimes join us on the bus. They all love meeting Farmer Andrew and finding out what he is doing that day. We often score a 5+ star rating from visitors, who are amazed at all they see as part of the tour, and of course the ‘smoko’ in the shearing shed.

How do you tackle answering questions?

Script writing ahead of time and pre-empting questions is vital so the facts are at hand. Attending the ASHEEP field walks have always been important for Andrew, but for me the resources gained at these events are gold. Talking to the varieties of visitors to the farm (veterinarians, stock agents, agronomists etc) and absorbing their information to include in our scripts is vital. I have learnt a lot from Enoch Bergman and Theo Oorschot, and Kathy Hine has provided some historical information and fun facts. Accessing some teaching and curriculum guides has also helped develop some of the resources such as a ‘scavenger hunt / questionnaire’ for our younger audiences.

We knew we would get a range of people joining our tour, and have not been disappointed. So far I have been lucky enough to be able to defer to Farmer Andrew via two-way if something new pops up, but I am sure there will be times that I will not be able to provide the necessary detail on the spot. As I have the contact details of my guests, I can always do the research and provide the information to them at a later date. Andrew is very focused on best practice for pain relief and livestock care. Recently purchasing rams from a Kojunup stud for the purpose of breeding out the need for mulesing and worming. When discussing the various livestock practices and care of the animals, the feedback so far has always been – ‘wow you think of everything for these animals’ and the response is always – ‘Happy animals, happy Farmer Andrew’.

Social media & promotion

We have a website and Facebook page, and getting better at posting. We are keen to not only showcase the tours, but the seasonal activity on the farm. Visitors have suggested other platforms such as Wikicamps, so we have a ‘Pindrop’ on as a point of interest as well as a great review. We are easily located via Google Maps, and have enjoyed great support from the Australia’s Golden Outback to promote our venture. We have explored all varieties of advertising, including print and radio and will soon be hosting the Channel 9 Destination WA team who are preparing an Esperance feature to show early 2022. There are so many other platforms still to explore, from Instagram to Trip Advisor... we will get there eventually.



www.esperancefarmexperience.com



@esperancefarmexperience

A huge thanks from ASHEEP to Andrew and Renae for their time and the information shared in this interview!



Renae Poot takes tour guests through wool-sorting



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Vet Spot: Annual rye grass toxicity (ARGT) season is upon us!

Dr. Scott Jackson. BSc DVM, Swans Veterinary Service

In the months of September and October, we conducted two significant disease investigations (SDI's) looking into neurological signs and deaths in sheep from two farms located between Gibson and Scaddan. Both investigations concluded that annual rye grass toxicity (ARGT) was responsible for the losses.

ARGT is a neurological syndrome in sheep, cattle and horses, caused by the ingestion of Corynetoxins in infected annual rye grass plants. The toxin is produced by a bacterium that clings to a nematode. The nematode, which lives dormant in the soil during later summer and autumn, climbs the stalk during seed set and settles in the head, whereby the bacteria living on its surface produce toxic slime balls known as gauls.

Symptoms will usually occur within 4 days to 4 weeks of livestock being introduced to infected pasture and may include a stiff, high stepping and staggy gait followed by recumbence, convulsions, stargazing and death. The early symptoms will be exacerbated by moving livestock. There is no specific treatment. If any of the above symptoms are observed in a flock and there is suspicion of ARGT (i.e. the mob have been grazing pastures/crops containing mature rye grass plants), the flock should be quietly shifted into a low risk paddock (no or scant rye grass present) and given plentiful access to hay, water and shade.

Once the disease is present in a pasture/crop, it is extremely difficult to eradicate. Infected seed heads may remain toxic for years and there is currently no way of controlling the nematode responsible for harboring the bacteria. We were surprised to find out that one of the two farms we had investigated had cropped an infected paddock with wheat the year prior. It is logical to assume that spraying out rye grass and cropping for a season can help to manage ARGT in the subsequent pasture, however, it only takes 5 infected rye grass plants per square meter in a crop to maintain the nematode and bacterial populations necessary for a toxic pasture the following year.

Producers are encouraged to consult with their agronomists for specifics; however some basic management strategies that can be employed to lower the risk of toxicity in a pasture are as follows:

1. Topping, hard grazing or mowing before seed set to prevent toxic gaul production
2. Burning affected crops
3. Spray topping before seed set to reduce rye grass populations in crops the following year
4. Post emergent herbicides to control annual rye grass in crops
5. Introduction of ARGT resistant rye grass strains such as Safeguard. The introduction of Safeguard strains MUST be combined with other management strategies to maximize the proportion of resistant rye grass in a pasture population. For example, a producer may elect to burn an affected pasture, crop the following year and use post emergent herbicides to control rye grass contaminating the crop. They may then seed Safeguard the subsequent year and crash graze before seed set to bring the wild type and resistant grasses to maturity at the same time, thereby allowing for cross over of resistant genes to the wild types.

In any instances of neurological syndrome or fatalities amongst livestock, your local veterinary service should be consulted to carry out a significant disease investigation (SDI), which is heavily subsidized by the department of primary industries and regional development.

Dr. Scott Jackson
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ASHEEP Pasture Variety Trials Summary 2021

Article by India Warren-Hicks (South East Agronomy Research)

In 2020, ASHEEP engaged the services of South East Agronomy Research to research profitable pasture varieties in the Esperance Port Zone as part of a Meat & Livestock Australia Producer Demonstration Site project.



Figure 1: Trigonella, Grass Patch 14/09/21

2020 saw the first year of the trials at three locations: Grass Patch, Salmon Gums and the Neridup Sandplain. The ASHEEP committee, key pasture agronomists and South East Agronomy Research decided the Salmon Gums trial would be relocated to Cascade. With the tough 2020 season in Salmon Gums and few farmers left working with sheep, it was agreed the trial would be more suitable in Cascade.

The sites for 2021 were in Grass Patch, Cascade, and the Sandplain. Prior to sowing soil cores were taken at the three sites. The trials were sown with a 1.8m single plot cone seeder with knife points and press wheels. The 2021 trials had a fantastic start getting up and away well with good soil moisture at sowing and decent rainfall following. It should be noted that all varieties in each trial were sown on the same date, with some species in particular the Vetch and Clovers generally requiring a late April sowing date. Take this into account when looking at the dry matter (kg/ha) results below.

2021 Sites	Grass Patch (David Vandenberghe)	Cascade (Simeon Roberts)	Neridup/Sandplain (John Wallace)
Trial Layout	15 varieties x 4 replications	15 varieties x 4 replications	15 varieties x 4 replications
Sown	20 th May	19 th May	13 th May
Soil pH (CaCl)	7.4 (0-10cm) to 8.7 (30-40cm)	5.8 (0-10cm) to 6.5 (50-60cm)	6.8 (0-10cm) to 7.7 (50-60cm)
Sowing Details	Cereals: 60L Flexi-N + 80kg Agstar Legumes: 50kg Big Phos + 10kg required Alosca	Cereals: 50L Flexi-N + 80kg Agstar Legumes: 50kg Big Phos + 10kg required Alosca Sparticus Barley treated with 1.5L/t Systiva	Cereals: 100L Flexi-N + 120kg Agstar Legumes: 50kg Big Phos + 10kg required Alosca Planet Barley treated with 1.5L/t Systiva
Varieties/Rates	Sulla @ 5kg Trigonella @ 8kg Express Grazing Oats @ 70kg Express Grazing Oats @ 50kg + RM4 Vetch @ 20kg Tillage Radish @ 6kg Snail Medic @ 12kg Leafmore Grazing Brassica @ 5kg Casbah Biserulla @ 6kg RM4 Vetch @ 25kg Mawson Subclover @ 6kg Cobra Subclover @ 6kg SARDI Grazing Lucerne @ 6kg Tetila Ryegrass @ 15kg BALL ThumpA Ballard Mix @ 20kg BALL SalinA Ballard Mix @ 20kg	Sparticus Barley @ 80kg RM4 Vetch @ 25kg Capello Vetch @ 25kg Express Grazing Oats @ 70kg RM4 Vetch @ 20kg + Express Grazing Oats @ 50kg Trigonella @ 8kg Tetila Ryegrass @ 15kg Cavalier Medic @ 12kg Snail Medic @ 12kg SU Tolerant Sultan Medic @ 6kg Casbah Biserulla @ 6kg SARDI Grazing Lucerne @ 6kg Cobra Clover @ 6kg Ball ThumpA Ballard Mix @ 20kg BALL SalinA Ballard Mix @ 20kg	Illabo Wheat @ 100kg Planet Barley @ 80kg Capello Vetch @ 25kg RM4 Vetch @ 25kg Tetila Ryegrass @ 15kg Express Grazing Oats @ 80kg Express Grazing Oats @ 60kg + Tetila Ryegrass @ 15kg SARDI Grazing Lucerne @ 6kg SARDI Series 7 Lucerne @ 6kg SARDI Series 10 Lucerne @ 6kg Casbah Biserulla @ 6kg Dalkeith Subclover @ 6kg Leafmore Grazing Brassica @ 5kg Franno Serradella @ 8kg BALL TearA Ballard Mix @ 20kg

Note:

The Ballard BALL SalinA mix includes Scimitar Burr Medic, Balansa Clover and Tetraploid Italian Ryegrass.

The Ballard BALL TearA mix includes Crimson Clover, Tetraploid Ryegrass, Pink Serradella, Bladder Clover and Gland Clover.

The Ballard BALL ThumpA mix includes Rose Clover, Bladder Clover, Soft Pink Serradella, Sub-clover and Tetraploid Italian Ryegrass.

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10 and 16 weeks after sowing pasture cuts were taken of species that had established adequately. These cuts were dried, and the numbers converted to dry matter kg/ha. Dry matter (DM) is the portion of feed remaining once water has been removed. Dry matter contains the nutrients: energy, protein, fibre, minerals and starch.

Analysis on the 16 weeks after sowing cuts was conducted by CSIRO. Crude protein and dry matter digestibility were the two focus results for these trials. Crude protein includes both true protein and non-protein nitrogen which rumen microbes can convert to protein. Crude protein is simply the proteins the animal needs. It is calculated as follows; CP= Nitrogen x 6.25

Dry matter digestibility (DMD) is expressed as a percent. 100% DMD means all the feed has been digested. Any value of 70% or greater is considered good.

Throughout the season ASHEEP had two field walks with the winter field day to Cascade and the spring field day to the sandplain. Both days had a great turnout allowing for robust discussion and interest to continue pasture research in Esperance in 2022.



Franno Serradella, Sandplain 07/09/21

Neridup (sandplain)

The sandplain site is typical of the non-wetting deep sands in the high rainfall zone. It has low N, P and K from the surface down to depth. The trial was sown into good moisture, and majority of the varieties established well. The three Lucerne species, Casbah Biserulla and Dalkeith Sub clover were slow to establish and put on minimal biomass throughout the season. By the final pasture cuts at 16 weeks the same trend as at 10 weeks is recorded. The standout variety being Planet Barley with 7250kg/ha of dry matter closely followed by the Express Oats and Tetila Ryegrass combination at 6750kg/ha. The cereals at this trial site were outstanding. The Capello and RM4 vetch was putting on biomass well but like the Leafmore Brassica was setback from broadleaf spray drift.

Cascade

The Cascade trial site saw an excellent establishment of all varieties other than Casbah Biserulla. At 10 weeks after sowing pasture cuts were taken with growing season rainfall sitting at 250mm. The Spartacus Barley was the standout at this point in the trial with 1700kg/ha of dry matter. This was closely followed by RM4 Vetch at 1600kg/ha, and the mix of RM4 Vetch and Express Oats with 1500kg/ha of dry matter. The same trend follows into the 16WAS cuts with the standout being the mix of RM4 Vetch and Oats and Oats standalone both at 5100kg/ha of DM. This is closely followed by RM4 Vetch with 4900 kg/ha of DM. The Sparticus Barley and Tetila Ryegrass were also noteworthy putting on good biomass and subsequent dry matter at this later point in the season.

Grass Patch

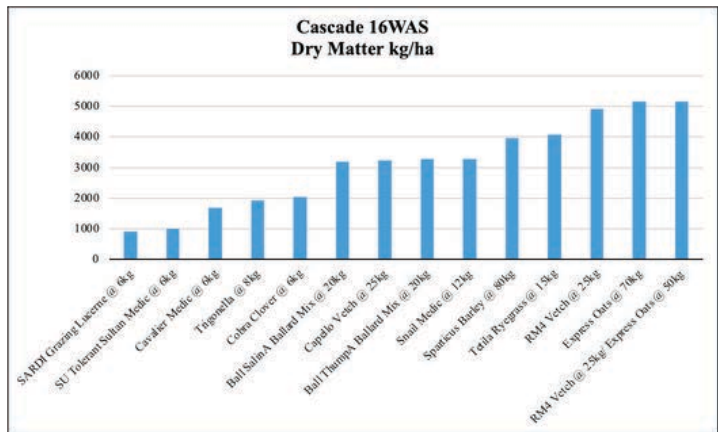
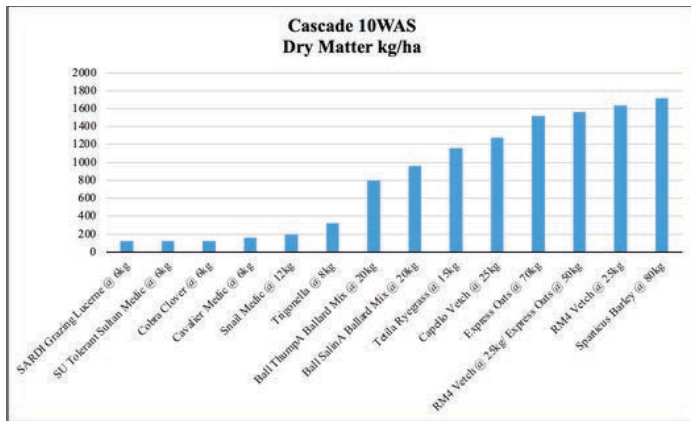
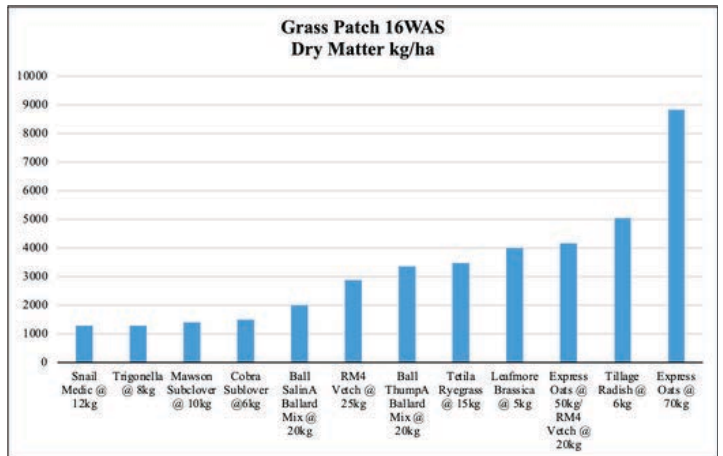
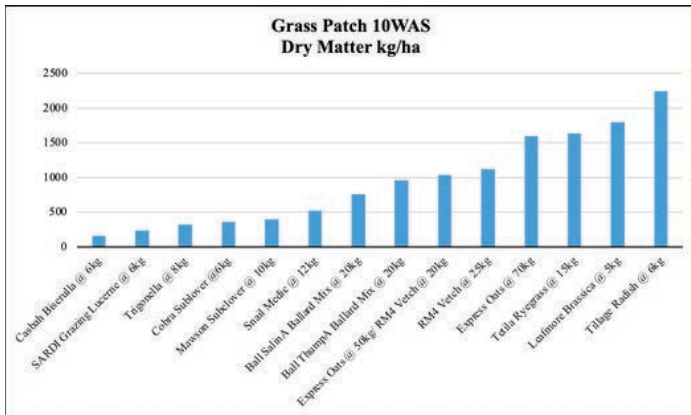
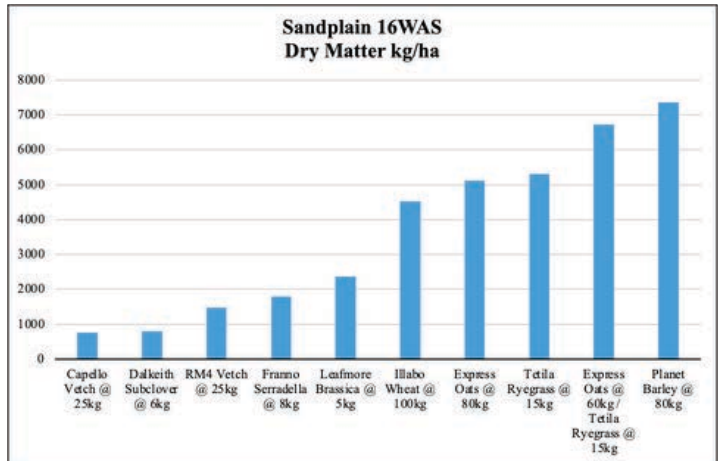
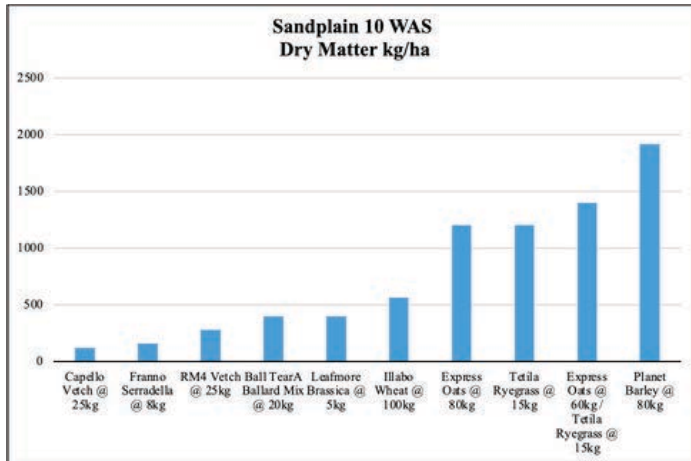
The Grass Patch trial was sown into a sandy loam over clay soil type. The site has good nutrition and soil structure from surface down to depth. All species established well and put on good biomass other than Sulla, which dry matter cuts could not be taken. Unfortunately, as the season progressed by September the site had started to dry out and species were dying off. The standout variety from this trial at 16 WAS cuts being Express Oats with 8900 kg/ha DM. This was followed by Tillage Radish at 5000 kg/ha DM.



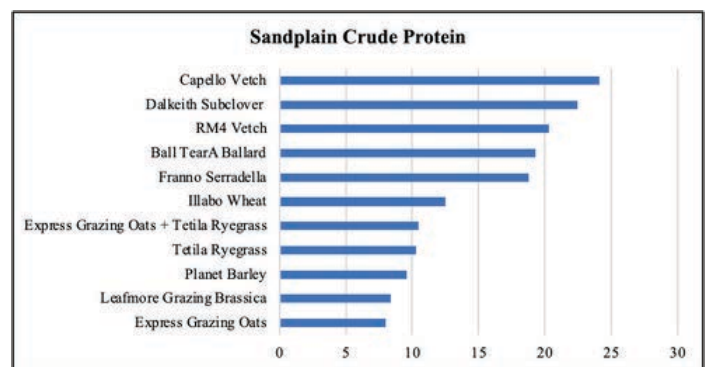
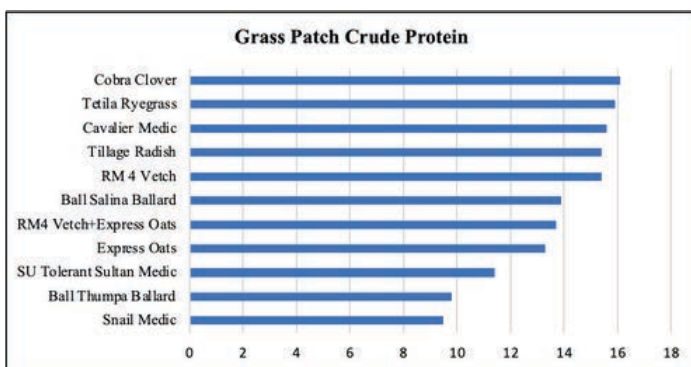
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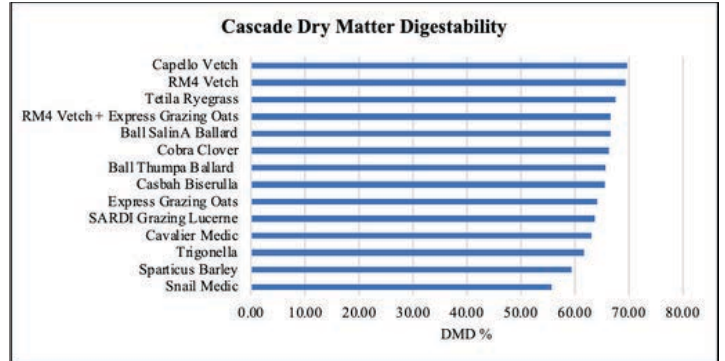
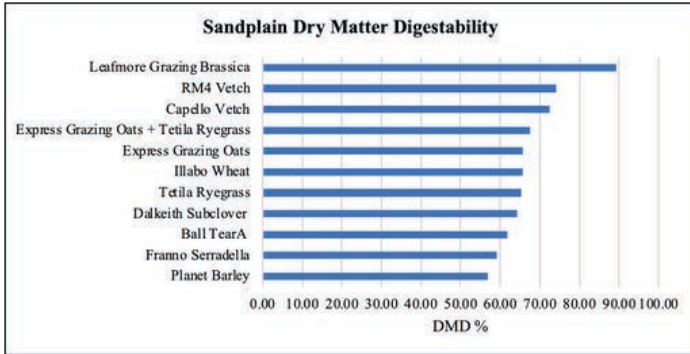
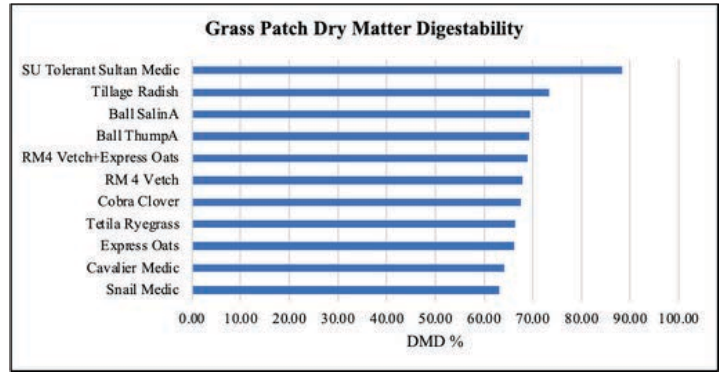
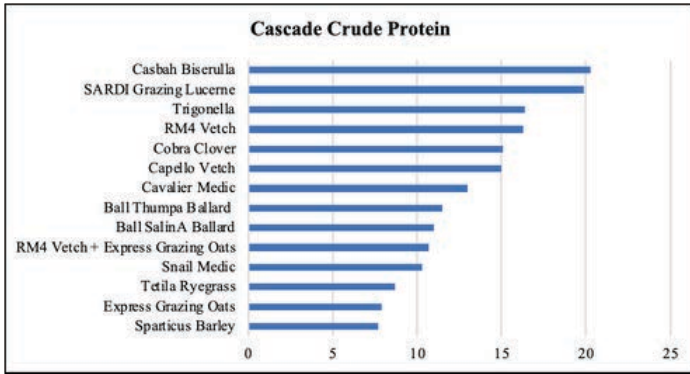
A mat of Tetila Ryegrass, Grass Patch 13/08/21
Tillage Raddish, Grass Patch 10/09/21

Dry Matter Results



CSIRO NV Analysis Results





Want to stay up to date?
Join our Pasture Trials WhatsApp Group



Text Sarah Brown on 0409 335 194 or email eo@asheep.org.au to be added to the group.

Project Lead Producer:

David Vandenberghe
 0427 786 040



Dryland Pasture Legume System Project - Variety Updates

A few key notes from Rob Harrison, CSIRO on the new varieties emerging out of the Dryland Legume Pasture Systems Project.

New bladder clover

- Potentially available to licenced growers in two years
- Flowers 10 days earlier than cv. Bartolo
- Successfully outcompeted Bartolo in Mingenew, Scaddan and Narembeen areas in terms of seed yield and biomass
- High hard seed content for better persistence
- High Nutritive value especially as senescence
- Small seed to avoid ruminant digestion
- Header harvestable- no suction harvester needed



Trigonella

- If passes the meat taint test will be potentially available in three years (pending red tape)
- 76 Days to flowering
- Header harvestable- no suction harvester needed
- Applicable to summer sowing with unique hard seed breakdown
- Compliments background medic pastures
- Small seed to avoid ruminant digestion
- Indeterminate growth habit



Frano

- Early French serradella (14 days earlier than Margarita)
- Available to producers now
- Header harvestable- no suction harvester needed
- Applicable to summer sowing with unique hard seed breakdown
- Early vigour (seed 25% bigger than Margarita)
- Indeterminate growth habit



Farm & General

46 Norseman Road, Esperance, Ph: 08 90720888

Abbey Animal Health is an Australian Animal Health company making animal health products for Australian farmers. In addition to that, they have now appointed a WA Business Development manager who is also a WA local.

Last month, Darren Rutley joined Abbey Animal Health to provide local knowledge and support to the Abbey Animal Health product range and the local WA independent network of rural stores.

Darren has many years of animal health knowledge having been born and bred in the WA country. He has many years of experience in the animal health industry having worked for major international company's such as Merial and Bayer Animal Health.

In these previous roles, Darren has spent a lot of time in the Esperance region working alongside Esperance sheep producers and is looking forward to renewing some of these past relationships and establishing new ones.

Abbey Animal Health is an 100% Australian owned and managed animal health company, ensuring high standards with local solutions. Next time you need animal health products, think Abbey Animal Health from Farm and General. For information on the Abbey Animal Health product range please contact Rory or Dylan at the store, or Darren Rutley on 0499 323 053.



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\$50 CASH BACK FOR JANUARY






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- ✓ Can be used with seed dressings that are typically harmful to inoculants.
- ✓ Convenient application.
- ✓ Can be blended with fertilisers, seeds or in a third box for ease of application.
- ✓ Can be stored for months as long as it is in a dry place.
- ✓ No need to mess around with slurries.

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The panel of speakers, "The Future of Farming" Livestock Conference & AGM 2021

What we've been up to

Sarah Brown, ASHEEP

The last few months have been a good run for ASHEEP, with a range of events that have seen great speakers and site visits. Before I get into that, it should be acknowledged that these events (and this newsletter) are made possible because of a huge range of people and businesses who give their time, thought and sponsorship. There's a willingness to get involved, share ideas, and to open up about successes and challenges, and that is what makes ASHEEP a valuable grower group. If there are things you'd like to see ASHEEP doing, or you have information to share, please get in touch. Either give me a call or have a chat to one of our Committee Members whose contact details are on the last page of the newsletter. Now for a quick wrap of some key events.



Trial Site Spin Around, DLPS Showcase

August saw our **annual livestock conference and AGM** themed "The Future of Farming", a good thought-provoker with thirteen speakers covering a lot of ground. This including two great presentations from guest producers Hamish Thompson (Moojepin Merinos) and Peter Gilmour (Irongate Wagyu) who we were grateful to have involved. The following day we went on a **Trial Site Spin Around**, stopping by the ASHEEP / MLA pasture variety trials and the Dryland Pasture Legume Systems (DLPS) showcase.

Later in the month Ed Riggall (AgPro Management) brought down Johan Greeff (DPIRD sheep genetics expert) to work with the team of producers involved in Ed's **Non-Mulese Systems Project** (MLA Producer Demonstration Site). We spent the afternoon at Rancho X hosted by Anita Chalmer, assessing the rear ends of lambs, weighing up the pros & cons of not mulesing, and learning about where to focus attention to make genetic gain. This included a reminder from Johan that predisposition to fly strike is a heritable, and if an animal gets struck it's likely to be struck again. He also focussed on the importance of using physical traits to select breeders, with dag score and breech wrinkle being a priority for non-mulese. He emphasised that dags are caused by a range of genetic traits including susceptibility to worms, capeweed, etc, and that buying rams from studs in your own environment / similar conditions can be beneficial.

September held our **Spring Field Day** (more on that on following page) and also a visit from Andrew Ritchie to deliver an AWI Sheep's Back 'Winning With Weaners Workshop'. The workshop delivered a great grounding in feed planning and calculating rations to meet growth targets.



Anita Chalmer and Johan Greeff discuss breech wrinkle in the AgPro Management Non-Mulese Project



Spring Field Day 2021

Article by Anita Chalmer, ASHEEP

The annual ASHEEP Spring Field Day was held on a brisk windy day on 16th September this year. Aboard the bus, we were lucky to welcome Dr Tim Watts representing WA Livestock Research Council (WALRC) to host and sponsor the bus, and gather feedback on industry issues. Tim gave a real-life example of how a few people having a chat about time of calving on the bus at the 2020 ASHEEP Spring Field Day was the catalyst of further industry discussions, drafting of a WALRC Priority and now the formation of a statewide MLA PDS project which is due to call for submissions in April 2022. This illustrates the importance of not only attending field days but making sure your voice is heard by the right people so your MLA levy can be utilised in the most effective way. If you have feedback about anything red meat related, contact your friendly local WALRC representatives John Wallace (Vice-Chair) or Enoch Bergman (Australian Veterinary Association representative) or look up www.walrc.com.au to learn more.

Our first stop was on Fisheries Road to look at the ASHEEP/MLA Pasture Variety Trial Neridup site hosted by John Wallace. This is the second year of this MLA funded PDS where a selection of pasture and fodder varieties are sown and assessed for biomass production and feed quality. The cereal/grasses were quick to reach an impressive biomass with the legumes being slower to get going but providing quality feed later in the season. There was great discussion to do with the management and best fit of each variety from Theo Oorschot with input from seed company representatives, pasture scientists and experienced growers.

On to Glen Quinlivan's property for Rob Harrison's DLPS (Dryland Pasture Legume System) trial which featured several exciting new legume pastures due to be released soon. The aim of this project is breeding resilient pasture legumes for low-medium rainfall zones with high quality feed value. Rob has a checklist of what attributes a successful legume pasture variety should have which includes regeneration after a cropping phase, aerial seed production (harvestability), fix nitrogen efficiently, suitable for summer sowing, high nutritive value throughout its life cycle, deep rooting habit, indeterminate growth habit and small seeded. Using these criteria, many traditional legume pastures fall short and we look forward with interest to see how the new varieties perform on farm scale.

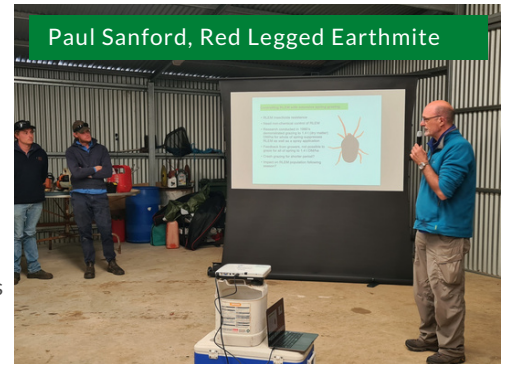


Images: Top - ASHEEP / MLA Pasture Variety Trials at John Wallaces. Bottom Left - DLPS Variety Showcase at Glen Quinlivan's. Bottom Right - Grazed Illabo Wheat at Glen Quinlivan's which had since been cut for hay.

Continued.

Glen Quinlivan also showed us a paddock of Ilabo wheat which he used to graze ewes to give them a boost of feed pre-lambing. The 22ha paddock held 450 ewes for 2 weeks. He said the ewes could have stayed on for longer but they had to be moved to their lambing paddock. The paddock had just been cut for hay and didn't seem to have suffered at all from being grazed.

Dr Serina Hancock from Murdoch University spoke in the paddock about the importance of a calcium/magnesium/salt lick when grazing cereals, particularly pregnant ewes. She also mentioned that from an animal science perspective, there is still a lot more to be learnt about the interactions between the forage consumed and the effect it has on that animal.



Paul Sanford, Red Legged Earthmite

At Quinlivan's shearing shed, Paul Sandford from DPIRD Albany shared information from a project he is working on with Svetlana Micic regarding the use of heavy grazing as a chemical-free control method for red-legged earthmites. Insecticide resistance in the WA population of RLEM is becoming an increasing problem particularly with so many farmers choosing to leave livestock out of their system.

After lunch we travelled to Scott Wandel's lucerne paddock at Dalyup which was a demonstration of how a well established and managed Lucerne stand could be very productive. The paddock of SARDI 10 was sown in August 2020 and treated very kindly in the first 6 months to ensure a good establishment with only light grazing and close monitoring for insect damage. In 2021 it has been cell grazed and cut for silage. If the rapid growth continues it will be cut again. Thanks to South Coastal Agencies for providing some beverages for the return journey to Lucky Bay Brewery.

Back at the Brewery, we finished with an update from Dr Enoch Bergman, Swans Veterinary Services on the recent discovery and deregulation of Bovine Johnes Disease in WA, plus a conversation around carbon baselining with Ian Richardson (Agrarian Management) and Tim Watts . Andrew Middleton was then anointed the 2021 Alosca Nod Champion by Floyd Sullivan and we retired to pizza and drinks. Thanks to everyone who took part in the field day including speakers, site hosts and sponsors.



Biserrula, Glen Quinlivan's



Tim Watts leads discussion, WALRC



Scott Wandel's lucerne



Ian Richardson speaks on carbon baselining



Floyd Sullivan & Nod Champion Andrew Middleton

High School Shearing Comp at Royal Show

ASHEEP was pleased to be able to support the Esperance Senior High School Farm Training Centre's shearing team to compete at this year's Royal Show with sponsorship of their singlets. Following is a letter from the school with the results.

Dear ASHEEP,

On behalf of everyone at Esperance Senior High School Farm Training Centre, I would like to thank you for your very generous sponsorship of our team who attended the Perth Royal Show. It created a sense of comradery throughout our team.

The students had a fantastic time at the Perth Royal Show where they entered the following events and have did an amazing job:

- Farm Skills Challenge - Competing with other Agricultural Schools, we placed top three in a number of individual events including Wool Handling, Wool Pressing and Welding.
- AWI Young Breeders Challenge - 3rd place for Preparation Class
- AWI Young Producers Challenge (with other competing schools) - 4th place. Charles Richardson (Year 10) placed 4th in the Wool Handling in this challenge.
- Novice Shearing and Handling

Thank you again for your generous sponsorship and your support of our school.

With kind regards,
Jazmin Parker
Program Coordinator, Esperance Farm Training Centre



ESPERANCE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
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Ashton in the Novice Shearing Competition.

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Aus Stock Transport is a member of the Livestock & Rural Transport Association of WA (Inc) and receives updates relative to our industry. We are also members of Transafe WA.

Aus Stock Transport is a sponsor of ASHEEP. We also proudly sponsor the Esperance show, various sporting clubs and associations throughout the Esperance and Ravensthorpe districts.

Aus Stock Transport relies on experienced operators to use 'best practices' when loading, unloading and carting of animals.

For all your cartage requirements call Peter Holdman on 0419 948 475 or email ausstock@outlook.com



Upcoming ASHEEP Events

Last event for the year is the Cattle Committee's Sire Evaluation & Comparison Workshop. Set for the afternoon of Thursday 16th December at the Esperance Bay Yacht Club. It will be a great line-up of speakers and discussion to prepare for the bull sales. Register at www.asheep.org.au or contact Sarah Brown at eo@asheep.org.au or on mobile 0409 335 194.

WALRC Newsletter



Subscribe to the WA Livestock Research Council newsletter.



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

ASHEEP's Cattle Committee

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Members

Enoch Bergman
 Amy Forrester
 Simon Fowler
 Wes Graham
 Ian McCallum
 Nicholas Ruddenklau
 Matthew Ryan

• FEBRUARY •

Next ASHEEP Committee Meeting is scheduled for February 2022.

Contact a committee or staff member to raise an item.

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