

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

FEATURED STATE- SA

Sheep Connect – SA - Ian McFarland & Tarsha McGregor

1. Sheep CRC Fly Strike Workshops presented by Rural Solutions SA at Lochaber and Furner in South East SA – 25 attendees.
2. Life Time Ewe – group established on Kangaroo Island.
3. Planning six farmer forums on the Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and Mid North titled 'Sheep – Less Hassle More Profit'. Forums are planned for the end of February/early March. Bob Hall (WA coordinator The Sheep's Back) is the keynote speaker. On the Eyre Peninsula the forums will be held in collaboration with Grain and Graze II.
4. Project Advisory Group meeting in Pt Lincoln to discuss draft funding application to AWI and future project planning for 2011 activities.
5. Eyre Peninsula NRM Board have verbally confirmed further funding support for the 2010/11 financial year.
6. Planning is underway for a SA Sheep Consultants workshop in early February.

Communications:-

i. Technical Column: topics included '**Promising outlook for super fine wool**' and '**Pregnancy scanning of ewes**'.

ii. Special response to seasonal conditions - technical information is being disseminated through the **Stock Journal** to assist sheep businesses in dealing with management issues relating to the wet summer.

Two one page features published over a fortnight. First issue to be published 20th January and features lamb management (number of weaners lost during this period), lupinosis risk and, increased management issues associated with worm control, in particular Barbers Pole.

Sheep Connect NSW – Michelle Anderson

1. "Managing flies and Lice" workshops held at Bathurst (26 attendees) and at Brewarrina (16 attendees). Other workshops in Booligal and Hatfield have been re-scheduled for the third time due to wet weather and flooding.
2. "Managing ewes and weaners over summer" workshop held in Canberra (15 attendees) and "Merino weaners" workshop at Mudgee (9 attendees).
3. PAP telemeeting on 26th November. Future plans discussed and approved.
4. New "Online Events" section added to the Sheep Connect website allowing the listing of online events and activities such as webinars and other online learning and training resources.

5. Sheep Connect NSW editorial article and accompanying advertisement included in the Western Magazine – November 29th.

Best Prac – The pastoral Zone – Carlyn Sherriff (Coordinator) & Stuart Mitchell (Chairman)

1. Bestprac is entering the final month of the current project. This means wrapping up activities and leveraged projects and also setting up for the new project, commencing at the end of January.
2. Completion of the leveraged project delivered under the FarmReady Industry grant project: Implementing new practices to manage climate change variability in the Australian pastoral zone. Final groups workshops have been delayed in QLD due to continuing flood. Report and case studies, <http://www.bestprac.info/pages/news-articles/enews---january-2011/managing-a-variable-climate---on-farm-strategies.php> , available for download.
3. Project evaluation has provided very positive feedback about the program and useful information and ideas to assist with developing the new project delivery model. The evaluation was undertaken by RMCG in October/November 2010 and their report stated “that Bestprac has achieved its objective of establishing a “culture of innovation” amongst 80% of its premium members” and “there is incredibly strong brand loyalty and ownership amongst the discussion group members”. Findings from this report, and a planning meeting with the PAP, will be used for a workshop with facilitators in February to outline the delivery of Bestprac for 2011 – 2013. This is an exciting time as we lay the foundations for another successful Bestprac project.
4. FarmReady Industry Grant and Bestprac funded the successful Healthy Pastures and Healthy Soils Forum in Blackall, QLD, on 3rd November 2010. More than 40 primary producers from central western Queensland region attended a one day forum and field days on climate change. Many participants said this was the best forum or field day ever held in the regions, as it combined the latest research science with practical hands on experience. <http://www.bestprac.info/pages/news-articles/2010-e-news/enews---december-2010/roadshow-to-rehydrate-queensland.php>

The Sheep's Back – WA – Bob Hall

1. Dry season workshop/field day in outer wheat belt at **Kulja** – attendance was 12 farm businesses. (Others delayed until after the exceptionally early harvest) Attendees were schooled in feed audit / FOO (Feed On Offer) / CS (Condition Scoring), feed budgeting, etc.
 - 100% thought the day was useful and were more confident.
 - 92% thought the day assisted with decisions and felt competent in FOO and CS.
 - 8% of participants were under 35, with 8% also over 50.
 - Flock average was 2798 (normal 3067).
 - Business representation was 2 males and 1.5 females.

- This area is “high tech” cropping but V. low tech sheep. Perhaps an interesting challenge?
- 2. PAP face to face meeting. Future activity approved and flagged extension of farmer membership, especially younger farmers.
- 3. Beyond the Bale article published. Three calls of congratulation and one questioning the figures: an extensive response was prepared and delivered.
- 4. Lengthy interview with MLA reporter for MMFS article on “Containment Feeding”.

BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB – VIC – Lyndon Kubeil & Annette Taylor

1. 20 Group activities including; planning meetings for next years focus, soil & pasture management, planning paddock subdivisions, flystrike, grazing strategies, water supplies, establishing lucerne, hormonal growth proponents, electronic tagging of sheep, weeds, joining young merino ewes trial. These activities involved 200 participants.
2. Two Stock & Land articles featuring; Campaspe Group 15 years old – video of members and their thoughts about their achievements and the group shown at the Elmore Field Days and “Sheep compete with locusts for feed”. four email newflash providing sheep industry updates.
3. Phone Seminar on Fodder, Flies and Worms – Nick McClelland from Australian Fodder Industry Association talked about hay curing and additives, Jim Walsh from DPI talked about flies and Robert Suter from DPI talked about worms. 49 participants were involved with this activity.

Leading Sheep – QLD – Tony Hamilton

1. Held the Bred Well Fed Well workshop in early December at Goodiwindi. Over 60 producers attended and the event managed a lot of media coverage in local, district and state press. Guest speakers at the event were Mark Ferguson (DAFWA) who spoke to producers about breeding better ewes. While Jason Trompf (RIST) discussed the role nutrition plays in weaning more lambs.
 2. Network coordinator Tony Hamilton attended a meeting regarding the QLD 2010-2015 wild dog strategy. The strategy is working on getting commitment from both the rural and peri-urban communities. The 2010 – 2015 Wild Dog Strategy can be found at http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_18743.htm
 3. The Leading Sheep network has assisted with the commencement of the recovery process, following the recent and ongoing flooding in Qld. LS has distributed information on Financial Assistance and Financial Counselling available to affected producers via its' network of facilitators and participants across affected regions.
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SEASONAL CONDITIONS

FEATURED STATE – SA

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- 2010 Bureau of Meteorology Statics state that 2010 was the third wettest year on record, with parts of SA such as North East corner receiving 2-3 times average annual rainfall.
 - Experiencing a late harvest with most expected to finish by end of Jan. Also biggest harvest on record, expected to reach 9.7 million tonnes. Quality is low, many downgraded to feed quality but high prices will still mean good returns to producers.
 - Good rains in January have meant re-growth in stubbles from fallen grain and a top up for perennial pastures.
 - Grain on ground and in storage may mean that mice will become an issue again for Upper Eyre Peninsula.
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- Heavy rainfall and flooding in western and southern regions of **NSW**. A total of 63 local government areas declared natural disasters since the beginning of December.
 - Rain during November and December delayed harvest and ruined hay. Flystrike is very prevalent. Extensive summer weed growth occurring. Some reported sheep losses due to summer weed poisonings in **Northern Victoria**.
 - Most reported adult locust activity in **Victoria** is currently concentrated in a corridor of land stretching from the west of the state from Harrow, Stawell and Ararat regions, across through the Castlemaine, Nagambie and Shepparton regions and further east towards Rutherglen and Wodonga. Swarming and egg laying activity is expected mid January. Some reports of second wave hatchings occurring in Northern Victoria.
 - Continued flooding in **Queensland** has devastated many members' properties as well as preventing scheduled workshop activities from going ahead. In early December, Tambo members had received 1,000mm for the year and Blackall had 1,225mm. It has continued to get wetter in these areas and throughout Queensland.
 - The unusually wet December will mean **QLD** producers will have a good body of feed through to winter. It is also expected to put downward pressure on feed prices.
 - Mid December the Gascoyne region in **WA** was also flooded. Flooding rains came at the end of one of the driest years on record. Prior to this event, one Bestprac member had received less than 75mm of rain for the year.
 - The BOM has confirmed the current **WA** season as the worst ever.

- **WA** Wool growers are finding straw and stubbles have proven to be of excellent quality which is useful. Sheep still looking well.

INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES / HIGHLIGHTS/ TRENDS

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- Fly strike remains an issue in South East of state but other regions have commented that the issue is now under control. Lice, however, still remains one of the biggest state animal health issues.
 - Reports of deaths associated with Rye Grass Toxicity on Eyre Peninsula.
 - The one millionth Western Australian sheep to be trucked through the quarantine check point at Ceduna in 2010 was recorded in December. Changes to OJD status rulings came in to effect on Jan 1st 2011.
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- 1 Million sheep sent to Eastern States from **Western Australia**. Very significant in maintaining high prices and a good feeling that they were not lost to the industry. Future of this trade now in limbo because of OJD classification of the state and South Australian regulations.
 - Major enquiry from **WAFF** regarding wool prices. Local press indicating that high wool prices gave high prosperity. Extensive reply illustrating that it is not simply wool these days and giving figures to assist in their response etc.
 - Sheep health concerns (foot rot, foot abscess, body strike) continuing to be a major issue over the wet summer months in **NSW**.
 - Sale figures continue to impress, despite supply beginning to decline. Recent sales at Forbes **NSW** saw heavy lambs set a new national record of \$206 per head.
 - The floods in **QLD** have meant lamb supply has been reduced due to road closures. Growers also holding off on purchasing supplies, such as seed, until the road network is repaired.
 - Conditions are also right for fly strike issues in parts of **QLD**. However, many producers have been able to stay on top after developing adequate programs in preparation for summer.

- Laboratory submissions are showing high cases of worm infestation from right across **QLD**. The Leading Sheep network sent out a reminder to all producers to keep an eye on their flocks for signs of worm burdens.

OTHER COMMENTARY OR QUESTIONS TO THE NETWORK

- With many roads out of action and the risk of more rain, Leading Sheep **QLD**, will be focusing on webinars for content delivery for around the next month, until things get back to normal.
- **Bob Hall** is looking forward to a lecture tour of the Eyre Peninsular **SA** in Feb. A good example of inter-state cooperation.
- **WA** is busy drafting their final report.

EDITORS NOTE:

- There is no report from **Sheep Connect Tasmania** for this edition of TNN. The departure of State Coordinator Warren Hunt to take up a extension position in the NT, and the shift of former Deputy Director and Extension Leader Dr Leigh Sparrow to head up the water portfolio of TIAR, have briefly left a gap in reporting the activities of SC Tas.

STOP PRESS:

- Chairman of the SC Tas Producer Advisory Panel (PAP) Matt Dunbabin has advised that a very satisfactory arrangement has been reached where the position will be jointly filled by job share between the current leader of TIAR's Making More from Sheep program, Andrew Bailey; and communications consultant Catriona Nicholls. Cat Nicholls will be known to many for her writing in various Kondinin Group publications.
- We congratulate Andrew and Cat on their appointment(s) and look forward to working with them in the future.

DEPARTURE:

- Longstanding Chairman of the Bestprac Producer Advisory Panel, Stuart Mitchell, "Cashell Vale", Bollon, Qld has indicated his intention to step down as chairman. Attempts to secure a replacement Qld representative have not been successful at this time, but many Qld producers have other things on their mind currently: no doubt we will find a replacement as we move into 2011.
- Bestprac PAP members, Rural Directions staff and AWI staff strongly supported a vote of thanks to Stu for his 11 years sterling service to Bestprac as chairman, champion and spokesman.

THE NETWORK'S NEWS



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