

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

FEATURED STATE – SA

Sheep Connect SA – Ian McFarland & Tarsha McGregor

- Communications:
- 2 x Stock Journal Technical columns - "Attention to Lamb Nutrition Minimises Tail End Effect" & "Using Genetics to Increase Reproduction Rates."
- SheepConnect feature in Stock Journal.
- Two articles to regional paper-Pt Lincoln Times on Eyre Peninsular- Understanding Stocking rates and Stocking Density' & 'Changing Grazing management can improve Pasture Composition.
- 2 articles for Livestock Annual published by the Stock Journal, "AWI continues support for SheepConnect SA" & "Medic Trial to Strengthen Sheep Enterprise".
- Production of 2 pull-up banners and SheepConnect shirts for promotion at events; including 'It's Ewe Time' forums at Minnipa and Lameroo at the end of August.
- Developing and finalising content for SheepConnect SA website which will be live by the end of August. Domain will be www.sheepconnectsa.com.au.
- Attended a sheep consultants meeting. SheepConnect SA has supported the formation of the group realising the benefits of this group to the industry and the value of collaboration. Members of this group play a key role in many farming businesses and provide support to many of the sheep industry programs running in the State.
- Working with Kate Sargent to determine opportunities to collaborate with the Evergraze program in SA.
- Collaborating with Grain & graze 2 on Eyre Peninsula. The four sheep groups have met and planned their programs for the next 12 months. Each group has a different focus issues to be addressed include pastures, fly management, matching livestock and cropping enterprises to land capability, electric fencing, stock yards and farm water planning.
- PIRSA Animal Health ran 4 Lice management workshops on the Eyre Peninsula. Attendances have been variable with 10-15 producers attending each workshop. Further workshops are planned across the State.
- A series of Practical Ram selection workshops to assist in addressing the low uptake of using EBV for ram selection are in progress across the State. These workshops have been conducted in partnership with SARDI (SASAG funded project) and Making More from Sheep.
- 15 producers attended the Prime SAMM conference held in Adelaide.

Sheep Connect NSW – Shelly Anderson

- Preparations are in place for the 2nd Sheep Connect industry Update for 2011, which will be held in Yass on the 17th August. This forum has been the main project focus for the last month. The range of topics and presentations have been selected to reflect the issues that face sheep producers on the Southern Tablelands and South West Slopes of NSW with a focus on ‘future-proofing’ their enterprise and closely managing the emerging challenges facing the industry. This event has been well received in the local and surrounding districts, with over 170 registrations so far.
- The Sheep Connect NSW blog is now up and running. This blog provides Sheep Connect with the ability to deliver general network information to members and industry, provide links to other industry newsletters and bulletins as well as research papers and knowledge collections, provide a platform for informal discussion with industry ‘experts’ and professionals for general commentary or on specific topics of interest.
- Group activities:
 - Three (3) Flystrike Prevention Workshops (50 attendees in total). These workshops focused on informing producers of management practices that will help to control and manage relevant health issues such as lice and flies as well as providing assistance to personalise prevention programs.
 - One (1) Managing Scanned ewes workshop (15 attendees). Participants learnt how to fatscore ewes to ensure they meet key production targets at joining through pregnancy to lambing as well as built on knowledge and experiences related to optimising flock reproductive performance.
 - Seven (7) District Grazier Updates (81 attendees). These workshops involved very localised activities that provided information on current industry issues, advice on planning ahead for lambing and other seasonal activities.
- Update on project evaluation and refunding: project evaluation will commence in September 2011. An Expression of Interest for an external reviewer is almost complete and tendering will commence immediately with the aim of completing a review by the end of October. Refunding proposal due February 2011.
- PAP meeting in planning for mid-September 2011. Topics for discussion include; roles and new appointments to the panel, update on external project review, final report and refunding process.
- **Side issue:** Dairy Connect is now up and running. Dairy Connect was established by the Dairy NSW, NSW DPI and NSW farmers Association, and was initiated as a result of the industry interest in the Sheep Connect NSW website. Dairy farmers requested a system similar to Sheep Connect which would provide access to a comprehensive event list that would cover activities provided by a range of industry service providers and organisations. Take a look at www.dairyconnect.com.au

The Sheep's Back WA – Bob Hall / Andrew Ritchie / Ed Riggall

- Ed Riggall attended a field day organised by a Young Stud Master, Luke Ledwith, at Pingarup in the wheat belt of WA. This is an interesting area where there maintains a keen interest in sheep unlike much of the other surrounding districts. Luke Ledwith is on the State committee of the Stud Merino Breeders and represents an increase in youth in this organisation.
- Bob Hall presented to the Independent Woolbroker, Primaries at their annual staff conference. The theme was “What really matters in sheep profits”, together with “Sheep **and** Crop” rather than sheep

versus crop. Primaries are very much a firm on the ascendance in WA as one of the leading independent wool brokers. Fifty (50) present including all the wool staff: some 12 in all. They will now be more able to discuss these items with clients and encourage them towards wool growing and sheep.

- Ed Riggall sent out the Winter Newsletter electronically to approx 850 recipients. He has received some favourable feedback almost by return.
- The **"It's ewe time"** forums, where The Sheep's Back cooperated with Making More From Sheep, were very well attended. An interesting observation was that the audience contained many who did not normally attend such meetings. Quite a new level of interest, and we hope to have harnessed this for our network.

Leading Sheep QLD – Tony Hamilton

- Planned and held PAP Meeting in Longreach 14th July. Jenny Keogh was elected as the new Chair and nominations for new members Ninian Stewart-Moore, James Hegarty and Don Perkins were accepted. All Leading Sheep team staff attended the meeting. This was a good outcome as team staff had not attended a PAP meeting before and gave staff a good insight into the PAP process within the project team. Minutes have been distributed and next meeting will be planned for a teleconference in October.
- LS Coordinators appointed include Noel O'Dempsey, Kylie Rutledge and Joy Hardie. All committees have been reformed with a lot of new committee members which will bring new ideas to the project team.
- **"It's ewe time"** Forum in Queensland was well attended with approximately 90 people in attendance. All of the DEEDI / Leading Sheep extension team attended the day. It was a very informative day and there was a lot of interest in sheep, especially merinos.
- Qld Wool RDE Assessment Project WP431 Milestone TMS02 has been completed. This was a result of not being able to draw enough producers together due to the large distances between producers.
- Sheep CRC SRS Leading Sheep Fly Strike days Muttaborra 26th and Bollon 19th September.
- Westec Field Day at Barcaldine. 13 -14th September. Staff are planning to engage with youth by running webinars on the day and to promote the Leading Sheep Website.
- Worm Egg counting Day at St George 26th August: following on from the Nindigully day, producers want to know more about on farm testing and also how to plan for the next summer to avoid worm build-up.
- Initial specifications have been developed to redesign the Leading Sheep Website and Database. These specifications have been sent to potential companies to quote on website and database development.
- Conducted an Operational Planning meeting with team staff to further refine the Leading Sheep Operational Plan. This draft has been finalised and approved by AWI.
- Collaborating with Sheep CRC and David Counsel to deliver an EID workshop at Longreach under Farm Ready. Will need to sign a Licence agreement and deliver through DEEDI as the Registered Training Organisation.



- Karbullah Field Day/ Leading Sheep. Mark Murphy, Tony Hamilton and Jason Trompf. Looking at addressing Lamb Survival. Plenty of dry feed but low in protein will cause issue if this is not addressed.
- iPad proposal submitted to AWI. Leading Sheep is investigating the use of this technology with producers to streamline evaluation processes.

Bestwool/Bestlamb VIC – Lyndon Kubeil & Annette Taylor

- BWBL Annual Conference 2011 – F'ewe'ture Sheep Farming was a great success with 380 producers and service providers attending. The evaluation report rated the conference at 8.6 (/10) and the information gained at 8.2. Most participants were going to look at changes on farm, most were going to improve nutrition to ewes, or join maiden merino ewes earlier or going to plant more Lucerne.
- Group activities are the core function of BWBL. Group activities provide members with access to information and the continuity of the program provides support to implement on farm change. Twenty Group Activities including: understanding ASBV's, lice control, winter pasture management, quality assurance scheme, farming systems including cropping and business management.
- Two email "Newsflash" sent to 983 sheep producers and industry representatives promoting sheep industry events and information. AWI featured articles included; wild dog funding available, market intelligence and We Love Wool.
- BWBL held a Young Producers and Rural Women's Forum on the 28 June, the day before the BWBL Annual conference. Young producers and rural women from across the state were invited to attend and workshop their ideas, goals and needs to progress an interest in the sheep industry. Participants spoke about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for both their business and themselves, which identified the key issues that they wished to pursue. In the coming months further meetings will bring these key issues together to develop a delivery model.
- Two new groups have been formed from the field days organised in early August at Bullioh and Benambra. Jenny O'Sullivan will now be working with these two groups to develop plans to learn about the latest opportunities in combating wild dogs and improving their sheep businesses.
- One more flood recovery BWBL group has been developed with the assistance of AWI Emergency Response funding. This group in Boort now brings the numbers up to five. These groups will be working on recovering from the recent floods and in some cases returning sheep to their business.
- BWBL and MMfS have formed an excellent partnership with the BWBL network providing a structure for delivery of MMfS activities. Workshops have been held on animal health, lice, fertiliser, farming systems and climate variability.

Bestprac – The Pastoral Zone – Carlyn Sherriff

- National Bestprac Forum was held last week. The forum was attended by 60 producers and industry participants from WA, SA, NSW and QLD. Evaluation data is yet to be reviewed but the initial feedback was very positive. One challenge was getting more producers to the event as many said they were "too busy".

- Planning is also underway for group workshops later this year that introduce members to webinars in the group workshop environment. Communication about these workshops has occurred and delivery will happen from now until December 2011.
- Cox Inall Communications will be developing 14 insightful and detailed case studies about innovations in the rangelands. The purpose of these case studies is to challenge Bestprac members to “think outside the square” and apply innovations into their businesses. Case studies will be published on the Bestprac website.

Sheep Connect Tasmania – Andrew Bailey & Cat Nicholls

- “Safe and Effective Livestock Vaccination” workshops — during late July and early August SCT, in conjunction with Proactive Agricultural Support and Safety (PASS), DPIPWE, Tas Quality Meats (TQM) and Pfizer; SCTas held six on-farm workshops, attended in total by more than 200 producers and service providers. Only four workshops were planned, but due to demand two additional workshops were held. Feedback was positive from contributors and attendees alike. A more comprehensive evaluation is underway.

‘I would just like to add my compliments to everyone involved in this series of really valuable workshops. Concern about the consequences of self-injection and adverse effects on the sheep have been a barrier to adoption of vaccination programs involving oil-based vaccines in Tasmania in the past. I think that this series of workshops has got the word out there that you can use safe vaccination techniques to minimise the risks, but if you do suffer an NSI there is a plan to maximise your chances of a rapid recovery.’ (Bruce Jackson, senior veterinary officer DPIWE)

- E-newsletter — Feedback from the monthly newsletter has been positive, with dynamic analysis possible, showing the number of recipients clicking on articles and traffic to the new SCT website.
- Feedback — Feedback from the newsletters suggests Tasmanian producers are keen to seek more information on perennial pasture establishment and management, Ovine Johne’s disease (OJD), safe vaccination techniques and worm control. Case studies continue to be a popular method of extending research outcomes and adoption.
- Database — the SCT database has been overhauled and entered into Mailchimp allowing the SCT to target future mailouts and promotions to key target stakeholders. This will allow for higher-quality and more meaningful analysis of feedback from the Mailchimp reporting function and ensure we continue to provide relevant service to our producers and suppliers.

SEASONAL CONDITIONS

FEATURED STATE – SA

Sheep Connect SA – Ian McFarland & Tarsha McGregor

- The warm start to August indicated an early break to Spring. Winter has been very cold with below average rainfall and slowed pasture growth.
- Mice are still an issue on Eyre Peninsula, with reports of 50-60% of canola plants being stripped of seed. Baiting is continuing-mainly with the use of planes due to crop height.
- A cold snap after shearing in the middle of August has reported a number of sheep deaths on EP.
- Crows attacking twin lambs have impacted on lamb survival rates. Foxes have also been reported as having two litters due to the good season.

The Sheep's Back WA – Bob Hall / Andrew Ritchie / Ed Riggall

- The early break in the North of the state carries on with very good promise for the season. The South was slightly late in the timing of the break but appears to have really caught up by this time. The Winter rains are excellent and continuing giving the appearance of an “old fashioned” Winter. Regular rain followed by warm sunny days has provided excellent pasture growth about two weeks earlier than normal. Pasture growth rates are high and FOO levels now good. The hand feeding that was needed earlier has now virtually ceased. Water was looking critical for the coming year but this is now largely solved in most areas.
- Crop prospects are excellent. It is perhaps perverse that it will take a good crop year before those croppers who wish to increase their sheep flocks will be able to afford to do so. There is the possibility of that being the case this year.

Leading Sheep QLD – Tony Hamilton

- The season is drying off over much of the sheep districts. Many producers are experience protein shortages and coming up to lambing will need to consider some form of supplementation. With good sheep prices most producers are prepare to spend money on feed these days. Most are experimenting with a number of different strategies including lupins corn, whole cottonseed, urea and minerals. Blocks are not as commonly used as most people are aware of the poor cost/benefit associated with some brands.

Bestwool/Bestlamb VIC – Lyndon Kubeil & Annette Taylor

- Rain in the north west of the state was well received; southern areas of the state are generally wet.

Sheep Connect Tasmania – Andrew Bailey & Cat Nicholls

- Persistent rain throughout much of the state during the past week is set to continue, with the forecast for the wet conditions to persist throughout August.

INDUSTRY ACTIVITY/HIGHLIGHTS/TRENDS

FEATURED STATE – SA

Sheep Connect SA – Ian McFarland & Tarsha McGregor

- Spring lambing has just started which has benefited from the warmer weather with feed growth and better conditions for lamb survival. Supplementary feeding with grain occurred for earlier lambers to keep up with stresses placed on ewe due to high numbers of multiple births and the slowing down of feed due to cold weather.
- Lamb marking percentages in the South East of the state have varied from 89% to 130% from unscanned merino maiden ewes and 1st X ewes.
- Ram sales are in full swing with strong prices reported. A poll merino ram on Eyre Peninsula was sold for \$3,600.
- Those that have started shearing have reported clean, white wool, cutting approximately ½ kilogram of wool more than previous years due to availability of good feed early on in the year. Some are reporting this is their best shearing in a long time.
- Croppers are now focusing on spraying and spray topping with reports on EP of barley grass appearing in July which is very early and could increase contamination issues before shearing.

Sheep Connect NSW – Shelly Anderson

- Worms are causing major issues for all classes of sheep on the southern tablelands and slopes. The level of pasture contamination is at levels not seen since the 90's. This is catching producers out. The drenching programs used over the last 5 years are not working this year. Sheep are being reinfected to treatable levels again in 6 weeks after oral drenches.

The Sheep's Back WA – Bob Hall / Andrew Ritchie / Ed Riggall

- There has been quite an interest in forward pricing of wool at discounts of 10-15% on the current market.
- Lamb marking will be at least average. There is a move towards preferential treatment of the twinning mob, generally with excellent results.

Leading Sheep QLD – Tony Hamilton

- 2011 be a good lambing, given that a lot of scanning is happening as a result of scanning workshops that have been done in the past. High sheep values will encourage producers to aim for good rates. Should be looking to get up to 90% but keeping them alive will be a challenge unless early rain arrives.
- It is likely that there will be a high proportion of merino lambs, given the renewed interest in the Merinos due to good wool as well as meat prices.
- Sheep sales on Auctions Plus have shown sheep are not leaving the Longreach area. Up to 5-6 decent size mobs have stayed in the district and some have even gone north. This is a very rare event



as most sheep move south when sold in Queensland. The sheep are going to existing sheep producers, however I have not heard of new entrants going into to sheep in the pastoral areas just yet.

- There has been good rain early in the month around Cunnamulla and Longreach which will do a lot of good coming into spring. Sub soil moisture will fire feed along once the weather warms up.

OTHER COMMENTARY OR QUESTIONS TO THE NETWORK

The Sheep's Back – Bob Hall / Andrew Ritchie / Ed Riggall

- Our suggested theme for the coming season will be “**Keeping Lambs Alive**” basically post weaning.

Leading Sheep QLD – Tony Hamilton

- Milestone Report is done and ready for end of August timeline.
- Leading Sheep 3 Contract is now with DEEDI legal for signing.

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