



Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Case Study

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USING electronic-ID

Ray and Belinda Haigh – Macquarie View

CASE STUDY: Ray and Belinda Haigh

LOCATION: Macquarie View, Trangie, NSW

ENTERPRISE: Lamb Breeding and Finishing

FLOCK SIZE: 2200 Ewes

Macquarie View has been a traditional first-cross lamb operation since the 1950s, buying Border Leicester rams to put over purchased Merino ewes as well as running cattle and having a significant cropping program.

In 2005 with increasing replacement ewe costs and prolonged dry periods, things could not keep going as they were.

Ray and Belinda decided the sheep operations had to be run in a more efficient manner. Ray often says from his cropping days that ‘in order to effectively manage something, you must be able to measure it’.

A livestock consultant was engaged to look at options in 2008 and Precision Sheep Management (PSM) was subsequently implemented on Macquarie View. In addition, due to replacement ewe costs, it was decided to mate some ewes to Merino sires to home-breed some replacements.

The key components of the Haigh’s PSM system is an autodrafter, scales, electronic-ID (e-ID) tags and e-ID readers.

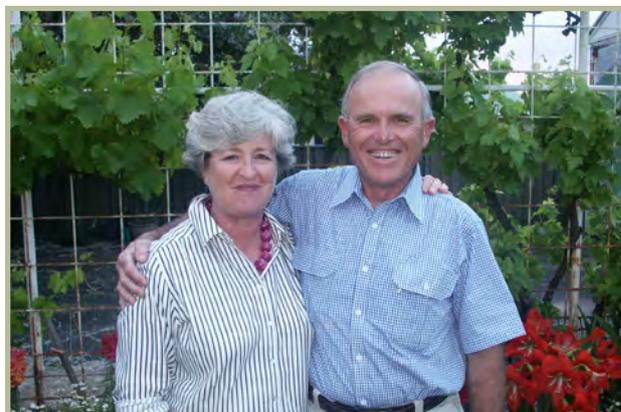
The individual animal identification system has meant that repeated measurements on an individual can be made and that decisions can be made on historical as well as current information. In the lamb enterprise this means that individual animal growth rates can be monitored, which allows for appropriate management decisions to be made for all animals and that they are not managed to the mob average.

BENEFITS OF SYSTEM TO DATE

As weighing is easier, more weighing is undertaken. Ray has calculated that due to labour and time savings, an average weighing of 900 lambs now costs \$210 less than under the old system. As more information is available, timely interventions and sales can be performed. This has equated to an additional profit of at least \$5 per lamb produced.

In the area of reproduction, use of scanning information and subsequent management decisions has resulted in an increase of about 4% in lamb numbers after the first two years.

As the Haighs continue to use the system, decisions will be easily made based on several years of data for ewes. It will also allow ewes to remain in the flock well beyond the usual 5.5 years of age, as long as they are still profitable. This will also allow greater selection pressure to be applied to young ewes.



ABOVE: Ray and Belinda Haigh



ABOVE: Ray Haigh autoweighing and drafting using a Tru-test XR3000 indicator and Prattley 3-way autodrafter

LESSONS LEARNT

The Haighs have identified four key lessons they have learnt since going down the precision path:

1. Being new technology in the sheep industry, attending an e-ID training course is of great benefit before commencing. In addition, access to a service provider is vital in the early days to keep everything going smoothly.
2. Once comfortable with the system many more potential applications have been identified than initially thought.



3. It is really important to determine how data is to be managed and reported so that appropriate software can be identified early.
4. The PSM system has given a great level of control over the entire sheep operation on Macquarie View.

The benefits of the Haigh's PSM system have been such that it has been totally paid for in just two years.

FUTURE

Now that the system is in place, the Haighs' next step is to make better use of the data management software. The Haighs can also see the added benefits of remote technologies such as Walk Over Weighing and Pedigree Match Maker to gather more information on which to make informed decisions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT:

www.sheepcrc.org.au
and go to Precision Sheep Management or
Phone: 02 6773 2927