

Balmoral Sire Evaluation Group

Trial News

www.balmoralbreeders.com.au

Annual Field Day: Friday, March 24, 2017

On property @ Tuloona 12pm—5pm

4580 Coleraine-Edenhope Road HARROW VIC

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From the Chairman

This newsletter comes to you as our committee begin to embark on a big 12 months of activities. Our trial site will have one of its biggest claims to a piece of Australian sheep industry history this month when we open the gates and pen the progeny from the last 2 years.

We can now official declare our Elders Balmoral trial site is:

**Host of the biggest Merino Ewe Lifetime Productivity Trial (MLP)
Field Day in the world!**



On **Friday, March 24**, our committee will be undertaking one of the biggest on-property displays of Merino sheep in Australia this year when we pen 1400 rising one and two-year-old Merino ewes into their 50 different sire groups. The display will represent the entire female progeny of the 2015 and 2016 MLP trials, which have been hosted by Tuloona, Harrow. The logistical arrangements of this undertaking for our committee cannot be under estimated, but we are up for the challenge and look forward to welcoming you all at the end of this month with ewes all penned up ready for your inspection.

Our field day — **12pm to 5pm** — will feature guest speakers, including Rob Herrmann from Mecardo "Making Merinos Great Again"; Nathan Scott from Achieve Ag Solutions "Making EID make money for you"; and a panel discussion with Anne Ramsay, MLP Project Manager on "The MLP Knock On" which will highlight what this \$7 million national program will deliver to commercial sheep and wool producers. The day will also include a number of industry businesses with static and working displays and demonstrations. Lunch will be provided on the day. More information can be found inside this edition of our newsletter.

A **FREE classing workshop** will be hosted between 10am and 12.30pm on the morning of the Field Day. This workshop aims to give producers a good, basic understanding of the classing tools at their disposal to select the right sheep and sires for their operations (ASBVs, visual selection, RamSelect etc). We have a great line-up of industry experts willing to impart knowledge to producers and we hope people take advantage of this. The workshop is limited to 40 places to ensure participants get the most out of it. Register your workshop place by contacting our secretary Liz Mecham (0407 015 059 or petelizmecham@bigpond.com).

Our 2017 AMSEA trial with 20 Merino sires will start with AI of foundation ewes in April at Koorinal. This trial will carry the progeny through to their first joining, giving additional fertility data analysis and much more for the benefit of producers and the wider Merino industry. Our trial continues to be supported by breeders and the industry in its pursuit of better profits from better sheep and to our wide supporter base, we thank you.

Tom Silcock

2017 Field Day
FREE sheep classing workshop @ Tuloona shearing shed
10am — 12.30pm

This **free classing workshop** aims to give sheep producers an overview of the sheep and wool selection tools they have at hand to ensure they choose the correct type of sheep for their operation. Participants should leave the workshop with a solid, basic, understanding of these tools and be able to confidently attempt assessing sheep for their own operations, and read results — such as the ones produced by our sire evaluation trials and the MLP — with more confidence and understanding.

Beginning at 10am, workshop participants will be given a quick overview of ASBVs and how they are created and what they mean. Participants will be split into small groups (<10) to rotate between the 4 presenters, all offering knowledge of different aspects of sheep selection. The aim is for participants to have hands-on during these 20-30 minute sessions. The workshop will conclude with a 10 minute question and answer session.

Topic & Presenter	What will be covered
Combining Selection Tools Allan Casey Advanced Breeding Services	Understanding what is written on the paper and how it relates to the visual picture of a sheep. How can you read the data and relate that to the animal in the pen? How can these selection systems create more money? And how to select a sheep to a clear breeding objective — your own, with as much accuracy as you can using what tools you have.
Visual Classing Rob Russell SheepScope	How to assess a sheep's structure and what to pay particular attention to. How does overlooking structural issues impact production – what can you overlook and what should you class out? How can these selection systems create more money?
Science of Wool/Skins Rob Close Kurra Wirra Merinos	Understand what the impact of not paying attention to skins can mean, how to assess skins and wool for different production aims. What do 'good' and 'bad' skins and wool structure look like? Understanding fleece rot and dermo. How can you make more money from this selection?
RamSelect & ASBVs Penny Schulz Sheep CRC	What are ASBVs, how are they created, what do they mean, how can producers get the information out of them they need? What is available to help understand them? What is the difference between ASBVs, EBVs, a trait breeding value & a breeding index What is RamSelect and how/why do/would you use it? How can this help me make more money?

Workshop participants will be provided with a copy of the Sheep CRC's Understanding Australian Breeding Values booklet.



This FREE classing workshop is limited to 40 people

To book a place contact Liz Mecham on 0407 015 059 or email petelizmecham@bigpond.com

2017 Field Day

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2017

Program of Activities @ Tuloona shearing shed

4580 Coleraine-Edenhope Road HARROW VIC

12pm — 5pm

From 11.30am: Autodrafting demonstration. See an autodraft in action as the site committee draft 1400 sheep into their 50 sire groups.

12pm: Lunch available at Tuloona shearing shed. Provided by the site committee and catered by the Wando Vale Hall Committee.

From 12pm :

- ⇒ Viewing of 2015 and 2016 Merino Lifetime Productive trial progeny.
- ⇒ Static information displays and working demonstrations onsite by industry businesses and site committee sponsors.

2pm - 3.30pm: Keynote speakers

2pm-2.10pm: Marius Cuming, AWI — Lifetime Ewe Management App and how producers can get the most out of it. **Free to download on the day**

2.10-2.40pm: Rob Herrmann, Mecardo — Make Merinos Great Again

2.40-3.10: Nathan Scott, Achieve Ag Solutions — Making EID make money for you

3.10-3.30: Panel discussion — MLP Knock on ... What will commercial producers get out of the project? Results from the project so far.

3.30pm - 5pm:

- ⇒ Viewing of 2015 and 2016 Merino Lifetime Productive trial progeny drafted into their sire groups.
- ⇒ Static information displays and working demonstrations onsite by industry businesses and site committee sponsors.

5pm: Refreshments.

DISPLAYS / DEMONSTRATIONS BY:



Is it now or never for Merinos?

Industry comment: Robert Herrmann, Mecardo

There are times when you just have to stand up; "it's now or never". Coaches espouse the need to win the crucial 3rd quarter, the "break" point in a tennis game, or bowl the "dot" ball at a crucial time of a cricket match. "Sometimes there is no next time, no time-outs, no second chances. Sometimes it's now or never." The playwright Alan Bennet probably wasn't talking about the wool industry, but he could have been.

Prices are great but the industry is in decline, how do we learn from other industries to save Merino in Australia. How do we make merino great again? Is the wool industry at a "now or never" point in time? Some would say that wool has never been better positioned, it's a unique fibre that is sustainable, perfect for the times, prices are at 11 year highs and supply going forward is not capable of flooding the market and causing prices to crash.



Why worry?

Well, for a start wool production is at long time low levels of production. This means that the industry capacity, exporters, processors etc. is also at greatly reduced levels. In the 1999 – 2000 season, more than 3.0 million bales were produced, this season that figure will be about 1.5 mill, in the past 16 years' production has halved. You can't say everything is fine, "nothing to see here", when sheep numbers and wool production have been decimated over a relatively short timeframe.

You could also argue that wool is seen within the rural sector as "yesterday's" commodity, with all the action seemingly in other industries. Grain, despite the roller coaster ride from unpredictable seasons and volatile prices, continues to be seen as favourable; feeding the growing world population is a positive story. To be relevant in this space, the grain industry effectively positions as at the cutting edge of innovation and promotes the latest technology. New ideas like "no till", using GPS to plant seeds exactly in the right place, including clever use of advisors and agronomists have all set this industry up to be seen as cutting edge. All this has happened in the shadow of deregulation, seen at the time as a scary prospect but in reality, it has helped create the space for ideas and innovation.

Potatoes are now planted and dug by machines, tomatoes have fully mechanised pickers, the pig and chicken industries have dramatically reduced labour requirements as a result of introducing new innovations.



The dairy industry since 1980 has doubled production per cow, and while cow numbers have remained the same the result is a 192% increase in production per hectare.

These industries are all competing for the new entrants to agriculture as well as limited acreage. Wool has lost this battle for acres over the last 20 years; in the late 80's the flock peaked at about 170 million, by 2010 it was 70 million. Drought played a part over this time, but the undeniable fact is that wool producers voted with their feet.

This cannot be dismissed as a sheep problem either, while wool is having a record run of prices, so too is the

lamb industry. This is translating into more ewes mated each year to terminal sires, with merino flocks either completely abandoning merino's or at the least mating as many as possible to produce saleable lambs. From 2004 to 2008 the number of ewes mated to merino rams dropped by 10.5 million to below 20 million. While this has stabilised or even steadily increased, both merino and "other" mating's sit around 20 million ewes per year now.

These figures are difficult to confirm, however a discussion with lamb marking or dipping contractors will quickly confirm this ongoing trend; there is still a swing away from merino sheep in what were formerly merino strongholds like the Western Districts of Victoria.

Those that have made the transition to prime lamb production are content; they have pushed productivity reaching 160% lambing percentages. They also look over the fence at struggling merino farmers tending weaners in the Autumn and swear to never go back!!

For those who have been in the industry a long time this is incredibly frustrating. Benchmark figures show that wool can stand alongside competing industries in the financial stakes. We also know that the Australi-

Is it now or never for Merinos? *continued*

Industry comment: Robert Herrmann, Mecardo

an Merino was developed to suit our conditions. This is still the case with the modern merino a fine addition to the grazing options.

What should happen?

Firstly, the wool industry must embrace new ideas. Business needs to constantly re-invent, so too does an industry like wool. This doesn't mean just being open to new ideas, it means driving and supporting any new innovations until they are either proven wrong or fully implemented. It takes stamina to drive change. Whatever happened to the robotic shearing experiment? My recollection was that it was initiated in the late 80's, and that circa \$8.0 million was invested. What happened? Would the advances in technology now available make the challenges it faced then possible to correct now? Chemical shearing was a goer in the 1990's, it too has all but disappeared.



The idea that we still pack wool in a bale originally designed for a camel to deliver to wool stores, and that the major changes to the shearing process in the past 1000 years have been the handpiece and the self-pinning wool press does not promote the wool industry as innovative. The fact that if you walked into a wool shed in full swing 100 years ago, it would be fairly similar to the process we see today. This is an indictment that innovation is not the natural ally of the wool industry to date.

Successful businesses/industries embrace ideas, usually they have multiple innovations trialling at any one time. This engages innovators; the very people needed if an industry is to have a long-term future.

Who should do something?

The old chestnut is who will do it? From my perspective, if we genuinely believe in the Merino, or we derive our livelihood from wool (or have in the past) then it is up to us. That's pretty broad, but to hone it down if we leave it up to those who have presided over the industry for the past 30 years then we deserve what we get. We know that it will be new eyes and new thinking that will create the innovation needed. The old guard is desperately in need of reinvigoration.

We should measure success on the basis of can wool attract the brightest young entrants. Cropping for example has the gadgets, new ideas and technology to sway not only new entrants but also investment. Wool needs its fair share, this can be seen as similar to the fight for acres; you either compete and succeed or you perish.

Conclusion

Is it possible that the wool industry could continue to contract and become irrelevant? The world does not have to have wool, so don't expect others further upstream in the industry to drive the changes needed to see wool thrive.

The spud fork is long gone, wheat bags have been replaced by bulk bins, eggs are collected via conveyer belts – agriculture on many levels has embraced ideas to improve efficiencies. This progress will never stop as the challenge to produce more with less will only intensify.

We need to find the new ideas for wool, possibly the whacky ideas, so that the industry can then develop the persona of success. On the flip side; if the wool industry looks at innovation through suspicious eyes or adopts a cautionary or hesitant approach, it will continue to struggle. Ideas like EID tags, EBV's, new selling systems, wool harvesting and handling innovations; need to be embraced to try to prove up the next industry improvement.

Now is the time; when the money is flowing in an industry the time to position for the next 50 years is now. If we wait for the commodity cycle to eventually take us back through the normal price ranges, not only will it be too late, but the fight for acres will have continued to erode wools position on the Australian landscape.



Robert Herrmann will be a guest speaker at the field day on March 24, speaking on this topic.

Trial property update 2015 & 2016 trials: Tuloona Pastoral Company, Harrow



Following the wettest spring in years, Tuloona entered spring looking fantastic. Both 2015 and 2016 F1 sheep were tracking well, although there were some concerns about dermatitis in the 2015 drop. In early December we weaned the 2016 F1 lambs at an average of 24.2kg with an application of Click Zin for prevention of body fly strike and drenched them with tri guard.

The sheep have been run on an oat stubble with lupin supplementation, under the guidance of Hamish Dickson from AgriPartner Consulting, who's advice is always appreciated.

On the January 27, we drafted the **2016 trial progeny** into ewe and wether groups. All lambs were weighed and condition scored. The ewe portion were crutched and had Clik Zin applied to their breeches. The wether portion was given a Clik treatment on their breach to get them through to shearing in July or August. Flies have been apparent in recent weeks and those being treated for flystrike were scored and electronically recorded. The progeny returned an average of 2.84 CS, with ewes weighing 25.3kg and wethers 27.1kg.

To date, two WEC samples have been taken, at 6 weeks and 10 weeks post-weaning/drenching, with WEC levels hovering around 120. This has meant no drenching of sheep as been required and hopefully indicates a good natural immunity forming for this trial group. We will have an interesting 7 years of trial measuring their progress in this regard.

The **2015 trial progeny** have continued to progress well, when last weighed in early December they returned an average 45.45kg bodyweight. The initial concerns around dermatitis have subsided as the bulk of the problems have lifted off the skin.

We welcome everyone to come and have a look at both the 2015 and 2016 trial progeny on Friday, March 24th when all 1400 head are drafted up into their 50 individual sire groups.



Michael Craig, owner,
"Tuloona"

The 2016 trial progeny which will be on display at the March 24 field day at Tuloona. Pictured receiving their lupin rations in February with their guardian alpacas are the 2016 drop wethers (RIGHT) and the 2016 drop ewes (BELOW).



Elders Balmoral 2016 Drop Weaning Weight and Breech Scores

Breeders Flock, Sire Name	Number of progeny	Weaning Weight FBVs (WWT)	Breech Cover (BCOV)	Breech Wrinkle (BWR)
Centre Plus Poll, 707115	70	-0.6	-0.4	-0.3
GRASS, 142194 (R4)	76	0.8	-0.1	-0.4
Glen Holme, 141077 (Dohne)	77	2.3	-0.3	-0.5
Greendale, 120012	64	-1.7	0.3	0.9
Greenfields Poll, 140345	39	1.8	0.0	-0.2
Greenland, 2.366	78	-0.7	0.0	0.0
Hannaton Poll, 120046	75	-0.8	-0.2	0.3
Hazeldean, 11.3542	74	-0.5	0.4	0.4
Kiandra Poll, 140757	61	1.2	-0.4	-0.1
Koorinal, 130519	90	-2.0	-0.3	0.0
Kurra-Wirra, SB5585	58	-0.5	-0.1	0.3
Leahcim Poll, 090918	88	0.6	-0.5	-1.1
Melrose, 12UGB060	63	-1.3	0.5	0.7
Mumblebone, 130389	35	-0.8	0.2	-0.3
Mumblebone, 140026	64	0.8	-0.1	-0.6
Nerstane, 100919	89	0.3	-0.1	0.0
One Oak No. 2, R56	77	-1.0	0.7	0.9
Stockman Poll, 090853	71	-1.9	-0.2	0.1
Terrick West Poll, 122220	56	2.0	0.2	0.3
The Mountain Dam, 11/ESA004	75	-0.2	0.2	-0.3
Trefusis, 110482	68	-1.7	0.2	0.3
Tuckwood Poll, 131026	56	2.5	0.0	0.0
Wallaloo Park Poll, 120912	83	-1.5	0.0	-0.4
Woodyarrup, 120175	63	1.7	-0.1	-0.3
Yiddinga, 141989	45	1.2	0.0	0.2
Progeny Group Average	68	24.2kg	3.7	2.6

The highest performing sires for each trait (**trait leaders**) are highlighted by **shading**.

Both ewe and wether progeny are included in the **Number of Progeny** and measured at weaning.

Breech scores are reported as a deviation from the average trait score for all progeny. No adjustments are made to the data to improve the accuracy of the results as is the case with **Flock Breeding Values (FBV)**.

2017 Elders Balmoral Sire Evaluation AMSEA trial Property update: Kooringal, Coleraine



Kooringal has benefitted from a good spring which has ensure lots of dry carryover feed for the summer months, which now has some green pick through it following some summer rainfall.

Foundation ewes for the 2017 trial were selected on February 2. The ewes were selected from the 3-and-4-year-old Merinos, which were all presented in full wool (18 micron), body condition scores of 3-3+ and weighing between 50 and 55 kilograms.

From this group, a mob of 1300 ewes was put together by classer David Whyte, Elders. From this mob, 1250 ewes will be artificially inseminated on April 20 and 21 to the selected 2017 Balmoral Sire Evaluation Trial sires.

Following this selection, the ewes will be shorn in early March, keeping in line with our usual management time frames.

The ewes will continue to be grazing on dry feed and supplementary fed with up to 1 kilogram of lupins, per head, per week, to maintain their condition score and ensure they present at 3-3.5 CS at the time of AI.

It will be a busy few weeks in March and April on Kooringal. After shearing of ewes, the balance of our flock will be natural joined from April 1, for a period of 5 weeks.

At the same time as the AMSEA trial joining, we will also undertake a small AI program of our own with a mob of selected stud ewes.

We look forward to beginning our sire evaluation trial journey and seeing everyone at the March 24 field day at Tulooona.



Mark Bunge, owner
Kooringal



Foundation ewes for the 2017 AMSEA trial being held at Kooringal, Coleraine, were selected on February 2. Pictured with the ewes are (from left) Jim Farran, Yiddinga, Edenhope, Mark Bunge, Kooringal, David Whyte, Elders

2016 trial lambs growth through the year:



TOP LEFT: 3 weeks post-marking, October 15, 2016.
ABOVE: Weaning on December 5, 2016.
LEFT: The weaned lambs in one mob grazing stubble before they were separated into, sexed mobs, January 2017.

2017 Elders Balmoral Sire Evaluation AMSEA trial entrants



	Stud	Ram	16 digit ID	owner
1	The Mountain Dam			Tom Silcock
2	Anderson	120096	6091472012120096	Lynley Anderson
3	Woodyarrup	140149	5004122014140149	Craig Dewar
4	Turkey Lane	15-0077	5090692015150077	John Symons
5	Wallaloo Park	140261	6013322014140261	Trent Carter
6	Kurra Wirra	150583	5041732015150583	Anthony Close
7	Yiddinga	White 4995	5092422015004995	Jim Farran
8	Moorundie Poll		6015022015150073	Geoff & Bernadette Davidson
9	Connewarran	024	5047042015015024	Hamish Weatherly
10	CentrePlus			Robert Mortimer
11	Tuckwood			Geoff Tucker
12	Lachlan Merinos	15028	505022201515028	Glen Rubie
13	Mumblebone INDUSTRY FUNDED SIRE	130850	5000632010100186	Chad Taylor
14	Tuckwood INDUSTRY FUNDED SIRE			Geoff Tucker
15	INDUSTRY FUNDED SIRE			
16	Nerstane	N53	5032982014140053	Hamish & Jock McLaren
17	Mumblebone	15-1723	5000632015151723	Chad Taylor
18				
19				
20				

The final places for sires in 2017 AMSEA trial are currently being confirmed. If you have a sire you would like considered for this trial, please contact Tom Silcock ASAP on 0419 882 239 or tom@themountaindam.com.au to discuss this. All of the 2017 trial foundation ewes will take place on-property at Kooringal on April 20 & 21.

Be aware of worms this summer

By Dr David Rendell
Livestock Logic

Weaner Worm Egg Counts tested by Livestock Logic were 3 times higher this February than in 2016, and the February of 2015.

Rising 2 year old maiden ewes were 2 times higher and mature sheep 50% higher.

The wet cool summer has increased **Barbers Pole** risk. Whilst this blood sucker worm can kill sheep, it causes negligible production loss.

Barbers pole tends to only be a problem on the same properties in quite specific localities.

If your sheep have a significant barbers pole problem it is easy to check:

- Briskly muster the mob for ½ km and examine any ewes that cannot keep up with the mob and flop down.
- If their weakness is caused by barbers pole they will have a bottle jaw (fluid swelling under jaw) and their inner eyelids will be extremely white, devoid of colour.

Farmers need to be alert, but not alarmed. If you have had barbers pole before or if you are not sure of your risk, contact Livestock Logic.

The much greater potential worm issue is **Ostertagia** (Brown Stomach) and **Trich** (Black Scour) worms with their ability to cause massive insidious production losses prior to any obvious clinical signs of worms. The high WEC level this summer combined with carry over dry feed will increase winter risk if steps aren't taken to reduce this risk. To do this without drenching excessively and increasing drench resistance means farmers must prioritise regular WEC monitoring of sheep, particularly in younger sheep.

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See your farm with clarity with AgriWebb

Data needs to drive information and when it does it allows farm managers and owners to make better, more insightful decisions.

AgriWebb delivers farm information that is derived from farm data collected offline, in the paddock via the NoteBook.

Farmers all across the country trust the NoteBook to provide them with their critical farm information. With more than 2.7 million animals under management on the NoteBook some incredible insights are certainly being driven.

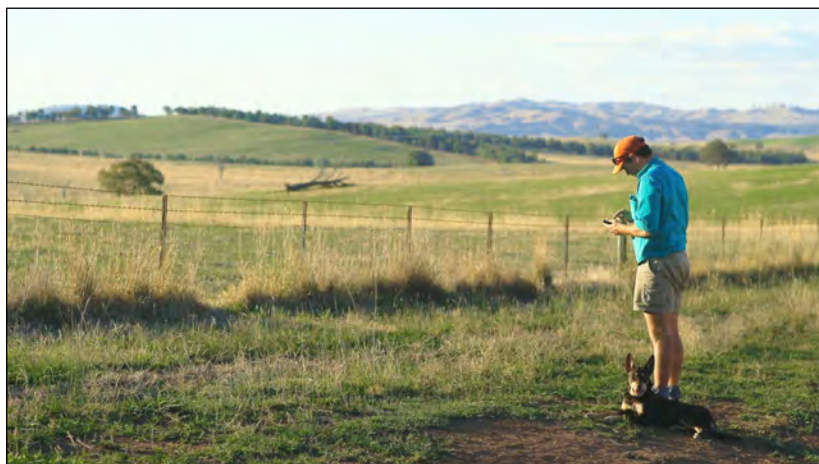
AgriWebb is an innovative software company looking to transform the livestock industry.

We are taking a very different approach to traditional companies in the 'AgTech' space. Our founders come from 5 generations of livestock production and want to drive the industry forward through data driven decision-making.

The only way to collect data is to allow users to record on the go, making the inputting of their farm data simple and easy. Our number one priority is customer service, which is supported by our top-level in house software development team. This means our customers can speak directly with the people that are building the tools to make suggestions and recommendations.

Being cloud based allows for AgriWebb users to access their farm information from any Internet browser on the planet. It also means that critical farm information is never lost or compromised, even if it is put through the wash... like traditional notepad based data is prone to be. Give yourself a clear look into the efficiency and productivity of your farm with the AgriWebb NoteBook.

Visit www.agriwebb.com for more information, call our team on 02 8278 7152 or see Kelly at the field day, March 24.



Summer nutrition in a wet year

By Hamish Dickson
AgriPartner Consulting

This summer has presented a vastly different feed situation to a 'normal' summer. Apart from lucerne or other summer active pastures, stock are typically offered dry pastures or stubbles that provide moderate levels of energy and low protein availability. The widespread summer rain this year has resulted in fresh growth in pastures and crop stubbles that present a completely different quality of feed.

To maximise growth of young stock or ensure body condition is maintained in breeding animals requires a different feeding strategy to previous years. Fortunately, with the current value of all classes of livestock and the relative value of supplementary feeds, utilising the correct amount of supplementary feed to balance paddock feed quality is providing a great return on investment and setting up for a successful 2017 production year.

The first step towards determining the correct feeding strategy is to understand what quality of feed is available for stock in the paddock.

Residual pasture from spring growth is providing adequate quantity but not necessarily quality; the larger bulk of feed grown last spring resulted in a lower quality of feed to start with and after large amounts of summer rains many nutrients have been leached resulting in dry feed of very low quality. Fresh summer regrowth is fading and will effectively become good quality hay.

In cereal stubbles, where we traditionally have some residual grain left from harvest, there is now green growth that has effectively changed the diet to a higher protein and moisture feed with no grain availability as it has all sprouted. This will change again quickly after the boomspray is brought out.

To determine what supplementary feed is most cost effective, next requires a comparison to animal requirements. For example, ewes in early or mid pregnancy have only moderate requirements for protein and require energy to maintain or increase body condition score.

Grazing these animals on cereal stubbles or dry pastures with some green pick, will likely provide adequate protein and supplementation would be largely targeted at addressing an energy deficit. In this situation providing a legume grain or hay would not be the most effective strategy as protein intake is already adequate; providing a cereal grain or other high energy supplement would provide the greatest return and ensure stock approach lambing in good condition.



Rules of thumb for summer nutrition in a wet year:

- Normal supplementation strategies should change to account for the different feed quality available to stock
- Assess various supplementation options such as grains, pellets, hay and straw based on whether they will provide the nutrients required by each class of stock and the cost efficiency per unit of protein or energy (including feeding costs)
- Summer weeds such as potato weed/heliotrope, wireweed, caltrop and salvation jane are not highly palatable, don't provide useful feed for stock and should be controlled to manage seed reserves for future years
- Monitor closely and take preventative action for animal health issues such as pulpy kidney, worms and fly strike as they are present a significantly higher risk this season.

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Thank you to our Sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our sponsors and appreciate their participation in our trials.



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