

FEEDBACK REPORT

SHEEP CRC CONFERENCE 'CONCEPT TO IMPACT' & LAMBEX 2014

AUTHORS: PRU BARKLA & TAMARA WHITE

Executive Summary

The following feedback report presents the key messages delivered by speakers at the recent **Sheep CRC Conference 'Concept to Impact' & LambEx 2014**. This report was prepared by sheep and wool producers, Pru Barkla of 'Rosscoe Downs' Cunnamulla and Tamara White of 'Riverview' Surat, who attended both conferences thanks to financial assistance provided by Leading Sheep.

Leading Sheep is an initiative designed to lead the way for a more profitable Queensland Sheep & Wool industry through the application of new technologies, knowledge and skills. The program is an important partnership between the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and Australian Wool Innovation Limited (AWI) with support from AgForce.

Leading Sheep Extension Officer Nicole Sallur reported that Pru and Tamara were selected from a strong field of applicants and Leading Sheep was proud to have supported innovative women to attend the Sheep CRC & LambEx conferences.

The sole purpose of this report is to share what Pru and Tamara have learned with their fellow Queensland Sheep and Wool producers.



About the Authors



Producer Profile – Pru Barkla

Property: Rosscoe Downs
Location: Cunnamulla Qld
Size: 15,000 hectares
Breed: Prime SAMM
Flock: 3,500 breeding ewes
Product: Prime Lamb, Sheep Meat & Wool

Prue is a passionate prime lamb producer working in partnership with her husband Stuart.

Their business consists of two properties, a breeding block “Rosscoe Downs” located South-East of Cunnamulla and a finishing block at Mt. Molar, Clifton.

Pru and Stuart have chosen the Prime South African Meat Merino (SAMM) breed for their sheep meat and wool enterprise. The superior genetics of the Prime SAMM breed is resulting in an exceptional carcass and producing 21 to 22 micron wool.

The success of their prime lamb, sheep meat and wool business is due to their commitment to continuously seek innovative tools and technologies to incorporate into every aspect of their family business.

Their operation is driven by production, which is achieved through high lambing and weaning percentages. To ensure these percentages remain high, they follow a pest management program which includes regular baiting with 1080 for the effective control of pests such as pigs, foxes and wild dogs.

Prue believes it's very important for producers to take the time to attend conferences and field days to expose themselves to new ideas and be aware of what is happening in the industry.



Producer Profile – Tamara White

Property: Riverview
Location: Surat Qld
Size: 9,500 hectares
Breed: Dorper
Flock: 3,000 breeding ewes
Product: Prime Lamb

Tamara is a fourth generation sheep farmer who has only recently returned home to work on the family farm at Surat with her parents.

In 2003, she graduated from the University of New England with a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Agribusiness, Management & Marketing. For the past 10 years she has had a successful career in marketing within the Australian agricultural industry, working for numerous companies including Zee Tags Australia.

Tamara is also a passionate prime lamb producer who is keen to become an ‘agvocat’ of the Australian Sheep & Wool Industry. She is particularly interested in utilising her marketing skills to assist industry with positioning **True Aussie Lamb™** as the protein of choice in both domestic and international markets.

Traditionally Merino wool growers, Dorper is now the breed of choice for the family's prime lamb operation. Their 3,000 strong flock of ewes are continuously producing grass fed lambs with carcass weights between 20 to 25kg at 6 to 8 months. The key to their success has been optimising breeding objectives to meet the demands of consumer markets.

Tamara believes in identifying and implementing best practice to ensure their prime lamb operation remains ethical, sustainable and most importantly, profitable.

SHEEP CRC CONFERENCE

Introduction

The Sheep CRC Conference 'Concept to Impact' was a one day conference that covered the research outcomes and achievements of the second Sheep CRC from 2007 to 2014. Information relating to the extension of the Sheep CRC for the next five years from 2014 to 2019 was also covered.

The Sheep CRC was established in July 2007 for a seven-year term to undertake a program of research and delivery of innovation to the Australian Sheep industry. At the conference, representatives of the Sheep CRC reported back on its successful campaign in converting research concepts into a series of practical and profitable tools which continue to transform the sheep industry. The conference focussed on providing practical, take home messages for breeders, producers and companies in the meat and wool supply chains.

The conference proceedings are now in the form of a series of new 'Practical Wisdom' notes designed to provide clear guidelines on how to use new information created during the CRC and are available for download on the Sheep CRC website.

New Opportunities in Genetics and Genomics

Key Messages

Genomics refers to the use of information from DNA samples. Julius van der Werf from University of New England reported that DNA tests are now available for determining parentage, poll status and to estimate Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV) for many economically important traits. **The Low Density (LD) Test is expected to significantly increase the accuracy of breeding values for young rams.** This means Ram breeders can more accurately select young rams for traits that are generally measured later in life e.g. wool weight and meat traits and accelerate the rate of genetic gain, which in turn will benefit commercial producers.

Using genomics for faster genetic gain and better balance - Julius van der Werf

The LD Test increases the rate of genetic gain in ram breeding flocks by increasing the accuracy of selection and increasing breeder confidence to use rams at a young age, reducing the generation interval. Stephen Lee from the University of Adelaide reported that genomic tests can increase overall genetic gain in Merinos by approximately 10 to 15%. **The LD Test generates breeding values for 3 new and important carcass traits: Lean Meat Yield (LMY); Intramuscular Fat (IMF) and Shear Force (ShearF5),** the latter two associated with eating quality. The accuracy of these traits is currently between 40 and 50% which is sufficient for selection decisions.

Optimising breeding program design with genomics – Stephen Lee

The Juvenile In Vitro Embryo Transfer (JIVET) program is super-charging the speed of genetic gain in Andrew Michael's flock at Snowtown, South Australia. **Andrew is using genomic technology to select superior breeding stock within weeks of birth.** He uses advanced embryo technology to collect eggs from ewe lambs at 6 to 8 weeks of age, which are then joined in a test tube before lambs are carried to term in surrogate mothers. This program is dramatically shortening the generation interval and achieving high performance lambs on the ground within 6 months. Traditional breeding programs would take up to two years to achieve a similar result.

JIVET - Juvenile in Vitro Embryo Transfer - Andrew Michael

Meat Science and Consumer Eating Quality

Key Messages

Dave Pethick reported that moderate levels of Intramuscular Fat (IMF) contributes strongly to the tenderness, juiciness, flavour and overall eating quality of lamb, with research indicating a minimum of 4% IMF is required to achieve a positive response from consumers. While increased lean meat yield significantly improves processing returns and meets consumer demand for lean meat, genetic selection heavily in favour of lean meat has the potential to impact negatively on eating quality. **Increasing lean meat yield and maintaining intramuscular fat is essential to the profitability of lamb.** Improved selection can be achieved by using the IMF ASBV from a genomics test to directly measure IMF.

Balancing meat quality with lean meat yield - Dave Pethick

According to JBS Farm Assurance Manager, Mark Inglis, **communication between producers and processors is key to adding value to supply chains.** He explained the importance for both producers and processors to continue to adopt new technologies to improve production and processing efficiencies. Mark reported that x-ray technology is now being used at JBS's processing plant in Bordertown, South Australia, resulting in increased cutting accuracy, reduced labour in this part of the plant and the creation of 200 new positions, as the plant now operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. More initiatives for producer engagement is critical to the industry's ongoing success.

Opportunities for more efficient supply chains - Mark Inglis

Sheep breeders are increasingly adopting targeted breeding tools through ASBVs, advanced breeding techniques and DNA testing. Steve Milne of Waratah White Suffolks believes **LAMBPLAN offers the best objective assessment of an animal's genetic merit.** He also believes the challenge for industry is to develop breeding programs that optimise the use of breeding tools, to ensure an individual's business objectives are achieved and the demands of future markets (wool, meat or dual purpose) are met. Steve recommends that all producers establish breeding objectives that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely.

Optimising breeding objectives for current and future markets - Steve Milne

Improving Sheep and their Performance

Key Messages

Sheep producers can access the latest information on parasite management through the **ParaBoss suite of websites: FlyBoss; LiceBoss and WormBoss.** Embedded within these websites are practical electronic tools to assist producers with developing integrated Pest Management Plans and identify the most effective treatment for flies, lice and worms. These websites have been developed by expert panels of parasitologists and veterinarians from across Australia and are maintained by the University of New England.

Using the ParaBoss resource for better parasite management - Brown Besier

Matthew Ipsen from Wareek Victoria used his 2013 Nuffield Scholarship to investigate the world's best practices in sheep reproduction and lamb survival. He strongly believes **using pregnancy scanning data can improve flock productivity and increase profits,** particularly for producers running higher stocking rates and when grass feed is in short supply. To increase productivity, Matthew recommends identifying multiple bearing ewes and managing their nutrition accordingly and removing dry ewes from the flock.

Using pregnancy scanning data to make money - Matthew Ipsen

Nuffield Scholar, Graham Clothier is one of 500 producers currently involved in Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) - a small group based course with close to 100 groups across Australia. **The focus of LTEM is to assist producers in improving their understanding of ewe nutrition and management.** Graham explained that whilst the course is built around Merino ewes and is a very accurate guide for Merinos, it is also a good indicator for crossbreeds. He recommends the following: scan ewes for multiples and feed accordingly; cross empty ewes again; monitor the condition of all ewes and shorten joining periods to around 5 weeks.

Implementing lifetime ewe management - Graham Clothier

Measuring and Managing Wool Quality

Key Messages

Sheep CRC have developed and commercialised a Wool HandleMeter and Wool ComfortMeter to measure the handle (softness) and comfort (prickle) of a finished fabric. Wool's reputation as a prickly fibre is the direct result of a common misconception that soft wool has no prickle. These Meters have proven that **fabric softness and prickle are totally unrelated fabric attributes** i.e. a very soft fabric can have a high prickle factor. Softness is mainly influenced by fabric weight, thickness and density, whereas prickle is influenced by fibre diameter. Wool with an average fibre diameter of less than 18 microns is considered very comfortable (low prickle).

Guaranteeing wool comfort and handle - David Tester

The development of the Wool HandleMeter and Wool ComfortMeter presents exciting opportunities for the Australian Wool Industry. Now that manufacturers and retailers have the technology to test fabric for softness and comfort, they have an opportunity to access new consumer markets by producing next-to-skin wool garments. **Wool producers will then have the opportunity to achieve price premiums for producing ultrafine and superfine Merino wools** and the industry as a whole can tackle consumer perceptions that wool is prickly.

Implications of wool measurement systems for breeders/producers - Philip Attard

Natalie Skubel is the General Manager of Sourcing at Country Road, one of Australia's leading fashion retailers involved in Sheep CRCs research into the objective measurement of wool handle and comfort. Natalie reported the Wool HandleMeter and Wool ComfortMeter will provide garment retailers like Country Road with the information needed to **ensure their wool garments are of a consistent standard and meet customer's expectations for quality and comfort**. She stated wool handle and comfort are critical to the process of fabric selection and garment design.

Applications of wool measurement systems to retailers - Natalie Skubel

Impact of Education and Training

Key Messages

Graham Gardner from Murdoch University reported that the first and second Sheep CRCs had an extensive postgraduate training program supporting research students enrolled in PhD and Masters Degrees. A graduate tracking survey was developed in 2009 in response to concerns from industry funding bodies questioning the value of their investment in postgraduate training. Many were concerned about the retention of these highly-trained postgraduates within the sheep industry. The survey results showed that **70% of postgraduates had found employment directly within the industry** and 90% have been retained more broadly within agriculture.

Postgraduate training - careers and contribution to industry - Graham Gardner

The Sheep CRC delivers innovation by building skills in advisors and service providers, developing high quality information and decision tools, and supporting the delivery of training to sheep producers. Lu Hogan reported that over the past 7 years, 4,884 producers and service providers, and 223 industry service providers have participated in Sheep CRC training programs. She explained that while investment in agricultural research and development leads to productivity growth in the sector, **slow industry uptake can result in a 35 year lag between development of an innovation and improved industry performance**.

Training programs and skills development - Lu Hogan

Debbie Milne of Richmond Hill Agribusiness, Victoria reported that many producers with access to technology are struggling to make the most of these opportunities, identifying **a real need for agricultural consultants**. She explained there are real opportunities available in agricultural consulting for graduates and the availability of online and distance courses is making it easier for primary producers to obtain qualifications. Debbie said it's important for producers to continue to learn and improve, and it's never too late to enrol in further study.

Setting up a consulting business - Debbie Milne

The Next Five Years

Key Messages

Michael Thomson from Cox Inall Communications reported that a recent survey conducted by Sheep CRC found that 52% of producers were aware of the research Sheep CRC were involved in and indicated they trusted this research. Michael advised the **Sheep CRC intends to utilise social media as a preferred method of communication to proactively reach and engage younger producers**. He explained that Sheep CRC recognizes the power of, 'Word of Mouth' and 'Creating a Community of Influence' and would capitalise on these opportunities.

Communicating research through social media and producer networks - Michael Thomson

The Sheep CRC has brought about significant transformations in the sheep industry with developments like Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM). James Rowe indicated there a **number of opportunities for producers to plan for in the next five years**, as new developments are made. He believes effective industry collaboration between key stakeholders such as Breeders, Producers, Processors, Retailers, Sheep Meat Council & MLA, is key to ensuring these opportunities are realised. He predicted exciting developments, including the availability of faster, more effective and more affordable full genome testing for producers in the near future.

Opportunities to plan for in the next five years - James Rowe



Above: Audience at Sheep CRC Conference 'Concept to Impact'

Introduction

LambEx 2014 was a jam packed two day event which attracted close to 900 delegates from across Australia, as well as some from New Zealand and Argentina. Many more were reported to have streamed the event live online from their home office, or out in the paddock.

The conference, featuring a two-day conference program, a trade show and gala lamb dinner brought together a mixture of sheep and wool producers, processors, exporters, service providers and food service professionals in the one venue.

Conference speakers highlighted an exciting future for Australian Sheep and Wool producers, presenting information that indicated emerging markets are developing a taste for lamb. There are also significant developments being made in innovation and technology for the improved efficiency and profitability of breeding and processing lamb.

The conference also highlighted two critical challenges for producers and the industry, the first being consumer perception and how to combat misinformation and the threat of wild dogs and how to control them effectively.

The power of consumers' perceptions

Key Messages

United States cattle rancher and agricultural broadcaster Trent Loos urged delegates to be like the animal activists and, **'Start Not Shutting Up'**. He illustrated how important it is to educate consumers because of the misinformation that is so easily accessible on the internet – today if you want to know something you 'Google' it. Trent suggested that the easiest way to get started is to start with educating your own family and friends, as they will then be in a position to correct others in the future. He was also keen for all the delegates to realise that as producers we all have a very important job, as we are the people, that despite being a small nation, are producing the food and fibre that is feeding and clothing the world over. We need to take pride in what we do.

Trent Loos - Rancher, broadcaster and 'agvocate', Nebraska, US

UK based food marketing expert Professor David Hughes reaffirmed that supermarkets worldwide are reacting to the consumer 'pressure cooker'. He warned that while 'ethical' and 'sustainable' are buzz words now, **in another ten years we will need to make changes to on-farm production practices to meet consumer demands**. He reported that with an aging population worldwide and a trend to have less or no children, the population in the next 10 to 20 years will be significantly less, resulting in a smaller market for meat, including lamb. He illustrated that the 'big fight' for market share will continue to be between high intensive farmed meats such as chicken and fish. He recommended that lamb, "stay out of this fight" and focus on obtaining the premium market, explaining that lamb is considered a premium protein and that's a good thing.

David Hughes -Professor of Food Marketing at Imperial College London, UK

JBS Imports is one of the largest importers and distributors of red meat in the United States. Head of JBS Imports, Kim Holzner believes the **US is the most important export market for Australian Lamb Producers**. The US is currently the highest dollar value market for Australian lamb with consumers preferring the highest value cuts – the rack, the loin and the leg. US producers can't meet the demands of the domestic market, with sheep ranching almost a cottage industry. Kim reported the market is growing and the US population is being driven by immigration, with many of these immigrants arriving from countries more familiar with lamb. He also reported they are seeing a better demand for lamb as the US economy recovers from the recession. In the US food service industry lamb is a protein of choice because it is considered different and interesting to work with. Kim says the key to success in this market is to continue promoting lamb to retailers and food service providers. He urges producers to work more closely with processors to better understand and meet market demands, noting that the US is looking for quality, consistency and year round supply.

Kim Holzner - Head of JBS Imports Colorado, US

The International Lamb Opportunity

Key Messages

MLA's General Manager of Global Marketing Michael Edmonds reported that over the next decade our traditional markets – North America, the EU and Australia are unlikely to change significantly. However in contrast, emerging markets are likely to grow their share of Australian lamb. **Two of the biggest demographic trends emerging over the next decade are rising incomes and an ageing population.** Meat consumption tends to decline with age, but the good news for lamb is, these older cashed-up consumers concerned with health are likely to choose a premium product like lamb. A number of psychographic trends will also impact on the consumer of tomorrow and provide opportunities for Australian Lamb, in particular 'Natural Source and Absolute Integrity'. To capitalise on these opportunities, MLA has launched the 'True Aussie' brand which showcases our disease free, natural environment and our trustworthiness in delivering a product to the highest standards of safety and integrity.

Michael Edmonds - General Manager of Global Marketing, Meat & Livestock Australia



David Rutley is the Lamb Supply Chain Coordinator for Thomas Foods International and he believes the Australian sheep industry should be capitalising on opportunities for the future. He reported that China is the largest consumer of sheep meat in the world and their ability to produce lamb is continually falling behind its consumption, which presents a great export opportunity for Australia. He warned that political pressure from the European Union demanding all importers provide animal traceability, **could lead to mandatory individual animal identification in Australia.** David explained the many benefits of EID and suggested that producers see voluntary adoption of EID as a good opportunity to achieve improved production and consistency demanded by consumers. David also suggested that in the future, producers achieving best practice may be rewarded for eating quality.

David Rutley - Thomas Foods International

"When times are good, we don't need to improve but when times are tough, we cannot afford to improve."

Dr Alex Ball Program Manager from MLA presented a look at the next generation of Meat Standards Australia (MSA) for lamb and yearling sheep meat and what it means for producers and processors. **The future is all about IMF - Intramuscular Fat** (marbling), which in moderate levels contributes strongly to lamb's reputation for tenderness, flavour and overall eating quality. He reported that current consumer markets are seeking lamb carcasses weighing between 22 and 24 kg with a fat score of 2 or 3, noting that the end result is 50% genetics + 50% nutrition (feeding program). He suggested that the key to success will be in effectively communicating down the value chain. He indicated that as the quality of lamb improves, consumers will invariably demand more. He strongly believes the future profitability of lamb will depend on eating quality, being: taste/flavour; juiciest and tenderness.

Dr Alex Ball - Program Manager, Eating Quality Research and Development, Meat & Livestock Australia



Embracing Technology

Key Messages

Melbourne city girl turned passionate agriculturalist Jo Newton presented her five favourite pieces of technology that she believes will save producers time and labour. They were as follows:

1. Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs)
2. Auto Drafter
3. Sheep Handling Equipment
4. Smart Phones and Mobile Applications
5. Working Dogs

Jo also recommended the following mobile phone/tablet applications for producers, that once downloaded can be used anywhere without internet access:

- Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) market reporting;
- Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) Lifetime Ewe Management (currently under development) and
- Farmware

Jo Newton - University of New England Armidale, NSW

Nathan Scott from Mike Stephens & Associates, Victoria talked about the effective use of electronic identification (EID) for Precision Sheep Management – the term used to identify and manage individuals or groups of sheep to take advantage of variations in the flock. He suggested that Performance Monitoring is an area in which commercial producers have significant room for improvement, given that every flock has poor, average and superior performers. Traditionally, producers have used visual management tags to identify and manage large numbers of animals, now EID makes this process easier, faster and more accurate. In addition, the cost of EID tags and associated equipment has significantly reduced, they are now more capable, as well as more reliable and robust. **Electronic identification is now a viable tool for commercial sheep producers for use in the identification and management of individual animals.** Producers can choose to be trained and purchase the relevant equipment, or engage the services a contractor.

Nathan Scott - Mike Stephens & Associates, Victoria

Tom Gubbins from Te Mania Angus strongly believes Australia's sheep industry must demand more from its seedstock sector when it comes to the application of genetic technology. He reported that one of the industry's core problems, is many commercial breeders are still choosing to select their breeding stock subjectively (by eye) rather than selecting objectively using performance information. He says **seedstock suppliers need to work closely with their commercial clients to improve the acceptance of performance data.** He is concerned that despite the availability of genetic tools, there is slow, to no uptake within industry. Tom recommends that the sheep seedstock industry also needs to push to obtain carcass feedback from processors in order to breed better quality animals.

Tom Gubbins - Te Mania Angus Stud, Mortlake, Victoria



The looming nation-wide lamb industry threat of out of control predators

Key Messages

Karen Huskisson from Wattle Downs Sheep Station gave an emotional account of her personal fight against wild dogs and how they devastated her family's fine wool Merino business to the point where she almost left the industry to retain her sanity. She highlighted how her forefathers had fought and won a war against wild dogs with basic means and how frustrated she was that in the present day with technological advancements we were losing the current war against wild dogs. She pleaded with delegates to **be proactive and not sit back** and wait until the problem becomes out of hand.

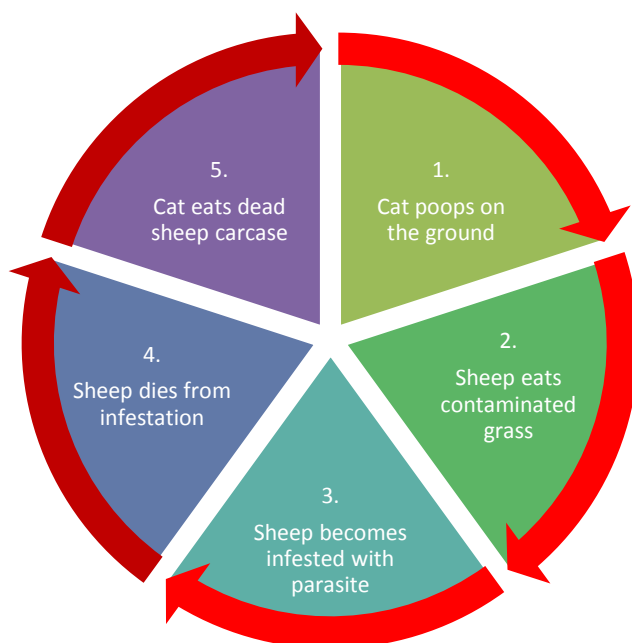
Karen Huskisson - Wattle Downs Sheep Station, The Gums, Qld

Heather Miller shared her experiences from South Australia's BiteBack program and illustrated the massive distances a wild dog can travel in a short period of time. She reported that a dog trapped and fitted with a GPS tracking device, **travelled 630km from Charleville Qld to Collarenebri NSW in a matter of a few days**. Heather reported that the number of sheep in Queensland has gone from 19 to 3 million and the current wild dog problem in Queensland is exacerbated by the lack of willingness of cattle producers to assist with pest management projects such as baiting and fencing. ABARE has reported that the post-traumatic stress related with dealing with wild dogs is significantly worse than Vietnam Veterans and Car Accidents.

Heather Miller - BiteBack Program, SA

Semi-retired Rural Vet Jack Reddin provided a snapshot of the impact feral cats can have on sheep and wool producers in terms of financial loss and lost productivity. He explained how **feral cats are carriers of two single celled parasites that readily infect sheep - Toxoplasmosis and Sarcocystis**. A single feral cat can infect a flock of sheep by simply walking through and defecating in a paddock – there are huge numbers of infectious parasites in their faeces. He went on to explain that Toxoplasmosis can cause abortion storms in infested ewes, which can have a significant impact on lambing rates. He reported a case where the presence of the parasite resulted in a lambing rate of just 40%. Jack presented this vicious cycle in a diagram similar to the following:

Dr Jack Reddin - Murray Bridge, SA



Important Note on Pest Management:

Feral animals have a very high reproductive potential, so replacements readily move in when feral animals are removed. For any Pest Management Plan to be effective, removal pressures must therefore be constant, which highlights the importance of collaboration amongst landholders.

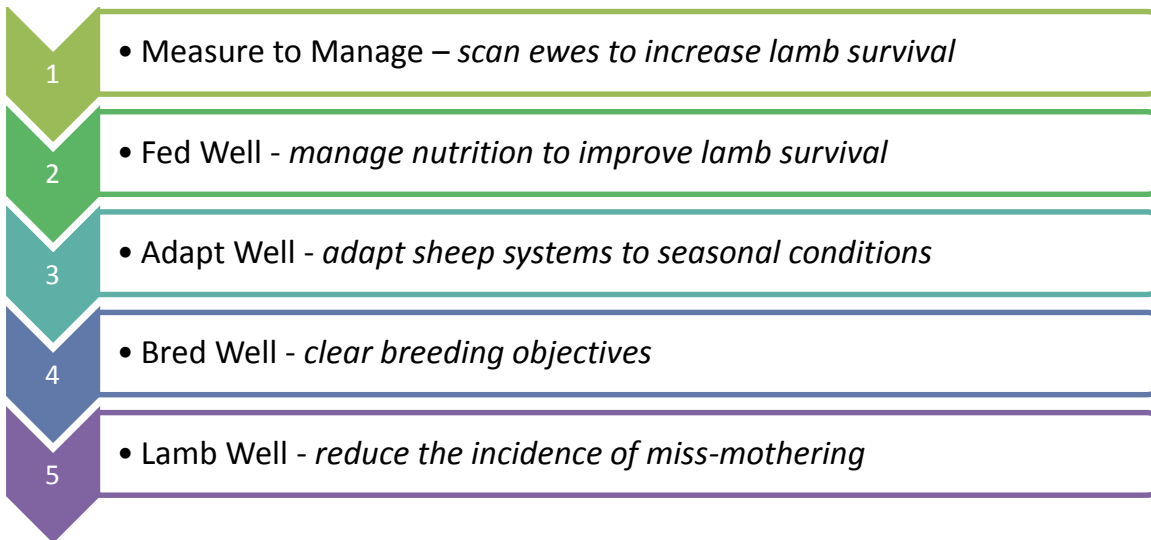
Optimising Margins

Key Messages

As the program suggested, Jason Trompf gave a very powerful address challenging producers to 'get better at lamb survival'. He asked producers to consider stocking rates per hectare and ask the question, "What are extra lambs worth?" He reported that Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) had contributed to Australian Marking Rates increasing from 88% in 1999 to 90% in 2013. Participation in these programs has proven to increase the reproduction rates of the national flock and thus improved the competitiveness, sustainability and ethics of production of the Australian sheep flock. Jason recommended that all producers subscribe to the following guide:

Lambs Alive, Do the Five.

Survive and Thrive - Jason Trompf, Principal, JT Consulting, Victoria



Brad Wooldridge challenges producers to become masters of pasture by finding the weak link in pasture management and correcting it to achieve substantial growth in profit margins. He was at the beginning of the Pastures from Space technology 15 years ago and has since teamed up with Landgate. He now uses **Land Imaging for Technical Analysis (LITE) to analyse how pastures have performed over the past eight-year period** and then explores how they *could* have performed given the season. Quantifying seasonal variation has allowed pasture performance predictions and matching stocking rate to the seasons predicted potential.

Brad Woolridge -Arthur River, WA

Nigel Kerin went through the droughts of the last decade like any other mainstream producer and came out with massive feed bills, depleted ecology, burnt-out people and a serious overdraft. He and wife Kate decided to find a way to make money in the good years and not lose it all in the bad years. They soon learnt it was **impossible to drought-proof a farm, but you could drought-proof a farm business**. Here's what they do:

1. Working on the Business Meetings – held monthly with an interrogation of current financials
2. Working in the Business Meetings – held every Monday to plan the week's activities
3. Grass Budgeting and Grazing Charts – matching stocking rate to carrying capacity in all seasons
4. Coaching and Mentoring – an external coach monitors their progress in achieving goals and objectives
5. Response to Drought – complete a Response to Drought document when grazing chart indicates a drought

Nigel reported the following are non- negotiable rules applied to his farming business:

- Grazing Budgets
- 120 days of grass on hand
- No longer have 100% carrying capacity dedicated to breeding stock

Drought-proofing the family farm business - not the farm - Nigel Kerin, Yeovil NSW

New approaches to better business profits and sustainability on-farm and beyond

Key Messages

Charlie de Fegely believes good management, productive pastures and the right genetics can make a big difference to lamb growth rates, which are central to profitability. The most profitable lambs for his farming enterprise are those sold direct to processors at weaning, between 12 to 16 weeks of age. The ideal lamb for this environment is a trade lamb with a carcass of 20 to 22kg. If lambs have to be weaned and placed in a **finishing program the cost of production increases by up to \$35 per lamb**. Charlie says the most critical factor in achieving optimum lamb growth rates is the condition of ewes, which are scanned and fed accordingly.

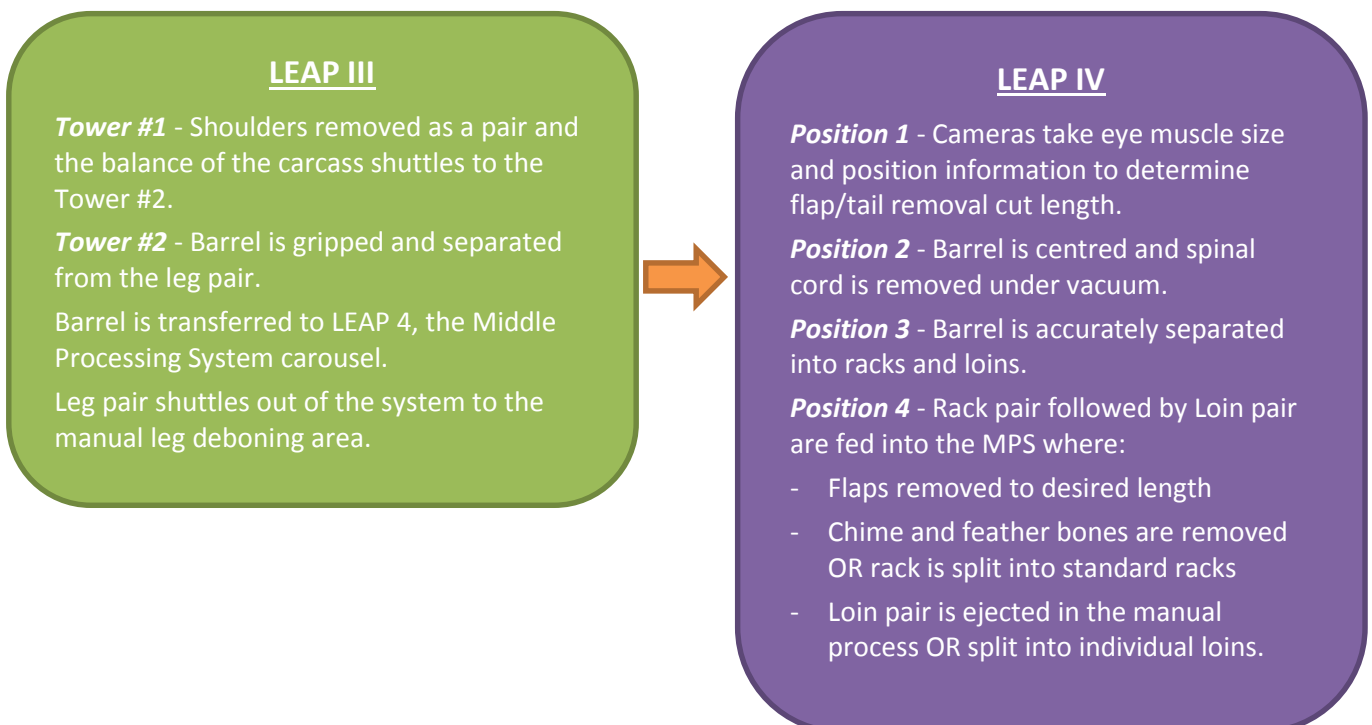
Charlie de Fegley - Ararat, VIC

Meat and Livestock Australia's (MLA) super butcher Raf Rameriz reported there is scope to take Australian Lamb to even greater heights with a spot of ingenuity. He demonstrated a number of new techniques butchers are using today to present lamb to consumers. Raf is truly excited about the current and future opportunities for Australian Lamb, which he strongly believes, **"...is the sexiest protein on the planet!"**

Raf Ramirez, MLA and friends.

Graham Treffone has been the driving force behind the installation of the Leap 3 lamb primal cutting system and Leap 4 middles processing system at JBS Bordertown, South Australia. The Leap process uses single energy x-ray (SEXA) to determine the skeletal characteristics of an individual carcass, which directs the cutting robot towers to the dissection points on the carcass. The system processes **10 carcasses per minute** and provides the following improvements in production: reduced cost of labour; greater accuracy and consistency; improved safety; reduced handling and reduced consumables.

Graham Treffone - Innovation Manager, JBS



People Magic

Key Messages

Acclaimed animal trainer Steve Jefferys has a remarkable string of credits to his name, including getting horses and dogs to do things many would consider impossible. Steve maintains his policy of setting boundaries and providing reward to his team of animals, is exactly the same strategy he applies to managing a team of people. **He recommends the importance of identifying individual personalities and strengths and assigning tasks accordingly.** He believes positive communication is key to a team working together efficiently and effectively. Steve says getting staff to comply is no harder than putting horses on stage at the Sydney Opera House.

Steve Jefferys - Horse trainer, NSW

Successful succession is considered the holy grail of any family farming business. Internationally acclaimed conflict resolution specialist Allan Parker clearly demonstrated in his presentation, the importance of drawing on every resource available, from body to brain, to in-laws and outlaws. **He recommends getting the topic of succession on the table and taking the time to discuss and resolve everyone's issues.** Allan strongly believes it is important not to assume, but confirm the thoughts and feelings of everyone involved. It is also important for the leader/s in the business to give praise and where children are involved, give them a go.

Allan Parker - Peak Performance



Photos from LambEx 2014

Left: Pru Barkla, Trent Loos & Tamara White

Below: Horse Trainer, Steve Jeffreys on stage

