**Queensland Government**

**Department of Agriculture and Fisheries**

**Media Release**

30 August 2017

**Western Queensland sheep producers share their exclusion fencing tips**

Sheep and wool producers have been advised to be proactive when weighing up the merits of exclusion fencing and ‘don’t wait until lambing percentages are down before taking action’.

Blackall wool grower Ben Banks has warned western Queensland producers delaying fencing could put them in a position where it was difficult to financially justify the infrastructure expense.

“If you’re in a position to be able to afford to put up fencing while you’re marking 80-100 per cent of lambs, do it,” he said.

“Don’t wait until you’re marking 20 per cent of lambs because it becomes a lot harder to justify and harder to afford.”

Mr Banks and his wife Oona run Rivington, west of Blackall, and have put in 60km of dog fencing to protect their 25,000 merinos. He said the expensive investment was critical for the sustainability of their business.

“It has cost us $6,500 a kilometre, or $400,000 in total, but it has paid for itself within a couple of years.”

But given the high cost of the infrastructure the wool producer said it is critical to research construction options, discuss the merits of different materials with those who had already installed fences, and “get out and have a look” at some of the exclusion fences that have been built recently in western Queensland. Predator control field days and fencing bus trips like what have been organised in the past by Leading Sheep are a great way to do this.

“I will be honest, between when we started the fence and when we finished, we changed nearly 100 per cent of our fencing installation techniques. We also learnt techniques that reduced the strain on man power,” Mr Banks said.

“The primary change we made was to how we rolled out the netting. Initially, we were rolling out netting horizontally off the back of the truck. We then changed to rolling it out vertically. This made the process quicker, reduced man power and made straining the fence a lot easier.”

He said given the cost it was critical producers got it right in terms of materials and construction efficiencies. His advice to those deliberating over how to get started is:

* Talk with local fencing representatives as they have considerable knowledge and experience about what is working and what is not.
* Visit properties that have already installed exclusion fences and ask what worked for them? You can pick up tips and tactics for things like effective flood fencing designs.
* Research prices and labour costs and compare brands.

Longreach wool producer David Owens, is another western Queensland producer who was motivated to install exclusion fencing to reduce the impact of wild dogs on his Merino operation.

“In one paddock we were losing 20 to 30 lambs a week to wild dogs,” he said.

“Overall our lambings were down to 50 per cent, when we can normally work on 70 per cent and we felt certain most of those losses were a direct result of wild dogs.

“So we made the decision to start work on exclusion fencing. It will cost us about $150,000 for the 20 kilometres of fence we have planned, but if it will save our lambing rates then it’s worth it in the long run.

“The dog fence is one of the most important investments you can make around here. We’ve run some numbers and found that, depending on the season, the fence will for pay itself within two years and importantly it will give us back some control over production.”

In preparing to build the fence, Mr Owens found preparing beforehand helped with time and labour efficiency in the installation.

“It’s important to do your research into the kind of fence and the materials you need for your place. You don’t need a lot of machinery, you can get by without some things such as a slammer.”

On the ground, one of the key elements of his fencing project has been to negotiate the challenges of building enduring, but effective flood fences.

With that in mind he has constructed flood fences with a two-part hinge specifically installed to withstand large flood events and critically remain “dog proof” during wet periods when the paddock might be inaccessible.

“The bottom layer is chicken wire which we make sure overlaps on the ground by about 45cm.Over the top of that is netting. These components are attached to a latch system which, when it floods, allows it to swing in the water. We’ve braced the posts back to withstand water pressure. We want to know nothing has breached the fence when we can’t reach it.”

He said he has already noticed significant improvements in production since he started work on the exclusion fencing.

“We have already seen improvements in lambing rates in the sections that have been fenced off. In my opinion, exclusion fencing is the single most important investment a sheep and wool producer can make to stay productive and ensure their business is sustainable into the future.”

***Listen to tips from western Queensland producers Ben Banks and David Owens about exclusion fencing.***

To view the video visit: [*http://www.leadingsheep.com.au/2017/07/video-exclusion-fencing-tips-from-producers/*](http://www.leadingsheep.com.au/2017/07/video-exclusion-fencing-tips-from-producers/)

Leading Sheep is a joint initiative of Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, supported by AgForce. It is a proactive network of Queensland sheep and wool business at the forefront of practical and relevant information and technology, to equip progressive and thriving producers for the future.

For more information about Leading Sheep visit [www.leadingsheep.com.au](http://www.leadingsheep.com.au) or like the Leading Sheep Facebook page.

**ENDS**

**Media: Andrea Corby ph: 333 04551**