**Queensland Government**

**Department of Agriculture and Fisheries**

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**Technology and networking key to success**

Being willing to adopt new technology and utilise effective, information networks will be key to the future success of the state’s sheep and wool industry according to one of Western Queensland’s younger producers.

Jesse Moody works alongside his parents, running Abbadoah and Yarmouth, with the properties making up around 56,000 hectares of mulga and Mitchell grass grazing country near Cunnamulla.

He returned to the family operation in 2011 determined to succeed in the sector after completing an apprenticeship.

Since returning home he has joined Leading Sheep, a proactive network of Queensland sheep and wool businesses committed to equipping progressive producers with knowledge, skills and the latest technology to increase productivity and profitability.

Now Mr Moody is also a producer representative on Leading Sheep’s 10-member state advisory panel.

The panel helps identify industry and producer priorities and opportunities for extension and information-sharing geared towards on-farm gains.

Mr Moody said he was motivated to join Leading Sheep to influence the future direction of the industry by enhancing growers’ production and management systems, along with increasing sheep numbers in the state.

“The positive implications of technology for a producer are great, if we can afford to implement them and use them correctly I think they will be very beneficial,” Mr Moody said.

At a grassroots level, he is working to gradually implement change as part of his family’s grazing operation.

The Moody family run around 6000 Merinos and 150 head of cattle in a grazing operation that has a 20,000 head DSE carrying capacity. But he said drought and wild dogs had significantly reduced livestock numbers.

“Whilst the drought severely impacted our merino operation, it has allowed us to tidy up anything that hasn’t been performing, bring electronic tags to our business, fleece weigh our young livestock and regularly scan our sheep to ensure everything is lambing,” Mr Moody said.

Mr Moody also relies on good nutrition and genetics to improve the durability of his flock. On the nutrition side he has been successfully supplementing his sheep with grain and minerals.

While from a genetic perspective he credits his involvement with a ram stud in New South Wales with providing him with an understanding of sire evaluations, the importance of clean fleece weight, and selecting rams based on both the Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) as well as traditional methods of visual assessment.

“When buying sheep, eye muscle depth and yearling fat scores are the biggest factors for looking at the durability of livestock, the better they are, the better indicator your sheep will do well. I also firmly believe like a lot of producers, looking at clean fleece weight is important for growing wool.

“We have just started getting a full wool assessment, including fleece weight, on each individual maiden ewe to boost production through selective culling.

“Through using ASBVs we have seen fleece weights go up and our growth rates increase, and our general type of sheep has also changed. We used to have a large frame, solid, South Australian type merino, and in the past 10 years we have moved to a different frame and seen fleece weights increase. We are running smaller sheep yet cutting more wool.

“I think the stud industry as a whole will adopt all this new technology, as younger producers are starting to look for better, easier and more efficient ways to produce their sheep.”

Today, the potential to eliminate wild dogs with exclusion fencing, wool prices reaching an all-time high of more than 1500c/kg and enhanced production methods has motivated Mr Moody to phase out cattle and increase his sheep numbers.

“We did a financial comparison of our cattle and sheep operation and the sheep were beating cattle, even with the record prices we are seeing in the beef industry, and ultimately our land is better suited to sheep,” Mr Moody said.

Longer term he is optimistic his enthusiasm for the sector, and his experience and willingness to embrace new technology will allow him to bring new insights and perspective to the Leading Sheep network.

“Leading Sheep offer a good diplomatic approach to dealing with the issues in the industry, there are fewer and fewer of us and having a body like that bringing us all together to find common ground is really advantageous,” Mr Moody said.

Leading Sheep is a joint initiative of Australian Wool Innovation 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.

**Media: 3087 8598**