



Harnessing eID data for smarter management

Producers: Father and son, Trevor and Alan Rissmann; 'Rosedale', Yelarbon

Enterprise type: Mixed enterprise of Merino sheep (450 commercial ewes and 850 stud ewes), cattle (300 Angus breeders) and crops (600 ha, predominantly forage).

Land area and type: 4,000 ha across two properties, from decent Belah and Brigalow soils to very light Box Creek country. Rosedale is located near the town of Yelarbon, halfway between Goondiwindi and Inglewood, in Southeast Queensland. It has around 600 mm average rainfall.

In 2018 the Rissmann's took over a seedstock operation now known as Rissmerino. Overnight the need to collect and store data went from being something to strongly consider to an absolute necessity for the family. They began using electronic identification (eID) across the whole property and flock. Seven years later, Alan says it changed the way everything is done at Rosedale; from lamb marking and classing, right through to worm management.

A day in the life at Rosedale: data capture made easy when lamb marking

At Rosedale, a typical marking day starts the night before with a quick but important task – taking a few minutes to prepare the eID reader. Alan sets up a new session and gives it a clear name. This includes the date (year and month), the mob name (e.g. lambs born in 2025 plus the paddock to distinguish groups), and the event or measurement type (marking).

Next, he adds the data fields that need to be recorded, such as sex and birth type (maiden twin, maiden single, mature twin, mature single). The reader then goes on the charger overnight, ready for the busy day ahead. On marking day, preparation and efficiency are key. Thanks to careful paddock planning, Alan already knows the birth type of each mob coming through the yards.

"We lamb different birth types separately, such as twins from maiden ewes, so at marking time we know exactly what we're working with," he says. "At the start of the mob, I just set the eID reader to automatically record the birth type, in this example, maiden twin, and then we're good to go." From there, the process runs like clockwork. "It takes about two seconds per lamb – scan the tag, tap in the sex, and move on," Alan explained.

But lamb marking isn't just about getting the job done, it's also a critical data collection point. "We record other traits too, like breech cover, breech wrinkle, and birth coat," Alan said. "That data helps us down the track when we're classing. It's how we breed Merinos that don't need mulesing, without compromising on wool or carcase quality."

The Rosedale team uses an automatic weigh and draft system with a panel reader, connected to the BreedELITE program. The data is recorded in real time and feeds straight to a laptop.

Classing with purpose: the value of good planning, simple tools, and consistent data

At Rosedale, classing sheep is all about using the right data – and making it work for your operation, no matter what software you use.

While Alan uses the BreedELITE system to manage their records, he says you don't need fancy tools to get started. "BreedELITE works really well for us, but honestly, with a bit of pre-planning and some basic Excel skills – like learning how to use XLOOKUP – you can make just about any system work," he said.

Plan ahead: The key, Alan said, is being clear from the outset about what you want to achieve with your data. "You've got to plan ahead. What's important to your breeding objective? If it's weaning weight, micron, and body condition, then record those. But if you're never going to class on micron, don't waste time measuring it," he said.



That forward thinking includes being intentional about when and how you'll record and use the data. "Think about when you'll collect it, how you'll name it, where you'll save it, and how you'll use it later. Fit it in around jobs you're already doing, like marking or weaning, and make it part of the workflow."

Record birth and dam type: One of the most important data points, Alan says, is tracking both birth type and dam type. "You've got to know if a lamb was a single or a twin, and whether it came from a maiden or mature ewe – that makes a massive difference when it comes time to class," he explained. "If you don't record that, you'll end up culling too many twins or maiden-reared lambs just because they had a worse start in life."

Their system groups lambs into four clear categories: twins from maidens, twins from mature ewes, singles from maidens, and singles from mature ewes, and that status is recorded at marking. "That way, when we're classing later, we can compare apples with apples."

Timeliness is crucial: "You might think you'll remember what happened when you get back to the office next week, but trust me, you won't," Alan said with a laugh. "Take 10 minutes at the end of the day to save the data and jot down any notes. It'll save you hours trying to piece things together later."

Keep things consistent: "Every sheep needs a unique ID – we like using the birth year and tag number, like 24-0001 – and name your files in a way that makes sense," he said. "I always go with date, mob name, and measurement, like '20250225 2024 drop ewes weaning weight'. Keep it simple and repeatable because it makes life so much easier."

Using eID data to manage drench resistance

At a Leading Sheep workshop in 2024, Alan and Trevor Rissmann shared how they're using eID tags to take a more targeted approach to worm management in their flock. By collecting individual worm egg counts, the Rissmann's can track which sheep had the lowest worm burdens as lambs, and that data is proving useful well beyond weaning.

"What we found is that the wormiest and least wormy lambs tend to stay that way into adulthood," Alan said. "At 2 and a half years old, the pattern held with just a couple of exceptions."

Instead of blanket drenching the entire mob, they now selectively treat only the most worm-affected sheep – around 70% – and draft off the remaining 30% to remain undrenched. It's a simple but powerful strategy to [support refugia and slow resistance](#). "Refugia is one of the last tools we've got to deal with rising drench resistance," Alan said. "So, we always try to leave a percentage of sheep untreated to help maintain that susceptible worm population."

Top tips

- Plan before you scan by knowing what data matters to your breeding goals and working out when and how you will record it.
- Start simple and stay consistent by using the same file names and animal IDs whether you are using specialist recording software or Excel.
- Record birth and dam type so you know if a lamb came from a maiden or mature ewe and whether it was a single or twin to make more informed classing decisions.