



Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Case Study

Document ID:	SheepCRC_26_3
Title:	Using electronic ID - Ted & Simon Beattie
Author:	Sheep CRC
Key words:	sheep; electronic identification; eid;

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It should be cited as:

Sheep CRC (2011) – Practical Wisdom Note: *Using electronic ID - Ted & Simon Beattie*

USING electronic-ID Ted & Simon Beattie - Derrynock Poll Dorset Stud

CASE STUDY: Ted & Simon Beattie

LOCATION: Derrynock, Victoria

ENTERPRISE: Ram Breeding and Lamb Finishing

RAMS SOLD ANNUALLY: 200

The potential for immediate benefits in labour savings and accuracy have led Simon and Ted Beattie who own 'Derrynock' Poll Dorset Stud, to invest in electronic-ID (e-ID) technology.

The Beatties sell 200 rams each year, and also run a commercial 450 head self-replacing lamb flock turning off 700 lambs a year.

Simon and Ted discussed the use of Precision Sheep Management and e-ID within their stud for some time prior to introducing the technology and began their use of e-ID through involvement as a TAP alliance (Tru-test, Allflex, Prattley) showcase site.

In this role they helped to road-test tags, equipment and software.

At 'Derrynock' the Beatties use a Tru-test XR3000 indicator, an Allflex stick reader, an Allflex panel reader, a Prattley auto-drafter, and Sapient Technology software on a laptop computer in the yards.



ABOVE: Autodrafting using Prattley autodrafter and Tru-test XR3000 indicator and large screen display



ABOVE: Simon Beattie

Labour savings have been considerable through the use of data management software in conjunction with the auto-drafter to draft ewes and rams based on any number of traits.

This has been particularly evident in the preparation of rams for their annual on-property sale - the process has taken a 12-hour job down to just two hours.

According to Simon the advantages don't stop just at the labour savings.

"For our last sale, our rams were better presented than they ever have been," he said. "We drafted all the sale rams into groups based upon traits, and indexes.



ABOVE: With repeated drafting sheep become accustomed to the autodrafting equipment

“Within each group we could then pen them according to type. It produced very well matched and even pens of rams.

“Although we can’t directly attribute anything to this drafting, I don’t think it is just a coincidence that it was our most successful sale ever.

“I also had a client who needed six rams. He was very particular on the traits he was looking for, so I set his parameters using the Sapien Software and we ran 200 rams through. The auto-drafter selected 10 rams.

“He was then able to pick the best six and walk away with exactly what he wanted. We just wouldn’t have been able to do that for an individual client in the past.



“We are hoping to record as much as we can directly into our data management software this year, from lambing through to sale. The less we have to touch the data the better.”

But it hasn’t all been plain sailing. Tag infection has been the most significant issue experienced at ‘Derrynock’.

The Dorset breed has a thick ear, reducing the amount of airflow in and around the tag. When combined with wet weather, this can result in infection and tag loss.

“It has been a problem for us, but people are working on solutions,” Simon said.

“At this stage, we’re hoping for a different tag design that will meet all of our needs. Ideally we need something that we can read visually, is easy to apply, light enough to use at birth and designed to allow plenty of air flow in and around the tag. As soon as we have something like that we will be really happy.”

There have been some issues with equipment as well.

“The technology is complex and you need to develop an understanding of how to set up and use your equipment. You have to be prepared to read the instruction manual because it is not always straight forward.”

The use of e-ID has also helped Ted remain a vital part of the operation. They have installed a large monitor screen to display tag numbers and animal history, replacing the need to physically handle rams all day, or read through pages of tag numbers to locate an animal’s details.

Throughout the implementation of the technology Simon and Ted have experienced some issues, but they have no regrets.

“There is still some refinement required to the equipment and our system, but there is no way we would go back to visually reading tags now,” Simon said.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT:

www.sheepcrc.org.au
and go to Precision Sheep Management or
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