Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Case Study

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USING electronic-ID
Haddon Rig – Merino Stud and Lamb Feedlot

CASE STUDY: Haddon Rig
OWNER: George and Sally Falkiner
MANAGER: Andy Maclean
LOCATION: Warren, NSW
STUD EWES: 5500
RAMS SOLD ANNUALLY: 1050

Haddon Rig is one of Australia's premier Merino studs having been established in 1882. Since then, Haddon Rig has been supplying genetics to much of the Australian wool industry. Today, on the 25,000 ha of Haddon Rig country in the NSW Macquarie Valley, there is also beef, lamb feedlotting and cropping.

Being a progressive stud, Haddon Rig has been measuring and using measured information for breeding and selling for 25 years.

As margins were tightening and labour availability decreasing, by 2005 Andy and George had to look at more efficient systems for the stud.

The stud data had been managed in Woolpak since 1997. This meant Andy was familiar with data collection and management, but there were issues with visual tag reading errors and labour requirements - Precision Sheep Management and electronic-ID (e-ID) tags provided a solution to these problems.

The first 1,000 e-ID tags were put in during 2007 for ram selling so that production and pedigree information could be readily accessed for all animals. In January 2008, AI ewes were tagged and lambs were tagged in June 2008 in order to record pedigrees. All special stud animals were tagged by January 2009.

Essential equipment used at Haddon Rig includes a tag reading unit and an autodrafter.

ABOVE: Andy Maclean managing data in the office

BENEFITS OF SYSTEM TO DATE

Benefits found at Haddon Rig have included labour and time savings at all data collection points, with pen and paper not required any more. The Bluetooth wireless connectivity of the system has made the system versatile and portable.

As data collection has been made simpler, much more data is collected.

One example of where it has really helped is at ram selling where data is easily accessible for sale rams. In the stud, another example has been weaning through the autodrafter - this has allowed a weight measure to be gathered with ram lambs, ewe lambs and dams being drafted out in a single operation.

ABOVE: Haddon Rig woolshed

Due to minimal labour required, Andy is able to have a good look at the sheep as they are being processed.

In addition, the autodrafter has been valuable in the lamb feedlot to monitor weights and allocate animals to appropriate feed groups.

Most importantly, data errors are now virtually non-existent.

LESSONS LEARNT

The system has worked well from the beginning but following are some of Andy's thoughts to ensure smooth operation:

- Ensure gear is working prior to a job. Ensure all batteries are charged and system-checked using dummy tags the day before.

- Have access to backup equipment for big jobs so that shearers, classers etc are not held up due to technical issues. This back-up gear has not been needed as yet but provides peace of mind.

- Ensure that any software to be used is compatible with all other components such as readers and scales.

- Engage a service provider who can ensure technical backup whenever needed.

FUTURE

Haddon Rig has recently installed new database software and aims to be able to use much more information on each animal at selection than has been possible in the past.

In addition, the Pedigree Match Maker tool will be utilised to achieve more efficient mothering-up, further freeing-up labour for other purposes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT:
www.sheepcrc.org.au
and go to Precision Sheep Management or
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