



Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Case Study

Document ID:	SheepCRC_26_7
Title:	Using electronic ID – Peel Ag
Author:	Sheep CRC
Key words:	Sheep; Electronic identification; eID; Precision sheep management; Lamb breeding; Lamb finishing

Attribution: You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you acknowledge the Sheep CRC Ltd.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding believed to be correct at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to check currency of the information. Sheep CRC Ltd accepts no responsibility for any actions taken based on information contained in this document.

It should be cited as:

Sheep CRC (2011) – Practical Wisdom Note: *Using electronic ID – Peel Ag*

USING electronic-ID

Peel Ag – Commercial Self Replacing Prime Lamb Flock

CASE STUDY: Peel Ag

LOCATION: Geelong, Victoria

ENTERPRISE: Lamb Breeding and Finishing

FLOCK SIZE: 2500 Ewes

Knowing the actual performance of each ewe is critical to the operations of a modern prime-lamb enterprise, and according to Nathan Scott, consulting manager of the Peel Ag sheep enterprise.

This means that Precision Sheep Management and electronic-ID (e-ID) is “the way of the present”, he says.

Together with the Livestock Manager, Des Cameron, Nathan has managed the introduction of an e-ID system on the property. The flock consists of 2500 crossbred and composite ewes, which have been allocated to two main flocks: maternal and terminal.

Previously the selection of ewes for the maternal flock was based upon pregnancy scanning results and visual selection. This method of selection was relying purely upon potential production.

“What we really want to know is what each ewe is actually producing,” Nathan said.

Peel Ag has tagged all ewes in the existing maternal flock, and starting in 2010, all lambs bred from those ewes will also have tags. The equipment consists of Allflex and Gallagher Panel readers, a Tru-test XR3000 and a Prattley slide gate auto-drafter.

For the first time last year, Peel Ag used Pedigree Match Maker which allows them to match a lamb to its mother.

“Once we know that we can manipulate the maternal flock based on a number of traits,” Nathan said, “the main thing that we are chasing is kilograms of lamb weaned per ewe.

“We weigh all maternal lambs at approximately 100 days of age, and use that to calculate the production per ewe up until weaning.



ABOVE: Pedigree Match Maker assists in estimating kilograms of lamb produced per ewe



ABOVE: Reading e-ID tags with a Gallagher panel reader for Pedigree Match Maker

“Through that one calculation we are able to rank and select ewes based on a number of traits including fertility, milking ability, mothering ability, lamb survival, and lamb growth rates.

“Fertility is often spoken about because of its low heritability, but given that it is repeatable (a ewe bearing twins one year is more likely to produce twins each year), we will be producing more lambs from the maternal flock which are carrying the other more heritable traits that we want.

“Our scanning results tell us that the fertility of our flock is actually already very good, as most crossbred and composite flocks are, so this method of selection helps us focus on lamb survival and mothering ability.

“We join our ewe lambs at seven months of age, and so through the use of Pedigree Match Maker, we will also be able to make some decisions on which ewes make it into the maternal flock based on their first lambing.”

Nathan is also aware of the impact that selection for growth can have upon mature ewe weights and for this reason will cap the weight of ewes entering the maternal flock.

“At this stage we will do that with a ‘cut-off weight’ for all ewes, but we will also look at using the calculation of ewe efficiency,” he said.

“This is where we divide the kilograms of lamb produced by the kilograms of ewe joined. That way we are rewarding the ewes which are the most efficient, even if they are heavier.

“Either way, the last thing that we want is a flock of 100kg ewes wandering around, reducing our carrying capacity. Ultimately while selection is based upon kilograms of lamb per ewe, the overall performance of the enterprise will be assessed based upon kilograms of lamb per hectare.”

His focus is no longer on age groups, but is on specific animals which meet enterprise objectives.

“There is no doubt that our source of rams is crucial, but we also see real value in making the most of the natural variation that we have within our ewe flock. Our objective is to breed as many fast growing, easily finished lambs as we can at an optimum stocking rate, from highly efficient, low maintenance ewes.”

Nathan is also a consultant with Mike Stephens & Associates.



ABOVE: In green grass conditions, feed attractants encourage sheep movement through a Pedigree Match Maker raceway

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT:

www.sheepcrc.org.au
and go to Precision Sheep Management or
Phone: 02 6773 2927