



## Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Case Studies

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## Precision sheep management

### CASE STUDY

**Jim Meckiff, Industry Development Officer - Wool NSW**

**Department of Primary Industries, Armidale**

Technology is enabling precision sheep management (PSM) to be faster and more accurate. Jim Meckiff explains how commercial producers can enhance their operations by using EID tags to aid data collection and management using speciality software packages available to producers.

#### About Jim Meckiff

Jim is the Industry Development Officer – Wool, with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), based in Armidale. He works from the Armidale District Office helping the Merino sheep industry adopt latest research and development outcomes, particularly sheep breeding, genetics and grazing management that benefits the sheep industry across the New England and other regions of NSW and Australia.

Jim also coordinates the New England Merino Sire Evaluation (NEMSE) site which is run on commercial sheep producers properties in the Armidale district. The Central Test Sire Evaluation (CTSE) measures the performance of progeny sired by Merino and Poll Merino sires from many studs located right across Australia.

He is currently using the latest PSM techniques with New England livestock grazer and NEMSE site co-operators Jock and Shara Menzies at “Coningdale”, Armidale.

“EID tags and some basic PSM equipment such as a stick reader and a data recorder or laptop with specialised software, allow for accurate and rapid data collection in commercial environments and also when running a complex trial such as CTSE,” Mr Meckiff said.

“Additional investment in equipment such as an auto-drafter will add benefit to existing equipment and reduce the labour involved in sheep handling, but is not necessary for commercial enterprises starting out in PSM.

“However this equipment can speed up the job when drafting animals into pre-recorded groups such as joining or pregnancy test status mobs or grading animals on performance. Speed and accuracy is essential when handling large mobs of animals such as is the case with commercial sheep flocks.

“Producers can use information collected to make informed management and production decisions, e.g. producing their own selection index using Rampower or separating twin- and single-bearing ewes pre lambing.”

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### Take home messages

- Do the sums and estimate the cost:benefit before spending lots of money on non-essential equipment.
- Managing the data in a secure software package is critical—invest in yourself to learn how to do this or use the services of a data manager.
- Don't spend time or money collecting data that you don't need or won't use—use the 80:20 rule.

### Further information

- Merino Superior Sires [www.merinosuperiorsires.com.au](http://www.merinosuperiorsires.com.au)
- Sheep CRC PSM [www.sheepcrc.org.au](http://www.sheepcrc.org.au)
- Practical Systems/Stockbook