



## Chairman's Corner

I am not sure where to start my column this time. There is so much happening in the industry with record high prices, shortage of sheep and lambs, low rainfall and challenges again for land use by high grain prices. In all of this I am sure though that there is a very sound future for lamb, though in the short term there are challenges like getting lambs up to market weight in one of the toughest years for feed that I have experienced in over 50 years of farming. **I do urge members to make use of the technical services on nutrition and lamb and sheep management over the coming season that WAMMCO offers exclusively to its share holders.** This service is provided by Rob Davidson, who is well qualified and experienced to cover a wide range of situations that will help producers see their way through a most unusual year.

WAMMCO for its part is continuing to look at ways to help producers market their lambs and sheep to gain the highest possible returns. Peter Krupa and Wayne Radford are continually looking at ways to help producers extract the extra dollars from their sheep and lambs whether it is on schedule, on farm buying or by placing unfinished lambs with other producer shareholders to finish.

At the works costs are being continually scrutinized. With the full benefit of the upgraded boning room now being felt and other lesser yet significant changes being made at the plant we expect to see our processing costs reduced by about 10% through this season. This benefit will eventually flow through to

## Brindley & Gale Make Generous Contribution to St John's Katanning

At the recent Lambex convention, WAMMCO donated 35kg of vacuum packed prime lamb product for auction. The meat auction was conducted by Neil Brindley (Brindley and Gale, Esperance) and after strong competition the product was knocked down to Peter Gale (Brindley and Gale, Esperance) for \$1,000.

The funds raised have been donated to St John Ambulance, Katanning. Their spokesperson welcomed the donation and stated the money would be put towards the purchase of a new wheelchair that will go in their newly purchased ambulance.

our shareholders in the form of a better and more efficient plant and when surpluses are created, into rebates for members.

I think the messages that came out of the recent Lambex convention would have left those that attended confident that the Australian Lamb industry is soundly placed for the foreseeable future. The Board of WAMMCO showed great commitment and judgment in underwriting Lambex which allowed this event to go ahead and benefit the industry in so many ways.

I cannot let this occasion pass without making mention of the **upcoming retirement of one of the Foundation Directors of WAMMCO, Mick Quinlivan.** Mick has been a Director for 11 years and 9 of those years as my Deputy Chairman. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience that he brought to the Board room and used it without fear or favour to the benefit of WAMMCO and its shareholders. In that time I have valued Mick's counsel very highly and will miss it when he leaves. **On behalf of WAMMCO I would like to thank Mick very sincerely for the passion, commitment and wisdom that he has shown and provided during his term as Director.**

Finally, I would like to urge all shareholders to continue to support their Co-operative. The next 12 months are going to be a real challenge to both producers and processor and by working together I believe we can achieve the best outcomes possible for both parties.



*Dawson Bradford (WAMMCO Chairman), Neil Brindley (Brindley & Gale, Esperance), Coll MacRury (WAMMCO Chief Executive) and Peter Gale (Brindley & Gale, Esperance) at Lambex 2010.*

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### Disclaimer

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## Lick Feeders Offer Advantages to Managing Weaners

Much has been spoken recently of the advantages, lick or saliva restriction feeders offer to growers. **The majority of the recent literature has focused on the flexibility provided by the feeders to deliver cost effective rations to pregnant and lactating ewes.** The added benefits of not trail feeding the stock thus saving time, labour, grain and potentially mis-mothered lambs can pay for your investment inside two years.

However these feeders offer so much more and can be used to;

- Lift the condition score of rams and ewes prior to joining
- Supplement break of season pastures
- Introduce new grains to lambs pre-feedlot entry and
- Assist in weaner live weight management.

**With the development of the lick feeder, there is no excuse to accept the traditional weight loss or simply maintenance performance of weaners.** Weaners must continue to grow and gain weight over the summer / autumn months. As these animals are still growing it is critical to supplement their diet with adequate levels of protein and energy. The nutrient qualities of our annual pastures have in some parts of the state already started to decline due to the warm drying conditions. Now is a good time to teach the weaners to recognise the feeders and thus learn to eat supplements.



Photo source: C. White

**Supplementing quality pastures/stubbles with a small ration of 200 – 250g/h/d of 75:25 cereal:legume mix can generate moderate levels of production.** As the quality of the feed declines, the rate of supplement can be increased. A real advantage of the feeders is to supplement senescing pastures with the cereal or legume grain the weaners will graze in the stubbles next month. This reduces the need for a slow introduction to stubble paddocks however doesn't reduce the need to continually inspect the livelihood of the stock.

*What is critical for success?*

- Ensure weaners are fully vaccinated before feeding grain - ie 2 x vaccinations 6 weeks apart
- Use ewes to train weaners to recognise feeders and grain
- Use buffers when first introducing stock
- Don't over stock the feeders – max 250 / feeder

- Frequently move feeders to stop "hollowing out" ground around feeders and to maximise paddock feed utilization
- Don't allow stock to use feeders as shade.

*Measure the performance?*

- Note tonnes of feed placed in feeders and weight and fat score of livestock and then re-assess in 3 to 4 weeks time. Depending on result continue with existing or modify ration to meet your objective.

## Co-op Comment

A shortage of supply in Australia and New Zealand is seeing firm demand and prices maintained for lamb and mutton products in export and domestic markets. A poor start to the lamb season in WA along with wet conditions in Eastern Australia and a seasonal downturn in New Zealand has meant that supply has been restricted. The only dampener on returns has been the increasing value of the Australia dollar which is currently above 97 cents to the US currency and at record levels to the Euro.

Negotiations are underway for chilled lamb leg business into European supermarkets in the UK, Belgium and France. Shipments commence in September and will continue into the traditional Christmas sales period through November and December. Sales into Middle East markets are going strong with some extra shipments completed for the holy month of Ramadan. More and more we are seeing good sales of chilled products which are directed into a variety of supermarket, hotel and butcher-shop trade.

The local domestic market is also performing strongly with heavy demand for roasting legs throughout the winter months. WAMMCO is supplying chilled lamb into supermarkets in both WA and Eastern Australia.



Marketing Manager Damien Giumelli and MLA's "Lamb Ambassador" Sam Kekovich at LambEx 2010.



## Lifetime Ewe Management – lift your skills and reap the benefits of more productive ewes and more lambs – Mandy Curnow, DAFWA, Albany.

The Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) program is about gaining the skills and confidence to manage the ewe reproduction cycle. Each LTEM group involves five producers who meet for six 'hands-on' sessions over 12 months. Each meeting coincides with a key stage in the ewe's reproductive cycle including pre-joining, joining, mid and late pregnancy and lamb marking. Each producer monitors a mob of their own ewes to demonstrate the effects, nutrition and management has in their environment, on ewe productivity. The group members will develop skills in condition scoring, pasture and stubble assessment, feed budgeting and feed planning.

The LTEM guidelines are based on outcomes from the Lifetime Wool project. These include;

- Ewes that are joined in condition score 3 and that lost a condition score throughout pregnancy had a 20-30% higher risk of twin lamb losses
- Lambs from poorly fed ewes that do survive are less productive throughout their lifetime producing less wool and broader wool throughout their lifetime
- Ewes in poor condition (less than CS 2) at lambing are at a high risk of dying at lambing
- Even with high grain prices maintaining ewes at condition score 2.7 or higher from joining to lambing can increase profits by up to 6%

LTEM is coordinated by Rural Industry Skills Training which specialises in providing short course training opportunities to farmers. LTEM is facilitated by private consultants and DAFWA specialists who have been trained in pasture and animal assessment and understand the WA sheep Industry.

### Key topics that are covered in the LTEM course include;

- Weaning and preparing ewes for next year's joining
- Setting up for joining - manipulating ewe condition
- Linking ewe condition at joining with lambing potential
- Mid-pregnancy - planning for lambing
- Late pregnancy - optimising lamb survival
- Economic analysis of different feeding strategies

**The net cost of LTEM training is \$400 per year per person.** The upfront cost is \$1900, which can also be paid in instalments. A \$1500 Farm Ready subsidy is available once the training is completed, providing the person has not accessed Farm Ready for any subsidised training during the delivery of LTEM.

More than 300 Merino and cross-bred producers across Australia have been part of LTEM. **In Victoria, LTEM participants improved the number of lambs weaned per hectare by 30% - achieved through a 15% increase in ewe stocking rate, a 50% reduction ewe mortality and a 15% increase in weaning rates.**

### Are you interested?

Talk to other sheep producers in your area and get a LTEM group together. (LTEM operates best if the total travelling distance between all of the farms in the group is less than 100km). Alternatively register your interest in LTEM with Rob Davidson on 0429 380 195.

## Case Study - Steve Thompson, Newdegate

Steve Thompson, Newdegate, was keen to join the Lifetime Ewe Management programme to lift his weaning rate. His pregnancy scanning figures were indicating a reproductive rate of 140 – 145% across the flock (140 -145 foetuses per 100 ewes joined), but his weaning rate continued to hover at 100%. Steve acknowledges about 6% of their live lambs are lost between lambing and weaning, **but was to explore options to improve the potential reproductive rate.**



Steve Thompson, Newdegate (centre) condition scoring ewes

Steve's key target is to maintain an average ewe condition score at no less than 2.5. He knows maintaining ewe condition score throughout pregnancy is more profitable than a feast and famine approach. Due to a winter lambing (July–August), Steve can use green feed as a cheap source of energy to build up ewes to score 2.7–2.8 by lambing. The challenge is having enough pasture to feed the ewe flock as 70% of the farm is dedicated to cropping. He is looking at ways to boost pasture productivity by sowing different varieties and has leased land to sow oats and peas and to use for weaning lambs.

**The programme has confirmed the importance of matching the energy availability of pasture and stubble to the energy requirements of the ewe.** While the practicalities are a challenge in terms of keeping on top of feed requirements in a quantitative way, Steve enjoys the challenge of tweaking his farming system to improve productivity.

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## Ballot Information

Mr Mick Quinlivan, who has served as an Active Member Director since the Co-operative was formed, is retiring at the forthcoming AGM, and has not offered himself for re-election.

Nominations to fill the vacancy have been received from Tony Boyle, York; Donna Lynch, Hyden and Lyn Slade, Mt Barker.

Ballot papers must be returned by **Thursday 21 October 2010**. The announcement of the result of the election will be made at the **AGM** to be held at **The New Lodge, Katanning** commencing at 3:30pm on **Wednesday 27 October 2010**.

**The AGM will be preceded by the opportunity to view the new boning room at the abattoir starting at 1pm.** Members interested in attending are requested to please RSVP to Marilyn or Sue on 9262 0999 by Wednesday 20 October 2010.

## Membership Information

WAMMCO recently asked all producers to supply us with updated contact information. This was a big exercise but a process which needs doing from time to time to ensure we don't lose touch with people who change addresses and phone numbers, and more recently, email addresses. Over 950 producers responded which we believe was an excellent result. By having an accurate contact database we can efficiently deliver information which we think will be useful to producers such as newsletters and price schedules. Kill feedback sheets are also sent out using the same contact database. Where appropriate, and where possible, we will use email or fax to deliver this material which minimises postage costs as well as providing speedier delivery.

**If you wish to unsubscribe from our schedules, newsletters, or your contact info has changed, just let us know.**

Producers delivering livestock direct to WAMMCO have the option of proceeds being paid directly into their bank account. If you are still receiving payment by cheque, all we need is your bank details (BSB and account number) and future EFT transfers can be organised. Contact Perth office on 92620999 to arrange.

**The winner of the contact update draw for a twin pack of Evan's and Tate wine was Ainslie and Robyn Hyde, Hyde Park Farms, Dalwallinu.**

## Skins Update

Being the second driest winter on record has not assisted but

this year we have seen considerably more lambs being presented with "farmer faults". In all the below cases the skins are downgraded into our 4<sup>th</sup> grade pack.

These are:

**Vegetable matter infestation** - grass seeds and burrs are processors worst nightmare thus paddocks (and laneways) must be spray topped and stock managed accordingly to avoid seed contamination.

**Matted Belly** - This occurs especially in open feedlots and /or when livestock are infested with grass seeds. The livestock get dirt or mud into the belly area and higher and this area gets matted.

**Over crutching** - Lines are being consigned with crutching above the tail. Of course if the livestock are dirty it has to come off but if clean, only crutch up to the underneath of the tail. WAMMCO's preference is a bunghole crutch only.

**Wool length** - Many lines are consigned with wool well above 50mm in length and the wool becomes wispy and coarse. Every year is different but currently skins above 50mm have limited demand.

All lines of livestock are assessed on arrival by WAMMCO's Skin Supervisor and as first impressions are always the best, the better you present your animals you have a better chance of obtaining the best possible result.

Any time you are viewing your livestock being processed at Katanning you are welcome to see the skin processing area.



*Alby Baker (WAMMCO Senior Marketing Executive Meat and Skins) discussing lamb issues with Chris Squires, Shirlee Downs, Quairading at LambEx 2010*

### WAMMCO CONTACTS

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