



FEEDING SHEEP WITH MORE EFFICIENCY

SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER



FEEDING SHEEP WITH MORE EFFICIENCY - 1

KEY POINTS

- Purchased a dedicated feed truck with a Cole bin mounted to allow 12 tonnes of feed to be carried in one fill
- Load cells under the Cole bin to allow for accurate feeding with an electronic display in the cab
- Actuators on the auger arms are operated via a switch in the cab, allowing the grain flow to be started and stopped remotely
- Time spent feeding sheep has been significantly reduced by reducing the backwards and forwards from silos to paddocks.

Paul & Roclea South farm between Darkan and Arthur River, running around 9,500 ewes in a 50/50 livestock/cropping mix across 3,800ha

Sheep feeding was taking up a huge amount of time and at peak times was requiring a full labour unit to feed the entire flock. With sheep spread across the farm there was a lot of driving between paddocks and re-filling of the 2.5 tonne feed trailer. When, in 2018, they started containment feeding their ewes for the period from scanning until pre-lambing, they noticed a reduction in the time taken to feed the ewes as they were now held in 4 main mobs – XB single bearing, XB twin bearing, Merino single bearing and Merino twin bearing. Containment feeding did mean feeding a complete ration with no access to stubbles or dry pastures so the amount being fed was increased. There were many trips required from the silos to each paddock to give a full ration to 2000+ ewes in some paddocks.

A feed truck seemed to make sense as it could carry the feed required for several paddocks without having to return to the silos. Roclea estimates that at peak feeding times in autumn, it has reduced the time taken to feed the flock by more than 50%.

A second hand six wheeler truck was purchased, as

well as a second hand Cole bin which was mounted on load bars to allow the grain to be fed accurately by weight. Feed budgets were regularly being completed to ensure feed on hand was enough for the coming season and that each ewe was receiving the correct ration for her pregnancy status and stage of pregnancy, feeding accurately to the demands of the sheep which was hugely beneficial. Previously feeding was done by timing grain delivery, so would have varied between grain types and mixed lupin/pellet rations were a bit of a guess, with room for error added to by incomplete door openings, etc. in the old trailer. Now mixes can be done accurately, both loading into the bins and feeding out. The grain is clearly visible as it is being fed from side augers rather than directly under the trailer so the driver can ensure the flow is on or off at the appropriate time, and feeding by weight eliminates errors in not having the door pulled fully open on a manual rope opening setup.



Monitor display in the cab shows grain weight which allows for accuracy of feeding.

Many hand injuries have occurred from the use of ropes to open and close the door on a feed trailer, which is how their old trailer operated. The remote switching in the cab eliminates any potential injuries from pulling the rope and takes away one job to concentrate on while driving. The larger capacity and less fills also means far less in and out of the cab.

The South's have an away block, so the truck provides a much safer vehicle for travelling on main roads fully loaded. It can also carry the full amount required to be fed at the block so there is no need for a second silo to store grain there or for more than one trip.

The main downside to the truck over the previous trailer is that it is much heavier, and access can be limited to some paddocks once it has rained and the ground becomes too wet. The old trailer has been retained for use in these cases but usually feeding doesn't continue for long after significant rains, so this is not a major issue. Another potential issue is to ensure staff have the appropriate skills and licence to drive the truck rather than just the ute. The South's feel the other improved safety and feeding accuracy features far outweigh this potential issue.



Shows the feed truck with Cole bin mounted on load cells being filled with lupins.



Truck in the paddock with lupin trail having just been fed to sheep.

FEEDING SHEEP WITH MORE EFFICIENCY - 2

'It's been a great investment' Paul Milne, Burra Burra Farms

We recently caught up with Paul Milne who manages Burra Burra Farms across three locations in the West Arthur and Williams Shires. The business purchased a new, larger sheep feeder last summer and we wanted to find out what benefits this has delivered and whether it has saved him much time.

Operation overview:

- Three locations with two split by a 10 km laneway and the other 25 km away
- One person operation with some use of contractors and seasonal labour
- Operation size of 1,500 ha
- 30-35% cropped
- 6,000 breeding ewes, of which 2,100 are joined to British breed rams
- July and August lambing
- Pregnancy scans for singles and multiples
- Manages single and twin bearing ewes separately
- Stocking rate ranges between 10.5-13 dse/WGHa depending on the season

As you can imagine with a spread out operation, Paul spends a lot of time and does a lot of kilometres feeding sheep. Previously that was all done with the older 24 bag (2 tonne lupins) sheep feeder.

New feeder specifications:

- 42 bags (3.5 tonnes lupins)
- Load cells
- Electric brakes (essential for this load size)
- Wireless actuator to allow remote operation
- 1/3 partition for different grains
- Roll tarp
- Cost was \$15,000 + GST

The feeding system:

A comprehensive feed budget is developed each year in the spring. This is updated as the summer unfolds. The sheep feeder is used in spring to imprint feed lambs three times while they are still with their mothers. In most years the feeder is then used from February through till early July.

The weaned lambs get a low rate of lupins from the beginning of summer, but the feeding really ramps up from early March when the stubbles have been depleted. At the peak of feeding, over 30 tonnes of lupins and pellets per week are put through the sheep feeder. The peak of feeding also occurs when Paul is also trying to put the crop in.

The larger feeder has allowed Paul less trips to the paddock for feeding and more time to dedicate to both sheep management and cropping, getting the jobs done in a timelier fashion.

KEY BENEFITS:

It still takes time to feed sheep but not what it used to. The other benefits that have arisen by purchasing the new feeder is the increased safety for the operator and increased accuracy of feeding.

TIME

Paul estimates by having a larger feeder he conservatively saves one day per week in the busy times during the March to June feeding period. The months of April and May are a critical time as there are other jobs to be done on the farm including seeding, spraying and drenching ewes.

ACCURACY

The feed budget can now be followed more precisely as the new feeder has load cells with a digital monitor. This has been especially important for the twin bearing ewes who get a greater amount of feed.

SAFETY

Paul covers a lot of distance with the sheep feeder. It was imperative that the new feeder came with brakes. The electric brakes make this feeder much safer to tow than the previous feeder. Along with the brakes, the taillights now make it legal to tow on the road (albeit not full with lupins). It has also given him more confidence to allow casual labour to feed sheep.

TOP 10 FEATURES OF A GOOD SHEARING SHED

Darren Spencer has been a shearing contractor for 29 years, based around Lake Grace, and is the current President of the Western Australian Shearing Industry Association (WASIA). We asked him what the top 10 features of a good shearing shed would be from his perspective.

Health and safety are of increasing importance, and the responsibility lies with the farmer to provide a safe and well-functioning shearing shed and facilities for the shearing team to work in. If shed renovations or rebuilds are in your plans, it may be useful to consider some of these desired features. Some of these would only require simple alterations, and maybe some maintenance in existing sheds, to improve the safety and comfort levels for your shearing team.

Open and airy shed with good ventilation, e.g. large shutters that can be opened or closed depending on the weather, and even water cooled air conditioners installed for summer shearing.

Sloping front fill catching pens with forcing pens of similar size and swing slide gates.

Double swinging catching pen doors with a small gap to eliminate a pinch point with one door smaller than the other. The smaller one being closest to the stand.

Well maintained shearing heads with antilock technology and a free swinging back aid arm.

Large let out chutes that cut into the shearing board approximately 100mm and 200mm lower than floor level. A large area above each chute for tool storage for the shearers.

Individual let out pens that can be shut off. This way classers can count out and keep an eye on the standard of each shearer's job.

Solid loading ramp into the shed with enough under cover area for a full day's shearing. Should not be any light coming through under the grating or near walls, which baulks sheep.

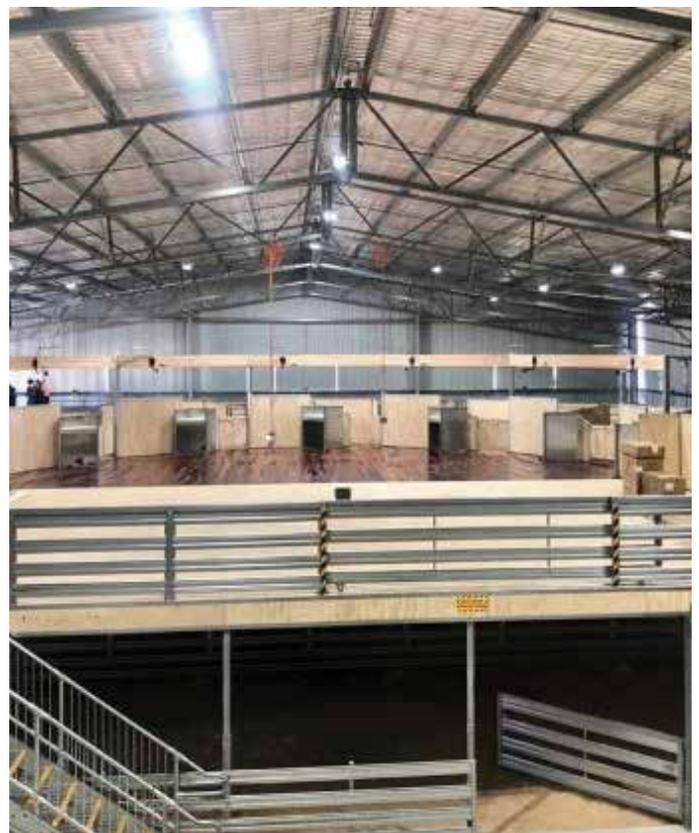
Yards with watering systems outside the shed to reduce dust blowing through the shed.

Open wool room with plenty of work area and wool storage. Wool bins that are made of solid material with no wire or mesh. A wool press with working scales and a second set of shed scales to calibrate the press. Whether raised board or level board, the floor needs to be even with no raised nails or tin patches.

Separate lunch area with fridge, microwave, table and chairs and an ablution area attached to the shed. Running water that is drinking quality and rubbish bins that are emptied when full.

So, there you have it. Darren's top 10 tips on setting up a good shearing shed.

Also be sure to check out the newly released SafeSheds, The Shearing Shed Safety Program. Developed by Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and the Western Australian Shearing Industry Association (WASIA) to help woolgrower's and shearing contractor's identify and record design and safety improvements and the appropriate changes to be made. Go to www.wool.com/safe-sheds.



Source: Geoff Bilney

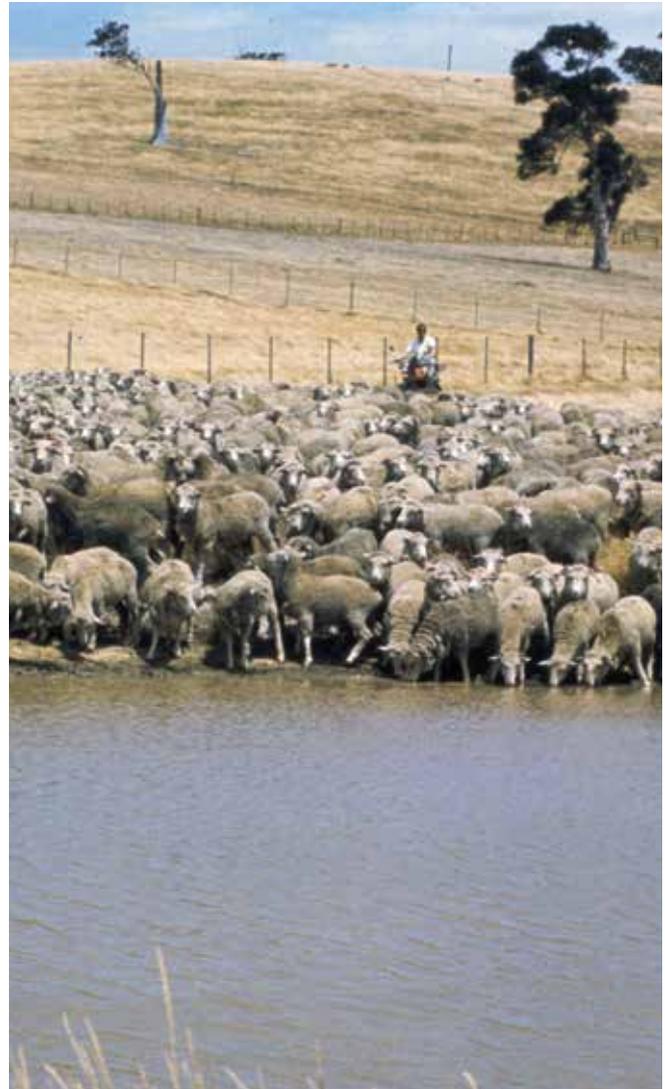
A FEW QUICK REMINDERS FOR MANAGING SHEEP OVER SUMMER

Growing sheep need Vitamin E supplements when green pick is not available. The first dose should be given six to eight weeks after green feed ends and repeated every six weeks until the break of season. Vitamin E can be administered by oral drench or may be added direct to grain to dose mobs without bringing them into yards.

When feeding cereal grains over summer, calcium must be added to ensure balance in the ewe's mineral levels. The best way to do this is by adding 2% finely ground limestone to the grain when fed. This is particularly important in pregnant ewes.

Water quality is important for sheep production and salinity is not the only thing to check for. If water is getting warm and rank in shallow dams, sheep will reduce intake and therefore it may affect production. Make sure all livestock have ample fresh, cool water. Did you know a ewe will drink up to 6 litres per day (increasing to up to 10 litres per day when lactating) when eating dry feed only? Check water sources regularly!

Some great presentations covering water management and sheep management over summer were given at our Spring Optimiser events in October. Some of these have been recorded and uploaded to Youtube. Visit Youtube and search The Sheep's Back, subscribe to our channel and view the videos.



PAP MEMBER PROFILE – ALEX COOLE

Alex is the current Chair of The Sheep's Back Producer Advisory Panel (PAP). She runs a 6,500 hectare mixed farming enterprise in Frankland River with her parents. The business comprises of 60% sheep and 40% crop; they run 47,000 sheep at peak, mating up to 17,000 ewes a year.

Alex is passionate about the sheep & wool industry and is involved extensively in the industry. As well as being the Chair of The Sheep's Back PAP, she has been a past member of the Sheep Industry Business Innovation (SIBI) New Technology Pilot Group, The Rylington Park Management Committee, attended AWI's Breeding Leadership Course in early 2020 and

is involved in other local community groups. Alex believes that extension continued learning is vital for her family's business and has been a participant in many AWI and industry initiatives including The Sheep's Back events attending Sheep Easy, RAMping Up Repro and many Sheep Optimiser Workshops, Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) and several other extension programs.

Alex has a keen interest in sheep genetics, and plays a huge role in their on-farm nucleus flock which focuses on breeding an easy care, robust, dual purpose Merino as well as incorporating technology into their business to improve efficiency and accuracy. They use

THE SHEEP'S BACK



The Sheep's Back's is AWI's producer network in Western Australia and our mission is to champion the Western Australian Merino sheep industry and improve grower confidence and their capacity to make better and timelier decisions. The Sheep's Back is managed by a team of very experienced livestock consultants, who are guided by a Producer Advisory Panel (PAP) consisting of leading woolgrowers and representatives of associated industry & business. The Sheep's Back and the PAP are always keen to hear from WA woolgrowers about what they want from The Sheep's Back or discuss any queries or issues you may have.

Here is a list of PAP members and their contact details, should you wish to get in touch.

PAP Member	Location	Contact Phone
Alex Coole (Chair)	FRANKLAND	0467 888 550
Katherine Davies	DPIRD - NORTHAM	0475 834 480
Mitchell Hogg	WILLIAMS	0428 858 030
Jessica Horstman	NORTHAMPTON	0428 953 912
Roger House	KOJONUP	0428 148 545
Kristin Lefroy	MOORA	0418 925 760
Geoff Sandilands	KENDENUP	0428 514 030
Greg Tilbrook	AWN - BIBRA LAKE	0407 303 721
Tim Watts	WEST PINGELLY	0427 871 321
Ben Webb	KOJONUP	0427 987 273

CHANGE OF DETAILS OR SUBSCRIPTION

PLEASE USE THE FORM BELOW TO UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION.

TITLE _____ FIRST NAME _____ SURNAME _____

COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ STATE _____ POSTCODE _____

I no longer wish to receive The Sheep's Back hardcopy newsletter.

**Email your details to The Sheep's Back.
Email: admin@sheepsback.com.au**

COMMENTS _____

DNA parentage testing and electronic identification in their stud nucleus flock to fast track and improve the accuracy of data. Alex also utilises ASBV's for all their nucleus decisions.

Alex is also passionate about pasture production and utilisation to achieve optimum stocking rates, including robust fertiliser rates, deferred grazing, pasture reseeding both directly and via fodder crops and pasture integration with a cropping phase.

For further information or to contact The Sheep's Back team go to www.sheepsback.com.au.





sheepsback.com.au

This document should only be used as a general aid and is not a substitute for specific advice. To the extent permitted by law, Australian Wool Innovation Ltd excludes all liability for loss or damage arising from the use of, or reliance on, the information contained in this document. ©2021 Australian Wool Innovation Ltd. All rights reserved. Australian Wool Innovation Ltd gratefully acknowledges the funds provided by the Australian government to support research, development and marketing of Australian wool.