

LUXURY MERINO

IT CAN BE GROWN ETHICALLY

Presented by Noel Henderson
Avington Merino, Australia

INTRODUCTION



Avington has an on-site management team with a shared passion for merino sheep and wool



16,000 merinos, including ultrafines and superfines in the 11.5 – 15.0 micron range



Farm Management Plan addressed soil fertility, pasture and ground cover, fencing stream sides, revegetation, conservation, tree planting and biosecurity



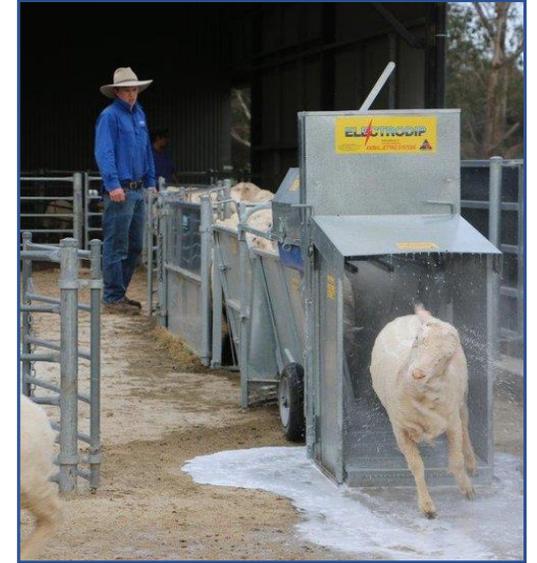
FARMING IS CHANGING



- Increasing number of studies, controls and legislation that impact farming
- Animal welfare standards and conditions have changed to promote the welfare of animals
- Owners and managers have a duty of care, based on the Five Freedoms
- Technological disruption and development has both positive and negative outcomes for Australian farmers

THE JOURNEY TO A NON-MULESED FLOCK

- The decision to end mulesing was taken in 2006
- This was done even though the industry generally decided against change
- Since then, Avington have continued with the classing process using genomic testing when it was first available to identify all stud sheep, allowing an increase in wool cut and the identification of bloodlines that were fly resistant
- Avington embraced broader animal health and welfare standards, including the Five Freedoms, prompted by IWTO



WHY HAVE AVINGTON DONE ALL THIS?

It was not because Avington thought it could receive a premium for its wool but because it believed these issues were important and demonstrated social responsibility

SHEEP HEALTH AND FARM CALENDAR



Key risk issues include when to lamb, when to shear, when to sow new pasture and what feed reserves will be needed



Issues to be monitored include condition of the stock, parasites and resistance and fly control and resistance



Avington found that it did not need to make significant changes in the lead up to a non-mulesed flock



The fly control method adopted has reduced the cost of chemicals by 30% and reduced labour



Mortality rate due to flystrike at Avington is 0.01%

FUTURE ISSUES AND OPTIONS

- Avington has been working with scientists from ENEA (Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development)
- Currently trialing the development of an organic application to Avington's sheep to control fly strike – another step towards raising the environmental credentials of wool
- Climate change, particularly increased temperatures could result in the lengthening of the fly strike season
- Appropriate management and intervention strategies will need to be developed





BEST PRACTICE

- With few standards in the sheep and wool industry in Australia in the late 1990's, Avington set out to develop its own standards and a process of traceability
- Introduction of electronic ear tags made traceability easier, with every sheep able to be instantly identified and entered into Avington's database
- Each sheep is identified at the commencement of shearing and that identification stays with the fleece until it is allocated to a bin before being pressed into a bale
- Laserscan is used in the shed to measure all fleeces for micron and fleece weight, providing certainty to the fleece details in every bale
- This information is used to continually improve Avington's flock and add value to the business. Avington measures to improve

THE FUTURE

- In 2016, Avington looked for an international standard that used third party auditors, to test the standards developed and how they were working
- The responsible Wool Standards (RWS) was the only one Avington could find. Avington was audited in January 2017, becoming the first RWS certified wool grower in Australia
- The RWS program is too complicated for the average Australian wool grower and is unlikely to get broad acceptance
- A user friendly program that addresses all modern issues and that can be implemented across the wool industry, both in Australia and internationally, is needed





Wool is a luxury fibre
that demands respect –
as do the sheep that
grow the wool.

THANK YOU

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