

SA Responses – June 2011

Research, Development & Extension

Theme	Sub-theme	Issues/Actions	Priority Ranking	Time Frame
Profitability & productivity	Best practice animal management	Footrot vaccine research (with Sydney Uni??) needs to be continued and extended with more partially subsidised producer trials across all states. Increase knowledge to producers that there are various strains – it is not just “ I have footrot so don’t worry about biosecurity” Need to develop a more definitive test for the presence of footrot	H	S
		Easy care dual purpose sheep	H	S-M
		Better ewe management More efficient ewes Reduce lamb and weaner deaths	H	S
		Need to keep making improvements and to keep all producers up to date with any new best practice. This is still the best way to make the producer more profitable.	H	S-L
		To ensure and maintain profitability in a sustainable way best practice management skills need to be adhered to and include management, animal welfare issues, and best practice etc.	H	S-L
		Animal Welfare	H	L
		Maximising production/unit of animal whilst maintaining highest possible welfare standards/environmental capabilities	H	M
		Cost of production ,forward budgeting The single most important issue for farmers Without this ability no forward decisions can reliably be made	H	S
		Increase productivity – farmers behind what is known – need to invest in extension (Paddock to plate is crap – need to focus on the production system).	H	S-L
		Sheep lice control – for longer wool sheep (ie lambs)	H	S-L
Extension that results in adoption relating to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breeding values 	H	S-M		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition • Marketing • Finishing lambs in drier environments <p>Increased adoption of technology required (eg pregnancy scanning, RFID etc)</p> <p>OJD – cost of vaccine, safety of vaccine</p> <p>Sheeplice – increased understanding on costs, treatments</p> <p>Research on dung beetles and how to make them more effective in sheep systems</p> <p>Research on managing native pastures</p> <p>Animal welfare – mulesing, marking/castration, lamb survival, transport, feedlot/containment, shearing/crutching. - Need to ensure strategies are in place to deal with</p> <p>Research on new chemical groups for worms and lice</p> <p>Mulesing alternatives – what if skin traction isn't the answer?</p> <p>Sheeplice extension</p> <p>No issues/actions specified</p>		
			H	S-L
			H	S/M
			M	M
			M	S-M
			H	S
			H	M-L
			H	S-L
			H	S
			H M	S S

		<p>Need to address shortage of labour on farms Shed hands – do we need to pay more or is it the length of the day? -do we need to skirt as much?</p>		
		<p>Improve technology uptake Electronic ID needs to be cheaper</p>	High	5-10 years
		<p>Wool handling. Larger wool bales Sheep handling equipment mechanical handling alternatives & options Training and recruitment of shearing staff</p>	M	M
		<p>Drenching alternatives to reduce labour eg spot/pour ons/injectables</p>	H	S
		<p>The issues of the shearing industry and farm labour are going to become a larger issue for all sheep producer. We will continue to have to compete against other industries (mining) that pay better and have better living conditions. So we are all going to have to become better at being more efficient – and have to have best practice so that the shearing contractors want to work for us.</p>	H	S-M
	Labour efficiency	<p>Labour and labour efficiency is the biggest problem the industry faces as we move forward. Management, animal welfare issues, and best practice etc .can't be adhered to unless we have the labour to assist. (We are running out of time with the mining industry breathing down our necks).</p>	M/H	S
		<p>Adoption of technology to increase labour efficiency and therefore productivity.</p>	H	S-L
		<p>More innovative use of existing practices</p>	H	S
		<p>More importantly the lack of interest in the industry from young people, the development of an apprenticeship for school leavers is needed</p>	H	S
		<p>Labour availability, in particularly at shearing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training opportunities for young farmers 	H	S
		<p>Labour OH&S important</p>	H	S
			M	M

		<p>Increasing DSE/person will impact on other areas eg weed control and feral animal control</p> <p>Need to improve safety of husbandry operations</p> <p>No issues/actions specified</p>	<p>H M</p>	<p>S S</p>
	Education	<p>Everyone is aware of the need for education/extension of trials etc but there is no funding for it to happen. PIRSA is decimated – R&D is limited – no one wants to fund extension but it is vital</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>S-L</p>

		<p>Show (more extension) the \$ value and ease of management that can be gained through improved genetics. Concern that there are too many traits that can be selected through ASBV's – reliability of data ,-confidence in the accuracy of data being fed into merino select / lambplan.</p>	H	S
		<p>Merinos need to place more emphasis on carcase and maternal traits Feed efficiency</p>	H	S
		<p>There has always been great benefit to the producer if they can get better genetics into their sheep flock. The genetic gain that they can also get by not having to mules, easy care sheep also need to be continued.</p>	H	S
		<p>Genetic gain is important as we need to make more out of an animal to offset increased costs. The risk of genetic gain can involve what we gain in one area we lose in another. Therefore we need to continually measure using the SWAT analysis</p>	H	S-L
	Genetic gain	<p>Better education in understanding ASBV's</p>	H	S
		<p>Worm tolerant sheep Fly strike resistance (replacement for mulesing) High growth rates Improved lamb survival and weaning rates</p>	M	S-L
		<p>Breeding sheep that don't require mulesing</p>	H	M
		<p>Identify wool characteristics to suit different environments</p>	H	M
		<p>Need an increased availability of consultants/support people to encourage/work with producers to teach and lead through to adoption of practices such as breeding & genetics.</p>	H	S-M
		<p>Need to improve accuracy of prediction Decrease costs of taking measurements Increase understanding of what results mean</p>	M	M
		<p>Independent group trials of sheep to verify ABV's and perceived gains</p>	H	S-M
		<p>No issues/actions specified x 2</p>	H	S

		Further research to look at winter crops in summer pastures	M	M
		Production systems to match feed supply Utilising grain crops for feed More perennial options to utilise climate change	H	S
		This information has been around for a long time – I believe that the issue is more the culture of the producer that needs to be educated by producers that do it well.	M	S-L
		This is a difficult one as all production systems are different and require different solutions and management skills pertaining to a particular area. (Ongoing according to the season).	H	S-L
		Healthy and productive soils	H	L
	Maximising feedbase potential	Maximising pasture utilisation	H	S
		Rotational grazing strategies Better pasture varieties Reduced reliance on fertilizers	M	L
		Plant breeding to identify species that are more adaptable and palatable	H	S-M
		Soil health and controlling plant diseases important		
		Need to match livestock requirements with available feed		
		Education, education, education Basic nutritional information	H	S-M
		No issues/actions specified	H M	S M

		Promote the most productive and economical ways of maintaining perennial pastures	med	med
		Management systems with more flexibility	H	
		Better water use efficiency	H	S
		Understanding climate outlooks	H	
		As above – grazing charts, etc have been around for quite a while, again it is the culture of our producers that need changing	M	S-L
		There has always been climate variability and each production system needs to adapt accordingly (A monitoring situation)	H	
		Adaptation to Change	H	S-L
		Increase in parasite prevalence	H	S
	Adressing climate variability	Increase in flystrike	H	S
		Pasture change	H	M-L
		Decrease greenhouse gasses through		
		• Breeding sheep	H	M/L
		• Development of carbon efficient farming systems	H	M
		Understanding of how climate change will affect the sheep industry & how to alleviate the effect of a carbon tax on sheep producers	H	S-L
		Risk management at it's most basic – being aware, preparing	H	S
		No issues/actions specified	L	M-L
			L	L
		Low priority not a significant issue	L	

	Exchange of information	Concern that new ideas are not being disseminated to all regions. Use of technology to hold webinars (private or public venues) synchronised with a seminar that may be held in another state. Several sessions may be able to be held at once with interaction from a group of farmers. It is not just the time factor that limits attendance but cost with travel and staying overnight – may be cheaper to use Rural Solutions staff or local consultant to host webinar	high	short
Producer exodus	Increasing age of wool producers Sheep work needs to be easier Young farmers prefer cropping	We need more young producers Easy care sheep and handling facilities Returns and adoption of technology need to improve to attract younger farmers. Better lifestyle	High	Short
Sharing in the value chain at low risk	Supply chain communications	<p>Feedback from processors to producers Producers promote to the retail sector, the clean green production system</p> <p>Direct marketing and key business relationships I believe are key – to get good feed back on your product on areas that you can improve in is crucial – for meat as well as wool</p> <p>Most important we don't want to lose control of our product at the farm gate.</p> <p>Given that the majority of wool produced in SA is sold to China the issue is to develop alternative markets with other countries</p> <p>Better producer access to information along supply chain</p> <p>More direct communications from processor to producer ie good & bad</p> <p>No issues/actions specified</p>	<p>H</p> <p>H</p> <p>H</p> <p>M</p> <p>M</p> <p>M</p> <p>H L</p>	<p>S</p> <p>L</p> <p>S-L</p> <p>S-L</p> <p>S</p> <p>S</p> <p>S L</p>

		Work further on developing wool blends and modifying the wool fibre to reduce prickle factor, pilling and shrinkage	M	M
		More wool used in leisure and sports wear	H	S
		Wool I believe needs to move faster in this area, meat sheep do this very well – as a stud we would like to be able to tell the story of the sheep and then the product.	M	L
		We need to be continually innovative	H	S-L
	Product innovation	Aust can't compete in the manufacturing sector so should we even bother?		
		Question around marketing of wool as a high-end product. Why can't lower end markets be targeted (eg Coles, Woolies)? If progress has been made let producers know about it.		
		If no demand for wool – no need to produce it	H	S-L
		Quality furnishings material at reasonable prices ie curtains & lounge material. Make it available and affordable	M	S
		No issues/actions specified	H M	S M

		Wool market reports need to also crystal ball the future market demands – wool future contracts are a good risk management technique but many farmers feel they lose out and it is the purchaser of the contract (speculator) that knows more about the future of the wool industry than the producer	med	med
	Managing risk & wool marketing	Fairer forward contracts. Always seem to be at a discount to the spot market. Market specification. Demand and reward for supplying to specs. Forward supply contracts	M	S
		This has got to be a key area for all producers to manage. A lot of producers do not use any risk management for their business	M	S
		We need to have some control/communication with processors as our product moves through the system; to ensure we are producing what they want; to verify what we are producing; to tell our story	H	S-L
		Not targeting majority of population with an easy care everyday product	H	M-L
		Feedback along supply chain – breakdown on what buyers are paying/discounting on and why.	M	S-L
		Get rid of perception of Merino as high end expensive – make good value affordable products	M	S
		No issues/actions specified	H M	M M

Risk and marketing rated as low priority by one responder

		<p>Look at alternatives to wool harvesting. Change of skirting practices to reduce labour. Training of classers to increase the value of the clip ie reduce bulk classes, optimum bale size lines, reduce focus on low value prod such as locks</p>	H	S
		<p>Larger size wool bales Hire in larger capacity presses Automated pressing</p>	M	S
		<p>Don't see this as an area of great concern</p>	L	
		<p>In my view wool handling is very inefficient. I see great gains to be made with on farm sampling, and direct from farm to port after testing.</p>	H	S-L
	Wool handling efficiencies	<p>Again labour is an issue,</p>	M	S-L
		<p>Improve efficiencies in the shearing shed – classing, bale size</p>	H	S-L
		<p>Technology to measure strength in the shed (rather than just relying on classer).</p>	M	M
		<p>Increase the amount of shearing/wool handling training Training for producers in shed design and pre-shearing of sheep.</p>	M	M-L
		<p>Better feedback from processors on exact needs ie skirting/non skirted, skin pieces</p>	M	S
		<p>No issues/actions specified</p>	L H	M S

Consumer acceptance & confidence in wool in the farming system	Animal & environmental credentials	Ethical treatment of sheep – Steer away from banning of mulesing and look at anaesthetic injections from vet that last several days	high	short
		Environmental Management System registrar. Producers that qualify by vendor declaration Could market separately	M	S
		This is the key for us- we want to see an accreditation system that allows those producers that are doing the non mulesing, ethical treatment of animals, good management systems in place be rewarded for their efforts.	H	S
		We need to promote and tell our story about the environment we live in, the sustainable way we produce our product etc. Part of that story is the clean green image of wool production	H	
		The perception of animal welfare is important and will continue to be pressured by the associated groups. The sheep industry must continue to improve its image in this area	H	5yrs
		Need to promote best practice production to consumers (Need to be wary of media's habit of sensationalising things).	H	S
		Active & ongoing promotion program of what we do & why – education of the consumer from the basics. More interaction with schools & younger people to show what is being done and not emotive claptrap from the likes of PETA	H	S
		No issues/actions specified	H M	S S

Awareness & adoption of wool industry messages	Industry & the wider community	Push the sports wool for greater acceptance of wool in the community. Educate public about prickly factor and micron – not all wools are the same. Change the image of wool as a difficult fabric to wash	med	med
		Our wool is the best. It needs to be marketed accordingly. Consumers have to pay for quality.	H	S
		This is about communication – we need to continue to have an open communication with the producers and have good industry people who are open and transparent in the positions of trust that are making the decisions about industry. I don't believe we have always had that.	H	S
		Needs to be done through seminars, field days etc. Workshops, forums tend to struggle in some areas – too intense repetitive.		
		Basic communication skills from industry bodies to farmers have been lost. Don't need glossy feel good – just good quality information on a regular basis and more face to face workshops	H	S
No issues/actions specified		M L L	M M	

Other SA issues/comments

- Wool promotion – how good has it been?
- Shedding breeds not represented on Industry groups.

Mixed enterprise properties – interest in sheep will depend on season and grain prices. The income from cropping is so much greater and on large properties, sheep become a secondary priority.

Marketing of sheep – saleyards v over the hooks. Greater use of the OTH should occur for a number of reasons including animal welfare. Significant variance in processing results with OTH – this needs investigating.