



2020 FLYSTRIKE PREVENTION RD&E PROGRAM PROJECT SUMMARY REPORT

INDUSTRY EDUCATION, EXTENSION AND PROMOTION

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OVERVIEW

One of the pillars of the Flystrike Research, Development, Education, Extension and Communication Strategy 2019/20 to 2024/25 (the Strategy) is Education, Extension and Promotion, with the aim of “adoption of best practice strategies to improve lifetime welfare of sheep, reduce reliance on mulesing and support transparency in the supply chain”.

Australian woolgrowers operate under a wide range of sheep type, environment and farm business priorities, meaning they have adopted a complex integrated pest management approach to reducing the risk of flystrike to ensure the best lifetime welfare of their sheep. Key flystrike management tools along with mulesing include the strategic timing of crutching and shearing, accelerated shearing, judicious use of flystrike prevention chemical treatments, worm control, breeding for reduced breech wrinkle, dags, stain, breech cover, fleece rot and horns, and managing for optimal lambing dates and the lambing period to support improved management. A reasonable number of older woolgrowers managed Merinos prior to the adoption of mulesing in the 1960s and 70s using these same tools, while a few never adopted mulesing.

Moving to a non-mulesed enterprise involves rebalancing these tools. However, as improving the lifetime welfare of sheep has been a long-time, heartfelt goal for all woolgrowers, many continue to strongly believe that mulesing remains the most effective tool for achieving that vision.

Woolgrower confidence in returning to a non-mulesed Merino enterprise requires evidence and confidence on-farm in the existing tools and along the supply chain regarding improved lifetime welfare, sustainability, demand and business viability.

Influences on-farm and across the supply chain since mulesing was slowly but widely adopted that will impact on woolgrower decisions whether to continue to mule or not, include: confidence in the emerging Merino types that are increasingly productive and naturally resistant to flystrike; use of long-acting worm and flystrike control chemicals (including more recent concerns over the length of protection they offer); managing the much higher stocking rates and dag following the introduction of improved pastures and fertilisers in the 1960s; the lower levels of on-farm labour; the increasing supply chain requests for transparency regarding on-farm husbandry and animal welfare practices and balancing the mixed messages from price premiums on offer for non-mulesed wool and price discounts for unmulesed sheep.

With all this in mind, AWI produces education, training and extension resources that provide best practice information and support for woolgrowers and their advisors to meet a wide range of best practice management options for improved lifetime welfare of sheep. Some examples of these follow.

1. Develop and implement education, training and extension strategies to improve lifetime welfare of sheep
Deliverables in this area cover a range of activities, including:

- AWI Extension Networks (Leading Sheep Qld; Sheep Connect NSW; Best Wool Best Lamb VIC; Sheep Connect TAS, Sheep Connect SA, The Sheep's Back WA) to deliver training programs and events for woolgrowers at a regional level www.wool.com/people/awi-grower-networks
- Lifetime Ewe Management training program www.wool.com/people/education-and-leadership/lifetime-ewe-management
- ParaBoss (including FlyBoss, WormBoss and LiceBoss) www.paraboss.com.au
- Merino Lifetime Productivity Project www.wool.com/sheep/genetics/merino-lifetime-productivity
- Control of feral animals including wild dogs, feral pigs, rabbits and foxes www.wool.com/sheep/pest-animals
- Information on managing footrot www.wool.com/sheep/welfare/footrot
- Making More From Sheep www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au
- Sheep Classing Workshops www.wool.com/globalassets/wool/people/education-and-leadership/stockmanship-and-merino-visual-classing-workshop-material/an-introduction-to-merino-visual-classing.pdf
- Introduction to Stockmanship Training www.wool.com/people/education-and-leadership/stockmanship-and-merino-visual-classing-workshop-material
- Training in best practice shearing www.wool.com/people/shearing-and-woolhandling
- AWI Practical Workshops www.wool.com/people/education-and-leadership/practical-workshops
 - Picking Performer Ewes
 - Winning With Weaners
 - Ramping Up Repro
 - Foundations of Sheep and Wool Production
- Regular articles in the AWI Beyond the Bale magazine www.wool.com/about-awi/media-resources/beyond-the-bale
- Project Newsletters
- MERINOSELECT www.sheepgenetics.org.au
- Resources on the AWI Website (including under www.wool.com/sheep/welfare/breech-flystrike):
 - Project updates and final project reports (including on Vaccines, Genomics, Flystrike Causal Web, Rate of Genetic Gain, Insecticide Resistance)
 - Information on options for best practice analgesia and anaesthesia (Tri-Solfen, Buccalgesic, Metacam, Numnuts)
 - Plan Prepare Conduct Best Practice Lamb Marking Training Guide
 - Dealing with Dags
 - Planning for a Non Mulesed Merino Enterprise
 - Past RD&E Technical Updates (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018)
 - Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep
 - Managing Breech Flystrike Manual
- AWI Social Media Channels including The Yarn podcast www.wool.com/about-awi/media-resources/the-yarn-podcast and Facebook www.facebook.com/AustralianWoolInnovation.

Course content for AWI Flystrike Workshops is currently being reviewed and updated and communication and extension resources from current or recently completed R&D projects are continually under development.

2. Monitor, evaluate and improve the success of education, training and extension activities

Key activities include:

- On-going woolgrower surveys
 - 2017 AWI Merino Husbandry Survey
 - 2019 Benchmarking Australian Sheep Parasite Control Survey (following from 2012 and 2007)
 - AWI Strategic Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Surveys
- AWI/MLA Wool and Lamb Forecasting Surveys
- AWI Shareholder Surveys
- AWEX National Wool Declaration; rates of adoption, premiums and discounts.
- Consultation via the AWI Woolgrower Consultation Panel and larger AWI Woolgrower Consultation Group
- Consultation with range of Breeder Groups and Associations
- AWI AVA and Genetic Reviews of the Strategy.

3. Engage with woolgrower advisors on the Strategy

Key activities include:

- AWI Wool Broker Forums
- Biennial AWI Flystrike RD&E Forum and website
- ParaBoss Technical Committee
- Sheep Genetics.

4. Ongoing engagement with domestic and international stakeholders to ensure they understand best practice management of flystrike and the welfare implications

The key activities include:

- AWI AVA and Genetic Review of the Flystrike Strategy
- AWI Animal Welfare Forum
- Biennial AWI Flystrike RD&E Forum and website
- Regular engagement with international and domestic brands and retailers by the Woolmark Regional Managers, both within Australia and internationally.

Further information on AWI's engagement across the supply chain is available in the following presentation from the 2018 Flystrike Prevention RD&E Update (www.wool.com/sheep/welfare/breech-flystrike/latest-research/past-flystrike-prevention-rde-updates/#rde-market).

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