

Hot ewes equals fewer lambs

By Dr Gordon Refshauge
Livestock Research Officer
NSW DPI Cowra

Heat stress during mating can have serious effects on fertility. These effects are typically seen when temperatures exceed 41 °C for about 9 hours on the day of, or up to 3 days after, mating.

Death of embryos is a clear result, but loss of embryos does not account for all fertility problems associated with heat stress. Fertility has been shown to decrease by about 2% to 3% for every day during mating when the temperature is 32 °C or more.

If ewes are exposed to heat stress experimentally for the whole gestation, for about 50 days of gestation, or for the last 15 days of gestation, then the weight of the placenta and the foetus are reduced and rearing rates decline.

Every ewe that slips one cycle because of heat stress needs another cycle to conceive. On farm, when heat waves occur, you should consider using a third mating cycle as risk insurance, depending on the timing of the heat stress relative to the timing of mating.

Producers who mate for three cycles should not be concerned about pregnancy rates: instead, they should consider the effects of heat stress on growth of the foetus.

It appears that improving nutrition after heat stress is unlikely to improve the birth weights of growth-restricted lambs, although there will be improvements in lactation quality and in early post-natal growth. In the case of growth-restricted lambs, improved lactation is important for growth to weaning and subsequent weaner survival. These lambs are more likely to be fatter at the same weight as other lambs and weaners, and they have a lower greasy fleece weight as hoggets.

After an extended period of heat stress, producers should have their flocks pregnancy-scanned to identify non-pregnant and twin-bearing ewes. Those Merino ewes not pregnant should be identified with an ear notch or ear tag and returned to the mob, and given one more chance to prove themselves. The ear tag or ear notch enables you to easily identify these once-dry ewes. Twice-dry ewes should be culled. Giving ewes two opportunities

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Research has shown that fertility in ewes can decrease by about 2% to 3% for every day during mating when temperatures exceed 32 °C. The January heat wave this year may have resulted in lower fertility and lower lamb survival because of the birth of smaller lambs. *Photo by Fiona Myers*

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to prove their fertility will both increase the accuracy of selection for reproduction and retain lots of selection pressure for other important economic traits.

Twin-bearing ewes should be immediately separated into their own mob and managed to reach lambing in condition or fat score three. Heat waves during mating or during pregnancy can result in low-birth-weight lambs, so twin lambs are at an added disadvantage. Lamb mortality increases in heat-stressed ewes, so the udders of the ewes should be 'wet and dried' after lambing to find those ewes that have lost lambs.

Accurate selection of ewes for reproduction traits takes time. Reproduction is a lifetime trait, and it takes a lifetime to express itself. Giving a ewe a second chance offers two opportunities to decide whether the animal is infertile or unlucky. How you make the decision to cull ewes will be based on the current feed supply; the forecast future pasture conditions; the amount of wool on the dry ewe relative to when you next shear; the current stocking rate; and your reproduction goals.

If a farm is highly stocked, identifying dry ewes at scanning and selling them is an important decision. However, because this is an entirely economic decision and is not strictly a genetic selection against low reproduction, it won't result in the greatest possible improvements in fertility. Furthermore, if a high proportion of the flock is dry, culling once-dry ewes will reduce the selection pressure available for other important economic traits.

Selecting ewes for rearing ability by 'wet and drying' udders after lambing is the most effective way to identify those ewes that are capable of rearing lambs in their environment. This type of selection is likely to identify ewes with poor fertility and poor rearing ability, but it also identifies those ewes that are less able to thermoregulate during heat stress. This trait is expressed only during heat waves and depends on the timing of the heat stress relative to the time since mating.

The effects of the month-long heatwave in January this year may extend to lower fertility and lower lamb survival than normal. Sheep affected will be those mated in October, November, December and January. Managers of these sheep should expect to see some smaller lambs and should therefore scan their ewes to make sure nutrition is optimised for the pregnant ewes—especially those with twins. For ewes mated during January, one option producers have is to mate for a third

cycle. Scan the ewes 45 days after removing the ram; draft out twin-bearing ewes and manage them to lambing in condition or fat score three. Ewes mated in February are not expected to have been affected, as the heat was not as severe in most regions during that month.

We strongly recommend that producers 'wet and dry' the ewes after lambing; this is often done at marking. Identifying dry or lambbed-and-lost ewes with an ear notch or ear tag will help you to easily identify these ewes if they fail to rear lambs in the future. Ewes should be given a second chance to prove themselves. If they fail once, that's biologically acceptable, but not twice. Culling ewes that have previously been found dry will result in improvements in reproduction rates, through greater litter size and lamb survival. Pregnancy scanning alone will not identify all the ewes that are susceptible to the effects of heat stress, which is why wet and drying udders remains essential for managing reproduction. A carefully considered selection program will make the flock more able to withstand heat stress events, which are expected to be more frequent in the coming decades. This type of considered selection will improve reproduction levels even if summer heat waves don't occur.

In summary:

Heat stress in ruminants has three possible effects on ewe reproduction:

- reduced fertility
- increased embryo deaths
- lower birthweight and increased new-borne lamb loss.

Note that rams are also affected by heat stress: rams kept without shade have problems with sperm formation.



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Menindee Cultural Gardens opens

A sense of community spirit and pride in the achievement of creating the Menindee Cultural Gardens was the call of the day at the official opening on 5 December. The official flag-raising ceremony was led by Evelyn Bates, Traditional Custodian, with special guest David Shillington, Captain of the Canberra Raiders.

The culmination of hard work, perseverance and hundreds of volunteer hours was on display, and it was evident to all attendees that there was great pride in their community and their new garden.

The gardens are located on the site of the Menindee Local Aboriginal Land Council and incorporate native plants that have traditional uses as both medicine and bush tucker. The plants include prickly wattle (the seeds of which are used to make bread), emu bush (traditionally used as a medicinal plant) and milk thistle (known as *panyuwanpa*, *pulapul* or *parlampa* in Barkindji language; eaten raw as greens and also used as a medicine for the blood).

In addition to the plants, the garden includes bower sheds, shade houses, humpies, spirit poles, a fire pit and bench seating, creating the perfect atmosphere for locals to come and sit and enjoy the surrounds while talking and learning about traditional culture.

Project partners included the former Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Native Blende Nursery, along with many volunteers from the Menindee Community who dedicated their efforts and hard work to plan, fund and complete the gardens. The gardens will help assure the economic security and development of Menindee by empowering the community to harvest seeds and propagate plants there and, in the future, to develop a plant nursery. The local community has embraced the Cultural Gardens and has taken ownership in caring for them; this has led to the formation of the Menindee Aboriginal Landcare group.

'The Menindee Cultural Garden provides a hands-on experience where people can learn about the plants that have been essential for Barkindji people's survival in this area for tens of thousands of years', said Catchment Officer, Aboriginal Communities, Ronni O'Donnell. 'This is an outstanding community educational resource. We can teach our young people about the cultural knowledge and the plants that have sustained their people. It's important to keep our culture strong and to pass that information on to people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal', she said.

Special guest David Shillington, Captain of the Canberra Raiders and State of Origin and NRL All Stars team member, was in awe of the enthusiasm, dedication and tenacity of the volunteers in developing and creating the garden.

He said, 'This is a great bonding experience and brings together the community. It's very important that the traditional knowledge from elders is passed on and to carry on traditional knowledge and customs, so that the next generation has the knowledge to pass on to their children'.

David happily spent time with the locals, signing autographs, chatting with attendees, tossing the ball and participating with local school children in hands-on erosion and water quality demonstrations organised and facilitated by Regional Landcare Facilitator Kim Trigg.

Kim has been helping the Menindee Aboriginal Landcare group with opportunities to connect with other groups within the region and with Junior Landcare and senior groups that can potentially become partners in larger projects into the future. This will allow the Landcare network to share resources and learn from each other to make sure each project is as successful as possible. 'The garden has already been visited by the Murray Goulburn Landcare Network, in July. They were inspired by the hospitality shown to them in sharing this project with the wider community. It really has been a very positive outcome already', said Kim.

Local resident Margot Muscat, of the Menindee Rural Transaction Centre, said, 'This is an amazing benefit to our community, especially to the Land Council and Aboriginal Community. It gives us a place to meet and greet, as well as to just wander through the garden and get back to nature'.

The gardens now fall into the area of operation of the Western CMA, which will guide and support their progression into the future.

By Kim Long
Acting Educational Facilitator
Murray CMA (Buronga Office)

Official opening of the
Menindee Cultural Gardens.
Photo by Tom Klein



Enjoy a fascinating and fun-packed adventure at a local national park

During school holidays throughout 2013 the National Parks and Wildlife Service is running a fun-packed *Discovery Walks, Talks and Tours* program in the Far West, with activities for all ages.

NPWS Tourism and Recreation Officer Dinitee Haskard said the April school holiday program was one of the busiest yet.

'There are lots of activities available in national parks throughout the Far West, including at Kinchega, Paroo-Darling, Culgoa, and Mungo national parks and a Discovery trailer at Bourke.

'Activities will run at various times throughout the April holidays, and activities are also organised for the June public holiday weekend and the school holidays of June and July. September school holidays also have activities planned.

'This autumn at Kinchega National Park the whole family can join Menindee Aboriginal Elders in Bush Foods and Tracks and Traces tour activities for children to learn about traditional bush foods and animal tracks.'

Mrs Haskard said the 'tag-along tours' are always popular during the school holidays.

'Visitors and locals can join rangers and Aboriginal elders in a tag-along tour into

areas in the south of Kinchega National Park that are normally restricted to the public. This way, people can gain personal insight into the park's history.

'A tag-along tour is also being organised for Paroo-Darling National Park, to the spectacular Peery Lake. Peery Lake is an internationally recognised wetland and is home to an abundance of birds.

'Tag-along tours are also being offered to Culgoa in April and Ledknapper in June, providing an insight into how the environment and wildlife have responded to the influx of water over recent years.

'Mungo National Park is offering a number of activities, including a Starry Starry Night feature, a tag-along tour to the walls of China and a walking cultural tour.'

For more information on tours contact the NPWS Broken Hill Office on 08 8080 3200 or visit the national parks website at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/default.aspx>

NPWS Ranger Julianne Doyle is ready for the discovery tours!
Photo supplied by NPWS



Goat publications extend knowledge

A series of comprehensive publications produced by the Western CMA is helping to stimulate informed discussion and build our knowledge base of the management of goats in western NSW.

By Russell Grant
Operations Manager
Western CMA, Cobar

The six publications address current information about the management of goats, including the economics of alternative management practices, population trends and aspects of the goat industry.

Since their release last December, the publications have been helping to encourage greater awareness of the impact of unmanaged goats on ground cover, biodiversity and landscape function.

The CMA recognises that goats are a legitimate and valuable stock animal for the Western Catchment. However, although harvesting unmanaged feral goats provides a short-term gain, there are longer-term opportunities in better controlling grazing pressure.

As with other stock, when grazing pressures are unmanaged goats can adversely affect the environment. Goat populations in western NSW have doubled over the past decade of drought and are expected to continue to rise.

The publications are:

- *Feral Goat Ecology and Management in the Western NSW Rangelands: A Review*
- *Review of Feral Goat Regulatory and Strategic Framework*
- *Feral Goat Population Trends in the Western NSW Rangelands*
- *The Feral Goat Industry and Implications for Groundcover*
- *Economic Analysis of Feral Goat Control within the Western NSW Rangelands*
- *Feral Goat Management to Achieve Healthy Groundcover: Discussion Paper.*

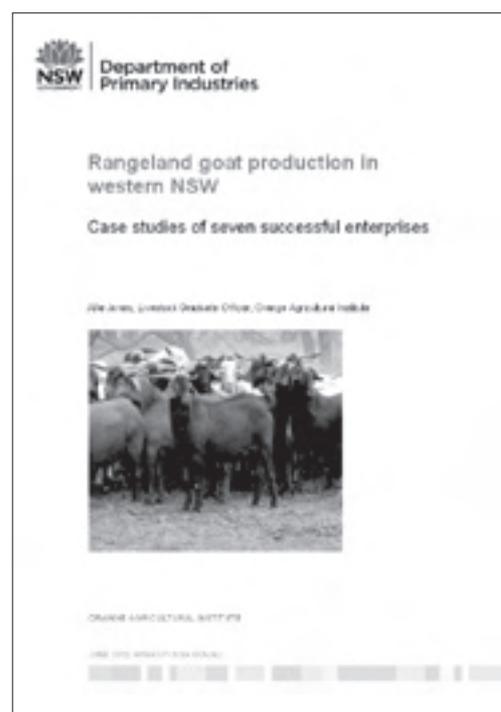
The publications clearly show that goats are highly adapted to the semi-arid rangelands of western NSW, largely because their broad dietary preference helps them to survive. Data collected by the authors also suggest that goat enterprises based on managed grazing are sustainable.

Although the economic analysis publication listed above shows that harvesting unmanaged goats is profitable, the Western CMA appreciates that landholders may need incentives to adopt more managed grazing systems that improve land condition.

We recognise that the goat meat industry is an important and developing component of the regional economy, so we are keen to work with the industry, which plays the leading role in goat management.

The Discussion Paper listed above outlines the CMA response to the information gathered by researchers. Part of that response is the current \$600,000 incentive funding, provided by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund and administered by the Western CMA.

For a copy of the goat publications, phone Freecall 1800 032 101, contact your local Western CMA office, or visit www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au.



In addition to the Western CMA publications mentioned here, the NSW DPI report pictured here provides case studies of seven successful rangeland goat enterprises. This report can be obtained by contacting Allie Jones from NSW DPI on 02 6391 3816, or email: allie.jones@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Strong interest in management of uncontrolled goats

By Jennifer Sandow
Catchment Officer –
Grazing Management
Western CMA, Bourke

A series of information sessions to promote the management of productive goat enterprises in a healthy landscape, along with a \$600,000 funding project to erect fencing to control unmanaged goats, has attracted a strong response from landholders in the Western Division.

The Western CMA received 102 expressions of interest for funding from landholders in the Bourke, Cobar and Ivanhoe areas, where densities of unmanaged goats are highest.

The Western CMA will administer the project, which has been funded from the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund and is expected to see up to 200 km of fencing erected to control unmanaged goats.

It aims to help landholders to manage total grazing pressure from all animals and to provide a balance between mouths and available feed across as many properties as possible.

The Western CMA launched the funding as part of a series of information sessions conducted in conjunction with the NSW DPI last year.

The first of these events was held at Burndoo Station and was hosted by Rick and Jo Gates. It included an outline from NSW DPI staff of the benefits of tactical grazing and total grazing pressure management and an overview of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS).

At the same event, Meat and Livestock Australia also launched their best-practice guide, *Going into Goats* (see box), which includes information specific to rangelands management.

In Cobar, the Western CMA launched a series of comprehensive publications on the management of goats in the Western Catchment. Presentations by NSW DPI and Christine Ferguson of Myrnong Station helped landholders to compare grazing systems and livestock types and to explore tactical grazing management, the NLIS and the global goat industry.

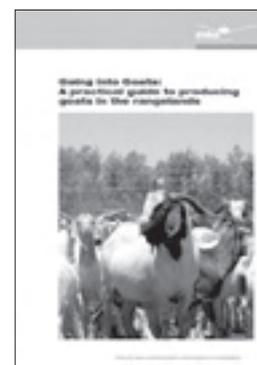
Dave and James Leigo hosted the final event, at Dungarvan Station near Bourke. Despite the hot conditions, these events attracted large numbers of landholders from across the

Going into Rangeland Goats guide out now

The Australian goatmeat industry has experienced strong growth over the past 20 years, with over 1.5 million goats processed annually. This growth has been largely supported by the sale of goats sourced from the rangelands; these account for more than 90% of production. To support further growth in the rangeland goat industry, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) has released a new tool, *Going into Goats: A practical guide to producing goats in the rangelands*.

The guide has been developed by producers for producers through consultative workshops held across Australia's rangelands during its production. During these workshops, rangeland producers identified the specific production issues that influence their productivity and profitability and detailed the processes and procedures that they use to maximise the potential of their enterprises. The guide focuses on these issues so that producers can learn from other producers' experiences.

Going into Goats: A practical guide to producing goats in the rangelands can be accessed now at www.rangelandgoats.com.au. The resource is released as an e-learning tool and is best viewed electronically or online. A printable pdf file is also available for those who would prefer a printed copy.



Catchment, highlighting the significance of the goat industry in the region.

The next step in the funding process is for the Western CMA to provide landholders with feedback on the suitability of their projects and to guide the development of more detailed applications. To minimise the likelihood that people will prepare detailed applications for proposals that are uncompetitive because of their scale or cost, staff will help them through the process as needed.

To learn more about the information presented at the goat management events, phone Jennifer Sandow on (02) 6872 2144.



Right (top): The tour of 'Burndoo' included a stop at the Gates's goat-processing yards. *Photo supplied by Western CMA*

Right: The 'Dungarvan' information session included a property tour with the opportunity for paddock discussions on grazing management. *Photo supplied by Western CMA*



Farm Asset Mapping

- Assist in infrastructure planning
- Map existing paddocks for size, water points, gates, vegetative features etc.
- Map proposed new paddocks and "ground truth" to locate new fence lines and calculate area of new paddocks
- Paddock mapping will assist in more efficient grazing management
- Map printed in A1 size and Laminated (x1)
- Map pad (30 maps) to assist seasonal labour and day to day operations and future planning of the property assets

Map labels: No 1 (486 ha), No 2 (579 ha), No 3, No 16, No 17, No 20 (366 ha), No 21 (407 ha), No 22 (532 ha), No 23 (769 ha).



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PRECISION AG consulting services

Smart fencing for landscape goat management

By Dr Milton Lewis
Catchment Officer
Lachlan CMA

The preceding good years followed by a dry summer have made us all too aware of the high numbers of goats in the rangelands of Western NSW. The very successful kidding rates are obvious as we look at the large flocks clustered around water tanks. A short walk into the scrub quickly provides evidence that grazing and browsing have reached a point where damage to the vegetation will be difficult to repair unless good rainfall arrives soon.

Although many people in the rangelands have profited from harvesting these excess numbers of goats, even with the fall in prices, the majority of harvesting relies on water-point trap yards that can be worked only during the drier months. If we're to better manage our lands for a productive long-term future and not live with a boom or bust economy, we're going to need something new in feral goat harvesting.

As part of a large project centred on improving conditions for endangered malleefowl, the Lachlan CMA has worked with landholders throughout the Western Districts to assess and monitor the health of native mallee. During this process, we realised how very important the feral goat population was to the rural community, yet at the same time how very little was being done to better manage this growing industry for the future. In particular, few people recognised the damage that could be caused by growing populations of goats and their direct competitive advantage over traditional domestic stock such as sheep.

A trial to harvest these animals was conceived during aerial surveys to find malleefowl nesting locations in the Mt Hope region. While viewing

the expanse of mallee woodlands from the air, we noticed that there were obvious patterns to goat movements and that these were not based solely on watering locations. Large flocks of goats were often observed moving south through large expanses of mallee.

These locations did not contain artificial watering points; instead, we think that the goats were relying on natural rainfall to allow their expansion into new areas. This observation suggested that the current cheap method of restricting harvesting to water tanks was collecting only a fraction of the total goat population. Mustering by any method is costly in time and labour, as well as inefficient, with flocks frequently being missed or lost. We needed to turn the natural movements of these animals through the mallee to our advantage, at the same time restricting their access to sensitive areas. In this case I wanted to control goats around the small isolated populations of malleefowl, but for some landholders the same could be said for a lambing paddock or crop.

The solution was relatively simple: funnel the moving goats towards areas where they could be easily collected and away from sites where they were difficult to harvest. To investigate this, we devised a fencing trial about 60 km north of Hillston, where a small number of malleefowl and the surrounding vegetation have been monitored since 2009.

About 25 square kilometres was fenced around the mallee woodland containing the nest mounds of the malleefowl. Along one section of the fence, one-way gates were spaced about 1 kilometre apart; these gates allow goats to move out of the protected areas into an adjacent laneway. Another fence parallel to the one containing the gates was erected to form a corridor leading to collection yards containing water and feed. The corridor is open at the northern end and also collects goats that are moving south out of neighbouring mallee and drifting along the northern boundary fence that secures the nesting area.

Although the system of fencing has been properly functioning for only around 6 months, nearly 1000 goats have been collected. These animals are from areas usually missed by conventional methods and have been trapped during months when water-point traps are not effective.

Captured goats in the laneway.
Photo by Milton Lewis



We will continue to monitor the value of this system and plan to start a second trial to the west of Mount Hope. Vegetation monitoring within the malleefowl nesting areas has already yielded evidence to suggest that the grasses and shrubs will respond positively to reduced grazing pressure from feral goats.

The use of remote cameras in the malleefowl nesting areas is also providing valuable information about the impact of feral goats on malleefowl and is confirming the effectiveness of the fencing design.

We hope that this simple fencing design will give land managers a method of sustainably managing feral goats for both income and a healthier landscape.



One-way gates spaced 1 km apart are used to funnel moving goats into a laneway.
Photo by Angela Higgins

Fay Linnett named 2013 Murray-Darling Local Woman of the Year

Mrs Fay Linnett, of Ivanhoe, has been declared the 2013 Local Woman of the Year in the Murray-Darling Electorate.

John Williams (The Nationals, Murray-Darling) extended his congratulations to Mrs Fay Linnett on receiving this esteemed award.

Mr Williams said that the Local Women of the Year Awards recognise the important roles and achievements of women throughout NSW.

'All nominated Local Women of the Year have been invited to the NSW Women of the Year Awards reception at Parliament House on Thursday 7 March, where an official group photograph with the Premier, the Minister for Women, Members of Parliament and other Local Women of the Year will be taken. The names of the Local Women of the Year will be featured in an honour roll booklet.

'Fay is a tireless worker for the Ivanhoe Community in remote Far West NSW.

'Fay is involved on the committees of many organisations in the area, where she holds voluntary positions. The organisations include St Stephens Anglican Church, Ivanhoe Telecentre, Ivanhoe Tourist Association, Ivanhoe Ladies Golf Association, the 'Kilfera' Field Days, Ivanhoe Community Hall, Ivanhoe Revival Group, Cobb Highway Action Group, Ivanhoe Health Advisory Council, The Long Paddock – Moama to Wilcannia, and Ivanhoe Youth Centre. She is also the relieving Ivanhoe reporter for the Hillston Spectator.

'For the past 23 years, Fay has been the principal organiser for the annual Kilfera Field Day. Together with her family, she has



Faye Linnett, 2013 Local Murray-Darling Woman of the Year. *Photo supplied by Linnett family*

raised \$240,000 for the purchase of medical equipment for the Ivanhoe Hospital and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

'One of Fay's greatest achievements and passions is her involvement with the Senior Citizens of Ivanhoe and District. For the past 17 years she has been organising functions for Senior Citizens Week and has always made sure everyone has an enjoyable time.

'Fay also helps run the family sheep and cattle property and works a couple of days a week at the Ivanhoe Central School.

'Fay has made significant contributions to the Ivanhoe community, and she truly deserves to be recognised with this worthy award. I commend Fay for her untiring efforts for the isolated community of Ivanhoe, and I'm pleased that she has been recognised with this award', Mr Williams concluded.

Protecting the Western Division from OJD

By Greg Curran
Veterinary Officer
NSW DPI Broken Hill

The Sheepmeat Council of Australia and WoolProducers Australia have taken up the challenge of coming up with the most effective national management plan for Ovine Johne's disease (OJD).

They have drafted a National OJD Management Plan and have called for submissions on this plan. You can find the plan at <http://www.woolproducers.com.au/> and other sites.

Key proposals in the plan are:

- a simpler management system that relies on producers and industry (including agents) taking a risk-management approach to managing OJD
- encouraging producers to collectively develop their own Regional Biosecurity Plans (RBPs)
- no control or protected areas
- continuation of Sheep Health Statements but removal of the ABC point scheme.

The Western Division has managed OJD simply and well through risk assessment and management since 1997, when it first recognised the importance of keeping the disease out. In that year, the Western Division set up nine Rural Lands Protection Board OJD management committees, whose work would be described now as formulating Regional Biosecurity Plans. The whole of the Western Division received recognition as part of the Protected Areas in 2002. Sheep Health Statements and the National Livestock Identification System have been essential parts of our OJD risk assessment and management, although we now recognise that producers elsewhere have sometimes not allocated ABC points to themselves correctly, particularly in the case of vaccinated sheep.

The Western Division is part of a group working to prevent the entry of OJD. The group wants the Division to continue as part of the Protected Areas, an arrangement that has proven very effective. Other members of the group include representatives from:

- South Australia
- Queensland
- the New England area

- Nyngan, Coonamble and Coonabarabran in Central Western NSW.

The Western Division statement to the review panel was:

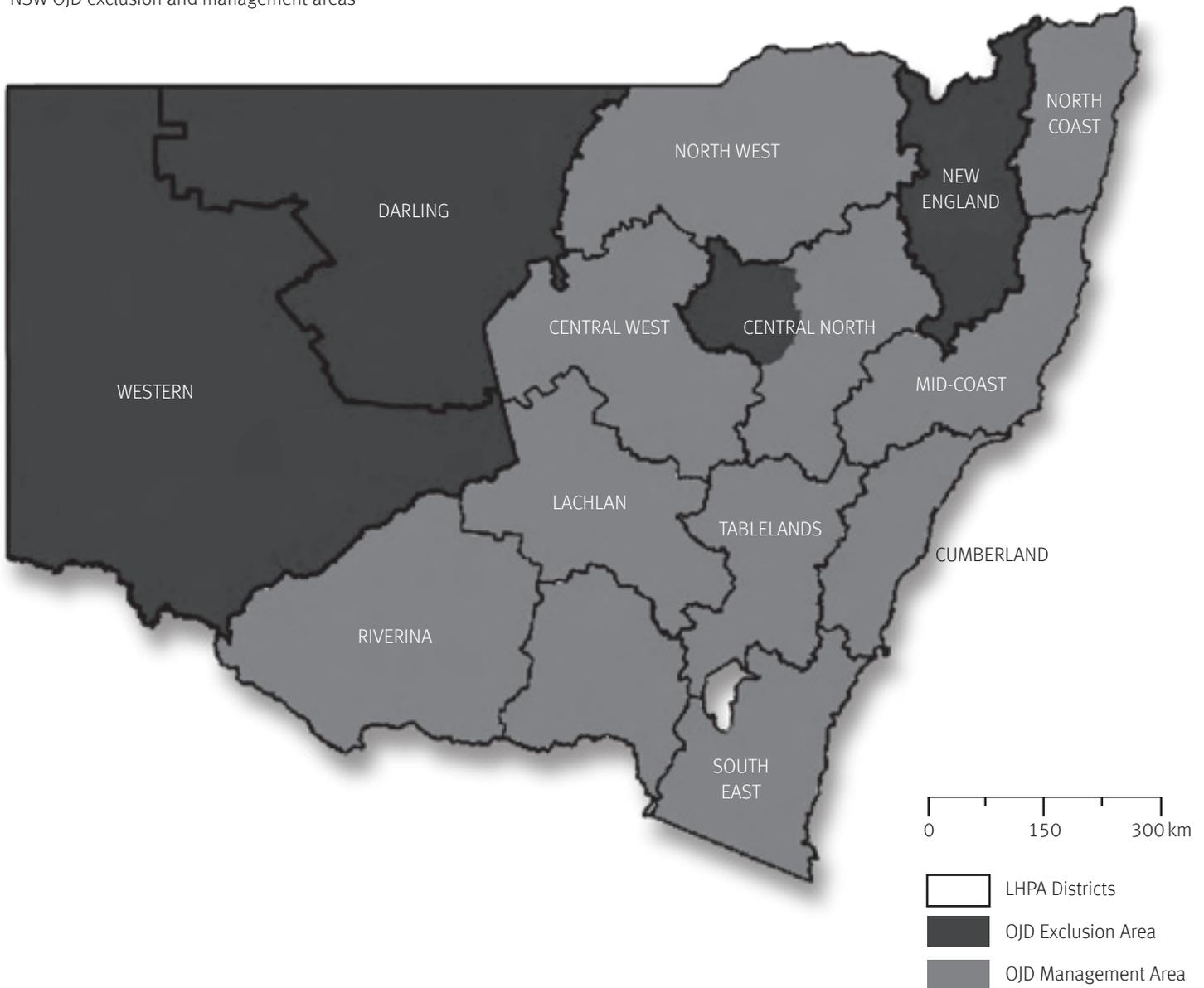
1. The Western Division of NSW has worked consistently and effectively to prevent entry of OJD, and deal with any suspicion and the few incursions of OJD, since 1997.
2. The Western Division has repeatedly shown strong community-wide support for this work.
3. This support is based on recognition of the costs and risks of OJD:
 - a. the unwanted cost of Gudair vaccination if a flock is infected
 - b. the social costs of a flock becoming infected in an area where the huge distances and extreme conditions mean fences are never completely secure
 - c. the need to maintain this area's reputation as a source of good, solid, disease-free sheep
 - d. the desire to be a source of sheep with very low to nil risk of OJD, to reinforce efforts by infected areas and flocks to maximise the benefits of Gudair vaccine and OJD management
 - e. the clear risk that *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* will be recognised by consumers as a cause of Crohn's disease
 - f. the risk that the remarkable adaptability of *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* will lead to ever-increasing expansion into harsher environments.
7. It is essential that communities such as the Western Division be allowed to continue this work by you and your organisations, and by government.
8. It is essential that these communities be allowed to identify themselves and their efforts with formal recognition as 'OJD Protected Areas'. To ablate these arrangements would be unfair and unprincipled.
9. It is essential that this formal recognition be based on a set of biosecurity rules that these communities, the sheep industry and government acknowledge and support.

- 10. These rules have been devised and accepted over an extended period in the Western Division and elsewhere. Some aspects of the rules can be improved (for example, the Sheep Health Statement) to maintain and improve compliance and effectiveness.
- 11. These rules have become a community standard in Protected Areas. Removing them contradicts current biosecurity arrangements.
- 12. It is essential that these rules be enforceable, both to support this standard of biosecurity and to ensure these communities are able to deal effectively

with those not prepared to meet those standards, and who wilfully breach those standards.

- 13. The positions on OJD put forward by South Australia, New England, Nyngan and Coonamble are consistent with that of the Western Division.

NSW OJD exclusion and management areas



Ram paddocks, bruce and other problems

By Greg Curran
Veterinary Officer
NSW DPI Broken Hill

Ram paddocks are convenient. They are often close to home, and they serve to hold rams, killers, strays, poddies, sick sheep, and 'leftovers' until they are needed, or until something can be done with them. In the meantime, you can keep an eye on the animals in these paddocks.

But there are a number of problems created in ram paddocks:

- If rams cover the other sheep in their paddock, this can increase the spread of brucellosis in any of the sheep.

- The stocking rate in the ram paddock can creep up, with pasture quantity and quality dropping off, making it a little harder for the rams to be in peak condition.
- Over the years, high stocking rates in some ram paddocks can lead to a build-up of less nutritious, unpalatable or poisonous plants, making it harder for rams to stay healthy and put on and keep condition.

It may be worth considering keeping ram paddocks for rams and building another paddock close and handy for any other sheep.

POONCARIIE FIELD DAY

**10AM SATURDAY, 4 MAY 2013
AT THE POONCARIIE RACECOURSE**

Bringing our community together since 1999

COME ALONG & MEET OUR 2ND YOUTH AMBASSADOR

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The Hay Ewe Flock Competition: not just a bus ride but a 2-day woolgrower talkfest!

Hay Merino Breeders Inc. recently hosted the 22nd Peppin Shaw Competition in the Western Riverina. This is the world's largest commercial flock ewe hogget competition!

We travelled by bus over the 2 days, covering close to 1000 km on roads in variable condition. The unpredictable problems of broken vee belts and a seized air conditioner bearing were handled capably by Purtill's Coach Captain Kevin Gough.

This was truly an interactive 2 days. While travelling we listened to short talks on marketing, the changing environment, animal health, skills training, biosecurity and farm safety. The latter was present on everyone's mind, with both President David Rankin and Vice-President Magnus Aitken showing the results of recent misfortunes. Recent experiences in this area strongly suggest that all musterers should wear hi-visibility clothing and have communications devices attached to their bodies.

Riverina Wool Marketer Mark Bazeley kept all 50-odd bus travellers alert on both days by running judging competitions on the ewes from the properties visited and questionnaires on topics related to the wool industry.

It was great to have a young associate judge in Allan Vagg, interacting with fellow judges



By Kevin Ingram
Pooncarie

Associate Judge Allan Vagg in action. *Photo by Sally Ware*

Cam Munro from 'Egelabra', Warren, and Roger Polkinghorne from 'Churinga', St Arnaud. The judges prompted much conversation among the 70-odd people present at most venues. There were discussions on price discounts on wool grown longer than 110 mm; comparisons were made with the easier stock management and greater bodyweight efficiencies of sheep with shorter wool. First is the need to balance



Woolbroker Mark Bazeley demonstrating the use of fingers to measure the minimum length of wool staples. *Photo by Margie McClelland*

Article author Kevin Ingram (left) sharing a joke with judges Roger Polkinghorne and Cam Munro.
Photo by Margie McClelland



structure with a good topline (plain, not narrow). Aim for lustrous, deep-crimping, free-growing skins, wax being an indicator of secondary fibres. Unlike suint, which gives colour, white and bright wool enhances the comfort factor. Fertility is the key to profitability in breeding operations, and scanning for twins vs. singles is a great tool for monitoring better fodder use. ASBVs (Australian Sheep Breeding Values) are another tool for advancing genetics for trueness to type, body score and free skins.

Leaving Hay before sunrise on Day 1, we headed into the Western Division, where we crossed the Lachlan River at Oxley and entered predominantly chenopod shrubland country. The first stop was at Broken Dam yards at 'Tupra', where a young female on the bus asked if there would be a ladies' room. The answer was 'Sorry, no', but she was lucky a crutching shed was present, as there wasn't a tree in sight! Next stop was 'Merritop' for smoko and presentation of the well-structured and balanced flock, which became the overall winning team of the competition.

Travelling farther north to 'Yamba' woolshed yards, we inspected a fertile flock, which was judged second overall. Next stop was 'Alma' woolshed for lunch supplied by the local NSW Farmers branch, then north towards Mossgiel where the ewes from second-year entrant 'Bronte' were yarded. It was then back down the Cobb Highway for refreshments at the Booligal Hotel (thanks to Ben Parker of Bayer), followed by hot lamb rolls prepared by the locals.

On Day 2, travelling south-east of Hay it was evident that the European rabbit and African boxthorn were major management priorities this season. At 'Steam Plains' the main attraction was the recently built Thornton 10-stand horseshoe-design 'shear delight' shed. (For more information see Bestprac Case Study Series No. 6 at www.bestprac.info.) Next we travelled towards Conargo, then north to the historic 'Warwillah' shed. Their flock was presented with the Elders trophy for best new entry, despite the fact that Elders' mobile scales failed in transit!

2013 ROB SEEKAMP MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Application forms and Guidelines for the Rob Seekamp Memorial Scholarship are now available for collection at the Pastoralists' Association office, situated in Adelaide Road at Broken Hill.

Forms are also available by mail – send a request form to **PO Box 279 Broken Hill** – or by email at **pawd01@bigpond.net.au**, or you can obtain a form by calling **(08) 8087 3322**.

APPLICATIONS CLOSE ON 30 JUNE 2013. THE SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT FOR 2013 WILL BE \$2,500.



Judging ewes at David and Barbara Butcher's property 'Bronte' near Mossgiel. *Photo by Margie McClelland*



The winning property 'Merritop', in the Oxley area, preparing for judging of the Peppin-Shaw. *Photo by Sally Ware*

Travelling on towards Boooroban we experienced localised wet and dry summer storms that sparked a number of fires and quickly changed peoples' priorities. Next stop was 'Nyangay', where there was much discussion. This flock was later awarded the Elanco Encouragement Trophy for the best short-wool flock. Lunch was at Shear Outback in Hay, which also provided the chance to cover Valentine's Day commitments! At the Pevensey yards south-west of Hay the 2012 winners from 'Mungandal' were on display. These sheep endorsed the great season of 2011 and signalled that green-tag ewes will be lifetime profit-makers. The final flock inspection was back north of the Murrumbidgee River at 'Budgewah', where a double ram strategy and faba bean supplements are employed. Budgewah was later awarded the fertility award, and with

four young aspiring jackaroos in the family the owner's fertility received a mention!

What a remarkable opportunity to spend 2 days visiting nine commercial grazing operations and inspecting 17,000 ewe hoggets! I can recommend it to anyone even slightly interested in rangeland management. Landholders who want more information on the Peppin-Shaw ewe flock competition at Hay can contact Sally Ware at NSW DPI in Hay on sally.ware@dpi.nsw.gov.au, or call 042 930 7627.

On a final note, I'd like to say to the Editor that whatever becomes of the current restructure into Local Land Services it is paramount that the *Western Division Newsletter* stays as the prime communicator of information on the NSW Rangelands.

Western Division Newsletter

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (March 2013). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services or the user's independent adviser.

Local Land Services is coming

From January 2014, Local Land Services will deliver the services currently provided by the Catchment Management Authorities and Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and the agricultural extension currently provided by NSW DPI.

Currently, all NSW DPI agricultural extension staff and all CMA staff are applying for new positions with an interim agency, CMAg, or are taking voluntary redundancy. These changes will be finalised by 30 June 2013. Staff who successfully gain positions will move into the new Local Land Services organisation.

The future of the *Western Division Newsletter* is yet to be decided and will depend on

many factors, including staff redeployment, ongoing funding of the Newsletter and Local Land Service regional boundaries. However, there is strong support from both landholders and supporting agencies for the Newsletter to continue, and we hope that this will happen.

To have an input into the formation of Local Land Services, landholders are encouraged to get in touch by using the following contacts:

Web: <http://haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/locallandservices>

Mail: PO Box 865, Dubbo, NSW 2830

Fax: 02 6881 1295

Sheepyard shot of the Editor of the Western Division Newsletter for the past 7 years, Sally Ware. Photo by Margie McClelland



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