



# Information Exchange

The newsletter of the BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB network

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## Leadership course offers inspiration

AN INTENSIVE week of leadership skills training has two members of the Soil Health BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB group in central Victoria looking to the future.

Amanda McClaren and Hannah Marriot both received support from BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB to take part in the recent Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program.

The week-long, live-in course at Geelong featured a range of speakers who covered topics such as leadership, team processes, submission writing, negotiation, effective meetings, public speaking, managing conflict, communications and dealing with the media.

The course attracted a range of participants from around Australia and who represented a cross section of industries and agribusinesses.

Amanda McClaren and her husband Ian farm at Graytown, between Heathcote and Nagambie, and have a strong interest in running a profitable and environmentally sustainable farm business.

"It was an amazing experience to be with so many people



**Hannah Marriot with AWI CEO Brenda McGahan and Amanda McClaren at the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program dinner.**

from such a cross section of industries," Amanda said.

"The people in the course were innovative and interesting. I learnt a lot from the other participants, as well as the guest speakers and lecturers.

"The quality of the guest speakers was a highlight for me – especially having to introduce Australian Wool Innovation CEO Brenda McGahan as the keynote speaker at the National Australia Bank Agribusiness industry dinner.

"I then sat next to Ms McGahan and had the opportunity to talk to her during the evening.

"It was inspiring to meet so many women in leadership roles, including the CEO of the Foundation for Rural and

Regional Renewal, Sylvia Admans, who was another of the guest speakers.

"It was certainly a challenging course. I really enjoyed it and would recommend it to anyone in BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB."

Hannah Marriot said the course was one of the best she had ever attended.

### Recommended

"The experience was unbelievable and one I would always recommend to any one passionate about improving themselves, their business or their community.

"To be given the opportunity to go to such a course is a great privilege which I thank BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB for

and I hope many more members benefit from it in the future.

Hannah found the communications session of the course of particular interest

"Once the nerves about public speaking were a bit calmer, we had some fantastic experience with media training. This included radio interviews, letters to council or the like, and doing a press release.

"We also had a good session on negotiation and creating a win-win situation in the workplace.

"One of the last sessions was on managing meetings and how to manage different people within a meeting and to make sure everyone gets the most out of the meetings, the characteristics of a good chair and a good secretary."

Another formal session dealt with community leadership and change.

The final session involved the participants role playing in four interest groups in a case study to solve a work-based problem.

"It proved just how difficult it can be to get a clear message across to the community and all the relevant parties," Hannah said. ■

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# Monitor project shows impact of season

WESTERN VICTORIA was ahead of other wool and prime lamb regions last season according to the latest figures from the Sheep Farm Monitor Project.

Last season most of Victoria experienced a very dry spring, with only the south-west of the state receiving any significant rain in October – and the effect was felt on the bottom line as well as in the paddocks.

A summary of the 2008/09 Sheep Farm Monitor Project results was recently released and showed that the profitability of wool and prime lamb businesses suffered in line with lower rainfall in the growing season.

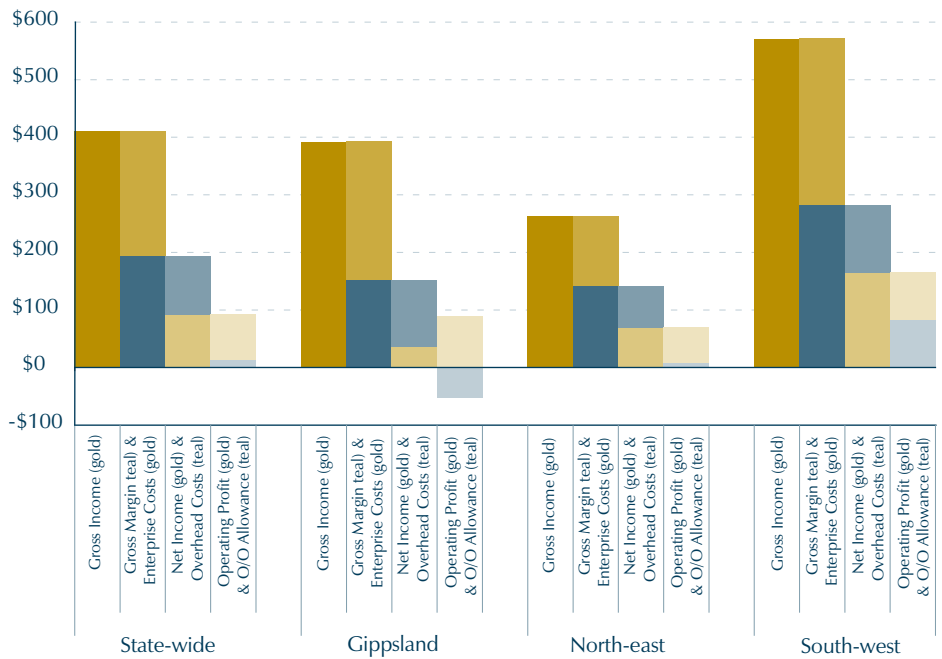
The Sheep Farm Monitor Project is an initiative of the Department of Primary Industries and BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB.

More than 70 wool and prime lamb producers were involved in the project, which aims to provide a snapshot of the profitability and productivity of properties, as well as analyse a range of key farm performance indicators.

Across the state the average gross income per hectare was \$411 – down \$124 on the previous year.

The average operating profit was \$14/ha, after an average for enterprise costs of \$217/ha, overhead costs of \$102/ha and an owner/operator allowance of \$78/ha were taken into consideration.

There was considerable variation between districts, with farmers in Gippsland averaging an operating loss of \$53/ha, farmers in the north-east making an operating profit of just \$9/ha, while farms in the south-west returned an operating profit of \$82/ha.



Incomes fell in line with rainfall during 2008/09.

The gross farm income figures included all farm income from wool, lambs and sheep sales, and included increases in inventories of stock or feed on hand.

The south-west had a gross income of \$571/ha, with a stocking rate of 16.5 DSE/ha, while Gippsland averaged \$392/ha with 13 DSE/ha and the north-east averaged \$263 on 8.5 DSE/ha.

Gippsland and north-east Victoria not only missed significant October rain, but also missed out on critical May rain, and as a result had a tough start to winter.

As a result Gippsland producers had higher

enterprise costs at \$18.50/DSE, ahead of the south-west with \$17.50/DSE and the north-east on \$14.20/DSE operating costs.

One of the big challenges for this most recent survey was accounting for the increasing number of properties that are joining merino ewes to prime lamb sires, said DPI economist Jonathon Tocker.

“In the past we asked people to nominate if their main enterprise was either wool or lamb production, but we’ve seen an increasing number of people who are running a dual-purpose flock of merino ewes joined to terminal sires.

“These flocks have tended to be very profitable, but classifying them under either wool or prime lamb production has distorted the results and we will endeavor to deal with these operations differently next year.”

Jonathon said while overall figures pointed to prime lamb production being more profitable than wool production during 2008/09, the top wool producers were still making good profits.

“There’s a range in the performance of all the farms included in the Sheep Monitor Project and the top farmers are still making profits in either wool or lamb production.”

Copies of the Sheep Farm Monitor Project are available from the DPI website, [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)

For more information contact Jonathon Tocker on 5336 6633 or Tony Berrisford on 5226 4947.

## AT A GLANCE

### Phone seminar

The next BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB phone seminar is planned for early December. The topic and speaker will be finalised soon, so stay tuned by visiting the website at [www.bestwoolbestlamb.com](http://www.bestwoolbestlamb.com)

### Forum

A Forum page has been added to the BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB website to give members a chance to chat online about topics of interest.

It can be accessed by going to [www.bestwoolbestlamb.com](http://www.bestwoolbestlamb.com) and clicking the forum tab on the top righthand corner.

### Worm Test

A haemonchus Dipstick Test kit that detects Barbers Pole worms quickly and easily in a simple 30-minute on-farm test will be commercially available this spring. The kit, developed by the Sheep CRC, is produced distributed by Merial and Ancare. It can detect immature worms about a week before they produce eggs – but when they are already causing disease in sheep.

### Newsletter contributions

We are keen to hear suggestions for this newsletter and are happy to take contributions. Phone Jane Court on 5735 4351.

# Strong leadership essential in shaping agriculture's future

ANY FARMER who wants a future in agriculture should be committed to a farming organisation that is politically aware and professional in the way it portrays agriculture.

That's David Jochinke's conclusion after a three-month study tour of farmer organisations in Europe, the UK, US, South America and New Zealand in 2007 as part of a Nuffield Scholarship.

David is a third-generation cropping and livestock farmer from Murra Warra, north of Horsham, and was a guest speaker at the recent BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB 'Future Farming' conference in Bendigo.

## Combating lobby groups

He was awarded his scholarship to study how farmers influenced their industry through effective rural leadership in overseas countries.

"Agriculture is under increasing pressure from community groups who are ready to depict farmers in a bad light, tell governments how to handle agricultural issues and damage markets," he said.

"Strong rural leadership is essential if farmers are to influence their industry and the broader community's appreciation of what farmers do.

"The emerging animal welfare and environmental movements are increasingly challenging what farmers do and questioning the very basis of production.

"We need to become more professional about how we present ourselves to the public and how we approach issues. We can't afford to be complacent if we want to keep farming."

David said while Australia was a major player in world agriculture in terms of wool and sheep meat production, it was essential sheep and wool producers identified their strengths and reflect what consumers want.

"I believe we need to focus in sustainable production systems, product traceability and our high safety and quality standards," he said.

"At the same time, we need to be aware of the increasing numbers of pressure groups bombarding the community with emotional views on agricultural issues aimed at changing public opinion."

Farmers face a number of threats and



**If farmers want to take the lead against well-organised, professional pressure groups they need to be organised in a sensible way and have a clear focus on what is really required, says Nuffield Scholar David Jochinke.**

challenges from a broader community that has little empathy with what farmers do, he said.

If farmers want to take the lead against well-organised, professional pressure groups they need to be organised in a sensible way and have a clear focus on what is really required.

Globally, most farmer representative organisations have a declining farmer membership, partially due to the decline in the number of farmers, but also because some farmers lack empathy with an organisation.

## Key attributes

David said the most successful farm organisations and rural leaders he met during his study tour had three key attributes that gave them access to people and helped them wield influence.

These were:

- a clear message, supported by policy and quality information;
- strong relationships with industry players and government; and
- a good reputation, built on credibility.

"There are so many issues in agriculture that

are very divisive, even among farmers, such as genetic modification, mulesing and grain marketing," he said.

"It's important any leader or organisation acknowledges different views, but also has a consistent message. It's in no one's interest to send mixed messages to consumers."

Strong relationships were equally important.

"If you can't talk to all sides in an argument then you're in trouble. You need to know what your opponents think and understand their issues so you can put forward a well-presented argument that counters their concerns.

"A good reputation is vital if we want to be taken seriously. There are too many people out there that get caught up in single issues and use megaphone diplomacy. You get a good reputation by listening and being consistent, rather than by painting yourself into a corner and then having no room for political manoeuvres."

"If we want the world to want our sheep we must adopt and develop world's best practice in production and marketing, while being proactive about the industry." ■

# Introducing the new chairman

ASTHE new Chairman I would like first to recognise the contribution Jamie Ramage has made as a long-standing Chairman and Advisory Committee member of BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB.

Jamie has been a wonderful advocate for the program over the past eight years and on the committee's behalf I thank him for his dedicated leadership.

With my wife, Penny, children, William and Madison, and Penny's parents, I run a prime lamb and beef cattle operation in Greta Valley, north-east Victoria.

I have been involved with BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB for 10 years as the Glenthompson group co-ordinator and in recent years as the co-ordinator representative on the Advisory Committee.

It is great to be communicating with you all during more



**Jason Trompf,**  
chairman,  
BESTWOOL /  
BESTLAMB

favourable seasonal conditions than we have experienced across Victoria in recent springs and at the same time the future of the sheep industry appears bright.

Also, due to a lot of people's hard work, the program is going through a growth phase, with a number of new groups forming in recent months, including in Ararat, Casterton, Benalla, Nagambie and Euroa.

The BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB network now has more than

670 group members and 690 associate members.

As primary producers we are always faced with new and varying challenges. BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB is a supportive structure that enables producers to come together to face these challenges as a team.

BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB aims to build resilience in our businesses, the environment and communities – that's our challenge.

I hope all the stakeholders in the network feel comfortable enough to approach myself or other members of the Advisory Committee to discuss the program and have input into the future direction of how we do business.

I look forward to having contact with you all. ■

## Lotfeeding

A draft of the National Code of Practice for Intensive Sheep and Lamb Feeding Systems has been released for public consultation.

The Code is as an initiative of the Australian Lamb Finishers Group and the Sheepmeat Council of Australia, with funding from Meat and Livestock Australia.

It covers environmental, nutritional, management, design, supply chain and animal welfare standards and guidelines, and will apply to outdoor feedlots, containment areas and shedded operations.

An audit tool is also being developed to complement the Code and will be trialed over the coming months. It will be a self-audit checklist system that helps ensure standards within the Code are met.

If you are interested in road testing the audit tool or want to find out more about the Code phone 1800 177 735.

## SMOKO

### Puns for Educated Minds

- The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
- I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
- She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.
- A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.
- No matter how much you push the envelope it'll still be stationery.
- A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.
- A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.
- Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.
- A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.
- Atheism is a non-prophet organisation.
- Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other, 'You stay here. I'll go on a head.'
- I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.
- A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said 'Keep off the Grass'.
- The short fortune teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
- The man who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.
- A backward poet writes inverse.
- In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.
- When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.
- If you jumped off the bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.



BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB is a co-operative program for wool and lamb producers seeking to boost their farm profit and productivity.

For information about the BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB network, phone (03) 5355 0531, e-mail [bestwool.bestlamb@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:bestwool.bestlamb@dpi.vic.gov.au) or visit [www.bestwoolbestlamb.com.au](http://www.bestwoolbestlamb.com.au)