

producer case studies

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New South Wales: Alison Tancred (wool)

Alison Tancred runs 8000 Merinos in the Gulargambone district and considers the new *Making More From Sheep – A sheep producer's manual* to have a considerable amount of information that could help her improve profitability.

"I particularly liked the way each unit is broken up with signposts and tools and I was impressed that the directions to further research didn't just point to websites and computer references," she said.

Ms Tancred is the livestock manager on the 6800ha family property The Maze, near Gulargambone in North West New South Wales. Ms Tancred runs around 3500 breeders averaging about 19.5 microns. She is working on increasing fleece weight whilst reducing micron.

Making More from Sheep is a groundbreaking new management tool developed with the input of nearly 250 leading sheep and wool producers and technical experts. The initiative has been launched by Australian Wool Innovation Limited (AWI) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) to help sheep producers increase their productivity, profitability and overall satisfaction with their farming business.

Ms Tancred believes that while some of the information in *Making More From Sheep – A sheep producer's manual* is not brand new much of that information may not have penetrated completely into farm management. She believes sometimes the uptake of new information can be slow in the farming community and it is very worthwhile to have that information available and in one manual.

"I hope that the manual can help farmers improve the areas they are weakest in and not just reinforce the area they are strongest in," she said.

"The more progressive farmers are already probably doing many of the things suggested in the manual but there is always room for improvement."

In her case she said whilst she was familiar with a lot of the information in the manual there was still many things from the manual she could be doing to improve profit.

"The beauty of it is if you are keen on one of the modules then you will be able to follow it up by attending a hands-on seminar or a field day," she said.

Ms Tancred is also very pleased with the holistic approach of the manual. "Looking at the farm and the family as a whole is better for sustainability and for the future of farming."

She has attended a 'Wean more lambs' workshop which covers whole farm practice, benchmarking reproductive performance, fat scoring and establishing targets.

The Wean more lambs workshop was designed to help producers reach their flock reproduction potential with little or no cost by planning and management. Wean more lambs is now incorporated as one of the modules in *Making More From Sheep – A sheep producer's manual*.

“The workshop was actually held here on The Maze and, while many attending were experienced farmers, those I spoke to afterwards agreed it was extremely worthwhile.”

Ms Tancred was keen to learn better ways for managing pregnant and lambing ewes. According to scans on her large-framed high fertility flock 57 percent were twin bearing but about six percent of the lambing ewes were lost to toxæmia.

“For us, the focus (at the Wean more lambs) workshop was on fat scoring. Generally we have been running our ewes too heavy and that has led to problems of toxæmia in pregnant stock.”

“We’re now making some changes and very much trying to work towards fat scoring and to improve our supplement feeding to prevent pregnancy toxæmia.”

“When lambing out in June/July all the twin-bearing mobs are kept separate in smaller mobs of no more than 250 and weaning occurs at an average of 14 weeks. All our weaners are run on lucerne.”

As parting advice Ms Tancred suggests: “There is a lot in *Making More From Sheep – A sheep producer’s manual* and farmers should take their time to work through it. Don’t try and do it all at once.”

Ms Tancred’s brother Michael O’Brien runs the cropping operation on “The Maze”.
rofitably use,” he says.