

## **producer case study**

April 18, 2008

### **South Australia: Greg and Jane Kellock (wool and sheepmeat)**

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Implementing new practices to improve their sheep production and Poll Merino stud business has resulted in some major positive changes in Greg and Jane Kellock's family enterprise over the last three years.

Greg and Jane Kellock and will share their experiences and what they have learned with other sheep producer through Making More From Sheep events in South Australia.

The Kellocks are reaping the rewards of investigating new options, some careful planning and taking action.

Many of the management practices adopted by Greg and Jane are included in the *Making More from Sheep – A sheep producer's manual*, the comprehensive guide which supports the program. The manual contains 11 topic modules which address the key profit drivers in sheep enterprises.

With three grazing properties spanning more than 14,000 hectares in the mid north and upper south east of South Australia, the Kellocks run more than 11,000 sheep across very different pastures and varying rainfall areas. Greg Kellock says while convincing his father three years ago to take on some rotational grazing rather than their traditional set stocking wasn't easy, the new practice soon proved highly beneficial.

"I started with one part of the property running 900 sheep between four paddocks," Greg recalls. "Every fortnight we moved them from paddock to paddock and within 12 months, when we could see the positive results, we started rotational grazing on all of our country."

"The area that had been on rotational grazing for 12 months really took off. The spell enabled the grass to re-establish and grow faster, and varieties that we hadn't seen before appeared. With a reasonable spring to follow, the new varieties set seed and the country noticeably benefited through the dry period."

When the dry times hit, instead of spreading the sheep out again, Greg put them into one mob rotating it around 23 paddocks of their property Thistlebeds, east of Burra.

"That enabled us to stretch our pasture rest time and with the help of grazing charts and destocking through the drier times, the country really benefited. Despite the poorer seasons, the change in the country over the last few years has been phenomenal."

While the Kellock's stocking rate hasn't been as high as in the past, the health and welfare of the stock has significantly improved and the sheep are cutting more wool per head. So even though they have less sheep on the property they are cutting the same amount of wool.

"We're getting a lot better lambing percentage because the sheep are in better condition from continually going into fresh paddocks to feed," said Greg.

Initially they did face some problems including psychological aspects of the sheep.

“Suddenly increasing a mob of 300 into a mob of 1800, means the sheep have to learn to find water on 10,000 hectares, rather than 1000. The older sheep tended to hang on a fence wanting to go back to their old paddock. But eventually this was overcome and now with the young sheep being shifted early, they are easier to train,” he said.

Greg and Jane say grazing charts have made an enormous difference to their management.

“The charts let us know our stocking rates and enable us to calculate forward. By assessing the seasons and the paddocks and keeping rain records we can put plans in place, for example, off-load any dry stock after preg-testing. Just being in control of stocking rates and matching your carrying capacity is important,” Greg explains.

Another change to the Kellock’s overall operation was their move to a more structured business, including defining everyone’s job role. The family set up a weekly breakfast meeting to work out the week’s plan and to write up what has to be achieved each day.

“This has really helped us,” Jane says. “And with six family members involved, we’ve also set up a board of directors and hold a monthly meeting to discuss any major issues, guide the finances and to check how everyone is going. We chart our progress including family balance, work load, stress levels, communication and so on. This way, any problems can be addressed and solved.”

The Kellocks also meet quarterly with their farm consultant, bank manager and accountant. “If there are any issues, everyone is on the same page and talking,” Jane says.

“Each month we also complete a business position statement to rate each property’s production, water levels, staff, pasture conditions, livestock sales and so on – recording how things have gone over the last month. We write business plans and policies, like a drought policy, and are blue-printing our business.

“Not having to make major decisions during the stressful dry times, because we made them earlier, is invaluable. While a lot of the decisions may be common sense, when things are tough in a drought, if you haven’t made those decisions, it can be pretty tough to make them and you can flounder.”

Jane says after completing the Making More From Sheep Quick Quiz, they were able to assess business areas with the most potential benefit and gained more of an idea of the scale of improvement their business could achieve.

The Quick Quiz is designed to help sheep producers assess the areas of their business with the most potential benefit and to give some idea of the scale of improvement that the business can achieve from each of the modules.

“Making use of the Making More From Sheep package can identify limitations in current farming management practices and lift productivity,” she said.

*Making More from Sheep – A sheep producer’s manual* costs \$65+GST for AWI levy payers and MLA members and can be ordered from the AWI helpline on 1800 070 099 or the MLA membership line on 1800 675 717 or on the program website [www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au](http://www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au) Information on *Making More from Sheep* activities, forums and workshops can also be found on the website or by contacting the helplines.

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