Western Murray Land Improvement Group Inc

Sheep EID Workshop

The Subject

The introduction of electronic identification (EID) of sheep in Australia has been the subject of much discussion over many years. While there is no doubt that EID has a benefit from a biosecurity and animal traceability perspective, the cost and utility of the technology from a producer's perspective is far less clear.

Challenges and objectives

Unlike the cattle industry, EID is not mandatory in the sheep industry, it is not regulated in any state other than Victoria. While EID is not mandatory for sheep producers in NSW, Victorian Department of Agriculture/Primary Industries regulated the use of sheep EID mandating it to be used and reported on through National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) from March 2018. As per the new regulation, Sheep producers in Victoria must transfer and notify the NLIS database of stock movement.

Solution

On Wednesday, 27th of April 2022, Western Murray Land Improvement Group in partnership with Central Murray BestWool BestLamb engaged Nathan Scott from Achieve Ag Solutions to deliver a presentation on Sheep EID at the Ettershank property in Cobramunga. Nathan has a background in prime lamb production and has a passion for working with clients to improve productivity and profitability on farm.

Nathan outlined the importance of EID from not only a biosecurity and animal traceability perspective, but as a practical on farm improvement through improved data quality and collection, time and labour savings and improved management of stock. For example, EID allows individual stock management opposed to mob-based management, meaning that you are able to identify your most productive animals within a mob and are able to cull your poor performers.

Nathan showed a range of EID equipment including products from Gallagher, Allflex and Tru-Test, outlining the price differences, the capability, ergonomics, weight, strength and readability of equipment.

While there are many benefits of using EID you must have a clear understanding of the needs and suitability of EID to your enterprise. It is about knowing your needs and understanding the various equipment components, including hardware, software and data management. Nathan explained "Anything can be recorded, but the more data collected, the harder it is to manage, so it's essential producers understand what data they need to collect for their enterprise, and then match the right EID system to suit".

Nathan concluded the day with a practical demonstration of the Gallagher tag reader, auto-draft, weigh scales and data collectors.
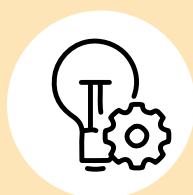
EID can record any data that can be measured. However, keep these four key points in in mind when implementing EID:

1. Only record data that will add value to your enterprise.

2. Always keep data collection tasks as simple as possible.

3. There is no point collecting data unless you are going to use it.

4. The more data you collect, the harder it is to manage.