# RED MEAT UPDATES

## TASMANIA

**FRIDAY 22 JULY 2016 | LAUNCESTON**

## Red Meat Updates is proudly presented to you by the Red Meat Updates Working Group

Georgie Burbury, Chair (Eastfield Lamb, Cressy)
Frank Archer (Landfall Angus, Dilston)
Iain Bruce (Western Plains, Stanley)
George Shea (Lyndall, Hamilton)
Irene Sobotta (Meat & Livestock Australia)
Fiona Looker (Meat & Livestock Australia)
Greg Bott (Roberts Limited)
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# PROGRAM

Friday 22 July 2016 | The Tramsheds, Launceston

**8.30am** Registration desk opens, tea and coffee available **9.00am** Proceedings commence

| **SESSION 1** | *Chair: Georgie Burbury, Eastfield Lamb* |
|---|---|
| **Welcome**<br>*Georgie Burbury, Chair, Red Meat Updates Working Group* | |
| **Welcome address – MLA towards 2020: Enhancing the profitability and sustainability of the red meat industry**<br>*Richard Norton, Managing Director, MLA* | |

| **SESSION 2: RED MEAT CHAMPIONS SESSION** | *Chair: Greg Bott, Roberts Ltd* |
|---|---|
| **Rabobank industry innovator**<br>*Video presentation* | |
| **Greenham Tasmania gate to plate producer**<br>*Leon Quilliam, Muirhead Enterprises, Winnaleah TAS* | |
| **Angus Australia emerging leader**<br>*Richard Sutton, Taroona Pastoral, King Island TAS* | |

**11.00–11.25am MORNING TEA**

| **SESSION 3: CONCURRENT SESSIONS** | |
|---|---|
| **SHEEP UPDATES** *Chair: Georgie Burbury, Eastfield Lamb* | **BEEF UPDATES** *Chair: Ed Archer, Landfall Angus* |
| **What do the top 20% of sheep producers do differently?**<br>*John Francis, Holmes Sackett, Wagga Wagga NSW* | **What do the top 20% of beef producers do differently?**<br>*Basil Doonan, Macquarie Franklin, Devonport, TAS* |
| **Objective measurement – revolutionising carcase assessment**<br>*Richard Apps, Program Manager: Genetics Implementation and Sheep R&D, MLA* | **Optimising female management and productivity in beef breeding enterprises**<br>*Dr Shane Thomson, Holbrook Vet Centre, Holbrook NSW* |
| **Capturing branded opportunities in lamb**<br>*Tom Bull, LAMBPRO Partnership, Holbrook NSW* | |
| **Risk factors for sudden death of lambs grazing lucerne**<br>*George Shea, Lyndall, Hamilton TAS* | **Strategy supports sustainable growth**<br>*Alison Napier, GH Napier and Son, St Marys TAS* |

**1.00–1.45pm LUNCH**

| **SESSION 4: RED MEAT PRODUCER CONSULTATION UPDATE** |
|---|
| **Southern Australian Meat Research Council (SAMRXC): Producers guiding investment in research, development and adoption**<br>*Jenny O'Sullivan, SAMRC regional chair, Gippsland VIC* |

| **SESSION 5: VIRTUAL FARM TOUR** | *Chair: Rafe Bell, TP Jones & Co* |
|---|---|
| **Virtual farm tour**<br>*James Walch, Stewarton, Epping Forest TAS; Chris Headlam, Lowes Park, Woodbury TAS; and Matthew Lester, Beattie Lester Beef, Lileah TAS* | |

| **SESSION 6: CONCURRENT SESSIONS** | |
|---|---|
| **IRRIGATED PASTURE UPDATES**<br>***Chair: James Atkinson, Roberts Ltd*** | **DRYLAND PASTURE UPDATES**<br>***Chair: Rob Winter, Heritage Seeds*** |
| **Realtime biomass estimation project**<br>*Tony Butler, TIA, Launceston TAS; John Francis, Holmes Sackett, Wagga Wagga NSW; and Robbie Tale, Greenvale Pastoral, Cressy TAS* | **Seasonal outlook for spring**<br>*Dale Grey, Agriculture Victoria, Bendigo VIC* |
| **The cost of irrigating pasture and fodder crops**<br>*Tom Graesser, Ben Lomond Ag, Evendale TAS* | **Pasture renovation – assessment, planning and commitment**<br>*Rob Winter, Heritage Seeds, Longford TAS* |
| **Nitrogen fertiliser response of new and old perennial ryegrass cultivars**<br>*Martin Harmer, PGG Wrightson Seeds, Ballarat VIC* | **Development and management of new phalaris cultivars**<br>*Richard Culvenor, CSIRO, Canberra ACT* |
| **Finding a balance – intensive irrigation and native bush**<br>*Julian von Bibra, Beaufront, Ross TAS* | **Upskilling in pasture management**<br>*Jock Hughes, Cluden Newry Angus, Longford TAS* |

**4.40pm NETWORKING DRINKS** **5.30pm EVENT CONCLUDES**

# WELCOME

## Georgie Burbury, Chair, Red Meat Updates Working Group

Georgie is a lamb producer from the Northern Midlands of Tasmania. After studying Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania, Georgie spent five years working in beef and lamb feedlots in eastern Australia. She has been back in Tasmania working on the family farm for several years managing Eastfield's lamb feedlot, which supplies lamb to domestic and international markets. Georgie and her husband also run a mixed farming operation at Campbell Town.

Georgie is the first producer chair of the Red Meat Updates Working Group and a member of the Southern Australian Meat Research Council (SAMRC) South East Victoria and Tasmania regional committee.


**Abstract:**

As the Chair of the Red Meat Updates Working Group, I would like to welcome you to the 2016 Red Meat Updates.

Red Meat Updates is a producer driven initiative that has gained significant traction over the past three years. It was first held in 2013 and since then has earned a reputation as being a forum where the State's leading red meat producers can gain a snapshot of key industry research findings, resources and tools, training options and technological innovations. It is a day where producers, advisors, researchers and industry stakeholders come together to network and learn. There is no other forum in Tasmania where you will see such a large number of red meat producers in one place.

As a producer, I am excited about Red Meat Updates 2016. The seasonal conditions in the last year have been particularly challenging for grazing operations in Tasmania. The theme for 2016 has been inspired by the learnings during this time and looking for ways we can work smarter, not just harder, to achieve our goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the event sponsors – without our sponsors, this day would not be possible.

I hope that you enjoy the day and find it a valuable experience.

# WELCOME ADDRESS

## MLA towards 2020: Enhancing the profitability and sustainability of the red meat industry

**Richard Norton, Managing Director, MLA**

Richard joined MLA as Managing Director in June 2014. The fifth generation of a beef and sheep farming family from Monaro NSW, Richard began his working life as a rouseabout and jackaroo. He has spent more than 20 years serving livestock producers as a stock agent and auctioneer across NSW, where he still farms beef. His drive to see Australian agribusiness thrive has led him to hold various executive positions, including Head of Livestock and International Trade and then Managing Director of Landmark. He led Landmark's partnership with the Future Farmers Network, assisting it to become the preeminent young farmer network. In addition to roles in agribusiness, Richard has applied his focus on developing people, company culture and innovation, while managing financial results through strategy execution to executive positions in retail, manufacturing, logistics and warehousing with Wesfarmers Dalgety, Toll Holdings, Woolworths and Coca Cola. Richard has an MBA from Monash University, and has held various Board positions including Agrium Asia Pacific, the Australian Wheat Board, RD1 New Zealand, Landmark Harcourts and Australian Wool Handlers. He was also Chairman of Integrated Traceability Solutions (Global) and AuctionsPlus.

**Abstract:**

MLA is the producer-owned marketing, research and development body for Australian red meat producers. MLA's mission is to deliver value to levy payers in all we do, to improve producer profitability, sustainability and global competitiveness.

Richard will provide an overview of MLA's Strategic Plan, which lays out the roadmap for MLA's strategic direction and investment priorities over 2016-2020. All of these contribute to increasing the profitability, sustainability and global competitiveness of Australia's red meat producers. Key to producer profitability and sustainability is adoption of new R&D outcomes. MLA is supporting producers to build their skills in areas that drive business profitability, and to better manage risks and uncertainty, such as climate variability.

Richard will also give a market overview, looking at key global markets and opportunities for the Tasmanian red meat industry.


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# RED MEAT CHAMPIONS SESSION

**Chair: Greg Bott, State Manager Productivity Services, Roberts Limited**

Greg has forty years in the banking industry in Tasmania including in leadership roles. The last 30 years have been directly involved with the rural sector, initially on the north west coast and statewide since 1997. His expertise lies in financial mangement, budgeting and business analysis, and he has strong industry knowledge and a large network of farming businesses.

Greg has tertiary qualifications in both agricultural economics and business. He is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Fellow of both the Australian Institute of Management and the Australian Institute of Banking & Finance. Greg's passion is to see agriculture expand in Tasmania and his contribution to realising this is by helping farmers become more productive and profitable.

## Notes

# Industry innovator

### Video Presentation

Rabobank in conjunction with a group of innovative Australian sheep producers recently travelled to New Zealand to find even more ways to enhance their own businesses by visiting other sheep farms with a track record of ongoing adoption of new ideas and techniques. Tour participant and Jigsaw Farms manager Matthew Rhooke spoke to *globalfarmers.com* about the farm's ground-breaking work to develop a 'Super Ewe', and what he gained from the tour to help further improve their operation at home. Closer to home we hear from the family property of Mark Wootton and Eve Kantor, owners of Jigsaw Farms covering 6,700 hectares in western Victoria, 15 kilometres north of Hamilton. The farm is developing a true dual purpose sheep, with a focus on both muscle and genetic fat in their selection process. During this video, other Australian sheep farmers on the tour also talk about the benefits of seeing first-hand what producers were doing in other countries and how they can apply their new-found knowledge.

# Gate to plate

**Leon Quilliam, Muirhead Enterprises, Winnaleah TAS**

Leon Quilliam is currently employed by Muirhead Enterprises at Winnaleah and has been with this family since 1987, manageing the stock enterprise for the past 25 years. Previous to moving to the North East, Leon left Circular Head in 1974 and moved to Longford where he worked on Mount Ireh for 10 years.Since he has been at Winnaleah, Leon has been involved with a number of organisations such as TFGA Meat Council. In that role as Meat Councillor, Leon has served on a large number of committees. Leon has also been a Board Member with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture from 2010 to 2015, while in this role he was appointed to the Sense-t advisory group. Leon is currently the Chair Coordinator of the local North East Farm Discussion Group and has held this role for about the past 25 years, as he understands, this Group is one of the largest and most active groups in the State. Leon has also been a member of the Dorset Council for the past couple of years and is currently on the Pathways to Marketing group which is a joint venture between the University of Tasmania and Greenham Tasmania.

**Abstract:**

As the Greenham Tasmania Gate to Plate presenter, Leon's presentation will cover:

- The benefits of MSA grading and how to get the best results;
- The benefits of particpating in farm quality assurance schemes, such as Aleph, Never Ever and the Gap Programs;
- Being able to communicate with the people you sell your stock to; and
- Working with a family owned company.

# Emerging leader

**Richard Sutton, Taroona Pastoral, King Island TAS**

After leaving school, Richard worked in both the forestry and livestock industries in Western Victoria, between 2003-2005, he completed an Advanced Diploma in Farm Business Management at Marcus Oldham College. After spending 2006 travelling, he returned to manage the family farm on King Island.

Taroona Pastoral is a partnership between Richard and his brother, Alistair, it is a newly formed partnership that was created as a result of the family's succession planning.

Taroona Pastoral is located at Egg Lagoon on the north end of King Island, it comprises of approximately 1000 hectares which range from good heavy soils to sand dunes on the western side of the island. The primary focus is a 500 head spring calving herd that produces grass fed MSA yearlings, they are continually looking to improve efficiency and fertility.

Outside the farm gate, Richard is into his fourth year as chairman of the King Island Beef Producers Group and on the committee of Angus Tasmania. He has been lucky enough to participate in the Cattle Council's Rising Champion Initiative, the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership programme and with the help of ABIF, he completed the Kellogg Rural Leadership programme at Lincoln University in New Zealand.



## Notes

# SHEEP UPDATES

**Chair: Georgie Burbury, Eastfield Lamb, Cressy TAS**

Georgie is a lamb producer from the Northern Midlands of Tasmania. After studying Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania, Georgie spent five years working in beef and lamb feedlots in eastern Australia. She has been back in Tasmania working on the family farm for several years managing Eastfield's lamb feedlot, which supplies lamb to domestic and international markets. Georgie and her husband also run a mixed farming operation at Campbell Town. Georgie is the first producer chair of the Red Meat Updates Working Group and a member of the Southern Australian Meat Research Council (SAMRC) South East Victoria and Tasmania regional committee.

## What do the top 20% of sheep producers do differently?

**John Francis, Holmes Sackett, Wagga Wagga NSW**

John has been involved in the agricultural sector for over 25 years. He has a technical background in agronomy having worked in both the private and public sectors. John is a director of Holmes Sackett and has been consulting for 10 years during which time he has acquired farm business management skills. John's client exposure and annual analysis of the Holmes Sackett farm business benchmarking data have provided him with an excellent understanding of the drivers of profitability on farm.

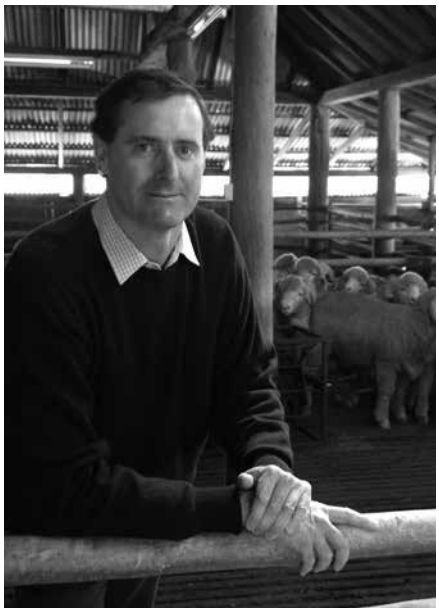
**Abstract:**

The most profitable livestock producers generate double the level of profitability of the average over the long term. Over an asset base of $4 million dollars this equates to approximately $120,000 in profit. They do this by generating higher levels of production per hectare while maintaining a low cost structure. Central to achieving this are the following factors:

- Optimum feed utilization
- A clear understanding of the farm business and the drivers of success
- A strong motivation to achieve

This presentation will demonstrate the extent of the difference in resource efficiency between the most profitable livestock managers and the others to show the extent of the opportunity that exists for the majority.

# Objective measurement - revolutionising carcase assessment



**Richard Apps, Program Manager Genetics Implementation & Sheep R&D, Meat & Livestock Australia**

Richard Apps comes from a family farming business in northern NSW running beef breeding, backgrounding and finishing enterprises. He holds a Bachelor of Rural Science degree from the University of New England. Richard commenced his career in the beef industry where he spent 10 years as an Executive Officer for a range of beef cattle seedstock societies. Following this he moved to central Queensland working on development of genetic evaluation and technical breeding program advice for the northern Australian bull breeding industry. Richard commenced work with Meat & Livestock Australia in 2002, joining the LAMBPLAN team, from where he has progressed through roles managing the Sheep Genetics program, sheep and southern beef extension activities, the on-farm sheep R&D portfolio and is currently the Program Manager for genetics and sheep research and development (R&D).


**Abstract:**

Objective measurement, both on and off-farm, is increasingly important to increase the wealth of red meat value chains as it enables more efficient delivery of livestock to specifications and delivery of product more efficiently to the best market endpoint. The real value of a carcase is highly influenced by the weight of saleable product (yield) and its eating quality, and therefore research focussing on measurement or estimation of yield and eating quality is a key focus of MLA's R&D programs.

Richard's presentation will discuss current R&D on tools to estimate yield, such as x-ray and 3D imaging, and eating quality, such as hyperspectral cameras and NIR probes. MLA and it R&D partners were recently awarded a $4.8M Federal Government grant to expedite R&D in this area, and as a result there are significant programs of work being initiated.

# Capturing branded oppurtinities in lamb


**Tom Bull, LAMBPRO Partnership, Holbrook NSW**


Tom Bull is General Manager of LAMBPRO, a seedstock business based at Holbrook NSW. The breeding program focufses on Maternal and Terminal genetics. Last season the business supplied rams to over 250 businesses that range from Northern NSW to Southern Tasmania. In 2016, these businesses will produce close to 800,000 lambs. The business is a leader in research and development and has conducted progeny testing routinely since 2002, focusing on retail yield, consumer testing and productivity measurement.

Tom has a background in meat processing and was project manager for VIAscan a technology that measures meat yield in lamb carcases. In addition, Tom has also had a wool processing business that has marketed wool products in many major retailers Australia wide.


**Abstract:**

The Australian beef industry is transforming from a generic commodity competing globally on price, to the emergence of numerous brands which are gaining market share of high value markets world-wide. These brands are a combination of breed based (e.g. Angus, Wagyu) or sometimes regionally based (e.g. Great Southern, Cape Grim).

Australian lamb is still characterised by a generic approach in breeding and marketing that sees little point of difference between companies, and brands.

Technology advancement over the past decade will create the opportunity for lamb supply chains to develop point of difference products based on product quality. These products can potentially tap higher value markets with better precision and potentially will allow lamb to gain market share over NZ and other global competitors based on quality not simply price.

The next decade Australian lamb will see changes in supply chain interaction, driven by technology and market opportunities.



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# Risk factors for sudden death in lambs grazing lucerne

**George Shea, Lyndall, Hamilton TAS**

George Shea grew up in Tasmania and went to school in Hobart and Launceston. After leaving school, George worked as a jackaroo and head stockman in Queensland. From here, George and his wife moved to north west Tasmania, where he worked for Roberts Limited and leased a property at Hampshire.

They then purchased a stud and commercial beef and superfine merino property on King Island, where George also worked as livestock manager at a King Island abattoir. From King Island, George and his family moved to the Riverina, where he was part owner and manager of large scale irrigation, grazing and dryland cropping operation at Gunbar.

George then worked in Queensland, as a livestock manager at the Dinmore abattoir with Australia Meat Holdings (now JBS), with Elders coordinating cattle in feedlots their Queensland feedlots and as a consultant with feedlots and producers.

George and his wife are now own Lyndall, at Hamilton in the Derwent Valley. Lyndall is an irrigation property, fattening MSA grass-fed cattle, fat lambs and growing poppies. They have two sons and one daughter.

**Abstract:**

With the availability of irrigation water and limited cropping options, many sheep producers in Tasmania have used lucerne to finish crossbred prime lambs and grow out Merino weaners. Sudden death in these lambs has been reported as a significant problem, but few autopsied have been conducted to identify which diseases/conditions were associated with losses. Lucerne red gut, frothy bloat and pulpy kidney are suspected as the most likely diseases/conditions to cause these deaths. A study was designed to obtain some data on the extent of the losses and also define some risk factors for sudden death. A questionnaire was administered by telephone, and statistical analysis was conducted on the resulting data. Of 26,520 crossbred and Merino lambs on 10 midlands properties, 439 died (1.6%, range 0.2% to 3.2%) representing a loss of approximately $44,000.00. There was no difference between crossbreds and Merinos. Some producers that had autopsies done reported a diagnosis of lucerne red gut. Risk factors associated with a decreased risk of sudden death were:

1. Administering a third 5-in-1 vaccination
2. Only grazing when more than 50% of the lucerne was flowering
3. Not feeding grain
4. Unrestricted access to high fibre feedstuff such as hay
5. Access to a vitamin and mineral supplement
6. Not grazing continuously
7. Not hungry when placed on lucerne

Irrigating while lambs were on the lucerne paddock did not seem to make any difference.

A more comprehensive study should be conducted, but at this stage the recommendation is that producers try to reduce these risks while still optimizing growth rates and turn-off times.

# BEEF UPDATES

**Ed Archer, Landfall Angus, Dilston TAS**

Ed Archer is a Co-Principal of Landfall Angus and Farm Manager of the Archer Family's property "Greenhythe". Ed is a graduate of Marcus Oldham College, studying Business Management in 1998.

"Greenhythe" is a beef and sheep breeding and finishing operation with the main enterprise being the production of Angus genetics under the Landfall Angus banner. The production system focuses on high stocking rates achieved through improved pasture management.

# What do the top 20% of beef producers do differently?

**Basil Doonan, Macquarie Franklin, Devonport TAS**

Basil Doonan has over 20 years of experience in farm business management, training and consultancy. He has worked extensively in Australia and overseas in grazing industries primarily consulting to farm business owners and managers and developing and delivering farmer training. He is currently consulting to 20 dairy businesses and 15 beef businesses on a monthly basis, and runs groups focused on the implementation of tactical activities that drive profit.

**Abstract:**

The most profitable livestock producers generate double the level of profitability of the average over the long term. Over an asset base of $4 million dollars this equates to approximately $120,000 in profit. They do this by generating higher levels of production per hectare while maintaining a low cost structure. Central to achieving this are the following factors:

- Optimum feed utilisation
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- A strong motivation to achieve

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## Notes

# Optimising female management and productivity in beef breeding enterprises


**Dr. Shane Thomson, Holbrook Vet Centre, Holbrook NSW**

Shane works as a veterinarian at the Holbrook Veterinary Centre (HVC). HVC is a mixed veterinary practice catering to all species, however has a strong focus on production animal reproduction and advisory services. Shane's role is heavily focused on production animals with reproduction services such as artificial insemination (AI), embryo transfer (ET) and ultrasound pregnancy testing featuring on a regular basis. Shane also provides production advisory services to individuals or groups of clients, these services include animal health, disease prevention programs, reproductive programs, production indexing and systems analysis. Shane completed his veterinary training at Charles Sturt university in Wagga Wagga, NSW. Shane is currently undertaking a Masters in whole farm veterinary consultancy through the Fred Morley centre at Charles Sturt university, this degree focuses on the analysis of the farm system as a whole and the provision of production advice appropriate to the specific system. Shane's enthusiasm towards veterinary science and more importantly production animal practice has been fuelled from his personal management of a commercial beef breeding enterprise near Jugiong, NSW. The management and operation of this farm has become one of his key "hobbies" and has been invaluable in assessing the implementation of many practices that are recommended to beef producers.

**Abstract:**

This presentation will be looking at the defining points of female fertility, how fertility drives profitability and highlighting the concept that it is our management of female fertility, more than anything else, that can drive productivity. We will assess the fertility of two concept herds and in doing so come to appreciate what factors influence herd fertility and that conception patterns (or calving spread) not pregnancy rates are the key indicator of a breeding herds' fertility. This discussion will introduce the concept of average calving dates, which we will calculate and compare from an economic point of view. We will identify what breeding parameters are important to assess and what appropriate breeding targets would be. This brings us to the concept of optimal, rather than, maximal breeding targets, where it is demonstrated that the critical factor is 'when cows are pregnant, not if they're pregnant!'

When we consider a standard established self-replacing beef breeding enterprise we know that for every replacement heifer we retain, an older cow must be culled; some of these will be the empty, old or diseased cows but then we still need to sell more, this presents an opportunity to selectively retain the early calvers and improve the reproductive efficiency and profitability of the herd. Therefore, the collection and recording of data at the time of pregnancy testing can enable average calving date calculation and more efficient female management and selection. In summarising, we assess the economics of various joining periods by calculating the average calving dates and identify the financial incentives in targeting these optimal breeding rates.

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# Strategy supports sustainable growth

**Alison Napier, GH Napier and Son, St Marys TAS**

Alison produces high-quality Angus beef on her 3000ha grazing property in Tasmania's Fingal Valley. Her core focus is on long-term productivity and sustainability, of both her business and the natural and human resources that support it.

Originating from a mixed farming enterprise on Tasmania's East Coast, at Grindstone Bay, Alison has a tertiary background in education, but has had an active role in the family-owned GH Napier and Son since the mid 1990s. After the death of her husband Alan in 2009, Alison took over the reins of the business. A strategic approach to all aspects of her business has seen steady growth in stock numbers, stocking rates and per kilogram productivity per hectare. Alison feels blessed with the environment she operates in and believes that under the right management Tasmanian beef producers can produce some of the best grassfed beef in the world.


## Abstract:

Sustainable and profitable agricultural businesses are built on sound and strategic decision-making, supported by clear-cut operational plans and carefully-considered policies and procedures. Beef producer Alison Napier believes this approach allows all stakeholders in her business (both internal and external) to be on the same page and working cohesively towards the same goalposts.

GH Napier & Son strives for best practice in terms of business management, livestock production, natural resource management and human resource management. To achieve these objectives requires a dedicated investment in monitoring, evaluation and recording across all four facets of the business. Gathering and collating information across these core business components has allowed Alison to grow her business, while managing her livestock, human and natural resources sustainably. Regular monitoring and evaluation throughout this growth phase has also allowed for opportunistic trading and proactive management in light of changing seasonal and market conditions.

Supporting her strategic approach is a range of clearly articulated business objectives, operational plans and policies and procedures, which support decision making and reduce stress levels when seasons and markets fluctuate.

In Alison's words: "For us the business is about managing our people, our grass, our livestock and our budget. But at the end of all that, we have a strong sense of passion and pride in what we do — we are committed to operating at a level of industry best practice, because we aim to be here for the long haul."



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## Notes

# CONSULTATION


**Jenny O'Sullivan, Regional Chair Tasmanian and South East VIC SAMRC, Gippsland VIC**


Jenny O'Sullivan is a red meat producer and the chair of the Southern Australian Meat Research Council (SAMRC) South East Victoria and Tasmania regional committee. As a producer, Jenny is well known for her role in promoting sustainable, productive agriculture, particularly in Gippsland where she and her husband run a 680ha beef and sheep property. Jenny has helped develop and deliver many initiatives to encourage farmers to adopt sustainable management practices. More recently, Jenny and her husband Paul have created an exciting agri-tourism business, Gippsland Food Adventures, which demonstrates the science and practices used to produce delicious tender meat as well as promoting Gippsland as a premium food region.


## Abstract:

A revitalised Southern Australian Meat Research Council (SAMRC) was established by the major investors in red meat research, development and adoption (RD&A) in South Eastern Australia in July 2015. The committee of seven farmer representatives (chairs of each region) and others from five State Governments, six universities, CSIRO and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), has been instrumental to its successful revitalisation. MLA now vests this entity (and NABRC in the North and WALRC in the West) with responsibility for guiding its RD&A investment in the grassfed sheep meat and beef sectors. The regional structure is based on seven agri-ecological zones and a collaborative planning process led by the SAMRC forum. SAMRC convened in August 2015 and has released a plan in April 2016. The Tasmanian and South East VIC Regional Committee consists of 6 farmers, co-investors from universities and government representatives from the Tasmanian and Victorian Governments.

We determined that our priorities for research, development and adoption must:

1. Increase the profitability of the red meat supply chain by at least 10%.

2. Provide farmers with options to adapt to variable climate conditions which provide 3-4% return on asset over extended period.

This committee intends to have ongoing consultation with farmers, stakeholders and researchers to scope options for our region to develop programs to address highest priorities.

The key areas to act on for improvements in profitability identified across all SAMRC regions were:

1. A farm systems approach
2. Feedbase development
3. Supply chains
4. Extension - better adoption of existing knowledge
5. Animal productivity, health and welfare



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# VIRTUAL FARM TOUR

### Chair: Rafe Bell, TP Jones & Co, Youngtown TAS

Rafe Bell returned to Tasmania to join TP Jones & Co as General Manager in 2011. TP Jones & Co has established itself as one of the premier independent rural retailers in the state. A privately owned Tasmanian business established in 1985 servicing the rural sector in key markets such as beef, sheep, wool, dairy, horticulture, broadacre cropping and viticulture to both private and corporate farms. Rafe is a graduate of Melbourne University, Dookie College, where he studied Agricultural Science. He has worked on and overseen rice, wheat, canola and sheep properties in the Southern Riverina & Victoria before holding Regional & State Management roles with Nufarm in Victoria and Western Australia as well as State and National Management roles within Landmark based in Western Australia and Victoria. As a Director & Partner, Rafe has enjoyed watching the business continue to grow and evolve, and as its customer base continues to innovate and diversify is optimistic about what the future holds for the Tasmanian agricultural sector, and TP Jones & Co.

### Chris Headlam, Lowes Park, Woodbury TAS

Chris and Richard Headlam own and operate the business Headlam Brothers Trust at Woodbury in the Southern Midlands of Tasmania. The properties consist of Lowes Park, Ratharney and Ballochmyle, with an enterprise mix of sheep (for wool and prime lamb production) and both irrigated and dryland cropping. The annual rainfall is approximately 400mm.

Over the last 15 years, irrigation area has been expanded to focus on high value crop production as a priority, as well as complementing livestock enterprises. It has also helped for dry season livestock management through lucerne and short rotation ryegrass in cropping rotation.

We are now implementing more technology into the overall system to improve efficiencies in both production and labor usage.

### Matthew Lester, Beattie Lester Beef , Lileah TAS

Matthew Lester is the fourth generation to own and operate Beattie Lester Beef at Lileah, 20 km south of Smithton, North West Tasmania and Deep Creek, situated close to Smithton. The property is solely a beef finishing operation, supplying Greenham Tasmania, with a small amount of ground cropped under a potato lease arrangement to aid in pasture renovation. The annual rainfall at Lileah is approximately 1300 mm and 900 mm at Deep Creek.

In recent years Matthew has focussed heavily on intensive pasture and grazing management to improve his pasture utilisation and efficiency. Irrigation development has also been a focus, with 100 ha of the Deep Creek property now under irrigation.

# VIRTUAL FARM TOUR

**James Walch, Stewarton Pastoral, Epping Forest TAS**

James and Jenni Walch farm Stewarton at Epping Forest Tasmania. James graduated from Lincoln College completing a Dip Ag and Dip Farm Mgt. He has been farming at Stewarton since 1992. Stewarton is situated on the Wyldes plains on the junction of the Isis and Macquarie River and the property is dominated by floodplains. Traditionally a wool growing property, Stewarton has transitioned through an intensive irrigated cropping phase to settle on its current enterprises of sheep finishing and lucerne hay production. Two years ago the last of the merino breeding flock were sold. No breeding stock are run on the property. Currently all types of sheep including merinos, cross breeds, lambs and mutton are finished. All stock are sold to Tas Quality Meats. Irrigation has allowed the finishing business to prosper during the dry times. Stock are purchased and finished matching feed availability.

## Notes

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# TAS-AG SERVICES

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- Tissue and soil testing
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# IRRIGATED PASTURE UPDATES

### Chair: James Atkinson, Roberts Limited

James grew up on a dairy farm at Bishopsbourne in Northern Tasmania and commenced my employment at Roberts Irrigation in a counter position, before moving into an external sales and design. He left Roberts and took up a roll with BLH Engineering and Construction, a company involved in engineering, labour hire and mining, this showed him a completely different side to the world from his usual agricultural background. James learnt additional skills particularly in logistics and workplace health and safety which have proved important in his current role.

James returned to Roberts Irrigation four years ago as the Operations Manager, overseeing 24 staff at four locations around the state. His passion is successfully delivering Roberts' clients long term solutions for their water needs and helping to add value to their enterprises.

In his spare time, James has two children under five and tries to spend some time on the golf course.

## Realtime biomass estimation project

### Tony Butler, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Launceston TAS

As a Development and Extension Officer in the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), part of Tony's role is to work closely with industry partners within the pasture research, development and extension (R, D & E) portfolio. His key focus is on applied industry research, plant evaluation, the development of the State's pasture seed industry and support the TIA extension team for grazing industry extension activities. This role includes project lead for the real-time pasture biomass project within Tasmania.

Originating from "across the ditch", Tony has been involved with the Tasmanian agricultural industry for over six years. Previous experience includes postgraduate research focused on irrigation management, working in the UK agricultural sector, as well as various roles within the private agricultural research industry.

### John Francis, Holmes Sackett, Wagga Wagga NSW

John has been involved in the agricultural sector for over 25 years. He has a technical background in agronomy having worked in both the private and public sectors. John is a director of Holmes Sackett and has been consulting for 10 years during which time he has acquired farm business management skills. John's client exposure and annual analysis of the Holmes Sackett farm business benchmarking data have provided him with an excellent understanding of the drivers of profitability on farm.

# Realtime biomass estimation project

**Robbie Tole, Greenvale Pastoral, Cressy TAS**

Robbie grew up on Greenvale at Cressy in the Northern Midlands of Tasmania and attended school in Launceston. After leaving he school, he spent three years working on farms in Tasmania and on the South Island of New Zealand. He then attended Glenormiston Ag College, completing his Advanced Diploma of Farm Management. After ag college, he spent a year in at a large cropping and beef feedlotting operation in Borden, Western Australia. Robbie returned home in 2000.

Robbie and his wife, Eliza, are now the fourth generation farming Greenvale, which came from traditionally a 100% dryland, prime lamb operation. It is now a diversified farming business with an extensive cropping program and a small breeding flock of crossbred ewes which are run alongside a lamb trading operation.

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**Abstract:**

The regular monitoring of pasture biomass is essential for any grazing based enterprise. The commonly accepted used tools to quantify pasture biomass are the rising plate meter and visual determination. Advancements in optical sensor technology have opened the opportunity to develop new tools which are accurate, time efficient and provide real-time results. Many of these tools have been pioneered for use in other sectors of the agricultural industry.

The focus of the real-time pasture biomass project is to create a calibration for some of these new optical sensors. When partnered with a smartphone, these new tools can provide rapid and accurate localised pasture biomass prediction. The data generated from the combination of the optical device and smartphone app can be easily transferred to either, a feed budget or stocking rate calculator. This fusion of tools can lead to improved grazing decisions and profitability. This project is a national project funded by MLA, and in partnership with the University of New England and CRCSI.

As optical sensor technology develops and the growing interest by producers and industry, evaluation of these tools to traditional tools is being undertaken in Tasmania. This includes accuracy, producer feedback as well as business profitability. The local evaluation includes, local producers, TIA and Holmes Sackett.

The presentation will discuss:

- The national real-time pasture biomass project
- How do optical sensors work?
- Comparison of optical and traditional pasture monitoring tools
- Development of the cell phone app
- Producer feedback to using the tools
- The value of using the tools to your business

This project would not be possible without the assistance of local producers: Will Green, Richard Johnston, Stewart McGee and Robbie Tole.

Enquires about the Herbage Development Program, its work and the team can be directed to TIA.HDP@utas.edu.au.

# The cost of irrigated pasture and fodder crops

**Tom Graesser, Ben Lomond Agriculture, Evandale TAS**

Tom graduated with a Bachelor of Ag. Science from the University of Melbourne in 1988. He worked with Serve-ag as an agronomist in Northern Tasmania for 23 years, gaining broad experience in dairy, beef and lamb pasture systems, vegetable production, grass, clover and vegetable seed production, broadacre cropping and poppy production. He has worked for himself over the last 5 years, initially with Tas Agronomy plus, and more recently as a director of Ben Lomond Agriculture Pty Ltd.

Tom lives with his partner Liz and four children on their farm at Evandale.

**Abstract:**

Tasmanian agriculture is in the middle of a massive expansion of its irrigation capability. This presents red meat producers an opportunity to share in this productivity gain, but what is the total cost of this irrigation water? How much does this vary for different farm irrigation set ups and for the range of irrigation schemes in Tasmania?

This presentation will help growers answer these questions and understand the main factors influencing the total cost per applied megalitre of water. It will also relate this to the quantity and quality of extra dry matter produced under a range of perennial and annual fodder crops and the value of the extra liveweight produced for a range of livestock enterprises.

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# Nitrogen fertiliser response of new and old perennial ryegrass cultivars

**Martin Harmer, PGG Wrightson Seeds, Ballarat VIC**

Martin Harmer is one of approximately 60 research staff employed by PGG Wrightson Seeds in Australia and New Zealand. As part of a team of researchers at Ballarat in Victoria, Martin manages short term ryegrass, mediterranean and continental tall fescue, plantain and cocksfoot trials at a range of sites aimed at assessing both growth potential under dryland and irrigated conditions and persistence under drought and grazing pressure. The highlights of Martin's job include returning to PGG Wrightson's drought screening site every winter to see what has survival the summer, and analysing trial data to find progress has been made by the companies plant breeders.

**Abstract:**

Nitrogen (N) fertiliser is an important input in perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne L.) systems for both economic and environmental reasons. A large body of perennial ryegrass N response data contributes to current recommendations used by farmers to make N fertiliser use decisions, but owing to when the experiments were completed, the responses used to derive recommendations are for now outclassed cultivars. Might modern perennial ryegrass have different response functions and as a consequence, different profit maximising N rates?

Eight perennial ryegrass cultivars ranging from those which contribute predominantly to historical recommendations (Victorian Perennial Ryegrass and Kangaroo Valley ecotypes), European and contemporary commercial cultivars to an experimental cultivar (potentially available to producers in the 2020's) were used in this experiment. Each cultivar was tested at 5 N rates; 0, 20, 40, 80 and 160kg N/ha per harvest. While data collection will continue for another year, initial results are very promising and suggest producers might benefit from N use recommendations being updated to reflect the performance of modern cultivars. Examples of our findings include:

- in winter N responses of the best modern cultivars almost doubles those on which current recommendations are based;
- in late spring N response of some modern cultivars was described by steep linear functions as opposed to functions with diminishing return for all old cultivars; and
- in autumn under irrigation N responses ranged from as low as 6.3 kgDM/kgN for Victorian Perennial Ryegrass to between 15 and 25 kgDM/kgN for high performance modern cultivars.

Before recommendations can be made to farmers more work is needed to determine the repeatability of responses and their exact shape, however the following is clear so far:

- farmers using low rates of N fertiliser can benefit from improved growth of modern elite perennial ryegrass cultivars as they grow more than old cultivars under N limiting conditions;
- farmers using moderate rates of N on old cultivars can significantly reduce their cost of feed by changing to new elite cultivar; and
- farmers already using modern elite cultivars and moderate rates on N can likely purchase additional feed at a low cost by using more N as modern elite modern cultivars respond so well to N fertiliser in some seasons.

We conclude that for producer profits to be maximised, N use recommendations may need updating to reflect contemporary cultivar performance. Collection and analysis of more data is required to determine if cultivar specific responses exist and should be reflected in N use recommendations. In addition, for this trial and its results to actually benefit farmers, a robust and independent cultivar evaluation scheme is required so producers can know the likely performance of the cultivar they choose to sow.

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# Finding a balance: Intensive irrigation and native bush

**Julian von Bibra, Beaufront, Ross TAS**

Julian is a seventh generation Tasmanian farmer and Beaufront has been in the Family for the last 100 years.

As training, Julian completed a Bachelor of Commerce at Melbourne University, as well as later spending a year at the Royal Agricultural College Cirencester UK, completing a Post Graduate Diploma in Advanced Agricultural Business Management.

He rates both these experiences, however learnt much about farming working for his father and jackarooing for The Legoe family in South Australia.

**Abstract:**

Beaufront is a typical midlands farm, with its roots firmly held in the wool industry. However current turnover is balanced between irrigated poppies, wheat, prime lambs, beef as well as wool.

Large areas of the farm are native bush which historically was harvested for woodchips, and grazed "bush wethers through the summer". These areas are currently in a conservation agreement managed for carbon sales.

The farm also contains a significant parcel of land that is lightly timbered with an under storey of native grasses and tussocks. It is close to the country that would have greeted early settlers to the midlands, a landscape that is now nearly all converted to agricultural farm land.

The challenge for those lucky enough to manage this remaining remnant native bush is to ensure its rich biodiversity is not lost to future generations and at the same time it remains relevant to modern farming.

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# DRYLAND PASTURE UPDATES

**Chair: Rob Winter, Southern Australia Heritage Seeds, Longford TAS**

Rob has broad experience in the temperate pasture industry and related mixed farming for 18 years. Rob's current role includes developing and implementing extension tools for temperate forages and representing Heritage Seeds in Tasmania. He has a particular interest in identifying opportunities for improved pasture productivity, addressing feed gaps and encouraging adoption of improved methods and best practice. Rob has been with Heritage Seeds for six years, previously an agronomy, production and management role in seed production in northern Tasmania. He has a degree in Applied Agricultural Science from the University of Tasmania. Rob originally hails from Seven Mile Beach, has lived at Geeveston, Penguin and since 2001, in Longford. He is the Scout Leader with the Cressy Scout Group and enjoys camping, science fiction, and making sauces and jellies.

# Seasonal Outlook


**Dale Grey, Seasonal Risk Agronomist, Agriculture Victoria, Bendigo VIC**


Dale has been working with the Agriculture Victorian as a crop/pasture research and extension agronomist for 23 years at Rutherglen and Cobram and is now based in Bendigo. He comes from a cropping farm in the southern Victorian Mallee. For the last 11 years he has specialised in climate and weather and is editor of "The Break" and "The Fast Break" and "Very Fast Break" climate e-newsletters. Dale has recently endured 35 degree days in a 6 day bushwalk through the Katherine Gorges in the NT.


## Abstract:

Dale's talk will focus on the oceanic and atmospheric climate drivers that effect Tasmanian rainfall. He will focus on the El Nino Southern Oscillation, the Indian Ocean Dipole, the Southern Annular Mode and the position and strength of the high pressure ridge. He will outline their current status and then provide a summary of climate model predictions for rainfall and temperature for the next six months.



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# Pasture renovation: assessment, planning and commitment

**Rob Winter, Southern Australia Heritage Seeds, Longford TAS**

Rob has broad experience in the temperate pasture industry and related mixed farming for 18 years. Rob's current role includes developing and implementing extension tools for temperate forages and representing Heritage Seeds in Tasmania. He has a particular interest in identifying opportunities for improved pasture productivity, addressing feed gaps and encouraging adoption of improved methods and best practice. Rob has been with Heritage Seeds for six years, previously an agronomy, production and management role in seed production in northern Tasmania. He has a degree in Applied Agricultural Science from the University of Tasmania. Rob originally hails from Seven Mile Beach, has lived at Geeveston, Penguin and since 2001, in Longford. He is the Scout Leader with the Cressy Scout Group and enjoys camping, science fiction, and making sauces and jellies.

**Abstract:**

Renovation with improved grasses and clovers potentially increases pasture productivity, although producers should also consider their pasture production goals, commitment to an input regime, and management methods before renovating.

Renovating a permanent pasture to restore or improve productivity may take various forms including: manipulation with herbicides, addressing fertility issues or site limitations, changing grazing management regimes or introducing new species or cultivars. In many cases, many or all of these will need to be addressed or undertaken for best outcomes.

The costs of renovation are recouped through improved overall production and / or through the provision of pasture types that will offer feed at specific times to meet animal production targets or fill a feed gap, thus complimenting the overall grazing system.

Measuring current pasture production will help inform the decision process. Assessing pasture composition and reasons for under performance is needed to assist decision making and thereby help assure longer-term success with a new pasture. Measurement of pasture growth, soil testing and weed and pest assessment should be undertaken.

Preparation of the site may require a number of steps over some months or years. The use of break crops or specialty short-term forage options is often a valuable stepping stone towards re-establishment of a grass-clover pasture, as it may provide alternative herbicide options, removal of host species of various pests and an opportunity for targeted forage and fodder production.

A new pasture needs to be nurtured into full production. In ecological terms, a pasture is rarely a 'climax community'. For reliable outcomes embracing of improved management, maintenance or other intervention is usually needed at key times.

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# Development and management of new phalaris cultivars

**Richard Culvenor, Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO Agriculture and Food, Canberra ACT**

Richard Culvenor is a Principal Research Scientist in CSIRO Agriculture and Food specialising in perennial grasses. He first joined CSIRO in 1981 to work on acid soil tolerance with the phalaris breeding program run by Dr Rex Oram. After completing his PhD at the University of Melbourne he returned to CSIRO in 1989 to conduct research on persistence factors in phalaris. He took over the phalaris breeding program in 1996 after Dr Oram's retirement and completed Holdfast GT and Advanced AT by 2007. From 2008-13 he worked on perennial grasses for the low rainfall margins of mainland south-eastern Australia and from 2013 has worked with researchers in Victoria on introducing new technologies to pasture breeding.

**Abstract:**

Phalaris is a productive, deep-rooted perennial grass suitable for all livestock enterprises in dryland situations where long-term pastures are desired and where low rainfall is a limitation to the use of perennial ryegrass. A 2011 survey found that phalaris is the most widely sown perennial grass in mainland south eastern Australia. Phalaris is grown on a wide range of soil types but is best suited to deeper soils with a clay horizon which retains moisture over summer. It offers long term persistence, relatively high cool season production of good nutritive quality, drought and waterlogging tolerance and high resistance to grass grubs. Phalaris is usually sown with subterranean clover but a range of companion legumes is suitable. Like cocksfoot and tall fescue, it is slower to establish than perennial ryegrass and best establishment is obtained when sown as the only perennial grass. Established phalaris is very grazing tolerant, particularly the semi-winter dormant Australian type that withstands high rates of continuous grazing. Winter-active cultivars have been bred for higher seedling vigour and autumn-winter growth rates compared with the Australian type. These have a growth habit less suited to heavy continuous grazing and benefit from rotational stocking for persistence and production at high stocking rates. A new winter-active cultivar, Holdfast GT, has recently been released with improved tolerance of heavy grazing. Phalaris is more sensitive to acid soils than some other grasses. It is nevertheless widely grown in acid soil areas on the mainland aided by the release of cv. Landmaster and more recently cv. Advanced AT which has significantly improved aluminium tolerance.

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# Upskilling in pasture management


**Jock Hughes, Cluden Newry Angus, Longford TAS**


Jock manages Cluden Newry Angus, breeding performance recorded bulls from 300 Angus cows. The farming enterprise also produces prime lambs along with irrigated cropping, such as poppies and vegetable and grass seed. He completed a Bachelor of Commerce in 2007 at the University of Melbourne, and then worked for several years as an analyst in Australian agricultural investment for a company based in Melbourne. Jock returned to the family farm in 2010 after a short stint harvesting in the UK, and since then has worked alongside his father Peter, who is retiring this year.


**Abstract:**

In 2014, Jock undertook the Lifetime Ewe Management course along with a group of producers from the Cressy – Longford area. The following year, the group decided to enrol in the Pasture Principles course, which is a year long course comprised of theory and coaching sessions aimed at maximising pasture production and utilisation, predominantly through improved grazing management.

Jock's presentation will give an overview of the impact this upskilling has had on the business, with particular reference to changes made to the management of irrigated pastures.



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# Notes

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