Lindis Peaks Station successfully introduces two new Merino bloodlines with the help of Allflex RapID tags

"It's all about monitoring at the start and nailing down what you're actually wanting to change, so until you know, you can't make informed decisions on that. For a Merino we need to have them up in condition so we want to know if there are ewes out there that are falling away in condition or not."

Will Gibson, Breeding Consultant at Lindis Peaks Station

BACKGROUND

Lindis Peaks Station, located in Tarras, New Zealand, is one of those iconic South Island high country properties whose reputation was built on growing fine Merino wool.

The property has been farmed by four generations of the Annan family since 1910 and has been a supplier of fine wool to the Icebreaker brand since 1995.

Today the farm is run by Simon Maling and Lucy Annan. Merino wool remains the main focus of the business, with the majority of its clip still contracted to Icebreaker.

CHALLENGES

The Merino industry has a range of sheep types, depending on the genetics you choose to focus on," says Simon, "and it's hard to gauge the performance of individual animals when you don't have any history." That's why the farm wanted to improve management decisions with the support of data collected from EID tags.

Will Gibson, a Merino and Hereford stud breeder who's helping with the genetic development of Lindis Peaks' Merino flock, explains that the aim is to get as much wool as possible into the top line of Merino fleece wool that the farm supplies to Icebreaker. "The focus is on young stock, because that's where the property is likely to get the biggest yields and quickest results.

AT A GLANCE

Company: Lindis Peaks Station
Location: Tarras, New Zealand
Herd size: 7000 Merino ewes, 7000-8000 hoggets, 150 beef cows, and 1000 trading /dairy grazing cattle

Challenges
- Explore new Merino genetics
- Increase fleece yield

System
- Allflex Heatime® HR LD System for rumination, heat detection, and cow identification

Results/Benefits
- Successful introduction of two new Merino bloodlines, with decisions driven by EID tag data
- 6 kg (13 lb) difference between the top and bottom bloodlines in two-tooth ewes that are all running together
- Increased lamb survival rates
- Better culling decisions

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SYSTEM

Lindis Peaks has been using Allflex RapID EID ear tags in its replacement ewes since 2016.

With four years of records now available, the farm is now using these records to type-class all sheep as two-tooths pre-mating. This will assign them their mating mobs for life unless they are made a terminal.

BENEFITS

When Lindis Peaks' EID-tagged sheep are run through the yards they are weighed and condition-scored, and that data is scanned and recorded.

Using that information, the farm has been able to introduce two new Merino bloodlines to the two original bloodlines using EBVs of stud rams. Will says EID tagging has confirmed that the introduction of new bloodlines is already paying off. "There's a 6 kg difference between the top and bottom bloodlines in two-tooth ewes that are all running together, so that's pretty straightforward to see."

Finetuning lamb survival rates has a significant impact on the property's bottom-line, so fat and muscle alongside fleece weight have been a target when purchasing rams. As breed improvements are made in lamb survival rates, the aim is to put more ewes to a terminal Merino sire and have greater selection of replacement ewes. "The data gives us more information for an informed decision at the drafting gate, to make sure the ewes are mated to the right type of ram or are culled for proper reasons," continues Will.

"There is also a lot of variation between sheep, so we really want to know exactly what's out there. If we didn't have EID tags in them, we wouldn't easily know where they have come from and wouldn't be able to compile the information quickly."

Both Simon and Will say data from EID tagging is instrumental in their decision-making and has given them confidence that introducing new bloodlines was the right thing to do. According to Simon: "The data backs up the important decisions we are making and shows that the decisions we are making are actually paying off."

About Allflex Livestock Intelligence

Allflex Livestock Intelligence is the world leader in the design, development, manufacturing and delivery of solutions for animal identification, monitoring and traceability. Our data-driven solutions are used by farmers, companies and countries to manage hundreds of millions of animals worldwide. By putting intelligent, actionable management information into farmers' hands, our solutions empower them to act in a timely manner to safeguard their animals' health and wellbeing, while achieving optimal production outcomes for a healthy food supply. Allflex Livestock Intelligence is a livestock portfolio of digital products within MSD Animal Health.

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