



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Technical Report

Program and KPI: Sub-program 5.3 KPI 2.42
Report Title: PGS Mentoring Lamb Compliance
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Date published: 31 January 2021



Citation

Hocking, E. (2021). PGS Mentoring Lamb Compliance. *An Advanced livestock measurement technologies for globally competitive Australian meat project.*

Acknowledgements

- Gundagai Meat Processors
- Bruce Hancock (PIRSA Rural Solutions SA, retired)
- Advanced Livestock Measurement Technologies (ALMTech)
- Sheep Cooperative Research Centre

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Final report

PGS Mentoring Lamb Compliance

Project code: L.ADP.2000.C2
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Date published: 18 January 2021

PUBLISHED BY
Meat and Livestock Australia Limited
PO Box 1961
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

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Abstract

The aim of this project was to support the training of a new deliverer for the Profitable Grazing Systems (PGS) supported learning program (SLP) '*Meat the Market – Lamb Compliance.*' Using a tailored mentoring approach which included phone and email mentoring support pre- and post-workshop delivery, along with co-delivery of the workshop, the trainer was able to become familiar with the package content and delivery style. Since the mentee already had technical expertise, the focus for the mentoring was on the delivery approach rather than support for learning technical content.

The desired outcomes of this mentoring activity were achieved, including mentoring the deliverer mentee, as per an approved mentoring plan, to build their capacity to:

- 1) Deliver a high quality, effective SLP that there is market demand for.
- 2) Recruit participants for future delivery of this SLP, through developing a relationship with the value chain.
- 3) Engage and empower producers to have a value chain approach to improving lamb compliance and profitability.
- 4) Act as a champion and support good governance of the PGS program.

Mentoring a livestock advisor with existing technical knowledge, networks, and relationships within their own region in the delivery of an actual PGS SLP, through the provision of phone and email support along with co-delivery opportunities, was a highly effective way of engaging the livestock adviser within the PGS program.

Executive Summary

Background

The vision for the Profitable Grazing Systems program is to have a financially sustainable adoption program that is aligned to the MLA 2020 targets that extends MLA R&D outputs and achieves increased producer skills and capability, practice change and whole farm business improvement through increasing producer understanding of:

Business profit = management capability + evidence + value chain approach

In the Profitable Grazing Systems (PGS) business plan, service provider engagement and capability to deliver were recognised as being critical to the success of the program, and currently lacking in some areas. MLA investment into training and support for the deliverer network was recommended to upskill service providers to ensure their ability to engage successfully with PGS.

Following the development of the Profitable Grazing Systems supported learning program '*Meat the Market – Lamb Compliance*' (PROJECT NO. L.PGS.1833), the workshop was piloted with three producer groups across South Australia and New South Wales. The delivery of these pilots was funded by ALMTech and the Sheep CRC, and was delivered by developer Elke Hocking Consulting, along with initial support from Bruce Hancock (Sheep CRC Lamb Supply Chain Group Coordinator). In-kind support was provided by JBS Australia for the delivery of two SA Pilots, and Gundagai Meat Processors (GMP) for the delivery of the NSW pilot.

This project funded the co-delivery and mentoring component of the NSW pilot workshop at GMP, Gundagai, between June 2019 and August 2020. The mentoring process within this project was aimed to support the trainer to deliver an MLA-owned supported learning package (SLP), using a tailored mentoring approach which included phone and email mentoring support pre- and post-workshop delivery, along with co-delivery of the workshop to become familiar with the package content and delivery approach. Since the mentee already had technical expertise, the focus for the mentoring was more on the delivery approach than support for learning technical content.

This project mentored Jim Meckiff from *JM Livestock*, in the delivery of the MLA owned off-the-shelf SLP '*Meat the Market - Lamb Compliance*.'

Mentoring activities included phone and email support to the mentee, along with the value chain host, Michelle Henry, Supply Chain officer for GMP, prior to and following each session of the pilot workshop, along with co-delivery of Session 2 and de-briefing meetings after each session to ensure continuous improvement of the SLP.

The developer, Elke Hocking Consulting, prepared all participant and trainers materials, monitoring and evaluation Pre- and Post-Kasa and evaluation sheets for all sessions delivered at GMP (SLP developed for PROJECT NO. L.PGS.1833 *Lamb Lean Meat Yield and Eating Quality – Realising the Potential*). Mentoring included phone meetings and email communications with all deliverers, hosts and a representative from ALMTech, to go through session plans and organisation details prior to each session, along with detailed debriefing sessions (including evaluation of participants feedback) following the delivery of each session to ensure a thorough process of continuous improvement could be achieved.

Session 1 – 21st June 2019, GMP.

This session was delivered by Bruce Hancock (who was involved in the SA Pilots as a co-deliverer but has since retired). Jim Meckiff, in conjunction with Michelle Henry, the supply chain officer of GMP, engaged the producers to attend the workshop series. Funding for support from the mentoring for this session was provided by ALMTech.

Session 2 – 13th November 2019, GMP & host farm (organised by mentee).

This mentoring project supported this session and involved attendance of the mentor, co-delivery, phone and email support with the mentee to deliver Session 2 of the SLP at GMP. This session also involved the identification of a producer host for the pasture and genetics component. Jim Meckiff recruited the host producer from his existing producer networks, with support from Elke Hocking to determine host requirements and preparation of practical examples for use within the workshop (ram selection, entry of ram team into RamSelect and other associated Sheep Genetics data presentation). Travel and accommodation to Gundagai for Elke Hocking was provided by ALMTech.

Session 3 – Delivered virtually on 25th August 2020.

This session was supported by this mentoring project and was scheduled to be delivered on the 18th of March 2020 but had to be postponed due to the fires across Australia affecting mentor, value chain host, and some participants. Further postponement occurred because of COVID-19 restrictions preventing entry of participants into GMP.

The aim of this session was to conduct a tour of the processing plant, along with a presentation from the value-chain host (GMP) on customer specifications and what future grids might look like under a value-based payment system based on objective carcass measurements of lean meat yield (DXA) and eating quality (measurement of intramuscular fat). Mentoring support for this workshop involved phone meetings initially to organise the logistics of the processor tour and requirements for the value-chain host, along with going through the details of the session plan with Jim Meckiff so that he could deliver this session by himself.

A decision to conduct a shortened version of Session 3 virtually via Zoom, involved mentoring support to Jim Meckiff and the processor host to determine the key learning outcomes to be covered within the processor presentation by CEO of GMP Will Barton, along with logistics of how the virtual processor tour would run. Following the Session on the 25th of August, mentoring activity included a debriefing zoom meeting to discuss the success of the virtual processor tour by the mentor Elke Hocking, Sean Miller (ALMTech), Jim Meckiff and Michelle Henry.

Mentoring Outcomes

The desired outcomes of this mentoring activity were achieved, including mentoring the deliverer as per an approved mentoring plan (Appendix 1) to build the deliverer's capacity to:

- 1) deliver a high quality, effective SLP through the completion of all processes as set out in the mentoring plan (pre- and post-session mentoring, along with co-delivery and continuous improvement of the SLP).
- 2) recruit participants for future delivery of this SLP, through developing relationships with value chains with Objective Carcase measurement technology installed (GMP).
- 3) engage and empower producers to have a value chain approach to improving lamb compliance and profitability.
- 4) act as a champion and support good governance of the PGS program.

Appendix 2 shows an evaluation from Session 2, in which the participants of the workshop evaluated the delivery of the different components of the workshop, including evaluation of the mentee.

Feedback

The mentee Jim Meckiff, of JM Livestock, was inspired by the workshop and thought it was a great model to engage producers through the value chain. He said it opened the door for him to be able to work with some of the participants one-on-one following the workshop, to give them more support to analyse their carcase feedback and make more informed decisions on-farm regarding their genetic selections and management decisions.

Regarding Session 3, his comments were: "What a great tour of the plant for the participants and insight toward the future of lamb at GMP." Jim hopes to do a follow up activity with participants involved in the SLP in February 2021 to review the "Lamb Crop of 2020" and make plans for 2021.

Recommendations

Mentoring livestock advisors with existing technical knowledge, networks and relationships within their own region, through co-delivery, phone and email support, is a highly effective way of engaging livestock advisors within the PGS supported learning program.

The key success factor for this SLP is that it must be delivered through a value chain that is moving towards measurement of lean meat yield and eating quality and has commenced installation of objective carcase measurement systems such as hot or cold DXA. For this reason, targeting and mentoring livestock advisors with existing relationships or involvement with such value-chains to deliver this SLP will be more effective than conducting train-the-trainer sessions with generic livestock consultants.

The development and concept of the virtual processor tour within this project has also laid the foundation for future delivery in this style to producers where entry to processor plants (due to COVID-19 or other logistical issues) is not possible. This method of delivery can be used for future workshops as well as for remote mentoring / training activities.

Appendix 1 – Mentoring application training plan

Mentor Applicant details:	Mentor Name:	Elke Hocking
	Organisation:	Elke Hocking Consulting
	ABN:	53 915 530 384
	Phone number:	0427 667 081
	Email address:	elkehocking@gmail.com
Mentee Applicant details:	Mentee Name:	Jim Meckiff
	Organisation:	JM Livestock
	ABN:	90 554 939 324
	Phone number:	0428 332 280
	Email address:	jamesmeckiff@gmail.com
SLP Mentoring is provided for (SLP Title):	Lamb LMY & EQ (Lamb compliance)	
When & where: <i>SLP Activity, date, time, venue/s, town/s.</i>	<p>Session 1 - 21st June 2019, mentoring via phone before and after workshop (Bruce Hancock and Michelle Henry - both involved in this pilot workshop)</p> <p>Session 2 - 13th November 2019, Gundagai Meat Processors, Gundagai</p> <p>Session 3 - 18th March 2020, Gundagai Meat Processors, Gundagai</p> <p>Post workshop and potential assistance with another workshop - via phone 2020</p>	
Budget	Mentoring fees	4 days (1 day already invoiced after Session 2) 3 days remaining
	Mentor costs (including travel)	Travel expenses from Adelaide to Gundagai have been covered by ALMTech/Sheep CRC funds for Session 1 and 2 and 3 as well as delivery of Session 2 and 3.
	Other items	
	Total cost for mentor activity (to be invoiced based on time)	4 days @\$1,500/day = \$6,000

Mentoring Plan	
<p>Mentee and Mentor developed mentoring plan. Discuss with mentee their requested focus of the mentoring activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery • Coaching • SLP technical support <p>Describe how this will be included in your mentoring plan.</p>	<p>Delivery: Co-delivering sections of workshop</p> <p>Coaching: Phone calls involved in mentee preparing for each session of the workshop (identify host farm, livestock for assessment, pasture for assessment, follow up one-on-one with producers from the workshop), evaluations and debriefing following workshop.</p> <p>Technical Support: Provision of resources and discussions regarding tailoring to the region/processor/producers</p>
<p>Detailed mentoring program. Calendar & description of mentoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre • during • post SLP delivery. <p>When how (e.g. phone, face-to-face) and what.</p>	<p>Pre-SLP Mentoring: Phone calls prior to workshop regarding workshop preparation for S1,2 & 3 (via phone) (0.25 days per session = 0.75 day)</p> <p>Mentoring during SLP delivery: Co-delivery Sessions 2 and 3 – 0.5day face-to-face on the day before each workshop with mentee. Comprehensive evaluations and debriefing after Sessions 1-3 (0.5 day each session: face to face and phone). 2 days</p> <p>Post SLP Mentoring: Phone calls regarding follow-up one-on-one with producers from the workshop. Potential for future group activities identified during the workshop and identification of new groups. 0.5 day</p> <p>Further phone mentoring during 2020 for mentee to potentially deliver another workshop along with Supply chain host (Gundagai Meat Processors - Michelle Henry also co-delivering) (0.75 day including preparation, debriefing each session and continuous improvement of resources). <i>Only charge if this goes ahead.</i></p>
<p>SLP technical resources required</p>	<p>LMY trainer and participant notes, slides, resources (Mentor provided all printed materials for this workshop - paid by ALMTech/Sheep CRC for this pilot)</p>

Appendix 2 – Participant evaluation of deliverers GMP Pilot Session 2

Session 2: Practical Solutions to non-compliance, 13th November 2019, Gundagai Meat Processors

	Average	Min	Max
Prime Lamb Profit Drivers: Elke Hocking	8.8	5	10
Understanding ASBV's & Indexes / breeding objective: Elke Hocking	9.3	8	10
RamSelect App: Jim Meckiff	9.3	7	10
Feed quality and quantity - Elke Hocking	8.8	6	10
Nutrition and growth path - effects on LMY & EQ - Elke Hocking	8.8	6	10
Host rams: ASBV's (practical - on farm) - Jim/Elke/host	9.7	9	10
*Pasture assessment (on-farm): Jim Meckiff	6.3	2	10
Seasonal feed production / Action plan: Elke Hocking	8.7	8	10
Event coordination / Catering / Venue: Michelle Henry	9.7	8	11
How satisfied with this event	8.8	5	10
How valuable	8.8	5	10
Recommend to others	88%		
Plan to make changes	75%		

* No feed to assess in pasture assessment, so difficult to do. Spent time looking at containment pens

What did you like most and why?

- New tools available: RamSelect
- Openness of all conversation, positive environment
- Understanding of ASBV's
- All sheep farmers should do this. Well done
- Drought lot management
- Farm workshop and talk at the start from CEO Will Barton, of Gundagai Meat Processors
- The point being demonstrated that looks aren't everything
- Learning about ASBV's and selection of rams

What did you like least and why?

- All interesting - you can always learn something
- Last session on calculating growth rate of lambs
- Pasture assessment: no pasture to assess

Suggestions for improvement

- More sessions for different areas
- Try to finish up by 4pm so we can travel
- More detail on ASBV's

Specific Feedback on each Session:

Host rams: ASBV's & Indexes (on-farm practical session)

- Great to demonstrate the point using ASBV's

Event Coordination / Organisation / Catering / Venue:

- Excellent
- Food was excellent. Great food on offer (FOO)