

# Final report

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## **National Coordinator Grass Seed Awareness Program**

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## Abstract

*Winning Against Seeds* is a core element of the **National Grass Seeds Action Plan** (NGSAP). The *Winning Against Seeds* extension and communications program aims to address the rising cost of grass seed contamination to the whole lamb supply chain.

Contracts were finalised for the position of Interim National Coordinator (E.LSM.1403) in August 2013 and for the National Coordinator (E.LSM.1408) position in April 2014.

Principal outcomes/actions of the National Coordinator relative to the programs 8 point extension and communications strategy to date include:

1. Chaired/convened 4 National Grass Seed Leadership Group (NGSLG) meetings
2. Assisted with the development of Communications program and activities (industry contacts/media releases/articles/program awareness, video's etc)
3. Preliminary development of resource requirements and materials with MINTRAC and selected processors; compiled preliminary funding submission (AMPC) to support development of in plant grass seed assessment and recording resources;
4. Producer engagement through media releases/articles; 25 producer meetings/workshops (578), 6 Industry Representative/Conference presentations (125); 3 Pilot Producer Skill Development workshops (33) since July 2013
5. No Complimentary R&D undertaken
6. Developed GS Action Plan workshop resources, calendars and management and agronomic/chemical strategies for prevention and management of seedy lambs

Geoff Duddy resigned from the National Coordinator position on August 15, 2014 due to time constraints (linked in part to additional business commitments).

## Executive Summary

Grass seed contamination/infestation is a significant issue for the whole supply chain of the Australian prime lamb, sheep meat and associated industries, affecting animal health and welfare, on-farm production, processing efficiencies and profitability.

A strategic, united approach towards tackling the grass seed issue led to the development of a National Grass Seed Action Plan (NGSAP) in 2012. Representatives from all industry sectors participate as members of the NGSAP Leadership Group, developing the key objectives and strategies needed to reduce grass seed incidence and impact.

The *Winning Against Seeds (WAS)* extension and communication program is a core component of the NGSAP. An 8 point strategy was developed to target producers, agents, in-plant staff and lamb buyers nationally and provide opportunities for agribusiness and state departments of agriculture to engage in the program.

These strategies include the development of:

1. A National Grass Seed Leadership Group (including Coordinator)
2. A National Communications program (to improve producer feedback, communication and producer/processor engagement and facilitate improvements in processor and on-farm productivity and efficiency)
3. Measurement of carcase seed including consistent scoring and trial kills
4. Producer feedback including consistent reporting
5. Producer engagement including workshop and producer demonstration sites
6. Resource development
7. Complimentary R&D
8. Positive pathways for seedy lambs

Principal duties (and actions) of the National Coordinator are summarised below:

***Coordination of the National WAS program; ensure program KPI's are achieved and that monitoring and evaluation requirements were fulfilled***

- Convened 4 Leadership Group (LG) Meetings;

***Development of program implementation/monitoring and evaluation plan(s) and oversee implementation of the communications plan***

- Developed Program Implementation Plan;
- Input into Communications Plan and components;

***Develop and manage critical relationships (producers, processors, agribusiness, MLA and AMPC) within and around the WAS program.***

- Liaised with LG and industry representatives regarding program development and actions

***Collaborate with appropriate processor training organisations to drive the development and implementation of a range of resources for in plant staff including a consistent carcase seed scoring and reporting method***

- Discussions/preliminary development of resource requirements and materials with MINTRAC and selected processors;
- Prepared preliminary funding submission (AMPC) to support development of in

plant seed assessment and recording resources;

***Identify opportunities and integrate the WAS program into extension opportunities and related activities***

- EOI application(s) for state and national conference promotion of NGS Awareness program;
- Discussions with state, commercial and private organisations regarding meeting program KPI's and Producer Awareness/Skill Development workshops

***Initiate opportunities to raise sheep producers' interest and awareness of WAS opportunities and participation in program activities.***

- Compiled/coordinated numerous regional/state and national media releases (newspaper/magazine articles, video development etc)

***Provide Executive support and respond effectively to the requirements of the Winning Against Seeds Leadership Group***

- Discussions with LG members;
- Technical support where required

***Set up systems to maintain regular communication with funding partners to track progress against milestones and identify potential issues that may hinder achievement of the program KPI's.***

- Developed industry support contacts database;

***Identify and coordinate delivery partners to implement an effective series of producer workshops***

- Increased (+12) processor involvement and support of the NGSAP;
- Liaised with LG members, industry agencies/processors during development and running of *Producer Awareness* and *Skill Development* information forums and workshops

***Coordinate delivery of a series of producer workshops and other producer engagement activities in conjunction with appropriate partners and implement monitoring and evaluation processes***

- Coordinated delivery of three *Train the Trainer* (26 participants) and three *Producer Skills Development* (33 participants) workshops.

***Collate M&E results and provide quarterly activity reports against the respective program KPI's***

- M&E (Producer Skills Development workshops) completed and submitted

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## Background

In 2012, major Australian processors and supermarkets were surveyed on the impact(s) grass seed has on their core businesses. Many respondents indicated that “*grass seed was the number one problem facing their business.*”

A National Grass Seed Action Plan Discussion Paper was developed and circulated to industry in April, 2013 and a National Action Plan Scoping Workshop held in Melbourne, May 30, 2013 with 25 representatives from all sectors of the sheep meat industry.

This strategic, united approach towards tackling the national grass seed issue led to the development of the National Grass Seed Action Plan (NGSAP). Representatives from all industry sectors participate as members of the NGSAP Leadership Group, developing the key objectives and strategies needed to reduce grass seed incidence and impact.

The NGSAP aims to ***provide the lamb supply chain with knowledge, skills, resources and targeted information to reduce grass seed infestation incidence to less than 5% at processing facilities that engage in the program by 2015.*** Base line 2012 grass seed levels ranged between 1.5% (based on limited data) to 6.01%, among processors actively participating in the program

National Coordination of the program involved the development of program implementation and communications plans; facilitating development of measurement systems for carcase seed infestation within abattoirs; developing nationally consistent and auditable grass seed incidence feedback reports; coordinating producer engagement and resource development for Trainers and Producer Skill Development workshops

Geoff Duddy accepted the Interim Coordinators role (E.LSM. 1403) from August 30<sup>th</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, followed by the National Coordinators role (E.LSM. 1408) from April 30<sup>th</sup> till August 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

## Position objectives

The key roles of the national Co-ordinator are:

1. Professionally and efficiently co-ordinate the *Winning Against Seeds* program to ensure approved KPI's are achieved, activities are aligned and integrated, and all monitoring and evaluation is carried out as outlined in the *Winning Against Seeds* Action M&E Plan.
2. Develop and implement the program implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation plan and Communications plan.
3. Develop and manage the critical relationships (sheep producers, processors, agencies, agri-business) within and around the *Winning Against Seeds* program.

4. Drive the development, and facilitate implementation of a range of resources including a consistent seed scoring and reporting method in collaboration with program partners.
5. Co-ordinate delivery of producer workshops and other producer engagement activities in conjunction with appropriate partners and implement monitoring and evaluation processes.
6. Provide Executive support and respond effectively to the requirements of the *Winning Against Seeds* Leadership Group work program partners to identify opportunities to integrate the *Winning Against Seeds* program into extension opportunities and complementary activities.
7. In conjunction with MLA, initiate opportunities to raise sheep producers' interest and awareness of *Winning Against Seeds* opportunities and participation in program activities.
8. Collate M&E results and provide six monthly activity reports against the respective program KPI's.
9. Set up systems to maintain regular communication with funding partners to track progress against milestones and identify potential issues that may hinder achievement of the program KPI's.

## Results

Grass Seed Awareness Program National Coordinator achievements/actions:

Interim National Coordinator (E.LSM. 1403; August 30<sup>th</sup> - November 30<sup>th</sup> 2013)

- convened 2 NGS LG meetings (Melbourne)
- developed presentation material(s) for *Winning Against Seeds* Awareness Forums (2013). These materials formed the basis of the *Train the Trainer* (E.LSM. 1409) workshop manual and associated resource material
- Coordinated/presented/reviewed 5 Grass Seed Awareness Forums in South Australia/Victoria and NSW (69 participants)
- *Winning Against Seeds* Awareness presentations at 11 producer (223 participants), 3 Industry Reps (49) meetings/workshops and MINTRAC Conference (Melbourne)
- 4 abattoir visits to discuss aspects and implementation of NGSAP

National Coordinator (E.LSM. 1408; April 30<sup>th</sup> - August 15<sup>th</sup> 2014)

- convened 2 NGS LG meetings (Teleconference, Melbourne),
- developed NGS Implementation Plan
- input into Communications Plan and components; provided industry contacts and reviewed Grass Seed video series
- Discussions/preliminary development of resource materials with MINTRAC and selected processors
- Prepared preliminary funding submission (AMPC) to support development of in plant seed assessment systems
- *Winning Against Seeds* Awareness presentations at thirteen producer meetings/workshops (355 participants); three Industry Rep (76) seminars; BWBL

Conference (59 participants) and 3 *Producer Skills Development* workshops (33 participants)

- Increased (+12) processor involvement and support of the NGSAP; liaised with LG members, industry agencies/processors during development and running of *Producer Awareness* and *Skill Development* information forums/workshops
- Submitted EOI application(s) for state and national conference promotion of NGS Awareness program (Conferences/Annual Meetings etc)
- Discussions with state, commercial and private organisations re meeting program KPI's and running *PSD* and Awareness workshops
- Compiled/coordinated numerous regional/state and national media (print) articles (Feedback; Farming Ahead; Land; Weekly Times; Stock and Land; Rural News)
- Compiled Industry Contact Database (LG, processor, industry reps) and Grass Seed Management and Research Reference databases

## Discussion / Conclusion

The NGSAP National Coordinator positions roles and responsibilities are many in terms of the number, scale and requirements within each Program Objective.

While many of the programs principal Objectives were achieved difficulties with

- broad industry consultation;
- apathy/token support among industry members from the producer base through to manufacturing/communication and/or media promotion;
- a restricted communications and operational budget and
- tight time scale to meet program milestones impacted on meeting all program KPI's and Objectives.

These issues, coupled with growing business commitments (unrelated to the program) and input associated with Projects E.LSM 1406 and E.LSM 1409, led to the appointed National Coordinator regretfully resigning in August 2014.

The National Grass Seed Awareness Program to date has led to an improved understanding of grass seed impacts on animal welfare, health, production and enterprise profitability among many industry players. A continued focus on grass seed impacts on animal health and profitability; improved cooperation and interest among industry players and an increased operational budget are pivotal in terms of the programs future success.