Optimising Stud Operations with eID Technology: The Gordon Family Experience

Producer case study: The Gordon Family - Bruan Poll Dorsets

Background

The Gordon family operates a farm named 'Davencol', located at Condah, in South West Victoria. Their livestock includes 170 cattle (140 breeders, 100–120 turned off/year) and 5500 sheep (5000 ewes, 5500 lambs turned off/year). They have been using eID technology since 2014 in their stud operations for 'Bruan Poll Dorsets'. Bruan Poll Dorsets was founded in 1984 and in 2024 offered 160 rams for sale, with 159 sold.

Image 1 Bruan Poll Dorsets

Recording Scan Data

The Gordon family uses eID technology to record scan data, including eye muscle depth, fat depth, and weight. This data is crucial for assessing the health and quality of their livestock. The eID system allows for accurate and efficient data collection, reducing the need for manual record-keeping.

Birth and Weaning Weights

eID technology is employed to record birth and weaning weights of lambs. This information helps in tracking the growth and development of the animals, ensuring that they are meeting the expected milestones. The ability to capture this data electronically streamlines the process and improves accuracy.

Image 2 Weighing newborn lambs and recording data

Sire Group Management

The Gordon family uses eID technology to manage sire groups for joining ewes. By recording and analysing sire group data, they can make informed decisions about breeding and genetic selection. This application of eID technology enhances the efficiency of their breeding program.

Sale Weights and Weight Tracking

eID technology is utilised to record sale weights and track weight gain and losses. This data is essential

for managing the commercial aspects of their livestock operation. The eID system provides a reliable and efficient way to capture and analyse weight data, supporting better decision-making.

Drafting Sires Using MateSel Data

The Gordon family uses eID technology to draft sires based on MateSel data. MateSel is a product available for Sheep Genetics clients. It gives you mating outcomes by submitting lists of possible sires and females, information about your breeding program (e.g. how many types a sire can be used), as well as constraints on short-term and long-term inbreeding (co-ancestry).

On the Gordon family farm, this application allows for automatic drafting of animals into sire groups, reducing manual labour and improving accuracy. The integration of MateSel data with the eID system enhances the efficiency of their breeding program.

Tag Scanning for Ram Sales

eID technology is employed to scan tags during ram sales. This application facilitates the quick and accurate collection of tag information, supporting the transfer of PIC numbers during sales. The use of eID technology in ram sales improves efficiency and reduces manual labour.

Image 3 Sale Day at Bruan Poll Dorsets

Benefits

The Gordon family has experienced several benefits from using eID technology, including:

- Reduced manual labour and time spent in yards
- Seamless data integration with Pedigree Master, which is a software to manage data.
- Streamlined drafting and weight recording
- Improved accuracy in data collection and record-keeping.

Challenges

Despite the benefits, the Gordon family has faced some challenges with eID technology, such as:

- Equipment issues, including the need for upgrades
- Learning curve and setup time
- Reliance on technology and risk of data loss
- The cost of mandatory eID tags without a clear commercial benefit.

Future Opportunities

The Gordon family sees several future opportunities for eID technology, including:

- Scanning ewes in the paddock to directly assign sire and dam information to lambs
- Linking scanning equipment with Tru Test XR5000 for automatic data recording, including eye muscle depth and fat
- Expanding the use of eID technology beyond stud operations into the management of commercial flocks.

Industry Implications

The implementation of eID technology has significant implications for the livestock industry. It offers the potential for improved efficiency, accuracy, and data-driven decision-making. However, challenges such as equipment costs, technical support, and the learning curve must be addressed to maximise the benefits of eID technology.

Recommendations to others

Based on their experience, the Gordon family recommends the following for new users of eID technology:

- Have a knowledgeable support team to assist with setup and troubleshooting – reach out to supplier reps and experienced peers
- Invest time in training to effectively use the technology
- Be prepared for the initial setup time and learning curve
- Consider the cost-benefit analysis for commercial operations.

Conclusion

The Gordon family's experience with eID technology highlights the potential benefits and challenges of adopting this technology in sheep farming. While they have experienced significant improvements in efficiency and accuracy, they also faced challenges related to equipment and costs. Overall, eID technology has the potential to revolutionise livestock management, but careful consideration and support are essential for successful implementation.

Image 4 Bruan Poll Dorsets out in the paddock

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