

WALRC Livestock Matters Forum

Making sheepish decisions

Using Lynley Anderson's farm business as a foundation for discussion, we face up to the reality of making tough decisions on sheep. Do they stay? Do some, or even all, go? Irrespective, its likely things are changing. But are the decisions being made with the right information? We don't have all the answers, but exploring the right questions might help.

Tuesday, June 25

Run with Ben and Mike (then breakfast): 6.30am-8.00am Kojonup
Football Oval

Livestock Matters from 10am sharp to 5pm Anderson Rams Shearing Shed,
839 Anderson Road, (Boilup) Kojonup

- 10.00 Welcome to WALRC Livestock Matters – WALRC Chair **Bronwyn Clarke**
- 10.10 **An introduction to the Anderson philosophy:** Our host **Lynley Anderson** concedes that a high input stud enterprise and mating ewe lambs - two factors of her business – are particularly challenging in the current market. She discusses the changes she is making to ride the trough.
- 10.40 **How did we not see this coming?** We turn to local lad turned MLA marketing information manager **Steve Bignell** to explain why none of us appeared to think that a rapid increase in sheep numbers would lead to an apparently WA-specific pricing plummet. With so many critical sheep management decisions riding on the perception of when they'll be a sustainable price increase, an analyst's job has never been so important.
- 11.15 **Discussion**
- 11.25 **Don't worry – it's happened before:** We ask the oldest guy in the room to spend 5 minutes on history. **Bob Hall** (89 and proud of it) has seen it before!
- 11.30 **But is it different this time?** Consultant **Ed Riggall** reckons it is a bit different this time – but he reckons there are options. And some good ones at that. Here's what's happening according to Ed.

- 11.50 **But what are we going to do with the lambs?** We take a moment to consider the latest science. Murdoch University's **Dr Caroline Jacobson** is heading up the weaner project and there's a lot of learnings from this about strategies for managing weaners – that have suddenly become all that more critical.
- 12.15 **We look at how two very different businesses from opposite ends of the sheep state, are responding to the current market challenge:**
- **Emily Stretch** and her parents Digby and Nikki, farm south west of Kojonup – and have chosen not to mate in 2024. But their young flock structure means that they are not limiting their sheep future and therefore they can make a rapid recovery in response to market correction. Here's what they've done.
 - By contrast, Chapman Valley farmer **Jason Stokes** has a response that says 'do more, just better'. He's intensifying his stocking rate and really focusing on cost control.
- 12.45 Lunch
- 1.30pm **Ask an expert:** We turn firstly to our crowd to hear from those who want to share about their response to the sheep markets – and we then turn to our panel of experts to get their response. For every decision there is a consequence.
- 2.45pm Break
- 3.15pm **A different outsider's view:** Lawyer **Michael Maxwell** has represented livestock producers across the country on a range of occasions when either governments or activists or both - have been against them. We've asked Michael for the inside story on protecting our patch and why we should have confidence that fair and good can prevail.
- 4.00 **A new version of Tough:** WALRC is delighted to introduce you to Mike Rolls and Ben Pettingill – a couple of country mates on a mission to share their learnings. You can call them Mike and Ben – or you can affectionately call them Legless and Blind (without being accused of something inappropriate). Because they are. Literally! They have a great story to share of how they tackled the extraordinary adversity they were each faced with and what they describe as Tough Talk. Have a listen to Legless and Blind and go home with a renewed sense of this isn't too bad after all.
- 5.00 Close and hospitality