To introduce myself to those who do not know me, my name is Beverley Norman. My husband Ray and I farm with the assistance of three employees at Illabo. In the last couple of years we have scaled back to 2048ha all in the one area, running 5000 merino ewes joining 3000 to merino's and 2000 to terminal rams also running Glenray merino stud primarily for our own use. We crop 1250 ha of wheat canola barley lupins forage Brassica and trailing some oats this coming season. We are a mixed farming enterprise.

Today I have been asked to talk about pasture and crop for optimum sheep management.
Our dual programme consists of August September lambing in lucerne pasture.
We match the spring feed growth curve, we imprint the lambs three or four times with 50gms per ewe per feed of grain while the lambs are still on their mothers, which makes grain feeding them any time in their life easier if necessary.
Weaning takes place in November which enables us to put them straight onto forage Brassica which is a grass seed free pasture. As soon as the stubbles are available the ewes are removed from the Lucerne pasture so it can be spelled. When the Brassica runs out the lambs run on the spelled Lucerne.
With the season we have just come through the lucence vanished and the Brassica ran out of water early in December so our only option was stubbles or our feed lot for both the weaners and the ewes. We weigh all our terminal weaners and anything over 35kg went straight in the feed lot.
The rest of the weaners were drafted up into weight categories and put onto stubbles with lick feeders, ground trailing of barley and a supplement in tubs.

We noticed the lambs on the stubbles were going backwards. We knew we were feeding barley of 11.7% protein and we also knew we had barley on hand at 15% protein so we swapped for the higher protein grain. We noticed that did make some difference.
We had a couple of the stubbles analysed for protein, energy and trace elements. The tests coming back showed only 2.9 and 1.8% protein, 7.6 and 7 Metabolizable Energy and copper and cobalt less than .1 what I would call cardboard. This confirmed with the 15% barley and the stubble they were not getting enough protein and Metabolizable Energy to sustain them neither loan grow then. So we investigated how to get adequate protein and Metabolizable Energy into them to maintain growth. We then moved to 60% rolled lupins and 40% barley. We checked that the supplement was covering the mineral deficiency.
We mixed the grain and supplement with our mixer then put it in the lick feeders. This decision certainly turned our weaners around and they are growing nicely again now considering the season. We did receive 20 ml of rain on the 15th and 16th of Feb so we decreased the lupins to 50% as we did get a small green pick come through.
The lambs we put in the feed lot did not appreciate the extreme heat and did not go onto the feed as well as we would have liked but they are now firing.

We shorn the first 900 a couple of weeks ago so they are nearly ready to hit the market.

With our ewes we have put the older age groups through the immobiliser and assessed their mouths, udders, and constitution. Any not making the grade have been shorn and are in the process of going to market. During mouthing we weighed and checked fat scores, generally the lights and heavies had an average of 10kg difference. We have increased the ration for the lighter ewes to bring them up to a target fat score of 2 ½ or better.
For three years we have been putting electronic ear tags in our Merino Flock ewe weaners. Over that time we have been developing a selection criteria which is an ongoing process. We are definitely not going to let the computer tell us what sheep to keep or cull as it is so important to assess the visual characteristics as well, but the stats help with the decision making.
We collect micron,

fleece weight and body weight.

As weaners we use this information for each animal using spread sheeting to help determine the most profitable ewes. We remove all ewes that are cutting 2 micron over the average from the flock mob and join them to terminals.

We recalculate the average fleece weight, micron and $ per head using the AWEX wool market indicator five year average. All figures are on six months wool as we shear all our young ewes six monthly till they are joined because we believe they grow out better and are a lot easier to manage especially with flies. This year the value per head varied from $65.82 down to $29.62 with a range of $36.77 for fleece wool with out bellies and pieces. The final criteria is $ per head carrying the attributes we want to see in our merino flock. Any thing that has as good $ per head but has attributes that we don’t want to our Merino flock goes as a terminal ram.

Because of the harsh season we are going through some maiden ewes were under 45kg and fat score 2.5 so we put them in the feed lot to increased their weight quickly. We believe that body weight has a big bearing on conception rate. It will be very interesting to follow these ewes through to scanning to see the results.
Grazing crops are very important in our system but we were finding that even though we were sowing dry or on little moisture we were not getting the crops up so the grazing window was narrow especially in the season that has just gone.
So we decided to purchase a Bougault 3320Se paralink drill which we are hoping will help us get the grazing crops up sooner thus giving a bigger grazing window. We plan to sow barley and some Brassica in early April followed by the Bolac and canola.
As the stubbles run out due to lack of feed or being taken for sowing we will be putting our ewes into drought lots.

We feed barley, straw for roughage, salt and lime till the grazing crops are ready. The ingredient none of us can control is rain. Taking care when emerging our sheep from one feed source to another is very important as it takes two week for the bacteria in the ruminant to change which if not controlled the stock will get a set back and possibly break their wool.

Part of our reasoning in down scaling was that we believe having all our country together is more time efficient and we felt that this would help us get things down more timely both with the sheep and cropping enterprises. We also believe that by monitoring our sheep more closely and identifying the ones that are producing us the best income we could run less sheep but still have good returns. It costs the same to feed a sheep cutting you $65.82 as one that is cutting you $29.62.
We have spent money on improving our sheep handling equipment. Firstly we rebuilt the steel yards built by my father, Charlie Stanyer, in the early 1950's which was the traditional square yard with a V running into the drafting race.
Ray worked with Bill Thomas from Pratley's on a design that would complement the old yards, as this was the third set of bugle yards Ray had built, he had things he knew worked and wanted them incorporated like a double working race. We removed an old spray dip and some of the yards retaining the disused steel fences to be repositioned to make bigger holding yards and pens.
We then put a shed 22 meter by 11 meters over the working area. It works a treat, unbeknown to us in the heat of the summer it can be as still as still and hot as hot out side and there is a cool breeze where you are working.

In the winter we have a roof that joins the shearing shed to the cover over the yards so if you need to do sheep work when it is wet you can hold the sheep in the shed and run them into the working area with out getting them wet.
We have purchased a peak hill immobiliser a must for any women out there, or men who are not as young as they used to be, using the immobiliser we have taken operations back on that we were letting out to contractors like pre lambing vaccinating, clicking etc. We have a lot better handle on our sheep as we are working a lot closer to them and it is a pleasure to work in the environment. Our employees suggested we put a conveyer belt from all our properties so all work can be done at the main yards, they complain when we want to do major jobs in any of our other sets of yard.
We then purchased a Pratley auto weigher/drafter. When we first got it Ray thought it would be good for the feed lot. I will let you into a little secret, Ray is a wizz at operating it now and all the things you can do with it for example when we scan we don’t dot the twins and singles and when you want to draft them up the auto drafter does it while you just stand there and make sure they feed in. Fantastic for taking out the tail in your mob so they are not competing with the heavier sheep, detecting lambs in the feed lot not doing before it becomes visually noticeable. We put 18,000 sheep through it in the first few months of having it. You may be thinking all this money being spent but just remember the money we have put into stock equipment is a pittance compared to the cost of a tractor or a sprayer and the infrastructure is there for many years, the steel yard we restructured were used continually for 60 years.
The cropping side of our business is very important to us as well. We use it to complement the stock but also for cash flow. We endeavour to keep enough grain on hand to feed the stock for twelve months and if the season goes with us I sell the unused grain into the market. Our Canola and the majority of our wheat are cash crops.
Our take home message is –

we use our dual enterprises to complement each other.

We aim to retain stubble to conserve moisture using our sheep as weed control over the summer.

We work on keeping the sheep in a condition that they will get in lamb so that when the season breaks we have full potential of taking advantage of that.

We endeavour growing our young sheep out so they will not get a set back that will affect there production over their life time in seasons like the one we are in now.

We turn off the terminal lambs in a condition that creates cash flow.

No matter what the weather throws at us we are assured of income as in drought, frost, bob tailed spring to name a few the stock side of our enterprise produces wool and lamb no matter the conditions.

If the crop fails we can graze them thus still taking benefit.
Sheep can minimise resistant weeds.

They also can be grazed on areas that are unsuitable for cropping.

If the season allows a good cropping year we have more produce to sell on the cropping side and the stock cost of production is minimised.

Any Questions
PASTURE and CROP for OPTIMUM SHEEP MANAGEMENT

Beverley and Ray Norman

Mixed farming enterprise at Illabo