

WA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE – NARROGIN  
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020

PRESENT: Melissa Walker, Graeme Dent, Stephen Madson, Tony Ward, Teresa Rafferty, Emily McDonald, Doug Giles, Harley Bairstow, Malcolm Talbot, Sarah Hyde, Veronika Crouch, Alison Lacey, Don Thomson.

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Chairman, Graeme Dent welcomed new Principal, Melissa Walker to the meeting.

Apologies were received from: Geoff Ballard, Pierre Maartens, Geoff Perkins and Helen Wyatt. As Helen will be absent for some time, it was noted that if another agronomist was needed, this would be decided if necessary.

**2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS – NIL**

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2020**

The minutes were endorsed by Harley Bairstow and seconded by Veronika Crouch.

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**A. GD: Black pigs purchase by the college, why?**

TW: Black pigs were purchased as a new breed for interest's sake. Berkshires seen as the Wagyu of Pork in many parts. Esperance company well known for intensive livestock. As NILS tags are applied to pigs under 25Kg, we purchase over 25kg and are quite impressed with their growth rate.

GD: Berkshires are known to be slow growing usually and black hairs can be an issue when slaughtering.

TW: The original 5 sows and 1 boar are actually 4 sows and 2 boars. In seven weeks they have a pleasing increase in weight currently 45 – 48 kg.

GD: It would be interesting to see the growth rate per day and the comparison with other breeds would be of educational value.

DG: The Berkshire purchases were made from a top breeder with a great genetic history in pigs.

GD: Advised if the college actually went into breeding pigs, currently the industry is very strict on the health and welfare and infrastructure being in place when considering a pig industry. It was stated that at this time, the college is not considering an enterprise as such.

**B. GD: What were the causes of the seeder blockage?**

SM: Paddock N7 was re-done as the seeder appeared to have a twisted meter roller. One third was coming out of one head and two thirds out of the other part. Some crops were okay and plant density would sort out any spaces. N7 was sprayed out and re-seeded via the seed box.

GD: How far behind is N7 from the other crops? SM ; Two weeks behind.

GD: Cropping Manager roles? SM: Karl McBurney – seeding and John Archer – programmes.

**C. GD: Lambing Percentages and consideration for earlier lambing**

E.M: After some discussion it was thought the best consideration was two weeks earlier. Other points of interest:

- It is possible to have a split lambing program to help with educating students and data would be available to judge the best time.
- Funds for Trust need to be received before December end of year.
- Early start and sell in August could be supported in this district climate.
- Perhaps the maiden mob could be shorn later but management and shearing are also to be considered and the education programmes.
- Maybe shear at the end of year for some students.
- Steve felt that not much is going wrong now with a percentage of 104%. Malcolm agreed with this view and Harley agreed that keeping it simple and going well there may be only the need for small adjustments.
- Steve stated that lamb survival had been a topic, but numbers are showing this is not an issue now.
- If shearing was over a time of two weeks, then other programs could be considered but the college takes 6- 8 weeks for its shearing program.

**D. GD: Tractor from Cunderdin – Question of reimbursement?**

SM: In the early days, there was a dollar value on transfers of equipment but now this is not the case. All machinery and equipment is owned centrally and moved around when necessary. Doug came across an article where the tractor in question was described as clapped out. This is not the case, the tractor was just kept in the Cunderdin shed and was under utilised.

**E. MT: In the Farm Planning Report**

The scale of planning should be for ten years, not the 20, 30 or 40 as was shown. The quotes were gathered for the **Chemical** Shed not the Machinery Shed.

**4. CORRESPONDENCE**

**Inward**

- i) Hon Sue Ellery – Letter of response to Graeme Dent in regard to Land Acquisition.
- ii) Trust Funding Request – Letter of notification of the additional \$65,000 for the chemical shed and the approved distribution for 2020/2021 of the cattle yards which is also under discussion in the infrastructure considerations of the Department of Education for funding.
- iii) Letter from Hon Sue Ellery - New Membership of Veronika Crouch invitation extended.
- iv) Email from Sarah Hyde in relation to her application to the committee.
- v) Email from Pierre Maartens – Apology for this meeting.
- vi) Letter from Hon Sue Ellery – Malcolm Talbot – Thank you for support of the Department.

**Outward**

- i) Email to members the Agenda and Previous Minutes on 30<sup>th</sup> July.
- ii) Email to Graeme Dent with Agenda and Previous Minutes on 4<sup>th</sup> August.

## 5. ASSISTANT FARM MANAGER REPORT – TONY WARD – READ OUT

POULTRY – the average is 20 dozen per day with external customers taking 60 dozen on each Tuesday, kitchen supplies every day and admin sales the balance. Wild and Waste Free have increased from 5 dozen per week to 30 dozen per week and sell them for \$5.50. The eggs are held at 13 degrees and have a 28-day end date. Poultry Market Garden is progressing and participants will have a field trip to Harvey to view their enterprise and gain information.

PIGS – The Berkshire pigs have proven to be very educational and production value is very welcome. Slaughter should take place in two weeks.

WORKSHOP – The JD6400 is out and just requires a little cosmetic repair. There has been work on the MacDon, Mixall and 30-foot swather has been serviced. Graeme stated that the college should beware of light country, as the wheel can pull back and turn and make a sand ridge when harvesting. Harley suggested a power wheel can help the situation. The second header has arrived and is going for its 100-point service today. Graeme asked why it isn't serviced on site here and the response was that hadn't been thought about. Graeme suggested that it would be a good viewing exercise for student's education.

FENCING – This will be done on the Tarwonga Road boundary from the west entrance to the south as far as Lavater Road. A clearing permit has been granted. Part of this (2 kms) was an insurance claim from a February storm. The rest of the claim was for a tarp torn from the eco shelter, a tank destroyed and hay spoilage in the eco shelter. Fencing will become an ongoing maintenance plan for the college. Tony stated that 240 hectares of the west block was excluded from usage because of inadequate fencing.

CROPPING – Pasture manipulation has been completed targeting weeds etc. The experimental grazing of the classroom paddock took off some of the heavy oat crop in the Dalkeith clover crop. The clover has only a little red mite around the edges, but no recurrence of the caterpillars a few years ago. Silage production – not done in the last 3 years – will be undertaken in pit and wrap for comparison. The Forrester harvester will be looked at to see if it is workable, or we may use Harvey Ag's equipment if fitting in our programs and theirs.

FERTILISERS – Graeme asked if Urea had been applied and Tony advised that it had been put on the canola crop and the Nitrogen was needed to top up the cereal crops. Minimum tonnage and cartage are being considered with only ordering what is needed now. Graeme advised that before the next front would be the ideal time to apply.

FARM IMPROVEMENTS – 50,000 litre tank on the west block near to the Chinaman's Well where there is good clean water and a good flow.

CROP SUBSTITUTION – The question of planting some Lupins was put forward and the following points were made:

- Jurien is a new brand of lupin.
- Lupins help with fixing nitrogen – trial some lupins as a substitute for canola rather than other crops but not on waterlogging areas.
- Gordon Birrell Report: Canola is to be used to clean paddocks and lupins similar to this.
- Clean the grass and weeds out now. Radish can be taken out of lupins as opposed to canola.
- Don mentioned the best chemical for capeweed was Hasten.
- Lupins would go onto a cereal or canola crop to follow. N9 suggested as the paddock and we would spray top at the end of the season perhaps.

- Malcolm asked about the fencing on the west block in regard to using a hot wire as well. Hot wiring and barbed wire are in use at present. Cattle are moved frequently and so a solar power with battery back-up is used.
- Box Poison on the Golf Club side of west block is to be monitored closely.

## **6. ASSISTANT FARM MANAGER REPORT – EMILY MCDONALD – TABLED**

### Additional Notes

- The college is running a trial for drench resistance
- Perth Royal Show – Narrogin is not attending as there is no educational benefit for students to go. Danielle Trappitt to attend to learn from the shearing and stud sections.
- Cattle culled: K1 and P6 as not meeting standards required.
- Aquaponics have commenced for the Certificate III students.
- Doug mentioned a new drench from Firbank, slow release (3 months) liquid calf drench. Well done Emily for thinking outside of the box in regard to sending Danielle to the show even though the students were not attending

## **7. FARM MANAGER REPORT - STEPHEN MADSON – TABLED**

### Additional Notes

- Mulesing – Graeme stated he had trialled mulesing and non-mulesing for three years and recommended mulesing. Steve would like to hear some feedback from those only non-mulesing. There is always discussion on the procedure in regard to animal welfare. Doug mentioned that there is mulesing and tail stripping and he does tail strip wethers. Veronika put forward the name of Emily Stretch from Kojonup as a non-mulesing farmer.
- Chemical Shed – Dunkeld recommended by Doug as a suggestion to get a quote.
- Suffolk Stud – Graeme asked if there was new interest in the animals following the footrot in the ram from the Eastern States some time ago. Steve advised that yes there had been some good interest shown from private buyers and would be followed up.
- Certificate III: This certificate was able to be completed during the Covid restrictions with using different competencies that would support the certification.

### Farm Managers' Meeting

There was a phone app to cover vehicle management “FWS Manager” mentioned. Steve will look into this.

Infrastructure as a Plan – John Fischer on maintenance and listing the priorities.

Standard Operations Procedure – Chainsaw operations for farm staff to be drawn up.

Trust 2021 – The cattle shed is on the list. The basic design was submitted originally in the application but now we need to formulate the most appropriate design for this college. Do we incorporate the current shed or make a new one altogether in another position?

## **8. ENTERPRISE REPORTS FROM AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY MEMBERS**

### SHEEP ENTERPRISE - Don Thomson / Russell Gooley

- Most items raised in the above report. However, he noted that the Suffolks are looking really great. It may be wise to push some feed prior to sale.
- Wool off, 35 - 40mls is the better option. Clover pastures looking okay.
- Lambs are to be needled and then the splitting of the ewes and rams will take place.

#### CATTLE ENTERPRISE – Doug Giles / Emily McDonald

- Cattle are looking really good and strip grazing was a good move.
- Livestock selling, weight targets? Emily advised that we are aiming for 300 kgs.
- Within targets, aim for educationally sound achievements and presentation.
- Sales for 2020 will more than meet the budget income. The aim is to review the policy to make some benchmarks for weight targets.
- Emily suggested to get rid of the crossbreeds, then sell merino wethers heavier.
- Graeme put forward that crossbreeds grow quicker than merino wethers.
- Steve said the policy would be reviewed on a seasonal and strategic plan.
- Doug asked if embryo work was a possibility for the future.
- Emily stated that heifers were not being born in the stud and perhaps we could embryo our cattle.
- Doug informed that historical records of the stud were mostly lost, but the records are there for a few animals and flushing would enable the better cows to have their progeny extended.
- Melissa stated that this would meet some STEM and DOE requirements also.
- The pregnancy testing machine requires a qualified technician to operate and the training appears to be only in the eastern states. Mick Cluse was mentioned as a person who may be able to help with information.

#### FARM PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE – Malcolm Talbot

The chemical shed approval may be supported with funding other than the Trust. While this is under consideration, perhaps a sub-committee could be formed with a 5 – 10 year plan in place while the DOE wrestles with its policy on infrastructure. There needs to be a more elaborate 5-year plan submitted for machinery replacement also. Principals are being requested to submit an infrastructure plan listing all infrastructure present and for replacement. It was suggested for 3 or 4 persons with a passion in regard to an infrastructure plan, form the committee.

Steve Madson stated that also at the Principal and Farm Managers' Meeting, it was brought up that the colleges have a lot of antiquated equipment on sites with some equipment that may even be dangerous. Doug suggested that maybe one afternoon members could peruse the equipment and place in order of replacement, repair or expected life span. Melissa advised that we should follow OSH standards on machinery and equipment. Graeme advised Malcolm that all suggestions raised would be considered. Further, Graeme thanked Malcolm for his years of dedicated work on the Advisory and wished him well.

MOTION: The Principal will coordinate a committee to be formed to assess the farm requirements for infrastructure and machinery with a minimum of two members from the Ag Advisory Council. PASSED

#### CROPPING – Harley Bairstow

- Oats are exceptional.
- South laneway creek line needs attention.
- It was very welcome to have the "boys" in the ute this morning, Doug and Tony, displaying their passion in regard to the college operations.

## 9. LAND ACQUISITION

Principal, Melissa Walker read out the response letter from Hon. Sue Ellery. After this year with Covid spending, it would seem that the purchase of land would not be foremost on the agenda. Items from the letter from those present:

- Students are not released to farms due to the safety risks etc and insurance requirements.
- Some leases do exist within the colleges. This would appear not to be viable with Covid.
- What is likely to happen planning for the future and other long term goals?
- The rarity for close land parcels to come up for purchase should be emphasised as a great opportunity. Seek clarification on economic viability now and into the future.
- General consensus was to continue with the pursuit of this land purchase. Further approaches should have data attached showing the benefits of income and educational expansion. Perhaps Members of Parliament could be approached also to back the purchase?

## 10. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – Melissa Walker

Melissa read through her report highlighting certain topics. Building Philosophies, Covid 19, 2020 Priorities and 2021 staffing and recruitment. Melissa will be Principal for six months to enable an advertisement for 2021 commencement to get the best applicant for next year. Melissa is keen to have more of a student voice for positive as well as negative input around the college. There are a number of projects in the pipeline at present to improve some minor areas of residence and expansion of the CCTV coverage.

Student Projected figures for 2021: 35 year 10, 52 year 11 and 49 year 12. Total 136 day and residential students.

Doug advised that in Gnowangerup there had been a successful plan on the economy of water usage which may be of interest.

## 11. OPEN DAY FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18TH

Open Day will have Covid restrictions Phase 4 in place. It doesn't appear that Phase 5 will be introduced before end of September. Stephen Baxter has been invited to Open Day.

Steve stated that it was hoped to have more events and activities on Open Day., ie parent versus student competitions – come along prepared to compete.

## 12. GENERAL BUSINESS

- a) **Membership** – Sarah asked about what her value to the Advisory would be given the current port folios already covered. Sarah was assured that she would be a great addition to the group in regard to connectivity, research and STEM issues and education after school. The next generation are the members to provide the modern technology knowhow and implementation. Younger members also provide succession planning for the Advisory Membership with links to other like organisations to promote education for students. Graeme asked Sarah would she accept the nomination? Sarah stated “Yes” and that she felt much better about taking up the membership. Tony also made mention of the diversity that two new members in Veronika, and Sarah, would bring to the Committee.

**It was moved that the Principal, Melissa Walker put forward the nomination for Sarah Hyde.**

- b) **THANK YOU to Malcom** - Both Graeme Dent and Steve Madson thanked and congratulated Malcolm individually for his commendable input and support as a member of the Advisory and as Chairperson of the committee. He was presented with a small gift of appreciation.
- c) **Williams Road crossing** – Graeme raised the question on the situation of safety on that crossing of the property. There has been some improvement with the removal of trees obscuring traffic.
- d) **Leasing/Hiring of Header** – Doug has spoken to a dealership who were keen to support the college in having a header school with a view to current dealership mechanics and our students gaining experience on site in a workshop. Also there may be an opportunity to lease or hire a near new header for our harvest via an arrangement.

Melissa Walker will contact the Department in regard to the legal requirements and OSH expectations in relation to such “deals”.

MEETING CLOSED 1.34 P.M.

**NEXT MEETING PROPOSED FOR Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September.**

**THIS MEETING IS NOW SUBJECT TO CHANGE AND WILL BE ADVISED.**

# Farm Manager Report 10.8.20

## Farm section summary:

**Sheep Commercial:** Emily to research non mulesing alternatives for commercial sheep.  
Upcoming Ram sale Nepowie (require 2 to 4 depending on quality)

**Sheep Stud:** all look terrific, some interest in rams already

**Cattle:** strip grazing trial worked well

**Poultry:** Gutters and new roofing tin replacement ongoing

**Horticulture:** requires new shade cover, aquaponics projects commenced.

**Workshop:** new external door to toilets for day time security at workshop completed

## **Butcher shop:**

**Fencing:** replacing all fencing on Tarwonga road from standpipe to Laveter road

**Equine:** 2 bad tempered horses sold and now off site

**Farm Construction** – chemical shed??? Trust approval given waiting on clarification re infrastructure planning from head office

**Cropping:** review of 2020 program to outline improvements moving forward  
Lupins for 2021

Sale of 50 tonne barley for \$250 per tonne on farm Russell Ashley, will collect start next month.  
Fertiliser budget overspend!

**Piggery:** Berkshire pigs are outstanding

**Staffing:** Colin Batt will be away for up to 8 weeks, Rod Frantom here for 3 days per week helping clear fence lines for replacement fencing along Tarwonga road

**Farm Improvements:** 30ft McDon swather now onsite and undergoing cosmetic improvements and ensuring all components work well.

New eco shelter cover now fitted.

Comb for Esperance header arrived Monday

**Shows and Events:** we will not be attending the Perth royal show all but 1 student event has been cancelled.

**Farm Manager Notes:** RTO management - Online learning

Year 12 students progressing well through competencies most have about 80% complete on certificate 2 and we have 16 year 12 certificate 3 students working hard towards their qualification.

South Regional TAFE here training student in advanced wool handling (Rob Carter)

Perth Principals and farm managers meeting –

Potential; app for machinery and vehicle checking used at other sites

Discussion with John Fisher about how we apply for infrastructure maintenance and improvements into the future for the farm and school, this seemed to have various overriding priorities for access to funding.

**Staff Training:** SOPs for high risk activities on farm to be developed and implemented

Basic chemical safety course being planned

Chainsaw SOP required – potential chainsaw operator course required

Daniell Trappitt to Cattle AI course and possible working with external stud at the royal show

**2020 Trust allocation** – chemical shed approval given??, request new cattle yards for 2021 is on the list for 2021.

**Rainfall:** Month to date – 32.5ml Year total to date – 277.1ml

Thanks Stephen Madson - Farm Manager

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# Assistant Farm Manager Report 11.8.20

## Farm section summary:

### **Sheep Commercial:**

Crossbred mob: 104% marked 261 lambs

Merino Mob: 111% marked 1129 lambs

Weaning Completed

215 Cull ewes to be sold

187 Blue Tags to move to crossbred mob.

**Sheep sales:**

**Sheep Purchases:**

**Wool Sales:**

### **Sheep Stud:**

Lambing is completed 145% 84 lambs

Lambs vaccinated with gudair, glanvac 6s, eryvac and scabigard on the 4/8/20

**Sheep sales:**

**Sheep Purchases: Nil, Wool Sales: Nil.**

### **Cattle:**

Backline all cattle and gave second vaccination to calves

All stud calves are registered.

Big Mob did an excellent job in the class room paddock and are now back in south 9.

Entered two students into virtual cattle judging in NSW

R12 Bull has become a steer as he didn't meet our requirements and standards of a bull.

**Cattle sales: Sold K1 and P6 \$5580.75**

### **Butcher shop:**

**Equine:** Bliss and Dusty left the farm on Monday 27/7/20

Thanks Emily McDonald  
Assistant Farm Manager

- Drench resistance trials taking place.
- Royal Show - not attending no student events  
- Danielle going to learn showing practice.
- Aquaponics started.

## Enterprise Report w/e 7.8.20

### **Poultry:**

Egg production has increased since the arrival of 100 additional pullets. Average daily production is now approaching 20 Doz. External orders have also increased in proportion (approx. 60 doz), although customer base remains unchanged. Of note is a significant increase in demand for our eggs from Wild and Waste Free, who on-sell to the general public.

Berkshire pigs are exceeding educational and production expectations and are proving to be a draw-card for students. Boars (2) and sows (4) are currently separated and all animals are now on target for slaughter in 2-3 weeks.

Work has commenced on extending the existing vegetable garden in time for spring planting. Plans are under way for a fact-finding mission to Harvey Ag College, with a view to replicate and improve their 'Farm' section operations here at Narrogin.

### **Workshop:**

JD6400 has been reassembled and is now running. Still awaiting minor cosmetic parts. Repairs to the poultry mix-all have been completed.

McDon swather has arrived and is undergoing in-house servicing. Second header (Case 2144 Axial Flow) has also arrived and is currently undergoing pre-season servicing.

### **Fencing:**

Priority has been given to replacing storm-damaged boundary fencing on Tarwonga Road. Fence line cleared (permit granted) and pasture paddock fencing completed to date.

A 'whole of farm' fencing plan will be developed to inform future budgeting requirements.

### **Cropping:**

Pasture manipulation has been completed across all grazing paddocks, with stocking altered accordingly.

Experimental cattle-grazing was trialled in the classroom paddock over ten days in the last week of July, with a view of reducing heavy oat cover. Good clover establishment and oat regeneration has been observed.

Urea spreading completed in canola crops (abt 160Ha), in addition to Cert III student paddocks (approx. 7Ha). Nitrogen top up for cereals planned for late August and plant tissue sampling scheduled for 12/8/2020.

Preparations underway for both pit and wrapped silage, with weedy crops being targeted (south 1, west 6)

**Farm Improvements:** A replacement 50,000 litre water tank has been positioned at the Tarwonga Road entrance and is presently being filled from the solar pump on west block. This tank will primarily provide water to the pig and equine paddocks, with excess water being available for the school ovals once piping is completed (August 2020).

Tony Ward  
Assistant Farm Manager