

LIVESTOCK SA...

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Getting Sheep through the Drought

During September, with PIRSA and with funding from the Australian Government's Primary Health Network, Livestock SA ran 7 shearing shed discussions for livestock producers in some of the areas most affected by the last 2-3 dry years. They were hosted in sheds in the Lowbank (Brenton Kroehn), Peterborough (Neil Sleep), Orroroo (Ian Ellery), Eudunda (John Milde), Sanderston (McGorman family), Goode/Ceduna (Gus Bergmann), and Cowell (Norris family) districts. In all 98 producers came along.

The sessions were designed to draw on farmers' knowledge and experiences in managing the tough conditions, with support from industry experts and focussed on planning and management while in drought, planning for recovery and managing wellbeing.

Consistently the discussions included issues with the over-abundance of kangaroos, the importance of making a decision early, the protection of paddocks from drift, rates of destocking, which age groups to destock, the availability of agistment, confinement feeding and sacrifice paddocks, strategic timing of mating and lambing, and on supplementary feeding (feed budgets, hay and pellet feed quality, feed testing and feeder set ups)



The positive feedback from attendees indicated an appreciation of the opportunity to hear of other farmer's approaches and how the range of strategies might apply to their own farm. With no one solution to the challenges, the farmers valued the opportunity to weigh up what others were doing and going to do, along with the expert advice from the specialists.

It was encouraging to hear participants speaking about the impacts of the drought on their mental health, the importance of making decisions (right or wrong) and the willingness to share experiences and knowledge in order to help others,

Some typical comments in the feedback were:

- *it was a good way to hold a discussion, to hear about your neighbours' ideas and situations,*
- *make a decision and stick to it: keep planning – a bad decision is better than no decision*
- *a great time of sharing – lots of humour from people in difficult situations.*
- *suggest a shed type format for the ladies of the land.*
- *it's a pity people were not here: good to be part of coming together and sharing ideas*
- *good knowing everyone is in the same boat: I will be more confident to ask others for advice.*
- *positivity thinking forward making decisions that will help get through tough times*
- *very informative and non-judgmental on how people are doing: found it good for mental health*
- *need for assistance with containment feeding, condition scoring, ration formula, animal health.*
- *knowing that there are support services available and people that can help is very valuable.*
- *being a younger farmer will take home everything from this meeting*
- *locally no support for livestock – Livestock SA could be the answer.*

Some of the resources on hand were:

PIRSA drought response brochure:

https://pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/334631/June2019_Drought_Response_A4_brochure_DIGITAL.pdf

Feeding and Managing Sheep in Dry Times:

https://pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/326654/bulletinfeedingsheep2006.pdf

Country SA Primary Health Network Flyer for phone support services:

<https://saregionalaccess.org.au/health-professionals/#Order-Regional-Access-Promotional-Materials>