

ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION TAGS

... time saving and improvement in accuracy using EID

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In a recent trial involving ewes and lambs at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre (TAIC) at Temora, the use of Electronic Identification (EID) tags was evaluated against the long tradition of manually reading and recording individual weights and information.

EID tags were used to identify individual sheep across a variety of trials where weights and individual records were recorded over time.

In one trial, a hand held reader was used to read the tags of 188 lambs with weights recorded manually at regular intervals over a period of 6 weeks. The saving in time and energy by using the reader to identify individual lambs was significant.

The difficulty in gaining access to the weighing crate to read the tag numbers meant that each individual was taking an average of 53 seconds to weigh and record with the risk of injury to fingers /hands significant as the lambs become heavier and more stressed. Measuring just 91 lambs resulted in one tag being misread despite the best efforts to be as accurate as possible.

By using the wand to identify individuals, time was reduced to an average of just 24 seconds per lamb with no possibility of injury and an increase in accuracy with no tags recorded incorrectly for the remainder of the trial. The result was a greater than 50% saving in time, less injury and stress on the lambs and greatly increased accuracy.

In a separate trial, individual ewes were being identified at joining by placing them in a classing race and recording the individual tag numbers for future reference. To evaluate the time saving compared to manually reading tags, half a race full was identified manually which involved getting into the classing race and manually reading tag numbers and recording. Rather than taking just 10 seconds per animal to read and record tags on the hand held reader, each ewe was taking around 30-40 seconds to read the tag and manually record the ID. Apart from the physical effort required to handle ewes averaging 85 Kg and the loss of accuracy, one ewe smothered simply due the presence of an individual reading tags in the race. Not only was time, accuracy and effort a negative factor but the loss of an individual animal is a huge cost to any operation and always a risk when physically handling animals in a confined space. There will be no more manual identification of ewes or lambs.

The use of a hand held reader to read electronic tags is as basic as you can get in regard to the use of EID but still provides some significant savings and benefits to any enterprise. Savings of greater than 50% in time, better accuracy and less stress to you and your animals are just the start of the benefits that can be achieved by using EID tags.

A workshop on how EID can assist you in sheep breeding and management is planned for later in the year at TAIC, keep watch for notification of this event.



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Profitable & Sustainable Sheep Production in the Mixed Farming Zone

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