AWI | LEADING SHEEP

A proactive network, progressive producers and sheep and wool businesses leading the way.

Queensland Government

Incorporating technology into yards

A Producers Perspective

Many producers are improving **productivity** and **business outcomes** by incorporating technology into their yards.

A wide variety of technology is available, including drafters, handlers, weigh boxes and eID. This document shares some experience and advice from producers. For more detailed information on what and why to collect this information click or follow this link to Leading Sheep's eID booklet: https://tinyurl.com/msuauutp

1. **Efficient stock flow** to the handler or weigh box is important to the overall effectiveness of the technology in operation. Existing infrastructure can be modified, but sometimes it may be better to start fresh. Consider its current condition and functionality, current and future size needs, proximity to road access/tools and supplies, and the extent of modifications required .

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2. **On-site support** from the supplier can be valuable, particularly with set up but also for prompt troubleshooting.

3. **Try before you buy** to make sure the technology will meet your needs. Seek advice from other producers and ask the sales rep to organise for you to see the technology in use, or attend a field day or the like to see it in action.

4. **Choose technology** suited to your operational goals.

   - Make sure the technology suits the species and breeds you run, the activities you plan to conduct, and the way you operate (e.g. left-handed).
   - Portable options, including panels, can be great if you intend to use the technology in multiple or temporary yards. It's a good idea to make it very simple to add or remove and transport the component if you intend to move it.

5. **Plan ahead** to prevent operational challenges when you use the technology.

6. **Start with the basics** and build gradually to make sure you get technology you need and will use

> For individual animal management and data collection, adding a wand to your current setup may be all you need. If you intend to handle large numbers and measure multiple traits, a panel reader and an indicator may be more suitable. Focus on collecting data to support decision making for your sheep enterprise. Focusing on one key trait that is a priority area for your business, such as wet or dry at lamb marking, might be the most productive way to start.

Learn more with the following resources:
AWI Extension SA has some great videos comparing yard design and technologies.
Yard Design: https://tinyurl.com/25rhetcp
Sheep Handlers: https://tinyurl.com/ysn6p9yu
Leading Sheep has a case study that shares the benefits one Queensland producer with his handler.
Leading Sheep Case Study: https://tinyurl.com/mudnyhmd
Leading Sheep eID Booklet: https://tinyurl.com/yc458cu7

Tags to tools

Lots of producers have questions about eID tags in sheep and what is needed to make them work for their enterprise. What's on the market and what can the different equipment do?

This is a quick start guide for producers who are thinking about collecting data from sheep. It's designed to help you choose the correct equipment to collect the information you want to record.

There are benefits for producers adopting the NLIS system beyond its mandatory requirements. Linking data collected about your sheep to an eID allows you to establish a history of individual animal performance. This information can support informed business decisions.

Hardware: readers, indicators and collecting data

NLIS tag readers are available in two primary forms:

- Stick or wand readers offer greater mobility, allowing for manual operation.
- Panel readers are fixed in one location, either in the race or attached to a handler. Panel readers provide less mobility but do not require a person to read each animal manually.

When selecting readers, it is essential to consider their capacity to collect and store information. Panel readers simply read the RFID number and send it to another device, such as a scale indicator or a computer. Handheld readers have built-in memory, with some allowing them to retain multiple records and scanning sessions.

Key features to consider include the storage capacity, which varies between models. Additionally, the method of connection between devices, whether you prefer cords or a Bluetooth connection.

Software: data processing and using the data for decision making

Various software packages are available, offering a range of features and functionalities. The data can be downloaded in its bare-bones form using Microsoft Excel. Many of the equipment brands also have companion software that allows you to download the information.

Plenty of standalone programs are also available, usually including integrated paddock recording and farm mapping, whole-of-life performance recording, flock management and pedigree recording. Many of the different software options have a free trial that allows you to test the software before paying for it upfront.

When deciding what software and hardware to use, the important consideration is the point at which you will use the data to make decisions, either in the yards or back at the office. More detailed information can be found by contacting the hardware and software companies directly.