

eID



Embracing eID to unlock productivity insights on Kangaroo Island



Electronic identification (eID) is increasingly recognised as a powerful tool to improve traceability and productivity in the sheep industry. With eID now mandatory for all sheep in South Australia, many producers are now exploring how the technology can provide deeper insights to inform on-farm decisions and drive profitability.

On Kangaroo Island, six sheep producers participated in an eID demonstration project aimed at making sense of this potential, as part of a Department of Primary Industries and Regions Kangaroo Island AgTech Demonstration Program. With varying levels of experience, the group trialled different hardware and software tools, supported by advisers and agtech providers. Each farm developed a tailored eID plan focused on goals such as ewe reproduction, ram selection, growth rate, fleece yield, or body condition scoring.

Among those involved were Paul and Bek Bott, Hannah Robins, and Malcolm Schaefer, each bringing different perspectives and experiences to the project.

Keeping it simple, thinking long-term



Paul & Bek Bott

LOCATION:	Central north coast
PROPERTY SIZE:	1200 hectares
ENTERPRISES:	Sheep, cattle, feedlot

Based on the central north coast of Kangaroo Island, Paul and Bek Bott run a large-scale mixed enterprise including 3000 ewes, 200 cattle and a 10,000-head sheep feedlot.

While they have used eID in their cattle operation for 15 years, the recent shift to mandatory eID tagging for sheep prompted them to explore how to extract value from data in their breeding flock.

"We had a good idea about the practical side of using eID with sheep, but we needed to understand what software options existed to manage and analyse the data," Paul explains.

With support from AgInnovate's Jonathan England and consultant Tim Prance, the Botts clarified what they wanted to achieve, then evaluated software options based on those needs. Their key criteria was the system had to offer the right features without being too complicated—especially since four different people would be using it on the farm.

They settled on Stockbook, initially using a trial version before deciding to adopt the full platform.

"We needed to be able to put a filter on individual animals, looking at previous scanning, weight data, or applying tags based on yard observations," Paul says.

Though Stockbook is primarily PC-based, a mobile app is in development. Customer support was another drawcard for the Botts.

"We chose a system based not just on what it does now, but where it's heading," Paul says.

"We're interested in emerging technology like ewe-lamb matching using facial recognition or time-based data. We wanted something that could integrate with those innovations down the track."

Currently, the feedlot is not using eID data in a meaningful way because lambs historically arrived without electronic tags. However, with eID

tagging now mandatory for all sheep, lambs and goats leaving their property of birth, Paul sees big future value in analysing post-purchase performance.

“For instance, we’ll be able to filter lambs by weight gain by supplier,” he says.

“That will help us negotiate price, and we’ll be willing to pay more for lambs with consistent, strong growth.”

However, Paul cautions producers not to rush in.

“My advice is to not spend a cent until you’ve thought about how the technology will help you financially,” he says.

“What works for us might not suit someone else. It depends on mob size, your business goals and what technology you already have. There are a lot of options and the right one is the one that suits your operation.”

For the Botts, the goal is not short-term savings but long-term improvement.

“It’s hard to quantify the benefits right now,” Paul admits.

“We’re focused on production traits over the long term and eID gives us the ability to measure and act on that information.”

About the program

The KI AgTech Demonstration Program, funded by the Australian Government Regional Recovery Partnerships program, allowed KI primary producers to road test technologies free of charge on-farm and share their experiences with other producers on the use and benefits of the technologies.

More information:
www.pir.sa.gov.au

Perspectives from other participants

Hannah Robins brought a different experience to the project. For her, eID is a well-established productivity tool, not an emerging opportunity.

Having used BreedElite since its inception in 1999 and previously managing a livestock saleyard, she is already well-versed in eID and National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) compliance.

Her reason for joining the project was to stay informed regarding new developments.

“I’m in a different position to most producers,” Hannah explains. “At this point in time, there isn’t anything new I need to adopt, but I wanted to see what was out there.”

eID is already deeply embedded on Hannah’s farm. Data from sheep and fleece scales feeds into management decisions and she uses autodrafting for efficient handling.

Malcolm Schaefer, on the other hand, approached the project with fresh eyes. In addition to trialling eID software, he tested the Sherwell Y-Crate for improved handling. For Malcolm, the main benefit of the technology is accuracy.

“When the tags come up on the screen or on my phone, you can transfer data straight through to a spreadsheet. I haven’t got that far yet, but it’s impressive.”

Malcolm acknowledged the learning curve, particularly for those not raised with digital tools.

“It’s interesting for someone my age to learn these things. You think about what our fathers would make of what we’re doing now. Technology has changed everything.”



Tailored tools for smarter sheep production



This Kangaroo Island eID project has shown the value of electronic identification lies not just in meeting compliance, but in supporting better management decisions, tailored to individual operations.

Whether experienced like Hannah, curious like Malcolm, or strategically evolving like Paul and Bek, each producer found different benefits and limitations in their journey.

With the right planning and support, eID can become a powerful tool for improving productivity, profitability and long-term resilience in sheep production.



Australian Government



Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries
and Regions

