

# BestWool/BestLamb – Group gives confidence

Smeaton Group, May 2020



*Smeaton BestWool/BestLamb Group, wearing 3D glasses for a mining and minerals meeting, Creswick, 2019*

**Coordinator** – Neil James

**Group** – Smeaton

- 31 businesses, from Smeaton to Clunes, Skipton, Beaufort and Bacchus Marsh

**Enterprise mix**

- Prime lambs, with mix of cattle, potatoes, wool and crops

## Benefits of a network group

Becoming members of the Smeaton network group is paying dividends for Justin and Katie Lindorff. Minimal farming experience prior to joining the group, Justin and Katie have learnt, and continue to learn, better ways to run their farm 'Rowsley' near Bacchus Marsh.

The Lindorff's property consists of steep escarpment hills with basalt clay loam soils, and an annual rainfall of 500 mm. Their pastures are a mix of phalaris, ryegrass and natives, plus forage cropping and hay. They run Wiltshire Horns that lamb in August/September and the lambs are sold directly through a specialist Melbourne butcher and a small paddock-to-plate business.

Katie said: "We have learnt a great deal about pastures and forage crops. As we've learned more, we've come to agree with a local farmer's adage that we should be pasture farmers, not sheep farmers.

This focus, along with topical speakers presenting to Smeaton BestWool/BestLamb Group has given the Lindorff's the confidence 'to give things a go'.

"We've successfully made our own hay, which has been a lifesaver in the dry spells we've had over the past few years. We have ventured into forage crops; some have been successful and others not. The ones that have done well have opened our eyes to the amazing weight gains possible. In the past we would often just take whatever seed the local farm supplier had on hand. Now we are confident enough to order in exactly what we want so that it fits in with our enterprise."

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“This is primarily thanks to our group having experts speak at our meetings on the latest research and them being available for ‘Questions and Answers’ afterwards”.

Katie added the benefit and advice they receive from other group members is invaluable too.

“We have learned from the broad scope of activities on the members’ farms how we always need to be thinking of ‘later in the year’; what’s going to be happening in three to six months and what can we do now to prepare for that? One of the best lessons we’ve learned is this: ‘to be pro-active now rather than reactive later’.”

Katie concluded: “We have benefited immensely from our BestWool/BestLamb membership. Our farm business is going from strength to strength, maybe thanks to good markets, but also due to our increased knowledge and contacts through our Smeaton group.”

Graham Fagg is a third-generation farmer from Mt Mecer, 40 km south of Ballarat. Graham with his wife Katie, and their son and daughter, farm 6000 merinos alongside 1000 crossbreds. Graham attends most meetings, sometimes with other family members. They enjoy the friendship and conversations with other members, especially the “big prime lamb producers”.

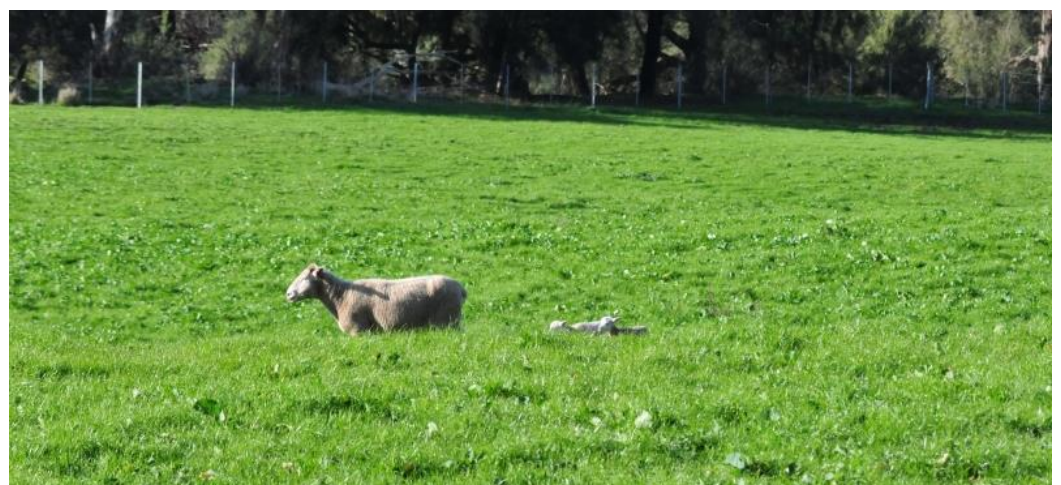
Graham said he’s still learning after years of farming.

“Just the knowledge and experience in the group is amazing, the willingness to share and pass on information within the group. Sometimes it’s initially new or might be something you’ve heard before, but through hearing from presenters and discussing it within the group again might be enough to then implement it on your farm.”

Improving condition in ewes before joining, checking rams annually, balancing protein and energy, checking rotations, sowing pasture and crops, managing worm resistance, and using mineral additives are just some of the examples of changes Graham has implemented in their business.

The ‘regional round up’ is a favoured part of the meetings for Graham. All members contribute information and issues relevant to their district and how they are managing.

“It’s great, it lets everybody know what’s been happening in the region, and I really like the social aspect as well. Top that off with ‘topical’ guest speakers, it’s a fantastic group to be involved in.”



*Italian rye and Winfred brassica for twin-lambing ewes, Justin and Katie Lindorff’s property, Bacchus Marsh, 2019*

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