

OFFA-QA Operators Newsletter No. 9

February 2008

Welcome to the first OFFM-QA Operator Newsletter for 2008. Produced by the Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX), this newsletter is distributed to all Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) OFFM-QA accredited operators.

Proficiency Trials for OFFM-QA Program

As you will be aware, one of the primary methods of ensuring that OFFM operators produce accurate and to obtain OFFM-QA accreditation, each operator must pass the annual Proficiency Trial.

Spring 2007 saw the completion of the 3rd Proficiency Trial for OFFM-QA operators. Twenty eight out of 30 operators passed the Trial at their first attempt, while two had to repeat the Trial (and subsequently passed). These results are excellent, with the necessity for two retests validating the use of the Trials to monitor the performance of operators.

In April 2008, the 4th OFFM-QA Proficiency Trial will be undertaken. All accredited operators will automatically be asked to participate to maintain their accreditation for the 2008/2009 period.

2008/09 OFFM-QA Accreditation Fees

AWI/AWEX wishes to advise that fees for OFFM-QA accreditation will remain unchanged for 2008/09. The fees are \$274 for one instrument and \$385 for multiple instruments. Invoices will be sent to operators in May 2008.

Direct link to OFFM-QA Operators via AWEX's WOOLSEARCH Website

To assist the industry in sourcing preferred service providers, AWEX will add registered On-Farm Fibre Measurement (OFFM) operators who have achieved Quality Assurance (QA) status through the AWI/AWEX program to the AWEX website. The expected delivery date is early March 2008.

The listing includes contact details and equipment used by all OFFM-QA operators, with operators easily identified by a state by state search. Australia-wide, 30 operators currently have QA accreditation.

This adds to the OFFM resources that can be found on the AWEX website. Visit the AWEX website to view your listing www.awex.com.au or www.woloffm.com.au.

Communications Activities

AWEX and AWI are pleased to announce that Mr Ben Swain has been appointed to undertake a Communications sub-project to help further promote the OFFM-QA Scheme. This work should be of benefit to all accredited operators. Ben's primary activities will involve case studies and other articles in the rural press, BOARDtalk and Beyond the bale; advertisements focused on accredited operators in the rural press and the development of some communication material for use in promoting your business. We anticipate that these activities will be conducted by Ben, in conjunction with AWEX, to capitalize on the critical spring flock testing period.

In order that growers get access to the correct information regarding OFFM, AWEX is distributing the AWI manual entitled "Making Money from Measurement – A practical guide to assist woolgrowers make the best use of OFFM". The manuals will be made available to both growers and brokers at AWEX auction centres in Yennora NSW, Brooklyn VIC and Spearwood WA.

What is Happening with Electronic Bale Identification (E-Bale)

AWEX and its partners have been investigating the application of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags to wool packs. In mid-January 2008, trials were initiated at a pack manufacturing plant in Asia to further consider two major issues: the tag design (dimensions) and the location and method of attachment of the tags to the pack.

A previous trial, using RFID tags similar to a "Credit Card", found the most critical pressure points to be firstly, at the pack manufacturer where packs are compressed into bundles of 50 for shipping to Australia and secondly, at the dump where bales are compressed into a tri-pack. Of course, these pressure points also have a cumulative effect that may result in tag failure anywhere along the pipeline.

In visiting the factory, approximately 950 wool packs were tagged using a combination of four different tag types and three different attachments. These packs will arrive in Australia in late March. The tags will be further assessed after filling with wool and baling with a farm press, moving through a wool store and core/grab line, and dumping.

The aims in completing this E-Bale trial are to:

- Determine the survival rate of the RFID tags as they progress through the pipeline, taking into account:
 - tag type,
 - tag placement, and
 - the number of times the tags have been subjected to pressure.
- Identify the most suitable location and robust tag type for use in identifying bales as they move through the wool pipeline.

For further information on any of these topics please contact:

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