

Summary of Tools and Products developed for lifetimewool

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Introduction:

Lifetimewool undertook to develop practical and easy to use tools to aid producer skills and decision making in managing ewe flocks. These tools would form the backbone of the producer kit and be provided free of charge to wool producers across Australia. The tools would also be provided to service providers for their own use and their clients use. A separate kit for consultants and extensionists were identified as a key product through the 2005 Consultant and Extensionists survey.

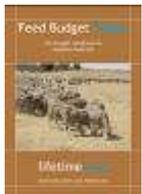
The process for tool development followed that used and developed by DAFWA (Walmesley and Curnow).

1. Identify need & levels of complexity
 - i. Simple, complex, paddock or yard use
2. Small scale concept testing with peers/users
 - i. Getting started on usable shape and feel
3. Develop product
 - i. Engage designer & editor
 - ii. Maintain brand and image
4. Peer/technical review
 - i. Sign off by peers takes time

The tools and products:

Feed Budget Tables

A series of feed budget tables has been developed over the last 2 years. These were designed to be as specific to pasture systems/regions as possible without losing the clarity and brevity of a simple tool. The success and popularity of the feed matrix developed by Mark Ferguson and Darren Gordon as part of the demonstration Phase in Victoria led to the development of the current feed tables. The format and layout was modified slightly on feedback from producers and to make the tables as stand-alone as possible.



The Dry/Drought tables were launched in February 2006 and include tables of pasture decline for both mixed temperate pastures as well as Mediterranean annual pastures. The Energy requirement tables were adapted from Grazfeed® and the feed intake tables from latest work in WA and CSIRO work in south eastern Australia.

These tables have been particularly popular with 4500 copies being printed and distributed upon request. Distribution includes all of the southern states with direct requests from producers, stock agents, consultants, extensionists, field day organisers, AWI, Vets, teaching institutions.



The Break of Season tables were designed for annual pastures in the establishment phase. These tables gave feed intakes based on emerging pastures when feed intakes are high at low FOO levels and used data generated from the lifetimewool project. Four

thousand of these tables have been printed with over 3000 copies distributed by request to a similar audience.



The Green Feed tables were designed for mixed perennial/annual pastures in south eastern Australia for use during the growing phase. 2000 of these have been printed with almost all of these being distributed in SA, Victoria, and Tasmania.

In NSW lifetimewool team utilised the Feed tables developed by Doug Alcock of DPI NSW which have a similar format but use herbage mass an input. Approximately 600 copies have been distributed as part of the NSW lifetimewool kit.

Feed on Offer Pasture Photo Galleries



These tools developed to aid producers estimate feed on offer are based on the popular product from South Australia that is now out of print. The Annual pastures version is a joint product with DAFWA using a series of photos collected by pasture specialists over 3 years. This edition was produced in June 2007 and 2000 copies have been produced. These have been particularly popular with extensionists at field days and short training days. The eastern Australian version was produced in September 2007 and 2000 copies have been distributed across 3 states.

Condition Score worksheet



These simple sheets were developed as a 'take away' product to support the Condition Score model display. They quickly became popular as a stand alone tool which provided a quick reference for yard scoring. 5000 of these sheets have been printed and many training institutions have utilised them with students.

Lamb Planner



This tool was developed by DAFWA with support from AWI several years ago and has been an extremely success publication. With the withdrawal of MLA support for production, lifetimewool co-funded further printing as producers were consistently requesting it as part of the lifetimewool kit. 6000 copies were printed in April 2008 and 4000 are available for distribution.

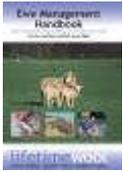
Ewe Management Handbooks

An edition of the ewe management handbook for each region was developed (excluding northern NSW) to give producers access to the lifetimewool messages and information with recommendations that were specific for the pasture system/climate. The handbook was based on the original field day notes developed in Victoria and were modified to build in full recommendations and economic impacts for each region. This included the optimum condition score profile, full table of impacts and quick reference guide.

These handbooks were promoted through the website and through consultants and extensionists with distribution through direct requests or through next users who then distributed them to their clients.



High Rainfall Zone Edition (blue band): 1st edition was published in early 2007 and the 2nd edition published in late 2007 with 5000 copies being distributed by mid 2008. Copies were distributed throughout Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania with a small number in southern NSW. It is based on spring lambing flocks.



Medium Rainfall Zone Edition (purple band): This edition was published in February 2008 with 2000 copies, of which about 1700 copies have been distributed by request to WA and western South Australia. Information and recommendations cover early and late lambing.



Cereal Sheep Zone (brown band): This edition was published in autumn 2008 with 5000 copies of which about 4000 copies have been distributed throughout WA, SA and Victoria. Information and recommendations cover early lambing and included details on the value of dry pastures throughout the season.



Southern slopes NSW and north central Victoria (green band): This edition was published in September 2008 with 2000 copies printed. It is in the process of being distributed through extensionists and consultants and promoted through the website. It covers late lambing and includes information on fat score and condition score and pasture targets are recorded in Feed On Offer and Herbage Mass.

These tools were packaged as a regionally specific kit for producers in an A5 magazine holder and distributed at workshops and field days. From mid 2008 a copy of the Lamb Planner was included with the kit. After receiving feedback from consultants and extensionists it was decided that a separate kit wouldn't be developed but rather products and tools for this audience would be included with the tools for producers. The key products identified were a copy of the reports, recommendations and science behind lifetimewool and detailed economic analysis for each region and the recommendations. The decision support tool developed by John Young was included in kits for consultants and extensionists who had attended the training for the tool. At the completion of the project a final kit will be distributed to all extensionists and consultants including a copy of a final report as well as an electronic copy of the website which will include all reports and analyses.



Condition Score Models:

In 2005 a series of 5 condition score models, developed using sheep vertebra and sheepskin with padding, were released for sale. These sets (scores 1-5) formed the basis of the reference set of scores for the paddock scale experimental work in lifetimewool and were calibrated using expert staff across 4 states. In 2007 a plastic mould of the vertebra were developed for ease and cost of construction. In 2008 half scores (1.5, 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5) were developed to meet the requests of operators. All scores are available for purchase through DAFWA Albany, individually or as a set with a lifetimewool bag and an option to have the kits assessed and re-stuffed. Currently approximately 40 kits have been distributed across Australia with sets in New Zealand and Paraguay.

Displays:

A series of posters for use at large field days and shows were developed in 2006 with consistent badging and messages. These were used extensively across southern Australia by staff to raise awareness and act as a focal point for other lifetimewool information on display.

Condition score display boards were developed and distributed to each state leader to use at field days and workshops. These had actual models attached to the display board which created interest with the audience and acted as a attractant to other information that was on display. These display boards have been replaced in WA with the "sheep". And there is an opportunity to develop sets for other states.

Value of the Tools and Products:



The awareness and use of the tools and products in producers and consultants and extensionists has been evaluated in two separate surveys across Australia in 2008. Thirteen hundred producers across 5 states participating in DAFWA's quarterly Wool Desk survey (Curtis K) were asked whether they had used any of the products (Table 1).

Table 1. Producers who had used lifetimewool products (Wool Desk Survey August 2008)

State	n	Feed budget tables		FOO Photo gallery		CS models		management handbook		CS sheet	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
NSW	506	28	6%	2	0%	23	5%	18	4%	28	6%
SA	211	8	4%	5	2%	12	6%	10	5%	18	9%
TAS	31	2	6%	1	3%	3	10%	3	10%	3	10%
VIC	289	24	8%	10	3%	32	11%	26	9%	37	13%
WA	316	22	7%	23	7%	28	9%	14	4%	23	7%
Total	1353	84	6%	41	3%	98	7%	71	5%	109	8%

Although the figures show that between 2 and 13% had used any of the products, many of the products had only been distributed for less than 12 months and some products such as handbooks and FOO books had not been distributed widely in NSW at all prior to the survey. The condition score models were relatively highly recognised, reflecting their 'hands on' design and that they were used widely at field days and seminars. The use of the ewe handbook in Victoria and Tasmania was highest and probably reflects that the high rainfall zone edition has been available the longest.

Eighty five responded to the Consultant and Extensionists survey (Curnow M) carried out in 2008 and most had heard and used many of the tools and products with high recognition and use of the feed budget tables and condition score models, feed on offer photo gallery and condition score worksheet. The decision support tool, which required attendance at a half day training course in order to receive a copy, had the lowest usage rates. Comments made by the respondents included that it was valuable but difficult to use and needed further development (for further comments refer to the survey report).

Table 1. The proportion of respondents who had either 'heard' or 'used' the products developed by lifetimewool in 2006-2008.

Product	Extensionists		Consultants	
	% heard	% used	% heard	% used
Feed budget tables	98	76	92	46
Condition score models	97	56	98	54
Lifetimewool web site	97	56	87	37
Feed On Offer photo gallery	93	54	92	49
Condition score sheet	90	66	92	46
Ewe Management Handbook	83	63	90	41
Condition score profile	75	41	80	24
Decision Support tool (electronic)	71	10	73	5

Many concerns were expressed about the continuing access to the products after lifetimewool project had finished. Many wanted to know who to contact and that they would be available to distribute to clients and at workshops and field days. Continued access to the website was once approach but many like the hard copy to provide to clients and tools such as the Lamb Planner are not suitable to have as a download. The lower usage rates of the internet by both service providers and producers would suggest that downloadable products are not as successful or accessible as hard copy for either audience.

These products although current would need to be reviewed at a suitable time to keep the information fresh and up-to-date. Further products or additions to the products would build on the recognition and confidence build into these products and that either the investors or a third party should continue to produce the range of tools.

References:

Curnow, M: The response of sheep consultants and extensionists in southern Australia to lifetimewool (Report on the email survey August 2008), DAFWA., 2008

Curtis, K: Wool Desk Report Sept 2008 Producer opinions of productivity and profitability, DAFWA 2008