

Foreword

This book focuses on the business of sheep farming. Its aim is to play a small part in the DPI's objective to enable transformation in Victoria's primary industries to increase wealth and wellbeing sustainably while protecting and enhancing safety, community, animal welfare and the environment.

My staff in Farm Services Victoria – a division within DPI which focuses on farm businesses – have played an important role in the development of this book. In doing so, they have demonstrated some of DPI's values including an ability to work together and collaborate within and outside DPI to achieve outcomes that make a difference. The collaboration with the Mackinnon Project of the University of Melbourne has been invaluable.

I trust the information in this book will assist primary producers to become even more productive, competitive and sustainable in an era of unprecedented change, including the emerging and profound challenge of climate change, as well as the pressures of competitive and volatile markets and more demanding community attitudes.

Ron Harris
Director, Farm Services Victoria

Arguably, it has never been more important that sheep farming enterprises are run efficiently to achieve the business goals of the owner. A constellation of factors – including an uncertain climate future with impacts on pasture management, patterns of endemic disease and increased risk of emergence of new or exotic diseases, changing rural demographics, increased consumer interest in production methods including animal welfare and wellbeing, changing local and international markers for product and a heightened expectation for food that is safe and nutritious – contribute to increasingly complex challenges to farm management. The complexity of the challenges facing farmers is such that there has never been a time when there was a greater need for expert, impartial advice based on solid science and a comprehensive awareness of the needs of the industry.

This book is both a resource for sheep farmers and an illustration of the high quality of advice that is available to sheep farmers within southern Australia. The collaborative approach to the compilation of this book, the diversity of the backgrounds of the contributors, and the involvement of DPI and the University of Melbourne are examples of the power of collaboration in achieving industry-wide goals. This book underscores the need for cooperation amongst state and federal governments, the tertiary education and research sector, and private industry to address the critical production-level needs of sheep farmers. The University of Melbourne, through the Mackinnon Project, has been a leader in providing this advice for over three decades and, as we enter the second decade of the 21st century, we commit to playing an even greater role in the rural livestock industries.

I congratulate the editors and contributors of this book on compilation of an excellent text on sheep farming in southern Australia. The material is comprehensive, without being excessively dense, and provides farmers with an excellent resource.

Professor Ken Hinchcliff
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