



## CASE STUDY

# Simon Maling and Lucy Annan

### At a glance

Simon Maling and Lucy Annan

Location: Lindis Peaks Station

7000 Merino ewes, 7000-8000 hoggets, 150 beef cows, 1000 trading cattle/dairy grazing 3,500ha

### Challenges

- Getting as much wool as possible into the top line of merino fleece wool
- Knowing when ewes condition score is decreasing
- Driving lamb survival rates

### Benefits

- Exploring genetics and drive breeding in the direction they want to go
- Easy to type-class sheep and assign them to mating mobs
- Confidence in introducing new bloodlines

**Lindis Peaks Station is one of those iconic South Island high country properties whose reputation was built on growing fine Merino wool.**

### Technology supports Lindis Peaks' fine wool aims

The property has been farmed by four generations of the Annan family since 1910 and has been a supplier of fine wool to the Icebreaker brand since it was established in 1995.

Today the farm is run by Simon Maling and Lucy Annan. Merino wool remains the main focus of the business with the majority of its clip still contracted to Icebreaker. Simon, a former Highlanders and All Blacks representative, says the farm is using new technology to explore new Merino genetics and drive breeding in the direction they want to go. "The Merino industry has a range of sheep types, depending on the genetics you choose to focus on," he says.

"Management decisions on farm are supported by data collected from the EID tags." "It's hard to gauge the performance of individual animals when you don't have any history." Lindis Peaks started using Allflex Rapid EID ear tags in its replacement ewes in 2016 and has continued that practice every year since. With four years of records now available, this is the first year they are using these records to type-class all sheep as two-tooths pre-mating and this will assign them their mating mobs for life unless they are made a terminal.



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Helping the Malings out with the genetic development of their Merino flock is Will Gibson, an award-winning Merino and Hereford stud breeder from Middlemarch. A consultant for the genetics consultancy neXtgen Agri, he works throughout New Zealand and Australia. In August he took annual leave from his consultancy work to help class the wool clip at Lindis Peaks. As Will explains, the aim is to get as much wool as possible into the top line of merino fleece wool the farm supplies to Icebreaker. He says the focus is on young stock, because that is where the property is likely to get the biggest yields and quickest results.

When EID tagged sheep are run through the yards they are weighed and condition scored and that information is scanned and recorded. "It's all about monitoring at the start and nailing down what you're actually wanting to change, so until you know, you can't make informed decisions on that." "For a Merino we need to have them up in condition so we want to know if there are ewes out there that are falling away in condition or not," Will says.

Lindis Peaks is not yet using EID ear tags to record fleece weights because that would involve a lot of extra work, but Simon says that may be possible in future. The property has introduced two new Merino bloodlines to the two original bloodlines it has traditionally used for fine wool production, using EBVs of stud rams to drive breeding in the direction they want to go. Will says EID tagging has confirmed the introduction of new bloodlines is already paying off. "There's a six kilogram difference between the top and bottom bloodlines in two-tooth ewes that are all

running together, so that's pretty straight-forward to see," he says.

He believes genetics combined with good management will drive lamb survival in Merinos. Fine-tuning lamb survival rates can have more of an impact on the bottom line of a property like Lindis Peaks than any other factor. So fat and muscle alongside fleece weight has been a target when purchasing rams. As breed improvements are made in lamb survival rates, the aim is to put more ewes to a terminal Merino sire and have greater selection of replacement ewes. "So the data gives us more information for an informed decision at the drafting gate, to make sure the ewes are mated to the right type of ram or are culled for proper reasons."

"There is also a lot of variation between sheep, so we really want to know exactly what's out there as well. If we didn't have EID tags in them, we wouldn't know where they have come from easily and wouldn't be able to compile the information quickly."

Both Simon and Will say it is still early days but the results of EID tagging have given them a good gauge on their management decisions to date and the confidence that introducing new bloodlines was the right thing to do. "The data backs up the important decisions we are making and shows that the decisions we are making are actually paying off," Simon says. Will says the technology is evolving all the time. "Technology is moving so quickly that if you're not jumping on board now, you'll just get left behind."



Allflex Livestock Intelligence, part of MSD Animal Health, is the world leader in the design, development, manufacturing and delivery of solutions for animal identification, monitoring and traceability. Our solutions empower farmers to act in a timely manner, to safeguard their animals' health, while achieving optimal production outcomes for a healthy food supply.

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