

# AUGUST 2024

"Haddon Rig"  
2358 Marthaguy Road  
Marthaguy NSW 2824

Telephone: 02 6847 4405  
Mobile: 0429 662 226  
[www.haddonrig.com.au](http://www.haddonrig.com.au)

f i @haddonrigstud



# HADDONRIG



## Dear Merino breeders,

2024 has been another exciting year in the merino game. With a strong recovery in surplus stock merino sheep and lamb prices since the low point of Aug-Sept 2023 and a favourable break in the season across Dec-Jan, 2024.

This year, we celebrate 30 years of Andy Maclean at Haddon Rig. Andy is making the move to Walgett in November to work with his brothers in their mixed-farming and merino operation. He will continue to be involved with HR as a Stud Advisor and client classer. We would like to thank Andy for his dedication, hard work and passion and wish him all the best with his next venture. (More on p.5) We welcome Matt Kelly into the role of Stud Manager and we look forward to supporting Matt in the next chapter.

On-farm, we continue to set ourselves up to capitalise on the recovery of meat prices, focussing on labour efficiency and profitability. Top of our list are fencing, more interior laneways and sheepyards, on-farm grain and fertiliser storage and vermin-proof exclusion fencing.

As our Poll stud grows in number and quality, we added another 400 Moorundie ewes to our ewe base last year. We classed over 1288 poll ram lambs and we're seeing good, strong lambs in the paddock. We carried out a 2150 head AI program using rams with industry-leading ASBVs aimed at improving early-growth, wool and carcass traits whilst maintaining our wools. We continue to incorporate the use of ASBVs into our breeding program, selecting sires that align with our genetic vision plus meeting our standards for phenotype, confirmation and wool quality. We are also working to deliver a new website this year which will make navigating sires, auction rams, genetic progress as well as news and events easier.

Following the last AWI election, I am pleased to welcome Emma Weston, new AWI board director, to live in our local district, as she spends a lot of time in the bush and will be accessible to all sheep breeders to discuss innovation to increase the profitability of the wool industry. Before anything else, I believe AWI needs to address the shearing issue by developing better technologies to make shearing easier and cheaper.

In personal news, I'm pleased to share the engagement of Olivia and her partner Will Michell. Olivia and Will now both live at Haddon Rig and it's great to have new ideas and energy in the business. Our daughter Grace and her fiancé Harry O'Donnell also welcomed a delightful baby girl, Isabella in July, 2023. I'd like to thank the entire HR team and everyone who contributes to the Stud for all their hard work. We look forward to seeing you at the 2024 On-Property Sale.

Kind Regards,  
**George Falkiner**



George and Olivia Falkiner, Andy Maclean and Matt Kelly



2024 Auction Ram Group



Will Michell, George, Sally and Olivia Falkiner



Andy Maclean and George Falkiner



Paula Blake, Andy Maclean, Will Michell, Matt Kelly, Olivia Falkiner, Paul Arragon, Charlie Kelly, Ed Beggs and Charlie Savage



## 2024 UPDATE *Andy Maclean*

Like everyone, 2023 turned out to be a very difficult year. The lamb, mutton, surplus sheep and cattle markets crashed with the season. We received only 300 mm of rain with 150 mm falling after 20 November. The wool market provided us with some much-needed income to keep everything running. As a result of the lack of rain we fed leading up to and all through lambing. The survival rate in the lambs was good but the quality in the old summer feed was poor. Ewes and lambs were well behind when we early weaned them in early August. Lambs were trail fed barley and lupins until rain started in November. Since then, we had a very hot humid summer with the moisture producing excellent feed. The natural perennial grasses on all our grazing country were great and are still green now.

As a result of introducing grain and a favourable summer, the ram lambs coming up for sale in September are excellent. We have the largest number of Poll ram lambs to date with 1150 shorn in April. We recently received their DNA results, confirming their pedigree and poll gene. Fleece weights were collected at shearing in April and eye muscle and fleece samples taken to give everyone true and accurate information prior to the hogget rams being sold. It is encouraging to see the rapid progress we are making in our poll stud by combining the use of ASBVs and accurate data collection with visual hands-on selection and classing. Our Poll Stud is rapidly improving in quality, numbers and genetic progress. On-farm results and client feedback have been excellent and evidence of our rigid breeding program. The ewe lambs have also done very well which allowed Stuart to class them early before crutching in April. The big AI and ET programmes are really paying off with the top end being excellent. We have kept pushing our AI and ET numbers this year to quickly improve our numbers and quality with 2150 Special Stud AI ewes and 20 Elite Poll ET ewes. Lambing conditions and survival have been fantastic for these ewes.

After six years at Haddon Rig, Callum Mclean accepted a manager's position at Steam Plains in the Riverina for Paraway and left in December. I would like to congratulate Callum, wish him all the best and thank him for all his hard work. Matt Kelly joined us as Assistant Manager in February, Matt was with us for two years before working at Egelabra and then attending Marcus Oldham. I would like to welcome Matt back to HR and I look forward to working with him in the future. Finally, I would like to thank all of the jackaroos and staff at Haddon Rig for their dedication and hard work, you all do a great job.



*Andy Maclean*

## 2024 DROP POLL LAMBS & AUCTION RAMS



*2024 Drop Poll Lambs in Early July*



*2024 Drop Poll Lambs in Early July*



*2024 Auction Rams*



*2024 Auction Rams*



## 2023 ON-PROPERTY AUCTION *Wrap-up*

The 2023 Sale season was one of the toughest we've seen, with many of our clients receiving very little rain across 2023 and feeling the strain of both meat and wool markets. It was a buyers' market with overwhelming feedback that there was opportunity across the line-up to pick up excellent value with quality, consistent rams right to the end. We want to thank all who came to support the sale.

A total of 215 rams sold for an average of \$2451 with the Sale's top price of \$10,000 achieved twice. Poll Merino Lots 1-5 sold for an average of \$8400. 99 horned rams sold to \$5000 and averaged \$2318, while 115 polled rams sold to \$10,000 to average \$2583. We were pleased to see returning clients and some new faces with clients buying from South Australia, Queensland, the Central West, Southern and Northern NSW.

Lot 2 HRP 221280 sold to Scott, Jenny and Angus Carrigan at Tyrone, Gurley. The PB 200154 son was a big 19.9 micron, long bodied poll sire with depth of body, maintaining a straight top line. He was among the higher performing lots for growth traits in the sale with ASBVs of +11.6 yearling weight (YWT), +11.1 post weaning weight (PWWT) and +0.8 yearling eye muscle depth (YEMD). He stands square and proud with a meat producing back-end topped off with a quality medium wool.

Lot 5 sold to Bernadette and Geoff Davison of Moorundie Poll Merino Stud, Keith, South Australia. Lot 5 HRP 220358 has a well-shaped behind, carrying a sire's wool with perfect nourishment. He has a micron of 19.8 and 99.1 comfort factor (CF). He has wool cutting ability with a Yearling Clean Fleece Weight (YCFW) of 30. His full ET brother has been kept as a Stud Sire. Lot 5 had a body weight of 110 kg, a PWWT of 2.7, a YWT of 3.5 and an MP + of 159.8.

James Morris, Bonanza Merinos, Walgett, purchased two polled rams, HR 220794 and HR 220326, for \$8000 each. These included HR 220794, by PB 200780, which had a standout Merino production index of +181.4, while the second ram Mr Morris bought, Haddon Rig 220326, was by PB 180832. As one of Haddon Rig's oldest stud clients, Mr Morris said the rams were well suited to his country and performed well in the Walgett district.

**"We're just starting to move into the polled Merinos as I think they've caught up to the horns and are the way of the future,"**

**"The rams have plenty of wool on them with nice, even bodies. They'll be joined to our stud ewes and depending on the season, we'll probably give them approximately 80 ewes each. We're full feeding our sheep at the moment and we will be until the season breaks, but we're in this for the long haul."**

**"We strive to improve our genetics and over the years we've tried other studs, but we always keep coming back to Haddon Rig."**

- James Morris, Bonanza Merinos

The top-priced Horned ram was Lot 6, HRP 220446 (AI), by HR 180084, sold to John Wheaton at Boorooma Merino Stud, Walgett for \$5000. Lot 6 had a soft pure 18.8-micron wool, a strong masculine head with a good horn set. He is a very plain ram but still well covered with a YFAT of -0.1, a PWWT of 5.4, BWT of 117kg and a CF of 99.6.

The Bragg family, Rossgole, Aberdeen, purchased 15 rams to a top of \$4500 to average \$2633. The Patton family, Merringreen Farming, West Wyalong, purchased 13 rams to a top of \$3000 to average \$2346. Luke Ridley, Caragabal, purchased eight rams to a top of \$2500 to average \$2312.

There was something for everyone, with a few non-mules clients selecting rams with low breech and wrinkle scores that would work within their program. Every year, we ensure a selection of non-mules type rams in our auction. Our Breech and Wrinkle scoring which we've been doing for over 10 years is key to this. We'd like to congratulate and express our appreciation to Andy McLeod, Jim Coward and Forbes Murdoch for 40 years of loyalty to HR. Their dedication and hard work is second to none.

Thank you again to all clients, agents Nutrien and Elders and auctioneers who came to the sale. We appreciate your support.



Forbes Murdoch, George Falkiner, John Setttee, Andy Maclean and Olivia Falkiner, Lincoln McKinlay, Brad Wilson and the top Polls which sold for \$10,000.



George Falkiner, Forbes Murdoch, John Setttee, Andy Maclean and Olivia Falkiner with Lot 5 HRP220358 sold to Geoff Davidson, Moorundie Poll merino for \$10,000.



Lincoln McKinlay, Andy Maclean, George Falkiner, James Morris, Olivia Falkiner, John Setttee, Andy McLeod and Brad Wilson with 2 Poll Merinos purchased by James Morris, Bonanza Merinos, Walgett.



Alstair Wilson, Andy McLeod, Dougie Wilson, Andy Maclean, Ed Beggs, George Falkiner, Brett Smith and Olivia Falkiner with 3 rams purchases by the Wilson family, Myall, Walgett.

# GENETIC PROGRESS

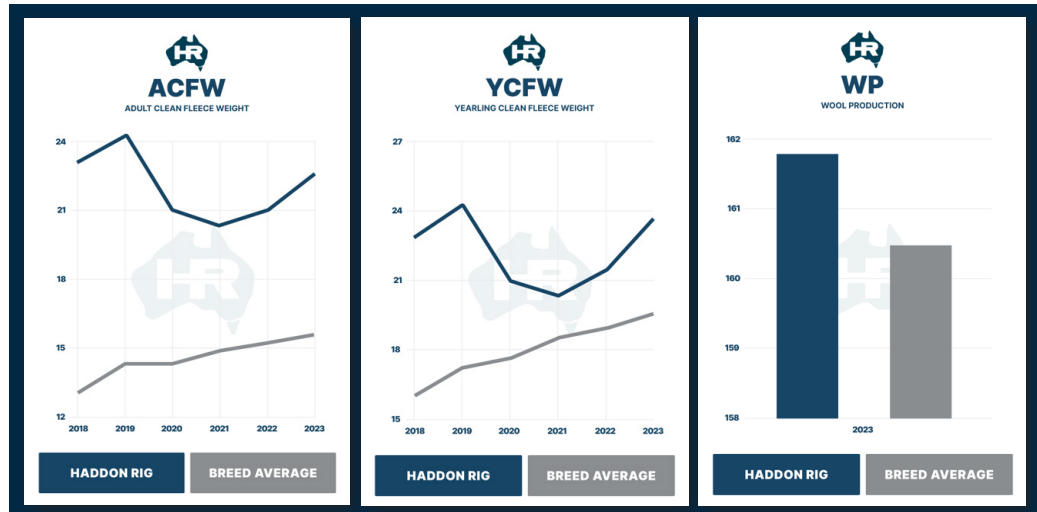
Given our continued breeding focus on early-growth, fertility, wool and carcass traits, it's encouraging to see the genetic progress of our Poll Stud over the last five years. As we add more animals to the system each year, our accuracy is getting better and as a consequence of this (as well as our breeding selections), our figures are improving rapidly, reflecting the true genetic traits of the HR animals.

## WOOL

As expected, HR continues to vastly outperform our competitors for both Yearling Clean Fleece Weight (YCFW) and Adult Clean Fleece Weight (ACFW), reflecting the ability of HR stud to cut large amounts of wool both early on (as yearlings) and throughout their lifetimes (as adults). This is a core focus of ours, as we want the rams to stay productive and profitable throughout their lifetime, cutting large amounts of quality wool each year.

### HR IS CURRENTLY:

- Above industry average for Yearling Clean Fleece Weight (YCFW)
- Above industry average for Adult Clean Fleece Weight (ACFW)
- Above industry average for Wool Production (WP) Index

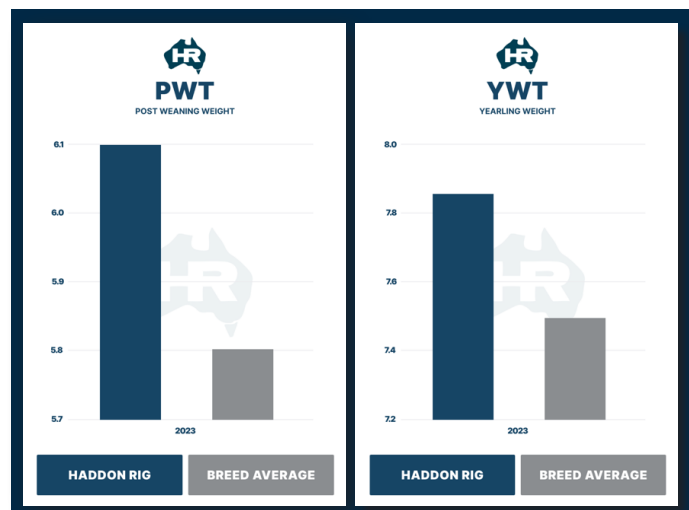


## GROWTH

Superior growth rates reflect the ability of the HR stud progeny to get to weight quickly, both when they are weaned to when they are 1 year old. Lambs of these rams will reach heavier weights at younger ages, enabling them to be marketed sooner (at the same weight) or be marketed at heavier weights (at the same age) compared with low growth lambs.

### HR IS CURRENTLY:

- Above industry average for Post-Weaning Weight (PWWT)
- Above industry average for Yearling Weight (YWT)

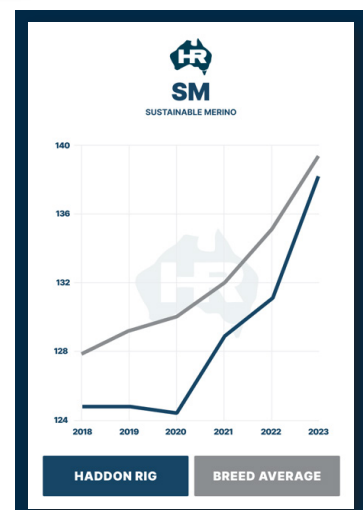


## BREEDING DIRECTION

As always, our priority is increasing the profitability of your flocks. Improving fertility is top of our minds as we aim to breed moderate-framed ewes that will breed a lot of lambs year-in, year-out! We continue to wet and dry our ewes each year, selling non-performers and selecting those ewes that breed singles and multiple lambs that survive and do well.

As we continue to finetune our ASBVs and improve our accuracies, a core focus continues to be improving the fly strike resistance scores of the sheep i.e. Early Breech Cover (EBCOV) and Early Breech Wrinkle (EBWR). At the same time, we're carefully increasing the selection pressure on condition scores (Yearling Eye Muscle Depth and Yearling Fat) to improve whole body energy and drought resilience without losing the wool type and correctness our sheep are known for.

We are excited to breed balanced, well-rounded Merinos, focussed on profitability and ongoing performance. With strong growth traits, heavy-cutting, high-quality wool and competitive ASBVs for carcass and welfare. Balance is our priority, whilst maintaining doing-ability and structural correctness.





# STUART MURDOCH 2024 Update

Haddon Rig's breeding direction of producing plain, easily managed poll merinos has challenged the industry trend through reducing breech wrinkle whilst maintaining our yearling micron and maintaining our adult wool cut in the top 20% of industry. We are very mindful of the adage "robbing Peter to pay Paul" as there are big, plain, easy shearing sheep out there with low wool cuts, coupled with inferior wool quality and style.

Haddon Rig's average breech wrinkle score is now at 1.5 (lowest score is 1 and the worst is 5). We have reduced our breech wrinkle by using sires that fit our strict criteria as plain and productive animals with the capacity to breed progeny that are rapidly maturing polls that still have our soft, bright, distinct wools.

There is currently industry discontent regarding sale rams that have adverse structural faults. Some commercial merino breeders are finding that their sires are not lasting the distance and breaking down which makes their seed stock investment very expensive! Often, this is caused by focusing on singular genetic traits instead of taking a balanced approach. In response to this, some producers are using a scoring system where sheep are scored on hoof shape, hocks, pasterns, backs and withers (to mention a few). Haddon Rig is taking a different approach, ensuring that sires with faults that affect longevity are not presented at auction.

It has always been one of our classing fundamentals to firstly appraise a merino's ability to survive and thrive and once they have passed this visual structural test then we grade on wool quality, frame, and industry related figures. In addition, our mixed age stud ewes are rechecked every year and the small percentage that have developed undesirable structural faults are culled. The Haddon Rig mixed-age sires get the same treatment being reclassified twice a year and annually micron sampled.

We once again purchased 400 Moorundie Poll stud ewes from Geoff and Bernadette Davidson to continue our objective of building our poll numbers quickly to meet our clients' demands. We are exceptionally pleased with the wool quality of these ewes, and we would like to thank the Davidson's for kindly offering to leave the ewes there for 6 months as well as doing the AI program at Moorundie while we were in the grip of the dry spell last year.



Fergus and Edgar Bragg, 2023 Open Day



Stuart classing the 2024 Auction Team

## 30 YEARS OF ANDY MACLEAN AT HADDON RIG

With mixed emotions we bid farewell to Andy Maclean after his significant thirty-year tenure with Haddon Rig and the Falkiner Family. Andy joined the team in 1994 as a senior jackaroo and swiftly rose to the role of Overseer. At the age of 25, Andy assumed the position of Stud Manager upon Forbes Murdoch's retirement in 2001, a role he embraced with his characteristic capability, work ethic and integrity.

Andy's enduring contribution to the Haddon Rig business and the Merino industry is immeasurable. He has navigated the HR stud through extreme droughts, floods, and market volatility, integrating new technologies and innovative management practices that have modernized infrastructure and streamlined operations. Andy's adoption of DNA testing, ASBVs and industry benchmarking have been instrumental in breeding high-quality dual-purpose merinos and establishing the HR Poll Stud.

Beyond his professional achievements, Andy's interpersonal skills have fostered close relationships with clients, offering guidance and warm hospitality alongside his family. His patient mentorship has positively impacted numerous young people including our daughters who consider him family. Reflecting on his time at Haddon Rig, Andy remarked,

**"Working at Haddon Rig has been a fantastic journey filled with opportunities and the chance to meet and collaborate with wonderful people. I am deeply grateful to George, Sal, Liv and the entire family for their unwavering support throughout my tenure. The friendships and experiences have been truly rewarding and I look forward to maintaining these lifelong connections."**

**Liv is now in her second year at the helm of Haddon Rig, demonstrating strong leadership and a professional approach to advancing the Stud. I am confident that Liv and Matt will form a formidable team, supported by Stuart Murdoch and the HR community, to nurture lasting relationships with current and future clients and propel the Stud forward. I am excited to collaborate with them in furthering the growth and promotion of the Stud."**

- Andy Maclean

Andy will continue to work closely with HR as a client classer and Stud Advisor, contributing to our breeding program and stud direction. We wish Andy all the best in his next chapter and eagerly anticipate continuing our longstanding friendship. We look forward to seeing you at the 2024 Ram Sale, where we will celebrate Andy and his contributions to HR over the last 30 years. Andy's last day at Haddon Rig will be 30 October, 2024.



Matt Kelly and Andy



Andy, Allie, Rachel and Sophie Maclean



# 2023 NATIONAL MERINO SHEEP SHOW AND SALE *Dubbo*

## THE RAMS PERFORMED WELL at the 2023 Dubbo Show, taking home:

- Reserve Champion, March-shorn medium wool Poll Ram  
HR 220355 (x 200780)
- Reserve Champion, March-shorn medium wool Merino Ram  
HR 220109 (x HR 150029)
- Reserve Champion, March-shorn medium / fine Merino Ram  
HR 220135 (x HR 150029)



Stuart Murdoch, Ed Beggs, Andy Maclean, Tom Bruce and Callum McLean, with Reserve Champion March-shorn medium Poll ram, Reserve Champion March-shorn medium Merino ram, Reserve Champion March-shorn medium / fine Merino Ram.

## 2024 WARREN SHOW

With over 50 show sheep presented, it was great to see so many studs supporting the 2024 Warren Show. Our '23 drop March shorn rams impressed the judge with HRP230090 winning the March shorn medium wool class of 15 rams (HRP230671 ran 2nd and HR230833 ran 3rd in this class).

HRP230097 came 1st in the Strong Wool March Shorn section. He then went on to win Champion Strong Wool and Champion Junior Ram of the Show. We also showed two Poll grass-fed sires, HRP200131 won the Strong Wool section and Reserve Champion Grass-fed ram of the show. HRP210582 won the Medium Wool grass-fed section and went onto win Champion Grass Fed ram of the Warren Show.

## 2024 BRED WELL, FED WELL WORKSHOP

On 26 July 2024, we hosted a Bred Well, Fed Well workshop in partnership with MLA, facilitated by Dr. Tim Gole from For Flocks Sake. We had 22 attendees and covered how productivity and profitability can be improved through better breeding and feeding over the livestock production cycle, with a specific focus on profit drivers. Outcomes of the workshop included how to develop a genetics and nutrition regime suited to each attendee's environment, prepping rams and ewes for joining and lambing, and how to use visual assessment as well as ASBVs to choose sires.

Andy Maclean gave a run-down of operations at HR as well as how to evaluate structure, faults and wool quality whilst sharing information about our breeding direction. We received great feedback on the day and we recommend attending a future workshop if you have the chance.



2024 Bred Well, Fed Well day

## 2023 ON-PROPERTY OPEN DAY

Over 100 people attended our 2023 Open Day, which featured Roger Fletcher discussing meat markets, Luke Harrison on animal nutrition, Charlie Blomfield on feedlotting and Dave Motley on training work dogs.

The aim of the day was to provide practical and useful information to our clients to take back to their operations and inspire some confidence in a year where many were feeling a little deflated. One highlight was Roger Fletcher advising that within 12-18 months, surplus meat stocks were likely to run thin, given the current storage space and shelf life which would prompt a recovery in lamb prices. Great to see the prophecy come true.



2023 Producers' Day



## TRADE WETHERS

In December '23, we purchased 2000 trade wethers at \$60/hd (avg 35 kgs) to run through the Summer, shear in the Autumn and fatten in the Winter in the feedlot. We locked them in on contract for June at \$7.30/kg. We got these lambs to 55 kgs liveweight (24 kgs dressed) to return a meat value of \$175/hd + skin.

We shored the trade lambs in mid-March to average 2.8kgs wool/hd. Interestingly, we shored our own HR wethers at the same time to average 4.1kgs/hd at 17.6 micron (at 1900c/kg) equating to a difference of \$14.30/hd. To us, this shows the importance of keeping wool quality and quantity on the right frame in your merino operation. All lambs shorn together averaged 3.5kgs/hd, to return an average of \$38.50 / hd (shearing cost \$11/hd) so net \$27.50. This covered the cost of feed in the feedlot and some of their running costs.

The second run of HR-bred wether lambs were fortunately fattened on crop (illabo wheat and feast canola). These lambs were locked in on contracts to sell in early-August at \$7.90/kg. These lambs returned the same in wool cut but we were ecstatic with the result and boost to our bottom line from their carcass value. 1208 '23 drop HR wether lambs at 25.2 kg dressed at \$7.85/kg = \$197/hd + \$12.50 skin. The lambs returned a total value of \$210.19/hd.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

We are capitalising on quick turnaround trades with our recently revamped cattle feedlot which Jim Coward made into a bunker feeding system for sheep, including 4 x 500 head pens. This is great for inducing wethers into our full grain automated feedlot.

We completed 2 x 1800 head sheep yards 5kms and 8kms from the HR woolshed. These yards incorporate a beguile design to allow us to mark, scan, process and load in the paddock with permanent 8m loading ramps fitted as well. This will save days of walking stock to the main set of yards at the wool shed. Permanent sprinklers and a 12m x 16m roof will also be fitted.

We installed a new loading ramp on the woolshed to improve safety and loading speed. We loaded a B-triple (750 ewes) in 40 minutes recently, which would've taken at least 2 hours using the old ramp.

We purchased a 5-way Pratley auto-drafter which will reduce drafting times and labour significantly. As we now use EIDs for all sheep, we can now automatically draft ewes into multiple sire groups or pre-selected mobs. This has stopped the use of blank colour tags and coloured siro mark brands. It is also fantastic for splitting feedlot weight ranges quickly and easily in 5 different grades.

We have installed 4 x Goanna remote water monitoring units to put on remote solar bores to reduce time taken to check water and ensure stock safety.



*New fascia, HR woolshed*



*New loading ramp, HR woolshed*



*New sheep yards, HR*

## FARMING UPDATE 2024

2023 was a challenging year for farming, between the cut-out in rain mid-year and inflated input costs. With rising costs, we're focused on improving efficiency and productivity and are currently building a 15m wide x 20m deep fertiliser shed so we can store and access fertiliser as we need it. We've also purchased a new 12t spreader so we can apply fertiliser using less fuel and labour, less re-fills and wastage and better accuracy.

We received our myBMP (Better Management Practices) accreditation under the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) in February, a certification granted for best-practice farming, labour and environmental practices. We've had a good start to the 2024 Winter cropping season with regular rain and our fingers are crossed for all fellow farmers as the year rolls on. The wheat out of the ground looks promising.



*Liv Falkiner and Robert Lathan*





Photo credit: Rachael Lenehan

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# OUR TEAM

## HADDONRIG

### George Falkiner

Chairman  
0419 474 262  
[george@haddon-rig.com.au](mailto:george@haddon-rig.com.au)

### Olivia Falkiner

General Manager  
0488 666 356  
[olivia@haddon-rig.com.au](mailto:olivia@haddon-rig.com.au)

### Andy Maclean

Stud Manager  
0429 662 226  
[andy@haddon-rig.com.au](mailto:andy@haddon-rig.com.au)

### Matt Kelly

Assistant Manager  
0488 106 011  
[matt@haddon-rig.com.au](mailto:matt@haddon-rig.com.au)

### Stuart Murdoch

Stud Classifier  
0427 437 271  
[stuartmurdoch2@bigpond.com](mailto:stuartmurdoch2@bigpond.com)

### Paula Blake

Office Manager  
(T) 02 6847 4405 | 0439 588 899  
[paula@haddon-rig.com.au](mailto:paula@haddon-rig.com.au)

### Andy McLeod

Stud Representative  
0418 465 725  
[cmcleod13@bigpond.com](mailto:cmcleod13@bigpond.com)

### Forbes Murdoch

Stud Representative  
0429 358 590  
[forbesm2014@gmail.com](mailto:forbesm2014@gmail.com)

### Brad Wilson

Nutrien Stud Representative  
0417 467 911  
[bradley.wilson@nutrien.com.au](mailto:bradley.wilson@nutrien.com.au)



2024 HR Stud team Top row, L-R: Matt Kelly, Andy Maclean. Bottom row, L-R: Olivia Falkiner, Charlie Kelly, Charlie Savage, Paula Blake, George Falkiner. Missing: Ed Beggs, Will Michell and Stuart Murdoch



Charlie Kelly and Charlie Savage with '24 drop lambs ready for breech and wrinkle scoring.



Hubert Murray

## HUBERT LENDS A HAND

We were lucky to have the help of little Hubert Murray who flew down from Trilby Station at the start of 2024 with his mum, dad and grandpa, Jess, Tom and Gary Murray. The Murrays are long term HR clients from Louth who join around 15,000 ewes a year using HR rams. It was fantastic to have 3 generations of Murrays at Haddon Rig.

## 2024 Calendar

**Dubbo National Ram Show & Display:**  
August 27 - 28

**South West Slopes Field Day**  
September 3

**Haddon Rig On-Property Sale:**  
September 12

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