

**JULY 2023**

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   @haddonrigstud



# HADDONRIG

Photo credit: Rachael Lenehan



## Dear fellow Merino breeders,

In very unfortunate news, 2023 saw the loss of two much-loved members of the Haddon Rig community. Our neighbour on the Marthaguy Road, Robert Perry passed away in March of this year. Robert Perry was a well-known client and friend of the HR team. Paul Kelly, dear friend, esteemed stud representative and renowned sheep classer passed away in May 2023. Please see page 7 for further reflections on these great men.

I have great pleasure in welcoming our third daughter Olivia to the HR team. Liv joined us in February as Assistant Manager and will be working with Andy Maclean, Robert Latham and myself across our stud, livestock and cropping enterprises. Liv brings new energy to the business following her career in corporate agriculture and has a deep passion for the land, especially the Stud sheep. Please take the time to introduce yourself to her and do not hesitate to call her if you have any queries. Sally and I will continue to divide our time between Haddon Rig and our house near Orange.

There are many things happening this year at Haddon Rig. Following two years of over 800mm of rain the five intersecting creeks on Haddon Rig caused a lot more damage to fences and pastures than originally thought. We are undertaking an extensive fencing program including 20 kms of replacement fencing, 4.5 kms of 1.8m exclusion fencing on our Western boundary and numerous creek crossings. We have also had to fix and replace many troughs, submerged pumps and infrastructure that were damaged.

Our quest for new labour saving technology continues with the completion of our 100 kilowatt solar PV and 150 kWh lithium-ion battery system which provides the farm with approximately 70% energy independence from the electricity grid. This has also reduced our power bill by nearly 70% but more importantly allows reliability of power for shearing and communications when blackouts occur.

Even though prices for meat and wool have eased a little for Merinos, we remain firmly committed to building our stud due to the proven profitability of the dual-purpose Merino. We purchased another 400 Moorundie Stud Poll ewes to continue to build up our poll ewe base. As per our Agripath benchmarking analysis, Merinos still give you the most consistent rate of return and have a healthy gross margin per hectare. We believe once the world economy gathers momentum again, these commodity prices will improve – and investing in the productivity of our Merinos will help position us to take advantage of this.

I believe that with generational change, it is important that the breeding objectives of the Stud are clearly laid out and progress accelerated using AI, ET and ASBVs.

*Please see page 4 for information about our genetic vision and breeding philosophy for the Stud.*

We were pleased to hear Jack Kelly and Austin Grace will be taking over some of Paul Kelly's classing clients. Jack has worked in the Merino industry since he left school. We are happy to encourage young people into the industry and will be working with Jack and Austin as they build their classing careers. (Jack: 0499 058 456)

This year we farewelled our two long-term and much-loved board directors, Peter McLachlan, who stepped down from the board after 41 years and John Kean, who stepped down after 33 years. We would like to thank John and Peter for their unwavering support and commitment to the family and company. Haddon Rig owes its success in no small part to their dedication and hard work.

We would like to thank Butch, Fiona, Meg, Josh, Jake and Trinity Pilley for their hard work and dedication over the years. The Pilleys retired as our shearing contractors in 2022 after 32 years doing the big shed. Butch Pilley began shearing at Haddon Rig at age 16. Fiona, Butch's wife had the pleasure of being taken on a shearing honeymoon as Butch took over the run. The Pilley family continue to work with us every March to do our annual blade shearing which we really appreciate. We would also like to thank Blake and Kent Skelly and their shearing team who have taken over the big shed for their hard work and commitment.

On a personal note, Sally and I are thrilled to announce our daughter Grace's engagement to Mr Harry O'Donnell.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy 2023 and I look forward to catching up at our 40th On-Property 2-tooth Sale on Thursday, 7th September 2023.

Kind Regards,  
**George Falkiner**



George and Liv Falkiner



Harry O'Donnell and Grace Falkiner

## 2023 STUD UPDATE *Andy Maclean*

Like everyone on the land in eastern Australia, it has been an interesting 12 months. Our lambing months May and June 2022 were well below average for rainfall. It started to rain in August and by December we had received twice our yearly average rainfall. The rain stopped at the end of 2022, HR has only received 112 mil of rain for the first 5 months in 2023.

These conditions made lambing very difficult in 2022. Despite the massive change in seasons the 2022 drop rams are exceptional. Similar to last year 12 of the ET bred ram lambs made it to the top group in the ram shed. The whole shed team averaged 96kg and averaged 19.3 microns, 2.9 SD, 15.1 CV and 99.3 CF for their Bendigo and Dubbo tests in mid-June. It is great to see the Poll rams continue to improve in wool quality and softness as well as growth every year. The huge investment in breeding and genetics is really paying off within the HR Poll stud. This is providing us with more quality rams so we can apply a lot more selection pressure when presenting rams for sale.

As a result of the flooding and the extreme wet, we made the decision to move the 2022 Haddon Rig ram sale to the Warren Show grounds. Again, we increased our Poll Ram numbers to 250 Rams and averaged \$3130 also offering 133 Merino Rams to average \$3198. It was great to see strong support for both studs.

In December 2022, we did a large ET, AI program (1800 Poll stud ewes and 504 Merinos). Feed quality was very low leading up to lambing, we have been trail feeding barley and lupins as well as putting out barley silage and ewe and lamb lick leading up to and during lambing. Considering the conditions, the AI and ET ewes have lambed very well and we can't wait to start tagging them soon to get a good look at them. The naturally joined Stud and Commercial ewes have been fed the same ration and are 4 weeks into their 6-week lambing and look to be lambing well. We will tag them in July.

Thank you very much to the whole HR team for their hard work and contributions throughout a very busy 12 months.



*Andy Maclean*

## COMBINING VISUAL SELECTION *with ASBVs*

In March of this year Haddon Rig received a 5-star rating from Sheep Genetics in recognition of our commitment to regular and accurate data collection. 2023 marks the 10th year of collecting and submitting data to Sheep Genetics for ASBVs on the Haddon Rig stud.

DNA testing has allowed accurate pedigree recording on a large scale. By having a greater understanding of both parents, we've been able to understand the relative performance of both dam and sire. It is helping us to achieve our genetic vision of breeding balanced and profitable animals with superior fertility, wool, early-growth.

There has been a lot of discussion in the Merino industry about the usefulness and validity of ASBVs and the weight they should have in making genetic decisions. At Haddon Rig we believe that the combination of visual assessment for wool and structure and the use of ASBVs as an additional tool is the best way to evaluate genetic potential. ASBVs provide relevant data points about each animal's genetic potential, specifically those harder to measure and later in life traits like reproduction and adult fleece traits.

Given our continued focus on balance and ensuring a consistent line of structurally sound rams with excellent wool for our clients, we have been encouraged by the relative performance of our MP+ and DP+ indexes compared to the industry. Further we remain well above the industry average for Adult Clean Fleece Weight (ACFW) and finer than industry for micron (Yearling Fibre Diameter or YFD) which proves that our wool remains a strong advantage of our product offering. We continue to collect breech

and wrinkle scores (EBCOV and EBWR) from all our stud lambs and this is assisting us for future selections.

ASBVs that we are monitoring over time and considering in our breeding program are;

- *Balance: Merino Production (MP+) and Dual Purpose (DP+)*
- *Growth: Yearling Weight (YWT), Post Weaning Weight (PWT), Eye Muscle Depth (EMD) and Yearling Fat (YFAT)*
- *Wool: Adult Clean Fleece Weight (ACFW) and Yearling Fibre Diameter (YFD)*
- *Welfare: Early Breech Cover (EBCOV) and Early Breech Wrinkle (EBWR)*
- *Reproduction: Ewe Rearing Ability (ERA) and Weaning Rate (WR)*

Importantly we look forward to the release of Sheep Genetics' 5 new indexes later this year, which will reflect up to date production systems and market values combined with a balanced approach to welfare traits.

Haddon Rig is working to make this information more accessible for our clients. Every year the accuracy of our ASBVs improves as we build on our database. We look forward to sharing the results of our progress and industry performance with our clients. Keep an eye on our website, as we continue to build our genetic vision and breeding philosophy.

# HADDON RIG ASBV ANALYSIS (2013 - 2023)

Over the last 10 years Haddon Rig has seen a marked improvement across the following ASBVs. It is important to note that these improvements were made without sacrificing the wool cut, quality and structural integrity HR is known for.

- 20% increase in Merino Production Index (MP+). The MP index focuses on genetic improvement of fleece weight, fibre diameter and body weight. It also includes staple strength and reproduction
- 20% increase in Dual Purpose Index (DP+), reflecting genetic improvement of fleece weight and body weight. The DP+ index additionally includes reproduction, carcass traits and staple strength
- 30% improvement in Yearling Fat Depth (YFAT), which we have achieved whilst maintaining fleece weight
- 10% improvement in Yearling Fibre Diameter (YFD) value
- 20% increase in Yearling Eye Muscle Depth (YEMD). Rams with more positive ASBVs for YEMD will produce progeny that have more muscle, independent of weight, and a higher lean meat yield
- 10% increase in Weaning Rate (WR). WR calculates the predicted number of lambs weaned per ewes joined
- 10% increase in Post Weaning Weight (PWT)

These trait improvements are even more remarkable, given Haddon Rig's ability to maintain our fleece weights across each animal's entire lifetime.

- HR sits in the top 20% for Adult Clean Fleece Weight (ACFW) and Yearling Clean Fleece Weight (YCFW). ACFW reflects the animals' ability to produce wool across their entire lifetime.
- HR is in the top 40% for Yearling Weight (YWT). Whilst we have not chased early growth alone, our overall growth has been accompanied by improvement in our carcass and fleece traits ensuring our animals remain balanced.



# BREEDING UPDATE *Stuart Murdoch, Stud Classer*

## Sound structure at Haddon Rig is paramount and one of our key fundamentals.

Our sheep must be able to walk to feed, breed, survive and thrive for the term of their natural life! Then and only then do we do the rest: The rest being our focus on wool quality and filling bales in partnership with an uncomplicated ewe that has a robust frame draped with a supple wool growing skin. She has doing-ability, fertility, maternal instincts, excellent post-partum recovery and breeds progeny that follow in her footsteps.

### Not much to ask for!

Importantly, to capitalise on the protein market, we are concentrating on selecting sires and dams that have the right genetic data and trends with the visuals to match. All this is aimed at breeding progeny that have attention-grabbing body shape and growth to quickly fit the processor's specifications, adding to the profit line of the Merino.

## Balance is one of our breeding policies.

HR will not focus on a couple of traits and jeopardise our historical foundations. We have seen markets change over the years and, to

our knowledge, the wheel still does a circle. We add to build on and improve on everything we have previously done, constantly assessing, and checking our objectives using every method available and always striving to breed better and increasingly profitable Haddon Rig Merinos for our clients.

We are very pleased with our 2022 auction results, our largest to date, with 369 Rams sold under the hammer. With the 38 stud ram prices out of the average, our sale is exceptional value:

- 210 Poll paddock auction rams averaged \$2860
- 120 Horn paddock auction rams averaged \$2763

There was quality, measured flock sires for all budgets and will be again this year. The auction team look like sires already! All our Polls have ASBV information plus pedigrees and actual data displayed for our clients to make the best possible purchasing decisions. We have been steadily building our pure Poll ewe numbers to meet the increasing demand from our clients. We have now reached 2500 stud ewes of which we artificially joined 1800 to industry leading sires.



HR Poll Rams (Photo Credit: Rachael Lenehan)

## Haddon Rig launches "Leg Up For Ag" Scholarship

We are pleased to partner with George and Sally's eldest daughter Eleanor Falkiner and her husband Charlie Blomfield at "Boridgeree", Canowindra to launch the Leg Up for Ag scholarship program. The \$10,000 scholarship is designed to encourage young people in agriculture. The first recipient is Mitch Salan, currently in his final year of Agronomy at Charles Sturt Uni, Wagga, who completed his first 6-week placement with us in May.



Mitch Salan

## It didn't just rain, it poured at Rossgole, Arberdeen in 2022

The Bragg family from the Scone district had 40 inches of rain last year and were thrilled with the way their HR blood ewes handled the conditions. Rossgole is classed by James Koster and they have been buying HR Polls for the last 6 years (previously HR horns). At our 2022 auction sale, the Bragg's put together a draft of 20 rams which were an even team of bright, fine medium wools to suit their 30- inch environment. Their wool classer, Brian Press of Bathurst was most impressed with the quality of the wool considering the season.

Similarly, Haddon Rig's new shearing contractor Blake Skelly (Bellwether Shearing) was surprised with the way the sheep shored after all the rain and floodwater they stood in and had this to say:

*"The HR sheep shored very well considering the extreme wet weather conditions of 2022. They combed well and surprisingly had minimal weather damage whilst carrying 12 months of wool and still maintained the productivity of cut that HR is synonymous for."*

# HR STUD RAMS CONTINUE TO PERFORM

## 2023 Merino Lifetime Productivity Day

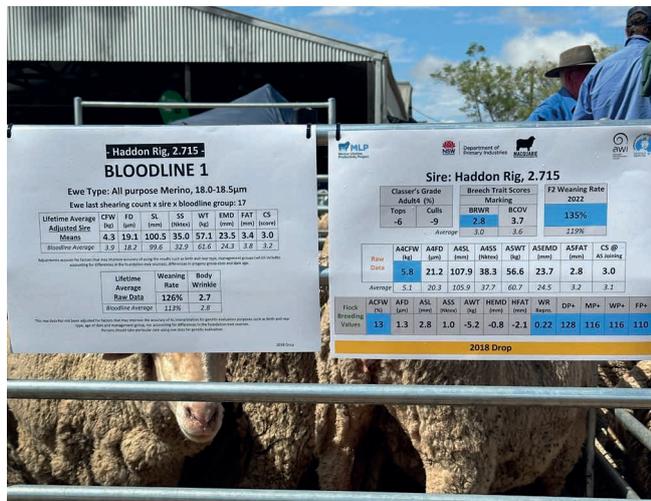
HR was recognised as Trait Leaders in AWI's Merino Lifetime Productivity Program for Reproduction, Fleece Weight and Breech Trait Scores (top 3). This included a weaning rate of 135% (WR: +0.22) and a Clean Fleece Weight (A4CFW) of 5.8 kgs (ACFW: 13%). We were also leaders across all four indexes: DP+ (128), MP+ (116), WP+ (116) and FP+ (110) and recorded the highest number of foetuses scanned. This aligns with what we find in our own scanning programs, with consistently high twinning rates across the years.

Importantly, HR also recorded the highest survivability (92% ewe survival). This is an encouraging validation of our efforts at HR, specifically our drive to breed a balanced animal that survives and performs consistently across its lifetime.

Comment from Ben Swain;

*"This ram we hypothesised would get better as he got older, and that's exactly what he did. He started off slowly and is now a trait leader for fleece weights and reproduction, which is rare to be doing both. He's currently leading the way with highest number of foetuses scanned. He's below average for fat and muscle, moderately framed, low on body weight, a really interesting ram when you think about economics of wool. He's a moderately framed sheep, cutting a lot of wool and siring a lot of lambs. He's the trait leader for all four indexes and the highest survival for ewes, 92% of these ewes have survived since marking. These ewes can rear a heap of lambs and survive, that's got to mean something. If you jump into any pen today, make it this one."*

Full results found here: <http://merinosuperiorsires.com.au>



Traits in blue indicate HR was a trait leader within Program



## 2023 Warren Show Prime Lamb Competition

- Class A - Merino
- Class B - Cross bred
- Class C - Dorper

Haddon Rig entered 4 pens of Merino lambs (3 to a pen), with a result of 1st and 2nd in Class A Merino as well as Reserve Champion lamb in overall classes. This is a testament to the modern Haddon Rig Merino, performing well against pure meat breeds and still having the ability to cut lots of quality soft wool.

## Client News

Haddon Rig clients had a great result at the 2023 Walgett Show:

- James and Jo Morris, Bonanza Merino Stud, Walgett, awarded Supreme Exhibit with a 6-tooth Merino ewe
- Alastair, Anna and Eleanor Wilson, Myall, Lightning Ridge, awarded reserve Grand Champion ewe
- Brennan O'Keeffe, Tootha Merino Stud, Walgett, awarded Champion 2-tooth ewe



James Morris, Judge Andrew Croft and Alastair Wilson



Judge Andrew Croft, Alastair Wilson and Brennan O'Keeffe



Anna, Eleanor and Alastair Wilson

# ON FARM DEVELOPMENTS AT HADDON RIG

With the increasing cost of labour we have been looking at ways to improve our efficiency. Our ex-Jackaroo Will Mackley, who has just completed his third year at Marcus, will construct two new sets of sheep yards in the Winter to reduce the travel time and distance from paddock to yard and make lamb marking, crutching, scanning and drenching easier and faster. We have also refurbished the square yards in Front Davis Hut.

We're pleased to have completed the renovations of the historic Haddon Rig woolshed, thanks to Tom Saunders who did a fantastic job. The shed now has a new board, chutes and stands in line with the latest AWI and industry standards. We completely gutted the shearing and working area, removed all left hand drags and converted to 11 modern right hand drag chutes with the correct width and drop-in to make it much easier for our shearers. Each working area was completely rebuilt with a good storage area and power points for fans, phones and boom boxes. We've also made

the catching pens the correct size and added a slope to the floor for much easier dragging. The shearers report it's a great shed to work in now.

Our 100-kWh solar project, co-funded by the NSW DPI has been finalised. The solar panels now supply the Haddon Rig domestic houses, woolshed, HR feedlot, Hangar and associated bores. It has cut down our electricity bill by 70%. With rising energy prices this is a welcome relief. We have also constructed solar to supply the primary water bores at Boomanulla. We are also carrying out trials for variable rate fertiliser mapping to reduce the use and cost of inputs. We have installed four Starlink systems which has transformed the reliability and speed of the internet.

The next year will see shade erected in our feedlot and finalisation of more containment feed yards to prepare for drought. We have also added another 5km of exclusion fencing on our South Western boundary to strengthen our biosecurity.



Newly rebuilt catching pens



100 kWh solar project



Exclusion fencing

## 2022 ON-PROPERTY AUCTION

We were proud to present our largest offering of Merino rams to date at the 39th annual on-property 2-tooth sale. With 60 more rams offered than 2021 we were pleased with a 95% clearance rate and a new stud record average.

In the breakdown 236 Poll Merino rams sold to average \$3130 and 133 Merino rams averaged \$3198, giving a total sale average of \$3150 for 369 rams – a new record for the stud.

The top priced ram was purchased by Bonanza Merino Stud for \$24,000. The Merino sire was lot six in the catalogue, HR 211283 by W170470. His wool tests were FD 19.6, SD 3.1, CV 15.5 and CF 99.7. The Morris family's other purchase was their first into the Poll world, securing lot one HR Poll 210561 (PP) for \$10,000. It was at ET-bred Poll sire with fibre tests of FD 19.3, SD 3.2, CV 19.6, CF 99.8, YEMD 1.3 and YFAT 0.4.

James Morris said, "Our family has confidence in purchasing sires from Haddon Rig. We have bought a lot of top rams over the years and they all perform and survive in our environment. We always buy their genetics because we know how safe they are".

Topping the Polled rams was tag 210083, purchased by DR and WA

Wilson, Walgett for \$16,000. HR Poll 210083 was sired by HR Poll 190612. His wool tests were FD 18.9, SD 2.8, CV 14.8, CF 99.7 with a PWWT of 8.5 and YWT of 10.

Alastair Wilson said the Poll sire was his first pick, "210083 was my number one pick and it was a quick and easy decision. He is the exact wool type we are looking for on a well-balanced ram. He is a well crimped medium wool with excellent staple length whilst still carrying the wool density we need in our country."

Both the Morris and the Wilson families are valued long-term clients of the Haddon Rig stud.

George Falkiner said there were a lot of long-time repeat clients at the sale with about 10 new clients present. "We increased our Poll numbers by 50 after the high demand last year and are really pleased to see the clients supporting that." Mr Falkiner said.

"We are seeing a lot of new clients coming, looking for that consistency, reliability and the guarantee of structural correctness and wool quality. It's our priority to deliver them that year-in, year-out." - George Falkiner



L-R: Brad Wilson, Callum McLean (front), Andy Mcleod, Alastair and Doug Wilson, Brett Smith, George Falkiner and Paul Dooley.



L-R: Andy Mcleod, Callum McLean, George Falkiner, James Morris, Olivia Falkiner and Andy Maclean.

# FARMING WRAP-UP

Most people would probably rather forget the winter farming for 2022. I'm sure you are aware it was extremely wet after 2021 planting and harvest and I'm sure you're also aware how to recover tractors, planters and headers out of a bog.

And that's how 2022 started: bogged. It was an exceptionally challenging year with a lot of doubt as to whether we were ever going to get a planter started. We started with canola around mid-April and got most of it germinated before another change came through, however we lost a few seeds in the last of the planted canola. We also planted about 300ha of raider wheat which really struggled due to it being so wet.

We didn't get going on wheat until the end of June which was probably still too early as we were getting bogged 2-3 times per day. It was far too wet for the 18m NDF planter, so we had to put the 9570T onto the 12m NDF. We pushed on with the 12m until we thought it was dry enough for the 18m planter only to get it bogged also. One that sticks in my head is when it took us almost a full day with a 30T excavator to dig about 1m down, 18m wide and 60m long to find a hard enough bottom to get it out. It was extremely trying times and hard for the team to find enough willpower to keep going but we got there in the end.

After planting it was spraying and spreading; again it was no surprise that we were constantly getting bogged. Harvest soon rolled around which, to my surprise, was less boggy and most of the time the headers could walk back out. Minimal damage was done to the headers, which was a great outcome, but I'm sure not one of them left the property with straight stairs. The best yielding wheat was about 2.8T/ha.

The cotton season went fairly well. We started planting in the first week of October and planted 550ha. Watering went well and picking was straight forward despite getting bogged a few times. Braemar cotton yielded the best and Boomanulla was close behind.

The Braemar cotton got us nominated for best yield over 200ha - we were in the top three, but it didn't quite get us the award.

Going forward, we are looking at how to save on labour, including development of pontoon irrigation for the cotton, variable rate fertiliser application and on-farm infrastructure developments to improve productivity. We're also fixing up accommodation to attract and retain good long-term employees. Our on-farm grain storage bunker has been an invaluable asset to protect grain from pigs and wildlife.

2022 was a difficult season but the Haddon Rig team pushed through the hard times and we somehow managed to get it done. I would like to congratulate the team on a huge effort.

Hopefully the season is looking good wherever you are, and all the best.  
**Robert Latham**, Cropping Manager



2023 Sowing team: Liam Nichol, HR Cropping Manager Robert Latham, Jack Robertson, Paula Strehli and Ferd Klaus.



Robert Latham, Cropping Manager

## VALE

### PAUL KELLY



Paul Kelly, 19th May 2023

The Haddon Rig family were devastated by the tragic loss of Paul Kelly on 19th May, 2023. We pass on our deepest sympathies to his wife Karen and children, Jack, Jesse, Charlie and his large close-knit family and the numerous friends and clients that his passing has affected. The void he is leaving, not only in the Merino industry but to all of those he touched is indisputable.

Paul was a valued and committed member of the Haddon Rig team and, most importantly, a friend. He has worked beside us for the last 7 years and his contributions have played a major role in the success of our stud business.

Paul slotted into HR seamlessly. We loved working with him, his common-sense approach, his humour, his smile, his simple clear thinking, timely pertinent comments always injected when just needed and that is all before we mention his industry leading sheep classing skills.

Loved and respected by all. We miss you and will not forget you Paul Kelly.

### ROBERT PERRY

Robert John Perry, passed away on the 27th March, 2023 aged 59 years. Son of Kevin (deceased) and Rose Marie Perry, partner to Juliette, and brother to Rosaleen, Charles, Bridget and Matthew.

Rob was a much-valued long-term client of Haddon Rig, a dear friend and trusted neighbour.



Robert Perry, 27th March 2023



Photo Credit: Rachael Lenehan

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Visit our website for all our updated news and to download upcoming Ram Sale Catalogue.

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# OUR TEAM

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2023 HR Stud team (Back row: L-R) George Falkiner, Callum McLean, Stuart Murdoch, Paula Blake, Forbes Murdoch, Jim Coward, Caroline Coward, Andy Maclean and Olivia Falkiner. (Front row: L-R) Connor Anderson, Tom Bruce, Paul Arragon, Ed Beggs and Anna Coward. Absent: Maggie Cavanagh

## 2023 Calendar

**Australian Sheep & Wool Show:**

July 14 - 16  
Bendigo, VIC

**Marra Field Day:**

July 22  
Marra Hall, NSW

**Nyngan Ag Expo:**

August 5  
Nyngan, NSW

**Haddon Rig Producers Day:**

August 11  
"Haddon Rig" Warren, NSW

**Dubbo National Ram Show & Display:**

August 22 - 23  
Dubbo, NSW

**South West Slopes Field Day:**

August 29  
Harden, NSW

**Haddon Rig On-Property Sale:**

September 7  
"Haddon-Rig" Warren, NSW

[www.haddonrig.com.au](http://www.haddonrig.com.au)

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