

RAPAD QFPI ROUND 1 Monitoring and Evaluation Interview and Exit Survey Visit 1 Summary

As part of the QFPI Round 1 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) program completed/near completion cluster participants were interviewed and asked to complete an exit survey. This involved Morgan Gronold, RAPAD QFPI Project Coordinator, Andrew Perkins and Gerry Roberts, independent M&E specialists and part of the project M&E reporting team, interviewing over thirty people from six clusters in Ilfracombe, Longreach, Stonehenge and Yaraka. Comments below are told here in the words of individual landholders.

What's happened with employment?

- Since putting up the fence we have employed an additional man to put in water infrastructure we had stockpiled. We now have more confidence in our future so we are happy to invest now the fence is up.
- It employs more people than you realise because the contractors that had two [people] now have four. One local fence supply material business has employed an extra three staff.
- [Thanks to the fence] I am able to pay someone else part time already.

What does having fencing happening mean for your business and getting back into sheep and wool production?

- This year with the fence we got 84% [lambing] last year we got none.
- For one block we have had two lambings there thanks to the fence with the number of twins we have raised this year we are going to do 103%.
- Our fence is not finished but we did have the creeks fenced before lambing. For the last few years we had 40% lambing and if you got 60% that was great. Where the fence is we got 100% and we weren't even completely enclosed.
- Our cluster had 41.5km of the 53km completed and we achieved 103% lambing in scanned ewes or 94% in all joined ewesⁱ, this has not happened in our memory here.
- We reckon we will eradicate lice and brucellosis all thanks to the fence. That will save us a lot of work and money, biosecurity plans and everything become easier and there will [now] be a limit to weeds coming in.

What's happening to your health and wellbeing?

- The fence gives you confidence to go again once it rains, before that the problem was we were just going backwards, not just the lambs being eaten, all the sheep were stressed and we didn't have sheep to sell.
- There is mass excitement now the fence is finished and we are having a party for that! We are getting control back and that will be a massive thing!
- Once you have the control you don't have to stress because you can make decisions, do the work and know the outcomes. We were not getting a result before the fencing and that has had a compounding effect by getting us more frustrated.

What's happened to workloads?

- We are no longer chasing our tails and are able to think into the future.
- The extra time we [now] have has allowed one of us to go and do other things, such as take more responsibilities in our local community.

Pastures – impacts, effects, what are you seeing?

- I'm seeing grass and herbage I haven't seen before thanks to the fence.
- I think the response will be phenomenal once we get a season. We'll have the opportunity to rest country, being able to lock country up will be fantastic and will have significant positive impacts on long term carrying capacity.

When the fence is up how are the sheep reacting?

- They are more content because they are not being annoyed and under stress and they are a lot more relaxed.
- For the last couple of months, as feed dried out, sheep have remained in really good order because they haven't been hounded by dogs.
- Sheep at home now feed right out to the boundary, use all the country and they are peaceful and not so wild.
- Definitely when you go to muster a paddock they are all [now grazing] across the whole paddock due to no longer having dog pressure, before this wasn't the case.
- You could tell when they were under pressure from dogs as they were a lot harder to muster, it took more time and they react differently. It is much better now.

Answers to the following questions are being ranked as Agree or Strongly Agree:

- This finished fence has met all my expectations.
- The amount of communication I now have with cluster members has increased.
- Overall I'd rate the project as successful.
- I believe the way RAPAD managed the project was practical and useful.

Final comments:

- We weren't in charge before but we are back in charge now thanks to the fence.
- Every fence that goes up makes us all better off.
- I knew I would have a more content husband when the fence was up but its been a real bonus having more content sheep as well.

To hear more from producers involved go to the RAPAD Youtube channel https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=rapad+cluster+fencing

ⁱ Overall figure of flock as includes some in the flock who weren't scanned.