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What a difference good, general rain can make to the level of optimism among Queensland's sheep and wool growers. Whilst at the time of writing, Queensland's producers are eagerly awaiting summer rain to provide more substantial, condition-score producing paddock grass; significant, out-of-season winter rain across much of Queensland's sheep and wool producing regions has been a welcome relief for producers, providing an over-abundant amount of herbage to feed (and fatten) the State's livestock.

This winter rain also encouraged thought-provoking consideration to restocking Queensland's drought depleted livestock numbers, in particular, restocking with sheep. The last four (4) years of drought, coupled with the memories of the 2000's drought, have encouraged many of those Queensland producers who moved away from sheep and wool to straight cattle production, to consider the economic benefits of a sheep operation. Many have stated "...it is far cheaper to feed a wether during drought, than it is to feed a beast...". Coupled with the cost of drought feeding, many producers are looking for more regular cash flow opportunities.

However, the move back into sheep and wool is still hindered by the number and impact of the wild dog. Whilst many sheep have been purchased and brought back from agistment to Western Queensland regions, many producers are loathed to do so without a strong, robust exclusion fence to protect their livestock from wild dog predation. The need to balance the finance requirements between restocking and building expensive exclusion fences is difficult; but government grant funding of approximately \$18M over the last two (2) years has provided benefit, where the government's contribution is meeting 50% of the cost of wire and posts.

Similarly, the Federal and Queensland State Governments have allocated approximately \$10M over the same timeframe to landholder groups and industry organisations for on-ground control efforts for pest animals and weeds. AgForce Sheep & Wool continues to lobby for additional funding to protect the sheep industry and to encourage its expansion.

This year, under the guidance of Traprock wool grower Mr Sandy Smith as President, the AgForce Sheep & Wool Board met in Longreach, on-property at Gore, South-east Queensland and in Brisbane. The Board's Longreach meeting coincided with Longreach's May Show, which hosted the annual State Sheep Show. With a number of organised social functions for members and guests, it was an opportune time and location to meet with some of Queensland's politicians to discuss wild dogs, biosecurity, drought and telecommunications.

The future is very bright for the Queensland sheep and wool industry with many western Queensland producers speaking of the economic benefits that exist with operating a sheep enterprise compared to cattle. Long, costly droughts and detrimental impact to the landscape in these areas are weighing in favour of running sheep, where they are cheaper to feed during drought, but more importantly, allow for more regular cash flow opportunities. It is the aim of the AgForce Sheep & Wool Board to ensure that the efforts being made to control the wild dog are enhanced and maintained so that more and more producers rebuild their confidence to run a sheep and wool production enterprise without the fear of predation.