



Local Land  
Services  
Central Tablelands

# 2015 Activity Report



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## Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of the report January 2015 to December 2015. However, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.  
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# Foreword

As we moved into the second year of operation, Central Tablelands Local Land Services had a focus on delivering programs to the region that would help producers raise productivity, improve natural resources, protect our agricultural industries from pests and disease and respond with the community to regional and state wide emergencies, such as the Hunter floods and the response to the detection of Red Imported Fire Ants at Port Botany in Sydney.

This work has been complimented by the delivery of projects supported by the NSW Government Catchment Action Funding and the Commonwealth Government funded National Landcare Programme. These were launched at the Mudgee Small Farm Field days by Mr. Mark Coulton MP – Member for Parkes.

Outside of these projects, the development of the Community Advisory Groups in the areas of Agricultural Industries, Natural Resource Management, Cultural Heritage and Local Government are ensuring that our services are beneficial and supportive of our producers and wider communities. This was evident in the excellent results of the state wide customer service survey, which ranked Central Tablelands extremely high in delivery of services to customers.

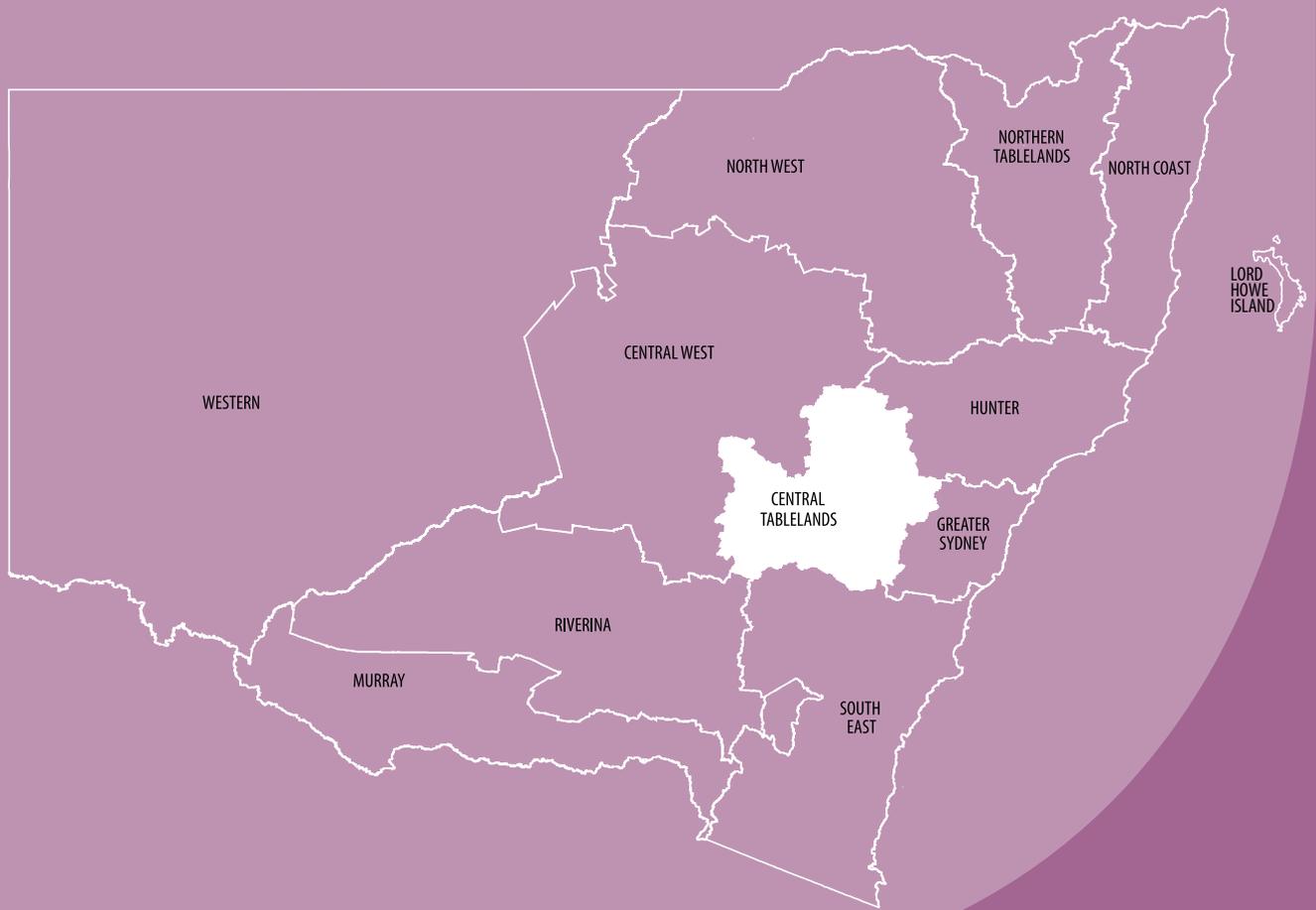
The composition of the board in 2015 was The Hon. Ian Armstrong (Chair) and board members; Reg Kidd, Pip Job, Bruce Gordon, John Lowe, Ian Rogan and John Seamen, along with General Manager Peter Sparkes. Together with all staff at the Central Tablelands the board committed to developing a strategic plan and operational plans that will be delivered over the next five years, these plans have a focus on productivity and innovative outcomes that support our region.

The board is only part of our organisation, it is in the hands of all staff members that plans become realised. This is evident in every unit of the business, not only in those roles that we all see but also in the roles that happen within the organisation that make it possible for our work to continue. All staff are congratulated on their dedication and focus in achieving outcomes.



*Missing from this photo is Bruce Gordon.*

# Central Tablelands region at a glance



Our region has a fantastic complexity of people, land, water, production and biodiversity. We have vibrant communities which are enhanced by abundant natural resources and agricultural industries.

- An area of approximately 31,365km<sup>2</sup>
- Falls predominantly within Wiradjuri Aboriginal country
- Home to over 156,000 residents including an Aboriginal population of 7,012
- A large proportion of land surrounding major centres is now divided into small lifestyle blocks
- Over 13,000 ratepayers

## Natural assets

The Central Tablelands has numerous natural resource assets such as national parks, culturally significant areas and is home to a vast range of native fauna and flora.

Our region is home to the headwaters of the Macquarie, Lachlan and Cudgegong River valleys. Some of the streams and waterways are noted as being very close to pristine. Many of the eastern areas of the region feature high value aquatic assets such as hanging swamps, nationally recognised wetlands and unique valley fill stream formations.

Gross Value \$M



## Agriculture and industry

Agriculturally our region is highly diverse including horticulture, viticulture, livestock, cropping and forestry. Evenly spread summer and winter rainfall supports productive cropping systems. Grazing is the most significant land use followed by broad acre crops and horticultural enterprises including areas of fruit and vegetable growing and viticulture.

Other significant industries across our region include mining operations which are focused around Orange, Lithgow and Mudgee and tourism particularly in the wine areas of Orange, Cowra, Canowindra and Mudgee.

# 2015 local achievements



**526**  
PROPERTY VISITS  
BY VETS AND  
BIOSECURITY OFFICERS

**2,398**  
GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY  
VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



**\$50,000**  
AWARDED IN LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT GRANTS



**96**  
LIVESTOCK EXPORT  
CERTIFICATES ISSUED



**298**  
PARTICIPANTS AT  
TRAINING EVENTS

**32,853**  
HECTARES PROTECTED THROUGH  
VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS



**18,772ha**  
MANAGED FOR SUSTAINABLE GRAZING



**80**  
PROPERTIES INVOLVED  
IN WILD DOG SPRING BAITING



**110**  
SALEYARD INSPECTIONS



**\$80,000**  
AWARDED FOR SUSTAINABLE  
LAND USE THROUGH SMALL  
GRANTS TO THE COMMUNITY

# Local Land Services goals

Local Land Services aligns all of its work with its mission of being a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources. The strategic direction of Local Land Services is summarised in four organisational goals.

Resilient,  
self-reliant and  
prepared local  
communities

Biosecure, profitable,  
productive and  
sustainable primary  
industries

Healthy, diverse,  
connected  
natural  
environments

Board members  
and staff who are  
collaborative,  
innovative and  
commercially-focused

# Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities



Central Tablelands Local Land Services continued to work closely with the diverse agricultural industries by establishing the Agricultural Industry Advisory Group.

The advisory programs delivered included specific priorities identified by stakeholders and investors, including paddock plants identification days, soil health, property planning and lifetime management of sheep and the development of the Women in Productive Ag group. The team also assisted growers to access premium markets by facilitating workshops on accreditation schemes for European Union and grass fed meat products.

We also commenced working on priorities identified by the agricultural industry including reduced access to pollinators and managing weeds, such as silverleaf nightshade, by bringing in experts to work with local industries.

## **Lamb survival field days and partnership with Sheep Connect**

Two successful 'Managing and improving your lamb survival' workshops were held. The days were run in conjunction with Sheep Connect NSW and over 35 producers participated in the workshops.

## **Women in Productive Ag group**

The inaugural Women in Productive Pastures and Landscapes Network began in the Bathurst area. The group brings together like-minded rural women interested in investigating productive agricultural landscapes, enterprises and potential industries. It is an opportunity to learn about central tablelands agriculture and pastures, but most importantly to network and strengthen community engagement.

## **Ground cover incentives – stock management areas**

Farm planning training was conducted to assist farmers in becoming more sustainable and resilient to drought through the use of stock management areas. These areas enable maintenance or improvement of groundcover levels and reduce environmental degradation of the paddocks during dry conditions.

## **Supporting Landcare**

Ongoing support of the Central Tablelands Regional Landcare Network has assisted in engagement, networking, capacity building and resource sharing across 60 Landcare groups.

Our Landcare Buddy program saw staff assigned to support Landcare and community groups in their area. Additional funding support for coordinators was delivered to four existing networks and a new network in the Lithgow/Oberon area.

We also hosted the 2015 NSW Landcare and Local Land

- Nearly 300 people attended training events.
- 16 groundcover incentives resulted in the protection of 23,057 ha through improved groundcover
- \$80,000 was awarded to communities for sustainable land use
- Completed five burns using cultural fire practices
- \$50,000 was awarded in Local government grants for roadside vegetation and riparian improvement

Services conference in Orange, attended by 227 delegates from across NSW including many of the local Landcare groups who showcased their projects to the wider NSW community.

## **Kids Teaching Kids**

Our education programs, in partnership with Central West Local Land Services, have delivered five 'Kids Teaching Kids' events for primary and secondary students including an Agricultural Careers Expo and 10 published books on feral animals in conjunction with Invasive Animals CRC and EnviroStories.

## **Working closely with our Aboriginal communities**

We continue to support the five major Aboriginal communities in the region through an active engagement network. Eleven local Aboriginal community leaders and young people were supported to attend the 2015 Indigenous fire forum in Cape York, building their knowledge and skill in cultural fire methodology and practice.

## **Local Government partnerships**

The Environment and Waterways Alliance, supported by Central Tablelands and Central West Local Land Services, reviewed their five year Plan, guiding the natural resource activities of 19 participating Councils. All the activities undertaken by the Alliance directly align with Local Land Services investment priorities and goals.

# Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

Our biosecurity team continued its work with landholders, community, industry and government to identify, prevent, eradicate and manage biosecurity risks of pests and diseases.

The Animal Biosecurity and Welfare Business Plan 2015-2016 guided the animal biosecurity team with surveillance being a critical function. Our team of District Veterinarians made field visits to many sheep, cattle, goat and pig producers diagnosing a range of animal health issues and excluding the more serious notifiable diseases. The management of endemic diseases and contaminants in partnership with land managers also remains an important role in managing biosecurity risks. It enables our staff to maintain rapport with the community and to hone skills in diagnosis, management, prevention and eradication of diseases.

During 2015 we undertook regular sale yard inspections and supported NSW DPI in compliance and enforcement of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) while managing the regional Property Identification Code (PIC) procedures.

## Maintaining travelling stock reserves

The network of travelling stock reserves across our region were managed for a range of uses including short and long term grazing, apiary, recreational and sporting activities. The current review of these important community assets will see the development of detailed plans of management in 2016.

## Protecting our agricultural industry

During the year we began a project looking at the levels of Q fever vaccination uptake, the number of people diagnosed with the disease and the number at risk among primary producers in the Central Tablelands. The aim of the project is to increase awareness of the disease and increase uptake of vaccination. Q fever is the most frequently reported zoonotic disease in Australia, a zoonotic disease being a disease that can be passed between animals and humans.

We worked closely with pig producers and owners, undertaking audits of facilities and providing information on a range of issues from the legal aspects of owning pigs, property identification codes (PICs), feeding and potential areas of feed contamination.

- Maintained a network of 310 travelling stock reserves.
- Undertook 75 investigations to exclude any animal disease.
- One hundred per cent of at risk pig properties were inspected for swill feeding in the past four years.
- Four wild dog management plans were developed.
- Pest plant and animal control measures have been implemented on more than 14,500 ha.
- Issued 331 property identification codes.

## Pest animal, plant and insect control

Throughout the year we also provided advice and assistance to land managers and the community in the management of declared pests including foxes, rabbits, feral pigs and wild dogs. A large number of land managers attended our 1080 training courses, and targeted wild dog trapping schools were run to support individuals and wild dog groups.

We focused strongly on facilitating the formation of groups who will manage invasive species through the development of vertebrate pest management plans and cooperative management programs. Our support involves training and on ground works as well as providing assistance in sourcing external funding to support on ground activities and implement broad scale projects across public and private land. The provision of baits for declared pests remains an important function and the introduction of the canid pest ejector this year demonstrates our desire to source and investigate new technologies which will improve the management of invasive species across the region.

Plague locust activities centered on surveys, advice and the provision of chemicals. Fortunately this was confined to a small area in the north west of the region.

As part of the Government's response to the review of weed management, we invited stakeholders to form a Weeds Advisory Committee to develop the Central Tablelands Weeds Regional Strategic Plan.

We worked closely with NSW DPI, which has the lead role in plant pests and diseases, to increase the skills of our staff and ensure we are able to assist in plant biosecurity incidents. Staff attended training and workshops on plant biosecurity, monitoring and surveillance. We are fortunate to have staff with experience in this field.





# Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

We were successful in gaining support from the Commonwealth National Landcare Programme, the NSW Government Catchment Action program and a number of smaller natural resource management programs.

These funds were used to support projects to increase the adoption of improved land management, retain and preserve environmental assets, water, vegetation and soil. The projects helped us connect existing conservation and privately held native vegetation as well as protect specific areas. We provided incentives to landholders to meet the National Landcare Programme and Catchment Action NSW priorities based on our priorities in the draft regional strategic plan.

Other projects supported:

- planning for the use of environmental water in the Lachlan River
- long term environmental monitoring
- protecting the Booroolong Frog and other threatened species
- weed management

Two of the largest projects that have contributed to improving our natural resources are the Targeted Ecosystems Project and the Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project.

## Targeted ecosystems

This project focused on developing partnerships and supporting threatened species within the region. Partnerships were developed with a range of stakeholders including Forestry Corporation, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Landcare. The project had a number of different components which were formed around the needs of some of our threatened species in the region:

*Purple Copper Butterfly* – We educated private and public landholders on the benefits of retaining and enhancing the known habitat of this species. A field day was attended by 45 community members, larvae population monitoring involved six staff and six volunteers and on-ground weed control was undertaken over 40 ha on five properties containing known Purple Copper Butterfly habitat.

*Black Gum (Euc. aggregata)* – Our activities included working with private and public landholders over 13 ha to carry out weed control, fencing and the propagation of Black Gum seed collected on-site for tree planting.

*Blue Mountains Swamps* – As a support to threatened

species such as the Blue Mountains Skink and the Giant Dragonfly this project is rehabilitating Browns Swamp which includes culvert remediation and tree planting over six ha.

*Abercrombie Snags* – We transported and installed snags and rocks over two kilometres of the Abercrombie River for critical instream habitat for species such as the Murray Cod and Macquarie Perch. We also raised awareness through the placement of interpretive signage.

## Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project

This project improved the extent, condition and connectivity of native vegetation along the western edge of the Blue Mountains from the Capertee Valley in the north to the Tuglow River in the south.

During 2015, this project provided ongoing support of four strategic partnerships to assist in the recovery of a number of threatened species including:

- Regent Honeyeater
- Brush-tail Rock-wallaby
- Purple Copper Butterfly.

We supported eight landholders in planting approximately 75 ha of native revegetation (including 50 ha of direct seeding). A further 14 were supported to help restore approximately 380 ha of native terrestrial and riparian vegetation and five collaborative projects were undertaken to manage invasive species at a landscape scale.

We increased knowledge, awareness and understanding among the community through a range of activities. These included the establishment of a community-focused fauna monitoring project in the Capertee Valley and the delivery of a workshop on the habitat requirements of threatened fauna.

Two research projects were also supported: one to assess the impact of two invasive flora species on native plant diversity; and another to continue ongoing research into the effectiveness of revegetation sites as potential habitat for threatened woodland bird species.

## Native vegetation management

A customer focus on providing targeted advisory services to land managers in the region was a core realisation for native vegetation advice and assistance during 2015. Activities included:

- property visits
- guidance in the use of the Online Tools for Assessment of Native Vegetation under the *Native Vegetation Act* and Regulations
- steering clients in the use of Notifications
- interaction with other organisations such Local Government in addressing native vegetation enquiries
- general enquiries from people within the region who wish to increase their knowledge and act in accordance with the legislation.





Senior Local Land Services Officer Brett Littler helped 22 producers get accreditation to enable them to access European Union markets.

When the season was looking poor Brett organised workshops to help build the skills of producers to manage their water and feed. Recognising the threat of dry season on the environment and income of livestock producers Brett initiated a project that helped producers establish stock management areas.

Brett also used his skills and contacts to assist the Hunter and Northern Tablelands regions deliver their advisory programs.

Brett takes pride in doing the best he can for producers by being up to date with the latest information. He is a great advocate for beef producers and has a dynamic and innovative approach to improving the industry.

## In our community

## Protecting and restoring ecosystems

### The challenge

This project engages private and public land managers to protect and restore ecosystems across the Central Tablelands region through a range of restoration activities, prioritising works that protect and restore nationally and state listed threatened species and ecological communities.

### Work undertaken

We have contracted landholders to protect land to create continuous tracts of native vegetation for species habitat and dispersal. Landholders received financial and technical support to undertake activities such as restoring understory diversity, protection of waterways and protection of remnant vegetation by managing the impact of grazing, pest animals and invasive weeds. A program of educational events also increased community awareness of issues.

### Benefits

- 90 property visits as part of an Expression of Interest process.
- 900 ha under contract to protect and enhance native vegetation, riparian and revegetation.
- Three carp musters to raise awareness of pest animals and water values.
- Field days to increase knowledge of revegetation establishment techniques and riparian health.
- Projects to investigate and enhance Copper Butterfly habitat.
- Enhancement of Eucalyptus aggregata communities through protection and enhancement.
- Riverine habitat mapping of reaches of the Lachlan, Abercrombie and Macquarie Rivers.
- Website promotion through the Riverspace website.

### Key achievement

We have raised awareness of threatened species through a combination of financial incentives to landholders and capacity building events. Activities have been designed to be inclusive while also targeting activities to the greatest effect.

### In collaboration with

- Local Government
- Office of Environment and Heritage
- Community fishing clubs
- Land managers
- NSW Fisheries



“The group benefited, regardless of previous experience, from the one on one instruction, on preparation and sowing of a tree/shrub plantation for livestock and native fauna protection.”

## Soil and pasture health workshops

### The challenge

This series of workshops aimed to help participants to better understand the physical attributes of soil, the importance of ground cover, soil carbon, what might be limiting pasture health and what the soil test numbers mean from their property. Importantly, it gave the participants an opportunity to understand more about their soils.

### Work undertaken

Each group completed a minimum of two half day workshops focussing mainly on soil nutrients that contribute to healthy soils and pasture.

The groups were small which allowed good interaction and personalised information on their soils and pastures.

### Benefits

- Encouraging participants to look at their soils and pastures.
- Improving soil health knowledge and general soils knowledge.
- Increasing an understanding of soil acidity, fertility, salinity and sodicity.
- Understanding the linkage between groundcover and soil health.
- Understanding how organic matter is important in soil health.
- Understanding what the numbers mean on a soil test.
- Learning about soil nutrients and how to address limiting benchmarks.
- Understanding the relationship between soil health, catchment and landscape health.

### Location

Workshops were held in

- Hampton (two)
- Meadow Flat (two)
- Bathurst (two)
- Mudgee (two)
- Oberon (one)
- Capertee (one)



### Key achievement

16 workshops were held.

Producers participating in these workshops manage in excess of 21,000 ha.

77 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they would change their practices due to attending this workshop series.

### In collaboration with

- Catchment Action NSW

“The workshop was very practical. It was good to compare the different results from different properties - to increase our understanding of the numbers and their implications on our property”

- Participant from Oberon group

## Coordinated wild dog program

### The challenge

The coordinated program was tasked with the challenge of continuing to minimise the reported incidence of livestock predation, while at the same time stopping the constant migration of the menace into new areas where they have not previously been reported.

### Work undertaken

Two ground baiting programs, were conducted involving 82 landholders. This was supported by aerial baiting of 33 properties.

Four targeted trapping programs were executed during the nine month project.

34 properties had involvement in the trapping programs removing 15 dogs.

Training forums were held for 30 land managers on all aspects of wild dog management.

### Benefits

- The awareness created in the general community of the wild dog situation.
- Empowering land managers with knowledge and experience.
- Broad scale control of foxes due to baiting programs.
- Control over a broader area.

### Key achievement

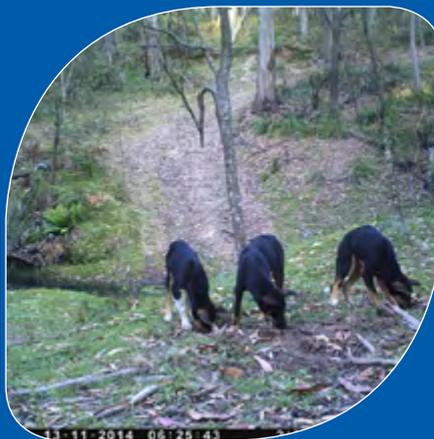
Extensive monitoring of wild dog populations using cameras was carried out in the lead-up to control practices being implemented and again following coordinated trapping and baiting programs. The removal of greater than 80 per cent of dogs was achieved in all areas. Stock impacts have remained low in these areas.

### In collaboration with

- NPWS
- Forests NSW
- Rylstone district wild dog assoc
- Goulburn river wild dog assoc
- Hargraves Hill End wild dog control group
- Mudgee Merriwa district wild dog assoc

### Location

The integrated control program was executed by the three wild dog control groups situated in the north eastern section of the Central Tablelands region.



“Large scale coordinated control programs give us the opportunity to get a true understanding of the scale of wild dog situation in our region”

- Mike Suttor, President, Rylstone District Wild Dog Assoc

## Impact of worms on sheep meat production

### The challenge

Internal parasites are a major problem for the Australian sheep industry and the most important health and production problem for sheep run on the central tablelands. Anthelmintic resistance is an increasing problem meaning that farmers need a range of measures to control gastrointestinal worms rather than simply relying on drenches (this approach is referred to as Integrated Parasite Management or IPM). IPM has been tested and implemented for the merino industry but surprisingly little work has been done involving sheep in the prime lamb sector.

### Work undertaken

Four Central Tablelands prime lamb properties were included in the study which was run from 2012 to 2015. On two of the properties an IPM approach was recommended and monitored. The other two properties were simply monitored as controls.

### Benefits

- Good worm control and performance with fewer treatments and less reliance on long acting drenches, therefore reducing selection for drench resistance.
- Good worm control and performance compared to maximum worm control achieved by completely suppressing worms. This highlights the effectiveness of the IPM approach.
- Meat breed and cross-bred sheep in good condition and grazing improved pastures were very resilient to the impact of worms (compared to merinos) with little impact on ewe and lamb liveweight, fleece weight, reproduction and mortality.
- When lamb growth rates exceeded 200g/day there was no benefit for weaning weight from drenches given to lambs before weaning.

### Location

This was a collaborative study across four geographic areas of eastern Australia, from the Northern Tablelands of NSW to the Central Tablelands and the South West Slopes of NSW to the winter rainfall zone of Victoria.



### Key achievement

We found that well run meat breed enterprises on improved pastures are much less susceptible to internal parasites than merino enterprises meaning that less drenching is required, reducing labour and selection of worms for drench resistance

### In collaboration with

- University of New England
- Charles Sturt University
- McKinnon Project at the University of Melbourne
- Funding from Meat and Livestock Australia

# Office locations

## Bathurst

66 Corporation Avenue  
Bathurst NSW 2795  
Ph: 02 6333 2300

## Lithgow

3 Ordnance Avenue  
Lithgow NSW 2790  
Ph: 02 6350 3110

## Mudgee

112 Market Street  
Mudgee NSW 2850  
Ph: 02 6378 1700

## Cowra

30 Lynch Street  
Cowra NSW 2794  
Ph: 02 6341 9306

## Molong

36 Bank Street  
Molong NSW 2866  
Ph: 02 6366 8505

## Orange

Orange Agricultural Institute  
1447 Forest Road  
Orange NSW 2800

Central Tablelands Local Land Services  
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