

# Virtual tour to put spotlight

KAROLIN MACGREGOR

THIS year's Tasmanian Red Meat Updates is shaping up to be a must-attend event for the state's sheep and beef producers.

The update will be held on June 12 at the Tramsheds in Launceston and will include information on the latest market trends.

A virtual farm tour of the O'Connor family's property, Benham, will be a feature of this year's update.

Rob O'Connor said he was pleased to be involved with the update and was looking forward to seeing how the virtual tour would look.

The tour will include footage from some of the more significant livestock management tasks that happen at Benham throughout the year, as well as general information about the property's sheep and beef operations.

"I'm looking forward to seeing how it turns out, because they have been down here quite a few times," he said.

"It's something a bit different and I think they've learnt a lot from this first one, so the ones they do from now on should be even better."

Benham runs a herd of about 850 Angus breeding cows.

Steers bred at the property are grown to feedlot entry weights using fodder crops and pastures.

During the drier months the cows are usually shifted to the property's native pastures and bush runs to make the most of the available feed.

However, Mr O'Connor said an excellent spring last

## Hear the latest market trends



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year meant they had plenty of feed in their improved pastures this year.

In the next few years Mr O'Connor said they planned to increase their cow herd.

Sheep are also a vital part of the Benham operation, which currently runs a flock of about 11,000 breeding ewes.

A change in breeding direction has seen a gradual increase in overall frame size of the ewes.

"They're very different to the sheep we used to have here and they're much more dual purpose now," Mr O'Connor said.

The flock now includes first and second-cross Merino Coopworth ewes, but Mr O'Connor said now they had a bigger frame size the plan was to eventually move back to a straight Merino ewe base.

"Because they're a lot bigger now they can handle the prime lambs, so I'd like to move back to the Merinos," he said.

The prime lamb fattening

operation fits in well with Benham's cropping program.

As well as the latest local and global market information, this year's update will also include practical information for producers and results from some of the latest pasture trials.

The update will start at 9.15am with a presentation by Meat and Livestock Australia chief economist Tim McRae about the past, present and future outlooks for the Tasmanian red meat industries.

In the sheep update section, Bothwell sheep producer John Ramsay will talk about his operation and Janelle Hocking Edwards will give producers the latest information about lean meat yields and eating quality projects.

Kerry Melrose, from Queensland-based Melrose Meats, will talk about the marketing of Tasmanian lamb and Jess Coad, from Livestock Biosecurity Network, will share some tips on how to

improve on-farm biosecurity.

In the beef update section, New South Wales beef producer Mark Pearce will talk about his operation and Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment veterinarian Bruce Jackson will give a presentation on the latest beef cattle health findings.

Mr McRae will then give another presentation looking at what sets profitable beef producers apart from the rest.

In the afternoon, two concurrent sessions will be held, focusing on irrigated and non-irrigated systems.

In the irrigated session, Macquarie Franklin consultant Basil Doonan will talk about what beef producers can learn from the dairy industry.

There will also be a presentation on the best way to use grass seeds crops in irrigated pasture systems and David Squibb, from PGG Wrightson Seeds, will talk about endophyte technology.

Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture researcher Rowan Smith will kick off the non-irrigated session with a presentation on matching pasture species with landscapes and climates.

Linda Hygate, from MLA, will discuss pastures for the future and DPIPWVE researcher Jonathon Knox will talk about the effectiveness and economics of wildlife management options.

To find out more about the update program visit [www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au)

# on top Tassie farm



BIRDS EYE VIEW: Rob O'Connor will feature in a virtual farm tour of his Fingal property Benham at next month's Tasmanian Red Meat Update.

Picture: KAROLIN MacGREGOR



9am-5pm • 12 June 2014 • The Tramsheds, Launceston

# RED MEAT UPDATES

TASMANIA

***Information, inspiration and research updates***

for Tasmania's red meat industry

**Program highlights include:**

**Virtual Farm Tour of Benham** - Rob O'Connor, Avoca

**Our beef production story** - Mark Pearce, beef producer, NSW

**Tasmania's red meat markets: past, present and future** - Tim McRae, MLA

**Interactive beef value chain presentation** - Doug Piper & Murray Patrick, MLA

**Grass seed crops within new irrigation districts** - Tony Butler, TIA

**Endophyte technology: pasture persistence vs animal performance** - David Squibb, PGG Wrightson Seeds

**Registrations open today!**

**Cost: Producers FREE • Sponsors FREE • Others \$200 per person**

For more information or to register contact Kylie at

Macquarie Franklin on 6427 5300 or email [events@macfrank.com.au](mailto:events@macfrank.com.au)

