

ISSUE 15 | Winter 2022

# OFF THE HOOK

STORIES FROM THE FARM

## STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE

*Outback Lamb on a podcast*

## Lamb Meatballs

*A winter warmer, because winter isn't over yet*

## Land to Market

*Our ecological verification outcome*

## Out & About

*Talking all things ag at local events*



# Welcome!



Hello and welcome to our Winter Issue of *Off The Hook*. If it feels like it's been a while since you've heard from me - that's because somehow Autumn slipped entirely by without me actually pulling together an issue!

But, we're not just busy being busy, there's been floods, lambing, shearing and sowing to squeeze in. Plus a few off-farm activities including a podcast, Talk & Taste at the Royal Easter Show; Meat & Livestock Australia's Meat-Up in Dubbo; guest speaking gigs in Forbes for International Women's Day, as well as Trangie for NSW Farmers, plus a fun evening with the three Fiona's for the Narromine Shire Council. I have also completed a Resource Consulting Services (RCS) Grazing Course and participated in a Drought Resilience Leaders Mentoring Program with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. We've begun some benchmarking with Land to Market Australia and of course amongst all of that we have been chipping away, making our delicious lamb sausage rolls. Except now we have some new plans afoot! Stay tuned, I'll be able to share more in the Spring issue of *Off The Hook*.

Coming up in the next few weeks is the Fine Food Expo in Melbourne. I'll be speaking at The Source Kitchen where my focus will be

on sharing our Australian farming story with industry influencers, encouraging them to connect with producers just like Outback Lamb, who are adapting their businesses to meet emerging consumer demand for greater accountability.

I've also been lucky enough to become a part of an industry panel called AGMAG - Ag Ministers (NSW) Advisory Group. We will be meeting again in the coming weeks to discuss Foot & Mouth Disease. Later this month I will be catching up with NSW Government representatives at a workshop to discuss strategy around roles for women in innovation precincts.

Of course, it's not all about me - Bill has been incredibly busy and the kids have had plenty on too. In education, 2022 is a milestone year for the Aveyards. It's Lily's final year of school and she is rocketing towards the HSC. It is Archie's first year of secondary and Evie's last in primary. We've had our local show, a couple of working bees (between rain events!) for the upcoming Mungery Picnic Races, winter sports and the usual community commitments. So, please accept my sincere apologies for the inconsistency with how I keep you current with life on the land. I hope, you enjoy this issue of *Off The Hook*, a glimpse into our farm life Outback Lamb style! in the Central West of NSW.

*FIONA AVEYARD*

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**FRESH AUSTRALIAN LAMB**



## Out & About



### Talk & Taste at the Royal Easter Show

Located front and center in the Woolworths Dome at the Royal Easter Show, Outback Lamb - along with a selection of RAS medal-winning producers took part in an interactive and very entertaining talk and taste fest hosted by the fabulous Lyndey Milan and 'Fast Ed' Halmagyi.

We spoke on the hour, every hour throughout the day to people about where their food comes from, educating them on our farming principles and everything good that goes into making the best sausage rolls we can.

We were really excited to be a part of this prestige event and jumped at the opportunity to showcase our delicious Outback Lamb sausage rolls to hungry show visitors. Guests booked in and sat at our producer's table where they had the opportunity to not just taste our product, but also to ask questions and dive into the fully interactive sessions.

### The 'Three Fiona's' celebrating small business, the bush & big ideas

To launch small business week in Narromine, I joined Fiona Hall from Biteriot, former Senator Fiona Nash and the crew from Narromine Shire Council for a panel discussion celebrating the bush and big ideas. Aply hosted by Agricultural Minister Dugald Saunders with Electorate Officer Jane Diffey, the evening was described as "light, refreshing and insightful", with plenty of banter combined with serious

discussion based around the the NSW Small Business Month "rebuild, recharge & renew".

### NSW Rural Women's Gathering, Forbes

Cancelled twice due to Covid, the Forbes Committee certainly were the "Women with Vision" that the gathering celebrated. I doubled up as a speaker for the partner's program, but was delighted to join Wendy Muffet from Grazing Down the Lachlan and Rose Philipzen of Moxey Dairy as one of the local plenary speakers on the final day. The passion and determination of both these women was incredibly inspiring, especially in terms of overcoming adversity.

### Women in Agriculture focus group, Parkes NSW

I recently took part in a focus group conducted by PhD student Linda Wirf who is studying gendered knowledges in agricultural practices. Other participants included a wide variety of female farmers from around the Central West. Linda's research aims to contribute by creating spaces for transformation in agriculture practice and including women's knowledge and perspectives.

It is my observation that sometimes women follow more traditional gendered roles in farming, and other times they step firmly into areas that have traditionally been filled by men. Hopefully, I was able to bring a different perspective to her research topic, and I look forward to reading the outcomes of Linda's PhD topic.

# Outback Lamb's Ecological Outcome Verification

*As Outback Lamb navigates its journey towards regenerative farming, we have been searching for ways to quantify proveable outcomes.*

The journey commences with an association with Land to Market Australia. We are currently making plans for benchmarking (just as soon as the paddocks dry out!) to establish an Ecological Outcome Verification (EOV).

EOV is an assessment and branding scheme to measure the health of soil, biodiversity and ecosystems - essentially a holistic management program but with some added extras. It is the first (farmer-driven market transformation) program in this country to identify and address the demand for quantitative ecological outcomes and verification.

It is part of a global movement instigated by the Savory Institute and is run by the Australian Holistic Management Co-

operative. Made up of producers who are committed to proving a positive environmental impact, we are excited about what lies ahead.

Ultimately their vision is that consumers and market partners will realise the benefits of buying food and fibre produced from land managed holistically which has been certified Ecological Outcome Verified, ultimately building awareness that our approach to farming and production can be proven to yield better outcomes for both people and the planet.

You can learn more about the verification process by visiting the Land to Market to [website](#).

## Lamb Meatballs & Pasta Tray Bake

*This is a really quick meal and a simple sauce. Sometimes I just bake the meatballs for 10 minutes and make a tomato sauce on the stovetop using onion and garlic, but for a quick fix, this works like a dream and has been a hit in our household on numerous occasions.*

### Ingredients

- 600g** Lamb mince
- 1/4 cup** currants
- 1/4 cup** Pine nuts
- 2-3** Cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp** Ground cumin
- 1 tsp** Ground coriander
- 1/4 tsp** Chilli flakes
- 2 tbsp** Finely chopped rosemary
- 1 tbsp** Chopped mint leaves
- 1/2 cup** Ricotta
- 1/2 cup** Breadcrumbs
- 1** Egg
- x2 400g** Cans diced or cherry tomatoes
- 45g** Anchovies, chopped and drained
- 400g** Pappardelle pasta
- Chopped mint and rosemary for garnish
- Parmesan to serve

Preheat oven to 180C

Whizz the currants, pine nuts and garlic in a food processor until roughly chopped.

Place the lamb mince in a large bowl and add the nut mixture to it, together with the fresh herbs, spices, ricotta, breadcrumbs and egg. Combine thoroughly, season well with salt and pepper and divide into 12-18 meatballs. Place in the fridge to firm for up to 30 minutes.

Add the tinned tomatoes, anchovies and 1/2 a cup of water to a baking dish, and stir to combine. Place the meatballs in the sauce. Place baking dish in the oven and roast for 20 minutes, or until sauce is bubbling.

Meanwhile, cook pasta in boiling salted water according to packet instructions. Drain. Serve meatballs with pasta, extra rosemary and parmesan



# In the News

## Podcast | Food, Views & Big Ideas

Hosted by Tawnya Bahr & Lucy Allon, Food, Views and Big Ideas has the ambitious goal of connecting listeners from around the world with some of Australia's food business leaders, artisans and innovators.

The podcast identifies a broad array of participants in the gastronomic landscape; from the land, in the kitchen or in the boardroom. Lucy and Tawnya are particularly focused on people whom they believe are driving an evolution in Australia's food identity and culture.

The first episode of the podcast features conversations with Alice Zaslavsky (Alice in Frames), followed by episodes with Sue Heward, founder of Singing Magpie Produce, and myself as co-founder of Outback Lamb. You can listen to the episode [here](#).

## The Weekly Times | Australia's Best Paddock to Plate Businesses

I was beyond thrilled to be included in a Weekly Times article amongst Sher Wagyu and Meredith Dairy. Just two of my favourite paddock-to-plate businesses.

The article highlighted a dozen Australian businesses, all servicing

the consumer, right at the farm gate.

It celebrates the emerging connection between the farmer and the foodie, noting that the consumer is becoming increasingly passionate about the provenance and the production of the food they consume. You can read the article [here](#).

## The Sun Herald | On the front foot against Foot and Mouth

It is always interesting times when agriculture is on the front page of the city-based newspapers.

While this article doesn't feature Outback Lamb, its subject area is highly topical at the moment. I always get a little uncomfortable when I am asked to comment on these types of stories. But I do it, not because I love it, but because I think it is important that farmers use their voices to share our stories when we get the chance.

If we don't speak up, it is highly likely that someone with a different agenda will speak for us. The article can be found online, or you can read it [here](#).

## Top picks of paddock-to-

## Genetic banks and cleaning mats: preparing for the virus

Anthony Segarra, Josh Gordon  
Farmers are taking action to defend against a potential foot and mouth outbreak in Australia, including preparing genetic banks to one day repopulate their flocks through IVF. The disease is spreading through Indonesia and border authorities are trying to keep it from entering Australia. It's like a time bomb, says a farmer. A single reported case would halt the movement of surrounding livestock, force the culling of thousands of animals and shut down Australia's \$27 billion livestock export trade. The federal government on Friday announced strict new biosecurity screening at Australian airports. Federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt said yesterday that sanitisation foot mats had arrived at airports and were being rolled out "as quickly as possible" and there would be "100 per cent risk assessment" of passengers returning from Indonesia. Farmer Fiona Aveyard is helping the disease stay out of the country but preparing for the worst. "It's daunting because (foot and mouth) is something on a scale we haven't seen," she said. "It's like a drought or a bad flood. You take a deep breath. I'm thinking to myself, 'Am I mentally ready for this?'" "If foot and mouth gets here, things will shut down for a while," she said. "It's not just about farmers' mental health, having to destroy their life's work... for the everyday person there will be long-reaching consequences." New stock arrivals are regularly quarantined from other animals when they arrive at farms, but producers are now monitoring stock for any signs of sickness, including blisters on mouths and feet, and animals drooling and collapsing. Aveyard has already cancelled farm tours and is considering adding cleaning mats for essential contractors and trucks entering the property. "If foot and mouth is detected, farmers are required to kill all animals on the property. That risk has driven lamb and grain farmers Jenny and Craig Bradley, and son Jack, to update their genetic banks in the event they need to start again. The family's farm in Araratree, just north of Dubbo, has sent a



collection of their sheep's sperm to an artificial insemination centre to be preserved. A farm's genetic superiority, often created over several generations, is the lifeblood of any livestock business. If their animals were culled, the family would attempt to buy back sheep they had previously sold. But Jenny is concerned about how an outbreak would affect the mating season. "We've got semen stored to use, but we've got no embryos because (the sheep) are breeding. It'll be able to collect embryos from our breeding stock. We invest a lot of money into our genetics," she said. "If anything was to happen, and they had to be destroyed before we got a chance to harvest embryos, we'd lose all those genetics in one fell swoop." Jenny said the coverage of the livestock kit "pretty dramatic". "But, we've never had it this close, and Ball is a very popular place to travel. "We're pretty resilient in the bush," she said. "Farmers tend to get on with their job and their business and cope as much as they can. But this will be a different level if it comes in. "We've got four really big overseas buyers who pay really well for a high-quality product. But if we got FMD our markets shut down for probably close to 12 months. Once the export markets open up, we will still have those big buyers?"

# The Source Kitchen



**Lucy Allon**



**Tawnya Bahr**

[View full program](#)

## Fine Food Australia: Melbourne | 5 September

Following on from the Outback Lamb story that was featured on the Straight to the Source podcast, Outback Lamb is again working with the expert food advocate team - this time in Melbourne at the Fine Food Australia Expo in early September.

Food experts Tawnya Bahr and Lucy Allon of *Straight To The Source* will delve into Australian produce, ideas and provenance through interviews, culinary demonstrations, ingredient spotlights, and industry workshops with farmers, artisans and innovators.

The expo is dedicated to everything foodservice, hospitality, manufacturing and retail. Fine Food is a vehicle that connects trade buyers to suppliers.

The Source Kitchen is planning on

pushing boundaries with a dynamic array of presenters, ingredients and techniques. I will be part of a panel discussion where, along with other producers, we will share our farming stories and talk about our values add journey.

Not only will attendees learn about how Australian farmers are prioritising soil health and animal welfare, but they will also hear about how our business models are focused on the future of family farming and regional prosperity.

I will share my vision on how we are changing up our farming business model so that we can really focus on hitting that sweet spot where the planet, profits and community are all winners.

# On the Farm

Like most of the east coast of Australia, 2022 has been a wet and incredibly challenging year. Sowing began early, but wet weather prevailed, delaying everything from shearing to replanting by months. We are now in August, and it is still wet. We have only a fraction of our crops sown and it is now too late for planting. I don't believe we are alone in this situation, with many farmers facing similar issues. Luckily there is plenty of grass for the sheep to eat! The challenges of regional living have come to the fore, with roads closed repeatedly due to damage as well as local flooding.

Lambing coincided with school holidays and we took in a couple of poddy lambs for the kids to raise. I don't like to brag, but (so far!) we have managed a 100% survival rate. Mind you, it's not all Disney cuteness with little lambs gambolling and butterflies fluttering - there is the endless parade of bottles and teats, plus sheep poop on the verandah. Nonetheless, Benny (for her bent neck)

and Fluffy (no explanation needed!) have become much-loved additions to our household menagerie.

The spectre of Foot and Mouth Disease has raised its ugly head, with Indonesia's outbreak spreading to Bali and outlying islands. The media have done us all their usual disservice of catastrophising this threat via fearmongering and a lack of education.

My understanding of the situation is that throughout the world there has never been an outbreak attributed to transfer via an airport. Combined with this, is that there is a slim to zero chance of the virus surviving the time lapse between Bali and our cities along the east coast of Australia. A very real risk does exist for entry to come via Darwin with a much shorter journey. Additionally, with the monsoon season fast approaching, if the spread throughout Indonesia is not halted, the risk of summer storms blowing this wind borne disease to Australia does indeed pose a significant threat.

Much is being done on our doorstep to protect our \$80bn agricultural industry. As producers, all we can do is utilise any

available resources so that we are prepared. With Lumpy Skin Disease and Varroa Mite also prevalent at the moment, taking the time to fine-tune a biosecurity plan should be seen as an opportunity.

On a lighter note, and not quite slotting in under the "on the farm" banner is winter sports. Finally (I know parents hear me!) we are on the tail end of an incredibly long season. Lily and Archies netball and rugby have finished, but Evie and Jim are through to the finals. Go the Condobolin Rams!

## Jim's Joke

What do you call an Italian man with a rubber toe?

Roberto!







FRESH AUSTRALIAN LAMB

"WESTPOINT" TULLAMORE NSW AUSTRALIA  
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DESIGNED BY ALEXANDRA OF [THE SOCIAL HERD](#)