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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On a winner

Champion wool grower shows better biosecurity equals higher profit

The winner of last year's inaugural *Biosecurity Farmer of the Year* and *Wool Producer of the Year* awards, Michael Blake, puts the success of his business largely down to best practice biosecurity measures.

And he is urging fellow farmers to get recognised for their efforts.

Michael runs a combination of superfine Merinos, crossbred sheep, Hereford and Limousin cattle, and fodder crops on Bally Glunin Park, his 1800-hectare property near Hamilton, Victoria, supplying niche Italian apparel and European meat markets.

"Over the years I have been dedicated to trying new and innovative ideas and processes – and it's something I enjoy sharing with others for the overall benefit of the Australian agricultural industry," Michael says.

To ensure his property remains weed, pest and disease free well into the future, Michael started operating largely as a 'closed farm'. Rams and bulls are only ever purchased from reputable breeders and are always spelled in isolation paddocks, to be carefully monitored for health problems before mixing with other livestock.

He also makes sure his boundaries are well maintained and secure. All visitors enter the property through one controlled entry/exit point after seeking permission, having their vehicles washed at the local sale yards and inspected on entry.

A natural worm resistance breeding program led to the successful eradication of external parasites without the need for any external chemicals, which have not been used at Bally Glunin Park for the past fifteen years.

"Biosecurity on your farm is not expensive or hard to implement," says Michael. "It just requires you to consider the consequences of your actions.

"For example, when buying livestock you need to be aware of the possible diseases those livestock may have and bring to your farm. Can they be eradicated or managed with minimal cost? If not – should you make the purchase?"

But Michael adds that demonstrating successful biosecurity practices is not only part of responsible farming – it could also be great for business. With mounting consumer pressure on the agricultural

For more information on Farm Biosecurity visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au

industry to introduce sound and ethical food safety and animal welfare practices, farmers need to be looking closely at biosecurity if they want to remain competitive into the future.

“I think it’s just good management, although the extra spin offs are that you are able to sell products to a wider consumer group who in turn are influenced by end-use consumer demand,” Michael says.

“You can also give credit to your products and in a lot of cases you will become the preferred supplier – and that puts money in your pocket because buyers will pay extra for your goodwill because they know they’re buying a product that doesn’t have risk associated with it.”

Jointly sponsored by Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia, the *Biosecurity Farmer of the Year* award promotes a positive image of Australian farmers, encouraging people to take on agriculture as a career choice. To cater for last minute entries, the deadline for nominations has been extended until **Monday 1 August**.

You can nominate yourself, your neighbour or anyone else deserving, by calling 1800 677 761 or [online](#). The criteria are straight forward and it doesn’t take much time to put the nomination together.

Michael urges biosecurity-conscious farmers to cast modesty aside and put in a nomination.

“Awards such as these are invaluable tools for marketing your products,” he says. “Plus it is a great feeling to be recognised by your peers for your efforts.”

To nominate or find out more information, visit www.kondiningroup.com.au or contact Kondinin Group on 1800 677 761.

-ENDS-

For more information, or to arrange an interview, contact Martin Blaszczyk, AHA, on (02) 6203 3988. (Photo of Michael Blake available)



Further Information

The Farm Biosecurity Initiative

Farm Biosecurity, a joint program managed by Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA), is a national education and engagement campaign which provides producers with information and tools to reduce the risk of diseases, pests and weeds. Producers are encouraged to check their properties regularly and if they see anything unusual to call the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** on **1800 084 881** or the **Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline** on **1800 675 888**. For further information visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au.

Animal Health Australia

AHA is an innovative partnership involving the Australian Government, state and territory governments, major livestock industries and other stakeholders. We work with our members and stakeholders to strengthen Australia's national animal health system and maximise confidence in the safety and quality of Australia's livestock products in domestic and overseas markets. For further information, visit www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au or call (02) 6232 5522.

Plant Health Australia

Plant Health Australia is the national coordinator of the government-industry partnership for plant biosecurity in Australia. As a not-for-profit company, we service the needs of Members and independently advocate on behalf of the national plant biosecurity system. Our efforts enhance Australia's plant health status, assist trade, safeguard the livelihood of producers and support the sustainability and profitability of our plant industries and the communities that rely upon them. For further information, visit www.phau.com.au or call (02) 6215 7700.

Hotlines

The Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) and the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) are free-call telephone services provided for people to report unusual plant and animal pests and diseases. The hotlines allow callers to directly report suspect detections to an area where action can be taken by knowledgeable staff.

