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## Tassie's top ag science student researches wether productivity

Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) student Lauren Rowlands has won a national scholarship and three awards recognising her achievements in agricultural science.

An Undergraduate Project Scholarship from the Australian Wool Education Trust (AWET) – one of 15 awarded nationally – is supporting Ms Rowlands' honours research into Merino wool production.

The research trial is taking place at Stockman Stud in the Southern Midlands, the region where Ms Rowlands grew up.

"Through my research, I hope to find out the most productive pathway for castrated Merino male lambs, known as wethers," Ms Rowlands said.

"Farmers want to know if wethers produce better meat or wool, and what they should be fed. I'm testing this out through two different pasture diets.

"With funding from the scholarship, my research will be especially rigorous. For example, I'm able to get the fleece samples professionally tested," she said.

AWET Secretary Mr Peter Sommerville said the industry-focused project design was a key reason for the selection panel's decision.

"Through the project, Lauren will develop her knowledge of wool production and solve a major question for local farmers," Mr Sommerville said.

"The scholarship recognises Lauren's keenness to contribute to the wool industry and her ag science know-how. She shows huge potential for a successful career in agriculture."

In December, Ms Rowlands won the University of Tasmania's Alan Bray Prize in Animal Science for highest grades in the Animal Science Unit.

She was also awarded for the best overall results at third-year level in the Bachelor of Agricultural Science at TIA.

At just 21, Ms Rowlands is already working part-time in a field related to her studies.

"During my degree, I enjoyed doing work experience in biosecurity with the Tasmanian Government, and I've since landed a casual job as a biosecurity inspector," Ms Rowlands said.

Last year Ms Rowlands volunteered for TIA's National Merino Challenge team, which [won first place](#) and she was awarded the Tertiary Overall Champion.

"Winning the National Merino Challenge 2018 influenced my decision to do an Honours project in wool research," she said.

"The previous summer I had a completely different agricultural experience doing a practical internship on [grapevine research](#) with TIA."

"All this experience helps you nut out which direction you want to go in.

"My advice to students is to jump onto work experience and put yourself out there."

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