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Tassie ag tech wins big

Australia's agricultural industry may soon get a big boost to animal welfare and productivity thanks to two start-ups from the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA).

Easy Drench and the Lambulance were the first ever Tasmanian entrants in the Australian eChallenge, an entrepreneurship program organised by the University of Adelaide. The eChallenge helps develop products from concept to market.

On Thursday, Easy Drench was awarded first place in the finals of the eChallenge Wool Innovation category, aimed at improving sheep health, welfare and productivity.

Easy Drench co-creator Katrina Durham said the first-place prize netted the fledgling business \$10,000 and significant industry attention.

"The interest has been overwhelming. We've already had a preliminary meeting with a trademark lawyer.

"Given the potential applications of our product to improve animal welfare in nearly every sector of Australia's agricultural industry, we're hoping to lock in the industry support we need to get the product on shelves," said Ms Durham.

Easy Drench is a small remote sensor that monitors health in individual animals and can automatically drench infected stock and alert producers to other risks. First-year TIA Agribusiness student and Easy Drench co-creator Dylan Bellchambers said the product will be a large step forward for agriculture.

"Regardless of whether we're improving monitoring for live exports, tracking wool provenance or saving millions of dollars with smart parasite treatment, Easy Drench can drastically shift how we work with livestock.

"For now, however, we just need to get some sleep. I think we're all running mostly on adrenaline at the moment," said Mr Bellchambers.

In this year's Australian eChallenge, more than 70 teams competed across five categories, including wool innovation, climate response and medical innovation.

"Working with key category sponsors such as Australian Wool Innovation helps bring more awareness to problems facing farmers and these innovations have the power to truly revolutionise farming," said eChallenge coordinator Julia Miller.

While TIA's other start-up did not place in the finals, Lambulance co-creator Andrew Bailey said farmers will be key to getting the project off the ground.

"There is so much interest from the industry. Farmers have told us what a massive benefit an automated triage system like Lambulance would bring to their operations," said Mr Bailey.

In addition to the \$10,000 prize for winning the wool innovation category, Easy Drench will also receive mentoring to grow their business and may apply for access to the University of Adelaide's start-up incubator ThinLab.

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