

HAZELDEAN MERINOS NEWSLETTER



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Hazeldean Riverina Sale rams September 2010

Maximising future profitability

There has been a lot of analysis recently on what makes the most profitable sheep enterprise. Merino, First X, Second X, Dorper, Dohne, SAMM - its beginning to sound like guy on TV where he is just trying to buy a bottle of milk! By necessity all this forward thinking is essentially a rear view mirror exercise as we are still unable to predict the future with any certainty. Nevertheless, we seek out futurists regardless to get some comfort as to where we might be or should be heading.

It intrigues me how much airplay 'forecasters' get and on a wide range of subjects – even though they are almost always proved wrong. We seem to have an insatiable desire to find out what the future holds even though we know the likelihood of what we are being told is, in fact, highly unlikely!

The sheep industry is no different. No one predicted the sort of values surplus sheep are making now and rest assured the same number of people will accurately predict what will happen next.

Maximising future profitability in the sheep industry means that producers have to remain flexible. Flexibility can be achieved in 2 ways. Firstly, your product can be flexible if it is suited to more than one market. E.g. high growth rate merinos with a valuable fleece.

Secondly, you can pursue lucrative meat markets by joining a portion of your ewes to a meat breed sire but not at the expense of closing the door entirely on the possibility of a wool revival.

We have long pursued flexibility in our own breeding program. We eschewed the advice of some industry experts who, at the peak of the fine wool boom, were suggesting to us that we ignore fleeceweight and solely pursue micron reduction in our breeding program. With the decline in the 'micron premium' there are many traditional fine wool sheep that have been having an extremely thin time of it in recent years - and we are therefore glad that we have maintained the cut and body size for which Hazeldean sheep have been renown for many years while simultaneously reducing fibre diameter.

We have been heartened by the outstanding results achieved by our clients with pure merino wether lambs being sold to slaughter for over \$120 after cutting a fleece worth \$30. These clients are focusing on flexibility in their enterprises and will always be best placed to capitalize on changes in seasons and markets. Changes to which we are all long accustomed.

Jim Litchfield

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Making More From Sheep Workshops

Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) have joined forces to develop Making More From Sheep, a best practice information package with tools and learning opportunities for Australian sheep producers.

Almost 250 leading sheep producers and technical experts helped develop the 11 linked modules in the manual, which cover subjects ranging from soils and pasture to wool and meat marketing, animal health, genetics and farm sustainability.

As part of the "Making More From Sheep" programme, Ram Selection workshops

continue to be held in many locations.

The workshops have been presented by Allan Casey of NSW Department of Industry and Investment and are a hands-on program targeted at commercial sheep breeders – both for wool and meat sheep. Breeders take away the practical skills using the latest technology, to select rams to breed the "best" sheep for their situation.

Hazeldean has hosted two of these workshops over the last 12 months; one just prior to the Riverina Ram Sale at our Riverina base, Rosevale at Hay and the other in February at Hazeldean.

Both workshops were well-attended and feedback has been very positive.

A "Making More From Sheep" website has been developed which contains all the content within the Making More From Sheep manual and cd-rom, and also gives you information about upcoming Making More From Sheep forums, workshops and other learning activities.

For more information go to www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au or contact Allan Casey.



Ram selection workshop at Hazeldean February 2010.



At the Hay workshop at Rosevale, participants rate rams on criteria best suited to their breeding objectives.

Rambouillet Merinos



Jim with a long lost French relative of Hazeldean merinos.

The world merino conference was held this year at Rambouillet near Paris. A couple of years ago we visited Rambouillet, as this was the source of the first sheep at Hazeldean when the stud was established in 1865.

Originally, the Chateau de Rambouillet was established as a hunting lodge by Louis XV1, but soon had the added purpose of an agricultural research centre to try out new farming methods, plants and animals. Tree and cereal crop seeds were brought from all around the world and trialled at Rambouillet and, if found to be successful, distributed to farmers across the country. New breeds of livestock including sheep, pigs, cows and chickens were also trialled in the same manner.

In 1786 the King of Spain gave Louis XV1 a flock of Spanish merinos after Louis XV1's scientist, Daubenton, had seen them in Spain and subsequently passed on his positive impression to his king. The King of Spain saw an opportunity to make a kind gesture towards his northern neighbour and so 387 sheep arrived from Spain and started the Rambouillet flock. In 1802



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a few more rams were introduced and from that point the flock was closed.

Louis XV1 kept the tradition going with the best rams that were bred often given to foreign kings as a present. The flock reached 600-700 at its peak (1850-1900) and rams were exported all over the world including Australia and in 1865 the Hazeldean Stud flock was established on Rambouillet blood.

The last rams to be exported from France were in the 1950's. The present day flock numbers 140 and is kept purely for historical and research purposes. With no outside blood for over 200 years the flock is quite unique and possibly the most inbred group of domestic animals in the world. Despite this close breeding, the animals are remarkably robust and displayed very few faults.

The fleeceweight now is about the same as when the first sheep arrived. Part of the flock has been tested and has an 18-19 micron average, with one ewe at 17 microns. They spend 6 months inside. To begin with there were 7 "families", some of which have now disappeared. Hogget ewes cut around 4 kgs.

Despite the passage of many years we could see some quite distinct resemblance to

Hazeldean merinos, particularly about the face and horns. Body size was much smaller, as was fleeceweight and productive capacity generally, but we enjoyed seeing these distant cousins of Hazeldean Merinos!



Every year for over 200 years, a sample of the flocks wool was taken and beautifully mounted.



Stables and silo built by Napoleon at the Chateau de Ramouillet.

Hazeldean Merinos Perform at Wyvern

The 2004 drop Hazeldean merino blood ewes at Wyvern, shorn in September averaged a cut of over 7.5kg after weaning 127% of lambs. Over 2000 of them will be sold at the Hay ewe sale on October 22nd.

Principal of T.A.Field Estates, Michael Field says they will in all likelihood gross around \$300 which he says is an "unbelievable" result for 6 ½ year old ewes. The ewes were last joined to White Suffolk rams, the progeny of which sold for \$140 per head. Add the wool value (7.5kg @550-600c = \$45/head) and then the anticipated value of the ewe (on today's market around \$110-\$120) and the dollars really start adding up.

This really is an exceptional result. The opportunity to acquire these outstanding

Hazeldean genetics is available by attending the Hay ewe sale where 800 Wyvern 09 drop ewes will be sold in addition to the 2000+ 04 drop ewes on account of TA Field Estates.



*Michael Field - Principal of TA Field Estates,
David Wagstaff- Manager Wyvern Station,
Richard Cannon - Manager Rosevale,
Craig Wilson - Craig Wilson Livestock.*

HAZELDEAN MERINOS SPRING RAM SALES



www.hazeldean.com.au

Hazeldean Merinos Riverina Ram Sale

Thurs 21st October, 2010
Rosevale, Hay, NSW

100 Merino Rams

Hazeldean Merinos On-property Ram Sale

Wed 10th November, 2010
Hazeldean, Cooma, NSW

100 Merino Rams

Private Selections 2010

This year's private selection sale grades are as follows:

\$1000 - top 15% on index

\$800 - 15-40% on index

\$600 - 40-80% on index

ARE YOU making serious money from Merino sheep?

DH Hill & Co, Springvale, Cootamundra

2009 drop wethers (9 months old)

- Average cut – 4.8kg
- Average micron – 18.2
- 1079 sold for \$119.70 per head at 10 months of age

Ross Adams the Principal of T Williams & Co. and a stock agent for 50 years, said:

"I can't remember a better line of Merino lambs presented in Cootamundra."

"They cut an average of \$28 worth of wool and grossed \$147.83 for wool and meat; \$8-\$10 per head more than budgeted."

"Hazeldean Genetics are a complete package - wool and meat."

Tony Hill - DH Hill & Co.



Tony Hill with classer Jason Southwell.

TA Field Estates Hunthawang Station, Hillston

2009 drop wethers (8 months old)

- Average cut – 5.0kg
- Average micron – 18.2
- 708 sold for \$108.30 per head at 10 months of age

"To produce this sort of result at Hillston, after several bad drought years of less than 5 inches of rain per year is a credit to the sheep and their management. It supports my long term faith in the sheep and wool industries, and their future viability." Michael Field



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Lamb marking well underway at Hazeldean – Ed Curtis, Will van Gemert (Mgr Hazeldean), Sophie Scemama de Gialluly (French Ag student), John Curtis (Mgr Myalla), Mark Blyton.

Classing at Rosevale

Richard Cannon, Craig Wilson and Riverina Wool Testing staff discuss the finer points before classing and fibre testing commences on this years ewe hoggets at Hazeldeans Riverina base, Rosevale. The young ewes went on to be shorn in late September cutting 4.7kgs and testing 19.4 microns. Shearing was interrupted by numerous rain events as well as some sheep being marooned on 'islands' for a day or two. All very welcome frustrations when we think back on challenges presented by drought. Rosevale has had the best season since Hazeldean purchased the property in 2001. There has only been one other bumper Spring in this time. The production from the country in good years is simply outstanding and the ensuing dry feed should stand us in good stead for the next 18 months or so.

Hazeldean ewes at Hazeldeans Riverina base, Rosevale, during classing in September.

