

THE HAZELDEAN LETTER MERINO



HAZELDEAN

LITCHFIELD
EST 1865

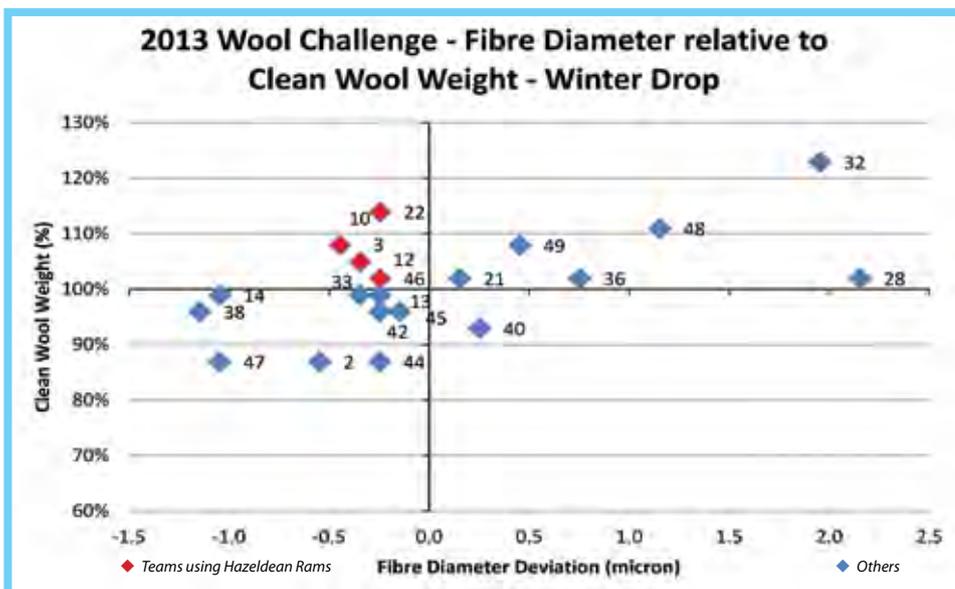


EDITORIAL - October 2013

As I write, the prospects for the wool and sheep industries are looking as positive as they have been for a number of years. The market for wool has risen strongly in the last few weeks and sheep prices are also moving very positively in an upward direction. This coupled with an excellent Spring through virtually all of the south gives us much needed confidence that our industry is on a very sound footing. Particularly when you look at the demand projections for sheep and wool and the historically low sheep numbers.

The Hazeldean program continues to show it's worth through the Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge wether trial.

In the winter intake of 20 teams, 5 teams were placed in the high fleece weight, low micron quadrant. Of these 5 teams, 4 of them were by teams using Hazeldean rams. (see graph below).



All 4 teams in the winter drop that use Hazeldean bloodlines were ranked in the top 10 for Profit/DSE.

PRIVATE RAM SELECTIONS

ROSEVALE Hay
from 17th October 2013

HAZELDEAN Cooma
from 14th November

Private selections will be available this year at both Rosevale and Hazeldean after the auction sales. The Hazeldean Riverina ram sale will be held on the 17th October and the Hazeldean Cooma sale will be held on the 14th November. Private selections will commence immediately after the auction to allow buyers who wish to top up their purchasers after the auction to do so.

Private selections will continue for the week after the auction or at any other time post auction by appointment.

Price grades for selected rams will be \$1000, \$800 and \$600.

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TA Field Estates, the only Hazeldean blood team in the Autumn drop group was ranked 2nd for Profit/DSE. Congratulations to all the teams using Hazeldean rams and re-affirming their ability to increase your bottom line!

The other interesting development in the merino industry lately is the sudden adoption of ASBVs by many studs. This is a very encouraging development however one hopes that the numbers are being used to breed better sheep and not just added onto sale catalogues and advertisements as a promotional tool.

Putting this concern to one side for the moment I think we are seeing the beginning of a much needed and much longed for adoption of performance based breeding on a scale that will really see a big lift in the genetic capacity of the Australian merino. Genetic progress in Merinos has lagged miserably when you compare it to other livestock industries - hopefully this is about to change significantly.

We continue to monitor developments in molecular genetics / genomics and Richard Cannon, Will van Gemert and myself attended

a workshop hosted by MLA in Sydney in late August to hear the latest on the rapidly evolving DNA technology and how it can be best incorporated into our breeding program. We are confident that it will make a significant difference to our future genetic gain but as the science is still developing the exact mechanism is not quite at hand yet. We are following up with a further meeting in a few weeks and will let you know further updates via our website.

Jim Litchfield, October 2013

RIVERINA RAM SALE

120

Merino & Poll Merino Rams

Thurs 17 Oct
Rosevale HAY, NSW

The annual Hazeldean Riverina Merino Ram sale will be held at 1pm on Thursday October 17th at Rosevale Hay. This year's sale will see some of the best rams we have produced to date go up for grabs. Once again we are proud to offer rams which have stylish looks but the data and breeding values behind them that ensures they will increase productivity in the flocks they enter. We have catalogued a total of 120 rams bred in both the Riverina and Monaro, of these there will be an offering of Poll and Horned rams which are selected on their ability to increase traits like fleece weight, wool quality and fertility

with are directly linked with profitability. Of particular interest in the poll section of the sale will be rams by Sir Thomas as well as our own poll sires Hazeldean 10.60 and 10.760. Of the horned rams we have catalogued there is some very exciting sons of Hazeldean 8.3561 who is the stand out sire at present in our program, as well as sons of Nerstane 8.121 and Hazeldean 8.333 amongst others. Please contact Richard Cannon 0427931177 if you would like information or to inspect the rams prior to the sale.

Richard Cannon, Manager, Rosevale, Hay

Jim Litchfield & Richard Cannon select the sale team at Rosevale for the Riverina Sale assisted by Jackaroo Tim Gregory.





Six years ago TA Fields started using Hazeldean rams. By adopting the use of ASBV's they have lowered fibre diameter by 2 microns and at the same time increased fleece and body weight.



Michael Field at Wyvern with some of his Hazeldean Blood sheep.

At 'Wyvern' six years ago the flock averaged 22 micron and 6kg of fleece; it now averages 19.5-20 micron, with the 22,000 purebred Merino ewes cutting 8kg of fleece for a yield of 68-70%, while also lambing at 104%. Similarly, the body weight of young ewes six years ago averaged 44kg and now averages 54kg.

Objective measurement delivers finer fleece at TA Field Estates

Story extract courtesy Sheep CRC Oct 2012

The use of objective data in the ram selection process has delivered a profitable improvement in the genetics of the TA Field

Estates' Merino flocks, with fleeces now two micron finer on average across the board.

At the same time fleece and body weights have been maintained - and on some properties increased (Wyvern & Benangaroo - using Hazeldean rams) - across flocks totalling more than 40,000 breeding ewes in three locations.

This genetic improvement has ensured the profitability of the TA Field Estates' sheep and wool activities has been maintained, despite extremes of seasons and on-going increases in input costs.

The TA Field's business is comprised of three grazing operations: 'Congi', near Walcha; Wyvern Station at Carrathool; and 'Benangaroo', at Jugiong, all in NSW. Long-term benchmarking has been conducted at each site to provide accurate information on flock performance for the key performance indicators of fibre diameter, fleece and body weight, and cost of production per DSE.

Rams for 'Benangaroo' and 'Wyvern' are supplied via a contract breeding arrangement with the Litchfield family's Hazeldean Riverina operation at 'Rosevale', Hay.

Continued next page...



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Mr Field, 'Wyvern' manager David Wagstaff, Hazeldean's Jim Litchfield and Richard Cannon, and Craig Wilson, of Craig Wilson and Associates all participate in the sire selection process. Each party assesses ASBV data from the Sheep Genetics website against breeding objectives, and then visually assesses the rams identified, before debate begins about final selections.

"We will buy semen from any stud, provided they are heading in the same genetic direction as Hazeldean and stack up in performance," Mr Field said.

The sires chosen are used in Hazeldean Riverina's November joining, with the progeny all fully assessed under MERINOSELECT. Commercial rams for the TA Field's operation are selected from each drop.

The arrangement delivers for both parties, with TA Field Estates having direct input into the genetic selection process, while Hazeldean benefits from both a large-scale commercial buyer and direct access to the performance data of their ram progeny.

More than 150 replacement rams are used each year for the two southern properties, with about 35% of rams replaced annually at 'Wyvern' and 'Benangaroo'.

At 'Wyvern' and 'Benangaroo' the new Merino Production index (previously the Dual Purpose 7% index) is referenced in ram selection as part of a breeding strategy aimed at increasing fleece and body weight, and further reduce fibre diameter to a target of 18 micron.

At 'Wyvern' six years ago the flock averaged 22 micron and 6kg of fleece; it now averages 19.5-20 micron, with the 22,000 purebred Merino ewes cutting 8kg of fleece for a yield of 68-70%, while also lambing at 104%. Similarly, the body weight of young ewes six years ago averaged 44kg and now averages 54kg.

"The accepted wisdom used to be that fibre diameter was in large part driven by the quality of pasture, but the MERINOSELECT data showed there was a genetic link and our results using ASBVs prove that," Mr Field said.

"Our aim now is to keep pushing fibre diameter down, while maintaining body weight, fleece weight and staple strength. We want sheep with plainer skin, shorter staple, and more even crimp.

"We jet our lambs but we don't jet our ewes over summer as it's an expense that we can't justify – we need sheep that can stand up to the environmental conditions."

As DNA testing nears a commercial reality, Mr Field is keen to include the genomic data being developed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Sheep Industry Innovation (Sheep CRC) in his breeding program as well.

"Before including Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) in our ram selection process six years ago, we had no other measures to go by other than visual assessment, fibre diameter and wether trial data to inform our decisions," business principal Michael Field said.

"We believe that the more information we've got, the better informed is our decision making process. We now assess ASBVs, fleece data and visual attributes as part of our flock management and ram selection.

"And now that more information is coming through to industry from genomics and DNA research, we will use that too. Genomics is absolutely fascinating. We're only just touching the tip of the iceberg of the potential and what it can do to the productivity of the Australian Merino," he said. "The genetic information it offers will help us push our flocks forward and the rate of improvement will only accelerate."

HAZELDEAN MERINO SALE

150

Merino & Poll Merino Rams **Thurs 14 NOV** Hazeldean Cooma, NSW



HAZELDEAN SALES ROUND-UP the last 12 months...



Speakers Allen Casey, NSW DPI, Prof. James Rowe CEO Sheep CRC, Gordon Litchfield and Jim Litchfield.

Hazeldean Ram sales over the last 12 months have seen clients able to select from increasingly productive, leading edge rams. All sales were well-attended and as usual the most up-to-date, comprehensive information was available to assist clients to select the type of rams that suit their breeding programmes.

February 21st saw woolgrowers gather for the 4th Annual Woolgrowers Breakfast and Elite Short Wool ram sale.

Annual Woolgrowers Breakfast and Elite Short Wool Ram Sale

Breaky cooked by Jim on the barbie was followed by industry experts Prof. James Rowe, Allan Casey and Gordon Litchfield making presentations to the group.

Allan Casey NSW Dep Primary Industries spoke about "Looking after your worker rams – how to maximise fertility, longevity and lifetime productivity"; Gordon Litchfield – Gordon Litchfield Wool, Cooma presented a case study on "Volatile wool prices – fixing the problem. Forward selling and how it can even out a volatile market."

Rounding off the morning talks, CEO Sheep CRC, UNE, Armidale, Prof. James Rowe gave an insightful and exciting presentation on "The Brave New World of DNA – The Sheep CRC and Information Nucleus Flock (The Resource Flock). How Genetics and Genomics is delivering better sheep through The Sheep CRC".

The Elite Short Wool Ram Sale followed with an offering of some of our top rams that are only one tier below our "keep" rams. The Hazeldean selection system initially identifies 120 of the best young rams (out of a total drop of 1,200) at their first visual and measured assessment which occurs in early June when the rams are 10 months of age.

They are then run through until the following January (17 months old) where the selection is further refined on the basis of another classing, fleeceweight and fibre test. From this analysis Hazeldean selects the very best for its own use and then the next 20 form the elite auction team. Astute breeders took advantage of this once a year opportunity to share in this elite group of rams and there were many return buyers and stalwart clients who snapped up the 20 rams on offer.



Brian Anderson.



Charlotte and Colin Murdoch.



Grant Burbidge and Ollie Cay.



Hazeldean 4th Annual Elite Short Wool Ram Sale 2013

courtesy The Land

Hazeldean Merino stud sells over 1000 Merino rams each year and concluded its 2012 ram selling season with an on-property auction of 20 double tested elite shortwool rams near Cooma last week following larger on-property Monaro and Riverina auctions of 150 rams in November at Cooma, and 110 auctioned at Hay.

"These were really the cream of the drop and certainly the best value. Yet most clients shy away from selecting short wool sires," said Hazeldean stud principal Jim Litchfield.

"The final elite 20 auction rams were double tested for fleece data - in June and December

which provides more reliable statistics. They are really the next tier down from the tops which we select from and retain for breeding within the stud, Mr Litchfield explained.

Seeing more value in this form of selection, and certainly an exception among shy buyers was Bungarby sheepbreeder Ollie Cay who reaffirmed that 'double tested rams' tend to be more stable in maintaining their fleece figures though-out their lives, and he deems them the pick of the crop.

Top price at the Hazeldean sale was \$3200 paid by Shaun Beasley, "Emu Park", Bairnsdale, Vic., a keen participant in the Peter Westblade Memorial Sheep Trial.

Hazeldean Riverina Ram Sale 2012 *Story extract courtesy The Land, October 2012*



111 rams sold at auction for an average of \$1288 & top of \$2400

Western Riverina-bred Poll Merino rams from the Litchfield family's Hazeldean stud were in demand (at their recent sale) at "Rosevale", Hay, with \$2400 paid for the top-priced poll ram on the day.

Of the 119 rams offered, 111 sold at auction for an average of \$1288. In the breakdown 75 of 80 Merino rams sold under the hammer to average \$1300 while 36 of the 39 Poll Merino rams sold to average \$1256.

The top priced ram was a Poll Merino by Stockman Jim and secured by long-time Hazeldean clients Duncan and Rod Chisholm, Seymour, Victoria, who took home five rams for an average of \$1800.

The top-priced ram had a wool micron of 17.1, standard deviation of 3.04 micron, co-efficient of variation of 17.4 per cent and Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV's) of -2.6 for yearling fibre diameter, yearling

clean fleece weight of 11pc, yearling weight of +3, yearling fibre diameter co-efficient of variation of 1.7pc, and an index of 7pc plus staple strength of 142.

Volume buyer was Goorama Pty Ltd, "Lowlynn", Galong, which bought a mix of 13 Merino and Poll Merino rams for a top price of \$2200 to average \$1431.

A.B. Eckert and Sons, Strathalbyn, South Australia, bought six rams for a top of \$2000 to average \$1433. Curry Flat Pastoral Company, Nimmitabel, secured seven rams for a \$1600 top to average \$1200.

There was a large cross-section of buyers from Narrabri, Broken Hill, Burren Junction, Cooma, Dubbo and Hay as well as from Bordertown, SA and the Victorian districts of Ararat, Cohuna, Seymour and Ocean Grove.



140 rams to a top of \$4,000 and average of \$1,707.

Hazeldean Merinos Monaro Ram Sale 2012

The Hazeldean Monaro Ram Sale held on Wednesday 14th November saw a large crowd gathered and resulted in a 100% clearance, topping at \$4,000 and averaging \$1707.

Average for the 34 Poll rams offered was \$1700, with Lot 118 topping the Polls at \$3750. Sired by Coromandel 07-0002 his index was 156 and ASBV's were -2.3 for FD,

+17 for CFW and +2.8 for yearling weight. Alan McGufficke, Greendale Merino stud Cooma was the purchaser.

There were 109 horned merinos offered, topping at \$4,000 for lot 114 purchased by long term Hazeldean client, Buster Dawes, Western Australia. Sired by Hazeldean 05-7731 he had an index of 143 and ASBV's of -1.2 for FD, +13 for CFW and +1.6 for YWT.

Mr. Dawes purchased 2 other rams for \$3,400 each.

Volume buyers included Curwin McClure, Tarcutta – 8 rams to a top of \$3,200, Elizabeth Balderstone, Darriman – 12 rams, James Flick, Cumnock – 8 rams, Fergus Irving, Woodside, 16 rams, Tony Hill, Cootamundra – 9 to a top of \$3400, Tony Flannery - 12 to a top of \$3600, Brian Anderson – 10 to a top of \$2400.



Mark Eccleston and John Curtis, Manager of Myalla.



Tony Hill, Rob Hyles and Ned Kater.



Shaun Beasley and Craig Wilson.



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Like us on **FACEBOOK**

visit hazeldean.com.au
to see our Spring Ram Sales
Video featuring interviews
with key clients

**Please note change
of date for the
Hazeldean Merinos
Monaro Ram Sale
Thursday 14th
November 2013**

Have we got your email
address?

Keep in touch & get
Hazeldeans latest info

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