



Welcome to the Hazeldean Letter for Spring 2008. The season on the Monaro has gone from a very wet summer to a very dry Autumn and Winter and as we look skywards through a September drawing to a close only 116 mls of rain has graced our rain gauge and paddocks since February. Nonetheless, we have managed to get through the winter without hand feeding, with most stock looking well and still a little of that ever precious commodity, time.

The young rams are looking very well and although not as well grown as the '06 drop that benefited from the exceptional year that was 2007, they will present in good order. The stand out sire group is again by Hazeldean 2.9558 whose skull and horns now adorn my office wall. Last Christmas he was found caught in a fence and although still alive, expired shortly afterwards. A sad end for a magnificent ram. This year we used 800 doses of his semen in our AI program so we will have plenty of his influence right through the flock and another excellent batch of rams by him for sale in 2009. The fact is we have had now used about as much of him as we can without running the risk of inbreeding, so fortunately there are some very promising young sires from different families now coming through to take his place and help us take the next step.

The bull sales have gone well this Spring with total clearances in Queensland and at Cooma with the outstanding Hazeldean Futura W133 remaining the sale topping sire at both venues. Futura is by CA Future Direction and while a predominance of his blood is evident throughout the industry it is for good reason. Following in his footsteps are several outstanding young sire prospects at Hazeldean. In particular Hazeldean Brave B195 (by Bando 9074 and out of a cow with both Hazeldean Renaissance and Gardens Highmark blood) and Hazeldean Carbine C28, an ET calf by Bando 5175 also

showing much promise. Through this winter we have also flushed 20 of our top young females to top sires including Leachman Boomtime on the strength of his excellent progeny produced out of our 2 year old heifers last year.

The Senegus program continues apace and in Queensland the Senegus bulls averaged only slightly less than the Angus indicating the growing enthusiasm and appreciation of what this animal can do for the northern beef industry.

Food for thought. We remain concerned about the fixation among many breeders and advisors over the merit in corrective or compensatory breeding where mating decisions are made with a view of creating offspring neatly falling into the middle of the traits put together. **If there is one abiding rule in genetics it is that genes are not blended and are actually passed on to each generation intact.** This is true of all genes. There is a very important evolutionary reason for this - if an advantageous gene exists and gives its holder a survival advantage, then it is vital that the occurrence and expression of this gene is not broken down (i.e. blended) with each subsequent generation but remains entire and able to express itself fully. If it is blended and its effects watered down, then the advantageous gene would quickly disappear. Genetics is about survival of the fittest and we use this mechanism to improve livestock. We need to remember this.

We wish all our readers a prosperous Spring and all the very best for the remainder of 2008.

JIM LITCHFIELD

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(Left): Stud females penned for inspection at the Hazeldean Stud Female dispersal sale in April where 193 females sold to a top of \$10,000 and averaged \$2081 (details inside).

HAZELDEAN RIVERINA RAM SALE OCTOBER 23 CATALOGUE will be on-line a week prior to the sale. Catalogues will also be available on sale day. If you would like the catalogue faxed/emailed to you please call the Hazeldean Head Office - (02) 6453 5555.



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The Hazeldean Letter

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Hazeldean bloodlines form an integral part of a Victorian property's ongoing success story

Hazeldean performs at Greystones

Leigh Harrison is the manager of Greystones, an 11,000 acre sheep and cropping property situated about 10km south of Bacchus Marsh in southern Victoria. The sheep are run on the rich red/grey loamy soils of Greystones and also the volcanic basalt country to the north west of the property. The average rainfall is approximately 350mm.

The present flock size at Greystones is between 5-6000 head, but this changes from season to season. Hazeldean rams have been used there now for about 6 years and Leigh says he is very pleased with the results.

"The Hazeldean sheep are good doers and have put a lot of size and stretch into our sheep, hence we are cutting more wool. We have also noticed the wool itself has changed dramatically in quality, with our weaners cutting 3.5kg, between 16.5-17 micron, and the older sheep approx. 7kg at between 18 micron (2 year olds) to 20 micron (6 & 7 year old sheep). The average mean micron of the flock is now 19.5."

Leigh says that each year he has been progressively selecting higher grade rams from Hazeldean, and the style of wool is really starting to come through.

"The lambing percentages have also improved with the introduction of Hazeldean rams, being

100% and over in better years and even 90% in the very dry season." says Leigh.

"The ewes have more twins than single lambs, and do very well finishing the lambs off before weaning".

The cull ewes and the 2 year old wethers, which are classed out each year before joining, are shorn early and sold, fetching \$100 average per head plus wool for the 2 year old wethers. Leigh says their strong frame and long bodies make them very saleable.

"I have been very impressed overall with the results of the wool coming through the shed these days both in quality and quantity, giving us the best wool sale so far in 2008," he says.

"It was a thrill to take one of our fleeces to the Bendigo Sheep and Wool Show this year and receive 1st Prize for Champion fleece in the fine merino (18.6-19.5) commercial ewe/wether section."

Leigh's figures show that the fleece was 18.8 micron, with a greasy fleece weight of 7.4kg and a fleece value of \$60.30. The standard deviation was 3.9, CV of 20.7% and comfort factor of 99%.

(Below): Manager of Greystones, Leigh Harrison with the Hazeldean rams purchased in 2007.



All producers should think about the cessation of mulesing with reference to how it applies to their own property and management structure

The Mulesing Issue

The mulesing issue must be just about the most talked about topic in the wool industry since the collapse of the reserve price scheme.

The abolition of mulesing will have a detrimental affect on all producers, however the severity of it will vary from producer to producer and from district to district. I suspect most affected will be those operating in extensive low rainfall areas where other means of fly control are not an option and the fly season longer. In more intensive, cooler areas the impact of non mulesing will be less although this may be offset to some extent where dag buildup is a problem.

In our situation our fly control program begins in September when we 'Clik' ewes and lambs at marking. The ewes are then covered until shearing the following January after which we generally have around 3 months where flies aren't a worry due to short wool. This takes us up to the end of March and in most years we can then get through the next month to six weeks without any further treatments. So as far as our breeding ewes are concerned the cessation of mulesing will mean that the period off shears where flies aren't a problem will shorten. This will lessen, but not eliminate, the number of years we get through April without additional fly prevention treatment.

I think it is important that all producers think about the cessation of mulesing as it applies to their own property and management structure and whether there may be modifications available that will lessen its impact.

With regard to alternatives to mulesing there has been plenty of coverage in the media without me repeating it here. However the one area I would like to comment on is the genetic option. While no doubt some sheep have naturally bare breeches, and the trait is reasonably heritable, it is important to look at the whole picture in terms of overall financial impact.

The likelihood of bare breeched sheep also having the best genetics for profitable wool production would be the ultimate in favourable coincidence and despite the claims of some that by a stroke of good fortune they have these sheep and will save the wool industry (as they were going to save the industry when the reserve price scheme collapsed) we have not seen any evidence to support this. In fact when

undertaking breech scoring of lambs recently at Rosevale to identify the sheep with naturally larger areas of bare skin, we were concerned a negative correlation rather than positive may exist. Research in SA showed bare breeched sheep were equal to non bare breeched in wool quality and quantity - but certainly not superior. We may well be looking at two different genetic effects here, and remain hopeful bare breeches don't carry negative baggage correlated to reduced fleece value.

The University of Melbournes Mackinnon Project, in their most recent newsletter, has estimated that the cost of not mulesing is around \$1.80 per dse in additional treatments. As followers of bloodline comparison trials would know, there is often far greater variation in genetic value between bloodlines than this. So choosing a ram source that saves you \$1.80 per dse but lessens total value by much more, will put you in a worse position, not better. Certainly if we discover a bare breeched ram either within our flock or outside and it measures up on all determinants of value, then we will use it widely but the decision will be made on the basis of total financial merit, not just partial. We will also keep in mind the fact that the more things we select for, the slower our rate of genetic progress will be.

As far as premiums in the market for non mulesed wool, there is little evidence to suggest these are occurring yet. Earlier this year we sold wool from 10 month old wethers that were not mulesed and compared this to their sisters that were and there was no difference. Again the Mackinnon Project estimates that a premium would have to be in the order of 4.5 to 5% to make non mulesing viable. Perhaps this may happen but will obviously only be short lived if mulesing ceases altogether in 2010.

There has been something of a surge on our side of the debate and it is to do with pain relief. Whether this has enough 'legs' to counter the influence PETA has on our customers only time will tell but it is certainly a positive development and, from what I hear, a very worthwhile measure in any case with lambs recovering and mothering up much quicker.

Finally, we all know what a great product Clik is but we also know it comes at a significant cost. There may be some light at the end of the tunnel here also with the patent expiring very soon. Here's hoping those clever Chinese will make a good copy!

The cost of mulesing is around \$1.80 per dse in extra treatments. A ram source that saves \$1.80 per dse through bare breach genes but reduces more than \$1.80 per dse in other areas will put you in a worse position.





From Manager Richard Cannon
at Hazeldean Riverina, Rosevale, Hay

Hazeldean Riverina

Mark our next Riverina Ram Sale on the calendar - October 23, 2008

Our second Riverina Ram Sale will be held on Thursday 23rd of October and the rams have progressed very well and combined with rams to come from Cooma will form a very good offering. I look forward to catching up with clients at the upcoming sales and wish everyone the best for a good Spring and Christmas.

Our seasonal news

Another Autumn and Winter has passed and there is plenty of empty space on the rainfall chart. Fortunately the significant rain we had last Summer, which saw the creeks on Rosevale run for the first time in many years, also provided the majority of the property with a good blanket of Summer feed which has enabled us to get through to Spring with all the stock in sound shape.

We have just finished shearing and the results are extremely pleasing. Of all the ewes shorn, the average wool cut per head was 7.4 kg, taking into account all age groups and both stud and commercial ewes. The wool, considering the seasonal adversity of the last 6 months, was extremely sound and the sheep presented in very good order off the board.

This result, on top of a terrific lambing, is a testament to the ewe's strong constitution and their adaptability to deal with a run of very ordinary seasons.

In May we undertook a breech wrinkle and breech cover scoring of a proportion of our lambs using the AWI scoring cards. This process was very interesting and outlined as suspected the correlation with the barer breeched animals and their lack of fleece weight and often wool quality. It appears blatantly obvious if we take measures to breed a mules free sheep at the expense of key production parameters such as fleece weight and quality, the over all profitability in a per hectare basis regardless of the environment will suffer.

There is still optimism to be gained though from an increasing acceptance by several US and European retailers to Tri Solfen as an ongoing treatment for mulesing, and the advancements with intra dermal injections are progressing and give another option.

Congratulations to John

John Porter, jackaroo at Hazeldean's Riverina base, Rosevale, Hay, surprised even himself when he won the Riverina Merino Information day's Landmark

Pennefather Junior Judging Award – by his own admission it was all “a bit of a shock”.

Twenty –two year old John, who grew up on the family farm “Miegunyah” at Boorooban, between Deniliquin and Hay, saw off stiff competition from several challengers from across NSW and interstate to win the coveted award. The Junior Judging competition was overseen by Wagga Wagga livestock consultant Craig Wilson, of Craig Wilson Livestock, and former Riverina jackaroo James Armstrong, of Cassilis Park Merino Stud, Cassilis.

Success at Sheepvention

It was enjoyable to catch up with many clients at Hamilton Sheepvention and pleasing to see that part of Victoria looking in good shape for a Spring.

(Below at top): Picture taken during ewe hogget shearing at Rosevale of a random selection of ewe hoggets in the race.

(Below at bottom): John Porter after winning Riverina Merino's Pennefather Junior Judging Award.

| Ident. | > 30µ | Mean | ∑ of V |
|----------|-------|------|--------|
| 9751.182 | 7 | 18.4 | 18.5 |
| 5435.182 | 3 | 17.9 | 16.8 |
| 3597.182 | 1 | 18.2 | 15.4 |
| 8868.182 | 3 | 18.7 | 17.6 |
| 8790.182 | 2 | 18.1 | 16.6 |
| 9203.182 | 1 | 16.9 | 17.2 |



Hazeldean wool promoted to Royalty

A highlight of recent wool sales was the sale of a portion of our hogget wool through Riverina Wool to Meredith wool that had a contract for the British Army's Household Cavalry to make their coats. The thought of wool from the Hay plains being worn by the guards at the gates to Buckingham palace is novel and a compliment to the quality of what we are producing .

Welcome to Luc

We recently welcomed Luc Siomon from Brittany in France to Rosevale who is undertaking 5 months work experience with us. Luc is studying agricultural engineering at the Institut Supérieur d'Agriculture de Beauvais in the north of France. He arrived at the beginning of shearing and has been a terrific help, taking to working with livestock extremely quickly.

Senegus suitability

On the cattle front our young Senegus bulls are growing out very well and the Senegus females continue to show their suitability to this part of the Riverina and their tolerance to the current dry times. For the first time at this years Riverina bull sale we offered 10 Senegus bulls and cleared all of them, the feedback so far on the bulls sold has been very favourable and their placid temperaments on such hardy dynamic animals continues to amaze clients.

A very successful Hazeldean Riverina Ram Sale

The inaugural Hazeldean Riverina Ram sale was held on October 31st 2007. The results of the sale were very pleasing where 97 rams sold from 98 offered at an average of \$1200. Rams were sold to NSW, Victoria and South Australia to a healthy balance of existing clientele as well as welcoming various new clients. On the evening of the sale we hosted a BBQ dinner which provided a great catch up for both staff and clients.

New for Rosevale at Hay

We have been continuing with our ongoing improvements to Rosevale with a further 34 km of poly pipe and 55 km fencing since the last edition of 'The Hazeldean Letter'.

A major improvement has seen a new set of sheep yards with a processing facility at the woolshed which has increased the overall efficiency of the place with now all stock yards interconnected by laneways.

(Top right): The British Army's Household Cavalry in their wool coats. (Centre right): Luc Siomon from France. (Bottom right): Hazeldean Riverina's successful inaugural Ram Sale.





Hazeldean 2008 Sales Round-up

This years selling season commenced with the **Hazeldean South Australian Bull sale**, held at Gumbowie at Guy and Sarah Cunninghams property for the first time. **49 bulls sold to a top of \$6,500 and average of \$3,635. The top priced bull was Lot 21, Hazeldean Bando B318**, bought by David Brown. He was a son of SAF 598 Bando 5175 out of a Hazeldean Focus female with +6.7 for BW, +113 for 600 day weight, and \$84 for JAP B3 index.

Volume buyers on the day were Bruce and Libby Creek, Hillcrest Pastoral Co. who purchased 16 bulls at the sale.

Billed as **"the opportunity of a lifetime to secure the best in Angus genetics"**, April 4th saw the dispersal of 200 breeding age Hazeldean Herd book females at Hazeldean Cooma.

It was a big day, kicking off with the sale of **210 Hazeldean commercial females**, followed by the HBR females and then finishing up with the Hazeldean bulls.

The 210 commercial females **sold to a top of \$1600** for the 2.5 year old heifers and averaged \$934 overall. Enquiry for the HBR females was strong and the sale resulted in a **top price of \$10,000 for lot 151, Hazeldean Renaissance X124** bought by Robert Bulle of Ardrossan Angus. She was a donor dam at Hazeldean with outstanding EBV's of +1.8 for BWT through to +81 for 600 DWT and a JAP B 3 of +\$94. **An overall average for the 193 females sold was \$2,081.**

Volume buyers were Lee Macarthur-Onslow from

Goulburn who purchased 26 stud females, J & C Braddock, Kybean 15, A. Bryant, 10, Whiskey Hill Cattle Co. 6, Yamba Angus 7, Bass Strait Beef 6, and Millah Murrah Angus Stud and Albert Investments both 5.

The bull sale saw **50 bulls sell to a top of \$7750 for Lot 43, Hazeldean Lead On B765**, a son of Connealy Lead On out of a Kelp daughter, with a low birth weight (+3.9), super growth (+96) and EMA (+3.1), bought by Matong. **Overall average for the bulls was \$3570.**

The **Hazeldean Northern Performance Bull Sale** was held for the second year at the Pinora sale Complex at Jackson, between Roma and Miles. The sale complex, beside a picturesque billabong, makes a delightful setting for the sale which was well attended by many familiar faces, locals and new ones.

82 bulls were auctioned; 62 Angus and 20 Senegus. **Top price for the Angus was for 2 APR bulls at \$7,000;** Lot 23 Hazeldean New Design B1142 with EBV's of +4.4 for BWT, +91 for 600 DWT, and Lot 24 Hazeldean Lead On B1147 with +6.1 for BWT, and +94 for 600 DWT. AJM Pastoral, Richmond and Cowan Investments, Hughenden were the respective buyers.

The Senegus **sold to a \$6500 top** for Lot 70, Hazeldean Hercules 06-69 with Cowan Investments also taking home the top priced Senegus bull, a CN5480 Hercules grandson out of a Hazeldean Renaissance granddaughter. Average for the Angus and also the Senegus was \$4,000.

Ram Sales 2008

Hazeldean Merino

Hazeldean Riverina Ram Sale Thursday October 23 at 1pm

Rosevale, Hay - 20 Hay bred rams, 80 Cooma bred rams

Annual Hazeldean Cooma Ram Sale Thursday November 13 at 1pm

Hazeldean, Cooma - 150 Rams

Private selections available at the conclusion of these sales or at any time by appointment.



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The Hazeldean Sales Round-up photo gallery:

1. Commercial females averaged \$934 to kick start the April 4th sale at Hazeldean Cooma. 2. Rod and Glenda Reeves travelled from Stanthorpe for the Northern Performance Bull Sale. 3. Pictured with buyers from AJM Investments at the Hazeldean Northern Performance Bull Sale in Queensland were Reay Cowan,

Hughenden, (on left) and Jim Litchfield (second from right). 4. Lindy Cowan and Joanne Cicconi at the Hazeldean Northern Performance Bull Sale. 5. Clients inspect the SA Sale bulls at Gumbowie. 6. At the April 4 Cooma sale, the 2.5 year old commercial females sold to a top of \$1600.

Hazeldean in SA

Hazeldean teams up with Gumbowie in South Australia

This year's Hazeldean SA bull sale, our 10th annual in SA, was for the first time held on-property at Guy and Sarah Cunninghams "Gumbowie" at Willalooka in the south east of South Australia.

The sale marked an important development in the provision of superior Hazeldean Angus genetics to beef producers in South Australia and western Victoria. Our relationship with Guy and Sarah has expanded with the despatch of 200 top class Hazeldean breeders to Gumbowie from Cooma, commencing the production of sale bulls born and bred in the south east.

In June Guy spent three days at Hazeldean in New South Wales selecting from more than 2000 cows, choosing between 35 and 50 at various ages.

"With around 1000 cows in the stud's AI program and about 300 progeny born each year by embryo transfer the Hazeldean herd is very even," says Guy.

Existing and new clients will now have the opportunity to inspect the dams of sale bulls.

Genetic progress will not be compromised as the herd will remain fully integrated with the full genetic pool available to Hazeldean.

The cows will remain in sync with their interstate sisters with on-going AI and ET programs. "We intend to retain spring calving (Aug/Sept) across the herd and will continue to offer bulls at 16 to 18 months. This allows our clients access to genetic progress as quickly as possible."

The Cunninghams were long-time Hazeldean commercial clients and with low winter rainfall and subzero temperatures in the Monaro region Guy says the cattle appealed because of their ability to thrive under harsh conditions.

Next year Hazeldean will offer around 60 bulls on the Tuesday of Angus Week and in 2010 the first drop from the new partnership will go under the hammer.

Genetics info day at Stonehaven

An inaugural Hazeldean client information day "Beef 2008 - Genetics as a profit driver in your herd" was held late last year at the Stonehaven vineyard function centre, Padthaway.

About 35 producers attended to hear a top line-up of speakers including Wayne Upton from the



University of New England's Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, Armidale. Other speakers were Richard Eldershaw, Rangers Valley Beef, Glen Innes, NSW, and Jim Litchfield principal of the Cooma based Hazeldean Angus stud.

Hazeldean SA Manager Guy Cunningham said the afternoon highlighted how breedplan figures could be used to make deliver significant genetic gains in commercial herds, and also the importance of breeding cattle with muscling, good carcase yields and quiet temperaments for the long fed Japanese market.

Hazeldean on KI

At the invitation of Kangaroo Island Beef Group, Hazeldean was recently involved in a session on interpreting and utilizing structural and carcass information available to bull buyers. The day involved hands on explanation of Beef Excel scoring systems and scanning data. Agriculture on the island continues to evolve alongside forestry tourism and aquaculture.

Producers on Kangaroo Island face the usual challenges as well as freight and transport issues. Encouragingly a local feedlot is now offering a marketing alternative for weaner cattle on the island.

Other producers on the island are running cattle alongside potato production and farmed marron. If the stories are to be believed the local fishing is also very good.

Thanks to the group for their participation, including Joe Riggs and Ben Hebart for their organisation.



(Top): Guy and Sarah Cunningham with some of the SA Hazeldean females.
(Below): From left to right, Sarah Cunningham, Gumbowie, Landmark Keith Brand Manager Phil Drury and producers Rob and Sonia Chalk, Urara, Willalooka.