Extraordinary Leahcim Poll Merino Sale

Well over 200 people either participated in, or bore witness to one of the most successful on-property ram sales ever held in this country, at Leahcim last week. Andrew, Rosemary, Luke & Stewart Michael presented 80 Leahcim Poll Merinos in their main auction, plus a further 40 by mini auction to the large gallery that contained 75 registered bidders.

At the completion of the sale there was a total clearance of rams for a national on-property average for Poll Merinos of $3,130. The top price was a new Leahcim on-property record of $22,000, bettered only by their $25,000 at the Classings Classic in 2006.

In summing up the day, it was a display of top quality paddock reared hogget rams from a family that has demonstrated extraordinary passion and positivity for their industry and sheep and were rewarded with a terrific and well deserved result.

Through the years of progress to reach such a result, the Michael family has endured much criticism, as is usual when one breaks the traditional mould of the way things are done. However, quite clearly this sale result demonstrated they are very much in tune with commercial breeder sentiment, producing sheep that will improve total sheep incomes with less costs for commercial breeders, backed up by actual objectively measured evidence.

Registered bidders came from every mainland state of Australia and contained at least 20 ram breeding enterprises. Auctioneers Craig Shearer (Elders) and Gordon Wood (Landmark) had no trouble extracting bids from the 'standing room only' crowd. In fact, when the last pen of mini auction rams came into the ring, there were two bids called before the auctioneer had even called for an opening bid!

The $22,000 top priced ram, Leahcim 556 had exceptional ASBVs, being +4.1 for yearling weight, average for fat, +0.5 for eye muscle, +11 for yearling clean fleece weight, -1.1 for yearling fibre diameter, -2.2 for yearling fibre diameter CV, combining to give a 7% dual purpose index of 144. The successful bidder was a syndicate of the South East and Mallee based studs of Ridgway Advance, Ramsgate, Rice's Creek and Gunallo. They outbid several other bidders, with the final underbidder being Landmark's Karoonda agency manager Murray Greenfield, operating for the Ridgway and Kamora Park studs in partnership. They were later successful in purchasing lot 13 for $6,500.

Interstate buying support featured four NSW buyers.
Nigel and Kate Kerin, Gullen Gamble Merino stud, Yoeval purchased lot 2, Leahcim 527 for $7,500 to be the sale's third top price. This was one of only 2 rams in the catalogue that the Michael family had placed a modest reserve on; otherwise they would have been retained in the stud.

Nigel had recently been recognised as the NSW Farmer of the Year. He and Kate were seeking a top ram for their relatively new venture into Poll Merinos; looking for size and plain bodies on their sheep suitable for their summer rainfall country. They first bought from Leahcim 3 years ago and have also been using semen from top Leahcim sires in the meantime.

Bill Walker, Classings Ltd, Murray Bridge purchased 4 rams on the day, with 3 of these purchased for the famous Haddon Rig stud at Warren, NSW. These included lot 1, Leahcim 297 at $5,000 and the other stud reserve, Leahcim 511 at lot 35 for $7,000.

Ian Lilburne Classing, operating through Landmark Hay purchased 2 rams @ $3,500 and $3,000, while Ron and Robyn Chudleigh, Bigga, through Elders Crookwell purchased 3 from $2,000 to $2,200. DM & AM Forrest, through Elders Tamworth purchased at one at $1,900 to round out the NSW buying.

The biggest volume buyers on the day were Queenslanders Peter and Kim Saunders, operating through Simstock Longreach. They purchased 2 in the main auction to $1,200, but then added 14 from the mini auction to $1,500; their 16 rams in total averaging $1,094.

South Australian buying support was widespread, but particularly strong in the Orroroo area. From one producer initially purchasing Leahcim genetics many years ago, others have observed their success first hand and have followed suit. This year 6 individual buyers from that area were successful in purchasing 20 rams in total to $3,500 and at a $2,245 average. They were Landmark clients, HT Harslett, Aramar Props and JF & CM Keurschner (all purchasing 4 rams each); and Elders clients KC & TM Hooper (2 rams), AG & AM Beinke (4 rams) and TB & JG Laskey (2 rams).

The biggest volume buyers in the main auction were repeat buyers, DJ & LK Ebsary, Barunga Gap, buying through Landmark Snowtown. After securing 6 rams to $2,000 last year, they again purchased another 6 from $1,600 to $2,500 and at a $2,167 average. In the context of the overall sale average, this was very good value buying.

West Coast buyers were headed by Barry and Daryl Smith and family, Glenville stud Cowell who successfully bid on lots 11 and 45 for $6,000 and $4,200 respectively, while Prime Family Trust, also from Cowell purchased lot 4 @ $5,000 and later purchased one @ $1,100 from the mini auction.

Yorke Peninsula buyers have always been strong supporters of this sale and repeat buyers, AP & DG Germein and Son were again strong, successfully purchasing 3 from $2,600 to $3,500.

White Hill Props, buying through Elders Roseworthy purchased the impressive lot 16, Leahcim 419 for $7,000; a ram that was 21% above average clean fleece weight.

The Graetz Family Trust, through Elders Bordertown waited until lot 75 for their pick ram, Leahcim 888, but were forced to go to the sale's second top price of $9,000 before being successful; pushed by Nigel Kerin, NSW; the successful buyer of lot 2.

Ray Schroeder, Gunallo stud, Murrayville, Vic and buying through Landmark Pinnaroo went to $5,000 before securing Leahcim 203 at lot 39; earlier being a member of the successful buying syndicate of the $22,000 top priced ram.

Long time local Leahcim supporters, Roger and Ros Wheaton, Snowtown purchased 3 rams from $2,000 to $2,500; and RP & BK Turner, Snowtown purchased 3 from $1,100 to $5,000.

Lowendale Pastoral, buying through Australian Wool Network purchased 5 to $2,600; Hillcott Grove Props through Elders Eudunda (4 to $2,200); and ML Jaeschke & Co, through Elders Clare (4 to $2,200) rounded out the main buyers.

Sale Summary

Main Auction	2008	2007	Mini Auction	2008	2007
Offered	80	74	Offered	40	35
Sold	80	71	Sold	40	24
Top	$22,000	$4,500	Top	$1.900	$1,200
Ave	$3,130	$1,864	Ave	$1,155	$676

Pictured with the $22,000 top priced ram at the Leahcim on-property Poll Merino sale are Andrew Michael, Leahcim; Bill Walker, Classings Ltd, Murray Bridge; Ted Keller, Ramsgate, Tintinara; Ray Schroeder, Murrayville, Vic; Karen and David Ridgway, Ridgway Advance, Bordertown; Mark Vandeleur, Rice's Creek, Tintinara; Craig Keller, Ramsgate, Tintinara; and Landmark auctioneer Gordon Wood, Murray Bridge, who sold the lot 10 ram.

Nigel Kerin, Gullen Gamble Merino stud, Yoeval, NSW holds the ram he purchased for $7,500 at the Leahcim Poll Merino sale. Also pictured is Leahcim stud principal. Andrew Michael, Snowtown.

These 3 rams were purchased at the Leahcim Poll Merino on-property ram sale for $7,000, $5,000 and $2,000 for the Haddon Rig stud, Warren, NSW by Bill Walker, Classings Ltd, Murray Bridge (left). Holding them are Elders Clare agent Darren Pretlove, and Leahcim principals Andrew and Stewart Michael.

Part of the seated portion of the large crowd of over 200 people at the Leahcim Poll Merino ram sale watch on as one of the early lots goes through the ring.