

# LEAHCIM NEWSLETTER

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Newsletter No.7

July 2009

## White Suffolks & Poll Merinos

### *Welcome to Leahcim's 7th Newsletter*

We have made a few changes to our structure as you will discover as you read on. None of these changes should have an adverse effect on you, our valued clients. In fact, we only see these developments as advantageous to our production system and our ability to service your needs in the future.

As with all business sectors, there are constant challenges being thrown up at the sheep industry. However, we believe this is one of the most exciting and potentially rewarding times in the history of the Australian sheep industry. Sheep prices are at very high levels with export and domestic demand for sheep meats never being better.

There have also been great advances in the manufacturing of wool, with exciting apparel now being developed for the high volume, young, casual, recreation and sportswear markets around the world, which can only improve the future demand for our wool.

We have more breeding assistance available to us now than at anytime in our history. Breeding technology advances, plus objective measurement schemes such as Lambplan and Merino Select enable us to consistently advance our sheep performance; advantages sheep producers from past generations could only dream of.

We are also offering a lot more rams in our 2009 Poll Merino sale. Besides natural advancement in numbers of quality rams being produced, we are well aware of the need to keep auction prices affordable for established or potential new clients.

Finally and 'Touch Wood', the seasonal rainfall seems to have a more traditional pattern about it, with this being one of the more promising starts to a season for many years. May it continue for all our clients right across the country.

Regards; Andrew, Rosemary, Luke & Stewart Michael, 'Leahcim', Snowtown, SA

Phone: (08) 8865 2085

Fax: (08) 8865 2585

Email: [leahcimgenetics@bigpond.com](mailto:leahcimgenetics@bigpond.com)



We encourage you to check out our website as a source for more information

[www.leahcim.com.au](http://www.leahcim.com.au)



### Leahcim's 2009 Calendar of Events

- ★ Hamilton Sheepvention - Monday 3rd August & Tuesday 4th August - displaying only
- ★ Dubbo Sheep Show - Tuesday 25th to Thursday 27th August - displaying only
- ★ Adelaide Show - White Suffolk Judging - Friday 4th September
- ★ Adelaide Elite Sale - Sunday 6th September - Leahcim offering 2 White Suffolk rams
- ★ Leahcim Poll Merino Sale - Tuesday 15th September 1:30pm  
Offering 200 Poll Merino rams 13 months of age
- ★ Leahcim 22nd Annual White Suffolk Sale - Friday 18th September 1:30pm  
Offering 110 White Suffolk rams

## Leahcim Farm Structure Change

Over the past 6 years we have leased 3 farms near Snowtown, which allowed us to increase our breeding flock and consequently both our ram and ewe selection numbers and supply numbers for our clients. In April of this year, two of these farms came up for re-leasing, which we decided to discontinue. At that stage, paddock feed at Snowtown was critically low and we were concerned about our future breeding projects.

For a number of years we had been looking at the option of leasing, or purchasing a property in the South East of S.A. We felt this would allow us to diversify our location and limit the climatic impact on our whole operation in dry years, thus giving us more surety to be able to continue our sheep breeding goals with confidence.

In April we negotiated with Michael Pocock who owned Panlatinga, to purchase his property situated 27km south of Keith. Michael was excellent in his dealings and as we needed immediate stock feed, he granted us access before settlement. This allowed us to move all our breeding flock to Panlatinga prior to lambing, with very few stock losses as a result.

Panlatinga has the same OJD status as Leahcim and this made the move very easy. The property has been run as a very successful Merino stud with Michael's ewes having the same foundations as Leahcim. Panlatinga has excellent infrastructure, including a central lane, many small paddocks, plus very good sheep handling facilities. All these will help when mothering and recording within our breeding programs.



Loading ewes to transport to Panlatinga in April

We will be using Panlatinga as our main breeding property because its location is very close to Brecon Breeders who conduct all of our artificial breeding and semen collection programs.

The 2009 Leahcim

sale rams will still be marketed from Snowtown. However, we will be surveying clients in the South East and assessing whether we have a need to hold a sale at Panlatinga in the future, or continue to service our clients and deliver rams from our Snowtown base.

## Leahcim's intensive feeding and lamb finishing project

Last year, with lower grain quality and prices at harvest time, we decided to purchase some Merino wether lambs to value add our grain. We purchased 700 lambs from the Jamestown market, plus 1,000 Leahcim blood lambs from Will and Pauline Crawford and Warren Harslett. The lambs that were selected at Jamestown were visually the plainest skinned lambs with good carcasses and came from 4 different blood lines. Both the Crawford and Harslett lambs were complete drafts.

All the lambs were backgrounded at our station and then went onto stubbles until feedlot space was available. The lambs were all of similar age and shearing and were managed as one group until being grain finished. There are 4 points of interest that we have learnt as a result of this exercise.

1. When finishing Merino lambs, there is a high percentage of them that tend to be too lean. Even after 50 days on grain, of the first 1,000 lambs that went through the feedlot and had carcass weights over 20kg, many still tended to be only fat score 2.



A group of the Merino wether lambs we feedlotted to value add our grain

2. When sending the first draft of 437 lambs to TMC (Tatiara Meat Company), we drafted off all the lambs that visually had excess skin. These 200 lambs had a carcass dressing percentage of 0.7% less than the plainer skin lambs. The skin values were the same for both lots, so the excess skinned lambs had a negative result on the overall profit.
3. With the third draft of lambs we had an independent agent assisting in their weighing, with the Jamestown lambs being 5 kg live weight lighter than the Leahcim blood lambs. This equated to 2.2 kg of carcass weight at \$4.30/kg which totalled \$9.46 less value per lamb. These figures are on a random trial basis so there could be some variations, but we have decided that we will only buy lambs from flocks with a good performance history in the future.
4. We weighed a small draft of these lambs and sold them at Dublin. These lambs weighed 47kg live weight and on the performance of the others sold on hooks, should have dressed 19.7 kg. However we struck a fluctuating down market that dropped \$8/head. This fluctuation cost us \$14/head compared with the lambs that were sold over the hooks in the same week.

## Greater numbers of flock rams

Over the last 5 years and through the use of AI and ET programs, we have increased our breeding flock and thus, the availability of top quality flock rams. Following last year's high demand at the auction, we will be increasing the number of Poll Merino rams offered at this year's auction from 120 to 200 to assist volume buyers in obtaining their requirements,

The White Suffolk auction numbers will be maintained at 110 rams, with another 40 rams available for private selection at the Poll Merino sale. Both breeds will have a large number of private selection rams available from the 21<sup>st</sup> of September. Priority preference for the private sale rams is always given to regular clients and/or clients who register and operate at our sales. Private sale ram prices will range from \$400 to \$1200, depending on their grade based on ASBVs and breeding quality.

## Poll Merino Ewe Sale

This year we aim to have a draft of Poll Merino ewe hoggets available for sale on the 15<sup>th</sup> September. These ewes will be classed and drafted into their breeding types and an auction reserve price allocated to each pen.

## Semen Sales

Leahcim offers a range of semen packages, with a minimum order of 50 doses per package. Larger packages are also available to suit volume buyers. The packages are for semen purchased and delivered for the one breeding season. Semen information on all

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 prominent, 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.



*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.*

## White Suffolk Genetics

In 2001 we founded the Leahcim Lam White Suffolk flock within the Leahcim program, primarily to allow us more selling opportunities for top rams at the Adelaide Elite Ram Sale. It has since become too expensive and difficult to maintain accurate records for two flocks, so we have decided to dissolve the Leahcim Lam stud back into the main Leahcim White Suffolk stud flock.

Over the past 3 years we have used three main outside sires to benchmark our performance and improve our accuracies on Lambplan, plus to breed some new family lines and to reduce inbreeding. The first of these sires was Farrer 040074. He produced excellent muscle through the loin and rump on all his progeny. His top son, Leahcim 060076 ( Pwwt 14.5, Pfat -0.3, PEmd +2.0) has produced most of the top rams for this year's sale offering, including L080153 ( Pwwt 12.8, Pfat -0.3, Pemd +1.3). He will be for sale in the Elite Sale in Adelaide.

Another sire was Pendarra 043050 (Pwwt 17.1, Pfat -0.3, Pemd +2.5); his progeny have excellent Lambplan figures with very high early growth and a medium mature frame size suitable for producing great domestic market sucker lambs. The progeny of P043050 are very compact and we are sure his ewe lambs (mated at 7 months) will produce some very productive rams for next year's sale.

Anden 070008 (Pwwt 20.0, Pfat -1.2, Pemd +0.6) was selected for his high growth ASBVs and has been mated to ewes with more fat and muscle than he has. His progeny have just been born at Panlatinga and will also be for sale in 2010.

Leahcim White Suffolk genetics are very commercially focused and with a high percentage of our clients using Merinos as their prime lamb dams, it is important to have rams that throw low birth weights, high growth and positive muscle. ASBVs for Pemd on the 2008 drop of 490 Leahcim White Suffolk lambs that were measured, saw only 22 with negative eye muscle readings.

Leahcim's total flock Lambplan genetic gain from 1999 to 2008

1999- Bwt 0.1, Wwt 3.5, Pwwt 5.4, Ywt 5.4, Pfat -0.3, Pemd 0.0,

2008- Bwt 0.1, Wwt 6.3, Pwwt 10.6, Ywt 10.9, Pfat -0.2, Pemd +0.8

That has demonstrated that we have been able to greatly increase the main profit drivers of growth and muscle, while maintaining birth weights and fat at desirable levels for easier management.

*This is a report as published in Rural Press and regional publications after the sale.*

## Quality Highlight at Leahcim White Suffolks

The feature of last year's 21<sup>st</sup> Leahcim White Suffolk sale offering was the very high quality, reflecting top commercial traits right through the line up of 108 rams. While the stand out rams were featured in the first 10 or so lots, the evenness of the structurally correct, high performance rams was a credit to Leahcim. Rams that exceeded plus ten for growth, had ideal fat and up to plus 1.4 for muscle were still on offer in the last few lots.



*A view over the pens prior to Leahcim's 21<sup>st</sup> Annual White Suffolk sale last September.*

Competition at the top end of the catalogue was strong, with the first 10 lots averaging \$1,130 and topping at \$1,500 twice, but as competition fell off the final average fell back to a great value figure of \$707.50.

10,000 - 25,000 lambs every Tuesday. From our stud's viewpoint the presentation of the Woolford lambs at Dublin adds to the competition and marketing of lambs through that selling system.

Andrew Michael

*The following is a sale report that appeared in Rural Press and regional publications after our 2008 Poll Merino sale.*

## Extraordinary Leahcim Poll Merino Sale

At the 2008 annual 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. 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 record 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 the mini auction that followed, the 40 rams offered sold to \$1,900 and averaged \$1,155.

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 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, 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 made 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,



*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.*

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.



*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.*

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.



*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 & Stewart Michael.*

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 1 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

Some of these rams will be retained at Leahcim, but most will be offered on September 15<sup>th</sup>. They clearly form the best offering of Leahcim genetics to date. We feel the quality and breeding potential of this year's sale rams far exceeds any that we have offered previously. The depth of quality within this group of rams is very pleasing as it clearly demonstrates that with high lambing percentages, high classing pressure and the use of genetic evaluation, development of a highly productive and sustainable flock can be developed under more humane management.

Catalogues will be available in August and the information on all the sale sheep will be on our web site by the middle of August.

## Client Profiles

### Welke Bros

The Welke Bros operation is spread across several properties, all located in the Cascades region of WA. The properties are managed by a partnership involving 3 brothers; Brian, Neville and Michael and Michael's 2 sons, Scott and James.



Mike Welke (centre) pictured at our 2007 Poll Merino sale after purchasing the top priced ram. He is with volume buyer Pauline Crawford & Bill Walker, Classings Ltd.

Their sheep operation involves 4,500 ewes mated to Merinos and 1,000 ewes mated to White Suffolks, run on their block closest to the coast. They shear in January, lamb in late April early May and in most years they sell all of their Merino wether lambs as lambs by April the following year.

The Welke's flock has always been based on a large framed plain bodied animal. To survive on the south coast of WA, where there is a lot of summer rain, any body faults, or too much skin was found out very quickly. However, they thought they could do better with their wool cut. They had gone as far as they could with the stud from which rams were previously sourced and felt their next challenge was to identify a supplier who could provide the 50-60 good quality rams needed at the time, without breaking the bank. Hence they started an AI program to breed their own rams.

They had a 'play' in the first year with some semen from their source stud; over 150 suitable ewes Bill Walker had identified over the years at hogget classings. This trial proved to them they could do it (74% conception rate), so they then aimed higher and Bill negotiated with Andrew and sourced some semen. They used L263 in 2004. According to the Welkes, the resulting progeny were fantastic. Staple length was twice as long as their flock bred animals on big long carcasses. They initially thought they'd have to wait 3 or 4 years before they had enough quality rams come out of the project, but within 2 years they had enough rams of the quality they desired. They continue to use Leahcim genetics and have found their results have been great, with each generation getting better and better. An added bonus is that they have dropped a full micron across all age groups; something they never set out to do, but are more than happy it has occurred.

The rainfall on the Welke's property has been very stable for the last 10 years. However, the proportion of the rain falling in the summer months has increased. For example in 2008, in excess of 200mm fell from the start of December to the end of February. This means their sheep have to be very tolerant of moist warm conditions. By and large they now have no body strike issues with their sheep. Any animal that does is immediately off the place and last year they treated more than a dozen of the adult sheep. They didn't mules last year's lambs and the wet summer highlighted the animals that were not up to it, hence they had to treat 120 out of

2,500 ewe lambs, mainly as a result of getting struck from urine staining.

The increase in summer rain got them thinking about how to use that rain rather than spending loads of money on spraying weeds. In September 2003, they sowed a subtropical perennial mix on the worst non wetting sand they had. The result was outstanding. They now have 400 hectares of perennials, consisting of mostly Rhodes grass and Panic with a Serradella understorey. This allows them to give sheep green feed at any time of the year and also enables them to spray out cropping paddocks without fear of running out of sheep feed. Country that was hard to crop and hungry on fertilizer is now a stable grassland. Country that cost them money to crop now makes them money through sheep. They now feel that instead of clayng that non wetting sand for \$400 - 500 a hectare, they can pasture it with perennials for less than \$100 and have a green sheep area all year round.

They are farming in an area where sheep are fast being pushed out the door in favour of continuous cropping systems. The Welkes explained that they believe they can still make money from their sheep by using quality genetics and identifying areas of the farm that are more suited to grazing than cropping.

*When the Welke family first sourced our genetics they had a vision and a 10 year goal of where they saw their breeding program heading. It is clear to me that with such a substantial cropping and sheep operation, both sectors need to be productive and work well together. The genetics the Welkes have used from Leahcim have been the most advanced we have bred, using our top AI sires over large numbers of ewes, which has given them similar genetic gains to Leahcim.*

Andrew Michael

### B J Woolford Trust

Barry, Nathan and Susan Woolford have four different properties, from Murray Town to Hammond, ranging in rainfall from 500mm down to 300mm. They crop wheat and barley on a two-year rotation as well as breeding prime lambs.

They started buying Leahcim's White Suffolk rams a few years ago, crossing with Merino ewes in their drier country and Border Leicester first cross ewes on their wetter country.

All their ewes are purchased at one and a half years of age specifically for breeding prime lambs. Their average lambing percentages are very good, being over 90% for their Merino ewes and over 125% with their Border Leicester cross ewes. These percentages are achieved without preg testing.

The lambs, once weaned, are left to their own devices in open paddocks. Once the paddocks of grass or stubble are eaten down, they leave a sheep feeder full of barley in the paddock for the lambs.

Preparing their lambs for markets consists of drafting the top 40 lambs off each week and using their own ute and trailer to transport the lambs as close to the time of sale, resulting in a high average price over a 12 month period.

Since using Leahcim's rams their lambs have been outstanding in length and height and have achieved excellent growth rates. Good breeding and preparation has enabled the Woolfords to achieve a rating of being in the top 10% of the price range at Dublin Lamb Market each week.

*The Woolford family has built a reputation of producing and presenting an excellent prime lamb which buyers seek out at the Dublin sale yards. Dublin sale yards are SA's main sheep exchange facility, selling*

In a personal family achievement, both Luke & Andrew had the honour of being appointed to judge at the same Adelaide Royal interbreed judging (pictured below).



## Breeding guide for Poll Merinos using ASBVs

This year more than ever, we feel we must stress just how important it is for you to understand that using ASBVs is both essential and profitable in sheep breeding.

In the article "Leahcim intense feeding and lamb finishing project" we explain the results we have seen at Leahcim this year. With both breeds (Poll Merinos and White Suffolks) there are clear selection indicators that clients need to be aware of when purchasing rams and ewes.

You need to balance up your selection for wool and carcase traits, so that your breeding is heading in the direction you desire. Merino Select allows you to genetically identify the better carcase, or wool traits to match your objectives and these will then be reflected in the improvement of your flock.

There is NO way you can visually select an individual animal's actual performance. It would be a guess at best, but ASBVs that are genetically evaluated allow you to know how that animal will actually perform.

We have all seen animals that have had a life of luxury through never leaving the feed shed, or those that have received inadequate nutrition and were unable to express their genetic potential. To know how those animals are going to perform is impossible without genetic evaluation. An example of this was in 2000 when we selected a sire that visually was well prepared and looked to have excellent wool and carcase attributes. Today, that ram has ASBVs for growth of -4.2kg, which means his progeny have 10kg carcase weight less than the average for sheep within our flock.

Growth and Eye Muscle Depth (EMD – an accurate indicator of overall muscling) need to be selected in balance. Trials carried out by MLA indicate that PH, meat colour and eating quality improves if both these traits are increased together. We are still paid on carcase weight, so high growth ASBVs are extremely important in increasing dollar returns. The Merino Select average ASBV for growth is +2.1kg so any ram you purchase above that will be of benefit in increasing growth rates within your flock.

It should go without saying, but in using ASBVs as your genetic guide, always check the structure and conformation on the animals you are considering to ensure they are acceptable to suit your environment and business objectives.

When considering fat levels in Merinos, we suggest you select animals in the ASBV range from -0.5mm to +0.5mm, with any variance on the higher side rather than lower.

Wool ASBVs are great indicators of follicle density, staple length and the overall skin area of the sheep. Because of the accuracies of the data within Merino Select, selecting for wool traits that suit your environment, or wool weight objective will help you achieve your goals. One of our clients in a wetter environment will only select wool CFW ASBVs if they fall in the range between +8% and +15%, which results in good fleece weights, but also the ability of those fleeces to breath and dry out. If your main objective is to increase fleece weight, as long as your wool is well aligned, white and on a good skin, a goal of +30% is very achievable.



Shearing at Leahcim in Nov. 2008

## Poll Merino Genetics

This year and after three classings, we have seen an increase in the percentage of hoggets that have both high performance ASBVs and good visual traits. Fifteen years ago we had a ram culling percentage of 61%; this year we have achieved a culling percentage of only 29.2%, even with more selection parameters being used in 2009, which is a great result. This year there are noticeably very few sheep with excess skin, yet test results have continued to indicate improvement in wool quality, while maintaining fleece weight.

In early February, we had a period of extreme heat for 12 days. During that period we found Leahcim 050154 dead in his mating group, which naturally was a shock at the time. L050154 had an excellent impact on the Merino industry by improving skins and reducing microns on a very good carcasses. However, it was interesting to note that at this year's classing, he was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the top 10 sires, so rapid genetic gain is still being achieved, with such good rams becoming superseded very quickly by the following generations.

The top sires at classing were L060004, L060047, L070120 and L070033, with many of their progeny for sale this year. L060004 has produced the highest percentage of top sheep with L080348, L080377, L080419, L080438 and L080445 being identified as rams carrying superior performance genetics. We think L080445 is one of the most advanced rams bred at Leahcim and is very close to the complete sheep in all aspects.

Sires, L060047 and L070120 are breeding progeny with outstanding carcase traits. L060047's progeny have a slightly higher fleece weight and are more nourished in the wool. L070120's progeny have excellent red meat characteristics, are average for fleece weight, but have excellent alignment and crimp definition on their wool.

The top sons of L060047 are L080120, L080226 & L080327. L070120's top sons are L080285, L080312 & L080323. Two rams well worth inspecting are L080285 (his ASBVs are Pwwt 7.1, Ywt 8.6 with 17.2 micron, 14.5 CV, 2.5 SD); & L080323 (his ASBVs are Pwwt 6.4, Ywt 7.9 with 17.8 micron, 12.4 CV, 2.4 SD).

Ram L070033 (a more moderate framed ram) now has a Ywt growth ASBV of +5.3kg. With his first progeny entered into the Merino Select data base, he increased +2kg for growth. The wools on L070033's progeny are outstanding, being very well aligned, well nourished, white and deep crimped. His progeny have slightly more skin than our other sires and that may suit some breeding programs. Progeny of L070033 that would be worth a closer inspection are L080521, L080566, and L080568. Ram L080566 has ASBVs of Ywt 5.0, micron 17.2, 12.8 CV, and 2.2 SD.

rams will be updated on our website when the latest ASBVs and sire progeny assessments become available at the end of July. Brecon Breeders at Keith, S.A. collect and dispatch our semen and they urge any breeder wanting to purchase semen to place their orders early to assist in dispatching. The more semen they can package and send together in the one shipping container, the cheaper the costs are for you.

## Trial transport offer for clients

This year we will be trialling the delivery of rams to Queensland, NSW and Victoria in the week starting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October. The delivery points are on the road to Broken Hill, Bourke, Cunnamulla, Walgett, Dubbo, Narrandera, Hay and Mildura. If there is enough demand to an area like Longreach, we may extend delivery to that area. There will be a small cost to the purchaser and we are trialling \$20 per ram if there are less than 10 rams, \$15 for 11 to 20 rams, and \$10 for orders of 21 rams or more. With the purchase of the Keith property, we will make free delivery to there and will consider delivery into Victoria if demand indicates this is warranted.

## Update from Chile

In February this year, Andrew again travelled to Chile to class Pepe Marin's sheep. The progress made within Pepe's flock has been amazing. With large sheep numbers to work with, high selection



23,000 ewes in a mob at Pepe Marin's property, watering from a 3 metre trough!



Leahcim 050191 & his son 991, bred at Pepe Marin's property in Chile

pressure has given rapid advances in carcase and wool quality. The White Suffolks at Pepe's would match most flocks in Australia for type, growth rate and meat yield and carcase conformation. In their Poll Merinos there has been a dramatic improvement in the whiteness and quality of the wools. Their top ram hoggets were brilliant, especially ram 991; his wool figures were 17.3 micron, 2.9 SD and 100% CF, plus he also had a superb carcase.



Wool on Pepe Marin's ram 991



Typical display of meat in Chilean butcher shop

The Marin family were starting production in their new cattle abattoir the week after Andrew left Chile. That has been another mammoth undertaking by their family, having both designed and built the abattoir.

On his last day in Chile, Andrew conducted a workshop at Temoco, which is situated 400km south of Santiago in the 9<sup>th</sup> region. The day was organised by Paola Vagas who works for Cooprinsem, an organisation that has 500 employees and is similar to our "stock agent" structure in Australia, but they offer a lot more technical advice and assistance.



The workshop at Temoco, in Chile



Glacier fed water running through a farm at Temoco

The Temoco region has a similar climate to Sydney, but with a 1,000mm rainfall, and deep, black & well drained soils. The stocking rates are quite high, with one producer

at the workshop running 25 sheep/ha. Their sheep were mainly mated to terminal sires in that region, with their main focus being on sucker lambs marketed off their mothers.

The farm where the workshop was conducted had a river of beautiful blue water from the glaciers running through it all year round.

## Showing

We continue to show a select few of our White Suffolk rams at the Adelaide Royal, strongly favouring the performance classes. We offer rams in the Elite sale after judging on the Sunday. Adelaide is the major show for the breed nationally. We were very pleased to again feature highly in the results, winning the Lambplan performance pair of rams class.



Luke & Stewart holding our Lambplan Performance Pair of Rams class winners at Adelaide last year (right)

Quality Wool, represented by Mark Dyson and Simon Seppelt, bid the equal top for lot 1; one of 5 outstanding rams they purchased for a Southern Fleurieu Peninsula client.

Paul and Yvonne Wurst, Appila also went to \$1,500 for lot 6, having earlier outlaid \$1,200 for lot 2.



Rosemary Michael (centre), Leahcim, Snowtown, presents awards to Simon Seppelt, Quality Wool and Yvonne Wurst, Appila, who were buyers of the equal top priced rams at the 21<sup>st</sup> Leahcim White Suffolk sale.

Humphris Family Trust, buying through Elders Gladstone agent Simon Harding also purchased 7 rams on the day from \$500 to \$550 in bargain basement buying.

Other prominent buyers with 4 rams each were Adalis Pastoral, Snowtown (to \$750); M& L Liebeknecht, Eudunda (to \$750); Dean Young, Kadina (to \$750); and CJ & J Rogers, Kadina (to \$700).

Equal top volume buyers were Kevin and Allan Hams, Whyte Yarcowie, who purchased 7 top rams; paying to \$1,200 for lot 3, but able to average their prices out to \$714 by sale's end.

At the sale's end, Andrew Michael made two presentations to long time supporters of this sale. Keith Ballantyne, Crystal Brook has attended every one of the twenty one Leahcim sales and this year bought 2 rams, while Landmark's Balaklava agent, Mel Haines has attended 19 of them.



Pictured after the Leahcim White Suffolk sale last Friday were Luke Michael (Leahcim), Snowtown; Mel Haines, Landmark Balaklava (who has attended 19 Leahcim sales); Allan & Kevin Hams, Whyte Yarcowie (purchased 7 rams to \$1,200); Simon Seppelt, Quality Wool (5 rams to equal sale top of \$1,500); Keith Ballantyne, Crystal Brook (purchased 2 rams and has attended all 21 Leahcim sales); and John Oswald, Wudinna (purchased 3 rams to \$1,000).

**2008 was highlighted by some wonderful successes. With the very bouyant sheep market and the exciting challenges we now have with our new property purchase, we are over the moon!**

