

LEAHCIM NEWSLETTER

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Newsletter No.9

July 2011

White Suffolks & Poll Merinos

Welcome

As we enter the second half of 2011, we reflect on a very exciting 12 months. Lamb prices have gone to unprecedented levels which has flowed through to all sheep meat sales. Wool has received a significant boost as have skin prices. Exciting times!

However we cannot linger long in reflection. At Leahcim we were excited about the prospects for the sheep industry a decade ago and we are still just as excited. All open markets fluctuate, but future sheep income is very soundly based in our opinion.

Producing genetics for the sheep industry is very much like the marketing adage. When times are good it pays to use the best genetics; when times are

tough it is imperative you do! No matter how good your management skills are, you can't get maximum profitability from poor performing genetics.

Our motto is "Breeding for the Future" and will remain so. We are continually striving to improve the performance and profitability of our genetics in our clients' flocks.

We trust this newsletter helps to keep you up to date with our latest news and developments and that you are as excited about the future as we are.

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

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



www.leahcim.com.au

Leahcim's 2011 Calendar of Events

- ★ Hamilton Sheepvention - Monday 1st August & Tuesday 2nd August - displaying Site 335
- ★ Adelaide Show - White Suffolk Judging - Friday 2nd September
- ★ Adelaide Elite Sale - Sunday 4th September - Leahcim offering 2 White Suffolk rams
- ★ Leahcim Poll Merino Sale - Tuesday 13th September 1:30pm
Offering 200 Poll Merino rams 13 months of age
- ★ Leahcim 24th Annual White Suffolk Sale - Friday 16th September 1:30pm
Offering 110 White Suffolk rams

More than a slogan

As stated in the Welcome, we have always had goals of 'breeding for the future' and have rigidly applied that philosophy, as you may have observed from our previous newsletters, or at workshops where we have made sheep industry presentations. One goal has been to maximise high growth to 6-8 months of age in both our sheep breeds. For example, with our Poll Merinos we are incorporating high early carcase growth into our existing breeding objectives of high fleece weights and excellent wool style and market suitability on a non mulesed skin. This presents an increased challenge, but not one that we are afraid to take on.

Within our White Suffolk flock, the addition of new sire, Anden 080275 (Pwwt +17.7) into our existing breeding lines has helped us to achieve some outstanding early growth weights and ASBVs in our progeny groups.

To demonstrate this, below are 3 examples of young rams from our **White Suffolks**:

L.100146 - Weight at 201 days - 82kg (408g/day)
PWWT ASBV of +17.5kg
(to be retained in the stud)

L.100152 - Weight at 202 days - 76kg (376g/day)
PWWT ASBV of +16.2kg

L.100192 - Weight at 197 days - 74kg (376g/day)
PWWT ASBV of +16.1kg

These weight gains were achieved under paddock grazing (good feed quality) and places these rams in the top 1% of genetics within Australia for this trait.

Average ASBVs of the whole White Suffolk Leahcim 2010 drop lambs (17-6-2011)

BW	0.3	Wwt	7.9	Pwwt	12.2
Pfat	-0.6	Pemd	0.7		

The Importance of using ASBV genetic selection within our Poll Merinos is also producing some outstanding results within the Leahcim flock. For years many people have said, "You can't have good carcase weights and high wool production on a plain skin". We have always said, "Why not?" We have then gone about finding ways to achieve this. It is not easy, but with clear objectives and patience, it can be achieved. From the 3 young rams below you be the judge as to whether we are making progress!

Poll Merinos:

L.100624 - Weight at 297 days - 76.5kg (297g/day)
Wool production of 880g/month, 19.2mic, 12.6cv, 2.5sd, 100%cf
ASBVs for YWT of 10.4kg; CFW% of +27

L.100967 - Weight at 297 days - 68kg (263g/day)
Wool production of 840g/month, 17.8mic, 13.6cv, 2.5sd, 100%cf
ASBVs for YWT of 9.9kg; CFW% of +18

L.101108 - Weight at 297 days - 64.5kg (250g/day)
Wool production of 850 g/month, 17.1mic, 15.9cv, 2.7sd, 99.8%cf
ASBVs for YWT of 8.6kg; CFW% of +23

These three rams are all genetically different, but all express high carcase growth combined with excellent top quality wool and fleece weight.

For meat production, L.100624 is growing at 8.91kg/ month, or approximately 4kg of carcase weight @ \$5.00/kg = \$20 a month.

For wool production, he is growing 880g of wool/month, valued at 1000c/kg = \$8.80.

Total = \$28.80 per month.

Average ASBVs of the whole Poll Merinos Leahcim 2010 drop lambs (17-6-2011)

Ywt	5.1	Yfd	-0.8	Ycfw%	+15.7
Yfdcv	-1.1	Ysl	+9.4mm		

At Leahcim, we are totally committed to selecting the best genetics to produce rams capable of maximising the profits in our clients' flocks.



Is this the ultimate Poll Merino sire?

Leahcim 080312

We are excited about where this sire can take our flock and the contribution he can make to the advancement of the whole industry.

Check his ASBVs:

Ywt +11.2, Yfat +0.2, Yemd +0.5, Ycfwt +18, Yfd -0.9, Yfdcv -2.3, Ysl +14, 7% Dual Purpose Index 181

Profitable Merinos

Leahcim has selected a group of Poll Merino ewes born in June 2009 that we have used all our modern breeding tools on. These ewes prove to us that breeding Merinos can be extremely profitable. The 210 ewes have been run as one group since they were mated as ewe lambs. They are fully pedigreed and performance recorded. Within this article we have a snapshot of what is achievable with a highly productive, low maintenance and welfare conscious breeding program. These ewe lambs were part of James Whale's research program to see what was achievable when mating Poll Merino ewe lambs. What I want to show here is how much production has been achieved by these ewes so far, and will be by the time they are just 28 months of age.

Born - June to July 2009

Mated - March 2010 - 112% weaned lambs (235 lambs) - the wether lambs sold to T@R Pastoral over the hooks and averaged 24.6kg carcase weight. With a \$30 skin, their average price was \$175.

Mated - January 2011 - 120% tagged lambs at tailing (249 lambs)

Wool Production

Shorn - October 2009, producing 1.2kg of lambs' wool @ \$6.00 /kg.

Shorn - April 2010 (3.5kg weaner wool @ \$6.90/kg)

Shorn - October 2010 (3.8kg weaner wool @ \$9.70/kg)

Shorn - April 2011 (4.0kg wool @ \$9.70 /kg)

★ Shorn October 2011 (4.0kg wool @ \$9.70/kg)

★ This last figure is an estimate of wool results when they will be shorn for the 5th time in October 2011 at 28 months of age. They will have weaned over 224% of lambs.

If we valued all of the 2010 lambs at \$175 (wethers and ewes), and all the weaned lambs in October 2011 at \$80, the meat and breeding returns would be \$61,045.00

The wool value was \$30,683.10

The total income at 28 months of age \$91,728.10

Income per ewe at 28 months \$436.80

Income per ewe at 12 months \$218.40

Expenses to consider are –

Shearing rates at \$5.20/head for 5 times (these ewes were not crutched over this period).

Other expenses including vaccines, pregnancy testing, trace element supplements etc.

These figures have been produced using only our commercial values.

Are these Profitable Merinos? You decide!



Pictured is this group of ewes post shearing, April this year

At the beginning of July we finished the preg scanning of our ewes with some outstanding results. 2300 stud ewes, Poll Merino and White Suffolk, were mated in single sire groups. We had only 35 not in lamb. We estimate that we should be able to wean well over 130% of lambs out of these ewes.

Poll Merino Ewe Lamb Matings 2011

In our 2010 newsletter we included an article on the mating of our 8 month old ewe lambs, which produced some very interesting results. Some of these results were ewes with high ASBVs for growth having a higher pregnancy rate, and the female progeny from some sires were more fertile than others.

This year we have again conducted a trial mating of our 8 month old ewe lambs, but used different management methods for the 3 mating groups. We divided the ewe lambs into the 3 randomly selected groups, each of 107 head.

1. Paddock mated.
2. Lot fed mated in a 2ha paddock
3. Lot fed mated in a 2ha paddock, but the ewe lambs were synchronized using CIDRs (progesterone sponges)

All groups were mated using ram lambs with a ram to ewe ration of 1 ram to 20 ewes. The ewe lambs were crutched prior to mating and they were all fed an equal ration of oats over the 54 days of mating.

The results again proved to be very interesting.

Group 1: The control group produced results nearly identical to last year, with 54% pregnant and with 63% in utero.

Group 2: The lot fed group had a 63% pregnancy rate with 72% in utero, which was a 9% increase on the control group.

Group 3: The lot fed and synchronized group had a 60% pregnancy rate and 71% in utero, which was an 8% increase on the control group, but gave no advantage over the other lot fed group.



These Leachim ewes were successfully mated as ewe lambs in a trial designed to demonstrate the benefits of such mating.

Clearly we can see that confining the lambs into a more confined space and having a centralized feed source has gained us a very good pregnancy response. The synchronization didn't work this year, but James Whale, who assisted us in our work with mating these ewe lambs, said he has seen some positive responses in flocks in Victoria. This year our ewe lambs averaged 43kgs body weight at ram inception, which was 2 kg less than last year. In other trials James has conducted in Victoria, the ewes were 3 to 4kg heavier than ours, having been run on Lucerne paddocks over the summer. As a result they achieved an 80% pregnancy rate.

Our conclusion is that if you manage your ewe lambs to achieve minimum body weights of 40kgs at 7-8 months of age, making extra profits out of your ewe lambs is definitely possible. What you need to ask yourself if contemplating mating your ewe lambs is – "What is the cost of supplementary feed and what is the value of an extra 10% more lambs ?

Next year we intend to split the ewe lambs into 2 groups. Both will be lot fed mated but one group will be fed with a lupin based ration, and the other group an oats based ration. We will see if we get an extra response from the lupins, which would be the expectation.

We use ram lambs in this mating to maximise our generational genetic gain, but concede that a greater pregnancy result may be achieved by using older rams.

Simple Answer on ASBVs

This year I was approached by a commercial sheep breeding group in NSW to give them a simple version of 'Understanding ASBVs'. The questions they wanted answered were:

1. What are ASBVs?
2. How will they improve my Commercial Flock?
3. How will ASBVs benefit me financially?
4. What if the stud I buy my rams from doesn't use ASBVs?
5. Where can I access ASBVs?
6. Where do I start?

1. What are ASBVs?

Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) are actual breeding assessments for every measured genetic trait for wool, skin and meat production within the sheep industry.

To get an easier grasp of the subject, the thing you need to do is to keep it simple!!

ASBVs are expressed as simple breeding values, whether it is in kilograms of carcase, wool micron, or fleece weight % etc. Due to industry linkages in the Sheep Genetics Australia data base, these ASBV figures are comparable with those of every measured sheep in Australia.

Here are some examples of Simple ASBVs:

Ywt = Yearling weight in kgs

Ram 1, Ywt of +10, mated to ewe also of + 10

Ram 2, Ywt of +1, mated to ewe also of + 1

Result - ram 1's progeny would be 9kg heavier - Simple!!

Yfd = Yearling fibre diameter

Ram 1, Yfd of -2.0, mates ewe of -2.0

Ram 2, Yfd of +2.0, mates ewe of +2.0

Result - ram 1's progeny would be 4 micron less - Simple!!

Ycfw% = Yearling clean fleece weight as a percentage

Ram 1, Ycfw% of +30, mates ewe of +30

Ram 2, Ycfw% of +5, mates ewe of +5

Result - ram 1's progeny would have 25% greater clean fleece weight - Simple!!

2. How will they improve my Commercial flock?

ASBVs are the only measurement that will give breeders the true breeding potential of an animal, taking out all the variances for feeding, climate, birth and rearing differences. The measurements are independently analysed. When you understand what ASBVs are, you can select the ASBV traits that will improve the productivity and profitability within your flock.

Eg 1. If your flock has reduced in average fleece weight and you want it to increase, select a ram with a Ycfw% closer to + 30, rather than a Ycfw% around + 5%.

Eg 2. If your lambs are not finishing early enough and you have adequate feed of sufficient quality, the problem could be that they are too lean (late maturing), or the lambs have poorer growth genes. Depending on feed availability, select rams with high ASBVs for growth rates – at W (Weaning – 120 days) or PW (post weaning - 200 days). ASBVs closer to + 15kg rather than + 5 will help; or it could be that your sheep are too lean, so select sheep that have fat ASBVs (Pfat) of 0.0mm, rather than a minus figure, especially in the -1.0 to -2.0 for fat cover (fat is important for doing ability and fertility in the live animal, and meat quality in the carcase).

For commercial breeders, ASBVs will improve your flock because you can simply select the breeding animals that best suit your environment and business.

3. How will ASBVs benefit me financially?

There is no way any breeder of sheep can identify the productive genes within their flock without using measurements that are transparent. ASBVs have adjustments made within the database to account for twinning, age of dam, date of birth, sire linkages and environmental influences etc, to give accuracies to that data.

As shown in a few articles in this newsletter, with good management, by selecting sheep with the right ASBVs you will increase your profits. This can be done by increasing carcase weight, improving wool production (increase fleece wt & reduce microns), reducing worm burdens, & increasing lamb percentages.

Very simply, the tested sheep within Sheep Genetics in 2009 varied (from the best to the worst) on Yearling ASBVs by 29.1kg body weight, or 17.1kg carcase weight. At \$5.00/kg, that equates to \$85.50, per lamb, we could do the same cost comparisons for wool production.

THAT'S A HUGE POTENTIAL FINANCIAL BENEFIT!



Leahcim 090848



Leahcim 090918

These 2 young Leahcim Poll Merino rams are impressive enough to be kept as sires in our flock. To make that decision we had the use of measured objective data converted to ASBVs. Could you make a selection visually?

4. What if the stud I buy my rams from doesn't use ASBVs?

The choice of where you buy your rams from should depend on previous results, client service and your flock breeding direction. If you think your sheep tick all the boxes, that's great, but it's always good to at least benchmark your breeding program. (We do!!)

My suggestion would be if your normal stud supplier doesn't use ASBVs, then choose an easy to measure trait within your flock (eg. weaning weight of lambs, or micron of your hoggets), then purchase some genetics with good ASBVs for that trait and benchmark your program by measuring the progeny from the 2 groups, to see what difference it makes.

5. Where can I access ASBVs?

1. Start by Googling 'Sheep Genetics Australia'.
2. Click on Lambplan, or MerinoSelect.
3. Within the menus you can find: Reports, New traits, Starting information, Links etc.
4. Search: Select any individual sheep, or studs.

Click on search and enter the stud's, or animal's number: Eg. Stud name = Leahcim, or Stud number = 600815, Animal = 080312 (press search)

If you want to check animals in the top 150 nationally for each trait, that can be done in the search area.

The Sheep Genetics web site is a great starting point to learn about ASBV's but its also your independent tool to check animals and studs for data comparisons.

6. Where do I start?

Start by simply deciding to take the guesswork out of your breeding program.

Then find out as much as you can from the Sheep Genetics website, or at field days and seminars to bring yourself up to a basic understanding of this world leading system for objective assessment of sheep genetics in this country.

★ Remember your sheep and lamb levies have helped develop ASBVs through MLA and AWI funding, so why not make use of them?!

Genomics

In April the sheep CRC invited approximately 20 sheep breeders, of different sheep breeds and from all over Australia, to participate in a two day workshop to look at the early results of project 1 in the CRC Genomics project. Personally it was great to be involved, especially as Leahcim entered both White Suffolk and Poll Merino rams in this project.

Basically, genomics is looking at a DNA snip to give a picture of the makeup of that particular animal's genes. This can be done at a very young age and can give breeders much better accuracies of the potential breeding attributes of that animal, over many traits including some very hard to measure traits such as intramuscular fat, eating quality and genes for colour etc.

You don't have to fully understand the science, but the important thing to remember is that genomics will improve our breeding accuracies of data at a very early age.

One exciting part of genomics for the prime lamb industry is the ability to improve intramuscular fat and eating quality, which have been virtually impossible to measure in breeding animals.

With our Leahcim Poll Merino hat on, I felt that the opportunity for us to take a DNA sample at lamb marking and get back data with greater than 70% accuracy on fleece weight and micron ASBVs before the lambs are 6 months old, will give us unbelievable opportunity for genetic gain. Traits vary in accuracies on the genomics data from 20% to 73%, but it's the ability to have that data accuracies, so that selections can be made on rams' and ewes' genetics at a very young age. It is hoped that this genomics package will be commercially available within two years, thus advantaging the whole industry.

Maternal Sheep Breeds

In 2010 Dale Cameron from Tatiara Meat Company (now JBS Swift Australia) approached the Pastoral Committee of the

Royal Adelaide Show to see if they could introduce a genuine maternal class to be assessed in the first half of the show when most of the terminal and maternal breeds were exhibited. The class was to be open to, and would hopefully include all breeds of sheep. Dale's question to the Pastoral Committee and the wider sheep industry was:

"Which breed of sheep is going to produce the future breeding ewe base?"

Last year, there were entries from the Border Leicester, Corriedale, SAMM, White Suffolk & Poll Dorset breeds, but no Dohnes or Merinos.

This year we intend to enter a group (1 ram & 2 ewes) of Leahcim Poll Merinos in this class, as we feel very positive that Leahcim Poll Merinos offer the sheep industry the right maternal ewe; either as a self-replacing unit, or as a prime lamb breeding ewe when mated directly to terminal sire rams such as our White Suffolks. This group will be displayed next to our White Suffolks at the Adelaide Royal Show on the 2nd to 4th of September.

Breeding with White Suffolk/Merino cross ewes

Throughout Australia an increasing number of producers are retaining a percentage of their White Suffolk first cross ewe lambs to use as breeders. With the national breeding flock at critically low levels this is a good decision, but it needs a small amount of planning.

Firstly you need to class your ewe lambs for wool quality because some terminal sires have very high swint levels, which will cause high levels of body flystrike – solution; select the whitest wools that are well aligned.

Lamb shape and birth weights are also very important if this program is going to be successful. Select ewe lambs and their sires that have low birth weight ASBVs, at least less than +0.5, plus a wedge shaped body. This means that the shoulders are not too wide or thick, with the hindquarter having more width than the forequarter; these sheep will have wedge shaped body.

The other important fact is you can and should mate them early if the seasons allow. We would suggest at 6 to 8 months of age. Remember, bodyweight is the important issue, not age. You need as many lambs as possible with superior meat production capabilities to make this profitable. By mating at that early age you can pregnancy test them before they are twelve months of age and allowing you to sell the dry ones as lambs. Research has shown that ewes that lamb at an early age (aprox 13 months) will have a higher lambing percentage their whole life. You should expect these ewe lambs to achieve between 60 to 90 percent conception rates mated at that age.



Part of the line-up at 2010 Royal Adelaide Show Tatiara and Meat & Livestock Australia Maternal Competition

In a good season, leaving those ewes to 18 months of age before mating is an unproductive decision.

I would suggest that if your business has highly productive and advanced Poll Merinos as your ewes, a profit and loss assessment of the two breeding programs might well be worthwhile.

School Wether Class

The SA Stud Merino Breeders have established a new class at this year's Adelaide Royal Show for schools. During the second half of the show, schools can enter a group of 3 wethers that will be judged for both wool and meat traits. It is a great opportunity for schools, and their students to extend their knowledge and to promote Merino sheep at the same time.

Leahcim was approached by Urrbrae Ag High School to assist, so we donated some wether lambs, enabling them to enter this class. The level of enthusiasm shown by the teachers and students at Urrbrae has been outstanding.

Anthony Pearce and Michael Bowden, owners of Hills Farm Supplies at Mt Barker, have also been great supporters, donating product and time to help educate the students in this wether project.

The lambs at Urrbrae have been split into 3 groups; a carcase group; a wool group; and a group with both wool and carcase attributes. The students are measuring their growth every few weeks and graphing their weight gains. If you happen to be at the second half of the Royal Show, make yourself known to the Urrbrae students and I am sure they would love to show you their wether team. Good luck Urrbrae!

Young sire information sheet

Leahcim has prepared a 'Top Young Sires' sale information sheet to assist breeders with their ram selections. We have included all the latest ASBVs, plus our classing and breeding information. We feel this will benefit many breeders with their selections.



The stands were packed and it was standing room only for many of the large crowd of over 300 at Leahcim's Poll Merino ram sale.

Raining bids at Leahcim

2010 Poll Merino Sale

This report and the following article are abbreviated reports from our Poll Merino & White Suffolk ram sales last September, written by Ian Turner and Richard Cooper respectively from Superior Selections and published in the press at the time.

In a stunning total clearance sale result, the Michael family, Leahcim Poll Merinos, Snowtown sold 176 rams to a top of \$11,500 and at a \$2,065 average.

While the average was back on last year's extraordinary figure of \$3,267, it is brought into perspective when you consider there



Inspecting keeper rams pre-sale

were only 79 rams in last year's main auction. The evenness of this year's offering of 11 to 14 month old rams was exceptional, giving bidders many choices to fill their buying needs.

Over 300 people were in attendance from all mainland states of Australia, plus Chilean visitors; a wonderful vote of confidence in the Leahcim breeding program. Amongst this crowd were 78 registered bidders, with 58 being successful in purchasing rams.

The \$11,500 top price was paid by David and Karen Ridgway, Ridgway Advance stud, Bordertown for Leahcim 090491, a 14 month old son of Leahcim 060004. He had a great balance of carcase and wool ASBVs in the 13 measured breeding traits supplied in the sale catalogue. The Ridgways later added a younger average breaker ram for only \$2,000.



Purchasers of the \$11,500 top priced ram at the Leahcim Poll Merino sale, Karen & David Ridgway, Ridgway Advance, Bordertown are with the ram, held by Leahcim's Luke Michael.

While this top price was \$13,000 less than last year's record \$24,500 top, the strength of rapid fire bidding throughout the sale was exceptional, especially in the \$2,000 to \$4,000 range in the first half of the sale. The first ram to sell under \$2,000 was not until lot 65 and the first ram to sell under \$1,000 did not occur until lot 98. This ensured such a solid sale average and made the auctioneering duties relatively easy for Craig Shearer (Elders) and Gordon Wood (Landmark).

In his pre-sale welcome and showing genuine passion and enthusiasm for the future of the sheep industry, Andrew Michael said, "The Merino breed is at a very exciting point in its history and now has identified superior genetics that will enable breeders to go in any direction they want; whether that is producing elite wools, superior carcasses, or a combination of both."

He explained there were rams with growth ASBVs up to 9.7, which is not far behind the many sheep in terminal sire breeds. He also displayed 3 of the stud's sires that had wools with the industry preferred staple length of 92mm at only 4 months wool growth, demonstrating that it was now possible to get 3 premium wool cuts per year.

"With measurement and these types of rams, we can take the industry as far as we want to," Andrew said.



Elders & Landmark auctioneers taking bids during the sale

The expectant gallery needed little encouragement, with the stands full approximately 30 minutes before the sale started. By greatly increasing supply of high quality rams in the auction, the Michael family were able to keep a lid on extreme prices; making their rams affordable for most producers. A quarter of the offering sold for \$1,000 or less, giving real value for buyers who had a more restricted budget. Despite the solidity and early strength of the sale, 63% still sold for \$2,000 or less.

Robert Hooke, representing Willera Merinos, Serpentine and buying through Landmark Bendigo got the sale off on a good note with a successful \$4,200 bid for L090255. He later added two more top rams for \$4,800 and \$3,600 in committed bidding, adding to the 3 he bought last year for a \$6,000 average.

Two lots later, KA & L Leo, Lake Grace, WA bid \$7,200 for L090980, again possessing top figures and highlighted by a clean fleece weight ASBV of +18.

Bill Walker, Classings Ltd, Murray Bridge purchased 3 top rams for regular buyers, Welke Brothers, Cascades, WA, paying \$6,500, \$6,000 and \$3,400 in very selective bidding.

Mark Kerin, Gullen Gamble Merino stud, Yoeval, NSW was back, 2 years after the Gullen Gamble stud first made a significant investment in Leahcim Poll Merino genetics. This year he bid \$7,200 to purchase L090784, a 16.5micron ram with a terrific 7% Dual Purpose index of 149. He outlasted Warren Beattie, Wudinna in a strong bidding duel.

Earlier in the year Mark bid the national record \$261 for commercial Leahcim blood Merino ewe hoggets from Richard & Barbara Turner's 'Rayville' flock dispersal.

NSW Buyers have been very strong Leahcim Poll Merino supporters in recent times with Andrew Michael saying they had sold 180 rams into that state this year. Peter Rolestone, Elders Clare manager had a busy administrative day, with 4 local clients purchasing 10 rams between them, plus 39 rams for 8 NSW buying accounts being booked out through the Elders Clare office.

Bluegate Pastoral Co through Rodwells, Deniliquin, NSW were also significant purchasers with 2 rams @ \$3,800 and \$3,400.

The Orroroo region was again very strong in its support of Leahcim Poll Merinos. Four Orroroo buyers purchased 18 rams between them, with HT Harslett paying from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for 6 rams being the most prominent of them.

Landmark's SA Wool Manager Trevor James purchased 8 rams for Picarilli Pastoral Co, through his company's Cunnamulla, Qld, office. He paid from \$1,300 to \$2,000 to put together a very good line.

Victorian buyers were headed by Warrambine Pastoral, buying through Elders Ballarat. They purchased 7 rams from \$600 to \$1,500, being rewarded with value through patience, selecting their rams in the latter part of the sale. WJ Dennis Farming Trust, through Elders Geelong selected 2 rams @ \$1,600 and \$2,200 to round out the successful Victorian bidders.

Rob Germein, representing the family partnership of AP & DJ Germein & Son and buying through Landmark, Minlaton was the equal biggest volume South Australian buyer with 7 rams selected throughout the catalogue, paying from \$1,100 to \$3,000.

He was joined on that number by PPH & S Naracoorte, A/c Erehwon Pastoral Co, whose 7 rams were purchased from \$1,200 to \$3,200.

There were at least 10 studs bidding on the day and besides those already mentioned, the Schroeder family, Gunallo stud through Landmark Pinnaroo went to \$6,500 to purchase L090456, another top son of L06004.

The Pindari stud, buying through Elders Riverton paid \$4,000 and \$3,400 for 2 top rams, while the Keller family, Ramsgate and buying through Elders Tintinara achieved great value with rams at \$1,600 and \$2,400.

Long time Leahcim supporters Roger and Ros Wheaton, Snowtown and the Crawford family, through Elders Peterborough each purchased 4 rams in the \$1,200 to \$2,600 range to again be significant contributors to the overall result.

Record average at Leahcim White Suffolk Sale

A record average was achieved at Andrew & Rosemary Michael & family's Leahcim White Suffolk sale. 110 exceptionally even and high quality White Suffolk rams were offered & all selling to a top of \$3,000 and averaged a very credible \$1,098.

While it was not standing room only, as was the case at their Poll Merino sale earlier in the week, a very good crowd of buyers from three states packed into the Leahcim selling complex & competed freely on the rams that had some of the best performance figures available in the breed. After some 25 years of accurate recording and measurements, the Leahcim rams are sought by some of the top prime lamb breeding flocks in SA and obviously perform well as evidenced through their repeat attendance at this sale.

These return buyers featured prominently, but had to compete with several first time visitors who were chasing the excellent figures offered at Leahcim. In comparison with sales as recent as 5 years ago, it is evident that buyers are now accepting, and even seeking out rams with some positive fat covering. Valuable feedback from prime lamb producers suggest that the finishing ability of lambs out of the already lean Merino ewes is now seen as important, so breeders are seeking rams to suit their specific breeding programs.

Eye muscle depth was certainly a sought after trait and a "selected" ram with PEMD of +1.8 and a Lamb 2020 index figure of 110 (both the highest in the catalogue) sold for \$3,000



to DW & AL Dunsford of Lucindale, buying through Elders. Whilst 80% of the selected rams were still minus for Post Weaning Fat figures, the 2 top priced sheep were positive and both twins.

Second top price was paid by return clients Paul & Yvonne Wurst of Appila who secured lot 9 at \$2,400, plus the first ram offered at \$2,000. Both of these rams were up the top of the catalogue for Post Weaning Weight and in the top 3% of the offering on Carcase Plus index. The Wursts have been the purchasers of the top and equal top priced rams for the last 2 years.

Top priced ram @ \$3,000 at the Leahcim White Suffolk sale was purchased by Norm Shutz of Elders Clare (left) for DW & AL Dunsford of Lucindale who was "on the 'phone" whilst the ram was offered. The ram is held by Leahcim principal Andrew Michael.



Luke Michael (left) holds one of the rams purchased by volume buyer Adam Jamieson, (right) Adalis Past. Co., Barunga Gap and with his agent John Reinke, Landmark, Snowtown (centre). Adam purchased 15 rams to \$1,000 and at an average of \$900.

Volume buyer on the day and winner of the Snowtown Salt Distributor's prize was again a return client, Adalis Pastoral Company at Barunga Gap. They secured 15 rams at an average of \$900 to put over their Merino ewes on both their home property and a recently leased property.

"I'm very happy with the rams I got today, however I didn't get enough as I need another ten or twelve rams, so I'll be talking to Andrew about getting more next week," principal Adam Jamieson said.

Another volume return buyer was Craig Bell, Bono Station at Pooncarie who took home 11 at an average of \$956. The spread of buyers, from the South East of SA, Adelaide Hills and the pastoral areas emphasised the success of the Leahcim breeding project. Return buyers all commented on the success they had had with their progeny.

A new attendee was Norm Crawford, from Fordvale Pastoral Co. at Strathalbyn, accompanied by his agent Danny Reynolds of Elders.



Norm Crawford, Fordvale Pastoral Co. Strathalbyn is with his agent Danny Reynolds, Elders Livestock Manager at Strathalbyn. A first time visitor to Leahcim, Norm was looking for low birth weight and high growth figures in rams to put over his maiden Merino ewes.

When buying, I always look at the ram first to assess its structure and body shape and then the figures. I like what I see here at this sale and the rams are as even a lot as you will see anywhere," Norm said. He used to run first cross ewes with White Suffolk rams until a few years ago, but now runs only Merino ewes and attended Leahcim to get rams of the highest order.

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