

# LEAHCIM NEWSLETTER

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## White Suffolks & Poll Merinos

### *Welcome*

Welcome to our 2014 newsletter. Seasonal prospects are positive in so much more of this great country than has been the case in our recent past and that is certainly the case in our region. It is indeed a very exciting time to be involved in the Australian sheep industry. Research developments have given us the tools to make unprecedented genetic progress. We are certainly striving to make maximum use of those tools and

we invite all our clients along on this great journey.

We sincerely thank all of our clients for their continued support and trust this update of our recent activities to be informative, educational and stimulating.

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

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We encourage you to regularly check out our website for updated information



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

## Leahcim's 2014 Calendar of Events

- ★ Displaying – Lambex - Wayville - 9th to 11th July
- ★ Displaying – Bendigo ASBA – Friday 18th to Sunday 20th July
- ★ Displaying – Hamilton Sheepvention  
– Monday 4th & Tuesday 5th August
- ★ Adelaide Royal - White Suffolk Judging – Friday 5th September
- ★ Adelaide Royal Elite Sale – Sunday 7th September
- ★ Leahcim's Snowtown Poll Merino Sale – Tuesday 16th September
- ★ Leahcim's Snowtown White Suffolk Sale - Friday 19th September

## Introduction

For many years we have been very excited about the measured genetic gain that we have achieved and we would like to share some of this information with you. We were very interested to read an article by Professor James Rowe in the April edition of the MLA Feedback publication. To quote:

*"It is estimated that with new Genomic information now available from the Information Nucleus Program, it is possible to increase the rate of genetic improvement by more than 7% in meat breeds and around 20% for Merinos."*

The lesser figure in meat breeds is generally because they have been advocates for measured genetic selection for several decades longer through Lambplan, whereas

Merino Select and the acceptance of measured genetic selection is a more recent development in the Merino industry

At Leahcim we are committed to making even greater efforts now and in the future to maximise our genetic gains for both meat and wool production, and to then make these genetics more accessible to our clients. Since our last newsletter we have completed our second JIVET (Juvenile Invitro Fertilisation Embryo Transfer) program using the ewe lambs from our first JIVET program (at 6 weeks of age) as donors.

When combined with Genomics technologies, these JIVET programs mean we will be able to offer clients the gains Professor Rowe is talking about as a minimum and much sooner.

## Commercial Focus

On a recent trip to NSW to visit some of our commercial clients it became very evident that they are extremely focused on breeding productive sheep that maximise meat and white wool production, while also having the flexibility to adapt for different markets. That flexibility that enables surplus sheep to meet varying market specifications, whether that be as lambs or as mature sheep, becomes very important to our clients when circumstances change.

The passion shown by these clients towards their sheep operations was amazing and consistently evident. We had a great time and developed a very good understanding of their sheep operations and genetic needs. We must thank

Denis Hewitt and Pat McNeill from Australian Wool Network who co-ordinated the visits over the two days. The level of understanding of ASBVs, new technologies and wool marketing by these two agents is outstanding, and our joint clients were very appreciative of that service.

← Visiting clients in NSW. Pictured are Ashley and Kevin Collins, Tim Kensit and Lynne and Les Hewett with Leahcim progeny on the Collins family's property at Crookwell.

Australian Wool Network agents Denis Hewitt and Pat McNeill (right) are pictured at our 2013 Poll Merino ram sale with clients Jim Gordon, Young and Les and Lynne Hewett, Crookwell. The AWN's Goulburn agency purchased 52 rams for 12 clients in that sale. ↓



← Heather Collins and Lynne Hewett enjoying a lamb burger at last year's Poll Merino sale.





*Leahcim recipient ewes with the lambs from our second JIVET program, born in May.*



## JIVET Programs

The benefits of JIVET, especially if magnified when combined with Genomics are wide and varied. For us at Leahcim, one of the main benefits is to identify whether our breeding directions are right or wrong in a very short time.

With the right selections we will get rapid genetic gain, but if our selections are wrong we will identify that in a very short time and be able to quickly take corrective breeding directions. Over the last two years we have introduced four new outside sires through AI programs with good results in both performance levels and benchmarking where our sheep sit within the industry.

With the combination of JIVET and Genomics you can model a breeding program that is as progressive and measured as can possibly be achieved. Three of the sons or daughters of those sires were used in the first of our JIVET programs. These all had high fleece weight ASBVs and other good traits, but visually had varying wool and skin types.

The big benefit of JIVET is that we could take the best of these lambs and multiply them very quickly with multiple crosses of breeding lines and breeding directions. One of those lambs had great wool and carcase ASBVs but the skin structure and wool quality was not as good as we like at Leahcim. This donor lamb was mated three ways to our top young sires (these being outstanding in this area of deficiency and other traits) and achieved over 30 pregnancies in the second JIVET program.

The capacity to benchmark an individual sheep's breeding potential and test it for all the important traits is a huge benefit to us and our clients, now and in the future.

The young sires used in that mating were:

**L132009** (8 months of age) - sired by L101259 and bred in our ET program – super skin and wool

**L123153** – a top young sire with outstanding production ASBVs – Ywt (7.3), Yfat (1.0), Yemd (2.9), Ycfw% (+23), Ysl (18.8).

**L123265** – a top young ram that has a great balance of figures for both wool and carcase traits.

Having progeny out of the same donor lamb's eggs from three different sires when the donor is only 6.5 months old is staggering.

**That is real progress!**

With our December JIVET program we flushed 12 ewe lambs and because the eggs are fertilised in test tubes (up to 3 different ways for each ewe lamb donor) we were able to achieve 27 different genetic crosses. Their progeny were born in the middle of May and will be on display at the field days we will attend this year, and also at our sale in September.

*These ewe lambs were born in April 2013. Their progeny from our first JIVET program were the donors (at 6 weeks of age) for our second JIVET program in December (pictured last Sept.)*



*These are some of the lambs born in November from the ewe lambs above. ↓*



*Dr Jen Kelly, the head research scientist at the SARDI Animal Reproduction Laboratory at Turretfield Research Centre*



*analysing samples under the microscope. This unit operates a commercial JIVET program and it was through this facility and program that we carried out our JIVET programs.*

*A feature story on the SARDI JIVET program was published in the Stock Journal in April and is reproduced on our website.*

## Poll Merino Wool Focus

For the last 22 years Leahcim has placed high selection pressure on skins that are wrinkle free, soft, even in thickness and carry a well-aligned and deeply crimped wool. Over the last 5 years the selection has intensified for whiteness of the wool, while fleece weight emphasis has also been given high importance.

With the selection for whiter wools we can see a significant change over the whole flock and the rams for sale are the best we have yet produced for this trait.

The fleece weights have increased by approximately 0.5kg/6 months on all measured sheep. This is reflected in our across flock ASBVs from the Sheep Genetics data base (Merino Select May 2014) and in the simplest terms, also in the bale!

**2006:** Strong and medium flocks = 9.6% average  
Leahcim = 9.9% average

**2013:** Strong and medium flocks = 11.1% average  
Leahcim = 15.1 % average



*Shearing in full swing at our Panlatinga property, Keith, SA*

**At Leahcim we have not chased higher fleece weights with a single selection focus. We will not accept the use of high fleece weight genetics if it adversely affects the wool quality and skin structure of our sheep.**

Experimental testing over the last two years has shown that it is very easy to breed the wrong skins and wools. It is also important that the balance of wool and meat production is not compromised by using sheep that are poor feed converters. Every sheep producer has a great search engine available to see if the genetics they are using fit in with their breeding goals. Just log onto Sheep Genetics, then Lambplan or Merino Select and search for the sheep or information you require.

We recently researched some rams in the system that have been widely used. One sire we noted had good ASBVs for Ycfw% of +27 with a near average growth, but it was -1.0 for Yfat and -3.3 for Yemd! This rang alarm bells for us from an industry perspective with some real genetic concerns.

They are:

Low fat equates to poorer lambing % and survivability.

Low muscle equates to poor yielding carcasses.

We would suggest that with this combination he may be a poor feed converter, despite still having a good fleece weight. At the very least he has a very late maturity pattern which means his progeny, or progeny of his daughters would be extremely hard to finish for early lamb markets or reach good weaning weight and condition in a normal year, let alone in poor seasons.

**The desirability of having a balanced animal for both phenotype and genotype that suits your environment and business objective cannot be stressed too much. It is extremely important.**

## Poll Merino Carcase Selection

In April we weighed and scanned all the rams for our data entry into Sheep Genetics. There has been a clear shift in the fat and muscling of all the sheep over the last 3 years.

On that day we also scanned our November JIVET lambs that were 162 days old. The top ram lamb weighed 63.5kg which equates to a gain of 380 grams per day since birth (after birth weight was taken off), with the group averaging 337 grams/day. They also had an average eye muscle depth (EMD) of 33mm. Clearly, some of the best lambs in the group were sons of L123153 (Ywt 7.3, Yfat 1.0, Yemd 2.9). Many of this year's sires also have a good balance of weight gain, fat and muscle measurements so we confidently expect the carcase yield of their progeny to be very good. Fortunately, gone are the days of thinking that you only need to look at wool on Merinos and meat traits on terminal sires.

Besides L123153 other feature sires with progeny for sale this year (data 7/5/2014) are:

Tag	Ywt	Yfat	Yemd
L100866	9.9	-0.3	0.5
L101085	5.1	1.0	1.3
L101259	8.0	-0.2	0.1
L101508	9.7	-0.4	0.0
L110490	9.7	0.1	0.6
L110651	7.5	0.1	1.2

## White Suffolk Rams

While there is a lot of exciting advancement in our Poll Merino genetics, that is primarily because the Merino breed in general is a much later starter in accepting objective carcase measurement as a relevant flock management tool. The meat sheep industry has been very accepting of these advantages for over 30 years. Having said that, we are not putting our White Suffolk program on the back burner.

With the use of TGRM (Total Genetic Resource Management) over the last 6 years, we have been able to direct our breeding focus towards areas that have the most commercial importance with our clients. TGRM is a computer program that matches ASBVs of sires with dams



to maximise the genetic gain in our nominated areas of selection priority.

This table shows our progress over the last 10 years on the Lambplan data base.

Year	Wwt	Pwwt	Pfat	Pemd
2003	5.09	8.45	-0.21	0.15
2013	8.39	12.95	-0.52	1.13

The progress in increasing early growth and muscling has been very evident with our on-farm scanning measurements. The latest research information on "Shear5" (Tenderness – shear force after 5 days) and IMF (Intra Muscular Fat – eating quality) ASBVs show that sheep with some of the best genetics for these traits will have a big impact on the marketing of lamb in the future.

At Leahcim we are hoping that in the future we will be able to offer rams to our clients that have balanced production figures, combined with outstanding eating quality data. The sires of our sale rams have outstanding ASBVs and their progeny would be the most even group of rams we have ever bred at Leahcim.

There is a correlation between higher muscling and leanness with lower intra-muscular fat. There is also the maturity factor when stock lay down more fat. Late maturing sheep are hard to finish and have limited marketing flexibility, while very early maturity often means stock are less efficient and too fat at heavier weights. Getting the balance right and in line with current market signals is so important and our challenge.



*Our success at last year's Adelaide Royal Show in winning the Lambplan Production Pair of Rams class (pictured) that takes all the relevant performance and projected eating qualities into consideration.*

## First Progeny of New White Suffolk Sires

New sires, Galaxy Park 110180 and Burwood 110629 have fitted into our flock very well. We felt it was important to introduce some outside genetics as a number of our home-bred sires were becoming genetically linked through their parentage. Line breeding produces consistency, but ultimately limits genetic improvement. Lambplan information and its accuracy enabled us to confidently select outside sires that will match our breeding objectives and performance levels. Both sires are from respected performance flocks.

Data on our current sire base including these 2 new sires is listed here.

Tag	Wwt	Pwwt	Pfat	Pemd
GP110180	12.3	18.2	-1.1	0.3
Bur110629	12.1	17.9	-0.6	1.2
L100146	10.3	15.1	-1.3	0.7
L100507	7.8	13.0	-0.3	2.4
L110660	8.1	13.3	-0.3	1.9
L120573	9.7	12.2	0.5	2.6

## Ram Availability

Within the next 18 months we intend to change the breeding and sale intervals of our leading sires.

The use of JIVET has allowed us to rapidly change the length of time we require our top sires for in-flock use. This will allow us to make more of our top rams available to our clients at an earlier age. The generational changes within our Leahcim flock, especially with the rams, will become very rapid, allowing our clients access to the latest generation very quickly.

This year we will have 25% more rams available for private sale after our on-property sale in September. These rams will be available from early October onwards.

At Leahcim we have a policy of offering our private selection rams to our regular clients and people who register to purchase rams for sale first. For many years we have had an excellent clearance of rams at our sale and immediately afterwards, so we encourage all interested people who are thinking of purchasing some of our genetics to contact us prior to the sales to ensure you get a selection of good rams.

## Field Days – Inspections

This year we will be attending a number of field days and conferences where we will be displaying some of our JIVET lambs. We encourage all sheep breeders to come and inspect these progeny.

- ★ Lambex (also the CRC Conference) July 9th, 10th & 11th – Wayville Showgrounds
- ★ Bendigo ASBA July 18th – 20th – Bendigo Showground
- ★ Hamilton Sheepvention August 4th & 5th – Hamilton Showground

*Following are sale reports from our 2013 ram sales as they appeared in the press.*

## **Great Commercial Result For Leahcim Poll Merinos**

The Michael family's Leahcim Poll Merino sale continued its outstanding run of results when 182 Poll Merinos sold for an \$1881 average. Buyers were in attendance from all Australian states, with 58 of the registered bidders successful in purchasing from one to ten rams each.

The young paddock reared and extensively performance tested rams were presented in great order with the identified highest performers visually matching their figures. The Michael family continue to lead the industry, with most in the crowd appreciating the measured genetic value of these rams.

The 2012 sale average of \$2123 was boosted by a \$38,000 top and several other high priced stud sales. This sale produced a very commercially focused result, with a top of \$5000 and only five stud purchasers. Principal Andrew Michael said post sale that he was very pleased with the outcome.

"It had a real commercial focus, was more affordable for our commercial clients, especially those who have been with us from the beginning, and the prices followed the genetic values of the rams," he said.

Peter Rolestone, Elders Clare placed the \$5000 top priced bid on behalf of Warranbie Pastoral, Ballarat, with manager Wayne Johnson connected to the sale via phone. This was for Leahcim 123002, a homozygous polled ram with a 17.6 micron clean fleece weight index of +19.8, a staple length index of +10.1 and a yearling weight of +9.7.

Paul Goerling, Lukin Springs Grazing Co, Boyup Brook and buying through Primaries WA was a significant top end buyer and also underbidder on the top ram. He purchased three, including the second top priced ram at \$4400, and others at \$3600 and \$3200.

Phillip Foss, John Foss & Co, Bruce Rock was another strong WA contributor to the sale's success. After purchasing 13 rams in 2012, he was back again and purchased seven top rams with balanced figures, paying from \$1100 to \$2200.

The highest volume buying honours were shared by two buyer accounts. The Atkinson family from Crafers and KI was one, also being the highest volume buyers in 2012. In this sale Peter, Sue and Chris added 10 rams that suited their selection criteria and budget, paying from \$1100 to \$2600 and averaging \$1990.

Australian Wool Network's Goulburn, NSW based agents Denis Hewitt and Pat McNeill were again in attendance with several of their clients, plus buying orders for those not present. They purchased 52 rams at auction for 12

clients and included in those was the other equal top volume buyer, Consolo. Their purchases were all at \$800 each except one at \$1000 in real value buying. Other prominent buyers amongst this group were Jim Gordon, 'Glensloy' Pastoral Co, Young (six rams from \$900 to \$2200), RA & SF McLean (six from \$800 to \$1200), L & L Hewett, Hollywood Pastoral Co, Crookwell (five from \$900 to \$1800), Lumley Pastoral (six from \$800 to \$1000), K & A Grazing, Crookwell (five from \$1000 to \$1200) and Ellendon Pastoral Co (four from \$1400 to \$2400).

Another strong NSW contributor, but operating through Elders Walgett was AJ & KM Smith. They selected some of the highest performing rams in their seven purchases and paid from \$2200 to \$3000, averaging \$2629.

Putting Queensland's stamp on the sale result was Ian Glasson, Picarilli Pastoral Co, Thargomindah. He also purchased seven top quality rams, paying from \$800 to \$2400 and at a \$1457 average.

From a South Australian buying perspective, Rob Germein, Minlaton was a strong repeat buyer, purchasing six excellent quality rams from \$900 to \$2200. PJ & KL Ebsary, Snowtown purchased five from \$1000 to \$2200 while TR & RG Young, Tumby Bay also purchased five, paying from \$800 to \$1000, both being significant contributors to the overall result.

Stud buyers included Ray and Brad Schroeder, Gunallo (L122918 for \$3800), BA, HL & RC Kluska, Bordertown (L123170 for \$3800), the Yanta and Nantoura studs on Eyre Peninsula in partnership (L123005 for \$3000), Nantoura on their own (L122992 for \$2800) and the Woolford family, Karawatha Park, Kimba (L122530 for \$3600 and L123264 for \$3000).



*Pictured with the \$5000 top priced ram at Leahcim Poll Merino sale are Landmark auctioneer Gordon Wood, Elders Clare manager Peter Rolestone (right) who purchased for Warranbie Pastoral, Ballarat and Leahcim's Alistair Michael (holding ram).*





↑ A view of the crowd at our 2013 Poll Merino sale

## Quality Well Rewarded At Leahcim White Suffolk Sale

A select crowd of mainly repeat buyers gathered at Snowtown for the Leahcim White Suffolk sale last year.

They were competing on 137 superb White Suffolk rams, showing tremendous growth for age, bone and muscling, supported by outstanding Lambplan performance figures. After their \$1423 average in 2011 the Michael family has consciously penned more rams than expected demand for the last two years to ensure clients with a range of budgets are catered for.

That decision was vindicated in a sale that was “hot to trot” at the beginning, then settled into a solid middle ground and finally saw rams going for extreme value at the end. Considering the evenness of quality, this enabled buyers to average out their buying accounts to very affordable levels.

The lineup of 137 even and impressive White Suffolk rams at Leahcim in the inspection pens prior to the sale. ↓



Leahcim principal Andrew Michael (front middle) is pictured with key buyers at the Leahcim Poll Merino sale. They are (back) Chris, Peter and Sue Atkinson, Crafers and KI (ten rams), Paul Goerling, Lukin Springs, Boyup Brook, WA (three rams to \$4400), (front) Ian Glasson, Picarilli Pastoral Co, Thargomindah, Qld (seven rams) and Phillip Foss (right), Bruce Rock, WA (seven rams).





119 rams sold to a top of \$3000 and averaged \$1030 in a splendid, commercially focused result. Although the top was down \$1000 on 2012, the average was up \$157, plus 15 more rams cleared at auction. While 21 rams sold for \$1400 or better, 44 sold for \$800 or less, highlighting the value.

Long time Leahcim clients, Paul and Yvonne Wurst, Appila paid the \$3000 top price for L120412, an outstanding ram for phenotype supported by figures at the extreme top end; highlighted by +17 for post weaning weight, +1.0 for muscle, and culminating in a Carcase Plus index of 202.9. This was one of two rams the Wursts purchased for their prime lamb enterprise, the other at \$1800.

They produce 700 to 800 prime lambs per year, sired by Leahcim White Suffolk rams over Merino/Border Leicester first cross ewes, with a 150% average lambing result. They lamb in both autumn and winter to get wider use from the elite rams they purchase. By seeking out the highest performers they are able to turn their lambs off earlier, having recently sold a draft of 13 to 14 week old lambs for \$122/head.

By purchasing the top price the Wursts received a sponsor prize from Snowtown Salt Distributors, as did the volume buyers in this sale. That went to another long-time repeat buyer



Pictured with the \$3000 top priced Leahcim White Suffolk ram are Damien Webb (Elders auctioneer, Kadina), purchasers Paul and Yvonne Wurst, Appila, Landmark auctioneer Gordon Wood and the ram is being held by Alistair Michael, Snowtown.

in Bono Station, Broken Hill. Roger Wheaton bought wisely on their behalf, accumulating 15 rams from \$600 to \$800.

Not far behind were two other buyers with 14 rams each. Mark Dyson, Springmount Pastoral and buying through Quality Livestock, Pt Adelaide purchased throughout the sale, his purchases ranging from \$800 to \$1900 and at a \$1404 average. Tom Hawker, Anama Holdings, Clare and buying through Elders also purchased 14, his rams coming from the middle value part of the sale, paying from \$700 to \$1100 and at a \$944 average.

Buyers came mainly from the mid north areas of the state, but also others from WA and NSW. Welke Brothers, through Landmark Esperence was one of the interstateers, purchasing five rams at a \$900 average price.

Other key buyers included AJ & DK Whitehorn through Elders Clare (nine rams from \$700 to \$1800), Adalis Pastoral through Landmark Clare (seven from \$600 to \$900) and Humphris Family Trust through Elders Jamestown (seven from \$600 to \$800).

GN & CJ McCallum, through Landmark Clare purchased the only ram going as a stud. They purchased L120221, another extremely high performance ram, for just \$2000.



Pictured after the Leahcim White Suffolk sale are the key volume buyers in the sale: Tom Hawker, Anama, Clare (14 rams), Mark and Hannah Dyson, Springmount Station (14 rams) and Roger Wheaton, buying for Bono Station, Broken Hill (15 rams).

## Progress Integrity Transparency Client focus Honesty

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