



**What a season!!** We are experiencing one of the best seasons in the South that I can ever remember and some of the older generation rate this Autumn and Winter as the best season since the sixties. (For those who were fortunate enough to miss out on the locust plagues) Let's hope that September and October are wetter months and that our spring hasn't come early.

Who could think of a better time to be in the sheep industry, with good returns from prime lamb operations. Lamb prices at the present time are just marginally better than last year, however mutton has been very strong in recent months and at the moment is trading at about \$1.20 more per kilo carcass weight than at the same time 12 months ago. With the national sheep flock at such a very low number and the temptation to "make hay while the sun shines" it seems that a shortage of supply will see good solid demand in the foreseeable future.

## **SHEEPVENTION**

Yes, Sheepvention is here again and the year seems to be flying. We will once again have a display of sheep in the Sheep Marquee (site 335) with a number of other exhibitors which gives you as a commercial breeder the chance to view a range of sheep and make some comparisons. We encourage all of our present clients to come and have a chat and let us know how the rams are performing. It's good to get as much feedback as possible, which allows us to best meet your needs and for you to see the direction in which our sheep are going.

## **POLL DORSETS**

The Poll Dorset Stud continues to grow year by year due to increasing demand for our rams. Major Embryo Transfer programmes using the best of our proven breeding ewes have enabled us to undertake this without compromising the quality of the sheep. The use of industry leading Sires by AI from both Australia and New Zealand has helped us to meet our breeding objectives. The Poll Dorset offering will present very well this year and quality has moved up a notch or two on last year. Lambplan figures are once again above breed average and rising. Whilst our growth and muscle figures are both above the breed average, we have reversed industry trend on fat and bred sheep with more fat cover than most other breeders. We believe that animals with more fat have better carcasses and are easier to finish straight off grass.

## **MATERNALS**

All mixed age stud ewes continue to run as a no drench flock and nearly all the commercial ewes needed no pre lamb drench again this year. Young stud sheep are struggling to get enough worms in them to conduct individual worm egg counts, further demonstrating the toughness of the Coopworth breed to internal parasites. Continuing genetic selection is being placed on the sheep to perform under commercial conditions. Mixed age stud ewes preg scanned very well this year averaging over 180%, mature commercial ewes continue to be around the 160% mark .

We will lamb down nearly 600 stud ewes this year which gives us genetic diversity and the ability to do some R & D trialling new genetics within the stud. As part of our commitment to keep breeding "more good ones" we carried out an extensive Embryo Transfer programme earlier this year resulting in over 200 live lambs which are out of 30 the very best of our ewes, including some of the New Clifton Hill Coopworth ewes recently purchased.

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### **Perendales**

The size and weight of mature ewes and rams is becoming an ever increasing issue in the prime lamb industry. Whether it be first cross ewes or maternal composites, everyone seems to be breeding them bigger. We saw the writing on the wall about 4 years ago and starting doing something about it. Perendales were the obvious breed of choice to have an impact on frame score without compromising other desirable features that we already have. Perendales are not that dissimilar to Coopworths, only they have a smaller frame score on average and slightly more desirable wool. They are tough, hardy animals and have gelled well in our Maternal Composite stud. We will continue crossing some of the Perendale half bred ewes back to Perendales to work towards more purebreds. The Perendale infused rams to date have performed very well and client feedback as well as our own experiences has prompted us to use more Perendale genetics.

During a visit to New Zealand last March, Sandy and I visited a couple of the leading large scale Perendale sheep operations both stud and commercial. These sheep were very impressive and I really believe that they have something to offer the Australian sheep industry - Moderate frame scores tough, hardy, fertile, good doing animals with very good quality carcasses. **Little wonder they are a major maternal breed in New Zealand and growing.**

### **RAM SELLING PROGRAMME 2010**

Following the success of our first on property Open Day and Ram Sale combination last year we will follow the same format this year. The dates for these events this year are as follows:

Open day / pre sale ram inspection day- **Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of October.**

Chrome/Icon Ram Sale – **Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> of October**

Rams on offer this year include: Poll Dorset, Maternal Composite, Perendale Infused, Coopworth and Clifton Hill Coopworth

We are very pleased to have on offer this year the entire drop of the Clifton Hill Coopworth rams. We feel that they will compliment our existing lines of rams, with many of these ranking high up the list on Lambplan performance data. The top 6-8 of these Clifton Hill rams will be offered at the Coopworth National Ram sale on Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> of November.

### **SHEEPCLASSING**

The sheepclassing side of the business continues to offer new challenges and demands. I now have a number of commercial and stud clients across Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and New Zealand. Being involved in breeding many different classes and breeds of sheep across a vast array of varying environments all add to the experience. The opportunity to continue working alongside my predecessor Sandy MacKirdy at a number of the stud operations has been of great benefit.

Looking forward to catching up with as many of you as possible at Sheepvention,

Regards, Matt Tonissen