

Ridgway rises to record \$12,600

For Ric, Gail, Matt and Rachel Ridgway and families, their annual Poll Merino ram sale at Kulkami this year is one they will fondly remember.

A big crowd, including 49 registered bidders from three states, gathered to witness a total clearance of 140 superb quality rams in the main auction clear to a Ridgway record on-property sale top of \$12,600 and average \$2448.

This was up \$374 on last year's seasonally affected average and a whopping \$7800 up on top price.

In the mini auction that followed the main sale, 32 of 42 sold to \$1100 five times and averaged a great value \$866, bringing the total clearance on the day to 172 rams at a \$2153 average.

While the sale was buoyant there was still plenty of value around, with 22% of the overall sale selling for just \$1000 or less.

There was depth of quality right through the draft with bodyweights up to 121kg and averaging 102kg. The bright, nourished, long stapled and well defined wools were a feature, with 38% of the rams being +20 or better for YCFW (yearling clean fleece weight) on Merino Select.

It was two NSW buyers who set the ball rolling towards such a great result. R94, a magnificent 121kg son of White River 546 stood out for size and quality, but at lot 1, again proved the adage of "The first ram is often the cheapest."

Bill Ryan, Curragh, Oxley jumped in with a \$3000 opening bid and was able to pick this star lot up for just \$3800. In a catalogue that ultimately saw 13 rams make \$4000 or better, this proved to be a bargain buy.

Robert Stein, general manager for Tubbo Station in the Riverina and owned by Giles Pritchard-Gordon, Darlington Point, went to \$4800 to get R234 by R721 at lot 3. However, it was the very next ram, R787, by White River 546 that took the bidding well beyond levels not seen at this sale previously, before again being knocked down to Robert Stein through Elders Griffith. Duane Simon, McPiggery, Lameroo was a very determined underbidder, but went home empty handed.

Its wool measurements of 20.4 micron, 2.5 SD, 12.1 CV and 99.7 CF were backed up by very impressive Merino Select figures including 20.7 for YCFW, 7.4 for YSL, 7.1 for YWT culminating in a MP+ index of 150.5.

"We have purchased here before and these rams have done a good job for us," Robert Stein said.

"This ram has got everything that's required; correctness, he's deep sided, well-muscled, has a great surface, good skin, plus a silky white, long stapled, well defined and nourished wool," he said.

He also went to \$4800 to purchase lot 9, R219, another R721 son with huge staple length and cut, but Robert Stein said this ram will be a back-up for the stud flock, whereas the other two would definitely be going into their stud flock at Tubbo Station.

It was a fair way back from the record top to the second top of \$5200. This was paid by Steve Kroehn, GD & JI Kroehn, Nildottie through Landmark Murray Bridge for R202, another R721 son. He

was a strong bidder throughout the sale on select lots, this being one of six he purchased at a \$3283 average.

Of the list of 15 top sires represented in the catalogue, the two sires of these top lots stood out. R721 had 25 sons that averaged 19% above the overall sale average, while WR546 had 12 sons that were 37% above.

The progression of the Ridgway stud has been both significant and obvious over the last two decades; but that progression and the competition it has attracted as a result is perhaps best indicated by long and loyal client, Stephen Paech, Callington. Not that many years ago he was competing for the star lots with a \$2200 bid. This year, when he purchased six rams to \$2200 (averaging \$1900), it was not until lot 52 that he made his first successful bid.

Volume buyers are the key to be able to clear these sort of numbers (140 rams) at such a good average. For the second year in a row it was Lynton and Susie Barrett, Lameroo and buying through Spence, Dix & Co, who took the top volume buying honours. They paid to \$2600 in purchasing 13 rams at a \$1792 average. To give a good indication of the lift in this sale compared with last year, their buying average was \$492 above last year's buying average, while purchasing the same number to the same top price.

Chris and Andrew Johnson, Mt Boothby, Tintinara and buying through Elders Keith were again very strong repeat volume buyers. They paid to a \$4600 top and averaged \$2911 for nine top rams.

Three buyers purchased eight rams each to be next in the volume buying stakes. Strongest was Colara Farms, Tintinara paying to \$3600 and averaging \$2800, with manager Aaron Freeman doing the bidding through Landmark Tintinara's Michael Lawrence.

Ian Jolley, manager for GNB Investments and buying through Landmark Lameroo, worked on the extreme value end of the sale, paying to \$1000 and averaging just \$913, but had to wait until near the end of the sale to get his requirements, with seven of these eight coming from the mini auction that followed the main auction.

To broaden their exposure to the eastern states' market, the Ridgway family has been displaying at Bendigo and then offering a pen of 5 rams at the Hamilton Sheepvention for quite a few years. This has helped attract Victorians in particular to their sale, with several initially able to purchase top rams over there at cheap rates, thus getting to experience their breeding credentials first hand. This year Ridgway sold 5 tops at Hamilton to \$5000 and average \$3400, which was probably still well below their value, but this venture helped attract six Victorian buyers to this year's sale, collectively purchasing 30 rams.

One of them was long term repeat buyers Peter and Simon Brady, Rhymney and purchasing through AWN went to a top of \$4000 and averaged \$2275 to be the other buyer of 8 rams.

Also buying through AWN's Kelvin Shelley were Graeme Fagg, Mt Mercer (seven rams to \$2800 and average \$2129) and Tim Philip, Maroona (five to \$2600 and average \$2000).

Hayden Price, Ben Nevis Farms, Crowlands and buying through Landmark Ararat picked up six rams to \$3400 and averaged \$2033, while Stephen Allen, Goroke and buying through Rodwells Horsham went top shelf and purchased three to \$4000 and averaged \$3333. M & N Farrell & Son, Parwan, buying through Elders Ballarat rounded out the Victorian buying list with one ram at \$2600.

Other prominent buyers included the Hampel family, GMR & J Nominees, Loxton with four top rams to \$4200 and averaging \$3100; CJ & YM Butcher, Meningie with six to \$2200 and averaging \$1800; ND & CM Smith, Loxton with seven to \$1000 and averaging \$971; and DS & HJ Piggott, Jabuk with seven to \$800 and averaging \$757.

Naturally the Ridgway family was delighted with the result with plenty of smiles post sale. "We really appreciated the new faces in attendance, while also welcoming our many repeat clients," Ric Ridgway said.

"We appreciate you don't have to go far north of here, or to the east to find the season is still very tough for some, but it has turned around here this year for which we are grateful.

"We are in a pretty good spot in the sheep industry right now and if producers have been able to keep a majority of their breeding numbers through the drought, we are in for good times," he said.

This point was reinforced by Landmark auctioneer Gordon Wood when he said, "We are indeed in a sweet spot at the moment with the meat and wool markets and it is top genetics like these that will enable producers to take full benefit."

Agents: Landmark Lameroo

Auctioneers: Gordon Wood and Richard Miller



Pictured with the \$12,600 top priced ram at Ridgway are Landmark auctioneer Gordon Wood, Landmark Lameroo's Simon Aldridge, Ric, Gail and Matt Ridgway, purchaser, Robert Stein, Manager for Tubbo Station, Riverina, NSW, and Landmark auctioneer Richard Miller.



The biggest volume buyers at the Ridgway sale were Lynton and Susie Barrett, Lameroo. Here they are concentrating on buying one of their 13 purchases at a \$1792 average.



Bill Walker, Classings Ltd (four rams to \$1800) is with KI buyers Ros and Mitch Willson, Willson River Trading (six rams average \$2333) and Jeff and Adam Buick (four rams average \$3550).



Six Victorian buyers collectively purchased 30 rams. These five accounted for 22 of them. They are Tim Philip, Maroona (five to \$2600), Peter Brady, Rhymney (eight to \$4000), Hayden Price, Crowlands (six to \$3400), Simon Brady, Rhymney, and Stephen Allen, Goroke, (three to \$4000).