



RIDGWAY

Poll Merino Stud

NEWSLETTER
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As was the case with large parts of Australia, 2018 was a very dry and tough year at Ridgway, which has unfortunately continued on to mid 2019.

The first 5 months of this year were very similar to those of 2018 with an extra 10mm this year, but the major difference being the total lack of sub soil moisture available in 2019, following last year's drought.

We were fortunate to receive 35-38mm over all our properties in the second week of June, which raised everyone's spirits and confidence, but 6 frosts in a row the following week has almost completely stalled pasture growth.

Supplementary feeding has needed to be ramped up again after easing off for a short period and looks likely to continue for a while yet.

We were fortunate to cut some hay in 2018, some of which were failing wheat crops, but harvested very little grain. Subsequently, as would be the case for many of you, we have had to buy in large quantities of both grain and hay, which fortunately we were able to source locally.

The lack of cover on large portions of our light mallee soils over the last 18 months, together with frequent strong winds, has required us to develop new and different strategies to be able to carry our core breeders, which we will expand on later in this newsletter.

Lets hope 2019 finishes off better than last year and that you are all able to take advantage of the exceptional wool and meat prices that look set to continue to reach new heights. Hope to catch you all at the upcoming field days and sales.



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DROUGHT MANAGEMENT TO MAXIMIZE LAMBING PERCENTAGES

During last summer, it became obvious to us that unless we were to have an early break this year, we would have no paddock feed available to lamb our ewes onto without careful planning.

After pregnancy scanning in late February, we decided to lock our entire flock into confinement areas. Scanned dry ewes and hoggets were run separately from those that were pregnant and were fed on varied rations.

We increased the intake of the pregnant mobs gradually as they became closer to lambing. Fortunately we always spread out our lambing, with ET recipients dropping in late March, AI ewes in early April and then our natural mated ewes and back up AI's in late April and early May respectively.

There were several reasons why we decided to use this strategy to prepare for lambing. Firstly, we would have needed to supplementary feed our pregnant ewes if they were in the paddock anyway, and by locking them up they weren't using energy walking the paddocks chasing the meagre feed available and removing the little cover left on our light mallee soils.

We were easily able to monitor our ewes condition in the feed lots and what paddock feed we did have was still available for us to lamb onto later.

Our ET and AI ewes were let out approximately 10 days before they were due to start lambing and were put into small mobs in almost every available paddock that we had. They were fed hay only while they lambed over a ten day period.

Then two weeks after the last lambs were born, we locked them back up into the feedlots. We found that this minimized mismothering, therefore our lamb survival rates were much higher than if they had been out in the paddocks walking to feed troughs and water. We also had nil losses from foxes.

We then followed this same procedure with our natural mating and AI back up mobs and had almost all our ewes and lambs locked up again by mid-May.

By this time we had received a little rain and had a good germination of green pick coming through. Because we had nearly all our sheep locked up again this allowed the new pastures to better establish before we let any stock back onto them in early June.



SALE RAMS

As was the case in 2018 we have nearly 250 rams available for sale this year at the various multi-vendor sales, our on property auction, or by private selection.

We will again offer 5 rams at the Hamilton Sheepvention in early August and select teams will be sold at both the Classings Classic and Adelaide sales in early September.

This year's team has predominantly been produced by home bred rams, including proven sires R721, R985, R112 and R451 as well as young sires R067, R430 and R005. Outside sires used include Karawatha Park 982 and White River 546.

We have had several conversations with John and Wes Daniel over recent years, regarding the success that they have had with ewes sired by Ridgway 92, which they purchased at the 2011 Classings Classic for \$32,000. It seems that many of the best rams that they have produced lately have been bred by ewes that were sired by R92.

White River 546 is one of these, a massive heavy boned, long bodied ram that we decided to use to put a bit more fibre density on our R721 type, long stapled, crimped ewes. Several interesting young rams have been bred by this cross which will be well worth inspection at the upcoming field days.

OUTSTANDING RIDGWAY EWE

We often focus on our well performing or up and coming rams in our newsletter. This year we would like to bring to your attention a ewe who has made a big impact in our stud.

Ridgway 120209 has consistently bred top sheep over the past 6 years. For the last 3 years the top priced ram at our on-property sale has been bred by 120209 and she was joined to a different sire each time!

In 2016 lot 1, 2 and 5 were all bred by her and she was also the dam of our top priced ram at the Classings Classic which sold for \$14,500.

She has been used in our ET program for the past 5 years. We have flushed 39 embryos out of her resulting in a total of 26 lambs. None of her progeny have been culled and all her male offspring have sold at auction grossing \$42,900 at an average of \$5,363. Two of her daughters are now also being used in our ET program.

She is a very well structured and correct ewe with excellent neck extension and carries a white medium fleece with good density. All traits that she passes on to her progeny.

She only had one embryo in 2017 and as a result we left it in her. This lamb ended up being a ram lamb which dropped in March 2018. He has been catalogued in our sale and at muscle scanning recorded the second highest eye muscle depth and equal highest fat coverage.

At the age of 6 and a half we chose to flush her once again in our ET program last year. She produced 5 lambs and then joined up again to have a natural lamb, who she is pictured with below. We believe this is a great example of the benefit of pedigree recording and justifies the extra work and expense of ET.



LAST YEARS SALE REPORT

The following is an abbreviation of a report on our sale that appeared in the print media...

Ridgway excels in tough season

Due to the seasonal effects on many clients, there was some justifiable vendor and agent apprehension leading up to the Ridgway Poll Merino ram sale at Kulkami on Monday. Buyers of at least 38 rams from last year's sale were missing this year, solely on the back of the drought conditions they are currently suffering from. However, that apprehension was relieved as the sale swung into action with those more fortunate from the inside country actively competing for the outstanding line-up of 139 rams penned for the main auction.

Wool cut, with exceptional staple length, density and crimp definition, plus good growth and muscling were prominent right through, with the Merino Select figures to back up visual assessments. The entire draft of 180 main and mini auction rams averaged over 100kg bodyweight.

At the completion of the main auction, 127 rams had sold to a top of \$4,800 and averaged \$2,074. This was one more ram sold than last year, with the average down just \$59; a very credible result in a year like this.

"There was certainly a blend of people looking for good figured sheep and being prepared to start at \$1,500 to \$1,800 and then bid up on those that were heavier cutters and had good muscling in particular," Landmark auctioneer Gordon Wood said.

Prepared to go further than any other bidders were Bill and Nathan Wilson, Pinnaroo when they successfully bid \$4,800 for lot 22, Ridgway 14, sired by Poll Boonoke 338. With a 100% comfort factor and 18.5 micron wool, it was in the top 10% nationally on Merino Select for YCFW (+27) and YSL (+7.8), while having a MP+ index of 165.4, the highest in the catalogue. It was a powerful ram described by Gordon Wood as, "A bull with wool."

The Wilsons run a small flock of 350 ewes, and with Nathan being the shearer for the Ridgway rams he was able to have a good close pre-sale look at all the rams on offer. "We had to go a bit further than planned, but the ram is so good we felt stretching the budget was justified in times like the present," Bill Wilson said.

The Graham family, Glencorrie, Maitland was back and provided great buying strength, purchasing seven of the best at a \$3,257 average. In chasing the highest and verifiable quality genetics for their sheep program, they went over \$4,000 twice, including the sale's second top price of \$4,600 for Ridgway 92.

A contingent of six mainly repeat Victorian buyers was also very prominent, especially early in the catalogue. Stephen Allen, Goroke and buying through Rodwells was underbidder on both the two high selling rams, but still managed to go home with five top rams, paying to \$3,800 and averaging \$2,920.

AWN's Kelvin Shelley, Geelong was back with three clients who all made an impact. Peter, Simon and Thomas Brady, Rhymney, Vic were the most prominent with eight rams to \$3,400 and at a \$2,300 average, while CC, GM & TG Philip with six at a \$1,400 average was also a strong bidder.

Buying through Landmark, Ararat, Ben Nevis Farms also purchased 6 rams averaging \$1,500. Collectively the six Victorian buyers purchased 35 rams to make a significantly positive contribution to the overall result.

The biggest volume buyer was Lynton Barrett, Lameroo. He bid strongly and astutely in purchasing 13 rams to a \$2,200 top and average of \$1,300. Last year he averaged \$1,809 for 11 rams, so in effect he was able to pick up more rams at an average of \$500 less.

The strong upper and middle ground of this sale, which saw five rams sell for \$4,000 or better and a further 22 sell between \$3,000 and \$4,000, was achieved through the intense competition amongst buyers, and six in particular.

Two Tintinara based buyers often found themselves in a bidding dual on rams that clearly suited their area. Chris and Andrew Johnson, Mt Boothby Pastoral Co were successful in their bidding on seven rams to \$3,200 and at a \$2,857 average, while Aaron Freeman and Tom Whittle, Colara Farms also purchased seven to \$4,000 and at a \$2,371 average.

McPiggery, through Landmark Lameroo pushed the top end with two rams at a \$4,100 average while Jeff and Adam Buick, Penneshaw were also strong bidders on the top end, purchasing six rams to \$3,400 & averaging \$2,667.

Stephen Paech, Callington has been a prominent and regular buyer at Ridgway for a long time. This year he upped the pressure a bit, before securing six to \$2,600 and at a \$1,900 average.

Rounding out the more prominent buyers was Haydn Weckert, Yumali with five rams to \$2,600, averaging \$2,200.

"We are pretty fussy with our selection points, especially structure and wool quality, so it was very pleasing to see how well the rams lined up," senior principal Ric Ridgway said. "The longer stapled wools allow us to shear twice per year, and some early criticism saying we lost density was possibly justified, but I think we have now shown in the draft today that with careful selection you can have both."

"We are certainly thankful for the support and vote of confidence we received from our regular clients who were not drought affected and to see them joined by four new clients was very pleasing," Ric Ridgway said.



Richard Miller, purchasers of the top ram Nathan and Bill Wilson, Pinnaroo; Matthew, Gail and Ric Ridgway; purchaser of the second top ram, Craig Graham, Glencorrie, Maitland; Simon Aldridge, Deb Graham, Gordon Wood; Josh Graham and Lilly Buick.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2019

Australian Sheep & Wool Show, Bendigo - Friday 19th-Sunday 21st July

South East Merino Field Day, Keith - Wednesday 24th July

Karoonda & Districts Merino Field Day, Murray Bridge - Friday 26th July

Hamilton Sheepvention (offering 5 rams) - Monday 5th & Tuesday 6th August

RIDGWAY ON-PROPERTY SALE (OFFERING 180 RAMS) KULKAMI - MONDAY 12TH AUGUST

Classings Classic, Murray Bridge - Monday 2nd September

Adelaide Royal Show Merino Ram Sale - Friday 6th September