

SEPTEMBER 2013

PASTORA

Poll Merinos

OPEN DAY

Tuesday 24th September 2013

Commencing at 10am

at Pastora Woolshed

check website for directions



Condition scoring ewes at lifetime ewe management course

Our website has been up and running since August 2012. We have had over 500 visitors to the site, with most interest coming from the Eastern states. We have also had a number of website enquiries through our contacts link. The website includes links to our previous newsletters, articles and latest news.

Visit www.pollmerinos.com.au and have a look!

Last year I participated in a lifetime ewe management course with four other farmers. Run by Andrew Whale, a Veterinarian from Hamilton, and subsidised by the AWI, each participant yarded one mob of breeding ewes, once every two months for the group to condition score. We also assessed the pastures the sheep were running on for the year with the aim of improving ewe management to wean more lambs. I found the course to be very beneficial. The group gained valuable information from Andrew and from each other as we discussed our own management issues. This year Andrew is involved with four more groups in the Lockhart area and there are 13 Pastora clients participating. If anyone wishes to be involved in one of these courses please contact me and we will see what we can do to get one running in your area.

Our Field Day this year will be held on Tuesday the 24th September, which is the week after the Henty Machinery Field Days. September seems to be the month for sheep industry days and this date seemed to fit in with most. Once again clients are welcome to bring along ten, one year old ewes to display on the day. Contact me if anyone is interested.

Last summer was certainly a long one with below average winter and spring rainfall in 2012 leading to a shortage of feed over summer. Thankfully this has been followed by warm and wet conditions throughout winter, which has led to quicker pasture growth rates. Hopefully it continues and the Spring is a fruitful one for all, with the possibility of improving sheep prices as season progresses - the icing on the cake!

The young rams were well below par by the end of autumn. Whilst healthy they spent the entire summer and autumn on one, eighty hectare barley stubble which was stocked at twelve to the hectare with one kilogram of grain in the early part, slowly increasing to three kilograms by March and one kilogram of silage for the last month as well. At cropping they were moved to a drought lot where they were fed three and a half kilograms of grain plus one kilogram of hay and one kilogram of silage. In the middle of May they were put on a paddock of vetch, stocked at ten per hectare with grain ceasing three weeks after introduction. They are filling out well now and I expect them to be in a similar condition at sale time as they have been in the past few years. At the time of writing this they are still on the same paddock of vetch. It would be very easy to give them a full feedlot ration for the summer and have them all looking like intensely fed and shed sheep, but it is important to me that our selections are done with the rams managed in normal commercial conditions to emulate commercial conditions.

Lambing

Last year we marked 3900 lambs from 3200 ewes joined. In addition, 300 lambs were marked from our ewe lambs, which were joined at seven months of age, giving us a combined total of 4200 lambs. This allows us the ability to class our ewes and ram weaners intensely and therefore increase the pressure on selecting for better animals.

Prices for surplus ewes dropped in spring 2012 causing us to retain all our cast-for-age ewes and also a larger percentage from other age groups. Due to the increased numbers, 4100 ewes were joined; of these 1280 were maiden ewes. Numbers indicated to be pregnant after scanning was 3800 and given a reasonable marking percentage we expect to continue with an intense selection pressure regime.

Shearing

Our breeding ewes were shorn in early June, around four weeks before their earliest lambs were due. The two-year-old ewes cut 7.1kg of wool (ten and half month's growth) with their fleece wool averaging 17.1µ. Our other ewes, which are mixed age micron ranged between 16.5µ and 17.3µ (fleece wool). The mixed ewes were not fleece weighed.



Eight year old Luke Westblade keen to learn to shear

Peter Westblade Scholarship

The 2013 Peter Westblade scholarship produced three great finalists:

Thomas Pengilly who comes from a sheep background and whose family owns and runs Penrose Poll Merino Stud situated North of Esperance, W.A. Thomas has an interest in electronic tagging, pedigree matching and Genomics and selection of the best animals for future breeding outcomes.

Stephanie Fowler who doesn't come from a farming background but has just started her PhD in Meat & Livestock Science, looking at meat quality through probing. Stephanie comes from the Central Coast NSW and chose to study at Tocal Ag College. She spent some time in New Zealand as a shepherd as part of her Ag College studies.

Annabel Lugsdin who is the 2013 Peter Westblade Scholarship winner, is a project officer with AWI. Annabel was raised on a large-scale commercial Merino property, near Hay in NSW. She says she was encouraged to enter the Scholarship by industry mentor, Sally Martin who hails from Young.

"Sheep advisory with growers is an area I want to get into – working with practically based genetics to bridge the gap between researchers and farmers"

"Coming from an area of large-scale properties, I know the constraints posed by running an extensive production system in a variable climate"

This knowledge has led Annabel to pursue her interest in genetic advisory, selection and ewe management and she graduated with a Bachelor of Livestock Science at Armidale.

We wish her well and hope that she is able to gain some useful knowledge and connections through the scholarship, to aid her with her career path.



2013 Sale Rams

Wether Trials

Currently we have 14 clients with sheep entered in five different trials throughout Eastern Australia. A total of 172 teams are entered in the five trials with a geographic spread from the Ovens Valley, to Temora, Bookham, Monaro and Orange. Pastora blood teams cut average fleece values of up to \$70.73. Our teams have placed in the top five for fleece value in the four trials assessed in the past 12 months.

Pastora wethers have emerged with the highest fleece value when compared to all the commercial poll merino teams in all the wether trials in which Pastora genetics were entered thus proving their domination in this area.

Pastora blood wethers also won the overall carcass and wool value in the 2011-2013 Ovens Valley trial with 26 teams entered.

Sire Evaluation

We currently have two rams entered in the 2012 Young Sire Program at Temora. There are ten stud rams entered in this trial from eight different studs. The first assessment was completed with the ram's progeny at ten months of age and ten months of wool growth. Both rams have been used extensively at Pastora and we should see some results finalised from this sire evaluation by ram selling time.



Wool from 10.2069 entered in the 2012 young sire program

Client News

Following on from last years newsletter; The **BAHR** family from the Rock joined their seven-month-old lambs in February 2012. They were pregnancy tested and 60% of the lambs were pregnant in June 2012. At the time of writing last year's newsletter they were still to lamb. Last spring the Bahr's weaned 88% from their pregnant one-year-old ewes. This is a fantastic effort and a testament to their great management. The Bahrs have joined their lambs at seven months of age again in February 2013.



Darren Bahr shearing one of his 2 year old ewes with Damien Hosie watching on

Congratulations to the **GOWLAND** family from 'Balls Up Downs' near Milbrulong who sold their entire wether lamb drop through the Wagga Sale Yards in mid May. The Gowlands averaged \$109 for their 2012 drop wethers. An agent told me that they were some of the most well grown merino wether lambs he had seen go though the sale yards. The Gowlands also have a team of wethers entered in the Orange wether trial.

Well done to the **PATEY** family from Boree Creek who last year gained the highest lambing percentage that they have ever achieved, marking 116% across all their breeding ewes. The Pateys are relatively new Pastora clients and the extra ewe weaners will give them the ability to class harder placing more pressure on increasing fleece weight and micron reduction.

The **KITTOS** from Tallimba sold their entire wether lambs through the Wagga sale yards for an average price of \$122. Interestingly their last draft sold on August the 8th for the highest price of \$137.50. This is a fantastic result by the Kitto family.



Above: Left to right: Luke, Owen, Hayden & Jacinta. Mad hair day at school

Upcoming Events

South West Slopes Field Day Galong

5th September

Henty Field Day Display

17th, 18th & 19th September

Open Day

24th September, 10.00am onward

Clients commercial ewes displayed

Helmsman auction commencing at 12.30pm

Pastora Woolshed

Walbundrie Show

7th October

Orange National Field Day Display

24th, 25th & 26th October

Private Ram Selection

Mid September onward

On farm inspection

Welcome all year round

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Hand feeding stud ewes February 2013