

Lampata Poll Merinos

Selected for total sheep productivity - Performance tested for nearly 60 years

Welcome

Welcome to our 2019 newsletter.

Seasons continue to test us here in the Mallee, plus many of our clients in other parts of the country. However, 2018 ended up being an excellent year for our sheep production and breeding programs, with solid demand, new clients and exceptionally good prices when selling wool and sheep.

Unfortunately for us grain yields were low, but prices were good, which have also increased since due to unfavourable seasonal conditions. All our barley was stored for sheep feeding. As you all know the season is still being difficult. Grain and hay resources are almost exhausted and have become very expensive, if you can source them.

Seasons like this continue to show the merit in being diversified, and specifically when running sheep in conjunction with cropping. These two enterprises are very compatible and while there is certainly an increased cost factor in running sheep in tight seasons, they give management flexibility, a cash flow at any time, and an extremely good profit margin at current price levels. The record sheep, lamb and wool prices are certainly putting any gross margin analysis in favour of sheep enterprises at present.



Annual Newsletter
July 2019
Newsletter No 10

Keep this date free! Annual Lampata Ram Sale on-property, 191 Hammat Rd, Lameroo
Tuesday 27th August 2019 – 1pm

Offering **60** Performance Measured Dual Purpose Poll Merino rams by auction
Plus **30** extra rams available in mini auction.

Also don't forget our Lameroo off-shears sale offering - **11th October 2019**
Offering our usual high quality drafts of ewes

To the business side

Flock expansion

We increased our flock numbers of both stud and commercial to 2050 ewes for the 2019 breeding program. This was done by keeping our 6.5yo ewes in a separate flock. We also purchased the breeding ewes from long standing clients, Trevor and Wayne Gilbertson. Trevor & his family have leased out their property and their ewes presented an opportunity that was too good to miss. They are some of the stretchiest and deepest bodied ewes we have seen.

Those who have attended our past sales would well know that Trevor & Wayne always purchased the very best rams they could for their flock and topped our sale many times. Those who they outbid in the past may now appreciate their absence at future sales!

We also purchased client David Williams's 5.5yo ewes late last year. We made these purchases to increase our potential commercial productivity.

Lambing information

We scanned all ewes with a conception rate of 147%. The stud flocks scanned at a projected possible 151% and 142% each, while the commercial flocks scanned at 150% and 144% each.

Considering the very poor lambing season, we had a good lamb marking result of 92% from all ewes mated. These results are pleasing considering the seasonal conditions we've endured and the mis-mothering that occurs with a large percentage of multiple births (twins and especially triplets). The twins averaged 55% per flock scanned and 37% scanned single, while the percentage of dry ewes was 8%. We had a higher than usual number of triplets born.

Again, seasonal conditions caused in utero losses, while there were also significant vermin casualties. We baited extensively for foxes.

While there is a clear wastage in these losses between conception and weaning, we are continually striving to improve that outcome. However, the inherent fertility of the ewes is clearly evident, and given anything like reasonable seasonal conditions, we are confident clients can expect very good fertility results from using Lampata genetics.

Research on Genetic outcomes from Twinning

The following article was recently published in The Land and also online. We thought it was well worth giving an airing here for those who may not have seen it.

Merino Lifetime Productivity Project early findings show double sire twins - by Lucy Kinbacher (27 Jun 2019)

Early findings from the Merino Lifetime Productivity Project have uncovered an unusual parentage scenario, with as many as 63 per cent of twins sired by two different rams. The Merino Lifetime Productivity Project (MLP) isn't set to conclude until 2024 but DNA results across most of the five research sites have indicated a surprisingly common occurrence within twin lambs born from syndicate ram matings.

To generate reproductive data, the MLP naturally join first-cross ewes to a syndicate of Merino rams. About 584 of the 2015 ewes from the Balmoral site were joined with a syndicate of rams. Of the 68 sets of twins that were born, DNA parentage found that 57 per cent of them had two different sires, and it wasn't the only time it occurred. The 2017 Balmoral joining found 36pc of the 92 twins born from a syndicate joining had different sires. In the Pingelly 2018 joining there were 49 sets of twins, with 63pc of them by two sires, and at MerinoLink in 2018, where there were 87 sets of twins, at least 32pc followed the joint-sire trend. MLP project manager Anne Ramsay said while the findings might not have an implication in a commercial setting, a syndicate stud situation wouldn't be able to assume the mating of twins.

MLP project manager Anne Ramsay shared some early findings from the project during the MerinoLink Conference in Armidale in June. →



"When I looked at the rams involved in generating these results, they were all involved in these double matings," she said.

Jerilderie sheep reproduction veterinarian Dr Michelle Humphries said it wasn't an impossible scenario.

"It's quite possible for twins to have two different fathers if there is a syndicate of rams. It can happen if two rams happen to serve the ewe in the same oestrus period and the timing lines up so they can both fertilise two different eggs that are released. They don't necessarily have two eggs released at the same time; they could be released over some period of time," she said.

MLP will also investigate the factors impacting on a ram's mating success and hope to further its analysis using sensor technology to monitor activity levels. During the same syndicate joining studies, about 32pc of the progeny were sired by one ram.

After joining the same group of rams the following year, they found some rams remained dominant, others stepped up, while some continued to under-perform. They also intend to identify any ewe favouritism towards particular rams.

Work conducted in New Zealand found rams aged at three years and older had 15-20pc greater mating success compared with those aged from one to two years.

"Because we are recording all that information, we will be able to go back through and check to see whether it is related to how experienced they are, or scrotal size, or to their body condition," Ms Ramsay said.

"I often spoke to people who said, 'We don't get the conception rate even when we have got everything right; when we have got the right joining percentages and the right conditions. What's the missing element and is it heritable? Is it something about the rams and the way they have been bred? It will provide another piece in the puzzle if we can identify what might drive that,'" she said.

(MLP is a 10-year partnership between AWI and the Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association with CSIRO)

Dealing with the Mallee's seasonal conditions

We have had to hand feed considerably due to the seasonal conditions. In the second week of July, we are still feeding hay and grain to all stock. However, season wise we consider ourselves very fortunate compared to many other areas and from what some clients have told us. Our underground water supply is priceless to us, as we don't have to cart water.

We built new confinement pens for our ewe lambs which have 900 shut up and being fed. They were shorn on the 23rd April. It was certainly advisable to remove their wool at that time because of dust and animal health implications. They were OFDA measured and fleece weighed, then placed in the confinement pens. These ewe lambs have been fed a set ration/day of 500 gms of barley and 1.5 kg/day of vetch & canola hay. They have moved forward very nicely & will be weighed and classed in the near future.



← *Our ewe lambs in the confinement pen in the dust in April; and being fed after shearing in May.*

We have learnt a lot about feeding sheep in confinement and now consider ourselves successful in achieving a good result. So far, out of 1300 sheep in confinement we have only had two casualties, which nutritional and animal health experts have informed us is an exceptional result. We have been assisted by those experts with relevant advice and have also received great support by our suppliers. The types of licks and additives is important, especially when reducing acidosis in both lots, and urinary calculi in the rams.

Sale Rams

The sale rams were shorn at the same time as the ewe lambs & have been confined on lick feeders since then where they have managed to gain 357gms/day. They were visually classed the week before. At that time, their average bodyweight was 52.4 kg. Their wool micron was 19.1, with a 3.4 SD & 17.6% CV. They cut 4.8 kgs of wool with 7 months wool growth, yielding 54.9% and a staple length of 75mm. This was achieved under paddock conditions which varied dramatically up to shearing. Full details will again be available at the sale.

Sheep Industry technology

The use of the RFID technology has certainly improved our record keeping and accuracy, even though it has taken some time to master the technique. It greatly assists in the classing of sheep on performance, plus the auto drafting is brilliant.

The ewe hogget classing usually took two days, but now we are doing it in just under one day. We still need to modify our sheep yards to take full advantage of the system. Sapien, the technology we use has been very co-operative. We have also had help from Paul Cousins and Rachel Chirgwin from Cousins Merino Services who undertake the measurement and testing.

Seedstock breeding using performance data

Seedstock breeding is challenging and requires a lot of patience, but it is wonderfully fulfilling and enjoyable if you accept that challenge. There are many identified traits we can measure and select for nowadays, but each of these have correlations, both positive and negative. Positive correlation means other traits are also improved when selecting for that particular trait, while negative correlation means the benefits from some other traits are reduced.

At Lampata, we have always been conscious of the need to have a balanced multi-trait selection policy encompassing the four main income areas for commercial sheep producers; wool, carcase, fertility & survivability. We've been slowly and carefully balancing this trait selection process for many decades to ensure we embed desirable traits, while limiting the possible downsides.

For your interest, here are some of the traits that we can select for, their benefits and the things to watch out for.

It clearly indicates the danger in single trait selection policy for any length of time. While taking this balanced approach limits the potential gain for each particular trait, it also limits the possible pitfalls. We believe our multi-trait selection policy brings you, our valued clients, better quality sheep that will produce a better bottom line income.

To give you an idea, here are just a few of the many traits, their benefits (free add ons) and things to watch out for.

Weight for age – growth rate

Benefits – Marketable at an earlier age; Higher reproduction; Higher fleece weight; Higher lean meat yield.

Things to Watch – Fibre diameter increases; Mature weight goes up; Birthweight increases.

Greasy/clean fleece weight

Benefits – Increases bodyweight & growth; Staple length increases

Things to Watch – Higher fibre diameter; Wrinkle score increases; CV of fibre diameter increases; Fat reduces; Reproductive efficiency decreases.

Lower fibre diameter

Benefits – Comfort factor improves.

Things to Watch – Fleece weight decreases; Lower bodyweight and growth; Staple length decreases.

Staple length

Benefits – Fleece weight improves; Washing yield goes up; Lower FDCV; Higher growth rate; Less fleece rot.

Things to Watch – Fibre diameter goes up; Reproduction goes down.

Carcase muscling (EMD)

Benefits – Increased lean meat yield; Shifts lean meat from forequarter to loin; Increased dressing percentage; Related to improved reproduction rate; Higher worm resistance.

Things to Watch – Possible reduced eating quality.

Carcase fatness

Benefits – Reduced CV of FD; Intramuscular fat (marbling) & eating quality improves; Related to improved reproduction rate.

Things to Watch – Fleece weight goes down.

Lean meat yield

Benefits – Growth increases; Carcase weight increases.

Things to Watch – Shear force increases; Birthweight increases.

Intramuscular fat

Benefits – Birthweight decreases; Shear force decreases; Eye muscle depth increases.

Things to Watch – Growth decreases; Carcase fat increases; Dressing percentage decreases.

These are just 8 of up to 20 selection traits we can currently use when deciding mating programs.

Sheep sales of note

We sold our wether lambs in August as we have done in previous dry years. We sold a draft of cull ram lambs on hooks after shearing for \$160/head to a high of \$210/hd; and another line mid July up to \$241 at the Horsham market.

The annual Lameroo Off-shears sale returned us with a \$273/head for 300 ewe hoggets, plus \$246/head for 240, which was extremely pleasing. These ewe hoggets were all purchased by repeat buyers which tells us they are working well for those producers. Our clients also had good sale results in this Lameroo market and the Naracoorte Border Leicester first cross ewe and ewe lamb sales. The current prices being paid for replacement breeding ewes are outstanding and with the extreme lamb prices at present, producers are happily accepting them.

The Wool Market & Shearing

The wool market has been extraordinary with huge increases in prices. We still wish we could work the whole wool market out, but that is a puzzle we imagine all producers would like to be able to solve!

We have continued with our six-monthly shearing as a management tool for the 17th season now. The benefits are large and far outweigh the extra costs and work.

Lambing is certainly easier, and we have very little fly trouble. The increased costs are reduced by not having to crutch, while the stimulation in wool growth post shearing results in growing more wool per sheep overall.

While staple length selection is not our highest selection trait priority, we are managing to get wools with acceptable staple length. The Vegetable Matter needs to be below 1%. The Lampata clip details will again be posted at the ram sale, as they have been in previous years. Unfortunately, due to the seasonal conditions this year and the necessary management decisions undertaken as a result, yields were down considerably from our normal levels.

On the cropping front

Cropping wise, with the increased sheep numbers, we reduced our cropping program to focus even more on our sheep enterprises. We sowed wheat, barley, vetch and lupins this season. A large quantity was sown to a mixture of cereals and vetch for hay and grazing. We do this to help prepare some paddocks for future grain cropping and also to assist with pasture renovation. The technology, management and seeding techniques have certainly come a long way in recent years.

Family news

Family wise we welcomed two new grandchildren.

Baby Mia Grace was born to Sally and Mark on 1st October 2018, a sister for Layla. Robert and Courtney welcomed another son, Hugo Elliot born on 30th January 2019, a brother for Thomas. We feel truly blessed. In another move, Bruce and Gaylia are also shifting into Lameroot, while Robert and Courtney will live on the farm.

Thomas learning the ropes with Robert! →

Thanks

Thanks to Ian & Wendy Turner; a big thank you for your input over many years. Your business "Superior Selections" has been of great benefit to us. Your journalistic abilities and managing our promotions have been much appreciated. By the looks of your latest trips you will have a few more planned. Also, you obviously share a common link with the best footy team in SA, the Crows!

2018 Annual ram sale

We had a good ram selling season in 2018 and picked up some new clients from our annual ram sale. After discussions with us on our future and what they can expect from using Lampata rams, we are pleased these people came our way.

The following abbreviated sale report was compiled by Mark Scown from the Stock Journal

Buyers secure meat, wool and fertility genetics

The 2018 Lampata Poll Merino ram sale at Lameroot, saw 56 rams sell to a top of \$3100, average \$1369 and achieve a near total clearance in their main auction for their unique type of performance and total sheep productivity based Poll Merino rams.

Buyers consistently return for these Lampata rams, with genetics that are very strong in the main profit-making traits of Meat, Wool and Fertility that the Pocock family have specifically selected for many decades.

The top priced ram was lot 29, Lampata 17172Tw and sold to return buyer, Ben Hunt, Nalang Farms based at Mundulla. This ram boasted the equal highest Cfat percentage of 121.2, while its EMD% was near the top at 111.1. Ben bought four rams at an average of \$1925, with all their purchases ranking at the top end for eye muscle and fat.

Another long term Lampata client who bid strongly was the Knight Family Trust from Buccleuch. Milton and Andrew Knight bought 8 rams including one from the mini auction, twice paying a top of \$1700 and averaging \$1228.

Despite the toughness of the season in their area, Ray & David Elleway from Cleve again purchased strongly throughout the catalogue, securing 6 rams to a top of \$2100 and averaged \$1616. Other major volume buyers were Paul Wallis from Serviceton who purchased 5 rams to a top of \$1600 twice, to average \$1220; and Jax Joynt, Meribah with 5 rams to a top of \$1300 to average \$889, then adding another three from the mini auction.

"It is a tough season, and we appreciate that some buyers north of here were unable to operate this year. However, we are very confident in the future of the sheep industry," Lampata principal Bruce Pocock said.

Elders auctioneer Steve Doecke commended the Pocock Family on their presentation of the catalogued sale rams, with full figures being available. He made special mention about the eye muscle and positive fat figures throughout the catalogue and the effect these traits have on twinning and fertility selection.

Overall, it was a good solid sale with widespread support. Buyers were able to find quality rams to match their varying budgets throughout the sale.



Pictured with the \$3100 top priced ram at the Lampata sale are purchaser, Ben Hunt, Mundulla, Robert Pocock holding the ram, Elders Lameroot's Jarryd Finch, Bruce Pocock and Elders auctioneer Steve Doecke. ↑

Finally, we wish all our clients the very best for the remainder of 2019 and a prosperous 2020.

⇒ Make sure you are on our mailing list to receive our sale catalogue & future newsletters. ⇒

Contact us now ♦ R. M. & S. Pocock, 'Lampata', PO Box 47, Lameroot SA 5302

♦ Bruce Ph/F (08) 8576 3035 M 0408 117 366 ♦ Robert Ph (08) 8576 3352 M 0438 824 758

♦ E lampata@lm.net.au