

ANNUAL

2023 - 2024



**AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL
GROWERS' ASSOCIATION INC.**

www.aswga.com



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Pure Australian Merino Wool



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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association Annual for 2023-24. This, the fifteenth edition, has been contributed to by more than forty people. There were a couple of instances when I thought I would have to resort to ChatGPT but we got there. Thank you all for your information, observations, reflections and advice.

It is well known that the ASWGA is a unique organisation in the wool industry. It is its membership base extending from growers through the supply chain to "mill members" that sets it apart. Its breadth is well reflected in this edition.

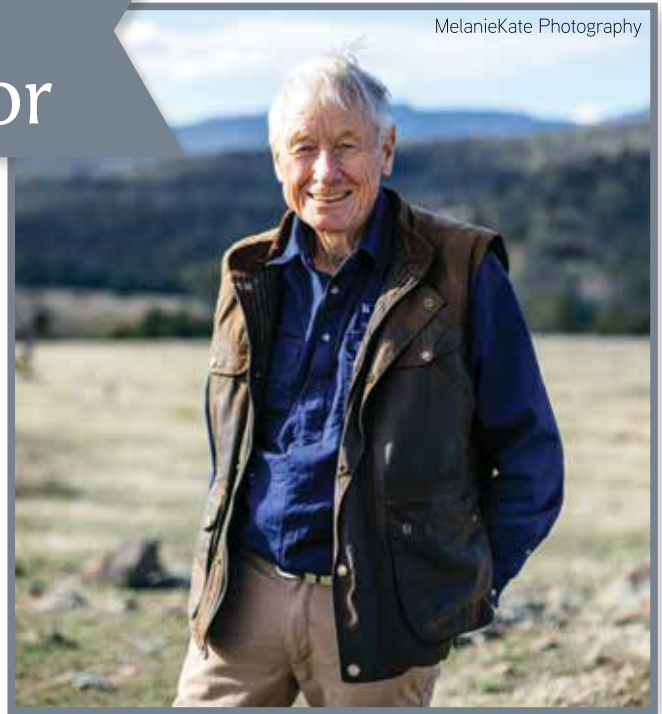
The Annual includes contributions from the supply chain spectrum – growers, AWI, industry service providers (AWN, Elders, AWTA, AWEX), an exporter, mills (Vitale Barberis Canonico, Ermenegildo Zegna Group and the Schneider Group) and brands/retailers (M.J. Bale, Smitten Merino and Horrocks Vale Collection). My particular thanks to Andrew Blanch for his New England Wool retrospective. It dovetails with an article marking the 360th anniversary of Vitale Barberis Canonico.

We are fortunate to have articles covering two industry legends, Don Belgre and Peter Morgan. Their combined 120 years, working in different areas of the wool industry tells a timeline of historical developments, progress and inventions some of which they have seen come, conquered and then superseded. Others they designed and are still in use today. With their fingers on the pulse of wool demand, they are respected in Australia and in overseas countries, with farmers, the wool fraternity and mills. Ironically both hailed from Sydney to pursue a wool career neither had considered during their school years. Our continuing Superfine Women series has two excellent contributions, Rita Barber and Angie Waters. Make sure you find them and the article on our featured wool producer, Queenlee.

Our President, Mark Waters, reports on the strong message from Italy in relation to animal welfare. His feedback from the Romagnano combing mill is a stark pointer to the potential future. The proportion of Australian wool processed through the plant used to be 90%. It is now heading towards 70% primarily due to the demand for RWS accredited wool ie non-mulesed. Dr Zegna, from the Ermenegildo Zegna Group, an organisation with more experience of domestic Chinese consumer habits than most, suggests that when Chinese consumers change their attitude to mulesing it will happen rapidly.

Mill members are important to us not just because they buy our wool. They are important because of their links further along the supply chain and their understanding of what consumers are seeking. When they speak we should listen and take notice or risk becoming just an inwardly focussed wool grower group.

Our discussion with Jock Laurie was extensive with a summary presented. The full version will be available via the ASWGA website. One important comment he made is an observation I include here:



When considering the mulesing issue it is worth looking at the environmental debate around tree clearing and water use that was taking place 25 years ago. Gradually it [the debate] developed to the extent that legislation was put in place to stop land clearing and to control water use. If the same principles are applied to animal welfare and mulesing there will be progression down a similar path. What we are saying to industry is take this into your thinking so when going forward then you will be able to move more easily.

Yes, many buyers of wool including the Italians are still buying 'mulesed wool' but for how long with 220 clothing brands already committed to a mules free future? Is it a game of chicken that it is wise to participate in? Perhaps there is a role the ASWGA can help play in defining the future and in so doing refresh its purpose.

The cover - I will probably be in trouble for the this one but what better way to recognise the Rowbottoms' first and second in the Ermenegildo Zegna's Vellus Aureum Award and especially with David and Susan's extraordinary record feat of a 9.4 micron fleece. The other remarkable result for the year was the Linkes with seven 1PP bales. Both achievements are from our Hamilton Region. Must be something in the water.

As usual the fact that we are able to provide our Annual is largely due to our advertisers. A special thanks to these companies, and, fellow growers, please return the favour with your support.

Finally, thank you those who helped pull this edition together especially Susan Rowbottom our fearless hassler, Lyndall Eeg, our fearless proof reader, Lesley Prior who keeps an eye on Europe and the UK for us and Donna Robinson and Bianca Heaney, the anchor team at AWIS.

Simon Cameron
 Acting Editor

President's Report

It is with pleasure and some trepidation that I send to all members my report for the 2022/23 year.

This year saw a change of staff at our office. We welcomed Donna Robinson as she assumed responsibility for our Association's office. She is slowly coming to terms with dealing with farmers.

Almost all Regions started with fabulous seasonal conditions. At times there was too much rain during the Spring. Major flooding was experienced in places like Forbes and Eugowra. Thankfully our members were spared the worst events. Grass quality and quantity was maintained in most areas until Christmas but have since fluctuated and declined. Many southern areas have now become very wet and sheep have lost condition. Members have moved to feeding some sheep, especially pregnant ewes or ewes with lambs.

The year started well with strong wool and mutton prices. These values followed buoyant finances for the previous couple of years following the end of the 2019 drought. At present, prices have eased somewhat due to a combination of rising sheep numbers and forecast of dry weather and possible El Niño.

Our immediate past president Danny Picker and I travelled to WA in February. Danny had offered to run a wool preparation day for members prior to the COVID pandemic. The wool presented was very stylish but quite dusty, typical for that environment. Good constructive discussion took place on how to handle the fleeces and how much to separate them to attract better prices. Danny showed how to prepare for 1PP types too. Everyone had a very pleasant and informative day with 15 people in attendance.

Vice President Neil Carey and I visited Natsun and had a meeting with Kevin Xing. A very interesting couple of hours discussing his and our issues. He added that Natsun would be happy to sponsor the class winners again, which we thanked him for. Kevin inquired about his farm at Berridale becoming a member. That evening Neil and I, along with Tim Marwedel had dinner with Yutaka Nagaoka, Ashley Okada and Sean Tobe from Nikke. We talked about them sourcing wool from Goulburn/Yass branch for a specific project and thought they would have a larger choice of types if they were to purchase from all of the members. We touched on the Motohiro 100-year celebration which was to be held at the conclusion of the IWTO conference in Kyoto. They were very pleased to see Lesleann and me at their special celebration. We thought it was fantastic.

I attended the International Wool Textile Organisation gathering in Kyoto. There were 250 attendees from 20 countries around the world. All are passionate and determined to secure wool's fair position in the world market. The inclusion of the young professionals' program with 25 delegates is a major initiative.

Topics included King Charles' wool project for his coronation where the woollen flags tied together with woollen rope lined the procession. Twenty six miles in total. The King



will continue to be a great supporter of the wool industry exhibiting provenance and environmental awareness.

Retail sessions outlined wool quality standards. A move towards more casual wear especially for everyday office work is evident. Conversely, made-to-measure suits for high-end professionals or meetings are still in demand. The younger buyers are buying second-hand clothes as well as clothes with eco credentials.

Sustainability is a constant theme. Concern around soaps used in the scouring process, the dyes used, circularity of the fibre and the large amount of energy used in processing are always under review. For farmers, environmental sustainability must mean financial sustainability as well. But the new word to move forward could be Biodiversity. It covers many facets. It requires collecting large amounts of data on animals, insects, plants, soils and water. The issue is that the data is not the same across all countries and it needs to be. There are differing challenges and standards in different geographical areas requiring different approaches. Likewise there are challenges for larger companies compared with small niche market enterprises.

Health and wellness is an expanding area involving wool. Bedding and wool underlay to assist sleeping issues, furnishings to help noise reduction and odours, and next to skin wear mainly use broad wools. Wool targeted at babies to reduce skin conditions like eczema are usually superfine types.

Leisure wear and sportswear is a fast developing area. Targets like marathon runners, rock climbers and cyclists are athletes who require optimal performance. They need to know if the garment can raise performance by even 1% - 2% which may give them a winning edge. There are exciting developments in Formula One motor racing. Qualities wanted are body heat advantages and temperature regulation along with sweat transfer away from the body. The Luna Rossa yacht from Italy involved in the America's Cup, used woollen garments

that are waterproof, lightweight and malleable for great body movement freedom. This exposure generated worldwide exposure with over one billion people searching online.

The product environmental footprint is another millstone around the neck of the wool industry. AWI and IWTO have been working on behalf of wool and other natural fibres against the PEF. There is progress and most importantly, we must continue the fight.

We ventured to Biella in northern Italy after visiting Kyoto. Mills visited were Schneider, Zegna Baruffa, Zegna, Vitale Barberis and Reda.

All of the mills expressed a desire that Australian wool could transition to no breech modification. Clothing brands are under pressure from activists and are now declaring that very soon they will only purchase non-mulesed wool. Growers must understand this. Those who have not stopped may soon experience a resistance in the auction room.

The COVID virus has had a big impact on the Italian mills. Sales were reduced significantly but are now rising although not back to pre-COVID levels. Many businesses lost valuable staff and replacing their skills with new employees takes a long time. Shipping of wool slowed during the pandemic with long delays, thankfully this is returning to near normal.

Issues from the mills included some wool being too long, more slightly bolder types evident - and these are ok as long as they are regular in the crimp. There were concerns with preparation and taking backs out as they perform poorer in the spinning and dyeing phases.

There was talk of RWS wool and its increasing demand. More of this certified wool is being purchased from other countries of a lower quality, showing lots of heavy colour and water damage. There is work being done to have a scheme for Australian wool that includes environmental credentials but also focuses on good breeding, harvesting and preparation for sale.

Lesleann and I headed to Manchester and met Malcolm Campbell, one of the more positive people in the world. He is a current member and said he will be for life. He feels ASWGA should be more involved in marketing; needs to talk about the nuts and bolts of our clips not just the cherry on top. His thoughts on biodegradable - "If that's all we've got, that is very ordinary - there are many other excellent things about wool." He was alarmed by Stuart McCulloch's statement that wool doesn't need crimp, it just needs a little Lycra!! At the end of our meeting he gifted us some of his 'Malcolm The Weaver' books, to give to our school teacher daughter as an introduction for city kids into the world of farming. We three then had lunch with Peter Ackroyd - he helped organise visits to Savile Row, amongst other matters.

Savile Row was a busy and enjoyable visit. We called into Dormieul, Anderson and Sheppard, Gieves & Hawkes, Holland & Sherry and Henry Poole. Most of these brands sell at the exclusive end of the market - almost all using superfine wool, plus a few blends with cashmere and some

linen. There were comments about how pleased they are that you Australians still grow that wonderful wool.

Business is returning to near normal post-COVID although most are experiencing delays from measure to purchase, of six to nine months. Staff is an issue, finding those with the right skills and then keeping them, so we MUST invest in 'their apprenticeship'.

They are noting that the workforce is becoming more casual and younger employees are demanding a coat and pants displaying comfort and presentation.

Last leg of the journey was to Launceston for our Annual Dinner, Fleece Competition Awards and Farm Visits over the weekend. This was held in conjunction with the Zegna group who held their annual awards' presentation.

Tours were organised to Waverley Woollen Mill and Australian Wool Handlers. Saturday, we all journeyed to the historic Campbell Town Show where we saw very few sheep. An indication of the trends in merino sheep farming.

The Zegna function highlighted the fabulous wool quality that our growers produce. Simon and Ann Louise Cameron were thrilled to win the Superfine Trophy for the best bale. The Vellus Aureum award for the finest fleece was awarded to David and Susan Rowbottom with an extraordinary 9.4 micron fleece. Congratulations to all the other finalists.

The ASWGA dinner saw presentations from Paolo Zegna and John Roberts CEO of Australian Wool Innovation. Celebration awards were made to Bill Crawford and Alistair Strickland for 50 years as registered wool classers. The ASWGA Fleece Competition was won by Lesleann and Mark Waters with a quality 70s type. Congratulations to all the section and regional winners too.

Sunday saw Farm Visits to Simon Foster's Merton Vale followed by Carol Westmore's Patterdale. We owe Marie Boadle and her team a huge thanks for organising this event.

The issue of mulesing surfaced at the Tasmanian function. This is likely to be a complex and very sensitive situation. We are working through the process in consultation with our growers and the Italian mills. There is much more to come and requires clear understanding of the circumstances.

Lastly, I need to thank those willing who have worked tirelessly for our Association. Cathy Hayne for her all-round work. Simon Cameron who stepped in to drive the Annual. Marie Boadle, the Tassie Dinner chair, etc. Danny Picker organised the Fleece Competitions and Brad Venning for sitting on the Animal Health and Welfare Committee.

Mark Waters

ASWGA President



ASWGA Annual Reunion

Tasmania had the pleasure of hosting the ASWGA Annual Dinner, Fleece Competition and farm visits in early June 2023. We were fortunate the Ermenegildo Zegna Group Wool Awards were held in conjunction with this event.

There were many highlights of the June weekend. A tour of Waverley Mills, the last remaining fully operational woollen mill in Australia, and the Australian Wool Handlers facility at Western Junction got the weekend off and running. The welcome function at the Penny Royal was loud and joyous as we all got back together again in a lovely venue with nice food and beverages.

SATURDAY was spent at the Campbell Town Show, enjoying the beautiful wool on display, the iconic Wool Fashion Parade and many other show highlights.

To complement the ASWGA members' visit to the show, Simon Cameron and other Tasmanian Superfine wool grower members, put together an exhibition of TFMBA sheep and wool. The display showcased some more traditional fine wool sheep and their wool, which reflected the passion of the TFMBA members. There was a lot of interest shown in this exhibition highlighting the continual passion held by the Superfine Woolgrowers in Tasmania.

The ASWGA Dinner and Fleece Competition evening was a highlight of the weekend. We heard from Mark Waters, ASWGA President; Paolo Zegna of Ermenegildo Zegna; and John Roberts, AWI. Details of the competition results are reported elsewhere as are comments from the speeches by Paolo and Mark.

Mark Grave, AWEX presented Bill Crawford, "Sierra Park" and Alister Strickland with 50-year wool classing stencils. Alister has achieved outstanding results throughout his wool classing career in Tasmania, having the privilege of classing at some of the top Superfine properties in Tasmania including "Trefusis", "Benham", "Macquarie Hills", to mention a few. Alister's input has contributed to bale entries from Tasmanian clips in the Zegna award and the production of 1PP bales. At the peak in the 1980s and 1990, Alister spent nine months each year working with Superfine wool, playing a crucial role in the production of 1,500 bales per year.

On behalf of the ASWGA Tasmanian Region, I had the great pleasure in presenting two awards to grower members. The first was an Honorary Life Membership to John Taylor in recognition of his dedication to the Wool Industry and 50 years' membership of the TFMBA. The second award was to Allan and Carol Phillips in recognition of their outstanding



Simon Cameron and Tom Spielvogel at the Campbell Town Show

achievements and contribution to the superfine wool growing industry in Tasmania. Both awards were presented by Paolo Zegna.

Allan Phillips did an amazing job as MC for the evening. The wool on display at the dinner was exceptional.

We wish to thank Simon and Penny Foster for hosting delegates at "Merton Vale". Sam Elsom from SeaForest gave an inspiring talk on fighting climate change and cultivating Asparagopsis in Tasmania (ultimately destined for feed supplements for ruminants to virtually eliminate methane emissions); George Nichols from Nutrien Tasmania also spoke, and Fiona Raleigh and John Cox presented on AWEX WoolClip application and the e-Bale roll out, which sparked much discussion among wool growers.

On the **SUNDAY** afternoon we visited "Patterdale" hosted by Carol Westmore and Brett Cox from AWN. The weather was superb for this time of year as we toured iconic colonial artist John Glover's impeccably restored house, studio and garden. The wool shed showcased "Patterdale" sheep and beautiful wool, with the majority grown on bush runs.

We were thrilled that a significant number of our interstate Superfine wool growers could join us for the weekend. Also thank you to the sponsors listed below for their generous support, without which the event would not have been possible.

PLATINUM

Ermenegildo Zegna Group, Australian Wool Network Pty Ltd.

GOLD

Australian Wool Testing Authority, Elders, Australian Wool Innovation, Endeavour Wool Exports.

SILVER

Australian Wool Exchange, Nutrien Wool, Country Wide Wool Testing, Vitale Barberis Canonico Wool, Techwool Trading.



Visiting members hearing from Carol Westmore at Patterdale



Simon Foster addressing visitors to his property as part of the ASWGA Reunion

OTHERS:

G Schneider Australia, Schute Bell Badgery Lumby, Barwon Yarra Valley Wool Brokers, Fraser Bros. Wool Buyers, GA & AT Woolbuyers, ACWEP, Natsun, Fox & Lillie Rural, Riverina Wool Testers, Zoetis, Mongrel Socks, Smitten and Waverley Mills.

Thank you to the small but amazing Tasmanian team who helped put the 2023 ASWGA Dinner and Fleece Competition together. Special thanks also to Penny Hartwich for her wise counsel and sympathetic ear.

Marie Boadle
President TFMBA



TFMBA sheep and wool display at the Campbell Town Show



Visiting members hearing from Sam Elsom at Merton Vale

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA GROUP

Celebrates its

59th

WOOL AWARDS EDITION



Launceston, Tasmania, June 3rd, 2023.

The Ermenegildo Zegna Group (“Zegna Group,” the “Group,” “Zegna,” or the “Company”) began sourcing Australian wool back in the early years of 1900. The inherent excellence and unique characteristics of this incredible natural fibre have allowed the Group to continue to perfect the beauty, the quality and the performance of its products. In particular, Australian Superfine wool has been and continues to be, key to creating many of the Group’s most precious fabrics and exclusive garments.

The Company was the first to believe in the importance of collaborating with the woolgrowers and the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association (ASWGA) to further strengthen their recognition in the international arena. Importantly, for almost sixty years now, the Group has also supported trophies and awards that recognise the quality, performance, and innovation that Australian wool is known for around the world and across the industry.

Sixty years ago, the Ermenegildo Zegna Group was the first to establish its inaugural “Ermenegildo Zegna Perpetual Trophy” to award and incentivise woolgrowers to improve the quality of superfine merino and it has consistently worked to celebrate the importance of this fibre. This competition is the oldest existing in the world of wool.

A second trophy, the “Vellus Aureum Trophy” followed almost 50 years later,

in 2002 to celebrate the incredible advances made by Australian woolgrowers for absolute excellence, by benchmarking every year the finest woollen fleeces - measuring 13.9 microns and finer - in the wool production countries.

Today the company honoured Australia’s best woolgrowers by awarding the “Superfine Wool Trophy” and the “Vellus Aureum Trophy” during an exclusive celebration hosted by Paolo Zegna, Member of the Board of Directors of Ermenegildo Zegna Group, held during the 10th Annual Australian Superfine Wool Growers’ gathering, in the presence of representatives of the major institutions associated with the world of wool in Australia.

Both competitions continue to be intended to encourage and reward wool growers for their commitment to quality. The winning wool bales and fleeces are judged according to a strict set of criteria including fineness, style, strength, colour and evenness.

“Working with the best wool growers in the world and striving for excellence is of paramount importance for us, as we continue to align to the evolving cultural codes of the new generations and consumers more broadly. Our ambition and our responsibility is to continue to pursue excellence and invest in quality in a manner which is respectful to all of our stakeholders and the natural world, sharing best

practice and knowledge with all our key partners such as the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association”, commented Paolo Zegna, Member of the Board of Directors of the Ermenegildo Zegna Group.

“The Zegna Group Awards are a consolidated tradition in the history of wool, becoming more and more relevant over time. We hope this award becomes a catalyst for an even larger number of growers to participate and drive them to new heights. Our long journey with the Zegna Group covers multiple generations of growers. We will continue to work together to promote the excellence of this noble fibre”, added Mark Waters, the President of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association.



Winner of the 2023 Ermenegildo Zegna **Vellus Aureum** Trophy was David & Susan Rowbottom (Rowensville, Victoria) with a new world record of an unprecedented **9.4 microns**.



2nd Place Aaron & Rebecca Rowbottom
(Myndarra, Vic.)



3rd Place Danny & Megan Picker
(Hillcreston Park, NSW)



4th Place Heather, Stephen & William Reid
(Kooringa Farming, Vic.)



5th Place David & Katherine Picker
(Clear Hill, NSW)

Winner of the 2023 Ermenegildo Zegna **Superfine Wool** Trophy was Simon & Ann Louise Cameron (Kingston, Tasmania)



2nd Place
Clive & Margaret Smith
(Mulgowan, Qld)



3rd Place
Danny & Megan Picker
(Hillcreston Park, NSW)



4th Place
David & Angie Waters
(Tarrangower Merinos, NSW)



5th Place
Allan & Carolyn Phillips
(Glen Stuart, Tas.)



6th Place
Sam & Mel Nicolson
(Bonneys Plains, Tas.)



7th Place
Ed, Andrew & Penny Hundy
(Windradeen, NSW)



8th Place
Brett, Susan, Cameron & Ellie Picker
(Hillcreston Heights, NSW)



9th Place
David & Barbara Bell
(Rosedale, NSW)



10th Place
Dan & Sarah Calvert
(Kalgara, NSW)

Photos courtesy of Zegna Group

Presentation Dinner Address

Dr Paolo Zegna

The Ermenegildo Zegna Group is one of the ASWGA's foundation mill members.

It is an extraordinarily successful international company now listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Throughout, it has retained strong links with the Australian wool industry and our association in particular. Those links were originally fostered by Count Aldo Zegna and have been continued by his son, Paolo. The contribution each has made to the Association has been recognised through honorary life membership. At our Presentation Dinner, Dr Zegna had an important message for those present. With his permission extracts from his speech are reproduced below:

Why have Ermenegildo Zegna and ASWGA been so close for many decades? Because we all strongly believe in the quality of Superfine wool; because we have always worked together to make Australian Superfine wool the Formula One of wools from all over the world.

Australian Superfine wool, despite the wide use in our EZ company of other prestigious natural fibres like vicuna, cashmere, alpaca, mohair, linen and superfine cotton, is still considered the King or the Queen (to your preference), of the natural fibres and Zegna is widely using it not just in the better-known classical collections, but more and more in our casual/less formal collections.

Zegna continues to believe that innovation, creativity, research and service are the tools to work with to attract the final customers of today, particularly those of the younger generation, the future of our business and the future of your business. And if we concentrate a little on them, and if I look into their post-COVID reaction, I can say they, the young clients from all over the world, are of course asking for style, colours, designs, but also, more and more, for a 360-degree quality which touches the softness of the fabrics and their performance and also their traceability, transparency and sustainability.

All the top companies and brands are working towards providing this and Zegna is in a very good position as it has not just recently started this process, but has always believed in it.

'we all strongly believe in the quality of Superfine wool; because we have always worked together to make Australian Superfine wool the Formula One of wools from all over the world'



You may at this point say: "We know all of this! This is why we have so strongly been associated one with the other. We know, we share the same values". The reason to remind you of this is that I believe we have today to work to reach another, higher, level and, in order to do that, we have to seriously face the risk associated with the practice of mulesing. Not to speak of it would be unfair, not honest.

Three days ago I spoke extensively of mulesing with the entire board of directors of AWI. John Roberts had invited me to their pre-board meeting. I had to honestly say that AWI, despite our advice, made a big mistake not seriously and properly taking action 15 to 20 years ago when Australian wool was attacked by PETA, by showing to the world, on purpose, some very brutal images about how badly the practice of mulesing is (sometimes) applied.

Whether we like it or not, not reacting to those images, not explaining why mulesing was in many cases the only and best thing to do for the benefit of the animal - sweeping, as we say, "the dirt under the carpet" - has worked like the fire still going underground after the external flames have been extinguished, and has entered the mind of many consumers that Australian wool is still the best in the world, but it is not as pure, as clean, as people thought.

This is why we all have to do something to prevent that negativity expanding. We have to recreate the best possible confidence and interest of the final clients. Even if China today purchases 82% of the wool sold by Australia and, so far, has not shown any particular interest in sustainability, transparency and traceability, the Chinese consumers evolve very, very quickly and will soon start making exactly the same requests for quality (remember: 360-degree quality) with the

same intensity that the younger generation in other parts of the world already asks.

And, last but not least, I asked AWI to concretely support ASWGA to be perceived more and more, as the Formula One of the wool industry.

To my conclusion, and forgive me if I again insist on passing the same message to all of you - members of the ASWGA - to represent the Formula One of wool means to be the best in the world. This, today, in my opinion, means to put the Association in an unassailable position. It means to take important, most probably difficult and unpleasant decisions. This could imply putting some money on the table, even though that money should be considered as an investment for the future, not as a cost.

Zegna, as a company associated with the ASWGA, has already made serious important decisions:

- The EZ wool awards are only opened to non-mulesed wools;
- All the Australian Superfine wool used in our fabrics is non-mulesed and traceable;
- We are working to be able to have the same complete transparency and traceability in all fabrics and yarns we buy from other weavers and spinners;

- Our commitment to give the best of our products to our clients remains “the must” for all our 6,000 employees.

We also believe in traceability and sustainability verified by the main certification standards like Authentico, RWS, ZQ, and SustainaWOOL Gold and Green

Once more, thank you very much to the ASWGA for all the work done with us and thank you to all participants in our competitions. And, to all of you, thank you very much for your attention. I hope my words of tonight will be taken positively and seriously.

The guarantee for a bright future for Australian wool, for superfine Australian wool, is in our hands.

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- Keep up to date with the industry through our regular market insights.

elders.com.au/for-farmers/wool

ASWGA Fleece

The fleece competition attracted 63 fleeces from 23 members across seven Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association (ASWGA) regions (Table 1) with an average of just under three fleeces entered per participating grower. This was an increase over the previous year but still down on 2020-21 entries (Table 3) and the ten-year average (72). Mudjee members entered the most fleeces with over 25% of the entered fleeces although Tasmania had the greatest number of members entering (Table 1). Fleeces from each Region generally fell within a common Quality Class range, predominantly 74's (19) and 80's (34) representing

a broadening trend over recent years with only three 90's and no 100's fleeces entered. Mudjee and Tasmania were represented by fleeces in all the four Quality Classes, with the other Regions in only 74's and 80's. The Scores received by individual fleeces in most Regions varied by up to ten or more points between highest and lowest scoring fleeces. Seasonal conditions varied from Region to Region, although continuing to be generally better than average seasons; there is little evidence that variation in seasonal conditions hampered any Region from producing high scoring fleeces, as evidenced by the similarity in highest score for each Region (Table 1 & 2).

No.	Region	Growers entering no.	Fleeces no.	Quality Class range	Score range
1	Ararat-Barunah	4	13	74-80	87.1-92.6
2	Goulburn-Yass	4	8	74-80	83.2-94.6
3	Hamilton	1	2	74-80	90.1-92.7
4	Mudjee	6	16	70-90	82.7-94.0
5	New England	5	8	70-80	81.8-95.6
6	Tasmania	7	14	70-90	83.7-93.6
7	Western Australia	1	2	70-80	78.2-78.5
	Total/ Mean	28	63	70-90	78.2-95.6

Table 1: Overall summary by Region of 63 fleeces entered in ASWGA Fleece Competition.

The mean scores of the fleeces entered from each Region (Table 2) highlights regional variation. Fleeces from Ararat-Barunah, Goulburn-Yass, Hamilton, Mudjee and New England consistently scored better across attributes compared to the respective means, while Tasmania and Western Australia were below. Table 2 also shows the overall ranking of the Regions with Hamilton (although only one entrant) ahead of Mudjee with Ararat-Barunah and New England coming third and fourth respectively.

Region	Fleeces (no.)	Weight (22)	Yield (10)	Trueness (20)	Uniformity (15)	Evenness (18)	Excellence (15)	Score (100)	Rank
Ararat-Barunah	13	19.5	9.4	17.5	13.5	16.3	13.4	89.7	3
Goulburn-Yass	8	19.2	9.2	17.1	13.8	16.5	13.6	89.5	5
Hamilton	2	21.6	9.3	17.0	13.8	16.0	13.8	91.4	1
Mudjee	16	19.1	9.4	17.9	13.8	16.5	13.7	90.4	2
New England	8	19.3	9.4	17.7	13.6	16.2	13.6	89.7	4
Tasmania	14	18.4	9.5	17.9	13.3	16.2	13.1	88.3	6
Western Australia	2	16.2	6.4	15.0	13.3	15.3	12.3	78.4	7
Total/Mean	63	19.0	9.3	17.6	13.6	16.3	13.4	89.3	
Possible (pc)		86.3	93.0	88.0	90.7	90.6	89.3	89.3	
CoV (pc)		14.4	6.2	4.9	3.4	3.5	3.5	4.4	

Table 2: Mean attribute scores for each ASWGA Region and overall. Bold cells are above the average for the attribute. The overall mean attribute scores are shown as a percentage of the largest score possible for the attribute. The coefficient of variation (CoV) is also shown for each attribute.

Competition 2023

Of the six attributes judged, the mean score for Yield received the greatest proportion of that possible (93.0 pc) closely followed by Uniformity (90.7 pc) while Weight received the least proportion of the possible score (86.3 pc). Evenness (90.6 pc), Excellence (89.3 pc) and Trueness (88.0 pc) all received relatively uniform high proportion of the possible score (Table 2). The small variation between the highest and lowest attribute percentage (Table 2) suggests all attributes are contributing relatively evenly to the final Score. This is to suggest that entrants of underperforming fleeces need to concentrate on all attributes to achieve a better result.

The six attributes were variably correlated to the final Score (Table 3); not surprisingly for a quality fleece competition,

Attribute	Weight	Yield	Trueness	Uniformity	Evenness	Excellence
Correlation	0.783	0.594	0.596	0.503	0.451	0.812
Rank	2	4	3	5	6	1

Table 3: Correlation and Rank of the Score with each of the attributes judged.

fleece entries has changed significantly over the last ten years. In 2013-14 the dominant class was 90's (49.2 pc), then a near even distribution across the Classes in 2014-15, followed by 80's domination (55.1 pc) in 2015-16, then near even distribution again in 2016-17 before domination by 74's (55.7 pc) in 2017-18. This trend did not persist, in 2018-19 with 80's and 90's being the dominant entries (each 36.2 pc), since then, although variable, 80's has dominated the entries.

Quality Class	2022-23		2021-22		2020-21		2019-20		2018-19		2017-18		2016-17		2015-16		2014-15		2013-14		
	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	No	pc	
60's													1	1.4							
70's	7	11.1	1	1.9	3	4.0	2	3.0	5	6.2	11	13.9	13	18.3	7	6.5	7	12.3	3	4.6	
74's	19	30.2	14	25.9	15	20.3	15	22.7	17	21.2	44	55.7	18	25.4	25	23.4	16	28.1	6	9.2	
80's	34	54.0	38	70.4	40	81.4	29	43.9	29	36.2	22	27.8	22	31.0	59	55.1	19	33.3	24	36.9	
90's	3	1.3	1	1.9	16	21.6	19	28.8	29	36.2	2	2.5	17	23.9	15	14.0	15	26.3	32	49.2	
100's							1	1.5							1	0.9					
Total	63		54		74		66		80		79		71		107		57		65		

Table 4: Comparison of entries by Quality Class over the last ten years. The bold highlighted cells show the dominant Quality Class(es) for each year.

Excellence had the highest correlation with the overall Score (0.812), although this has not been the case in recent years. On the other hand, Evenness had the lowest correlation with the overall Score (0.451). Although Yield (0.602) and Weight (0.783) combine to establish the clean fleece weight, they are poorest predictors of a fleece's overall Score. This contrasts with previous years and may reflect the effect of contrasting seasons. Points for Weight had the highest variability as shown by CoV (14.4 pc), the next highest CoV was for Yield at 6.2 pc. All other attributes are relatively uniform in their variation as indicated by the CoV (Table 2). Although the fleece weight needed to gain maximum points for each Quality Class was recently increased by 10 pc, 23 pc of fleeces still achieved maximum points for Weight although this is lower than when the increases were introduced (46 pc in 2021) and is the lowest proportion since the increases. No entry received maximum points for any other attribute.

Interestingly the composition of the



Grand Champion Fleece Winners, Mark and Lesleann Waters, Eddington Partnership, with Mark Grave, AWEX CEO

ROLL OF HONOUR OF WINNERS

YEAR	WINNER	REGION
2013-14	Glen Stuart – Carol & Allan Phillips	Tasmania
2014-15	Avington Merino – Noel & Lyndsay Henderson	Ararat/Barunah
2015-16	Kelsedale – Penny & Russell Hartwich	Ararat/Barunah
2016-17	Windradeen – Ed & Jill (dec.) Hundy	Mudgee
2017-18	Eddington Partnership – Mark & Lesleann Waters	New England
2018-19	Oak Hills – Irene & Daryl Croake	Mudgee
2019-20	Tarrangower – Angie & David Waters	New England
2020-21	Glen Stuart – Carol & Allan Phillips	Tasmania
2021-22	Tarrangower – David & Angie Waters	New England
2022-23	Eddington Partnership – Mark & Lesleann Waters	New England

Interview with...

Jock Laurie

In June the ASWGA had a conversation with one of the key players in our industry, AWI Chair, Jock Laurie. We present a summary of that discussion.

THE CURRENT MARKET

Although the 2023 financial year ended low for wool, through the post COVID period, overall, there have been positive signs and the price has held on reasonably well. The Chinese, especially, have been strong, showing there is good underlying demand.

COVID focused people far more. Internationally consumers want more traceability to understand the real impact, what happens over the full life of a product. It is a strong position, very positive for our fibre. It gives us confidence that there is underlying demand. We need to continue to defend it internationally and we need to continue to market it.

THE LOT OF WOOL GROWERS

Right now wool growers are facing many issues especially in WA. Wool growing families will be lost. Wool growing profit has to be comparable to other agricultural enterprises.

The shearing issue is impacting broadly. It is costing the industry growers. Growers feel they have lost control and are not prepared to put up with it any more.

Government policies are also making it more difficult. Compulsory electronic tagging and the 10% levy on levies for biosecurity are additional burdens.

The live exports ban will see others exit. Sheep exports underpinned the meat market. The Government announcement they would be banned destroyed confidence in the Australian mutton market. It has created uncertainty. The rest is history.

MARKETING ACTIVITY

During COVID we shut programs down to protect levy payers' money so it could be used when markets re-opened. The reserves were required because we were going to have to play catchup. That is what we have done defending the fibre through the Eco campaign, marketing into China, working with Prada Luna Rossa and the E car [Nissan Formula E Team] campaign. Also, dealing with the challenges domestically around shearing that hit during COVID and have continued.

Protecting levy payers' funds worked against us even though we explained why. We were attacked by agri-political groups who said we had too much money. We did not know what would happen post COVID. There is still discussion around the suiting market, for instance. Will it come back or is it gone forever? Sportswear is becoming very prominent.

China is a very dominant market at the moment, 82% of wool sales with 48% of this going into its domestic market. This is up from 38% 10 years ago so it is a strongly growing market.

We are investing where we see opportunities with value for money. We have just commenced the second Prada Lunar Rossa campaign which is more European based. The Eco



campaign, another \$4-\$5 million (much of this is supporting Make the Label Count Campaign) is about limiting the damage of the EU legislation which could reflect to other jurisdictions, a further risk to us. The Eco campaign had great response through Europe. This is about defending the product and re-establishing credibility.

We are always looking at opportunities to invest in a market or to address a risk. It is not about percentages into specific regions. Opportunities are prepared by staff and presented to the Board on a regular basis.

WOOL 2030

Wool 2030 is an industry document compiled by the industry for the industry to give guidance. AWI provides the secretariat for it. It is being progressed through the WICP [Wool Industry Consultative Panel] which has regular meetings to see targets are being achieved.

There is real connection between industry and Wool 2030. Those organisations represented on the WICP are to provide feedback to their membership base. Whether that happens has always been a challenge.

SOCIAL LICENCE?

Social licence is being questioned widely in agriculture. If you look at livestock production, the industry seems to be continually under threat.

People want environmental outcomes but are still buying petroleum-based fibres knowing they will continue to impact the environment. It is very difficult and one of the reasons we need to keep working in the space. We need to educate people as much as we can. You would think climate change factors would influence buying habits. At this stage it is not happening. We must try to make sure we shift those views to purchasing intent. We have to continually defend and promote our fibre.

The Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) proposal tabled in the European Parliament is a very good example. Wool could be tagged as being worse in terms of environmental performance than synthetic products.

ANIMAL WELFARE

When I became AWI Chair I needed to move the heat from the animal welfare conversation. We have positioned AWI to supply market signals to wool growers to let them know the information we are receiving, to supply tools and do research.

We have had regular conversations with people from Europe who strongly believe in the need to move to non-mules. This has been a very difficult issue for AWI. AWI is an R&D and marketing organisation that collects levies. Under the Statutory Funding Agreement, it does not deal in policy areas.

The Europeans present one side of the argument. The other side is the 82% of wool sold to China. We are getting no indication from the Chinese that they want non-mules. We receive reports every six weeks and, to date, it is consistently reported there is no change in the position.

We do not disagree with the Europeans but it is difficult to convince wool growers to go non-mules especially in more remote areas because of the extra costs involved if there is no premium for many wool types. If they want non-mules, pay a premium and it will happen. Perhaps we need to promote the need for a premium more.

Yes, it is possible big brands will just walk away from wool. Some of them may already be doing that. I would like to see farmer groups getting in there to move the matter forward but I do not see that leadership at the moment.

INDUSTRY CO-OPERATION

The wool industry could not continue to be divided. All service providers for the industry need to be working together rather than focusing on patch protection.

The need to mend fences was a very clear directive to John [Roberts] when he was appointed CEO. We cannot run the company without the confidence of the industry. Colette [Garnsey, previous AWI chair] had already commenced this before I arrived. We need to regain that confidence and to show we are not here to play politics, that we are there for growers and to give value for the levy. Bodies like AWEX, AWTA, the brokers, exporters and others need an understanding of AWI and not be threatened by it.

The reported industry data hub initiative is basically WoolQ. It would be better to work with the industry service providers to drive data through it. Historically WOOLQ was there but brokers would not supply data to it.

AWI is also doing a lot of work with brokers. Brokers protect growers' data, and perhaps they may have a legal right to do this. Wool growers pay for wool testing, pay the broker, pay transport, pay for everything but do not have the right to declare where their data can go. Surely the data belongs to grower not the broker but this is a discussion for another time.

There needs to be a way for growers to build their data. It will provide for traceability and sustainability and give real credibility. It will allow individual farmers to document their own on farm practices. There are a tremendous number of really good stories to tell but they are not attached to the wool being sold. In next few months the hub will continue



to develop. We are very conscious about delivering for levy payers and the only way we can do that is to have everybody on board.

More generally AWI has always been strong on collaboration, for example when working with Labels across the world, with research companies, with other RDCs, there has always been a lot of that done. AWI always did collaborate. The perception goes back to the politics, not the facts. It is not understood and has undermined the credibility of AWI at the expense of levy payers.

BOARD COMPOSITION

It is important to continue to bring the next generation in. Georgia Hack represents this now. With David [Webster] and James [Morgan] retiring there will be an opportunity to bring in more. There are plenty of people are out there with skills to bring vibrancy to the organisation.

The first thing needed is to be able to attract good people to stand for the Board. We need to get good professional people to stand. They would not if they were not confident in AWI. This shows they are comfortable where AWI as an organization is and that it is one they want to be involved with.

It is really important that you get the change. We need to have younger people coming on because they are the future.

JOCK LAURIE'S "TO DO" LIST

I have two and a half years to run on the Board. I want to see AWI regarded as an organisation that focuses very much on the levy payers, an RDC that is respected by its levy payers, and seen to be delivering results because that is why we are here.

Also, ideally, for us to be able to see wool strongly desired – recognized for environmental sustainability, traceability, biodegradability, issues that internationally really put it in a very good light. It is also about getting a unified industry as best we can, focused on wool growers being profitable and keeping them in the game. In an international market this is difficult but at least if people support AWI, that is a good start.

MESSAGE TO READERS?

Next year's Wool Poll will be a time for the industry to really think about what sort of a future they want for their industry and what sort of investment they want to make on their own behalf.

Investments are about marketing their wool, developing woollen products and on-farm research for wool production. These investments are made on behalf of growers and done with money invested by them. If they want to continue to maintain product development and maintain wool's place in the market, how much are they prepared to invest in that? It is time for growers to think about that.

I am not sure 1.5% provides enough money for what needs to be done longer term. The Board always thought 2% allows flexibility for working through fluctuations in the wool market. We have already downsized from 250 to 140 staff and reduced project delivery.

The next Wool Poll is about the wool industry and how much wool growers want to invest in their future.

Italian Mills Visit



Willy Gallia, Schneider

Monday 22 May 2023

The Schneider Group: Our hosts were Giovanni Schneider, Laura Ros and Pier Carlo Buscaglia.



Pier Carlo Buscaglia, Laura Ros Giovanni Schneider

We talked about the IWTO conference and how it is a positive experience for the industry. Schneider is a topmaker and owns 55% of the Company with a 15% share each owned by Zegna, Loro Piana and Marzotto. Most wool used is high quality Superfine. The prestige fibre they work with requires high inputs. They are finding, due to the expertise of their Company, better wool compared with lesser wool is harder to tell the difference in the finished product. Giovanni stressed that regularity of crimp and CV hauteur is extremely important.

Regenerative is gaining traction but they say the wool bodies need to work out a Data set rather than each country having their own. They are sourcing more wool from NZ, South Africa and Argentina with RWS accreditation which is bypassing China. A comment aimed at Australia - Australia relies on China to buy our low accreditation wool!! AA wool is too varied and the National Wool Declaration identifies breach procedures and misses the QA requirements that Authentico has.

Zegna Baruffa Lane Borgosesia: Managing Director Alberto Borsetti and Raw Materials Purchasing Manager Gian Marco Salussolia met with us at the Borgosesia plant. They have two other mills as well. ZB makes mainly worsted yarns and knitwear here with 19.5 microns being the main type. They are using a good amount of 17.5 but only small volumes of 16.5 and 15.5 micron. Some small parcels of cashmere are used, mainly blends, and shouldn't be compared with Superfine as it is very different. They process approximately 2.5 million kg and 35% has RWS label (very important). ZB exports 50% and of that, half goes to Europe and the balance to US, Hong Kong, Japan, China and Korea. Alberto stated breach modification is a political problem. South African wool is now more expensive to them. Australians have lost an opportunity to get paid. They are working towards better traceability. The NWD is only covering breach modification and they would like to add regenerative farming features. They would be pleased if AWI could do a scheme for ONE accreditation. Labour supply is an issue that was disrupted by COVID and worse still, is that the younger generation wants to be paid well but don't want to work!



Andrea Pizzaguerra Zegna

Tuesday 23 May 2023

Ermenegildo Zegna Group: We were welcomed to the Zegna business by Andrea Pizzaga and Matteo Loro. Andrea has been the CEO for two years following many years in other roles in the wool trade. They operate exclusively in men's suiting and use the finest quality Superfine wool. They do 2 million metres of cloth. The pandemic upset the workforce and resulted in losing staff with specific skills. These are difficult to replace and take time to train. We noticed lots of new, improved machines from our visit eight years ago. It is imperative to keep regularly updating machinery. We joined Paolo Zegna on a zoom chat. The dialogue centred around the upcoming Tasmanian weekend and some input into the press release afterwards. He was optimistic about his function and to be working in with ASWGA, an event between friends. He lamented the fall in the number of entries for his Competition. I thought it was a combination of the slight changes of the rules and the reduction of farms producing Superfine wool.



Alberto Borsetti, Gian Marco Salussolia, Zegna Baruffa

Wednesday 24 May 2023

Vitale Barberis Canonico: We renewed our acquaintance with Davide Fontaneto and Anderas Mercantili who were in Kyoto. The business model is vertical - from sheep to shelf and they have a staff of 450. (VBC owns two farms at Mudgee and Pyramul.)

Three quarters of the wool used is from Australia. Freight of wool has improved although it takes six months from woolshed to finish. Total used is 28,000 to 30,000 bales per year. The production is approximately 9 million metres but that is down from 12 million pre-COVID.

Wool strength ideal is down to 38 N/KT. They will buy lower if a desired type but they are discounted accordingly. A concern is the increase in overlong staple wool, likely due to a very good season in Australia and long shearing delays due to wet weather.

Their main wool type used is Superfine but they are seeing increased demand for a 21 micron wool from South Africa. These are more bulky, cheaper and probably have RWS compliance. A small amount of blending is done with cashmere and mohair at around 16 micron. Other issues include not skirting enough and not skirting well!!! More care should be made taking backs out as they affect the CVH. We had an interesting tour through the factory and noticed upgrades in machinery and more robots.



*Anderas Mercantili
and David Fonaneto*

The Reda Group: Fabrizio Botto Poala led us through the Romagnano top making mill. It is majority owned by Reda and VBC. It employs one hundred staff with 90% in the factory. They process 1,500 to 1,800 bales per week giving 22,000 kg of tops per day. 70% of the processed wool stays within

the three owners and the balance is traded to Fox & Lillie, ANI and CL7 on a commission basis. Mainly Australian Superfine Wool is procured (was 90%, now down to 80% and heading towards 70%!!!!). The new demand is wanting RWS accreditation wool and is very firm that Australian will continue to be overlooked. RWS is bought from South Africa and Argentina. Mainly 21 micron with some 16.5 diameter. A smaller volume is bought from NZ. This overall trend has increased and especially since the pandemic. We were fortunate to see both Australian wool (bright and white) and South African wool (very coloured, dingy, bolder) and the contrast couldn't be more stark. More customers are looking for environmental aspects of wool and they also want

traceability. Fabrizio says that the National wool declaration is only one part - the other is the need for SustainaWOOL / Authentico for quality breeding, harvesting, preparation and presentation for sale. He says IWTO is a great event for catching-up with others but he is frustrated with the program. For him, there needs to be more at retail level to give the full story. I asked him if they would consider membership but at this point in time, they would decline.

MARK WATERS



Fabrizio Botto Poala, Reda Group

VBC 360 Years

Vitale Barberis Canonico, one of the oldest and most prestigious textile manufacturers in the world, is celebrating a momentous milestone - 360 years of weaving exceptional fabrics.

With the 13th generation of the Barberis Canonico family at the helm, this remarkable achievement is a testament to their enduring commitment to craftsmanship, quality, innovation and sustainability. As they mark this significant anniversary, Vitale Barberis Canonico is also celebrating its first year since the establishment of VBC Wool, a business dedicated to furthering their legacy of excellence.

360 YEARS OF HERITAGE AND EXCELLENCE

Founded in 1663 in the Biella region of Northern Italy, Vitale Barberis Canonico has established itself as a true pillar of the textile industry. For over three centuries, the Barberis Canonico family has nurtured a tradition of uncompromising quality, with a focus on using only the finest materials and employing time-honoured weaving techniques. Their commitment to excellence has earned them a reputation as a purveyor of some of the world's most luxurious fabrics, sought after by discerning clients and esteemed fashion houses alike.

Throughout its rich history, Vitale Barberis Canonico has adapted and evolved to meet the demands of the ever-changing fashion landscape. Combining traditional craftsmanship with cutting-edge technology, the company has consistently produced fabrics that are not only aesthetically stunning but also durable and sustainable. Their unwavering dedication to ethical practices and environmentally friendly processes has positioned them as leaders in responsible textile manufacturing.

VBC WOOL: PIONEERING A NEW ERA

As Vitale Barberis Canonico reaches its 360-year milestone, the company is not resting on its laurels. Instead, they are embracing the future with VBC Wool, its Australian wool buying arm focused on procuring world-class wool from Australia and New Zealand.

Since its inception 12 months ago, VBC Wool has continued to maintain and expand on their strong relationships with Australian and New Zealand fine and Superfine wool growers, reflecting the critical importance these growers and their products represent to VBC's Italian manufacturing.

VBC's initiatives, including the Wool Excellence Club for Saxon wool producers and the associated contracts, have been continued and VBC Wool is expanding this group in addition to realising other important strategic plans.

"We are proud to reflect on a successful first year of



Alessandro Barberis Canonico, Managing Director

operations. All expectations have been met with the focus on supplying VBC Italy with fine and Superfine wool for their production of woollen fabrics whose superior quality and style is recognised worldwide. By directly sourcing wool from growers, VBC ensures a close connection between the raw material and the final fabric, allowing for greater control over quality and traceability", Andrew Raeber, VBC Wool Director

CELEBRATING 360 YEARS

Barneys New York: In honour of the VBC's 360-year legacy and the rich heritage of wool production in Biella, the birthplace of VBC, Barneys New York held a remarkable celebration. Renowned designer brand PDA showcased innovative designs that pay homage to Biella's UNESCO Creative City status, showcasing the fusion of modern fashion, creativity and the abundant lifestyle that new menswear embodies.

VBC's 5th Sustainability Report: Lucia Bianchi Maiocchi, Sustainability Manager at Vitale Barberis Canonico and a member of the 13th generation of the family at the helm of the company, states: "In the year of the 360th anniversary of the company, we are proud to be able to present the fifth edition of the Sustainability Report, with important results achieved and further goals set for the current year. The pride of being part of a community, a unison of people who interact daily to achieve a common goal, with their maximum commitment and enthusiasm, creating fabrics which are works of art.

Respect for People and the Environment is something which is built up over time, with investment, care and dedication. I would like to specify that, thanks to the daily commitment of ALL 480 colleagues at Vitale Barberis Canonico, we are determined and concentrated on the reduction of the impact made, in ESG terms, by the entire organisation. All for one and one for all, working together, we can make a difference."

Supporting the Next Generation in Fashion: VBC has always supported young, emerging designers in the fashion world, providing assistance during their training and careers. This year, VBC collaborated with VitoVi, an emerging women's



Barneys New York helping to mark VBC's 360 years anniversary

wear brand. The partnership between VBC and VitoVi is a fusion of two worlds of Made in Italy, both sharing the values of a family-run business. "At VBC I breathed the air of heritage and dedication in my search for perfection. A wealth of experience which enriches my creations. I immediately glimpsed a perfect correspondence between their textiles, as a purely masculine symbol of Italian excellence, and VitoVi – a Made in Italy brand of women's jackets with a masculine spirit." Maria Vittoria, VitoVi Designer.

Partnership: VBC proudly partnered with the Piemonte Open Intesa Sanpaolo tennis tournament, a premium event in the ATP Challenger 175 category, organised by the Italian Tennis Federation and Padel. Taking place in May at the Circolo della Stampa - Sporting in Turin, the tournament exemplified the shared values of tennis and style and elegance. Alessandro Barberis Canonico expressed pride in supporting this

prestigious tennis event during the company's 360th anniversary, highlighting the synergy between tennis and the excellence of Vitale Barberis Canonico fabrics.

Looking to the future, Vitale Barberis Canonico aims to expand its collaborations, working with forward-thinking designers and brands to push the boundaries of creativity and craftsmanship. The company's 360th anniversary celebration is a testament to its enduring legacy and commitment to excellence. With a strong foundation built on centuries of craftsmanship, the company continues to innovate and adapt to meet the evolving needs of the textile industry. By staying true to its values and embracing sustainable practices, Vitale Barberis Canonico remains a trusted and respected name in the world of wool.



The European Market for Superfine Wool

As I write this from the UK in May 2023, it seems extraordinary that despite the variable recovery from the global pandemic, and an ongoing war on the very edge of the European Union, the luxury goods market in the Northern Hemisphere, into which most of our Superfine wool goes, is doing very well indeed.

Reports are that 2022 was good for everyone at this end of trade - better than the immediate period before COVID struck. 2023 also looks very good so far.

As you might expect, some areas are better than others. There is currently a 5-month wait for Bespoke tailoring on London's Savile Row - particularly good news for our wool. However, further down the market, Ready To Wear is not doing well. "Static" or "in decline" is the considered view. Those who supply traditional High Street retailers with off the peg suits, are having to adapt and look elsewhere for sales. Wool-based tailored Womenswear is also struggling. Increasing workplace informality and more home-based working post-COVID are largely to blame.

There is a significant and growing interest in Made To Measure, not just in the UK but also the USA/Canada. Most upper middle brands/retailers of tailored clothing are now engaging actively in this area. What does this mean? MTM is a variable concept, but in essence, it offers the chance to individualise your garment for a relatively modest additional cost. It can be as simple as offering a hemming service for trousers, or a choice of cloth or involve much more tailoring for a precise fit.

The result is a look which is truly yours without the price tag of full Bespoke. Quite why this is happening is an intriguing question and one for sociologists rather than wool growers, but it is part of a general quest to be "the same but different" seen in younger Europeans in particular. Innovation in design and function is also a key driver in the search for the unique. The recent Hugo Boss knitted suit - a partnership between Woolmark and the Boss team



- was a sell-out success. AWI/Woolmark continue to drive interest from young designers in Australian wool by engaging with machinery and yarn manufacturers to push the limits of the possible in technical function.

Athleisure wear is a particular target for technical innovation and is another key market for our wool. Customers buying Superfine wool garments for this part of their lives, are typically late 20s/early 30s, well off young professionals, who also wear formal wear. So, there is crossover between both in purchasing concerns and decision-making metrics. The European Outdoor Group, the Trade body representing most major and minor brands selling to this Outdoor/Active Leisure market, reports very significant increase in interest from brand members in Sustainability driven largely by their customer base.

Traceability, Accountability, concern for Biodiversity - are all key parts of this. Quite how to define, measure and account for all

'demand for certified non mulesed wool is increasing'



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these accurately, consistently, and scientifically, to internationally acceptable standards, remains to be worked out, and is a question for governments and research institutes rather than growers. All we can do is the best we can, using appropriate tools, to explain how we care for our sheep and our environment. Telling the story, getting the right messages out there is key. Not trying to educate, just inform.

All parts of the European industry report that pressure over Animal Welfare issues remains constant. Mulesing remains the biggest Welfare issue across all sectors. The push by animal organisations against this, and increasingly, against tailing and castration, is relentless. They are described as “mutilations”. Deaths of young lambs are now described as “infant mortality”. Against this background, brands dare not risk buying mulesed wool. In some cases, they will simply not buy wool at all, preferring to avoid any issues. Talking to a large European processor recently, he said one of their biggest frustrations was the volume of Australian wool still coming to the market without the mulesing status described on the National Wool Declaration (NWD) even when, according to brokers who know the properties, it is Non Mulesed. Mills want to buy Australian wool, but with no declaration, they cannot. So South America and South Africa gain. In my correspondent’s view, it is essential for all growers to fully complete the NWD if they want access to a European market.

Demand for non mulesed wool is ever increasing, often with RWS certification required, because it covers the whole chain from sheep’s back to finishing. SWIS (SustainaWOOL), is not generally asked for in Europe, mainly because it is not well known, but also, according to one European mill owner, because SWIS allows growers at the lowest level of certification to continue mulesing. RWS may be the preferred scheme, but processors/mills report poor practice by certification bodies means documentation is regularly delayed or absent, leading in some cases, to loss of sales. Despite repeated attempts to get Textile Exchange to address this, it remains unresolved.

There are also frustrations that RWS offers no control over clip preparation, despite the word “Wool” in its title. Poor quality lots are sometimes bought just because they are certified. The result is not always acceptable through the chain and does little to enhance the reputation of Australian wool or RWS. Those lots bought under SWIS have a clear advantage here – quality of clip preparation is a key part of SustainaWOOL.



BOSS  **THE WOOLMARK COMPANY**

The EU and the UK, have been pushing hard to reduce GHG emissions below 1990 levels by 2030; reducing fertiliser and pesticide use, encouraging carbon farming and Organic/Regenerative Agriculture, Rewilding, increasing Biodiversity and raising the bar ever higher for European farmers in all matters relating to Animal Welfare. In the UK, and to a lesser extent in the EU, farm payments are no longer linked to production or area farmed, but to Sustainable Farming and Environmental and Land Management Benefits. To qualify for any government support, farmers must measure, monitor and record environmental credentials. Improvements must be audited and provable. Food and fibre production are now secondary issues. Those who do not wish to take part will receive no government support at all from 2024, but must still abide by multiple, (and by Australian standards) draconian rules on such things as pesticide use, water pollution and even air pollution.

The point here is that imported goods will come under the same scrutiny – particularly if imported direct rather than via China for example. So, scheme memberships which cover ALL the European concerns, will become increasingly important but, only if they receive official recognition of quality from the Competent Authorities in the EU and UK.

The International Wool Textile Organisation’s Sustainable Practices Working Group has stepped in here to find a way forward, initially by researching the degree of parity between the schemes on offer with the aim of ultimately offering IWTO accreditation to approved schemes and allowing membership of one to equate to membership of another - thus cutting down cost, administrative burden and providing certainty for governments. It’s early days, but so far schemes and audit companies have been surprisingly cooperative, recognising that working together is to the advantage of all. IWTO hopes to produce a report later this year.

So to sum up, for our wool, the future looks encouraging in the European market. Demand is there, brands and consumers clearly want the product, but they also want guarantees, commitment and ongoing monitoring of everything which contributes to growing the wool. Quite how we deliver that in an affordable way which works well for everyone, remains to be seen.

Lesley Prior

Tellenby Merino, Devon, UK

The Extraordinary Life of

Gordon Kay

There were few people in the trade who had not heard of Gordon Kaye during his long life in textiles.

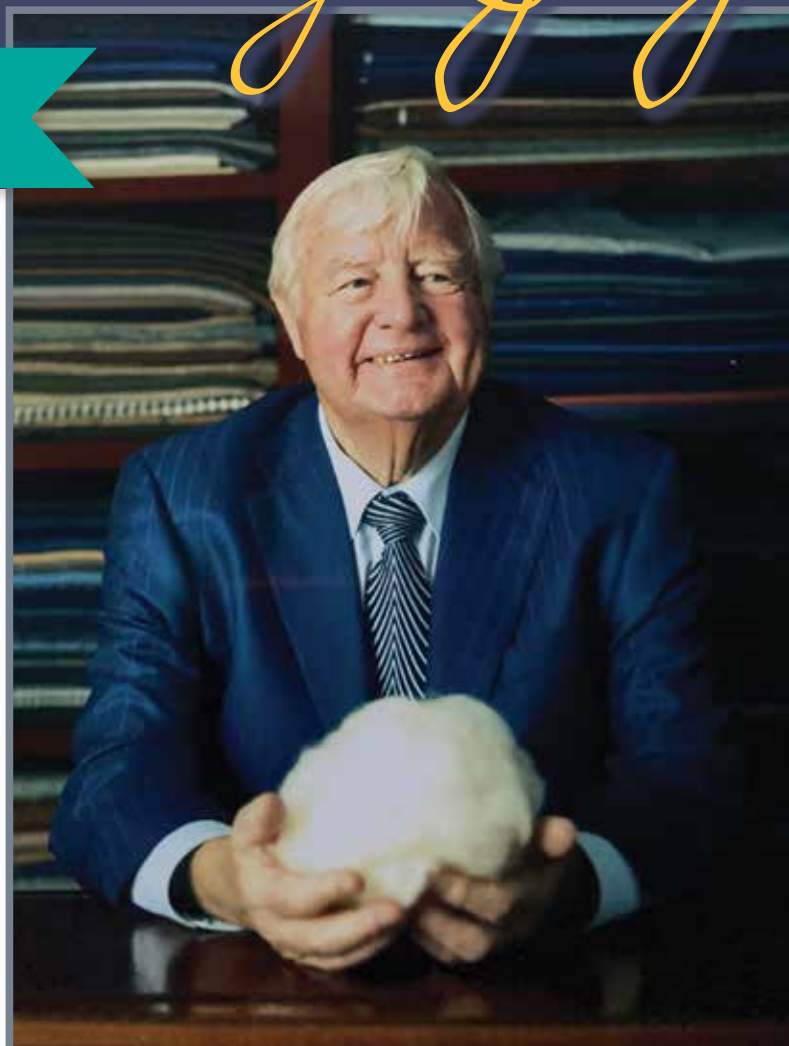
Born in October 1939, Gordon Kaye was educated at King James Grammar School in Almondsbury Yorkshire. After matriculation he entered the local Technical College, (now University of Huddersfield) leaving with a first-class City and Guilds Certificate in woollen and worsted raw materials, weaving, textile design and fabric finishing. During his studies he spent valuable time at Gledhill Brothers at Broadfield Mills working each department of the mill, ideal for his extraordinary career to come in worsted manufacturing.

Gordon joined Learoyd Mills in March 1959 as Assistant Designer, and it was in 1961 that a new life of travel and familiarity with faraway places began in earnest, one that would take him to over 50 countries on all four continents. Gordon was one of the first pioneers who travelled to Japan in the very early days when the market opened following the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. It was a unique introduction to the Japan of near yesteryear, laying a sure foundation for lifelong friendships in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and beyond.

It was after nearly fifteen years at Learoyd that he was asked to head up an 'operation phoenix', at Taylor and Lodge at Rashcliffe Mills which was a victim of a number of bankruptcies in the worsted sector in 1980. It was an ambitious plan to restart a virtually empty mill with no staff and no order book. His travels had included Iraq, where Iraq Stores had placed a substantial order for Learoyd Bros and subsequently a not insignificant order for Rashcliffe Mills. The Iraq business was a fine start for the mill, and Gordon joked that he could weave up the contents of the yarn store that came with the bankrupt company to fulfil the order.

'he was one in a million'

Gordon leaves a magnificent history of commitment to the welfare of the mill community, and its customers in over 50 countries. As Taylor and Lodge began to grow and prosper, he began to play a greater role in industry affairs, He was first appointed to the British Wool Textile Export Corporation Far East Advisory Panel in 1982, where his experience in Japan was invaluable, as the trade looked at the markets emerging in Korea and China. He maintained a particular affection for Japan. He and his dear wife Marjorie, who died twenty



years ago, took Japanese language lessons in Huddersfield; they were seen exchanging pleasantries in Japanese with tourists at the Dorchester Hotel after a reception there.

Gordon soon began to play an increasingly active role in industry affairs, joining the Council of the Export Corporation in 1985, becoming Vice Chairman in 1988 and subsequently Chairman in 1992. As Chairman representing the industry, he and his wife had important and significant roles to play globally.

Gordon retired from Taylor and Lodge in 2007, after twenty-seven years at the helm and fifty-two years in the industry but continued advising friends in the trade and working closely with Fintex and Romney Tweed in Kent. Princes, princesses, customers from all four corners of the globe, staff, colleagues and competitors were all greeted with exactly the same warmth and respect. He was a great family man who spoke frequently and fondly of his daughter and grandchildren. As a customer on Savile Row remarked in a letter of condolence to daughter Helena "He was one in a million".

Peter Ackroyd

Don Belgre - 50 years of Wool buying

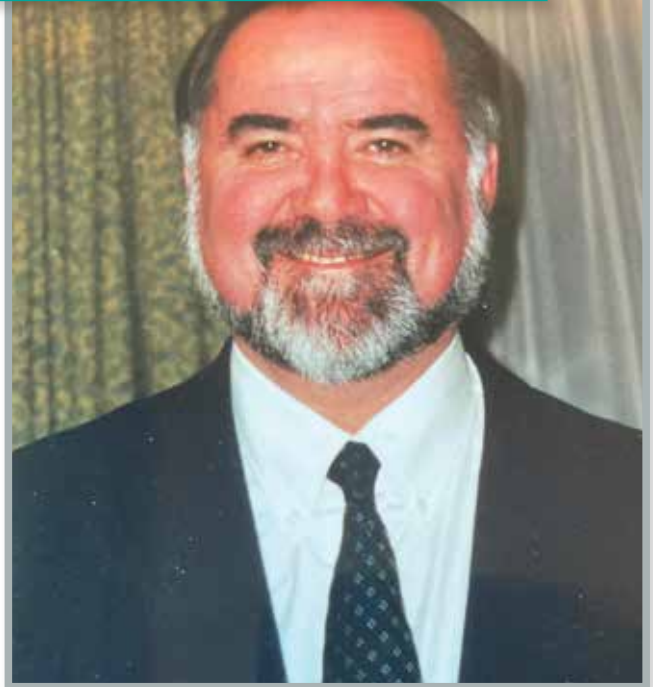
I have often wondered how a city person like me ended up in a rural industry like wool! Fifty years of working in this industry has left many memories.

I was born in Woolwich in Sydney in 1943 and grew up in a working-class family on the Lower North Shore. I was the eldest with two brothers and a sister. (For the gardening readers, my sister's family operated Camellia Grove, after the passing of Professor Waterhouse). The Belgre name has origins in Europe around Franco/Belgium but both sides of the family have been in Australia for generations.

I was fortunate to have an Opportunity class education in primary school which led to North Sydney Boys High - a venerable institution. Selection was based on being strong in all subjects, I did not have to sit a special test, many of my contemporaries went onto become lawyers or bankers - the latter which required elevated levels of mathematics as all calculations were done with pen and paper - similar to what the wool buyers were doing when I started. I left school at 15, which was a mistake. I should have pursued a tertiary education. I walked the streets of Sydney looking for a job.

After a few misstarts I joined Lempiere Australia as a wool sampler and penciller. Progressing to Junior Wool Buyer I began to travel every second week to attend wool auctions at one of the then twelve auction sale locations in Australia - Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Goulburn, Portland, Geelong, Melbourne, Hobart, Launceston, Adelaide, Albury and Albany - later to new sale locations in Perth, then Fremantle. I had two seasons in Western Australia, one of the few in the wool fraternity to return to the East. Brisbane was one of the hardest centres to work in, what with the heat and humidity - there were no air conditioners.

It was a marvellous life for a young person even though we worked hard and long hours. In the early days, you had to appraise and price one thousand lots per day, for a three-day sale solely on brain power, no calculator, no technical measurements, all done visually. I would not like to assess an 11-micron wool visually today! I went from visual appraisal, with rows of jute wool bales lined up, under the Bradford wool classing system to the introduction of the technological



testing of wool - firstly, micron which caused a controversy when Superfine wool tested stronger than growers thought it should. Then to yield, then strength, each influencing the sale price at the time of introduction. Today there is an extensive range of tests to describe the wool on offer. But well-grown wool, prepared and presented well is still high on the buyers' list. Where the bales may have been checked for faults years ago, today buyers rely on only a handful of wool in boxes to make the visual appraisal. The growers and classer reputations rate high on the buyer's agenda.

Not only have there been advances in wool testing and selling but also in communication. When I started, all instructions from the mills were received via telex or telegram and taking a telex machine to the regional selling centres was quite common. As well, there were banks of telephones available to phone headquarters - the copper wire, hanging on the wall, needed a penny to make a call type! Fax machines were next, allowing, in some cases, quicker communication. With the invention of the internet and mobile phones, instructions

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can be received while the sale is in progress. Electronic boards show growers their prices as they occur. Previously where they needed to follow the sale in a quiet room, not easy when the bidding was frantic or had to wait for the results to be either posted on a noticeboard at the agents or arrive in the post - now results are available in minutes. Because of COVID, the need to attend sale day has been replaced by watching in the comfort of the home.

After being in the industry for 50 years, I have been asked for what makes a "good" Wool Buyer. They do not come from the academic intelligentsia. Capacity to compete is very important. Concentration is essential. Errors cost money. An in-depth understanding of both the Grower and the Consumer in purchasing countries is also paramount.

I worked closely with the late Michael Lempriere in Sydney and I travelled extensively to clients, mainly in Western Europe. The trade was changing at that time, with the domination of Yorkshire mills lessening and increasing activity from both Western European and Eastern European clients through trade fairs and direct Government buying. Japan had a strong presence during this time too and the European mills could not compete. Then came the shift to mainland China's domination. During this period, we endured the activity of the Reserve Price System resulting in the accumulation of four million bales. A travesty that must never happen again. Not only did the removal of the reserve price bankrupt the wool industry, but also, the country. Farmers, brokers, buyers, mills and the manufacturers were all caught up in the demise. Sadly, it led to the slaughter of thousands of sheep. Farmers were also caught up in high interest rates, while mills and manufacturers held stock they purchased at high prices. The reserve was 850c/kg when selling was put on hold but were now worth less - 430c/kg was the opening EMI when selling.

Today we need to look at new markets, not rely on 80% of wool going to one country, similar to when copious quantities went to Russia before their collapse and the reserve price collapse. We need to look again to European mills, Korea, Malaysia and India to buy more of our wool. Wool is well placed with solid sustainability credentials which are requested by consumers. Traceability is becoming more common with new barcodes

on woolpacks. New products in activewear and knitwear have increased wool usage, while men's suits slowed during and after COVID lockdowns. Non-mulesing is now a very important factor in marketing.

The wool-buying fraternity was a close-knit bunch and enjoyed sports such as golf, tennis, rugby and cricket having various teams in suburban competitions. Personally, I enjoyed playing rugby union and cricket into my 40s. We had very few female "woollies" at that time, which I now note has improved.

After 25 years with Lempriere, I decided it was time to start my own trading and export business and did so. I had a client in (and also finance assistance from) Ian McIvor at Dalgety International. We travelled extensively to markets of immense potential such as India. During this period, we saw the increasing domination and direct buying from Japanese trading houses. They bought volume and were extraordinarily strong competitors. At this stage I started to do some commission buying for Tony de Pietra who was the Principal of G Schneider buying in Australia. At the time of Tony de Pietra's retirement he gave me the opportunity to do the buying and export for the G Schneider Group - an outstanding opportunity. I commenced to work closely with Marco Schneider and the Schneider family. A strong family business, (now over one hundred years old) with an excellent range of weaving and merchant clientele. Schneider Group was expanding internationally and had opened mills in Argentina, China and Egypt. They also sourced cashmere in Mongolia. Clients included companies and families with the status of Ermenegildo Zegna and Loro Piana, as I bought and marketed for these companies in Australia. It was my immense pleasure to be involved in the sourcing of the very best product for them and I did whatever I could to maintain their standards. I was very pleasantly surprised to receive the Australian Wool Industry Medal in 2019. I also spent 12 years as the Exporter Director on the AWEX Board and was the Foundation Chairman of Australian Wool Network. It has been a marvellous journey with a marvellous product.

50
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Peter Morgan A Long-Term Friend of ASWGA

Peter Morgan, who has been a long-term friend of ASWGA, retired at the end of April after sixty years in the sheep and wool industry.

In that period, he worked with the Western Australian Department of Agriculture in the Pilbara and West Kimberley regions of North Western Australia; with AWTA in Fremantle and Head Office; and thirdly with the Australian Council of Wool Exporters and Processors (ACWEP) and the Private Treaty Wool Merchants of Australia (PTWMA) in Melbourne.

He also completed postgraduate studies in ram fertility/breeding and lamb mortality at the University of Western Australia during the 1960s.

Peter joined AWTA when the market and demand for wool had just recovered from the difficult period in the late '60s and early '70s which had led to the establishment of the first Reserve Price Scheme.

It was also four months prior to the commencement of Presale Testing and Sale-by-Sample as integral parts of the Auction system in July 1972. This was a period of great change that saw ultra-rapid growth in test volumes due to the good take-up by growers and a reduction in the average test lot size from 100 bales plus in multi-farm post sale testing to 15 bales in pre-sale testing of single farm lots:

One of the significant changes of that period was the development of small computers which didn't need an air-conditioned room in which to operate. AWTA had made this move 18 months before Peter joined them. He had no experience of computers prior to joining AWTA, but soon realised their potential, learned how to program and began writing software, a role which he filled for the next five years, in addition to his Regional Management role. It is a skill that he used throughout his career.

While the importance of the in-house software is undeniable, Peter attaches greater importance to the pioneering work which he did together with IT staff from the brokers, buyers and the former Australian Wool Corporation to introduce electronic "computer-to-computer" data transfer (EDI) to the wool industry. The financial savings were significant, as was the time saved in the rapid movement of error-free data through the industry; all of which created opportunities for innovation in selling, buying and shipping of wool.



Peter Morgan receiving his HLM from Her Excellency, the Governor, Tasmania 2016



Peter addressing the ASWGA Reunion Dinner, 2016

The use of objective measurement as an aid to selection in the stud sheep industry was becoming more common in the early 1970s, while the introduction of PreSale testing stimulated a greater general use of the measurement data from individual animals for breeding and/or wool classing purposes. Peter had a major interest in this work from his previous days in the Pilbara and expanded AWTA's then small Fleece Measurement operations to meet the growing demand for these services.

He has provided support for over thirty years to ASWGA Presidents and Members while working at AWTA as Regional Manager in Western Australia and in Head Office, and as Executive Director of ACWEP and PTWMA.

One such occasion was during the turmoil that followed the collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme. There was much speculation about what was happening to wool production, but not much information, particularly at the superfine end of the clip. Barry Walker and Rod Thirkell-Johnston visited Peter to ask whether AWTA could produce such data. Peter had not long previously created a monthly publication called the "AWTA Key Test Data" which he immediately expanded to include superfine and ultrafine production details. This document provided the first indication that production at the fine end was actually increasing at that time.

Peter advises that his first contact with ASWGA was with Arthur Beggs, at "Buln Gherin" in 1968, when he was studying aspects of lamb mortality for his PhD. Arthur was doing his own research, looking at ways of reducing newborn lamb mortality, principally through the strategic use of shelter.

Peter's support for ASWGA led to him being appointed as an Honorary Life Member of our Association in 2016. I had the pleasure of making the award to Peter on that occasion when I said.

"Most relevant to this evening has been the support Peter has provided to the Association over the last twenty years. This has been in many forms with the formal one being our Public Officer. The less tangible and perhaps more important have been the organisational advice, the information analysis and, perhaps most importantly, the use of his vast network of contacts. I got some idea of this when I saw him in action at the IWTO Congress in Sydney a few days ago. We are indeed fortunate to have Peter as part of our community."

The above is a brief snapshot of some of Peter's contribution to ASWGA, its Members and to the wider industry. We wish him and Janette well in his retirement. **Thank you, Peter.**

Simon Cameron
Past President ASWGA

New England Wool and Andrew Blanch

New England Wool is no longer an official trading entity and its Managing Director Andrew Blanch is forging a new path whilst proudly reflecting on his involvement in an industry he has given inspiration and direction to for the past 32 years.

Andrew said the partnership formed by Italian fabric makers Vitale Barberis Canonico and Successori Reda in 1990 was a masterstroke. "There is no doubt these two successful businesses - competitors in fact - were forward thinking and entrepreneurial. The synergies they created by coming together gave them a much stronger position within the global wool industry and provided another wonderful framework for both businesses to grow and prosper", he said.

"The word that has been used throughout the life of this company, which epitomises its soul, is passion", enthused Andrew. "Passion for product, passion for hard work, passion for the people involved and an overall passion for life. I could not have asked to be associated with a better group of people throughout this personal and professional journey. In fact, a sense of family has underlined the way we have approached this long partnership together over so many years, with family values and a true respect for one another."

New England Wool (NEW) was established in 1990 when two high-end, family-owned Italian fabric makers, Vitale Barberis Canonico (VBC) and Successori Reda (Reda) came together with the combined goal of creating a company that would be their eyes and ears in the raw wool/mohair market. Their dream was to create an entity that would reward quality, incentivise wool producers, build enduring relationships and provide a transparent conduit for the flow of information between the supplier and the end user.

"I strongly believe NEW gave our Italian friends a voice in the market", said Andrew. "It was a measured and calm voice, but definitely a strong and highly influential one."

In a very short time from inception, New England Wool positioned itself as the major buyer of spinner-style Superfine wools in Australia and New Zealand. The company rapidly became a force in the auction room, consistently registering as the number one buyer at Newcastle auctions - the mecca for high quality Superfine wool - until these auctions were discontinued in early 2013. The wool offered through the Newcastle auctions predominantly emanated from the pastures of the New England region of NSW. Thus, the company was named in recognition of the prestige and importance the Italian stakeholders placed on the region's particular raw material as used for their own fabric production.

New England Wool has been quite a mover and shaker in the wool industry in its own unique, subtle and inclusive way. Some of the highlights include:

- The nylon pack rebate system in the late 1990s leading to the complete adoption of these packs by the Australian Industry.
- The production of a specialised wool classing book which went on to be utilised by TAFE colleges and educators in Australia and New Zealand to this day.



Andrew Blanch

- The Ultimate Clip competition which ran for twenty years and afforded the best wool producers each year, the wonderful experience of being guided through the Reda and VBC facilities in Italy. Each entrant received individualised feedback on their clip.
- A \$100/bale rebate paid to wool producers for purchases of bales of non-mulesed wool.
- A declaration system for non-mulesed wool which was the precursor for the now formalised and industry accepted National Wool Declaration.
- The development of both combined and exclusive Reda and VBC grower-direct contract buying systems.
- Countless New England Wool dinners and meetings as part of that two-way flow of communication between grower and end user.
- The development, instigation and management of the SustainaWOOL Integrity System which became the largest integrity system in the world over a period of three years. As a gesture of goodwill to the Australian Wool Industry the scheme was transferred to the Australian Wool Exchange where it still resides today and where Andrew hopes it will receive the commercial support it requires and deserves for long-term success.
- The creation and ongoing management of exclusive VBC and Reda grower groups which provided surety of supply, a guarantee of a premium price for an exceptional product and marketing tools for all involved.

Andrew applauds the release of industry promotions showing off wool as a natural, sustainable fibre. "We need to highlight wool's biodegradability. At the same time, we should expose synthetics more strongly and their detrimental contribution to climate change and microplastics in the environment. I believe that the industry needs to continue to promote the green and circular credentials of wool, cradle to grave. Not just cradle to the point of sale."

He said wool is also catering for people who are taking a more relaxed approach in their dress. Close-to-skin wear and sportswear in wool is proving to be a marvellous product both in performance and being environmentally friendly. While formal suits for men and women are still a major item, wool fashion products are fast gaining status in the casual domain and the sporting field and are at the cutting edge of innovation and trends.

As to his personal future within the wool industry, Andrew is passionate about promoting the production of quality wool and encouraging as many young women and men to take on the challenge and the hard work required to produce an annual wool clip.

“Getting people into the wool industry is still difficult; sheep are not the easiest animals to deal with, so we need to give young people the right tools and to pass on our passion for this wonderful fibre. There will always be competition for land use in Australia. We need to give more attention to giving a strong argument for today’s, and the future’s landholders, to choose Merino sheep and wool.”

“The world needs to be clothed and fed, and that’s where agriculture has a wonderful future. To do this in an environmentally, ethically and socially responsible manner is a challenge, but a challenge that modern wool production can accommodate.”

“I’ve always loved the fibre. I enjoy valuing it, looking at it through the eyes of both the producer and the client. I enjoy the cut and thrust of the auction room and my job has afforded me the privilege of developing strong personal relationships with the most wonderful array of characters throughout the world of wool. My time in the wool industry had never ceased to be exciting and fun and the friendships I have made will long outlast my involvement in this fantastic industry.”

‘new England Wool has been quite a mover and shaker in the wool industry in its own unique, subtle and inclusive way’



Alberto Barberis Canonico

He has a positive message to pass onto wool growers.

“Those producers who were regular suppliers to New England Wool should not be discouraged. VBC and Reda, two powerhouse companies, will be strongly competing against each other for the best fibre this country can produce. And that has to be good news for the Australian wool producer and Australian wool industry as a whole.”

“I began this journey as a fresh faced and naive 26 year-old. I believe I brought to the table a love of quality wool, an appreciation of what it takes to produce a quality fibre and an enthusiasm that was ultimately fuelled by the love, support and friendship shown by the Barberis Canonico and Botto Poala families. I can’t believe it’s been 32 years. It’s been a wild, wonderful and rewarding ride and I feel truly honoured to have been part of it”, said

Mr Blanch. “I wish to thank my team in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa for their drive and determination, professionalism, but most of all for their friendship. I also pause to reflect on Murray Bragg who was my longest serving friend and team member of 28 years who sadly passed in April 2022. I owe him a great debt in helping build this company to the pinnacle on which it finally finished its journey on 30 June 2022, and I miss him dearly.”

“I must also acknowledge the foresight of Alberto Barberis Canonico (VBC) and Roberto Botto Poala (Reda), and the late Michael Lempriere who were the initial visionaries. They, and other key contributors, instigated and championed the New England Wool partnership over thirty years ago. But like it was in 1990, changes are inevitable, and whilst looking back with a huge amount of pride, I am also enthusiastic about the future”, said Mr Blanch

“I wish Vitale Barberis Canonico, Reda and their families all the very best in their respective pursuits which will no doubt continue the tradition of passion and quality that they successfully forged together over the past three decades. This isn’t the end - it’s merely another beginning”.



Fabrizio Roberto & Francesco Botto Poala (some years ago)

An earlier version of this article by Simon Chamberlain appeared in The Land, 12 January 2023

AWI working on improving sheep reproduction



AWI's research is focused on twin lamb survival to increase productivity and profitability for sheep enterprises. Over 4,700 sheep producers across Australia have joined or completed the Lifetime Ewe Management course, which implements outcomes of AWI reproduction research, yielding an increase in whole-farm stocking rate by nearly 10% and decreasing ewe mortality by 25%. Contact AWI for a LTEM course near you.

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owner of

**THE
WOOLMARK
COMPANY**



Bringing Authentico to the next level all together



2023 marks the beginning of the second century of activity for the Schneider Group and this has pushed us to rethink who we are and what we stand for moving forward.

Born in Sydney and raised in Italy, passing through Egypt, Iran, China, Mongolia, New Zealand and Argentina, we have realised not only are we a multinational group spanning five continents, but we are above all an integrated certified global network, unique in the industry.

Over the years the Schneider Group has created a network of trading offices, combing and dehairing plants, as well as wool and by-product treatment plants, all directly controlled and operated, employing over 600 staff in eight countries around the world. Combining passion, tradition and know-how, and building long-lasting partnerships with clients and suppliers has turned us into the most trusted source for responsibly and beautifully made precious wool, cashmere, vicuna and other animal fibre tops, where superfine wool holds a special place since we are specialised in it and the natural port of call for all brands looking for this unique special fibre.

Going forward, we have realised that “responsibly made” is possibly the part that counts the most, since we believe in responsible, ethical and high-quality standards of sourcing and processing across our entire network. This is why we have made sustainability a strategic priority encompassing animal welfare, ethical standards, environmental standards, high quality and performance.

As part of this vision, we have worked further on our Authentico brand and its underlying Integrity Scheme. We know that premium luxury brands have a big challenge: they need to know exactly where their wool comes from and how it is made, all the way from the farm to the final product. Traceability is an integral part of Sustainability. Woolgrowers can make a big difference by implementing best practices and sharing as much information on their incredible job as they can. By being a part of Authentico, woolgrowers join a network that facilitates this transparency, which is a fundamental value of the Authentico proposition, enhanced by digital traceability, and brings growers closer to the end consumers.

We have decided to take Authentico to the next level and make it a desirable brand that brings value to everyone involved in the wool journey. We have worked on improvements to the program to make it stronger and more attractive to premium

luxury brands. Our vision is to have an integrated network from farms to brands where everyone is happy to share and learn from each other while boosting the offer of beautiful and sustainable wool to the consumers.

On September, 18 we have launched the new Authentico Platform, following a brief 4-day pause to smoothly shift from the old system to the new one. The new platform sports fresh features: first off, a more user-friendly interface. Additionally, brokers, who play a vital role for both Schneider and growers, have now their own profiles. As for growers, these profiles offer a chance to enhance their storytelling capabilities through added information, enabling us to find the perfect match with end customers. An important part of the new platform launch will be that all Authentico growers revisit their profile and make updates where needed, because it opens up a world of benefits. Growers and brokers can effortlessly access news and details about future market opportunities. This includes participation in tailor-made projects, finding the right client for one’s wool also through forward contracts, above all related to superfine wool, and sharing stories that maintain a competitive edge while maximising the potential of growers’ partnership with Authentico.

To help everybody in this transition we have ensured a grace period for updating profiles, which spans three months until the 18th of December 2023. To further support this transition, there will be dedicated moments, online webinars, but also in-person, in the first half of October in Australia and New Zealand, led by local teams and Authentico’s new Brand Manager.

In the current industry landscape, numerous demands are placed by the industry upon woolgrowers without always grasping the practical implications on farm level. At the Schneider Group we believe it’s crucial to immerse ourselves in the world of growers, gaining invaluable insights into the challenges and prospects of adopting best practices, to make sure that we shape this journey all together in the best possible way and we deliver to the final consumer a precious natural animal fibre like wool, which deserves a growing share in the wardrobe of everybody.

Australian Wool Network

Delivering Tailored Wool Marketing Solutions and Innovation.

Innovation, opportunity, and personalised service are synonymous with AWN, an Australian-owned company driving its expansion across the nation to meet its clients' evolving needs.

AWN's Superfine wool expertise is well regarded in the industry with more than 24 years supporting Australian Superfine woolgrowers with a team of experts assisting growers to make informed decisions. AWN is proud to once again be a platinum sponsor of the Australian Superfine Woolgrowers Association (ASWGA).

AWN's national team of wool specialists work alongside clients providing personalised service to maximise returns through a variety of marketing solutions including auction, direct-to-mill and forward contracts.

For growers who share the company's vision of connecting along the supply chain to the consumer, AWN specialises in innovative wool marketing programs which take wool from bale to retail. As well as offering industry programs such as Authentico and SustainaWOOL, AWN also offers DNA Provenance connecting growers, processors, and brands to provide sought-after traceability.

AWN is proud to be the largest shareholder in The New Zealand Merino Company (NZM) which is the global leader in the marketing and sales of ethically produced wool. NZM's ZQ and ZQRX programs are hailed as the world's leading ethical wool standard, setting the highest benchmarks for fibre quality, animal welfare and social responsibility. NZM partners with world-class brands to provide ethical and sustainable wool supply contracts. AWN exclusively offers the ZQ Merino program in Australia offering clients another unique marketing option for this versatile, practical and luxurious product.

AWN Managing Director and CEO John Colley says since its foundation in 1999, AWN's mission has been to provide innovative marketing solutions and personalised service to every client.

"Today, as a national wool, livestock, and rural property services provider, we are proud to be fulfilling that mission on a larger scale than ever before", he said.

"Our growth is testament to the trust and confidence our clients place in us, and we remain committed to delivering exceptional services and expertise to meet their evolving needs."

AWN is proud to be blazing a trail of innovation and opportunity on the back of successful expansions in wool, livestock, and property with clients familiar with the team of passionate specialists across rural Australia who are driving change and innovation in the agribusiness sector.



John Colley
AWN Managing Director and CEO

Well into its third decade, this progressive, Australian-owned company initially commenced as a wool-specialist business with a small group of rural services' visionaries who embarked on establishing an organisation that focused on the things that mattered to clients. Australian Wool Network, as it was then known, grew to become the third-largest wool broker in Australia. In 2003, the business expanded into livestock and property services.

Since 2020, AWN has significantly expanded its livestock and property agency footprint across rural Australia. A total of 13 branches have been added to the network via acquisitions and the establishment of greenfield sites during that time, with access to more than 16 major saleyards across the east and west coast. AWN is now Australia's third largest agri-services business.

These acquisitions provide clients with access to a network of agents and selling centres across rural Australia through a growing team of well-established and respected wool, livestock, and property agents. The focus remains on providing exceptional service to clients with the businesses being an excellent cultural fit with AWN.

AWN has had fantastic support and is widely recognised within the farming community. Experiencing huge success in spreading its unique brand from the eastern states to Western Australia, in the areas of wool, livestock and property, AWN is committed to continued expansion to service its clients' needs in the best way possible.

AWN is a dynamic company which prides itself on its philosophies of personalised service and value-adding together with its commitment to innovation and opportunity. These core values have seen the company embraced by rural communities across the nation.

With its early days founded on Superfine wool specialist marketing, AWN is proud, 24 years later, to be working alongside the ASWGA ensuring these growers continue to be delivered the highest level of service.



Specialty wool marketing services

maximising value for your business

- Auction
- Forward contracts
- Direct to mill
- Specialty bale-to-retail relationships
- Preferred partner of the world's leading ethical wool standards, ZQ and ZQRX Programmes in Australia, providing long-term contracts to leading global brands
- Assistance integrating e-bale & e-species
- RWS Certification advice



Contact your local AWN specialist by scanning the QR code, or visit awn.net



Elders Wool

For a sustainable wool industry

Elders' commitment to the Australian wool industry has only grown since the Elder family first began buying, financing and handling wool in the mid-1800s.

Having handled approximately 350,000 bales of wool in FY22, Elders continues to adapt and innovate in a changing wool industry, with a key focus on clients and customers.

It is with clients in mind that Elders is establishing a world-first automated wool handling business, Elders Wool, which will be launched this year.

The operation will be based around two centralised hubs (in Melbourne and Perth) that will be supported by an extensive network of receival centres. The business will complement Elders' existing wool offering, with existing wool selling centres in Yennora, Brooklyn and Spearwood remaining in operation. Clients will also continue to have access to a wide range of wool selling tools through Elders, including auction, auction forward, Wooltrade, and AuctionsPlus Wool.

Elders Wool will build on this existing offering to bring clients a full end-to-end service, providing a quick and easy delivery experience from your farm gate. The new business will improve efficiency and outcomes, aiming to get wool to market faster and providing exceptional service. The centralised business model also puts Elders in the best place possible to keep growers' costs down over the long-term.

Elders General Manager Agency Dave Adamson said the business will offer cutting-edge innovations.

"Elders Wool will provide real-time information about where wool is within the supply chain", Mr Adamson said.

"The project's efficiency improvements end-to-end aim to increase speed to market and lower costs over time for clients."

Alongside these benefits to growers, the two hubs are well-placed to support strong marketing. The Melbourne facility is strategically placed one turnoff from the Western Freeway at Ravenhall, creating a link between key regional growing areas and Australia's largest concentration of buyers. This provides Elders' clients with access to the port where over 75% of Australia's wool on the east coast ships to global markets. The Rockingham facility is on the doorstep of the port of Fremantle, enabling a quick and seamless transport route for buyers to deliver their wool for transport to national and overseas destinations.

Elders Wool will also be underpinned by key sustainability objectives. The business will aim to mitigate scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions through the use of solar power, renewable energy, LED lighting and energy efficient equipment.

The Melbourne facility, which is targeting a 4-Star Green Star Design and As Built rating, will move bales using Autonomous Guided Vehicles (AGVs), a world-first for the wool industry. AGVs are low-energy self-driving vehicles which use significantly less energy than human-driven forklifts. The AGVs also reduce safety risks to people and are intended to be powered by on-roof solar.

Mr Adamson explained these initiatives will improve sustainability outcomes within the wool supply chain.

"The use of electric handling equipment and investment in solar power generation will reduce greenhouse emissions, with the aim of being fully powered by solar over time", he said.

"This, paired with the introduction of new technology to improve efficiency and drive down costs, will make real improvements to sustainability across the supply chain."

In making this \$25 million investment in Australian wool - the largest single investment in wool handling this century - Elders stands with our clients, striving to deliver the best, sustainable wool supply globally.



Elders staff inside the Melbourne facility

Mark Grave and AWEX

The Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX) is a key service provider to our industry and an important organisation in initiating change within it. Earlier this year ASWGA spoke to long-serving AWEX CEO, Mark Grave, about his involvement and AWEX's role.

I have been working in ag space for over 40 years. I spent my first 10 years as a broker. Firstly, in livestock then I switched to wool and I'm so glad I did. I have been with AWEX since it started, nearly 30 years ago, initially as Southern Region Manager in Melbourne, then Commercial Operations Manager and I have been CEO for the last 20 years. I always pay tribute to those who went before, like Peter Smith, the first AWEX CEO, because there were a lot of hard yards by those before me. It was unbelievably challenging trying to corral a fragmented industry just after the fall of the Reserve Price Scheme. AWEX started as an organisation with new ideas and new thinking – looking forward rather than backward.

There were huge challenges getting the basics such as AWEX ID in place. It was an early initiative introduced as the basis for market reporting. There was an uneasy transition for an industry that needed change but did not want to change.

There were more hard yards with unsuccessful initiatives such as sale by description and centralised selling. The interest in these areas came from industry and AWEX was the vehicle to take it forward.

Obtaining respect for what AWEX does and how we do it, was and is the key. It is about making collaborative industry decisions, which are the most difficult to achieve, and often leadership requires difficult decisions to be made. The only way AWEX can influence is by taking a consultative approach, recognise that decisions need to be made and being supported in those decisions.

An example was centralised selling. The decision to close Brisbane selling centre, then Goulburn, caused many in the industry to be upset, particularly about the process. A more consultative approach was required. Adelaide followed later but the decision was supported by a majority of industry at the time and implemented by AWEX. Launceston, Newcastle and Geelong eventually followed suit over time. In hindsight, the approach to the closures could have been better in terms of consultation and the timeframes. Today, industry circumstances have changed in terms of production volume and understanding the cost pressures of maintaining multiple selling centres for buyers and sellers. For example, in the early 1990s, Tasmania had two selling centres and produced 150,000+ bales a year. Wool production in Tasmania today is about half of that volume and sales have moved to Melbourne.

Much of AWEX's work is centred around the presentation and selling of wool, whether it's selling centres and their administration, clip inspections and AWEX ID's. The AWEX Board and company took ownership. That is part of our DNA but we have since grown from that base – AWEX now is responsible for wool classing, NWD, WoolClip, market reporting and eBale. All of which grew out of the need for change,



Andreas Clark (AWEX Chair), Bill Crawford and Alister Strickland with their 50 years stencils, Mark Grave

to add value and take the industry forward. Ultimately, the Australian wool industry needs to take advantage of these initiatives because the global market in wool is so competitive.

Not all of our projects succeed, for example, Sale by Description, which was, and still is, a commercially sensitive issue. This project ultimately failed as we hadn't sufficiently established the value/benefits or addressed the real concerns about samples and guarantees. There were concerns expressed by both buyers and sellers at the time. Electronic selling was another project. The first AWEX trial was conducted in the 1990s. At that time the technology was new and there was limited interest. The open cry auction prevails as the most efficient method of wool trading. AWEX was not trying to replicate the open cry auction but the comparison to open-cry auction was inevitable. We tried and learnt from our successes and failures, about what worked and what didn't. Today, there are a number of online trading products available, but the open cry auction prevails as the most popular and efficient.

NWD

The National Wool Declaration (NWD) has been a success. It started in 2008, on farm inspections in 2010, to support the post farm gate industry with credible information regarding mulesing. There was a lot of consultation and extension about what the NWD was and why it was being introduced. There were many (very) heated discussions about what the NWD was and was not. Lost on many was the fact that it was an exercise in transparency specifically to inform customers of Australian wool. Fifteen years later, it is a less sensitive issue. The NWD, supported by a respected integrity program, is voluntary with approximately 74% adoption. Processors and their customers demanded the information in the face of animal activist pressure. It was about providing an informed market, giving information that was critical to them in making purchasing decisions. Equally, the NWD provides information back to growers about what the market is saying. A key outcome is that those who do not declare are discounted in the market. It also helps address competition from other countries where mulesing is not an issue. Market access and competition are two key drivers of innovative initiatives.

EBALE AND WOOLCLIP

eBale is relatively new and is going very well and quickly gaining momentum. It had its genesis in the late 1990s when a delegation from Germany visited Australia with a

plan (Intrawool) for a unique bale identifier. The technology at that time was too expensive and not up to the task. eBale is a more advanced concept with better technology and at a lower cost. What gave eBale traction was the recent potential threat of FMD in Indonesia. The industry supported the need to act. Over the last 25 years AWEX had been researching and trialing a product that worked and with the support of industry implemented eBale nationally. Discussions at this year's IWTO Congress highlighted the downstream interest in eBale from half a dozen countries wanting more detail to understand what it is and how it can work. Those investing in infrastructure and machinery such as European and Chinese processors, want automation. We can now offer something that will facilitate this. It is an advantage for Australia as we are the only country who has taken an industry wide approach to introduce eBale. Half the story is to get it in and achieve critical mass, then industry participants will leverage the technology.

'the industry will embrace & leverage digital platforms ...and no-one should fear this. We need to be open about sharing the insights we have and ensure we are all adding value to the industry'

eBale and WoolClip work hand in hand. There has been important work on WoolClip over last seven or eight years. The number of bales captured through WoolClip has nearly doubled this year to be in excess of 155,000. It has been a massive effort driven by AWEX in response to grower interest in eBale. Capturing wool data on farm has enormous benefits in reducing errors through the supply chain and importantly capturing the data on farm, the source of truth.

Strategically for the industry WoolClip is a powerful tool. AWEX will invest further in WoolClip so there is increased capability for growers themselves. For the first time it gives growers a permanent soft copy of their data and has the capability of using the data further e.g. for on-farm credentials and remote audits. WoolClip and eBale also can address traceability and provenance. Our intention is to establish WoolClip as the key on-farm data platform.

INDUSTRY CO-OPERATION

Industry collaboration is a challenging area. Each industry organisation has a defined role and responsibilities. No one organisation leads our industry and therefore collaboration

is required. It relies on personalities and a willingness to work together and the ability to compromise from time to time. WoolClip's on-farm acceptance across industry is an example of the former.

The industry is now at a stage where open and frank discussions are being held amongst industry leaders with the purpose of progressing and adding value to the industry. The key driver is recognising that there is a need to work together to improve the industry. Personalities play a big part. The mix at the moment is a good one. There is no reason why it shouldn't continue. The AWEX Board is certainly supportive and industry collaboration is now a big part of the AWEX strategic plan.

GROWERS AND THEIR DATA

We recognise that growers create information and want more information for their own purposes. Growers may not be sure what data they need or where to get it, so we have a responsibility to make it within reach. We are a data rich industry and we should use it to the industry's best advantage, enabling growers and purchasers to make informed choices. How data is made available or shared is the real challenge. Each company has invested IP in their data and of course privacy and security are always key concerns. It is a matter of how the various systems work together rather than creating "another" new entity. We have the will to satisfy data requirements and a data repository would make it easier to leverage. Things are moving fast in this space.

MG AND STAFF

I hope what I have done as AWEX CEO has earned respect for AWEX and the services we provide. The key is to employ people who are smarter than you are and to provide a clear direction of what AWEX and industry expectations are. AWEX is fortunate to have the talent it has. As a collective they are second to none. So, I am supported by very good and capable people who have the same set of values, understand the wool industry, the responsibility of AWEX and support the principles of what AWEX does. Many of the AWEX team have long service, 20+ years, with the organisation and the wool industry. I am privileged to be able to contribute in the areas of the industry I do but only with support of AWEX staff.

FINAL MESSAGE?

The future for the wool industry is exciting. The industry will embrace and leverage digital platforms and technology and no-one should fear this. We need to be open about sharing the insights we have and ensure we are all adding value to the industry. This is the strong message I need to get across.

The Other Bianca Heaney

Joining forces to help those in need in flood affected areas of NSW

During the past few years Bianca Heaney has helped farmers by providing hay to drought and flood-affected areas in NSW.

Bianca has a long history and relationship with farmers in Victoria. She married Dickson whose family had a wool growing property in the north-east of Victoria which Bianca and Dickson now own. Having worked at Longernong Agricultural College, Dooen near Horsham Victoria, she understands the struggles on the land.

In 2005, Bianca commenced work at the Australian Wool Industries Secretariat. Thus her connection with the entire wool supply chain began. Part of her role is to provide various administration and financial services to ASWGA and she recently became the Public Officer for ASWGA.

Bianca is also involved with many community service groups and is passionate about helping people. As President of the Zonta Club in Melton, Victoria (an International women's community service group) she became aware of the planned hay run to the Clarence Valley on 30 September 2022 to assist primary producers and hobby farmers in need. Bianca decided she wanted to do something to help their wives and children.

After approaching the Rotary Club of Grafton with her idea, Bianca was introduced to Leonie Saunders, Country Women's Association (CWA) Treasurer, who helped to bring her vision to life.



The Zonta Club of Melton, Victoria, recently joined forces with the Country Women's Association (CWA) to distribute a variety of games, toys, books and care packages to Clarence Valley women and children in need

Aussie Hay Runners delivered 56 trucks of hay / fodder to Grafton. The truck convoy was 8.5 km long and travelled over 1,500 km from Victoria to the flood-affected areas.

As trucks carrying bales of donated hay arrived in the Clarence Valley, they also brought boxes, backpacks and care packages full of books, pencils, games, toys, woollen doonas, woollen socks and other necessities, which were distributed to local families affected by the floods which had devastated the region earlier this year.

Bianca said it was great for the Zonta Club and the CWA to work together to spread some cheer. "We love helping people in need," she said, "and it was wonderful to have so many businesses jump on board and offer donations to make this possible." "Most farmers are still doing it tough in this area and their stories are heart breaking".

Thanks to all who supported this project - Zonta Club of Melton members, CWA North Coast members, Jean Hailes for Women's Health, Humphrey Law Socks, DH Steel, Dynon Wools and many other contributors.

Bianca Heaney

President, Zonta Club of Melton, Victoria, Australia



Truck loaded with donated hay



Unloading hay in the rain - it just hasn't stopped raining

AWTA Annual Review

Australian Wool Testing Authority^{Ltd}

Favourable seasonal conditions in most wool-producing areas coupled with a reasonable wool market boosted the volume of Australian wool tested by AWTA by 3.8% to 348.0 million kilograms during the 2022/23 season. This represents the third annual increase in production since 2019/20 when, in a year disrupted by COVID-19 lockdowns, 295.8 million kilograms were tested.

During the 2022/23 season the volume of wool tested increased in all Australian States, in particular Tasmania and Queensland. In Tasmania, a trend for some brokers to ship and test Tasmanian wool on the mainland was reversed, meanwhile production in Queensland rebounded following outstanding seasonal conditions.

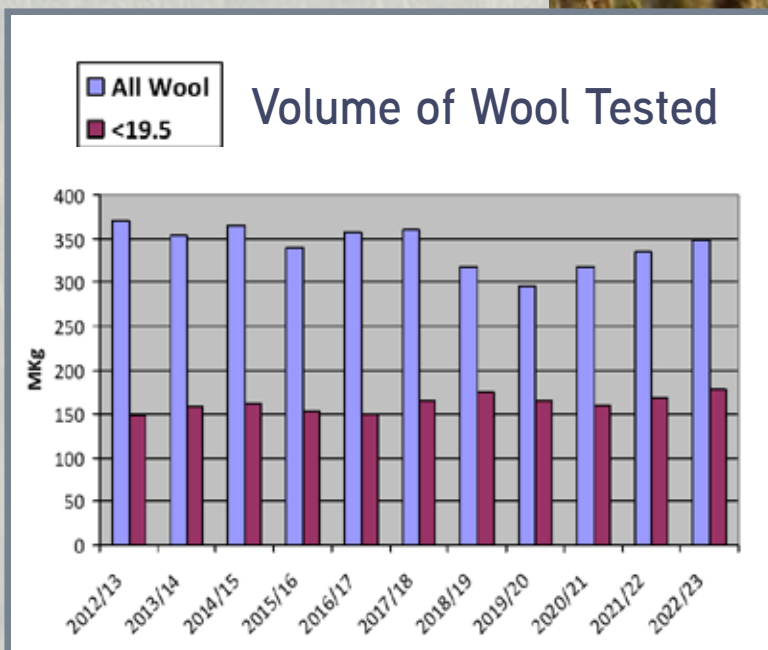


Season	All Wool	<19.5
2012/13	370	149
2013/14	354	158
2014/15	366	162
2015/16	340	153
2016/17	358	150
2017/18	360	165
2018/19	318	175
2019/20	296	164
2020/21	318	160
2021/22	335	167
2022/23	348	178

Table 1: Australian wool tested (MKg)

State	Bales 2022/23	Change +%
Queensland	56,669	28.6%
New South Wales	565,984	3.3%
Victoria	676,362	1.1%
Tasmania	43,726	63.4%
South Australia	223,216	5.0%
Western Australia	382,963	2.2%
AUSTRALIA	1,948,920	3.9%

Table 2: Volume of Bales tested by State



Season	Ultrafine (<15.6)	Superfine (15.6-18.5)	Fine 18.6-19.5
2012/13	1.555	82.836	64.609
2013/14	2.402	92.674	62.924
2014/15	1.744	92.699	67.557
2015/16	2.669	89.782	60.549
2016/17	2.597	84.911	62.492
2017/18	1.963	95.959	67.078
2018/19	3.942	109.752	61.306
2019/20	3.367	100.626	60.007
2020/21	2.115	92.78	65.105
2021/22	2.494	97.158	67.348
2022/23	3.165	106.318	68.517

Table 3: Fine wool production by micron category (MKg)

SUPERFINE WOOL PRODUCTION

The volume of wool tested that was finer than 19.6 microns increased by 6.7% to 178Mkg, a disproportionate increase, exceeding the 3.8% increase in the volume of all wool tested during 2022/23. During the past twelve months, the proportion of wool measuring less than 19.6 microns has increased from 49.8% to 51.2% of all wool tested. The proportion of fine wool production has exceeded 50% of all wool tested since the 2019/20 season, except for last season when it was 49.8% of all wool tested.

The profile of the fine wool component of the Australian wool clip has also changed with more Superfine (15.6 – 18.5 micron) and Ultrafine (<15.6 micron) wool being produced. The volume of Fine (18.6 – 19.5) has remained reasonably steady for the past three seasons.

AWTA LTD

When AWTA Ltd was privatised in 1982 it was structured as a Company Limited by Guarantee with the objective of providing services to its clients at minimum cost, rather than maximising profit for distribution to shareholders. There is no doubt that over many years the Company has been successful in this regard; the fee for AWTA Ltd’s primary service (presale raw wool testing) is lower today than it was in 1994.

In the last decade, wool production and the volume of wool tested in Australia has stabilised following a decade where it declined considerably and during which AWTA Ltd’s principal market shrank substantially. AWTA Ltd responded at the time by focussing on innovation and cost control in its raw wool testing laboratories and by reducing corporate overheads

and continues to do so. The Company broadened its revenue base beyond raw wool and expanded into food, grain and manufactured goods testing. This followed a decision by AWTA Ltd to adopt a strategy of expanding into related testing markets where independent, high quality, high integrity testing is necessary. At the same time it seemed that there was little prospect of a significant recovery in Australian wool production and so cost reduction initiatives were accelerated, this included closing the Sydney-based AWTA laboratory.

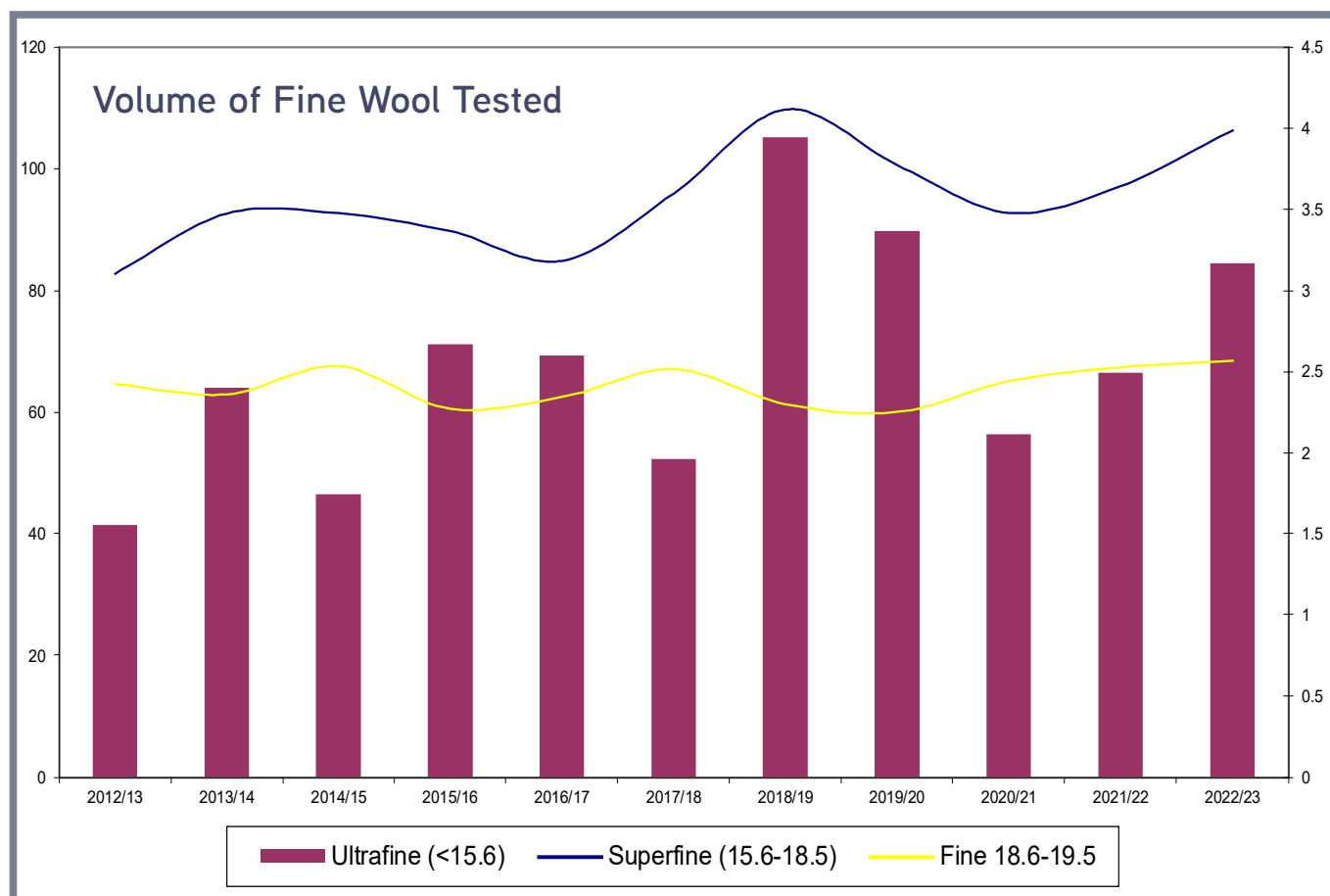
The success of this strategy is now apparent with AWTA Ltd continuing to report modest annual profits whilst avoiding wool testing fee increases in most years or constraining them to diminutive amounts when absolutely necessary, such as the 3% increase for 2023/24 recently announced.

As a result of its diversification strategy AWTA Ltd, as a consolidated group, is now comprised of three operating divisions in Australia:

- AWTA Raw Wool
- AWTA Product Testing; and
- Agrifood Technology (including FeedTest)

The total operating income earned from sources other than testing Australian raw wool continues to grow with Agrifood Technology recently expanding into microbiological testing in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane. This move has contributed significantly to a recent increase in revenue, albeit tempered by increased costs due to inflation.

Through its policies of cost control, the development and adoption of new technology and diversification into closely related testing markets, AWTA Ltd is well positioned to cope with whatever direction the Australian wool industry takes.



SustainaWOOL

ABOUT SUSTAINAWOOL

Certified under ISO 9001, SustainaWOOL promotes the sourcing and production of the highest quality wool through sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The scheme covers the three pillars of the wool production system from sheep health and wellbeing, farm management practices and facilities, and clip preparation.

It was first launched in 2015 by Italian fabric makers Successori Reda and Vitale Barberis Canonico along with New England Wool in response to demand from their customers.

For growers to apply for SustainaWOOL membership, the Grower Declaration must be completed by the responsible grower or farm manager. This functions as both a 'self-assessment' against defined legal and best practice standards and also a legal declaration subject to random desktop and on-farm audit. The 69 separate aspects assessed include use of pain relief if painful procedures are undertaken (e.g. mulesing), the standard of wool clip preparation, staff training and competence, farm chemical use and storage, and stock transport, for example.

Recognising the transition away from reliance on mulesing, the scheme offers recognition for farmers who meet SustainaWOOL practice standards that have ceased mulesing



(SustainaWOOL GREEN), and separately recognises those growers who mules using a registered pain relief product (SustainaWOOL BLUE).

HOW IS SUSTAINAWOOL DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SCHEMES?

Whilst there are common elements shared across various schemes, SustainaWOOL operates on a not-for-profit basis, is certified under ISO 9001 and places an emphasis on the quality of wool clip preparation and the shearing shed operation.

It is also the only Australian program to support our industry and its various production methods.

SUPPLY CHAIN PARTNERS

Having appointed a China Regional Representative in July 2022, SustainaWOOL is currently responding to increasing inquiries from Supply Chain Partners including garment makers, brands and retailers. They are particularly interested in provenance and the developments made by AWEX in traceability through eBale and WoolClip, which are supported by SustainaWOOL.

As brands' and retailers' policies continue to evolve in areas of traceability, environmental and animal welfare practices, the importance of an accreditation program for Australian wool growers increases. This is being reflected in the sale price and lower passed in rates for SustainaWOOL branded wool presented for auction.

3 TYPES OF BENEFIT FOR OUR GROWERS

SustainaWOOL provides 3 types of grower benefits:

1. Practice improvement: the SustainaWOOL Integrity Scheme allows growers to self-assess farm management practice against the SustainaWOOL stewardship benchmarks, allowing growers to identify areas for practice improvement.
2. Reputation: for growers who take their stewardship and reputational responsibilities seriously, SustainaWOOL provides an effective platform to declare these good practices to the world's wool buyers and to make clear your willingness to be audited.
3. Market Competition: SustainaWOOL GREEN and BLUE sale lots are often sought after to be included in consignments where integrity-assured lots are required. This additional competition often attracts higher prices.



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WHAT ARE THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS?

Since 2016, SustainaWOOL members have benefited from increased prices received for their fleece wool lots, relative to the prices received by non-scheme members for wool with matched attributes.

In the chart below we compare the auction prices received for our NM/CM members (SustainaWOOL GREEN and GOLD) and our AA/PR members (SustainaWOOL BLUE), compared to equivalent wool from non-scheme members of comparable NWD categories.

While COVID undoubtedly affected 2020-2022 prices, the overall picture is one where SustainaWOOL GREEN members typically receive 4 - 6% higher more than non-scheme members for equivalent wool, and our BLUE members 1- 2%.

At approximately \$2,500 per 18.5 um fleece wool bale, this can equate to around \$40 to \$60 per bale.

LOWER PASSED-IN RATES

When wool is passed-in at auction, it often means the trade valued your wool less than you did. Passed-in wool may be sold post-sale or more often it goes back into stock to compete against fresh wool in subsequent sales. Shown below, since 1st July 2020, the passed-in rates experienced by SustainaWOOL members at auction have been lower than that received by non-scheme members for equivalent specification fleece wools, especially for our SustainaWOOL BLUE growers.

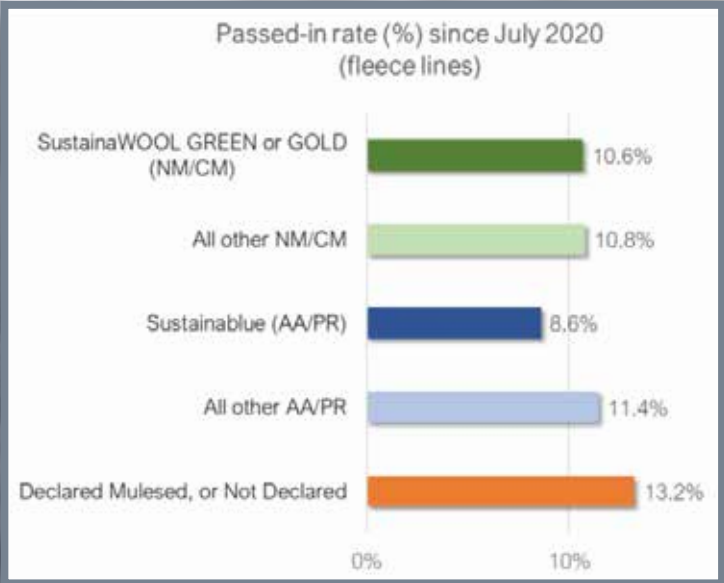
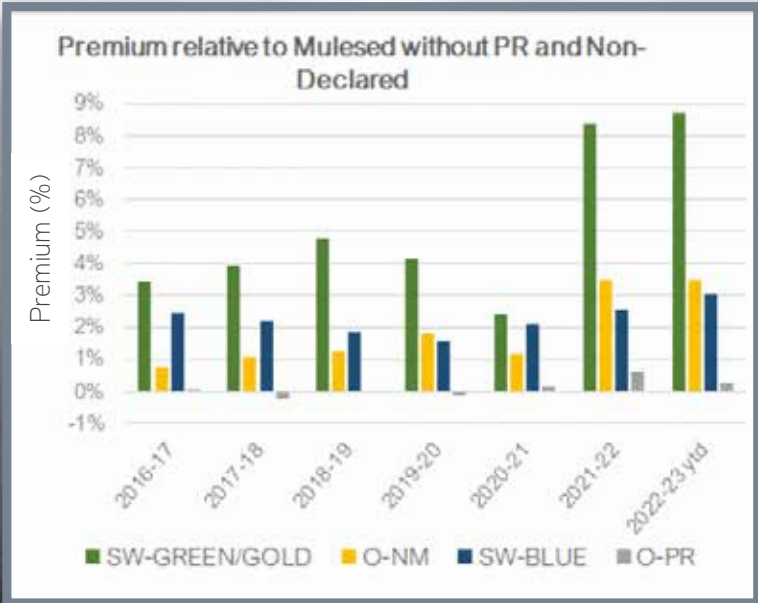
A BRIGHT FUTURE

The future does look bright for SustainaWOOL and Australia's wool industry. New developments are taking place, such as in smart in-shed digital tools and electronic enabled bale labels, helping to digitalise the sector and to improve traceability.

An example of smart digital tools for the shearing shed, AWEX has recently launched WoolClip (www.woolclip.com.au). This is a free and user-friendly online internet and smartphone app that allows wool growers and/or classers to create wool bale details, wool specification and complete practice declarations. The app also allows growers to declare their accreditation programs such as SustainaWOOL, that is then submitted to their marketing agent.

Another development is the recent implementation of AWEX eBale. AWEX has been working steadily behind the scenes to perfect electronic bale identification technology for Australia. The technology consists of an RFID chip and QR code, integrated into the bale label. The QR Code can be easily read on-farm by a smartphone. The eBale labels are fully integrated with the WoolClip app, linking electronic bale identification and information. The system offers the potential for traceability and biosecurity gains across the whole industry, and efficiencies for those involved in wool bale logistics, storage, and processing.

To find out more about SustainaWOOL, visit: <http://sustainawool.com.au/>



WoolProducers Australia

WoolProducers Animal Health and Welfare Advisory Committee

WoolProducers Australia (WPA) is the peak representative body for Australian woolgrowers, representing and advocating on behalf of all woolgrowers in the country. Our mission is to develop constructive and profitable outcomes for woolgrowers nationally.

The Animal Health and Welfare Advisory Committee (AHWAC) was established by the Board of WPA to specifically provide advice on the wool portion of animal health and welfare levies administered by Animal Health Australia (AHA) through a partnership approach. WPA is the only woolgrower representative member of AHA, which has 14 livestock industry members.

The intent of the AHWAC membership is to ensure that a representative cross-section of producer groups is involved in determining that compulsory levy dollars are invested in an effective manner and that policy determinations are made in the best interests of the Australian wool industry as a whole.

Membership of AHWAC includes representatives from WoolProducers Australia, Superfine Wool Growers Association, Australian Association of Stud Merino Breeders, Australian Stud Sheep Breeders Association Limited, MerinoLink and SRS Genetics Limited, along with observer representatives from Australian Wool Innovation, AHA and the Australian Veterinary Association.

In the past 12 months AHWAC has considered many issues in the animal health, welfare and biosecurity space that affect woolgrowers.

WORLD ORGANISATION OF ANIMAL HEALTH (WOAH)

WPA GM attended the 90th General Session of WOAH, held in Paris, France as a member of the Australian delegation at the invitation of the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer. The General Session included an Animal Health Forum on Avian Influenza in addition to plenary sessions covering WOAH achievements and priorities, amendments to standards and codes (such as the Terrestrial Code) and administrative and governance matters relating to the functions of WOAH.

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

As a signatory to the EADRA, WoolProducers Australia was heavily involved in national preparedness and response discussions and activities during the heightened awareness phase after FMD was confirmed in Indonesia. WPA prepared situational updates for our trading partners during this time to reassure them that Australia remains free of FMD.

BIOSECURITY TRADE PROTOCOL

WPA initiated the development of an IWTO Biosecurity trade protocol to facilitate the movement of wool from Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) impacted areas in accordance with WOAH Terrestrial Code requirements. WPA collaborated with the Australian government, AWI and industry partners from New Zealand, South Africa and Uruguay to collate resources



and presented the final protocol at the IWTO Conference held in Japan in May.

AUSVETPLAN REVIEWS

WPA represented woolgrowers in reviews of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA), Valuation and Compensation and Wool Enterprise Manual AUSVETPLAN reviews to ensure that the most desirable outcomes possible for woolgrowers and industry are achieved in the event of an EAD incursion.

TRACEABILITY

WoolProducers sits on the Sheep and Goat Traceability Taskforce, which is an industry, State and Federal Government forum which discusses the roll-out of mandatory electronic tagging for sheep and goats. WPA has been advocating for equitable cost-sharing, national harmonisation and database reforms to varying degrees of success.

WPA has also been working with the post farmgate wool industry to implement findings of the independent wool traceability report which was commissioned using Commonwealth traceability grant funding.

AWI ANIMAL WELFARE FORUM

WPA attended the AWI Animal Welfare Forum held in Sydney on 10 May. The Animal Welfare Forum includes key stakeholders in animal health and welfare: RSPCA Australia; the AVA; researchers from CSIRO and Melbourne and Sydney Universities; Animals Australia and Four Paws Australia and meets on an annual basis.

NATIONAL WOOL DECLARATION (NWD) REVIEW

WoolProducers provided a submission into the NWD Review conducted by AWEX. WoolProducers also represents growers on the NWD Review Industry Consultative Committee, which will make recommendations on the next version of the NWD to the AWEX Board.

TRUST IN AUSTRALIAN WOOL (TIAW)

The TIAW campaign is an initiative by WPA. The campaign aims to promote the high standards of animal health, welfare, biosecurity, sustainability and quality standards in the Australian wool industry.

The campaign launched in 2021 with a website and handbook. The website provides information on the Australian wool industry, its sustainability practices, and its commitment to animal welfare. The handbook is a comprehensive resource on sheep health, welfare and biosecurity.

The TIAW campaign is designed to reach a global audience of wool consumers, retailers, and brands. The campaign’s goal is to build trust in Australian wool and to position the industry as a leader in sustainability and animal welfare.

SHEEP SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK (SSF)

The second annual report of the SSF was released in May. The SSF structure comprises of four themes: caring for our sheep; enhancing the environment and climate; looking after our people, our customers and the community; and ensuring a financially resilient industry, with 9 focus areas and 21 priorities.

Generally, the trends across the priorities are positive, although further work in the WHS is needed. The annual report can be found here: www.sheepsustainabilityframework.com.au.

LIVE EXPORT

WoolProducers Australia has been working with other agricultural groups in opposing the proposed ban on live export of sheep by sea. WPA met with the Live Sheep Export Panel and provided a submission into the public consultation, explaining the ramifications of this ban on the WA and national wool industries, including the impacts of removing sheep from regional economies and the detrimental flow-on effect to regional services when these workers leave.



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Interview with...

Matt Jensen

Matt Jensen is the founder and CEO of M. J. Bale, the leading men's wear retailer and brand in its own right.

Since opening the business in 2009, Matt has grown the company to more than 70 stores nationwide. It is Climate Active-certified and is Australia's first fully carbon neutral fashion brand, covering both its products and the organisation. Matt has not stopped at just buying credits. He is actively investing in projects to reduce the footprint of the products his company sells. He is a great supporter of wool and wool growers and a great example of the sort of person we need at the other end of the supply chain. Here are some excerpts from a discussion I had with Matt recently.

SC: Matt, a few years ago you were interviewed and one of the comments that you made was that wool is in your DNA. Is it still there?

MJ: Yes, absolutely. Wool has always been in my DNA, and it still is. As you know, we're passionate about wool here at M.J. Bale, and we're passionate about the woolgrowing community. As Australians, we take great pride in helping to showcase what is the world's leading natural fibre. People love working with wool, right from the grassroots through to the processors, weavers and makers. As you know, the wool-weaving culture is so strong in northern Italy, where we get most of our cloth woven. It's such a pleasure to be part of it. Then, of course, wool is an incredible natural fibre to create fantastic clothes that perform really well. To help bring that ecosystem together is wonderful.

SC: You're a pretty keen observer of brands, it would seem. Are there any particular fashion brands that you admire?

MJ: I mean, you've got the Savile Row precinct in London, which has obviously been the epicentre of fine tailored woollen garments for centuries. I've got the utmost respect for Loro Piana and what they've created as a business over the years and also their in-depth investment back into the industry. I have similar feelings for Vitale Barberis Canonico and the Zegna Group with what they've done, investing in the grassroots of the industry here in Australia, and shining a light on great woolgrowers like yourself and many others. And then I would also say at the other end of the spectrum, some of the brands that are using wool in a sporty, outdoor and active way – brands like Allbirds and Icebreaker – have done so well.

SC: Matt, I read somewhere that you guys create clothes for the customer rather than being in trend or in fashion. Is that still your focus, or do you see yourself creating a range that includes areas such as sportswear?



MJ: Great question. We talk about M.J. Bale making 'garments of integrity for men of character', and I've always liked making things of high quality from natural fibres. I enjoy making products that have character and quality inherent in them. And I think if you do that, then customers can see it, they feel it, and it immediately becomes differentiated from the sea of clothes out there. So far, the model's been successful. But we're only part of the way through the journey and we keep challenging ourselves to keep evolving towards more lifestyle-centric collections. We've made some promising forays into sportswear over the last few years. Right now, I'm wearing one of our lovely 16.5-micron Merino base layer tops. I'm constantly living in these things, particularly because I live in the southern highlands of NSW, where it gets quite cold. But I recently did a trip up into the Alps of France, Switzerland and Italy, and wore my Merino base layers next-to-skin day in, day out, and they did not let me down.

SC: We're told that the people with the money, and the ones we've got to reach at the moment, like Gen Zs and the Millennials – I can't keep up with who is who, and what is what! I guess I mean the younger customers. How do you get and hold their attention?

MJ: I think there's a broader point there of how you get and keep the attention of any customer cohort these days. I think you've got to stay relevant. You've got to stay relevant in the conversation. So, that could be tactical things like attractive marketing campaigns or, you know, use of ambassadors. We kit out a lot of the elite Australian sporting teams, such as the Australian cricket team, the Wallabies, a lot of the AFL teams, the Socceroos. We love working with great athletes. But to go back to your question – I think we stay relevant

by understanding the needs of the younger generation, and by working on local solutions to global concerns. Whether that's through our shift to being a Climate Active-certified carbon neutral brand or the work we do with you, Simon, at Kingston on single-source wool and biodiversity preservation. I hope the younger generations see that we care for the environment and their future, and that we're doing the hard yards.

SC: Yes, I was actually going to ask you about the carbon neutrality. Congratulations on leading the way for the Australian fashion industry. Was there a particular process that you followed to get there? Is it paying off?

MJ: Well, I'll answer the second part of your question first. Is it paying off? I've actually never thought about it. We didn't make the decision [to become 100% carbon neutral] based on market research or what we thought the consumer wanted. It was just the right thing to do. It was an intuitive decision. In terms of the process part of the question... yes, it was a long and exhaustive process. We went from getting a carbon footprint scoping study done by a third party, which took months, and then commissioned the official assessment, which took almost a year and involved an environmental scientist poking into every nook and cranny of the business – every single aspect of not just

all our products, organisation and operations, but the organisations and operations of our complete supply chain. It is a highly mathematical and logistics-heavy process that required the co-operation of our entire business and all of our partners. The result, though, has been interesting. While so many businesses are hardwired on their financial P & L, we effectively now have a climate P & L that we are working towards.

SC: Finally, do you have any message for woolgrowers?

MJ: I have so much respect for superfine woolgrowers in this country. I know the painstaking work that goes into producing this incredible fibre, especially the hard yakka involved in looking after the animals throughout the seasons to ensure that fibre has the right style, strength and cleanliness. I also understand the commercial pressures of the industry, such as the high cost of shearing and everything else. I think that we – fashion brands and woolgrowers – need to really band together so we don't run the risk of woolgrowing becoming a cottage industry, you know, a boutique industry. Keep up all that great work on sustainability and we'll do our job to support Aussie woolgrowers and try to make it the most relevant fibre for future generations to come.



M.J. Bale supports Australian wool growers

Smitten Merino

SLOW WOOL FASHION MADE TO LAST

Recently ASWGA was fortunate enough to have a chat, well several chats due to the intermittent mobile phone coverage available in Tasmania, with Carl and Nicola Mason, the dynamic founders of Smitten Merino. Words do not do justice to the enthusiasm the Masons have for wool.

Carl advises he is dressed in wool from head to toe. "The fabrics are mind blowing. Its performance whether the weather is cold or not, dry or wet the comfort factor, the health benefits. The circularity of wool is like nothing else. Sheer performance. We absolutely love it."

Carl is into extreme sports. He has a background in building and environmental science and is a dynamo. Nicola is an ideas person, creative and a dreamy fashionista. Together they created Smitten Merino with, arguably, the largest wool clothing range in the world. There is a sort of family connection to wool - Nicola's dad was a wool classer. The bigger driver was Carl's aversion to synthetic sportswear and its anti-social impact [read BO] after intense activity and the void in the local market for Icebreaker-type products. The Mason's daughter, Holly, described as the face of Smitten Merino, is also a critical member of the team.

When I asked that Smitten Merino be described in five words we settled on four: *modern, sustainable, luxurious and timeless.*

The range includes an entire women's fashion line with everything from pants, skirts, dresses, coats, tops, pyjamas, jumpers and underwear. There is also an entire active range for both men and women comprising leggings, tops, pants, jumpers, zip-necks, base-layers and more. It is all lightweight merino clothing that is manufactured locally. There is a lot of talk about this approach. The Masons have been doing it for 16 years.

Yes, it was hard work starting the business but within six weeks of "throwing the concept out there" at a Tasmanian Merino Company function, they were underway. First it was "made to order" from party plan functions but that soon became too much for Nicola to deal with, so they identified a suitable manufacturer in Tasmania.

Currently about 75% of sales are generated online and 25% from a combination of the Battery Point [Hobart] store



and stockists. Word of mouth is also important. A global niche for the jacket of choice for white water river guides developed this way. It grew out of a product provided to Franklin River guides.

Carl admits that the Internet is crowded so they make extensive use of Google. More conventional brand advertising is carried out in magazines such as *Country Style, Australian Country and Australian Travel.*

Smitten Merino - a sustainable, ethical and renewable business - but not your average one.

"We want people to think about where their clothes are sourced and produced. We support local manufacture and transparency in fashion. We want to support skilled Australian women to keep sewing our clothing. We believe in sustainability and ethics - and are excited to be a part of the Fashion Revolution because we want radical change."

"One of our practices is making use of all the fabric when we are cutting the Smitten garments, so our delightful cutters (that is, Cathy and Carmen) are vigilant in making sure any spare merino is used up as beanies, headbands or mittens.

We are continually striving to aim for zero waste!”

Smitten Merino and Tasmania go hand in hand. As well as business awards Brand Tasmania has used the company as a case study. In 2022 it was the Tasmanian section winner of the Australian Export Awards for Creative Industries.

Doing as much locally as possible is part of the ethos of the company. The dream is local local, to be able to grow wool and fully process it in Tasmania. The Masons believe there is a groundswell of support for products like this. People are asking for them and will support providers.

A start was made when fabric manufactured by Waverly Mills in Launceston was used. They have also given support to a Tasmanian initiative, the Broad Valley Project, to pilot onshore early stage wool processing.

Carl and Nicola are heavily committed to the community and Tasmania, if sourcing locally is possible, and it comes with a higher cost the Masons accept they may have to absorb some of it. They proudly point out that Smitten Merino is more than just a money maker for the Mason family. 2% of turnover is contributed to environmental and humanitarian causes.

The company takes accreditations seriously. Its material sourcing is Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) based. Animal

‘modern, sustainable luxurious & timeless’

welfare credentials are essential for sales to the USA. Direct enquiries from customers validate this on a weekly basis.

“Many customers are very concerned about how the sheep are treated and tell us so.” Europe is moving more in this direction as well.

The other accreditation is Oeko-Tex 100 (a European standard) which is their fabric manufacturer’s standing. It is about being environmentally friendly especially minimising toxicity including in the dyeing process. Oeko-Tex-certified products are completely free from harmful chemicals and safe for human use. It stands for customer confidence and high product safety.

MESSAGE FOR WOOL GROWERS?

“Keep growing your fabulous product, contribute to traceability where you can, stay current and accept the need for change. Our customers, people who seek out natural fibres, are climate aware. They respond when they see efforts to reduce your carbon footprint. The new generation is far more aware. Be aware of animal welfare and traceability. Be up-to-date with the climate crisis and improve one’s carbon footprint. Embrace the new reality.”



Horrocks Vale Collections

The Birth of an HVC Woollen Wedding Dress

by Nikki Atkinson

For over 21 years I was a bridal fashion designer, and always had a niggle in my heart at the time when I co-owned a couture bridal business in Adelaide during this period.

When I ran the boutique, a girlfriend requested that her wedding dress made from wool. She grew up on a Merino sheep (Kidman) property just north of Broken Hill, so a woollen wedding dress would have been very appropriate. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a suitable wool so resorted to making my friend's dress in silk.

In 2003 I married a Merino Wool producer, Dallas Lines, and we now live on the family property Horrocks Vale, in the Southern Flinders Ranges, South Australia, along with our three children. The area they live in has reasonable rainfall that grows good clean white wool. The Lines family have invested many years of great genetics to fine-tune their self-replacing Merino flock.

That niggle of creating a woollen wedding dress was still imbedded in my soul so I tried many times over the years to find a suitable fabric. It was during a "special birthday" visit to Melbourne last year with my former bridal store business partner and friend, that we finally found one - and having traipsed the streets looking for a fabric supplier, I was just so excited - and I thought then and there the universe is trying to tell me something.

2022 saw the launch of 'Horrocks Vale Collections' bridal couture that has redefined luxurious wedding gowns that are kind to the people and our planet and made from 100% wool. The love and passion of wool came from my earlier years while studying fashion. As a sewing project we made a red tailored wool jacket and I just could not believe how easy the fabric was to work with.

This is a farm-to-fashion story that sees me living, working and immersing myself in the family's Merino sheep property, it is also the inspiration behind our unique wool bridal gowns.

The idea of sharing what's happening behind the scenes on the property day-to-day and what it takes to grow that perfect sheep to fleece is part of the Horrocks Vale Collections story. I want to show people what we do on the property through our socials, and what I can create with the woolly fibre not just as an end product, but as wedding & couture dresses, and along the way help educate people about wool.

Australian wool has come a long way from the scratchy itchy thick wool that might pop into our minds at its mention. Wool has incredible properties, as well as being an eco-friendly and very sustainable fibre. Imagine when you are getting married on a hot Aussie 40-degree C day in a polyester dress, you will have sweat dripping down your back, but in a woollen wedding dress the bride will feel very comfortable and confident in her wedding gown knowing that the clever wool fibre will take the heat away from the body. And the opposite when it's a chilly cold day, the wool keeps the heat in.



Nikki Atkinson with the Megan Dress

I work out of my studio in Wilmington which is quite fitting as it is a little old church that I've renovated - the perfect space for designing and creating woollen wedding dresses. I am also working on men's vests which are made with wool tweeds and plains, matching the backs of vests with bow ties with images of our canine friends that are a little different as they are also quite regal and unique.

For the future of Horrocks Vale Collections, I am working through the process of offering my designs from the 'The Amalia Collection' to other wedding retailers and offering wool wedding dresses as a sustainable option.

I want to shake the wedding industry up, as one single polyester wedding dress takes a whopping 9,000 litres of water to make. This creates other environmental issues as the water is chemically altered to dye the fabric which is sadly dumped back into the water supplies. To make an average wedding dress the amount of carbon emissions used is equal to what two people would produce in an entire year (unlike wool fibre) that takes 70% less water and emissions.

The other challenges with keeping the label wholly Australian-made is an issue of its own as I have been in the fashion industry all my life and have seen the industry change immensely over the years. When I first started in the fashion industry there was a bounty of Australian manufacturing factories. I then saw the first offshore manufacturing venture which sadly and slowly saw factories close due to the importation of cheaper clothing. But COVID thankfully unveiled the issues of fast fashion and people realised that we rely on overseas manufacturing too much and thus are demanding an "Aussie Made" product.

The clothing industry doesn't have enough skilled workers to fill the void for designers wanting Australian made, therefore the wedding industry is hugely lacking skilled workers. I will hopefully find a way at keeping the Hordock's Vale Collections Australian made and I am sure I will crack the code eventually. I aspire to the label becoming international and seeing HVC in the bright lights alongside other international fashion labels in the future.

Nikki Atkinson

Farm-Scale Natural Capital Accounting

Farm-scale Natural Capital Accounting: the missing link in demonstrating sustainability on wool-growing farms.

Jim Radford¹, Sue Ogilvy² and Alex Maisey¹

¹ Research Centre for Future Landscapes and Department of Environment and Genetics, La Trobe University.

² Farming for the Future and Integrated Futures

Valuing nature

Traditionally, a farm's wealth has been measured by what it produces, the value of the land and the capital assets on the farm. A glaring omission in this approach is recognition that natural capital – that is, all biotic and abiotic elements of the natural environment, including soil and soil biota, water resources, vegetation and the fauna it supports – is the foundation of agriculture. Aside from supporting food and fibre production, natural capital also generates broader ecosystem services, such as clean air and water, flood protection, carbon storage, and habitat for wildlife that assist with pollination, pest control, and nutrient cycling in production areas.

With increasing urgency, consumers and supply-chains are asking farmers to produce their goods using practices that are environmentally sustainable, combat climate change and do not further deplete biodiversity. This is a considerable challenge, particularly when there is a dearth of agreed and repeatable methods to measure the environmental performance of farms. This is the gap that farm-scale natural capital accounting aims to fill.

Farm-scale Natural Capital Accounting

Farm-scale natural capital accounting enables farmers to measure and manage the natural capital on their farms. Like financial accounting, natural capital accounting abides by an agreed set of standards, but it explicitly reports on stocks and flows in *natural capital* over time. Different metrics in the accounts measure different aspects of environmental performance *for the entire farm*, including production areas, such as ecological integrity, soil condition, greenhouse gas balance, net export of nutrients/pollutants, and impact on biodiversity. The accounts re-calibrate the concept of wealth, formally accounting for a farm's natural capital assets: from birdlife and insects, native pastures and soil quality, to a farm's carbon footprint and ecosystem services.

Natural capital accounting measures the environmental impacts (both positive and negative) of agriculture. Natural capital accounts complement financial accounts to provide an expanded view of farm profits that incorporates change in natural capital. This broadens our understanding of farm performance by considering the different ways in which farm practices support or diminish natural capital and ecosystem function, and conversely, how natural capital contributes to the financial performance of the farm business.



Midlands Tasmania photo Alex Maisey

The Farm-scale Natural Capital Accounting Project

The *Farm-scale Natural Capital Accounting Project*, led by La Trobe University in collaboration with a range of industry partners, including Integrated Futures, Bush Heritage Australia, Sensand Technologies and Odonata Foundation, and funded by the Australian Government's Smart Farming Partnership program, has developed a standardised framework and processes for generating farm-scale accounts. The accounts map the 'ecosystems' that occur on a farm, including production areas like pastures and crops, natural and semi-natural vegetation, and replanted or restored vegetation. An ecological asset register records the area of the different ecosystem types (i.e., natural capital assets) and captures information on the overall condition and stock of a farm's natural capital.

The accounts also include estimates of the ecosystem services that flow from the respective natural capital assets, including provision of forage for livestock, carbon sequestration, micro-climate regulation, provision of habitat for biodiversity, pollination and pest-suppression services. Over time, improvements (or deterioration) in natural capital arising from land-use change (e.g., replanting/revegetation) or management change (e.g., grazing practices) will be captured in the accounts.

The project has produced accounts for 50 farms – many of them wool-growers – in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. A clear finding so far is that many farms retain areas of important habitat for both common and declining or threatened species. For example, across the 50 farms, 227 species of bird were detected (173 species in NSW, 123 species in Victoria and 96 species in Tasmania), nine of which are listed as nationally threatened. This means more than one in three of all of Australia's land birds and waterbirds (excluding vagrants and seabirds) were represented in just 50 farms. This reinforces the importance of farms for supporting biodiversity as well as producing food and fibre. Farm-scale natural capital accounts pave the way for rewarding wool-growers for nature-positive actions and sharing the cost-burden (above the production benefits) of maintaining or improving natural ecosystems on their farms.

Farming for the Future - Linking natural capital to farm profitability

While it is logical that improvements in on-farm natural capital will flow through to improvements in biodiversity, how might natural capital influence farm productivity and profitability? A new project, *Farming for the Future*, initiated by Macdoch Foundation in partnership with National Farmers' Federation, aims to answer this question by researching the relationship between natural capital and productivity across thousands of Australian farms.

Farming for the Future is presently in its pilot phase and is using farm-scale natural capital account data from approximately 130 livestock operations to quantify the relationship between natural capital and farm productivity and financial performance. Future phases will include cropping, horticulture and rangeland operations.

Farming for the Future aims to provide the business case for farmers to invest in natural capital as part of their business model. By working with farmers to acquire data and create a natural capital benchmark for their region, all farmers can assess where they sit along the natural capital-profitability curve and make informed investment decisions about natural capital improvements on their farms.

Natural Capital Farm Benefits Diagnostic Platform – Business Case Elements

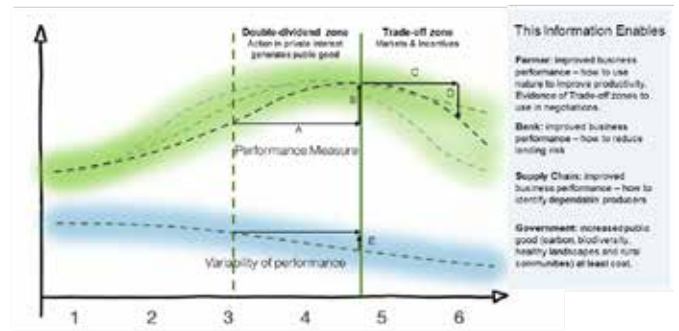


Figure 1: Illustration of *Farming for the Future*'s research hypothesis that relationships exist between the natural capital of a farm and the performance of a farm business. We hypothesise that to a certain point, an addition of natural capital on the farm may be associated with better farm business performance and beyond that point, more natural capital is associated with a decline in farm business performance.

Wool-growers are working together towards a more financially prosperous, climate-resilient and decarbonised farming sector in Australia. Programs such as the *Farm-scale Natural Capital Accounting Project* and *Farming for the Future* are producing the tools and knowledge to underpin this future.



Sheep farm in Western Victoria with large old River Red Gums and woody debris retained around the base of trees as a habitat resource.

Biodiversity under threat

St Helens is a farming district of Southwest Victoria, inland from Yambuk and south of Orford. Here David and Susan Rowbottom have made a home, raised a family, and built a very successful business producing sheep for over 50 years.

They have risen to high levels in the development of merinos – including breeding sheep without breach wrinkles over 40 years before this became a concern of the Australian and International Wool Industry. They are innovators in anticipating future market demands and building paths for others in farming to follow.

They farm on three sides of the St Helens Flora Reserve, a 29-ha remnant of a vast, lost ecology that once covered the region from the border to Budj Bim World Heritage Area to Warrnambool. This little reserve was set aside as a country racecourse in the 1870s but reverted to bush in the 1940s and is now managed by Parks Victoria.

In 2012 Southern Brown Bandicoots were detected by remote cameras in the reserve. They are a species protected by Victorian law because they are now so uncommon in the wild. That survey triggered a decade-long project that has produced some of the rarest wildlife films in southern Australia and built an incredible biodiversity evidence partnership between the Rowbottom family and a Landcare facilitator.

Any day you can read how terms like “predator proof enclosures” have become interwoven into the proposed solutions to preventing uncommon native creatures from becoming extinct. There is a media thread that often spins that assisting those uncommon species is the business of specialists working in big pieces of Crown reserves in remote places where agriculture is excluded. This is the story the media then tells the community.



But there is another thread that needs to be woven into the story of how all native species survive and thrive. Over half of Australia is farmed land. If you lined up who manages what, it is farmers that are at the forefront of preserving wildlife, and who are the opportunity to prevent more native extinctions. That is the thread that the decade-long program with Landcare has strengthened in a small place with a leading farm.

The evidence that Southern Brown Bandicoots had managed to survive in 29ha was, in 2012, what prevented The St Helens Flora Reserve from being burnt to add a speck into the State fuel reduction quota.

‘to counter the whip-up of loss being the only tale to tell, agriculture needs to tell its story of biodiversity custodianship and keep telling it year after year’

The evidence that the way the Rowbottoms had managed their farm to support the bandicoots played no part in that because it was evidence from the farm, not documented in a formal way.

It became obvious to Landcare facilitator Lisette Mill, that if Southern Brown Bandicoots were going to continue to survive in the little reserve, then the evidence of the role the farm around it had in keeping them alive had to be gathered. And fast. That this evidence was the only way that the Rowbottoms and Landcare could get the help they needed to keep up their work to prevent the Bandicoots from becoming extinct at St Helens.

In absence of a better way to collect that evidence, and with funding from Pacific Hydro, four remote sensing cameras were deployed between the reserve and the farm. 24/7 for



a decade, these photo collecting tools have been recording what wildlife comes to the farm and uses the farmed land. They also collect evidence of the behaviours of pest animals in the same places.

There have been many, many discoveries. In the top five (four have been listed in this paragraph) it's headed by the film of a Bandicoot skipping towards Lisette in the paddock on her way to check the cameras. Then a super rare Australasian Bittern walking through an ephemeral wetland. The feral cat being caught in the cage trap. The Painted Button Quail. It's a long list.

The rare fauna are the prized photos but, increasingly its stories of the real-life struggle to survive any native fauna have, that people connect with. They feel and so they care and learn.

A recent example was a series of distressing photos and short films Lisette put together for Twitter – showing the

impacts of foxes on Echidnas. In the series filmed in 2022 a female echidna digs a nursery burrow to place her growing puggle into. Soon after two foxes locate the adult Echidna there. The story ends with one of the foxes digging deeply into the nursery burrow and taking the Puggle.

The thread of this story went viral – achieving over 15,000 views in 24 hours. It was then picked up by The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, and other regional newspapers – spreading this series of films to an interested online audience.

Native biodiversity has been impacted by agriculture. Some are winners and many have been losers. But to counter the whip-up of loss being the only tale to tell, agriculture needs to tell its story of biodiversity custodianship and keep telling it year after year. This is what Rowensville Stud has been able to do with help from Landcare – and it has benefited them both in access to grants to do more to help Bandicoots, other biodiversity, the reserve, and the farm business. It has also reached far beyond the farm; shown people who aren't on the land what the challenges are to looking after biodiversity; and boosted the reputation of livestock agriculture as biodiversity custodians more broadly. The stories have also enabled other local producers to follow the lead of the Rowbottoms' work and develop their own biodiversity projects supported by grants.

Lisette Mill
@agvocate_au

Rowensville
Ultra Fine Merino Stud Brucellosis Accredited Free no. 3526
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David & Susan Rowbottom - 185 Barkers Rd, St Helens, Victoria
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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture contributed 17.4% of Australia’s GHG emissions in 2022. Enteric methane was the main source of agricultural emissions (68%), with the livestock sector, particularly ruminants, being the largest contributor. (Source: Department of Climate Change, Energy 2022). This paper provides an update on AWI research in the carbon space.

AWI RESEARCH

HISTORICAL

AWI undertook and published a cradle-to-grave life cycle assessment for the wool industry in 2020, bringing together a decade of research into wool’s environmental footprint over all life stages of wool clothing. This study confirmed GHG emissions from the farming stage to be a key hotspot for our industry, leading to significant AWI research investment into reducing on-farm emissions.

AWI-funded research on the Australian sheep industry’s GHG footprint is also providing the data needed to inform the Sheep Sustainability Framework’s goal of reducing net GHG emissions.

REDUCING THE FLOCK’S EMISSIONS

The Australian sheep industry requires a range of methane mitigation approaches that can significantly reduce methane

emissions, raise productivity and be safe for sheep, in order to deliver climate change goals and market expectations. They need to be scalable and economical, easy to implement and effective in grazing sheep.

With this intent, AWI coordinated formation of the National Sheep Methane Program (NSMP), which is a collaborative research effort including the University of Western Australia (UWA), Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA), NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the University of New England (UNE), together with AWI.

Utilising \$3m of AWI seed funding, approximately \$6m of Federal Government grant funding has been obtained to enable researchers to explore the most promising methane mitigating supplements and delivery mechanisms to grazing sheep.

We are still in the early stages of the NSMP’s 5-year program but initial results look promising. For example, recent work on the supplement Asparagopsis has demonstrated that once the sheep are familiarised with the feeding trailers, emissions were reduced by ~ 50%, when sheep returned to the trailer for feeding twice a day.

AWI’s longer term investment in improving sheep reproductive productivity has also been shown to have reduced emissions. The outcome of extension programs such as ‘Lifetime Ewe Management’ and ‘Ramping up repro’ has generated an estimated 9% reduction in wool’s emission intensity over the 15 years from 2005 to 2020.

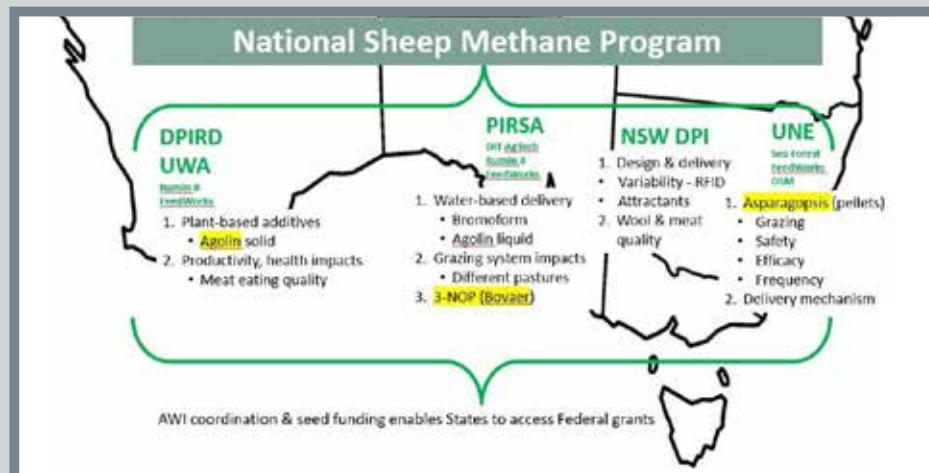
OFFSETTING THE FLOCK’S EMISSIONS

AWI is collaborating with MLA and other investors in identifying the most effective ways for producers to store carbon in their soil and vegetation. Projects such as the Carbon Storage Partnership and Farming for the Future are seeking to identify regionally relevant interventions for producers to both store carbon and increase biodiversity (in different climatic zones and with different enterprise mixes).

This work stream is also analysing the relationship between on-farm natural capital and farm profitability. It aims to minimise risk for producers who’re seeking to reduce their carbon footprint and will hopefully enable woolgrowers to sell their wool for a premium as well as access new income streams.

CLIMATE CHANGE			
Priority	Reduce Net GHG Emissions		
Indicator	Data	Status	Source
4.1.1 Contribution of sheep production to GHG emissions			
4.1.1a Net emissions: Mt of CO ₂ e generated by sheep industry (farm and sheepmeat processing)	9.49Mt CO ₂ e	●	CSIRO 2020
4.1.1b Emission intensity: kg of CO ₂ e emitted per kg liveweight (LW) when raising sheep	6.8kg CO ₂ e/kg LW	★	Integrity Ag 2020
4.1.1c Emission intensity: kg of CO ₂ e emitted per kg greasy wool shorn	24.4kg CO ₂ e/kg greasy wool	★	Integrity Ag 2020

Source: Sheep Sustainability Framework Annual Report 2023



ASSESSING THE FARM’S EMISSIONS AND SEQUESTRATIONS

Farmers need to understand both their emissions and sequestrations to establish their net position – which in turn helps inform decisions such as seeking to achieve carbon neutrality. Research suggests the barriers to achieving carbon neutrality are high (i.e. giving over 25% of the form to forest regeneration may be required), however, reductions in emissions can generate carbon credits, with full neutrality not being required.

Looking at the two sides of the carbon equation, emissions are easier to measure than sequestrations. Several carbon calculators for assessing emissions are now available. Agriculture Innovation Australia (AIA) are currently seeking to develop an industry-wide carbon calculator to provide a common methodology for farmers, foresters and fishers to assess their emissions, as well as integrate the data into existing farm management software.

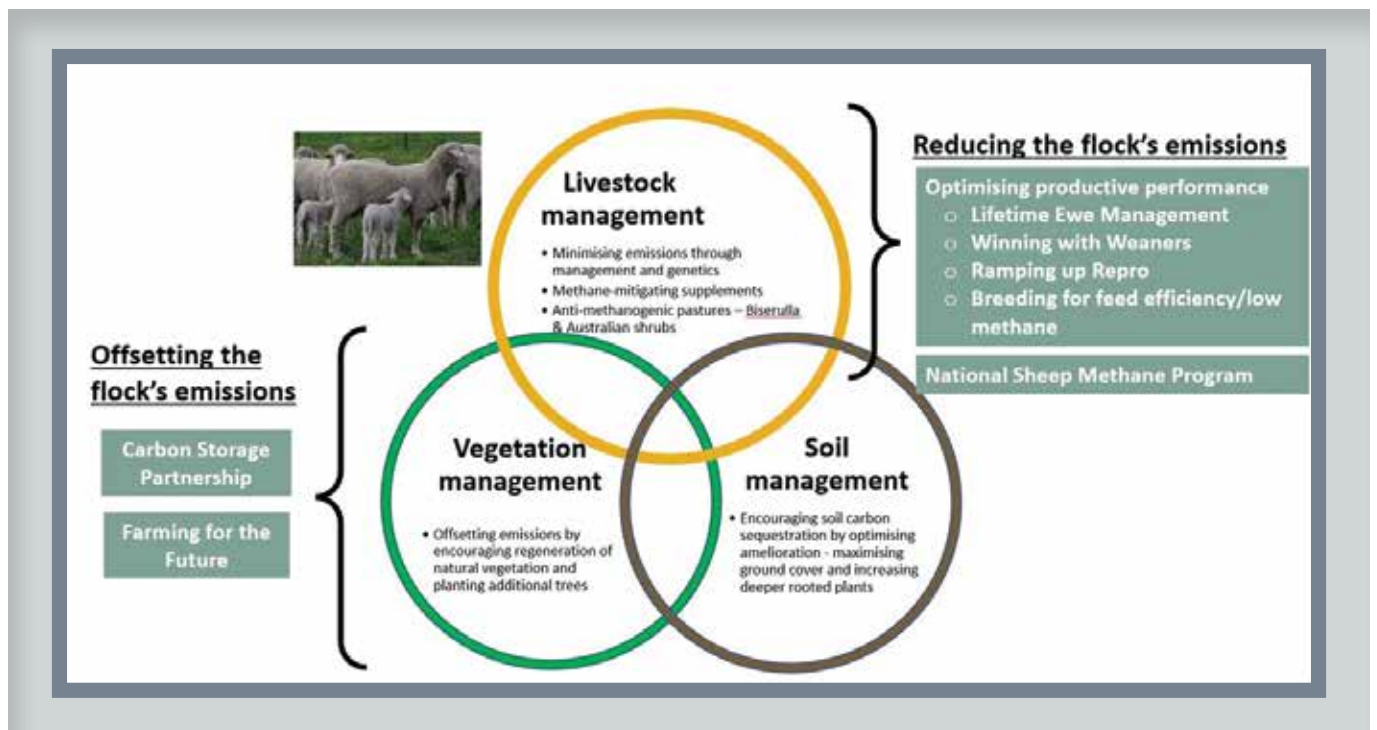
AWI invested in the discovery phase of AIA’s project but are not investing in building the tool. MLA have recently developed a tool with similar functionality to AIA’s proposed calculator, which will work for most woolgrowers.

In contrast to assessing emissions, measuring and monitoring carbon sequestration into the farm is labour intensive and expensive – requiring a level of investment that’s a barrier to entry to carbon markets for many small to medium sized operators.

Addressing this barrier is a cross-sectoral issue, which AWI is promoting at forums like the Emerging National Rural Issues forum (ENRI) to encourage broader collaborative research and funding to address this key need.

Angus Ireland

Program Manager, Fibre Advocacy and Eco Credentials, AWI



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International Sustainability

Consultant's View On The Future Of Superfine Merino Wool

"Many fashion companies want to use lower impact materials with full traceability, and I think wool is the absolute best material there is".

This was the introductory statement from an international sustainability consultant with a focus on high fashion clients, Ms Lisa Bergstrand, prior to visiting Talaheni in February 2023. I am sure such words are heartening to the ears of all wool growers particularly as Lisa is almost an Australian antipodean (means 'relating to Australia or New Zealand' – could be seen as tautology) from Sweden.

Although this view has been actively promoted by Australian Wool Innovation (www.wool.com/about-awi/media-resources/news/fashions-sustainability-focus/) for some time, it is more reassuring when a leading international fashion consultant who works with a wide range of materials with clients in the United States, United Kingdom and European Union as well as Scandinavia, is actively promoting the sustainability virtues of wool. This sentiment is captured in the mission statement of Bergstrand Consultancy which is to make the fashion industry sustainable without compromising on beauty or creativity.

In commenting on our efforts at Talaheni to produce superfine Merino wool in an ecologically sustainable manner, Lisa said, "On my many trips to Merino farms around the world, I select farms that are leading the way in regard to the quality of their wool, the care of their animals, and the way the farms use their land. On this trip I had the opportunity to visit farms that are a part of Natural Capital Accounting project, and I saw clever work on how farmers have restored their land and work with biodiversity and regenerative practices. Every farm has its unique challenges and regenerative farming has no "one-model-fits-all," as it is very dependent on conditions such as landscape, vegetation and soil of the farm."

"Most farms I visit have over 10,000 sheep. To see Talaheni with its 800 Superfine Merinos gave me a wider perspective on the types of farms that are practising progressive ways of farming. I am familiar with Merino farms producing 18- or 19-micron wool, so to visit a farm that has a focus on producing sub-14-micron wool in an ecologically sustainable landscape is something that will be of huge interest to my clients."

In responding to the question of the fashion industry's current objectives, Lisa offered, "From inside the fashion industry there is a shift from doing "less bad" to proactively using materials that are grown in a way that can, for instance, improve soil quality, take up carbon and increase biodiversity".

"More and more fashion brands are calculating their CO2 emissions. Unfortunately, the available data for wool is based on conventional farming and is not making wool look attractive compared to other fibres, resulting in brands still prioritising petroleum-based fibres and other materials."

"Merino farmers who switch their practices to a more holistic management of their land, shunning pesticides and insecticides whenever possible, avoiding land clearing, keeping ground cover, regularly rotating mobs to promote pasture recovery, as well as highly valuing animal welfare,



Lisa Bergstrand learning about Talaheni from John Ive

are in a strong position to take advantage of the fashion brands' needs."

"If farmers measure how much carbon their farms sequester, such as at Talaheni*, they will be able to sell their wool for a higher price since this will be requested more and more as brands aim for more comprehensive data and reporting."

"Fashion brands are seeking to have all raw materials reliably traced all the way to their production, including the actual farm producing wool, which is currently rare owing to the way the majority of wool is sold through brokers making it hard to trace it down to the exact farm that is doing things in the right way, such as at Talaheni."

It is timely that the e-bale system (www.awex.com.au/media/2202/3173-media-release-digital-traceability-system-to-give-australian-wool-the-edge.pdf) being introduced by Australian Wool Exchange in July 2023 will overcome these past difficulties by providing digital traceability from farm to retailer thereby offering Australian wool growers a marketing edge.

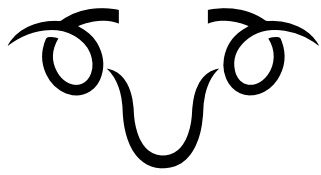
Lisa's concluding remarks were: "The fashion brands I work with will not stop using Merino wool. For all its natural properties and its creative possibilities, it is one of the best materials there is. But brands at the forefront of sustainability are increasingly demanding that Merino wool is produced in a way that respects the animals and the land. Therefore, it is not about whether we use Merino wool, but rather where and how the wool is produced."

"Talaheni is an example, which has been backed by studies from the University of Melbourne*, of how Superfine Merino wool can be one of the most sustainable materials when it is farmed correctly."

More on Bergstrand Consultancy sustainability operation can be found at their informative website: www.bergstrand-consultancy.com and in a previous article on Lisa's visit to Talaheni that appeared in The Land (www.theland.com.au/story/8102221/swede-impressed-with-merino-eco-credentials/). Incidentally if you are thinking this might be just a one-off, an even more persuasive recent article adds further support to this increasing international trend: Can regenerative wool make fashion more sustainable? - BBC Future.

*See: <https://www.publish.csiro.au/an/an15541>

John Ive
Talaheni - 20th April 2023



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Six Generations at Queenlee Stud – New England

HISTORY

QUEENLEE will celebrate 90 years in the sheep stud industry in 2025 and has been breeding fine and superfine merinos for over 150 years. The Queenlee Stud (named after Leo & Queenie Carlon) was established in 1935. The foundation sire was purchased at the Sydney Ram Sales by the late Leo Carlon, from Merryville Stud Boorowa NSW and came from the 'Silky' family. Since being founded in 1935 on Merryville and Tasmanian bloodlines, Merryville genetics continue to breed on at Queenlee, making up the oldest family bloodlines consistently breeding quality rams, ewes and wethers.

The stud was passed to Leo's son Tony and is now owned and managed by his son Philip Carlon who wouldn't be anywhere else, despite the unrelenting challenges of the past five years!! Drought, bushfires, mice plague, floods, COVID, labour shortages, market disruption, exponential rise in production costs / low commodity prices... the list seems endless; but with all this, Philip remains optimistic about the future of the merino industry and is committed to breeding and growing productive, profitable merino sheep.

When Tony and Barbara inherited Queenlee it was 2,150 acres (running about 4000 sheep). Today the family farms over 8,000 acres, running approximately 10,000 ewes. The family sadly lost Tony in 2016. He was a passionate Superfine man, but also appreciated the merits of many good Merinos. He loved all aspects of the stud game and especially cherished his friendships with fellow stud breeders.

Barb still helps on the property and is still wool rolling in 2023. She shows up most of the young ones in the shed and the kids laugh and yell, "Come on Mum - Granmum is going around you." Haha.

THE QUEENLEE STUD

This year Queenlee will shear around 20,000 Merinos and have totally depleted their cattle numbers since the 2019 drought to focus on their sheep. Queenlee's aims have always been to breed large superfine sheep with good constitution, good bone and covered with a stylish, dense, soft handling wool. The aim is to maintain their average micron of 17, maintain crimp frequency (70s-74s visually) and keep improving fleece weight and body weight in both their merino and poll merino sheep. It is also imperative that the sheep and their fleece are capable of handling the high rainfall and cold winter conditions of the New England.

Philip Carlon said this year's rams are doing well in the varied conditions; they were shorn early



August and the fleeces looked good on the wool table. Agents say that Queenlee sheep provide the opportunity to maximise return for wool and meat. They display great uniformity and their size and evenness of quality wool is outstanding. The fleeces are free growing and softness is a feature. The Queenlee genetics are stable and well based with subtle improvements and refinements continuing each year.

In 2022, Queenlee cut its largest wool clip ever which is a credit to their management program. Testament to the breeding and performance of their sheep is from their clients selling surplus sheep for premium prices. Repeat buyers at the Queenlee Ram Sale have been quoted as saying, "They have been using Queenlee rams for around 20 years and found the wool quality, cut and style of the Queenlee rams to have a positive influence on their flock." Another client described the rams as "growthy, heavy cutting, with bright wool".

THE QUEENLEE POLL STUD

In 2020, Queenlee introduced the first Poll genetics establishing their Poll Stud and are very happy with the results over the past three years. Foundation genetics have been sourced from Laraben & Wurrook Poll Merino Studs. Queenlee will replicate selection criteria from their horned stud, using AI annually to choose superior genetics and strict selection of their progeny, to breed quality fine and superfine Poll merinos. The Polls were introduced for ease of management while handling rams, as well as aiming to boost early maturity, growth and production.

FUTURE GENERATIONS

Philip and wife Jenni's four children (three sons and a daughter) are the sixth generation on Queenlee. Their eldest son Tom has been helping work the property for the past seven years; he has been following Philip around the farm since he was two, he



is Philip's right-hand man and is a very capable wool grower and passionate about the farm and merinos.

Joe is completing a double degree at Newcastle University, working on Queenlee during holidays and on weekends when he has time. He has been a driving force for Queenlee to start a Poll Merino Stud and very dedicated to ram selection and wool quality.

Sam is working on Queenlee for his gap year, since finishing school last year at Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School. He is proving to be a valuable member of the team, and the most challenging thing about working on the farm for Sam, is the early starts and dragging himself out of bed. Izzy is number four and also loves the farm and working with the kelpies. She would prefer to be working than going to school most days. She is a great little worker and has aspirations of doing something animal- or vet-related in the years ahead.

THE CURRENT SEASON

The Carlons are hoping for some good summer rain, to boost feed and dams on the property. Like all areas and growers, they try to stay positive and hope the season will not turn, with the BOM still not ruling out an El Nino at the end of the year.

Check out Queenlee's Facebook page for updates, as Queenlee will again be part of the New England Merino Field Days on 13 January 2024, and their 35th Annual Queenlee On-Property Ram Sale on Tuesday 13 February 2024. Queenlee is Footrot and Bruceellis Free and OJD status MN3.

Queenlee has been a member of ASWGA since its inception (over 50 years) and congratulates the Association on its continuing support of Superfine woolgrowers.

Jenni Carlon



Queenlee Silky
1935 foundation sire



Queenlee Ringmaster
Champion Superfine Ram

Ararat/Barunah

As our region spans a fairly wide area I have got a bit of feedback from different members within the region itself.

Sherrie and Tom Spielvogel, from Elaine/Morrison's, wrote how they have had an incredibly wet winter last year, that just blended into an even wetter spring. Their weather records indicated that during October, their area received the most rain since the 1950s. As a result of all this wet, the lambing percentages were low and the only farm work that seemed to be undertaken was continually pulling out bogged vehicles. They proceeded to have a green summer and just as it started to dry off towards the end of February, the autumn break arrived. This, coupled with lingering warm and intermittent sunny days, has ensured that the sheep are in great condition and the paddocks have had magnificent growth as they head into winter.

Jim and Sandra Ranken, who live next door to Tom and Sherrie, concur that the season over there has been wonderful. They also added that their wool selling season has been exceptional, with not only their wool selling for a fantastic price but also the wool from the sheep of their clients, of whom use the rams that have been bred on Jim and Sandra's property, "Hidden Valley".

Over here in the Metcalfe/Sutton Grange region, we also had a wet winter and spring. Come December the grass was ready to dry off and did so very quickly, unfortunately with all the dry feed we ended up with a lot of grass seed in the wool for the February shearing. We had a good break in April and it seemed like it was going to be a great start. However, it stopped raining after the second week and didn't rain again for another six weeks, thankfully it came in the nick of time and we have not looked back. The countryside looks fantastic and the sheep have bounced back beautifully.

A huge congratulations to the Barty Family who won the national pairs at Bendigo last year, along with many other ribbons as well. Also, congratulations to Russell and Penny Hartwich for their win of the Fleece competition for our region at this year's ASWGA dinner in Tasmania.



Russell and Penny Hartwich, Mark Waters



Alex Lewis and John Barty holding the winning pair



Hamilton

Winter 2022 started well, being not too wet, but was still cool with enough feed for the sheep to be doing well enough without hand feeding.

But late August, it got wet, which is good as usually September warms up and dries out. But not in 2022, it just kept raining.

In late September/early October, some local swans built a nest in a swamp, at least eight weeks late and the chicks still made it to being able to fly before the foxes could get to the nest. As a result, the later Spring shorn sheep had a lot of mud on them.

All lambs born in the late Winter and Spring did not grow as well as normally, due to lack of sunshine and quality feed. The prime lambs in the area took longer to get to and fewer were at marketable weight by early January. Crop yields were adversely affected by the late rain; wheat and canola yields were down considerably on previous years.

The Summer again in early January and February was cool and Hamilton failed to get to 40C. Cool wet Summers with large amounts of dry cover on the ground are making it hard to get good worm control, putting more pressure on controlling the worms in Winter. One plus is that in the last two years, the fire season has been very short.

The season break was an early one in March, saving a lot of hand feeding with good grass growth before Winter. All was looking very good, sheep were in good order, wool prices had dropped a bit, but not too bad considering what was going on in the world. Mutton and Lamb were a bit lower than we would like, but they had been very high, so all in all it was ok.

Then the end of May hit. Wool went down more, Sheep and Lamb prices were down to low levels, interest rates were still rising and the rain would not stop. Some areas in the South West have broken June records going back 140 years.

Shearers are becoming more available to remove the wool off the sheep, but the costs have risen substantially. Good wool handlers that can prepare Superfine wool well are getting harder to find, as most only want to prepare wool the same as the Crossbred wool in the area, sweep up locks and put the fleece straight into the press.

People's confidence has been rocked, then add in the debate about where the ASWGA is headed with membership rules, and some people in Western Victoria are thinking, "What is the future of Superfine wool?"



Bradley and Todd Venning, Mark Waters

On a positive note, some of our branch members have done very well at different events.

The Mibus family took home twelve broad ribbons from the Australian Sheep & Wool Show, including:

- Grand Champion Ultra Fine Ewe
- Junior Champion Ewe of the Show
- Reserve Victorian Pair
- Reserve Champion Victorian Ram

They also did well at the Ballarat Sheep Show, taking out Supreme Ram.

David and Susan Rowbottom have again done very well at the Zegna VA, taking out first prize again with a record 9.4 micron fleece. Aaron & Rebecca Rowbottom also did well, taking out second place.

Everard & Marilyn, Matthew & TJ Linke achieved 7 1PP bales of wool this year, an exceptional result given the season in which it was grown.

The Venning Family of "Kilmarnock" achieved good results in the ASWGA fleece competition, winning the 74's section.

Ram sales in the Spring and early Summer were good, with good sales and clearances at "Sierra Park" in February and "Glenara" in October.

The Superfine wool industry is struggling to attract young people to stay involved in growing the wool that was once produced in a very large area west of Melbourne. Young people who are growing Merino wool seem to want to grow 18-20 micron bold crimping wool and 100-120 mm long with a lambing percentage of 120-150%, not the fine crimping 80-90mm wools that the area used to grow.

However, we still have a small and dedicated group of Superfine growers in South West Victoria who will still grow some well-prepared Superfine wool into the future.



Goulburn-Yass

As I sit in the office I can hear the rain falling on the roof and a cold wind is blowing as a usual winter cold front sweeps across southern NSW, with all the talk of El Nina and an onslaught drought being predicted for the near future.

We are in the fourth year in a row of good conditions. The local country is showing the usual hayed off, frost bitten, dry rotting grass left over from last year's great Spring. The current weather pattern, if it continues as we expect, will see another bumper Spring, hopefully a bit drier than last year's.

The stock all look healthy enough and those of us who are supplementing the paddocks with hay, are quietly waiting to see how the quick Autumn turn around impacted on the tensile strength of this year's clip. Generally, across the region, talk of flies and worms centred most conversations I had recently with our members. Barbers Pole has been of concern to most growers - some growers talking of large losses in weaners particularly. Also noted was the number of fly strikes on the shoulders and neck area that saw sheep being blown well into May (noting the first heavy frost occurred early May throughout our region).

The fall in stock prices was also a common refrain I heard through conversation; lambs and cattle were about half the price they were 12 months ago and many fat lambs are unable to find a bid currently. The growers are racing against time to get their weights up with aging milk teeth a barrier.

The wool market is still working well for the local Superfine growers even if it is a 20% reverse on last year, around the same time. Well prepared and classed lines of stylish white wool are regularly making 2,000c per kg greasy in the Sydney Market. However, the large amount of crossbred wool on the market is creating a challenge for all.

Another conversation piece which has been raised by a number of growers, is the age of the growers and the movement of the retiring growers away from the farm and the sell-off of the farm. A number of properties have been sold in the past 12 months for large sums of money. Competing farm interests have seen wool operations disappear and being replaced with cattle and forestry enterprises. The Yass Road and the Hume Highway are a good indicator of the drop off of wool sheep numbers. Recent years have seen massive increases in black cattle and cross bred lambs.

Recent discussions of the lack of shearers and roustabouts seem to have come to a balance with the sheep numbers in the local area. I have seen woolsheds that are shearing at the usual time of the year again. We are starting in just under a month and we will be having 3 three additional roustabouts throughout our shearing to prepare and train these young people in a skill that they can take on through their life.

This year our members have been visited by a number of people who are important to the wool story of our region. In May, representatives of NIKKE Corporation from Japan



Brett and Sue Picker, Mark Waters

travelled to Goulburn and had a dinner engagement with our National President Mark Waters and myself, where discussions covered the purchasing of ASWGA members wool from all regions to fill their requirements. They were very positive about wool and its use in school uniforms in the Japanese school system.

Also in May, Andrew Raeber, who heads Vitale Barberis Canonico (VBC) here in Australia, did a number of property visits to see firsthand the farms, the sheep and of course, the wool. Having been the head of the Victorian arm of New England Wool, he had not seen much of the Southern Tablelands, so he spent a number of days visiting and speaking to growers about their operations. Andrew spent a day with Vicki and myself here at "Kashmir", Wee Jasper and then travelled onto Brett and Sue Picker at "Hillcreston Heights", Bigga. It is a great opportunity to discuss one-on-one where your breeding program and wool quality is heading and to hear how sought after this type of wool is.

In June a number of G-Y members travelled to Tasmania for the annual ASWGA Dinner and Presentation and Farm Tours weekend. Comments from all told how they thoroughly enjoyed the catch-up and wonderful hospitality.

Neil Carey

Mudgee

Our season end of 2022 finished with a very wet couple of months. In a six-week period it turned very, very dry with very little rain recorded.

This meant the season had to start again. In doing so we then suffered a catastrophic fire in the region that burnt out 35,000 hectares with many fences lost. Minimal stock loss due to the terrain plus a lot of the area is owned by non-residential residents with no stock. Overall, 5 – 6 permanent wool producers were heavily affected from partial to total burnout of their properties, over a 2 to 2 and a 1/2-week period.

The season then turned very cold very quickly following receiving a average fall of 30 mm rain. The following frosts have hampered pasture growth. The health of stock, in general, has been good but there has been a lot of hand feeding over the last few months to keep them maintained. The wool from our area this year is going to be down in production but should be finer in micron.

The region lost a long-time serving member of the ASWGA. Mr Ian Price, "Glen-Maye", Sally's Flat, passed away in February this year. Mr Price was a hard-working member of the Mudgee branch of AWSGA. He was also a Council member from 1991-2003 and again in 2014. He was a strong advocate for superfine wool and the Association. Ian, Valerie and family were also winners of the prestigious Ermenegildo Zegna Award. Ian also played a huge role in the local community being captain and group captain of the local bush fire brigade for many, many years. He was also the go-to man for any community projects. He loved the region, his wool and especially his family. He will be missed dearly. Our condolences to Valerie and family.

Congratulations again go to the Hundy Family on winning the Mudgee Region ASWGA Fleece Competition.

- Geoff & Robyn Rayner
- Sydney Royal Easter Show
- 2023 Winner Brian Devereux Memorial Prize
- 3rd Place – Pairs Competition (March shorn)
- Australian Sheep & Wool Show 2023
- Junior Champion Ultra Fine Wool Ram (August shorn)
- Reserve Junior Champion Ultra Fine Wool Ram (March shorn)
- Champion Ultra Fine Wool Ram (March shorn)
- Reserve Champion Superfine Wool Ram (March shorn)

Geoff Rayner
 Chair



Ian Price, 1934 – 2023



Pomanara's Brian Devereux Memorial Prize fleece



Andrew and Penny Hundy, winners ASWGA Fleece Competition, Mudgee Region, with Mark Symes



Geoff Rayner with Champion Ram, 2023 Sydney Royal Easter Show

New England

As we report on activities in the New England region over the past twelve months, it is worth noting that whilst many outcomes are as one would expect, the most variable relates to climatic conditions and particularly their effect on sheep markets.

SEASONAL CONDITIONS

Following on from last year's report, the wetter conditions experienced over the past couple of years continued through to December 2022. Once again, this created challenges for sheep producers, particularly in the NE Region.

These challenges included mixed outcomes following the spring lambing period, with lambing percentages generally below the norm. With warmer moist conditions in later Spring the ongoing issues with internal parasites in sheep, continues to challenge the management options available to Superfine producers.

Sheep, by nature, particularly young sheep do not always thrive in these wetter years, particularly with such an abundance of pasture. Much slashing of the pastures, along with the utilisation of cattle has helped opening-up paddocks to wean younger sheep.

The January to June period of 2023 has seen a decrease in moisture with a return to dryer rainfall patterns for the Autumn. The current predictions are for a return to "El Nino" phase later in the year, but hopefully not of the levels of the 2018/19 drought years.

SUPERFINE WOOL MARKET

The volatility in the wool market continues with variations on a weekly basis very common. The Superfine end of the market has generally held, particularly the lower micron 13/14 region. The changing fashion trends that we see consumers following do not offer the opportunities to trigger a surge in demand, so a boost in Superfine prices appears somewhat elusive.

Coupled with world events including trading relationships, shipping costs, talk of global recession and the ongoing instability around the world, particularly with the Russia and Ukraine tensions, it appears our great product will suffer from sluggish demand for the foreseeable future.

The 17/18-micron indicators are currently around 500 to 600c clean. below levels seen in May 2022.

With such high input costs, particularly shearing expenses, it is little wonder that Superfine producers are looking at alternatives, namely growing more wool per head and not necessarily the traditional types of Superfine.

The part played by quality assurance schemes and mulesed versus non-mulesed, is not necessarily helping the outcomes for the Superfine grower who has the ability to grow the best wool in the world in the New England region.



Lesleann and Mark Waters, winners of the ASWGA Fleece Competition

RAM SALES AND SHEEPMET PRICES

As a consequence of the increasing sheep numbers as producers rebuild flocks following the 18/19 drought years, the supply and demand situation has eased. The result is a massive drop in sheepmeat prices which has also impacted on replacement prices for Superfine stud ram breeders.

In many instances superfine ram prices and clearance rates have seen a considerable downturn with the reduced demand.

ALTERNATIVE RENEWABLE ENERGY

With a worldwide push for a reduction in pollutants and the Governments plan for a 43% emissions reduction below 2005 levels in Australia by 2030, we are seeing a massive push into renewable sources of energy.

Such a drive from State and Federal Governments for these renewables has resulted in a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) being developed, the largest by far, in the New England region. Such a large REZ (6,500 Sq km) is resulting in many Superfine growers considering transforming large areas of their properties to wind and solar farms, with significant compensation paid for the life of this technology, normally around 25 years.

Apart from causing unfortunate social breakup within some local communities due to the placement and returns from wind towers and solar farms, they are also occupying some of the most productive country which has for many generations grown some of the best wool that the New England has produced. The graveyard of renewable infrastructure left behind following 25 years' time is also raising many concerns.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSES

Many NE Region members came together socially pre-Christmas at Dobson's Distillery at Kentucky to celebrate another year of hard work growing our beautiful fibre. A cheery time was had by all in attendance along with the most impressive "Ploughman's Lunch" ever placed before us, featuring predominately local produce.

While only a few New England Merino Studs were in attendance at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, it is of note



that a special presentation was awarded to Leo and Judy Blanch of “Westvale Merino Stud”, commemorating forty years of attendance and exhibiting at this event.

Also of note, Cameron Gall from “Wilson’s Creek” was selected to contest the AWEX National Wool Classing Competition, held at the Royal Easter Show. Competing against the ten finalists from around Australia, Cameron was placed a very credible third placing. Cameron is also a representative of the Superfine Growers on the AWI Wool Consultative Group, attending meetings as required throughout the year.

NEW MEMBERS

A big welcome to new members, Euan Anderson from Outer Rockvale (who has taken over his family’s Superfine flock) and Mark and Victoria Condon. Mark is an accredited Master Classer and we are so fortunate he and Victoria decided to move north.

ASWGA ANNUAL FARM TOURS AND AWARDS PRESENTATION – Tasmania:

The Annual get together of members and industry personalities in Tasmania in early June attracted around twenty attending from the New England Region. A most informative and entertaining few days was had by all who attended this very well-organised event.



Cam Gall receiving his classing award, Sydney Royal Show

The ASWGA Fleece Awards saw Mark and Lesleann Waters taking out the 70’s Category and ultimately the Grand Champion Fleece Award. A big congratulations to Mark and Lesleann achieving this success during such a busy schedule attending to the duties as our National President.

The New England Region also passes on our congratulations to two of our members who achieved top placings in the Zegna Awards. Clive and Margaret Smith of “Mulgowan”, Amiens, Queensland achieved second placing, whilst Dave and Angie Waters, of “Tarrangower Merinos”, Hillgrove, achieving fourth placing.

Members in the region are indebted to our long-serving office bearers, Cathy Hayne as

Chairman and Janet Gall as Secretary / Treasurer. Cathy’s passion and involvement across so many areas of the industry are applauded whilst simultaneously running her property “Monterey”, at Halls Creek near Manilla.

Tony Gall
 Wilson’s Creek
 (Past President ASWGA)



Leo Blanch



2023 Champion of the RAS



Leo and Judy Blanch



Leo with his award Photo: Monde Photo

In a post script to the New England Report we are pleased to advise that earlier this year Leo Blanch was made 2023 Champion of the Royal Agricultural Society.

He has been involved with the RAS Sheep Section for over 43 years. This included 20 years as a Sheep Steward from 1977 to 1997 at the Moore Park Showgrounds. In 1998, when the show moved to Sydney Olympic Park, Leo and his wife Judy commenced exhibiting their 'Westvale' merino sheep which they have now done for 23 years. We are reliably informed (by their son Andrew) they will be back at the RAS in 2024.

Well done, Leo and Judy. Congratulations from the ASWGA.

REGIONAL REPORTS

South Australia

South Australia has enjoyed a good year for the most weatherwise. 2022 ended being very wet in a lot of areas, especially where I am situated in the Adelaide Hills.

One of the wettest springs we have had for many years. This made life interesting - trying to finish shearing and hay making. Shearing started well in the second week of October, managed to get a full week in then it was a case of shearing on Mondays for the next three weeks to finish. Had to shed up on Saturday for the Monday, as it would rain and then took the rest of the week for the sheep to dry. All mustering was done on the bike as too wet to even drive in paddocks. Hay was the same, normally done early November, was nearly Christmas by the time the tractors could get into paddocks. Unfortunately, by this time the quality not as good as it was when normally done.

Very pleased with the wool results, our micron seems to have stabilised at low 17s over the past few years now and we had a reasonable cut due to a good season. Unfortunately, prices did not reflect that and were down considerably from 2021. As were sheep prices by the time we sold off shears. Lamb prices held firm though. Since then, we have seen a decline in the strong cattle prices that we were getting here in 2022.

It was great to go through the summer with some green feed - a rarity to say the least. The sheep remained in great condition and didn't need too much feeding through the autumn. Water was also plentiful with dams filling up in 2022. A good problem to have.

Lambing has been a strong one this year; most people that I have spoken to have all enjoyed good lambings with lots of twins and triplets. We have had five sets here which is extremely rare for us. The ewes have remained strong and lambed with a fair amount of ease and losses very minimal. Weather has been good, not too cold with hardly a frost. Rain has come at the right times and not too damaging, although the last 24 hours* has been a bit wild, some areas in the Adelaide Hills have had 100 mm in the last day. Fortunately, most have either finished lambing or are well through Fair to say the paddocks are now wet and water running. (*written last week of June 2023)

Am looking forward to a solid wool cut and hopefully prices pick up. However, with all that is going on who knows? We have just been informed that power bills will be increasing by 25% and fuel prices keep going up as are a lot of the products we use. Makes things a lot tougher, that's for sure.

Wishing you all a good year and stay safe.

Nick Seager



Alysha supervising the lamb bar

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Wool Growing Region has experienced another good year with higher than average rainfall, although at times this proved problematic.

The abundant feed and wet paddocks increased the worm burden and dags in the sheep. The shortage of shearers and ongoing wet weather made it difficult to manage, with long waits on crutching and shearing crews. Throughout this wet period it was also a challenge to get paddocks prepared for fodder crops resulting in cropping being delayed. An easing in the rainfall by mid-autumn saw paddocks drying off.

The higher quality Tasmanian Superfine wools have continued to receive solid support over the past year. Post COVID consumer confidence in Europe was extremely positive, driving retail sales and pull through demand with many processing mills reporting their highest volume of sales in decades. Greasy prices reacted accordingly, lifting to within reach of their 2018 peak. The supply of good spec, best style fine wools is down year on year, as variable seasonal conditions have affected colour, length and strength; this has ensured that Tasmanian wools continue to receive good support in the marketplace not only for quality but also for provenance. From Tasmania “Glen Stuart” and “Barega” featured in the top national auction prices for the current season, along with being in the top five finest micron sold at 12.8 microns. Prices overall have seen a downward trend in the past six months while the cost of goods continues to increase.

Tasmania had the pleasure of hosting the ASWGA Annual Dinner, Fleece Competition and farm visits in early June 2023. We were fortunate the Zegna Fleece Competition was held in conjunction with this event. We are extremely proud that this year’s winners of the 2023 Zegna Superfine Wool Trophy were Simon and Ann Louise Cameron of “Kingston”, Tasmania and the ASWGA Tasmanian Regional Wool Award was won by Allan and Carol Phillips, “Glen Stuart”. In total Tasmania had three finalists in the top ten of the Zegna Competition. Sam and Melanie Nicolson from “Bonney’s Plains were a first-time finalist, achieving a sixth place.



Allan Phillips and Mark Waters

Finally, on behalf of the ASWGA Tasmanian Region, I had the great pleasure in presenting two awards to grower members. The first was an Honorary Life Membership to John Taylor in recognition of his dedication to the Wool Industry and 50 years’ membership of the Association. The second award was to Allan and Carol Phillips in recognition of their outstanding achievements and contribution to the Superfine wool growing industry in Tasmania. Both awards were presented by Paolo Zegna at the ASWGA Dinner and Fleece Competition.

Marie Boadle
President TFMB

P.S. Since writing this report we have had our AGM. I am very pleased to report that there has been generational change with Anna Cotton becoming President and Rachael Bowler the Secretary.

PPS Congratulations to our members, Sam and Mel Nicolson, for taking out the recently announced Clipex Woolgrowers of the Year award.



This year, the Tasmanian Fine Merino Breeders' Association honours one of its most revered members, John Taylor with Honorary Life Membership. John is a stalwart of the Superfine wool industry with a career spanning several decades and he can be justly proud as the fifth generation of his family's carriage of the "Winton" stud established in 1835: it is 188 years old this year.

A dedicated and passionate steward of his family property, "Winton" and its iconic merino stud, John's involvement dates from his school days in the 1960s, when he assisted in preparing and presenting "Winton" sheep entries at shows and sales, which continued for over fifty years.

In 1972, Following a two-year stint of National Service, the 24-year-old John was asked to return home to run the "Winton" property.

His early days running the property were challenging as the 1970s was one of the most difficult periods in the wool industry; when wool sold for 30 cents per kilogram, the Wool Corporation held huge quantities of Superfine wool in its stockpile and ram sales fell dramatically. Another particularly difficult period followed in the 1990s with high interest rates, more droughts, the collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme and a very fickle wool market.

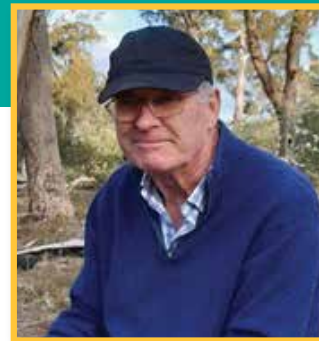
For forty years John continued his work at "Winton", unlike his forebears who had family members to assist, in terms of hands-on farming work, John was on his own. Never truly on his own, as his wife of 48 years, Vera, provided steadfast support to John.

From the earliest days, John recognised that wool buyers would continue to value high quality, Superfine Saxon merino wool, and therefore he had the imperative to maintain and improve the bloodlines of the "Winton" Saxon stud, to produce good quality stock readily available for stud and commercial flocks. He has said 'the strength of the Saxon sheep genetics enabled the survival of the stud'. John's inherent knowledge grew with experience.

John considered it a compliment to the stud when the name "Winton" was used for top fine wool fabric processed in Japan; "Winton" Wool Fairs in Japan and the well-known "Winton" Dinners held in Launceston during the 1970s until the 1990s. Under John's watch special recognition has been acknowledged for the "Winton" Stud.



Taylor clan at the ASWGA Dinner



In 2005, the IWTO used a "Winton" ram as its symbol; in 2009 the "Winton" stud was presented a Tasmanian Heritage Icon Award, and in 2010, "Winton" was filmed by AWI to promote Women and Wool in China. The bronze Eliza Forlong and a Ram statue sited in Campbell Town in 2013 was modeled on a "Winton" ram after much consultation between sculptor Peter Corlette and John.

John was particularly delighted when "Winton" was invited to become part of a niche marketing opportunity promoting pure Saxon wool products through the Escorial Company. This was at the forefront of specialised supply chains from "property to garment" offered by various companies. This helped assure the future of Saxon wool as one of the premier noble fibres, and the concept continues today between "Winton" and Vitale Barberis Canonico as well as other Australian wool growing enterprises.

John has supported important fleece competitions. From its inaugural year in 1963, "Winton" entered fleeces in the Zegna fleece award competition for 53 years until 2016 when the competition changed, requiring the entry of a complete bale of wool. John is a keen-eyed, much valued judge of both sheep and wool.

In addition to strategic and visionary hard work on the family property, John took a diligent approach to being an industry representative.

From 1967 John was a long-serving committee member of the Midlands Agricultural Association, then from 1973 John was a member of the TFMBA and ASWGA for over forty years, serving on the governing councils of both and having multiple terms as President of the TFMBA. Within this role he represented Tasmanian woolgrowers nationally and in Japan, South Korea and South Africa.

John was the TFMBA delegate to the Australian Association of Stud Merino Breeders for thirteen years prior to the formation in 1986 of the Stud Merino Breeders Association of Tasmania of which John was the inaugural President. Another four years as national delegate saw his tenure as TFMBA representative on the national scene extend to seventeen years.

John was President of the ASWGA in 2014 and 2015. He retired from Council just a few years ago after 43 years of commitment. John is very well read on all aspects of the sheep and wool industry. His recollection of those he has met in the industry around the world is encyclopaedic and he and Vera have been warm, gracious hosts to many interested sheep and wool visitors welcomed to "Winton" and Tasmania.

John's lifetime of commitment to the prosperity of Saxon sheep sees his intimate knowledge and recollection of the sheep bred over the years now being passed on to the next Taylor generations at "Winton".

Marie Boadle

2023 saw the retirement of Allan and Carol Phillips from wool growing on their Tasmanian property, "Glen Stuart". Allan has penned a few notes on his and Carol's time at the farm.

I grew up on the family farm, "Currawong", at Tatyoon in Western Victoria. It was a mixed farm focused on Superfine wool production based on Sierra Park Saxon bloodlines.

I completed Year 12 (1980) at boarding school in Ballarat and returned home to the farm to help my father, also Allan, who was suffering from some health issues.

My brother Geoff returned three years later, also after completing Year 12. It was during this period that I think we both developed that real passion for Superfine wool. We listened to many people in the industry and learned a lot, always trying to keep an open mind.

Shortly afterwards we both travelled overseas, but at different times. We visited Italian and English mills which were making beautiful fabrics from Superfine wool. Seeing the wonderful product and passion from the businesses' owners over there only strengthened our interest in the fibre and our desire to produce high quality clips.

In those days I remember we concentrated on producing high quality lambswool. We used to spend many hot days sorting through packs of lambswool - very tedious! But it was very rewarding to see it on the show floor.

I married Carol, a city girl, in 1989. It did not take her long to fall in love with the farm and sheep. We continued farming in Tatyoon until 1998 when we made the fairly big decision to buy "Glen Stuart" and move to Tasmania with our three daughters, Jessica (6), Rebecca (4) and Meg (2).

We took 2,000 of our Saxon flock to "Glen Stuart" and our share of the stud. It was an exciting and challenging time but the sheep did well on the native pastures and the wool was very clean and of a higher tensile strength. This had always



been the challenge at Tatyoon.

We were very fortunate in those early years that the prices for Superfine wool were very high to extreme.

It took a couple of years to fully understand the property, quite different from Tatyoon. However once settled in we found that it was capable of producing premium quality wool. This is what we had hoped for and it gave us confidence to pursue our goals of producing the best wool we could grow.

Over the years we achieved some successes, including winning Zegna wool competitions, the New England Ultimate Clip Award, the ASWGA Champion Fleece, the New England Fleece Competition and other fleece awards.

We always concentrated on trying to keep our sheep healthy throughout the year and tweaking genetics to produce the most attractive and desirable wool types.

Over the years our clip preparation improved with feedback from exporters and mills. We were very fortunate to gather an outstanding team of shearers and shed hands. This always made shearing one of the most exciting times of the year.

We have enjoyed our time in the industry, in particular meeting all the passionate people involved. We hope to keep in contact with the many friends we have made and I imagine we will visit Geoff and Heather at Tatyoon fairly often to help with their sheep and wool.

Editors Note:

Modesty is a Phillips' family characteristic. Glen Stuart's many successes especially in Zegna competitions surpass most. Allan has been a contributor to the industry at a state and national level. His willingness to share his experience has helped others to succeed. His local contribution was recognised with the presentation of the Bruce Foster Laincott Memorial Award in 2009. The presentation of a special award at the 2023 Annual Dinner was truly deserved.

Western Australia

REGIONAL REPORTS - TASMANIA

The report is with mixed emotions as the subject of the cancelling of the live sheep export is on all sheep producers' minds.

Many are becoming overstocked with excess sheep being a real problem. Also, the inconsistent prices for wool are putting pressure on growers trying to do their budgets.

On the bright side we had a new couple, Jayden and Stephanie join the Association and they were present at the highlight of our year.

Mark Waters and Danny Picker made the trip west to encourage and help us in the preparation of our Superfine Wool. It was a great day with about 15 attending, which was good to see as we only have four members at the moment. There is

interest and growers of Superfine Wool out there, and some were able to make it to the training day. Thanks again to Danny and Mark.

As far as the season is concerned, it's been a bit of a mixed bag - some have had a late break while most of us have had a pretty normal season so far.

Speaking of our financial members, I am pleased to say we have all ceased mulesing some time ago so the wool buyers and end users will be happy.

Another highlight for the year was the trip to Launceston for our Wool weekend. It was so well organised and it was a pleasure to be there. Marie and all her helpers certainly excelled.

In closing, we hope commonsense will prevail over the Live Sheep Export Trade and the excess wether situation will be resolved and that the season is kind to us.

Jim Pepper
WA Chairman



Jim and Faye Pepper, Regional ASWGA Fleece Competition Winners, with Mark Waters

A Short Tale of Rita Barber

A short tale of Rita Barber from Coliban Park and her involvement with wool

I was born into a farming family in 1943. My parents were fat lamb producers, not wool growers. My love of sheep has been with me from a very young age. After school I trained at the Alfred Hospital as a nurse.

Anthony and I were married in 1964 and our honeymoon was spent visiting bull breeders and also various wool growers to look at their wool. Anthony and I were especially impressed by the Picker's wool from Hillcreston, whose wool was in the Goulburn wool store at the time.

Wool from Coliban Park at that time was making records at over 300 pence per pound, but during the 1970s when the wool price fell away, many of the local wives returned to their former professions, unlike myself. We had six men working on Coliban Park at the time and as the times got tougher we had to reduce the work force down to one man - Anthony and myself. During shearing I worked as a wool roller for the second and third runs which allowed me to drop off and pick up the children, to and from school. Anthony and I worked as a team for all our married lives.

In 1979, an Italian wool broker Giovanni Nesti, asked us if we could shear some of our sheep twice a year in the hope that the shorter wools would have the same processing ability and feel as cashmere did. The wool was sent to a small mill that was just on the outskirts of Prato in Italy. We followed the wool over to Italy so we could promote the product that I loved so dearly. The government, through the Department of Trade, paid for our air fares and also our costs. At first, they wrote to me and said that I was not eligible for this scheme as I was just the lady of the house and was not involved within the business. I wrote a long letter back to them, describing that I was just as an intricate part of the business as Anthony was. They then paid for me as well.

We went over again in 1980. A young fellow by the name of George Jenson, from W.A. asked us to take a sample of camel hair with us, to see if any Italian mills would be interested in processing it. He and some friends of his had mustered up some wild camels, and with a lot of cursing, had managed to gather a couple of bags of camel hair. We took with us on our



Polly Barber, Maggie Barber, Jack Barber and Rita Barber

journey, two bags of clean, beautiful Saxon wool from Coliban Park and one bag of dusty, dirty, seedy camel hair from outback Western Australia. The wool was put on show in Italy and the camel hair was taken by the Italians, and quietly put in the bin, as they said it was only good for making rope. We travelled across Italy, France and England where we looked at wool being scoured and processed in various mills.

Because Coliban Park is only a little over an hour's drive from the Melbourne CBD, the AWC (Australian Wool Corporation), asked us if we would be happy if we could host their overseas visitors. At first, they were mostly mill owners from Japan and China, as a lot of our wool was going into Japan at the time. Seeing the clothing change of the Chinese businessman and what he was wearing was also interesting - watching them go from Mao suits to modern day dress. My cooking skills improved amazingly over the years and reading cookbooks became the norm for me. At one stage, Anthony employed me as the shearers' cook. Unfortunately I cooked meals that were fit for a King. The shearers then demanded a menu. Anthony stewed on this until three o'clock in the morning when he woke me up and told me that I was sacked as the shearers' cook. A new cook came up in the morning and the first meal he made he dropped his cigarette ash into it. The shearers were not game to say anything after that.

I have loved helping produce one of the best fibres on the planet. It has been an honour and a privilege.

'I have loved helping produce one of the best fibres on the planet. It has been an honour and a privilege'

Angie Waters

Angie Waters - Tarrangower Merinos

It was a great privilege for me to interview Angie Waters (and her husband Dave) for this story. It's a story of female strength and resilience, passion for Superfine wool and pursuit of excellence. The accolades which this couple have received for their wool are well deserved. I commend you to read this story of their journey.

The History

Angie was chuffed to tell me that she and Dave are following history, as their combination of her family's sheep genetics and Dave's family's land, are a reverse copy of her grandparents' history – her grandmother Peg Tully (Coventry), providing the land and Ross Tully providing knowledge of the sheep and wool during their 71 years of marriage and life together.

Angie spent much of her early years (from the age of three with her Dad feeding ewes through the early 1980s drought!) on the farm with her grandfather and father, working tirelessly on all the tasks involved in running a Superfine sheep and wool - commercial and stud operation - in later years being in charge of the stud.

She could not have had better teachers than her father Don Tully and grandfather Ross Tully. Both Ross and Don were well known and highly respected throughout the industry. Ross ran 'Girrakool' for many years then, upon 'retirement' started working for Primac to continue his passion for helping others in the wool industry. Ross and Don passed on their extensive knowledge of all matters relating to wool to Angie – such a gift!

About Angie

When interviewing Angie for this story, I discovered a private and reserved person. But hidden behind that façade, is a story of tenacity, remarkable intelligence and knowledge. Who would have thought that, annoyed at being relegated to a 'girl job' of 'penning up' for crutching, that she would pick up a handpiece and crutch 400 sheep in the day to prove a point, as well as penning up for three others?

After leaving school, Angie travelled overseas for twelve months, then spent the next seven years working alongside her father full time on the farm. Not wanting to spend two years completing her Wool Classing qualification, she completed it in six months with her results in the top group in the State. She has also gained experience in wool buying, a dabble in tourism, completed a business degree, an apprenticeship in real estate (with property guru Steve McKnight), the RCS Grazing for Profit and GradLink Schools, working in Finance in a large accounting firm and, more recently, completing a Certificate in Nutrition Farming.

Dave was the woolclasser in Angie's parents shed, classing their 150-200 bale clip for eight years. And that's where their love story started, in the shearing shed – where else of course? As for their own property - 2023 marks the 70th shearing in the shearing shed built by Dave's grandfather 70 years ago. But Superfine wool is her passion and has been all her life.



Angie and David with their daughters at the ASWGA Reunion Dinner

About the Flock

Dave and Angie are 5th and 6th generation woolgrowers - it's in their blood. In 2005, when Angie and Dave were still in their 20s, they had the opportunity to purchase the Tarrangower sheep from Angie's parents, Don and Fay Tully. Don and Fay were ASWGA members for many years and winners of the NEW Ultimate Clip Competition 1999/2000 and 2001 Ermenegildo Zegna Protected Wool Trophy. The Tarrangower sheep included selected stud rams, ewes and commercial ewes, and Angie and Dave began to use the wool brand IC/TARRANGOWER/NEW ENGLAND.

Over the next twelve months, they relocated the Stud and sheep to "Eastview", Hillgrove, Dave's family property situated 35 km east of Armidale in the New England region of NSW. "Eastview" comprises 568 ha and has a 50% balance of basalt and trap soils. Pastures are a mix of improved and fertilised native grasses. "Eastview" has an elevation of 1,000 m and sits on the eastern edge of the Great Dividing Range.

Angie & Dave felt the pressure of not wanting to spoil an already successful breeding program and didn't change too much initially. However, they soon identified wools that were well nourished & had more crimp definition were outperforming the rest in their new environment. While the industry was focusing on a heavier cutting larger frame sheep, Angie and Dave didn't compromise on wool quality yet were still able to make significant productivity gains.

Their aim is to produce wools that are soft, white, well-nourished and have a highly defined, even, fine crimp.

Poll genetics were introduced in 2013, which have proven to be not only successful within the stud but also popular with ram clients.

Healthy Soil/Healthy Plants/Healthy Merinos/Healthy People

Angie and Dave have found a passion for not just continuing to sustain their landscape but to regenerate it. They commented that by following conventional practices, they felt locked into a mentality of increased spending and putting 'more on' each year to achieve the same result. With an open mind, they stumbled upon a podcast interviewing soil ecologist, Nicole Masters, and what she had to say really resonated with them. Since then, they have listened to hours of podcasts, read many books and attended a week-long certificate course in Nutrition Farming.

The outcome of this new knowledge is a realisation that many current conventional practices, although achieving results, have unintended consequences that continually need addressing.

The ironic part of this learning was that it sounded very familiar to Angie's own long-held interest in human health and nutrition. Chemicals were impacting her own health - just the smell of them saw her with instant and extreme headaches so it 'just seemed natural' that they should transfer her knowledge of the human gut microbiome and its impact on human health to soil biology.

The new approach for Angie and Dave is about balance and nurturing a healthy soil full of abundant and diverse soil life. Healthy soil means healthy plants, healthy animals and healthy people.

The changes? Chemical usage has been greatly reduced, synthetic fertilisers are out, natural soil amendments such as lime, gypsum, rock phosphate, biological sprays and stimulants are in.

The Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophy and ASWGA Fleece Competition

This commitment to quality has consistently won Angie and Dave awards in the prestigious Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophy. They have featured on the podium many times, taking first place in the competition in 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2022, third place in 2015, fourth place in 2020 & 2023 and fifth place in 2008.

They have also found success in the ASWGA fleece competition taking out the Grand Champion fleece in 2019/20 and 2021/22 and being regular contributors to the fleece competition since joining ASWGA.

Building the bridge between Europe and Australia

In November 2016, Angie and Dave were invited to represent young Australian Superfine woolgrowers and speak at the IWTO Round Table Conference in Biella, Italy, where they gave their perspective of the industry at the time. Zegna representatives also provided a 'tour of a lifetime' around their mills, culminating in the Zegna store in Milan.

It was this trip in 2016, which convinced Angie and Dave to cease mulesing as there was much negative discussion surrounding it throughout the conference. The greatest challenge, they told me, was the 'mental' aspect i.e. the worry about 'what would happen' when they ceased mulesing their ewes and lambs. Although they had not mulesed their wethers for many years, once mulesing ceased throughout their entire flock, the challenges that had been expected were easily managed.

Family

Through all this time, Angie says, her greatest roles have been sharing her passion about wool with Dave and being a hands-on Mum to their two amazing daughters, Sarah, 18, and Bella, 16. With the girls finishing their school years and about to embark on their own independent life journeys, a certain level of grief occurs (with family leaving the family home) - but Angie is actively looking for new challenges to ignite her passion.

I can only say, being the author of this article - watch this space - this lady has much to offer.

Cathy Hayne

(with thanks to Angie and David Waters for their contributions)

Kelvedon Estate

NEW MEMBER

Kelvedon Estate settled by the Cotton family in 1829 is a 3000 hectare property situated 10km south of Swansea on the East Coast of Tasmania.

Ranging from sea level to 250 metres the undulating costal property has 520ha of improved fertilised pasture including 20ha of lucerne, 400ha of native bush and the balance, improved hill country.

The Cottons currently run 8,500 Superfine merinos, with bloodlines going back to Rokeby and more recently, Alfoxton and Beverly. The focus is to breed a large framed plainer bodied merino whilst still maintaining traditional Superfine wool. The adult sheep cut an average of 4.5-5 kg/head season depending, with an average micron of 15-16. -

In 2019 mulesing ceased on the property, this has been one of the contributing factors, in breeding a plainer-bodied sheep.

In 1998 due to numerous droughts, the family diversified and planted 1ha of Pinot Noir grapes. The vineyard has since grown over the years is currently at 9ha consisting of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc. There are plans to increase the vineyard and develop a cellar door.



Anna Cotton (4th left) IWTO Young Professionals, 2023

The vineyard enterprise complements the wool growing so peak workload requirements don't clash. The vineyard has proved sustainable through the drier years with some of the vintages occurring during drought.

In 2018 Kelvedon registered their stud, with ewes purchased from Beverly. With a goal to provide Superfine genetics to local Tasmanian farmers, there are plans to develop a Superfine Poll Merino Stud in the coming years.

www.kelvedonestate.com.au

Mark Condon

NEW MEMBER

I recently relocated to the New England district to breed my own small self-replacing Ultrafine merino flock after working in various wool buying roles throughout the Riverina and South West Victoria since 1995.

During my time as a broker, I have administered the auction selling and private buying catalogues of various industry heavyweights including Australian Wool Network, Fox and Lillie Rural and Segard Masurel. In 2016, I represented the Australian private buying division of Segard Masurel in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, fronting a workshop and seminar for over 75 South African wool growers and clients. It was a valuable opportunity to showcase the quality and versatility of the Australian Merino overseas, and the South African growers found discussions about wool growing in Australian conditions both enlightening and fascinating.

Since moving away from wool buying, I elevated my Australian Wool Classing qualification to Masterclasser status and still dabble in classing the occasional Superfine clip. This enables me to maintain contacts with the industry at the grassroots level and provides insight into the premium wools of the New England district. After decades immersed in the wool industry, I retain my passion for the fibre and look forward to the challenge of producing a sustainable, quality product to suit a contemporary, niche market.

Mark Condon

AWEX Accredited Masterclasser



Leslie Prior – ABC Interview

UK Merino Superfine Wool Grower

Tas Country Hour

By Laurissa Smith and Tony Briscoe

~ Broadcast Tue 20 Jun 2023 at 12:00pm ~

Australia exports all sorts of things to the UK like wine, lead and gold. Merino ram semen, on the other hand, is not in great demand.

In fact, Lesley Prior is the only Superfine merino woolgrower in the UK. Laurissa Smith spoke to her about how she's built up her small flock, exclusively with Australian genetics.

Lesley: Merino really hasn't got a history - a recent history in the UK - but it has an old history. It has a 200 years-old history and in fact we were exporting merino genetics from the UK to Australia as late as 1981 and they originally came from Saxony in Germany and they were imported into the UK. There were some also from Spain and Portugal that arrived in the late 18th Century and from that point onwards we were exporting some rams and some ewes across to Tasmania, NSW and Victoria from the UK so we were a known centre of excellence in merino breeding for nearly 100 years and then it all died out and you (Australia) became the pinnacle of merino breeding. I like to feel in a way I have brought it back home again, just lent it to you really for 150 years and thanks very much, I will have it back now.

Laurissa: What do your neighbours think of you?

Lesley: Oh I am completely crazy, utterly crazy, I get patted on the head and told "no you can't grow merino in the UK" and I say "you can't, but I can" and they take a bit of notice of that. And actually it is true, there is absolutely no reason why you can't grow Merino in the UK - it's just prejudice and tradition.

Laurissa: What do the Europeans like the most about the fleece that you can provide them?

Lesley: Firstly it is the same quality as they would buy from Australia, because it is Australian genetics and we are very careful to make sure that we are producing top quality wool. We have it properly classed. We have exactly the same standards as you do in Australia. The reason they like it is because they have full provenance, full traceability and guarantees of environmental and animal welfare standards because we are growing in European conditions and if they are at all concerned, all they have got to do is just come and see us. And that is so much easier if you are literally next door, or a couple of hundred miles away, which some of our customers are. So it is very easy for fashion people, for designers, for educators in the fashion industry and for brands to actually come and see us. They love what they see and that's why we seem to have no trouble selling our wool. They come to me.

Laurissa: And you don't mulse

Lesley: Of course, no, because it's illegal in Europe. We are also under threat with not being able to tail our sheep. That's very likely to happen within the next 4 to 5 years that tailing will be banned in the UK. It is already banned in some countries in Europe so we are going to have to find a way of



Photo: Laurissa Smith

managing the sheep, not only with not mulseing which we don't do anyway but also with the long tail, so that is going to be another issue.

Laurissa: What will you do to get around that?

Lesley: Well we are going to have to crutch a lot more, and crutch the tail as well, actually dag that out. Fortunately if you keep on top of the worms, the tails stay pretty clean. We do have worms - everybody has worms in the UK but we manage ours pretty well so we don't have dirty sheep. So it is going to be a question of just working a lot harder and keeping tails clean and shorn. So that when we come to shearing our shearers don't actually have to stop and shear tails as well.

Laurissa: And that's an extra cost to you if that happens

Lesley: Yes, that will be an extra cost and extra labour that we have to do and it's actually the labour as much as the cost of actually finding people to help us. We struggle a bit with that. Agricultural labour is really quite hard to find in the UK so it is me and my family who do most of the work.

Laurissa: The shearing

Lesley: No we don't do the shearing.. No no no no no - I call it quits at that. And that's been quite tough because as you can imagine most British Shearers have never shorn a Merino or if they have, and they often tell me that they have, they have shorn South Australian-type sheep. They have come over and they have bashed their way around South Australia shearing multiple mobs of South Australian-type wool and of course shearing a very specific niche market of Superfine is a very different ball game. There are more wrinkles, the wool is much finer, it is much more difficult and you have to find the right guys to do the job.

Laurissa: you are over in Australia Ram shopping. What do you hope to take back to the UK? What are you doing to progress your flock?

Lesley: Well, we are fortunate that after 17 years we've got a pretty shrewd idea of what's working and what doesn't work in our environment, so we've refined it down to certain numbers of studs that we are looking at. We don't import live animals, that is not possible. It has to be done by genetics only. So we have got to know quite a few good Stud owners and they know what we are after as well so it's a question of just whittling it down and saying "Ok, there are six great

rams. Thanks very much for showing me those, but of those six I think that one and that one will suit us best.” And then doing a deal on those and getting semen from those boys and then getting it bought over to the UK and then putting into our ewes. It’s a long drawn-out process.

Laurissa: But worth it in the long run. Are you getting the premium on your wool?

Lesley: Absolutely. Yes. I have got people queueing up to buy it. So it’s definitely profitable for me. Definitely.

Laurissa: Your thoughts on the future of the wool industry in the UK

Lesley: Pretty pessimistic, to be honest. For the majority of the wool growers, leaving me aside as a bit of a maverick, an anomaly if you will. The general wool industry in the UK - there is so little money in coarse wool, broad wool and most British wool is 32 – 36 micron some even broader. Despite all our best efforts, it’s quite difficult to find a market for that and of course the volume of broad wool and coarse wool is growing in the world generally. Australia is growing more of it.

Everybody is growing more of this type of wool and as all that volume goes up, we are struggling to find enough uses for it.

Laurissa: And that’s reflected in the price

Lesley: Yes, absolutely. I mean I was looking just before I came away at the current British wool auction and the price for some of the British wool was now down to 20 English pence a pound which is probably about 35 Australian cents per kilo which is never going to be worth the cost of shearing it. So more and more British farmers are moving towards shedding breeds. When they do shear, they are often not even bothering to send it into the Wool Board for using, they just burn it or just throw it back on the land. So it is a terrible waste. And we all know what a valuable ecological resource wool is, how good for the environment and how important it is not to waste this. But actually getting the market to embrace that and use it is really difficult. We are one percent of world fibre usage – wool - and we have to keep knocking on the door and upping our game, making sure people realise they should be buying wool and not synthetics.

Confidence in Wool

and a New Shearing Shed

In March 2023 a major commitment to sheep and wool by the Morrison family came to fruition. It is a stunning 30- by 90- metre sheep shearing and handling facility on their southern Tasmanian property, St Peters Pass.

The shed has capacity to hold 2000 sheep and the yards a further 2500 so a total of 4500 sheep can be held undercover. In instances of bad weather additional sheep can also be housed under the shed section grating. ASWGA spoke to Dougal Morrison and his dad, Askin, about the investment.

The previous shed site was in a terrible position at the bottom of a valley that received very little sun (especially during winter) making it difficult to dry sheep and hard to see incoming weather. It was at one corner of the farm and on the side of the highway (the State’s main north-south highway bisects the property) that has only 15% of the land. It was also between the highway and a creek making it difficult to access with stock after a large rain event. Added to this the shed, built in 1825, was made from sandstone and is heritage listed making it very difficult to change the layout.

The need for a new facility had been discussed for a while. In 2019 the real planning started with checking out what others had done to help build the picture of what might be possible. It moved to a higher gear in 2021 when the old St Peter’s Pass homestead and shearing shed were put on the market to fund the new facility.

The Morrisons started talking to shed and yard builders about the design. They looked at shearing sheds around the state and took notes on what they liked from them as well



Aerial view of Morrisons new facility

as information and ideas from the farmers who had built them. They talked to shearers and shed staff about their preferences. This was surprisingly difficult as there was so much variation from person to person!

The site selection criteria were centrality with access to the highway, electricity and existing laneways, and being elevated, dry and relatively flat.

Their preferred choice met the criteria except for flatness. It remained the preference so extensive levelling was required. Extra cost also came from the farm’s elevation, above 400 meters, so the structure had to be snow rated.

The next step was to decide on who would build the yards and shed. For the shearing shed fit out and yards they went with Proway as there were already two sets of yards from them on the farm, with satisfactory design and quality. Bison provided the shed. This company had done a good job for neighbours previously.

The design process for the fit out was done entirely via Zoom due to the pandemic. The Morrisons had good involvement throughout starting with their “dream layout” with the intention of scaling back as they worked through it. As it turned out there was no scaling back.



The new shed has 10 stands. The plan is to use eight of them with the other two for learners to provide support for the industry. The board is raised which most prefer, especially younger ones, and a saw tooth design that gives shearers a straight drag. The catching pens have a slight incline to the front. It is an easier drag and sheep stay at front of the pen. Catching pen doors are placed so shearers do not hit their elbows. The catching pens have two gates allowing front and side fill options. These work well and have reduced the labour penning up requirement from 1.5 staff to 1.

One stand has been specially designed to accommodate left-handed shearers. Three stands have a turn-around configuration making it possible to tidy up sheep during shearing and rotate them back to a catching pen rather than using the chute and having to bring them back from below.

The fibreglass grating used is really good. The squares look too big but this is not the case. Even lambs do not get stuck and the surface does not get slippery. Sheep do not baulk, even the first time they walk onto it.

The Morrisons are very happy with the yard design. It is a stand-out improvement on the previous set, especially the inclusion of a bulk handler, a great innovation, “a game changer when it comes to taking the stress out of drenching and vaccinating animals”.

Shearing and an unrelated activity can take place in the yards. The roof and lighting provide much greater use flexibility. In summary, just a better place to work.

The new loading facility is a big improvement and welcomed by truck drivers – 30 minutes to load a semi of old ewes.

The possibility of obsolescence if wool harvesting methods change was a concern. However, the board is modular so it can be adapted to other methods of wool harvesting. The sheep handling facilities are unlikely to change. The Morrisons have confidence in wool but even if there were significant changes, for example to fat lambs, the facility would still be fully utilised.

The shearers’ quarters that include a lunch room, bathrooms and accommodation is yet to be completed. It will further increase the positive benefits of the new facility.

Advice to other wool growers contemplating upgrading their shearing and handling facilities? “Go for it!” responds Askin without hesitation.

Askin Dougal and Fergus Morrison in front of a souvenir from their original shearing shed



Coating Sheep in 2023

I should stress from the outset that there must be a financial gain in mind when you start thinking of coating your sheep, for the commitment is not a set-and-forget strategy.

First and foremost, animal health and welfare must be front of mind, e.g. many a sheep has been caught by a leg strap on a root stump and would perish if not found.

I started coating wethers in the late 1990s with just visual and feeling the wool as a guide to discover which wethers were best to go into coats. Nowadays, all our weaners are OFDA-tested at twelve months and the finest wethers are identified, tagged and classed before they are selected for a coated mob. The work involved in coating sheep is constant as when the wool grows, the leg straps tighten against the sheep and if left unattended the sheep will have serious cuts to the legs. I generally change the coats three times throughout the year as naturally, both sheep and wool grow during this time.

I am always anxious when I'm checking the four paddocks of coats, because as we call it the fashion show of Wee Jasper, there are a number of ways a sheep may choose to wear their coat - Off The Shoulder, Around the Waist, The one showing Far Too Much Leg, The Drag look and of course, the Natural look i.e. I got rid of my coat. There is always a ready supply coats under the seat of the side-by-side and a willing dog to chase down the offending sheep to be caught and the coat rectified on the sheep. This task is constant and a chore that must be done regularly. When a coat change is coming up, the sheep are mustered early and walked to the yards early



to ensure the mob doesn't dust up on the laneway or in the yards. The coat change generally happens on the shearing board and each animal is checked for colour and style with the coat off. The sheep might be crutched or drenched at the same time, to minimise the time the sheep are brought to the yards. The next size coat is put on the sheep. Then once the mob is changed, they may stay around the grassed yards till the next morning before the mob goes back to the paddock. This is done to make any adjustments that are needed.

Then there is shearing. We do the 600 or so coated wethers in a shearing prior to the main shearing in August each year. The coats are removed and I say it's like Christmas, unwrapping the sheep of its coat and seeing a glimpse of nature's most incredible fibre, bright white and a slight tip, but so soft. Each sheep has been micron-tested and shorn in a particular way. The fleece is brought to the table and thrown lightly. My sister Irene Holloway (Classer) and Cherrae Smith (Classer) and myself and my wife Vic all work on each fleece to prepare the puddings of fleece to go to the bins for more classing and pressing into bales weighing around 100 kg or so. These are our 1PP candidates destined for the Sydney Wool Sale Show floor.

The reality of the return on effort - I feel that it is a passion that has continually pushed us to grow this paddock-grown wonder of nature. I have used these 1PP-certified bales to showcase the wool Kashmir has on sale in the boxed samples in the auction that same day. The financial return must be worthy of the effort and expense of coating sheep. In recent times very fine lines of weaner wools have commanded much higher prices than the 1PP-accredited wools which I believe is very disappointing, given the amount of effort that goes into their production. Our best prepared wools are given a 1PP Certificate and deserve the highest prices for the season.

There are lots of growers who no longer coat their wethers as the returns for the wool does not cover the labour, the price of the additional testing and of course, the nylon coats. Supply of coats has been an ongoing problem for some time.

I believe that we will continue to coat our wethers, but they must pay their way. When the margin between coated and uncoated wools falls, it is very hard to do all the work and not get paid for it.

Neil Carey



ASWGA Ram Breeders

Sale type*

A= Auction

OF = On Farm

PT = Private Treaty

SA = Semen Available

Horned/Poll= H\P

Region	Property/Stud	Predominant genetics	H\P	Sale type*	Sale mth	Contact
A/B	Beverley	Merryville, Hillcreston, Glenara	H	A, OF, PT, SA	Sep	John Barty 0400 096 637
A/B	Coliban Park	Coliban Park, Glenara	H	PT	Aug	Duncan Barber 0438 436 611
A/B	Currawong	Currawong, Rock-Bank	H	PT	Aug-Oct	Geoff Phillips 0438 540 590
A/B	Hidden Valley	Hidden Valley	P	A, OF	Feb	Jim & Sandra Ranken 0455 532 695\0418 268 834
A/B	Karalta	Clipswood Lucky	H/P	PT	all year	Tom Spielvogel 0408 861 451
A/B	Kelsdale	Kelsdale, Rock-Bank	H	PT	all year	Russell & Penny Hartwich 0403 434 401\0499 576 785
G/Y	Hillcreston Heights	Hillcreston	H	A	Nov	Brett Picker 02 4835 2377
G/Y	Hillcreston Park	Hillcreston	H/P	A	Oct	Danny Picker 02 4835 2220
HAM	Glenara	Sierra Park, Rock-Bank, Hillcreston, Kenilworth, Merryville, Conrayn	H/P	A, OF, PT, SA	Oct	Trevor Mibus 03 5573 3212
HAM	Rowensville	Rowensville	H	PT, SA	Oct-Dec	David & Susan Rowbottom 03 5568 4253\0429 920 120
HAM	Sierra Park	Sierra Park	H	A, OF, PT, SA	Feb	Will & Bill Crawford 0438 539 280\0427 311 975
MUD	Pomanara	Rock-Bank, Merryville, Pomanara	H	A, OF	Nov	Geoff Rayner 0428 288 075
NE	Edington	Glanna	H	PT	Feb/Mar	Mark Waters 0427 753 882
NE	Europambella	Saxon base	H	PT	Feb/Mar	Peter McNeill 0427 772 856
NE	Greenway	Merryville base	H	PT	Feb/Mar	Stephen Harvey 0427 751 301
NE	Mirani	Mirani	H/P	PT	Feb/Mar	Hugh Nivison 0412 402 576
NE	Queenlee	Merryville/Queenlee	H/P	A, OF	Feb	Philip Carlon 0437 261 695
NE	Stanley Vale	Merryville/Saxon	H	PT	Feb/Mar	Tim Bower 0421 704 598
NE	Tarrangower	Tarrangower	H/P	PT	Feb	David Waters 0458 781 165
NE	Westvale	Westvale	H	A, OF	Feb	Leo Blanch 0428 431 065
NE	Wilson's Creek	Merryville/Wilsons Ck	H	PT	Feb/Mar	Cameron Gall 0411 784 091
TAS	Glen Stuart	Rock-Bank, Sierra Park, Glen Stuart	H	PT	Feb	Stephen Caswell 0436 190 864
TAS	Kelvedon	Alfoxtton, Beverly	H	PT	Feb	Anna Cotton 0427 759 911
TAS	Mienna	Sierra Park, Hillcreston	H	PT	Feb	James Manning 0417 530 812
TAS	Winton	Winton - Saxon	H	PT	Nov-Dec	John Taylor 0417 002 613



THE AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION INC

ABN: 41 338 467 905
 Wool House, Unit 9, 42-46 Vella Drive, Sunshine West Vic 3020
 Telephone: (03) 9311 0271 E-mail: aswga@woolindustries.org Facsimile: (03) 9311 0138

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION & MEMBER UPDATE, 1/7/2023 - 30/06/2024
 RECIPIENT CREATED TAX INVOICE**

Please ensure that all shaded areas are completed and personal details are checked for errors.

TRADING NAME:		
ABN:		MEMBER NO:

FULL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION :

Base Annual Subscription (GST Inclusive)	\$265.00
Number of Superfine Bales (19.5 microns and finer) in your last clip	
Bale Levy @ \$2 per Bale (GST Inclusive) up to a maximum of 300 bales	\$
Region Levy (GST Inclusive) (If Applicable)	

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Associate Member (GST Inclusive)	\$100.00
Please tick if you require a receipt	
TOTAL AMOUNT	\$

PRIVACY POLICY - I CONSENT TO THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THIRD PARTIES - Yes/No	
AWTA AUTHORITY - I CONSENT TO AWTA RELEASING MY TEST DATA TO ASWGA - Yes/No	

MEMBER RECORD

Nominee who is to receive correspondence:

Signature: _____

TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr)	
NOMINEE'S NAME	
PARTNER'S NAME	
TRADING NAME	
PROPERTY NAME	
ADDRESS (line 1)	
"" (line 2)	
ASWGA REGION	
MEMBERSHIP TYPE	
AREA CODE (Phone)	
PHONE	
FAX	
MOBILE	
E-MAIL	
WOOL BRAND	
SELLING CENTRE	
BROKER	

ANNUAL SURVEY INFORMATION: (Not Required if Associate Member)

How many sheep do you have in your Superfine flock (19.5 microns and finer) at 30 June 2023?	
How many Superfine ewes have you joined to Superfine rams at last joining?	
Please indicate your seasonal conditions as Good/Average/Poor	
Please estimate this year's (July 2023 to June 2024) Superfine clip in bales	
What is your Average Fibre Diameter?	
What is the Fibre Diameter of your Finest line?	
What is the Fibre Diameter of your Strongest line?	
Has mulesing ceased on your property? (Yes/No)	

Your Signature & Date Please: _____

EFT payment is preferred - Please quote your member number when paying (see top of this page)

National Australia Bank - BSB: 083 091 Acct: 5151 69630

ASWGA Photography Competition 2023

Thank you to those who entered our 2023 Photography Competition. Here we have what our esteemed judges deemed the top three. Congratulations from the Annual Committee.



FIRST PLACE



"Sunset after the storm" submitted by Simon Cameron

SECOND PLACE



"John, the patient shepherd" submitted by Vera Taylor

THIRD PLACE



"Good Morning" submitted by Ann-Marie Thomas

Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association

is an international association of superfine wool growers and processors founded to promote and further the development and marketing of superfine wool. Superfine wool is the "flagship" of the world's wool industry and leads the industry in the highest standards of wool production, manufacture and promotion.

Founded when many people failed to recognise the importance of superfine wool, the organisation represents in particular the Australian superfine wool growers' as well as the most famous and prestigious international processors and manufacturers.

ASWGA is recognised as the voice of Australia's superfine wool industry. Through ASWGA, grower members have a voice in their industry, have networking opportunities, are kept informed and up to date with current industry research and trends.

ASWGA undertakes activities to further the interests of all its members, through representation and by linking global stakeholders in the supply chain. ASWGA liaises closely with other peak industry bodies and research institutes to ensure superfine representation and to provide education and advice to the superfine wool industry on superfine raw wool production trends and consumer demand.

ASWGA was founded on the dedication of Australian superfine wool growers and joined by visionary global processors and manufacturers

The first Super Fine organisation in Australia was founded in Tasmania as the Tasmanian Fine Merino Breeders Association in 1947, to link growers with their overseas customers.

.....
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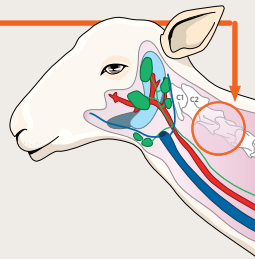
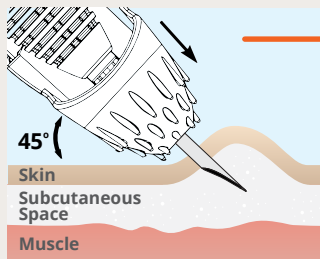
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OR

 **Glanvac® 6S B12**
2nd "Booster" dose

 **Eryvac®**
2nd "Booster" dose



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Zoetis recommends using a 18G 6mm (¼ inch) needle in all sheep vaccinations. Vaccinate lambs and shorn sheep at 45° angle and adult full wool sheep at 90° angle¹.

*This does not include Scabigard which should be discarded after the day of use. Reference 1. Zoetis data on file 2016.

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