

# RICHMOND

## M E R I N O S

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## WELCOME TO OUR 2016 NEWSLETTER

Once again we find ourselves moving towards spring with the promise of a plentiful season however a particularly long, hot and dry summer did create some feed related management issues across the state with many tonnes of valuable hay and grain being tipped on the ground over the extended dry spell which lasted from harvest through to may. Thankfully when the autumn break did eventually arrive the soil temperatures were sufficient enough to provide some pasture growth and anyone who kept their stock in good order over the summer were able to roll into the winter months without too many nutrition related problems.

At Richmond we were lucky enough to find some local agistment for most of the breeding ewes which meant a rest for our country as well as the opportunity to maintain the condition of the ewes over the joining period which resulted in a very acceptable scanning percentage (considering the season) of around 150%.

As we close in on the due lambing date we are waiting with great interest on the arrival of the progeny of some interesting outside sires as well as some exciting young home bred rams. The past two stud joinings have for the first time included "wool on wool" matings as we feel that our carcass attributes across our ewe flock have reached the stage where we can increase the depth of these higher density more productive animals without compromising meat and fertility and without being over dependant on corrective mating methods. This years sale rams and the current 2016 joinings have both been achieved with a sire group average of over 80 follicles/mm density. This is something that could not have been achieved 5 years ago and is well above the industry average.

With the season and the markets once again looking positive we look forward to the coming months with optimism and hope to see everyone at some stage over the year. Please remember we enjoy seeing how our genetics are working in clients flocks and are more than happy to assist with any classing needs or to simply drop in for a chat.

*Top priced \$5000 ram with Trevor Ryan, buyers John and Joyce Cavanagh, Nick McNamara Elders, Cowra and auctioneer Paul Dooley of Paul Dooley Pty Ltd. Photo courtesy The Land.*

## 2015 RAM SALE REPORT

In another successful ram selling season a complete clearance of 100 selected poll and horned rams was achieved at Richmond's 7th annual on property sale when rams sold to a top of \$5000 and averaged \$1710 which interestingly was exactly the same as the previous years result.

In the breakdown 80 single penned rams sold for a \$1872 average while a further 20 rams matched to type in pens of 2 all sold as well for an average of \$1060 helping to boost the sale aggregate and allow bidders who had missed out on earlier selections to fill their orders on competitively priced lots with high production figures.

The top priced ram of the day, lot 3 was knocked

down to the Cavanagh family of Young and was the standout ram for figures in the catalogue with a YWT of +10 and a YEMD of +2.0. He also possessed a deeply crimped and stylish staple and will be single mated in the Cavanagh's nucleus ram breeding flock.

Long term top end operator Max Stewart of Bombala was again very active securing 8 new sires including the second top price of the day for \$4000 as well as 4 more quality lots in excess of \$3000.

Other lots to top \$3000 mark were secured by Kitto Pastoral Co. of Tallimba, R & M Jones of Grenfell, R & S Grinter of Wyalong, Meemar Pastoral Co. of Cootamundra and Cumnock Farm Partnership and

## 2016 SALE DATES

### TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER ON-PROPERTY RAM AUCTION

Inspections from 10.30am  
Sale commences 1.30pm

### PRIVATE SALES

Grade rams available at set prices  
by appointment from

WEDNESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER onwards



the Schaefer family both of Grenfell. Return buyers F & J Morgan of Forbes were the major volume buyers taking home 12 lots for a \$1050 average.

It was very pleasing to not only record a total clearance and a good overall average but also very satisfying to be able to present a catalogue that provided consistent above average figures across the board for both carcass and wool traits on visually appealing animals

Once again we would like to thank all registered bidders for making the day a success.



## PLENTY OF MEAT AT GRENFELL

The Shaefer family of Grenfell have been recording some great results from their wether lambs for some years and their 2015 drop have been especially pleasing. The entire drop was sold over the hook in one single lot to average \$138/hd with a top of \$164 at only 7 months old and finished purely on pasture with no grain supplement.

The flock was originally based on dohne bloodlines however they have been using exclusively Richmond sires for the past 5 years and have not documented any reduction in the meat side of their enterprise since the change of direction. Warren Shaefer also reports a big improvement in wool quality and quantity with about 40% more

## CLIENT RESULTS

wool since the switch to Richmond genetics. The Shaefer's usually buy their replacement sires at the on property auction each year and up to now have been focusing on "wool type" rams in an effort to lift the production of this side of the operation which makes their carcass results even more pleasing.

## PLENTY OF WOOL AT BRIBBAREE



At their 2015 general shearing Matthew and Stephanie Hunter of "Westwood" Briggaree were concerned that their flock was not cutting enough wool. Since moving to Richmond genetics they had plained their sheep up considerably and were worried by the industry perception that the type of animal they were breeding were light cutters. These concerns grew when their woolclasser told them that they needed to put more skin on the sheep despite the fact that the fleeces seemed to have plenty of weight as they came over the table. When shearing was concluded however Matthew did the sums from the wool book and discovered

that the hoggetts had cut 8.0kg and the flock ewes 6.6kg while rearing 115% of lambs. "We were surprised at the weights because we didn't think they were cutting what they did" Matthew said.

The Hunters made the change to Richmond rams 8 years ago in an effort to transform what was then a tight skinned traditional flock into a more dual purpose type and the change in direction has been vindicated by a 30% rise in marking numbers and lambs that are now being turned off at 9 months of age at heavy trade specs.

## MULESING UPDATE

In recent months the ongoing mulesing debate has again resurfaced with more local and international pressure from many areas for the Australian wool industry to ramp up their efforts to phase out the process and yet our industry leaders continue to not just ignore the warning signs but seemingly impede the genetic advancement in this area.

South Africa has already ceased the practice while Mark Ferguson of NZ Merino recently told an audience at the wool/lamb conference in Bendigo that it was expected to be illegal in that country by the end of the year and that time was running out for Australian producers to convert to a mules free animal.

With many big clothing brands stating they do not want wool from mulesed sheep in their supply chain there is no doubt that if Australia continues to mules a large percentage of their flock our industry will be adversely effected.

Meanwhile many producers continue to push for higher and higher fleece weights by breeding from heavier skinned animals that are perceived by an out of date industry as being genetically more productive. Make no mistake a plain bodied mules free animal can be and generally is a very productive one.



Richmond sire 13-579 showing a genetically mules free breech. He is a trait leader for growth, staple length and CV% and is above industry average for fleece weight, muscling, fat cover, and worm resistance. He is also in the top 10% of the industry for the dual purpose index.

**Following are a list of traits that have a direct correlation to plain bodied, thin skinned sheep and are also directly connected to greater overall productivity.**

- Higher quality, better processing wools
- Higher lambing percentages
- Higher growth rates
- Better constitution
- Better feed conversion
- Less flystrike
- Lower chemical costs
- Easier shearing

**The benefits that also directly result from not mulesing are as follows**

- Less post mulesing stress means faster growing lambs
- Less deaths at marking
- Lower lamb marking costs
- Less arthritis
- Wool premiums

## FEED CONVERSION AND EFFICIENCY

One of the most overlooked and understudied traits of merino sheep is the mysterious yet vitally important ability of each animal to efficiently and frugally convert grass or grain into meat and wool. Unfortunately there seems to be very little research available in this area to enable producers to compare bloodlines or individual sheep.

In a recent large wether trial organised by a private consultancy group and overseen by the department of primary industries two teams of SRS blood wethers recorded the highest average bodyweights but when their dse ratings were adjusted to a per hectare basis both teams production figures were negatively affected on the assumption that they would eat more and therefore less sheep would be able to be run per hectare. Such assumptions are purely guesswork and it is quite feasible that these larger animals could be consuming a similar amount or even less than their smaller but possibly less efficient counterparts.

At Richmond this year we were able to gain a valuable insight to how our flock performs as feed converters when we made the decision to lock all the ewes in drought lots over the Autumn in order to save our ground cover. With the help of our nutritional advisor Anthony Shepherd of Sheepmatters consultancy we worked out that the nutritional requirements of the ewes based on their average weight, pregnancy status and the energy value of the available feed would mean they required 0.950grams/hd/day to maintain their condition. I was initially sceptical that they would need this amount and my doubts were confirmed when we managed to maintain their fat score over an extended period leading up to the last trimester of pregnancy with a feed ration of just 0.550grams, almost half the projected ration that was budgeted for. With grain at \$200/tonne this extrapolates to over \$1100/week savings for a mob of 2000 ewes not to mention the improved carrying capacity and



Stud ewes after 6 weeks in a drought lot moving towards the last trimester of pregnancy

utilisation of available feed under normal grazing conditions throughout the year.

We know through the use of ASBV's that the Richmond flock sits well above industry average for muscling and fat cover and as these traits are closely correlated with constitution it seems a natural progression that better feed efficiency would part of the package. It is also highly likely that the thick, heavy skins of traditional merinos which can weigh up to 15kg more than a better skinned animal would be a considerable drain on the resources needed for meat and wool production.



Richmond has eventually stepped into the murky world of social media by setting up a facebook page.

You can keep up to date with the latest news and photos by visiting our page at [FACEBOOK.COM/RICHMONDMERINOS](https://www.facebook.com/RICHMONDMERINOS)