

RICHMOND

M E R I N O S

Flock No. 5021

WELCOME TO OUR 2021 NEWSLETTER

As I write this newsletter Covid is once again raising its ugly head but despite the obvious problems associated with its persistence the merino industry continues on its merry way with the 4 income streams of wool, lamb, mutton and surplus sheep sales all sitting in profitable percentile ranges for the commercial grower.



One of the most pleasing aspects of the last 12 months has been how well our type of sheep has handled some very wet and humid conditions especially over the spring/summer period. There have been plenty of "horror stories" over the summer with reports of huge flystrike losses and bales full of green wool however all the feedback we receive from our clients reports negligible issues with paddocks full of healthy sheep and wool bins full of white, high quality fleeces. This year at Richmond we shored over 3000 adult sheep (including hoggets) in December and nearly 2300 lambs in April for a grand total of less than 20 sheep fly blown and 1 small handful of green wool. This is the result of years of making fleece quality a priority in our selection decisions and strictly culling any animals with

hard body wrinkle. Wool quality is such an important trait in the merino yet in modern times it is often undervalued and overlooked to the point where green wool and flystrike is often accepted as normal occurrence.

This year is shaping up very much as another Covid effected ram selling season so we would like to extend an invitation for obligation free inspections of the sale team at any time to anyone who is unable to make it to our inspection day. Please don't hesitate to contact us for any queries regarding ram sales.

2020 SALE REPORT

The 2020 ram selling season was a steep learning curve for everyone with lockdowns, traveling restrictions and social distancing taking us into new territory as far as ram auctions were concerned however despite these obstacles the confidence in the merino industry shone through. We were very pleased to record a 100% clearance on all 110 rams offered at an average of \$2277 which was \$336 up on the previous year. The top price ram tag 190189 sold for \$10,000 and was secured by the Martin family of Cassilis. A beautifully balanced son of 170013 he will be shared along with a 2nd \$5000 purchase for ram breeding duties between the "Dalkeith" and "Rotherwood" flocks. Stud buyers were active with pens being knocked down to East Loddon, Coddington Poll and



The \$10,000 top price ram purchased by Damon Soster, Lachy Soster and Troy Rose

Pepper Well studs while the volume buyers on the day were the Kitto family of Tallimba with 18 rams, Geeron partnership, Forbes 16 rams and the Haylock family of Cooma securing 10 new sires. In all it was a very successful day for all concerned with rams going to 3 states and despite the increased average plenty of good quality young sires still selling in the \$1000 to \$1500 range for the more price conscious bidders. As always we are very grateful for the support of both new and old clients particularly under such challenging circumstances.

2021 SALE CALENDAR

FRIDAY 17 SEPTEMBER SALE RAM INSPECTION DAY

10am – 3pm. All sale rams penned with up to date fleece data and ASBVs.

TUESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER ON-PROPERTY RAM AUCTION

Inspection from 10am.
Sale commences 1.30pm.
Offering approximately
120 thirteen month old rams.

WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER PRIVATE SALES

Grade rams available at set prices by appointment from Wednesday onwards.



Extreme weather conditions prevailed through the Summer and Autumn but Richmond blood flocks with the right skin and staple structure had minimal fleece and flystrike problems.



CLIENT SUCCESS

The marketing of stud animals is often focused around the high production figures produced from within the studs own flock. These results are generally driven by expert management and extremely high levels of nutrition and pasture production but often can't be replicated in client flocks when finance and labour resources can sometimes be limiting.

At Richmond we run a commercially orientated operation on mainly native grass country and without excessive feeding programs. We focus our time and money on genetic gain and instead measure our progress by the results of our clients. Following are some client highlights from the past 12 months.

- Some great scanning results around the traps this year but a huge 169% across the board including maidens for **Matt & Steph Hunter** of Bribbaree was the best reported.
- **Chris & Janette Dixon** of Quandialla had a great general shearing back in March with not one piece of green wool across the entire clip despite an Autumn shearing with their flock being fully exposed to a very wet & humid summer. When I visited the shed the ewe hoggets were cutting over 7kg of beautiful long stapled, white, stylish fleeces.
- **Warren & Lisa Schaefer** of Grenfell usually have a great run of wether lambs to offload each year & 2021 was no exception with their 11 month old lambs averaging \$247 over the hooks in May.
- **George & Mel Haylock** of Cooma had a terrific result with their ewe lamb joining, scanning over 1000 in lamb out of 1500 joined to give them a 68% conception rate.
- The Martin family's "Dalkieth" & "Rotherwood" flocks at Cassilis have always been exceptional for fertility & last year proved no different with **Troy Rose & Sara Martin** of "Rotherwood" recording 140% in flock ewes & 128% on joining with maidens.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BARE BREECH

For the last 15 years the mulesing issue has been one of the most hotly debated topics within the merino industry. For much of this time the non-mulesing brigade, led mainly by the late Dr Jim Watts has been very much in the minority. However over time this minority has gradually increased in numbers with growing consumer pressure and developing premiums creating a much larger following.



The top price ram from last years sale 190189. YCFW 21.9, ACFW 18.6

Lot 13 from last years sale 190068, semen retained for stud use. YCFW 22.8, ACFW 17.6

Richmond were one of the first studs in the country to address the mulesing issue. Our non-mulesing journey started way back in 2004 when we decided that our flock was sufficiently wrinkle free and has successfully continued for the last 17 years. An animal with a wrinkle free breech is the first step towards a successful non-mulesing program however an animal that also has a genetically bare breech area as well as being wrinkle free is even more effective. These bare breech animals have always been present to some degree in ours and many other flocks however mostly these sheep have been "strippy" types that are prone to be of lower follicle density and

lighter wool cut. The traits have always seemed to be closely correlated and so very few bare breech sheep ever made it through the selection process to become stud sires or dams. This all changed about 3 years ago when we were able to identify sire lines that were breeding productive, high density progeny with above average adult fleece weights that also carried the bare breech gene. This is a very exciting development at Richmond as we feel that we have now moved on from simply breeding wrinkle free breeches to breeding bare breeches with above average adult fleece weights with the potential to extrapolate these numbers throughout our flock.

GENETIC PROGRESS

I saw this image recently on social media and thought how easily it could be applied to merino breeding and in particular the selection methods employed at Richmond. We have always firmly believed that with so many antagonistic traits combining to make up the modern merino the best way forward is incremental yet consistent improvement across multiple profit driving traits which not only eliminates genetic compromises but also enables quality of fibre and confirmation to be retained as production increases.

The graph below shows the increase in ASBVs of Richmond sale rams (auction and grade) in what we consider to be important traits over a decade of selection.

	YWT	YEMD	YFAT	YFD	YCFW	YSL
2011	4.0	0.6	0.1	-0.9	4.2	11.1
2015	6.3	0.8	0.3	-0.7	10.1	13.7
2020	8.0	1.3	0.4	-0.8	17.5	18.0

