



Owen & Helen Huggins

Woodpark

Wilson Road
Jerilderie NSW 2176
Phone 03 5886 7149
Fax 03 5886 7148

www.woodparkmerino.com.au

Stephen & Carol Huggins

Eurolie

Hay NSW 2711
Phone 02 6993 4616
Fax 02 6993 4122
Stephen 0428 932 113
Carol 0429 934 616

info@woodparkmerino.com.au

WINTER
2018

Woodpark Merino • Woodpark Poll

Making the most of the highs

Wool's record run and great mutton and lamb prices against the backdrop of a variable season have really brought home the importance of a sheep type which can adapt to all the wonderful and testing things our industry can throw at us.

For us, it has highlighted the importance of maintaining our breeding program where we keep that balance of wool and meat production without pushing too hard in any direction so we can capitalise on any and all opportunities.

It has also given us great confidence and belief in our sheep type which is exactly where we would want it to be for conditions such as these.

Even when we read reports of wool "dipping to 2056 cents" it's hard to be too disappointed!

However, it is the challenge of seasons like this when Merinos have the chance to rise to the occasion and when solid breeding and management comes to the fore.

And even with great wool prices and strong sheep and meat returns, as all producers benefit our focus turns to looking forward to ensure these sheep will always be in a strong position, regardless of the market.

We are using this wonderful window as an opportunity to invest in our flock, continue to focus on improvement, take advantage of the depth and predictability of the large stud flock and look forward to a future that will be positive regardless of varying market conditions.

If ever there is a downturn the sheep are more productive, which is the time when the breeding will actually deliver most benefit and the well-bred sheep will stand out.

This is the exact type of year we have been gearing our sheep toward.

In the more than 25 years since Stephen became fully involved in the operation, the dry years have been more prevalent than good years. It is these years when our focus on meat characteristics, doability, ability to survive and perform in dry times comes to the fore.

We use assessment tools including eye muscle, fat, growth rates and visually selecting the ewes that perform in hard times.



All of that means the sheep have got the ability to be good feed converters, maintain body weights in dry times and importantly put on weight quickly offering options, whether to rejoin or sell.

It also means the quality and production of wool is maintained as the effort to maintain the sheep pays dividends quickly.

These sheep are bred for these moments

With a tight season, impressive wool sales and record lamb prices, we feel these are the conditions the Woodpark Poll sheep have been bred for. That's what has underpinned our program, the diversity of seasons and prices and breeding the sheep to handle it.

With solid cuts of fine micron wool (7.5-8kg of about 18.2 micron wool) and continued productivity from a long-standing emphasis on balance and on ensuring ASBVs accuracy, the sheep type is paying dividends.

We have selected for these characteristics right through the 2000s and beyond, physically selecting sheep that have reared a lamb and performed in dry times. To back that up we have then used eye muscle and fat as measures for sheep that have stored condition, with that one extra fat score worth eight kilograms bodyweight or the equivalent of being fed 24 kilograms of hay.

We select through our process of continual measurement, ASBVs, but fundamentally selecting using both all the information available and then physically assessing the sheep in front of us. We measure for it, we select for it, therefore we have it. (SEE DNA program info inside.)

We are selecting for quality, stylish wool and with good fibre density that cuts fleece weight, good mobile skins. We have found the sheep that have good mobile skins and good doability, tend to have a lot more secondary follicles and therefore fleece weight.

The sire battery has never looked better, when we look at our rams we can see the depth and the delivery of what we are seeking, which is really flowing into the sheep. Our entire operation underpins this selection of the animals that perform best in variable conditions.



With sheep and lamb prices at record highs, now is the time to not only capitalise but to head for the future.



Merinos attract return and first-time visitors

One of the wonderful features of the past year was the fact six of the new ram clients were either coming back to sheep or planning to breed Merinos for the first time.

These positive new industry entrants saw the move as valuable as sheep and wool as one of the lead agricultural products, with studies consistently reporting a self-replacing Merino flock as one of the most profitable broadacre farm enterprises.

We consider it a wonderful thing for the industry that people are swinging back to the breed and the enterprise, adding new management and knowledge to the industry pool, and with wonderful timing with record wool prices and soaring sheep meat values.

Brisk bids at Woodpark

By Stephen Burns, *The Land*, September 29, 2017

Bidding was determined at the Woodpark Poll ram auction at Jerilderie on account Stephen and Carol Huggins when 140 rams were penned to see 135 sold at auction to average \$2437.

Top price of \$8,000 was paid for a shedded ram, when 30 (shedded rams) were sold for \$3408, while \$5,000 was the top price paid for the 105 unshedded rams which averaged \$2160.

A further seven flock rams were sold after the auction for \$1500 average.

The sale was underpinned by many returning clients with new buyers also making their presence felt.

The top priced ram at \$8,000, an AI son of the highly successful stud sire WP12-342, was bought by long term clients Donald and Ann Bull, "Mungarra", Deniliquin.

"He has good soft and crimply wool on a bold and well-structured body," Mr Bull said.

Mr Bull said his family have been buying Woodpark-bred rams from the time his father purchased sheep from Stephen Huggins' grandfather, the late Eric Huggins.

"He will be joined to our stud ewes for replacement rams in our self-replacing Merino flock," Mr Bull said.

The ram measured 18.8 microns, with 3.1SD and was in the top ten per cent on MerinoSelect's Dual Purpose Index. Also coming out of the shedded draft was the \$5,000 ram purchased by Wagga Wagga-based sheep breeding consultant Craig Wilson for the Glasson family, Jimenbuen Past Co, Dalgety.

Sired by WP 14-204 who had been joined to hand-picked elite ewes, the ram will be used in the ram breeding project for the self-replacing flock on "Jimenbuen".

"We are aiming for high performance using high index rams through AI," Mr Wilson said.

"He was a trait leader for yearling clean fleece weight and has a good balance of the other figures like yearling weight, eye muscle and is moderate for fat.

"We can use him with confidence because he is also structurally sound and backed by the genetic depth at Woodpark."

Mr Wilson also bought two further rams at \$3,000 and \$2,500 for the Jimenbuen Pastoral Co.

Coming south for their first foray into the Woodpark Poll offering, Dougal McLeish and his wife Susan Ainge, Thurn Merinos, Coonamble, purchased the top priced ram at \$5,000 in the unshedded offering, along with one shedded ram for \$4,250.

The McLeish family have been breeding Merino sheep for over 80 years at "Thurn", and changed to Poll Merinos three years ago for ease of management but still retaining the essential attributes of heavy cutting fleeces on a sound body.

"We like the fact Woodpark have been breeding Polls for a long time," Susan Ainge said. "They are true to type, with nice well-defined crimp and bright wool. "We love the fibre ... and the market is now paying for it ... thank goodness!"

The ram, with micron 16.6 and 2.8 SD will be used in Thurn Merinos' self-replacing Merino flock to breed new sires.

Also paying \$5,000 were D.J. Boland and J.L. Peavey, Giffard, Victoria who selected the son of WP14-102.

Significant prices included \$4,500 paid by Grassy Creek Merinos for a ram with micron measurement 17.6 and in the top 10pc for the DP index: and \$4,250 paid by Coghill Farming, "Dewhurst", Urana for a young sire who was also in the top 10pc DP index.

Volume buyers included Budgewah Pastoral Co, Hay who bought 16 rams to top at \$3,500; J.C and L.M Clark, "Merriola", Hay who paid to \$3,000, twice, in their selection of nine rams and MV Ag, Alectown who paid to \$4,500 in their draft of eight rams.

Stephen Huggins thought the prices paid reflected the genetic and structural depth of the sheep, but also the present values paid for sheep and wool.

"It was a great sale and (with current industry conditions) it is wonderful to see everyone rewarded for years of hard work," he said.

The sale was conducted by Elders, Jerilderie and Landmark, Finley, with Ron Rutledge, Peter Godbolt and Nick Gray taking the bids.

High science meets dusty reality in paddocks

A large-scale DNA testing program was put in place at Woodpark Poll this year, aiming to deliver the most accurate information for the best possible breeding outcomes.

The move came three years after we started DNA testing a selection of young rams and has been driven by a desire to keep lifting the flock to the highest levels.

It also comes on the back of more than two decades of internal and external performance measuring and benchmarking of the stud and commercial flocks. It is designed to overcome some of the issues of large paddocks and practicalities of management in our environment and will capture accurate pedigree or parentage and poll gene data.

The DNA testing program was this year expanded to include encompass all last year's young rams, all lambs and all adult ewes which were not already linked to progeny following a mothering program earlier in the year. We had considered continuing mothering programs such as pedigree matchmaker and continuing only a selected amount of testing, due to the significant expense of DNA testing. But we concluded this was the best, fastest and most accurate way to achieve our desired outcome in our management situation, which includes



Equipment in the yards being used in the tissue sampling for DNA analysis.

multiple waters in large paddocks with real-life breeding programs of syndicate joining groups.

It is expected to not only offer us greater data reach but should also save time and labour as it reduces the number of data collection and performance operations, to deliver the information.

It should also deliver improved ASBV accuracy and is about getting the best information to make the best decisions to take the flock further forward.

We firstly physically mothered the 1300 stud lambs which were the product of AI or a single mating. Their mothers will complete the year's DNA testing program later this year to build our data bank for future lamb drops.

We then DNA tested all lamb which were progeny of syndicate-mated rams, at weaning, and later in the year DNA tested every stud ewe across all ages, except those which had been part of the earlier mothering program. The move means every 2017 drop lamb has both maternal and paternal parentage, giving us complete information about the poll gene and full parentage and pedigree.

This was the first time we had DNA tested ewes.

We now plan to continue to DNA test all lambs at weaning every year.

In other initiatives, we are also taking part in a DNA assessment project being coordinated by the sheep information group MerinoLink. This flock profiling project will also include a flock profile being developed for three Woodpark Poll blood flocks, who are also all participants in the latest Peter Westblade Memorial wether trial.

SNIPPETS

Engaging with young people in the industry

If ever there was a time one needed to feel interested and invigorated about what they do, it would be worth spending time with current and future people entering the industry. Sharing information with and learning from others is one of the highlights of a year with annual visits from our local students a chance to reflect and consider why we do what we do. Among the highlights this year were an annual visit by Charles Sturt University students and a bi-annual visit from Sydney Uni students. The groups were particularly enthusiastic and interested this year with a mix of students from country and city backgrounds. This mix often reveals a different perspective with questions this year having a real animal welfare and social license focus, and with a strong female contingent, great interest on the role of women in the industry and individual farm operations. Closer to home, each year we also sponsor a Hay War Memorial High School student to enter the National Merino Challenge. This year we sponsored local Monte Barnes, who is one of our next-door neighbours and has had a keen interest in livestock since early years. Thanks to Fox & Lillie who provided Isobel Huggins with a great opportunity during recent secondary school work experience. The Fox & Lillie and Fox & Lillie Rural team hosted Isobel with other students and gave her the chance to tour AWTA, spend time with brokers as they bid on wool and later clerked a sale, then followed through to the trading side. Isobel also spent time finding out about their marketing and promotion department and thoroughly enjoyed an interesting and useful great introduction to the other side of the wool production and sales ledger which many producers would also have loved.

Industry scholarship

In October 2017, Carol Huggins graduated as one of two wool industry participants from Australia's iconic Australian Rural Leadership Program, under an Australian Wool Innovation scholarship. She hoped to use the new skills and self-knowledge gained to contribute to the shee and wool industry in whatever capacity possible.

AWI reported on the 2016 intake's experiences in its Beyond the Bale edition early this year.

Australian Rural Leadership Program

"The Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) is rural Australia's iconic leadership development program that aims to produce a network of informed, capable and ethical leaders who are able to work collaboratively to advance the interests of regional Australia.

AWI funds the participation of wool industry leaders in the ARLP. These wool industry leaders engage with AWI, the wool industry and community about the learnings from the ARLP and continue to use these learnings for the benefit of rural and regional Australia, and the sheep and wool industry in particular.

The ARLP course provides a series of challenging experiences to develop leadership capabilities. It consists of about 50 days face-to-face, delivered in multiple sessions over 15 months. Five of these sessions take place in locations across Australia, including the Kimberley, a state capital city and a regional area, and involvement in Canberra's political scene. One session takes place overseas with a visit to one of Australia's closest neighbours, Indonesia.

2016-17 wool industry graduates

The Huggins' neighbour, Bert Matthews, who with his wife Liz runs 'Bedarbidgal' at Hay, also, graduated from the 2016-17 program thanks to sponsorship from AWI. Carol said she feels privileged to have "completed the ARLP".

"The program fast tracks a broad range of training and condenses years of experience into 15 months."

WOODPARK EVENTS 2018

Friday-Sunday, July 20-22
Australian Sheep & Wool Show

Monday-Tuesday, August 6-7
Hamilton Sheepvention
Sheepvention Ram Sale

Friday, August 17
Elders Sheep Expo, Deniliquin

Thursday, August 30
South West Slopes
Merino Field Day

Monday, September 24
Woodpark Poll Ram Sale

February, 2018
Loddon Valley Field Day

**WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT OUR
DISPLAYS AT THESE EVENTS OR
ANY TIME AT HOME**

ANNUAL RAM SALE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2018

140 POLL MERINO RAMS

JERILDERIE SHOWGROUND

INSPECTION 9.30AM — AUCTION 1.00PM

*** 800 MERINO AND POLL MERINO RAMS AVAILABLE IN GRADES IN DAYS FOLLOWING RAM SALE ***

HAMILTON RAMS TELL A PRODUCTIVE STORY

We are so excited about the two pens of rams we will be offering at Hamilton Sheepvention this year.

The rams number 10 in total (two pens of five) and are ideally suited to the type of sheep the district demands, with quality, soft handling, finer microning wool with all the productive traits we aim for.

The rams all trait leaders (top 10 per cent of industry) for the DP index. Eight are also trait leaders for the MP index.

Not only are we pleased with how they look, their figures also tell a strong story. The rams are characterised by their outstanding growth weights – nine out of 10 are industry trait leaders for yearling weights; while having finer microns.

We feel this is an ideal ram for today's conditions, with a wonderful wool market rewarding finer micron, productive sheep and a big lift in the 17 micron range, and also able to deliver growth when growing season moisture is at a premium.

Each pen again offers a distinctive type across the pen and the rams would stand among the top end of our annual auction.

We really look forward to presenting the rams at Hamilton and welcome any questions you may have.



2017 RAM SALE REPORT

The continued strength in the sheep industry and what we hope is continual lifting of the bar in our flock saw more new breeders taking on the Woodpark and Woodpark Poll bloodlines over the past 12 months.

We take the privilege and responsibility of breeding for others' production seriously and every effort is entered into continual lifting of quality and depth of the operation, to the point where we have no hesitation offering more than 800 rams for selection every year with a continual assessment honing that number from an initial potential offering of more than 1000.

SHEEPVENTION SALE RAMS

TAG	Lot No.	Sire	Micron	SD	CV	Comfort	CFW	Fdev	YWT	YFAT	EMD	LMY	DP	MP
PEN 1														
170973	1	PP	16.6	2.5	14.9	99.8	18	-0.2	10.0	0.5	0.5		149	146
170624	2	16-008 PP	18.2	2.8	15.6	99.4	21.1	-1.0	10.5	0.3	0.5		155	156
170032	3		16.9	2.6	15.6	99.9	20.4	-2.4	6.8	0.0	0.0	0.68	159	147
170008	4		18.6	2.6	14.2	99.3	20.1	-1.3	10	-0.4	-0.8	1.09	155	149
170450	5	12-407	17.5	2.8	16.3	99.4	17	-1.0	9.6	-0.3	-0.9		151	152
PEN 2														
170024	1	15-106	16.6	2.7	16.1	99.6	14	-1.7	10	0.6	0.3	0.66	154	153
170029	2	15-106 PP	18	3.1	17.1	99.5	11.3	-2.2	9.3	0.2	0.6	1.36	154	153
170002	3	15-106	16.6	2.5	14.8	99.7	12.5	-2.1	8.0	0.3	0.4	0.63	148	152
170086	4	12-342	17.1	2.6	15.1	99.6	19	-1.3	8.9	0.3	0.3	0.92	152	155
170911	5		17.6	2.7	15.2	99.9	19	-0.3	9.5	0.6	0.3		148	148

Top 10% of MerinoSelect

Top 20% of MerinoSelect

Top 30% of MerinoSelect