



Owen & Helen Huggins

## Woodpark

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

[www.woodparkmerino.com.au](http://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](mailto:info@woodparkmerino.com.au)

**WINTER  
2019**

# Woodpark Merino • Woodpark Poll

## Merinos delivering the good news

**When Stephen Huggins, a person who much prefers to be outside rather than at the desk, comes to put a few words together on occasion, it is rare that he hasn't got a great story to tell.**

Every time of the year seems to be a favourite time of the year, such as the enjoyment of lamb marking to see the way breeding programs have turned out and the potential and future of the operation; the harvesting of wool seeing how the sheep have done through the year, (always more enjoyable in a "good" year), classing and joining.

Even simply walking rams out through spring and enjoying the growth and lift and seeing what has lived up to early expectations and what has snuck through from the main run of rams to stand up with the early high level selections. Every part of the program is part of a jigsaw that helps move the operation forward, is carefully thought through and usually done with a large degree of enjoyment – admittedly, often a degree of haste to get through the volume of work. So despite the tightness of the season – and for many, it has been a very bleak run – it shouldn't be a surprise that this year he has found some good news again. The ability to recover from tight times by laying down reserves of fat and eye muscle, delivering high growth rates with minimal inputs – a high feed conversion – has come to the fore not only in our own sheep but in client flocks, through this time.

It was the standout feature of our ram sale last year, according to The Land (see page two), with productive rams able to keep "doing" despite the year, in demand.

This is essential in our now highly variable seasons, making it more important than ever to make the most of the smaller windows of opportunity the seasons now offer.

High growth rates, to turn wether lambs off quickly to good weights; ewes ability to recover and build body weight to raise oestrus levels and get in lamb again for high conception rates; reserves of fat and eye muscle to come through a tight period with a great recovery, along with not slipping too far when feeding in the first place.

This past season at Hay – which some would describe as almost or nearly a season – has been characterised by some rain interspersed with long dry periods, the moderate to small amount of grass dying or nearly dying before reviving it – and our hopes!

Two inches – or 50mm – of rain fell in the first 10 months of last year, to finish with 100mm – or 4 inches at the end of the year. But with a slightly improved start to this year.

The sheep have responded to the minimal paddock feed to look exceptional, recovering from one of the worst years ever recorded.

When there is the slightest moment of something available for them, the sheep have the ability to do something with it – convert quickly and put on muscle or bodyweight, which means you can do things with them. You can sell or join, whatever you choose – they quickly present you with options and opportunities.

We see it as having the balance – of muscle, growth, wool quality and weight. And because of the genetic stability, with few outside introductions, they are true to type, they will breed how they look, they will breed how their numbers represent them.



***Our own and client wool which has come through two incredibly dry summers. They are looking fantastic and the photos tell the story of the flock.***

It's a long term approach, we are not making decisions on the run and we have the confidence to hold firm through the tight times. We know what we are trying to achieve and are making the decisions to get there, to deliver a balanced, versatile animal that fits in with our so variable environment and still perform under those conditions.

We also see how using different tools provides the information we need to be confident in our decisions. In the results of client flocks in the Peter Westblade trial, through our DNA testing program which aims to identify parentage and key characteristics, through our entry in the MerinoLink Sire Evaluation. It all adds another piece to the jigsaw.

In 2015, at a MerinoLink conference, Sandy McEachern, co-principal of agricultural benchmarking consultants Holmes Sackett, said wool enterprises had been more profitable than other enterprises for years; with an 18 micron self-replacing Merino flock the most profitable livestock enterprise. Several years later even with a slight softening, with wool prices far in advance of the early 2000s, it seems a given that Merinos still do well.

# Polls hot at Woodpark

The Land - September 26, 2018



*Sale top price buyer Adam Mort, Hilltop Stud Mudgee, looking to add "Power and punch" to his sheep.*

**"The Woodpark Poll sheep were provided the opportunity to showcase their ability to perform in tough seasons, which Stephen and Carol Huggins have been breeding toward, at the annual ram sale at Jerilderie racecourse," The Land reported last year.**

"The draft of 142 rams on offer averaged in the top 10 per cent of all sheep on the MerinoSelect index for Dual Purpose (DP) index; in the top 20pc of yearling weight, yearling clean fleece weight and Merino Production (MP) index.

The sale average was up with 134 rams selling for an average price of 2571 to a top of \$6000.

Strong demand in the front row saw the sale top superseded on a number of occasions, eventually settling with Adam Mort of Hilltop Merino Stud Mudgee.

After liking the style of sheep he saw at the South West Slopes Field Day (in 2017 and 2018)... he decided to attend the sale and inspect the larger selection of the Woodpark Poll sheep.

Breeding superfine Poll Merinos, Mr Mort was looking to add some power and punch to his sheep. The top priced ram WP 17-0273 was in the top 10pc for yearling clean fleece weight.

"He has such a deep body combined with the added bone, structural soundness, and good doing ability I was looking to add to our flock," Mr Mort said.

WP 12-0612, a son of WP 14-0008, in the top 10pc for yearling CFW, and both the MP and DP indices, sold for the second top money of \$5750, to return buyer Sue Braid, Frogmore.

Mrs Braid was drawn to Woodpark after the bloodline caught her eye due to their performance in the Bookham wether trial. Mrs Braid has been particularly impressed with their ability to perform in high rainfall environments.

The third top money of \$5250 was met twice. Dave Bibby of Maranui Pastoral Co, Tatyoon, in Victoria, fought hard for a WP 17-0299, a WP 15-352 son who was in the top 5pc for CFW and MP index and top 10c for DP index. Drawn to the ram for his capacity and depth of body as well as his good, clean fleece weight numbers, Mr Bibby has been purchasing from Woodpark Poll for 10 years.

"I really like the wool, the early maturity pattern and the fertility of the Woodpark Poll sheep."

The other \$5250 equal third top price was WP 17-023, a son of WP12-342 and was in the top 5pc for both MP and DP indices, who sold to KJ & N Davis, Caragabal.

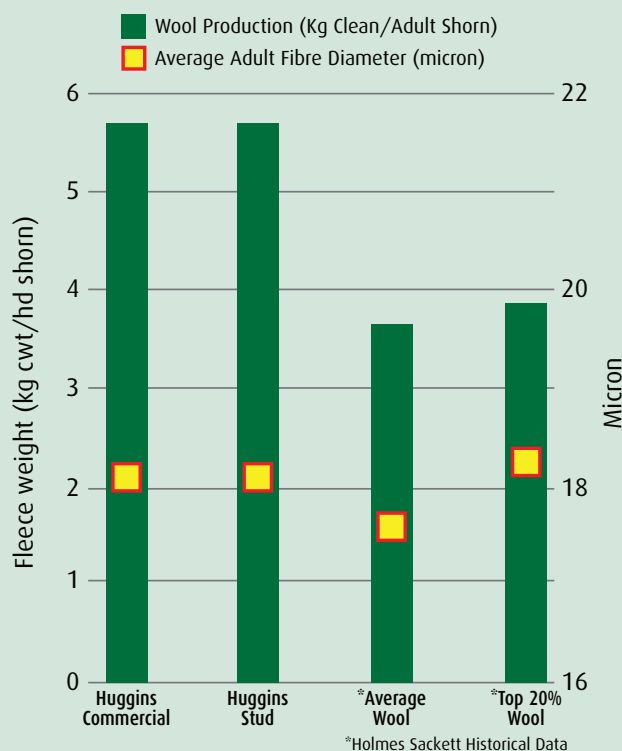
Woomargama Station put together a line of 10 rams for a \$2425 average, paying to a top of \$3750 for WP 17-401, a WP 12-204 son, who was in the top 5pc for both MP and DP indices.

Not to be outdone, L, D, S & M Farrant, also put together a draft of 10 rams, working hard to get them loaded at an average price of \$1785, paying to a top of \$2750 along the way.

Buying well, MV AG, Mountview, Alectown, paid to a top of \$3500 on the way to securing 8 rams for a \$2581 average. While Coolamon's S & H Exton and Son drafted seven their way for a \$2935 average paying to a top of \$3500.

Peter Sleeman, Pty Ltd, "Riversdale" Jerilderie, and Budgewah Pastoral Co, Benduck, Hay, both found value when securing their respective 7 rams for \$2157 and \$1157 average. The sale was conducted by Elders and Landmark with Ron Rutledge, Peter Godbolt and Nick Gray sharing duties. - Nathan O'Sullivan, The Land.

## Fleece Wt v Micron



### BENCHMARKING WOOL PRODUCTION

Last year we started benchmarking through the highly regarded Holmes and Sackett benchmarking process. We saw it as a great chance to shine a light on our whole business, rather than just focusing on sheep production as we do every day. While the data collation and entry has proven a worthwhile project – and challenge – in itself, even before the analysis comes back – the early production results were wonderful.

The data showed Woodpark Poll's commercial and stud Merino flocks had higher wool cut at a lower micron than the top 20 per cent of the Holmes and Sackett historical benchmarking.

The data was entered into the organisations benchmarking algorithms from Eurole's complete wool records by Holmes and Sackett benchmarking facilitators and was the shearing results in a relatively tight year.

### HAMILTON SHEEPVENTION

We are once again entering two pens of five rams for sale at the Hamilton Sheepvention annual ram sale on August 6. We have offered 10 rams for the past three years as we feel the rams we select offer the high wool cut and productive body type while maintaining micron, that producers keen to capitalise on both the cracking wool market and robust sheep prices, can use in the region with confidence. With successful forays into the genetics by district breeders over the past few years, it shows the right sheep will be productive in any environment. We believe the rams we have entered in the auction are a lovely line of productive Woodpark Poll types. We look forward to providing any information you may wish for.

## WOODPARK EVENTS 2019

**Friday-Sunday, July 19-21**

**Australian Sheep & Wool Show**

**Sunday-Tuesday, August 4-6**

**Hamilton Sheepvention Sheepvention Ram Sale**  
Offering 2 Pens of 5 Rams (August 6)

**Friday, August 16**

**Elders Riverina Sheep Expo - Deniliquin**

**Thursday, September 3**

**South West Slopes Field Day - Harden**

**Monday, September 23**

**Woodpark Poll Annual Ram Sale - Jerilderie**



# Success measured in wether trial



**A Merino breeding enterprise started just six years ago with surplus 1.5 and 6yo Woodpark Poll-bred ewes, has achieved the highest combined fleece and carcase value, \$10 a head more than the next-ranked team, in the PWMMC, Australia's largest wether trial.**

The Mulquiny family's Wooroonook, near Charlton, origin wether team, averaged \$205/head, rewarding their focus on quality, and drive for a balance of wool and carcase, at the most recent shearing and carcase appraisal of the Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge.

The Mulquinys started the flock with surplus Woodpark Poll 1.5 and 6yo ewes adding a mix of the stud's grade and auction rams six years ago. They deepened the commitment with the purchase of a run of surplus one and a half year old Woodpark Poll-bred commercial ewes at the feature Jerilderie September Merino sale the following year.

The result came from the wethers' highest carcase value (and highest weight at 54.6kg) of the trial at \$108.58, combined with its 16.2 micron and 7.1kg greasy fleece weight average wool, netting the second highest fleece weight and value in their age group, giving them the third highest wool value in the trial.

The team also ranked highest on the Rampower DP index and the second highest on both the MP and FP index.

WMMC convenor Craig Wilson, Craig Wilson, said it was "no surprise" the team had "compared so well in the PWMMC, Australia's largest evaluation of commercial Merino genetics."

"Great results for a young person, keen on sheep in a mainly cropping area, started with quality and only improving every year," Mr Wilson said.

In a report by The Land in June, Mr Wilson said: "They are a great example of what you can do, because they didn't even have sheep six years ago they just went out and bought really quality ewes and rams."

Bernie Mulquiny, who runs the family's mixed farming operation with his sons, told The Land the family had previously concentrated on cropping and opportunity sheep production, mainly wethers.

"Initially (Bernie's sons) Harrison and Lachlan spoke to Stephen Huggins of Woodpark Poll, I didn't know about it but I met Stephen later that day and he said your sons have agreed to buy some stud ewes off me, I said right, good on them," Mr Mulquiny said.

The Land reported: "The Mulquinys put their quick success down to a quality genetic base in the Woodpark Poll bloodline."

"We liked the elite wool and their doing ability and I just liked the look of the sheep – square, boxy and their fertility so we've got more scope to get the genetic gain quicker," Mr Mulquiny told The Land.

Stephen Huggins said the Mulquinys' results also demonstrated their commitment to what they were doing. Harrison, who was 17 when the family moved into breeding ewes, is also the co-recipient of the 2017 Peter Westblade Scholarship Award, citing his award as the opportunity to travel and find out more about the industry, including investigating pedigree tracking and new technology.

"I like to get the best out of our sheep and am always striving for a better animal," Harrison said.

"I aim to breed productive, easy-care Merinos with a high fleece weight and lower micron".

## Trial sets a challenge for Merino breeders

The Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge is Australia's largest commercial evaluation of Merino genetics and several Woodpark Poll clients have previously entered the trial as a means to benchmark their sheep.

It is a huge commitment, particularly when sheep prices are strong, but the knowledge gained is a great opportunity to see where a flock sits and what needs to be done to take sheep to a new level.

The 2018-2020 trial has one more shearing to be held and is being participated in by long time Woodpark Poll supporters and specialist breeders the Rowan family of Coleambally. The Rowans are seeing excellent outcomes in wool being among the top flocks in terms of wool value and carcase characteristics in their age section.

The Kreutzberger family at Rand have entered for a second time, after a gap of several years, after entering shortly after introducing Woodpark genetics. The Kreutzbergers have seen a big lift in their results, with their carcase focus and solid wool results putting them third in the carcase value for their age section.

Hamilton's McCorkell family have entered the trial for the first time following the recent introduction of Woodpark Poll genetics (See story page 4) and will feed the information gained into their breeding objectives. They are adding wool cut and sheep frame and fertility to their previously specialist wool flock.





# ***“With a change of bloodlines this Western District flock hit the ground running”***

- writes Fiona Myers (The Weekly Times June 5, 2019).



Howard McCorkell, his family and manager Jamie Burns run more than 7000 Merino and Composite sheep on the McCorkells property in 650mm rainfall country west of Hamilton.

After taking over his family's property and flock more than seven years ago, and on the advice of his sheep consultant Craig Wilson, Mr McCorkell injected Woodpark Poll genetics in a bid to lift wool cut and body size while maintaining the existing wool quality on his flock.

The Weekly Times spoke with Mr McCorkell about his results, in June this year.

**Wool cuts increased 20-30%**

**Body size increased**

**Micron steady in 16-18 range**

“Diversification for Western District farmer Howard McCorkell comes in the form of running two different breeds of sheep.

“Despite his country being in the heartland of composites more than half the 7000 ewes he joins are Merinos .

“...(He) said it was the numbers that stacked up when it came to maintaining the Merinos as many others in the district were opting to go down the opposite path.”

“We wanted sheep with a good body and good wools. It was an interesting decision given that we were taking sheep from the Riverina to the Western District but the young rams have handled it well.”

**Howard initially bought about 20 Woodpark Poll flock rams which still had ASBVs but allowed him to build up ram numbers of similar type without going to auction. Since then, he has started operating at the stud's annual auction.**

“We wanted more depth and body in our sheep which would give us better (more profitable) options when it came to selling them,” Mr McCorkell told The Weekly Times.

“Several joinings down the track the influence of the new bloodline has done exactly what they'd hoped and something they didn't expect.

“Wool cuts have risen by 20 to 30 percent.

“This has had a huge impact on the Merino enterprise in the livestock operation as there was simply more wool to sell.

**But micron has remained steady.**

“Even with the boom in lamb prices, the comparable marked increase in wool prices combined with the now higher wool cut in his sheep see Merinos outclassing the composites for the past couple of years when the enterprises are benchmarked.”

“We had thought that we would lose the fineness in the flock but we haven't changed much, if at all.

“We were in the 16-18 micron range and we have stayed there.”

“The impact on body size has made their sheep more attractive to sell as mutton, with stock now consigned direct to the abattoirs and sold on a grid basis.

**The McCorkells measure their Merinos through use of ASBVs for selection, internal benchmarking by consultants and measures such as entering wether trials.**

**“I was lucky to have bought a good flock of sheep that my parents had worked hard on and have been able to use these as a base to make an even more productive flock.”.**

- Edited article - The Weekly Times, June 5, 2019



**ANNUAL RAM SALE**  
**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2019**  
**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 \*\*\*