



Albury Wodonga Region Report July 2011

Superfine wool growers!!!

They are a particularly resilient group of people. That resilience has seriously been tested in recent years.

Firstly there were low wool prices, then drought, then more low wool prices, and more drought, more low wool prices, then a little bit of pleasure in surplus sheep prices. Trying to manage without mulesing sheep and the extra crutching involved causes us to start questioning the future?

I opted to join some of my ewes to a broader merino to have a bigger saleable sheep at the end and still a reasonable wool article. So, what next. A clip that averages about 28 nkt with 100% mid break.

Heard that there was a lot of high mid break wool around so I decided not to sell. Rain fall turns on a bit of a better season but still no improvement in wools future. Still under pressure to improve the bottom line. Chose to cross breed some ewes with Dohne rams, this venture is on going with first lambs on the ground.

I chose to sell last year's wool in January. I was fortunate to receive 14-1500 cents for my fleece lots. Certainly an improvement but can the current market be maintained. We as Superfine wool growers certainly hope so.

Ok, so what now? After so many years under that pressure and having to change the demographic of the business, do you now just drop all of the changes that have been set up and go back to breeding superfine or do we embrace the change and continue with the current breeding program to keep the risk diversified. I think probably a choice of the latter option in the short term any way could be the way forward. After all I am still joining approximately 2/3rds of my ewes to superfine and have decided to keep wethers for another year.

How many superfine growers are in this or similar situation? I suspect quite a few so it is probably going to need a sustained period of good superfine wool prices for these growers to recover to full superfine productions.

On a more positive note this season's clip shorn in July is probably one of the best clips ever produced all be it small.

Also after an atrocious lambing last season I have paid more attention to my ewes. Feeding twinners right through pre and post lambing and it has made an enormous difference to the survival. It has delivered a drop of lambs this season that I am proud of.

Last year I wrote an article about pasture cropping and some of my experiences. That work has continued and expanded this season. After such prolific summer growth we realized that if we didn't heavily graze or trample a lot of that material then we would not get germination and therefore have no winter feed. This has happened to a lot of local farmers.

Generally speaking we would graze a paddock sufficiently to get a bit of trampling then, using our disc seeder, we would plant oats or triticale into it. Some of the best results were in paddocks that had a lot of hairy panic growing. The disc seeder just cuts a slot through the material with 10.5 inch spacing than away it goes without much competition. At the same time 100% ground cover is maintained 100% of the time.



The Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association Inc.

ABN: 41 338 467 905

Unit 9, 42 - 46 Vella Drive, Sunshine West Vic 3020, Australia

Telephone: 03 9311 0271

e-mail: aswga@woolindustries.org

Facsimile: 03 9311 0138