



Ararat-Barunah Region Report July 2011

During the year it was exciting to see one of our long time members Mr George Holden, Concongella, receive an Order of Australia Medal (OAM). Mr Holden's (OAM) award recognised his ongoing service to the local community, his work with environmental groups including Landcare and Project Platypus, agricultural groups including the wool industry, the Country Fire Authority and local government.

Congratulations must also be extended to the Sandlant family, "Pyrenees Park", for once again excelling in the field of sharlea wool production. Building on last year's achievement, this year Rob and his team presented a bale measuring **11.2 um**. The bale, typed ASF1E was the finest ever presented for auction, realizing a price of 200,000 cents per kilogram greasy. A notable achievement considering the subdued state currently surrounding the sharlea sector.

As with much of eastern Australia over the past 12 months, the Ararat/ Barunah region has experienced one of its wettest periods on record. From drought to flood we surely do live and work in a diverse environment. A positive outcome from this is obvious. Feed aplenty, prime stock combined with healthy fleece weights. The difficulties encountered included fleeces containing heavy colour, over length, health issues associated with plant toxicity, worm burdens and of course fly strike.

Despite these problems the 2010/2011 season has proven to be a positive one for wool growers in general. An ever strengthening wool market combined with historically high prices for livestock meant that the returns from sheep and wool has rivalled that of competing ventures, reinforcing the importance of the merino within Australia. Confidence has returned, and with it so has demand for quality superfine rams. We once again are seeing strong enquiry for well bred, robust breeding stock which will primarily be used for wool production. The upwards trend will need to continue in order for

loyal wool producers to regain some of the ground they lost during the run of less profitable years.

It is pleasing to see an increase in the number of wool and wool blend garments in stores, in particular in the active wear ranges. It will be important however to maintain high standards within these product ranges so as to keep and grow the current enthusiastic clientele. Already garments containing lower quality wool are entering stores at discount prices. Such products must not be allowed to jeopardise the high reputation that has taken so long to build up over many years of financial effort.

The superfine sector has struggled through adversity in the past, and it is only now that we are witnessing a turnaround in prospects. It is through the tireless work of organisations such as the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Assoc that growers concerns are represented and, if required change implemented. With this in mind I thank and support Helen and the executive for their efforts and would encourage others to do this also.



With the record-priced 11.2 micron bale, from left, G. Schneider Australia Mark Syme; Brad Sandlant; Landmark auctioneer Simon Arbuckle; Landmark Jackson superfine specialist Ted Wilson; Pyrenees Park owner Rob Sandlant

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