



*Trade Mark of Excellence*

## **New England Region Report March 2011**

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New England Region is experiencing a wonderful season. The countryside is covered in thick grass. Some grass species which were thought to be almost gone have emerged in numbers. These will seed over summer and autumn and will help to keep our pastures strong and diverse. But it is not all joy, all sheep will carry much higher vegetable fault when shorn. We have lots more foot abscess and the barbers pole worms are absolutely loving the conditions. Most growers are saying they are having to drench a few extra times this year. Also sheep are not as fat or as heavy as usual due to too much long and wet grass.

The floods in January affected our northern members the most. Fencing and road damage will have the biggest impact. Stock losses were minor but farmers will have much extra work as a result.

Wool prices are increasing much to members delight. Agents report prices 40% higher than the start of the season and about 75% compared to February 2010. This will be a huge boost to growers, as they will be able to do extra maintenance of their properties that has not been done the last few years.

Mutton prices at present are fabulous. Surplus sheep are selling at prices not seen before. It is because of low sheep numbers and a very good season. There is a growing trend back to merinos with more joinings to merino rams being planned. There may be some members who will keep wethers to shear and this can only improve the quality of the wool clip.

The Newcastle wool selling centre is once again in the sights of the National Auction Selling Committee. They are planning to reduce the number of sales from five to four in the 2011/12 selling season. The New England branch will be doing everything to keep our sale days intact. High profile buyers and exporters have written submissions against the move to scrap one sale week and this can be seen as a big endorsement for Newcastle. But in another twist, the NASC is imposing dubious restrictions that have to be met to keep our sales. We are still committed to selling in Newcastle as it provides a great venue and holds a top brand name too.

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