



AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION INC

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ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA VELLUS AUREUM INTERNATIONAL WINNER ANNOUNCED

Wool, finer than cashmere and vicuna, was produced by Australian ultrafine woolgrowers Peter and Max Lee of "Beulah" Gunnedah, NSW to win the inaugural **Ermenegildo ZegnaVellus Aureum International Trophy**.

For the first time the **Ermenegildo Zegna Awards** have included an international award to be contested by the world's major fine wool growing nations Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Argentina.

The awards were presented by Count Paolo Zegna, Joint Chief Executive Officer, of Ermenegildo Zegna Group, Italy, manufacturers of fine quality men's fabrics and clothing, at the Park Hyatt Melbourne tonight.

The 'golden fleece' entered by Peter and Mark Lee, measuring only 10.3 microns, is a triumph for all fine woolgrowers worldwide whose highly skilled breeding programmes, developed through many years of research, have produced an ultrafine wool to rate alongside other rare and exotic fibres such as cashmere and vicuna.

For the past 15 years since, they moved to Gunnedah in the north-west of NSW from their property in Charleville, Queensland, brothers Peter and Max Lee have been dedicated to refining their ultrafine Merino sheep. Their 610 hectare property "Beulah", Gunnedah presently runs a small flock of Merino sheep with some 380 of these fine, rare animals in sheds.

The winners will receive the Golden Fleece's "weight in gold" and a replica of the Swiss artist Not Vital's sculpture created in 2002 especially for the launch of the Vellus Aureum Trophy.

The Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum International Trophy represents a significant milestone in the long and close relationship which has developed between the Zegna Group, one of the largest buyers of Australian superfine Merino wool and a strong believer in the improvement of its quality.

In the **Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum Trophy** which included, for the first time, participating fleeces from New Zealand, growers Geoff and Leone Bishop of Mt. Otekaike Station, Oamaru, North Otago, won the NZ competition with a fine quality fleece measuring 13.1 microns.

Other trophies presented in the **Ermenegildo Zegna Awards**:

The **Ermenegildo Zegna Unprotected Wool Trophy - Australia** was won by Irene & Daryl Croake, "Oak Hills" Pyramul, NSW with 95.6 points.

For the Croake family, no strangers to receiving the highest accolades for their superfine wool, this win follows first places in the 2002 Ermenegildo Zegna Protected Wool Trophy and 2001 Unprotected Wool Trophy and places in 1999, 1998 and 1986.

At "Oak Hills" in the Mudgee region of NSW the Croake family runs some 5,500 fine Merino sheep, based on predominantly Hillcreston and a small infusion of Merryville bloodlines.

The Croake family name has, through several generations, become famous in Australian wool growing circles and worldwide, synonymous with production of superior Merino wools.

The **Ermenegildo Zegna Protected Wool Trophy - Australia** was won by Garry & Kay Wilson, "Caringa", Tumbarumba, NSW with 95.0 points.

The Wilson family's win is a first major Ermenegildo Zegna Award for "Caringa" wool following a third place in the competition in 2000.

"Caringa", situated in southern NSW, high in the mountains 300km from Canberra, runs some 4,000 ultrafine fine Merinos of Ledgerton bloodline on 245 hectares. They have an annual production of around 60 bales measuring less than 17micron.

The **Ermenegildo Zegna V. A. Challenge International** launched this year in Argentina, New Zealand and South Africa overall winner was Rob & Debbie Leslie, "Glentara" North Canterbury, New Zealand with 92.46 points for a 14.5micron fleece.

Overall the Australian competition attracted 287 entries, another record over the previous 282 in 2002. Each year producers from all fine wool growing areas of the continent keenly support the Awards which recognise their efforts and gives them world status.

Growers in Argentina, New Zealand and South Africa have also enthusiastically embraced the concept of the Ermenegildo Zegna Awards. In New Zealand 49 entries were received, 54 in South Africa and 53 in Argentina and organisers in each country are confident of much larger numbers next year.

All fleeces entered will be purchased by Ermenegildo Zegna and made into the finest quality menswear and accessories produced under the Ermenegildo Zegna and Agnona labels.

Since 1963, when the first Ermenegildo Zegna Perpetual Trophy was presented in Tasmania, Zegna has encouraged and supported the development of a finer, softer and more exotic wool product. Today world market preference is for the finest wools in menswear and womenswear.

Announcing the winners Count Paolo Zegna said "Fine quality wool has always been crucial in every Zegna fabric collection and we believe ultrafine wool has now been projected even higher into the imagination of consumers who are seeing a fibre of fineness and beauty equalling other natural and exotic fibres such as cashmere, and even vicuna.

"The very exciting developments we have seen over the last few years in lightweight wool fabrics for summer and rich elegant cloths of extreme finess and beauty suitable for the most sartorial clothing, are only made possible by an assured supply of the finest quality fleeces.

"Through our Awards, and through the world-wide promotion of wool, we believe we can assure woolgrowers of a secure future for their product" Paolo Zegna concluded.

ASWGA President, Tony Gall thanked Count Zegna for the continued support given by the Zegna Group. "I am proud to say the superfine wool growers of Australia and the world's leader in wool processing and fashion Ermenegildo Zegna continue to work together for the future of their industry, 40 years on", he said.

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA AWARDS

2003 RESULTS

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA VELLUS AUREUM INTERNATIONAL TROPHY

(For fleece 13.9 and finer - Unprotected, Protected & Shedded sheep)

Winner
10.3 Micron
Messrs Peter & Max Lee
"Beulah"
Gunnedah NSW 2380
Australia

**ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA
VELLUS AUREUM TROPHY**

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, ARGENTINA & SOUTH AFRICA

(Fleece 13.9 micron and finer - Unprotected, Protected & rugged sheep)

PLACE	MICRON	NAME
Australia	10.3 Micron	Messrs Peter & Max Lee "Beulah" GUNNEDAH NSW 2380
New Zealand	13.1 Micron	Geoff & Leone Bishop Mt Otekaike Station NORTH OTAGO

**ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA
UNPROTECTED WOOL TROPHY
AUSTRALIA**

(Fleece from non-rugged sheep)

PLACE	POINTS	NAME
First	95.6	Daryl & Irene Croake "Oak Hills" PYRAMUL NSW 2850
Second	94.3	Tony & Janet Gall

		"Wilson's Creek" URALLA NSW 2358
Third	94.1	AD & P Hundy "Windradeen" PYRAMUL
Fourth	93.9	Mr Merv Mibus "Glenara" DUNKELD VIC 3294
Fifth	93.7	Mr Fank O'Connor Benham Pastoral AVOCA TAS 7213
Sixth	93.6	C.D.R. & F.J. Tully 'Tarrangower' ARMIDALE NSW 2350
Seventh	93.5	Tony & Winsome Price 'Boiga View' PYRAMUL NSW 2850
Equal eighth	93.4	Mr.Greg Munsie C Munsie & Sons 'Topside' URALLA NSW 2358
Equal eighth	93.4	Mr. Owen James O. & J. James 'Baroonga' NIMMITABEL NSW 2631
Tenth	93.3	N.Hartwich & Sons 'Mt.Challicum' BUANGOR VIC 3375

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA PROTECTED WOOL TROPHY - AUSTRALIA

(Fleece from rugged sheep)

PLACE	POINTS	NAME
First	95.0	Mr & Mrs Garry Wilson "Caringa" TUMBARUMBA NSW 2654
Second	94.7	CDR & FJ Tully The Tarrangower Trust "Tarrangower" ARMIDALE NSW 2350
Third	94.5	AS & P Hundy "Windradeen" PYRAMUL NSW 2850

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA V.A. CHALLENGE
SOUTH AFRICA, ARGENTINA, NEW ZEALAND
(Fleece between 17.9 and 14 micron)

PLACE	POINTS	NAME
Winner SOUTH AFRICA	86.38	Messrs Carlie & Jules van Aardt Baviaanskrane Farm COOLHOUSE 5820
Winner ARGENTINA	88.40	Mr Luis Torres (Manager Dr Jorge Mehaudy) Estancia La Bianca GORBERNADOR COSTA (Chubut)
Winner NEW ZEALAND	92.86	Rob & Debbie Leslie "Glentara" NORTH CANTERBURY

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA V. A. CHALLENGE INTERNATIONAL

(Fleece between 17.9 and 14 micron)

Winner	Rob & Debbie Leslie "Glentara" NORTH CATERBURY
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ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA AWARDS

HISTORY

Since Ermenegildo Zegna founded his wool mill in 1910 the company has been an enthusiastic promoter of the finest quality raw materials.

The young entrepreneur had a clear goal in mind; producing the finest fabrics in the world. To achieve this he established direct contacts with those markets supplying the very best natural fibres the world had to offer.

In 1920 he visited Australia in search of the finest Merino wool and since that time Zegna has promoted a sense of tradition and historical connection with Australia.

Now Gruppo Ermenegildo Zegna is world renowned for its leadership in men's clothing and fine fabrics under the labels Ermenegildo Zegna, and Agnona in womenswear, and one of the world's largest users of extrafine Merino wool.

Other exotic natural fibres used by Zegna are cashmere from Inner Mongolia; mohair from South Africa and through Agnona, Zegna is one of only three companies in the world allowed by the Peruvian Government to produce and distribute the rare and precious fibre vicuna.

The **Ermenegildo Zegna Awards** were first conceived in 1963 with the **Ermenegildo Zegna Perpetual Trophy** presented in Tasmania for growers of "Superfine Skirted Merino Fleece".

In 1980 a national award, the **Ermenegildo Zegna Trophy for Extrafine Wool Production (now the Ermenegildo Zegna Unprotected Wool Trophy)** was launched in conjunction with the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association (ASWGA) to salute the outstanding effort by woolgrowers dedicated to continued improvement of their product. To this day, it is the only non-commercial competition of its kind.

In 1998, an **Ermenegildo Zegna Protected Wool Trophy** was added at the suggestion of ASWGA, for fleeces from sheep coated for around nine months of the year to protect the fleece from the elements, dust and vegetable matter.

In 2002 celebrating the incredible advancements made by Australian woolgrowers, the **Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum Trophy** (transl.Golden Fleece), for 13.9 micron and finer, was launched. This award recognised that dedicated group of Australian woolgrowers whose continuing quest for excellence, produces a wool of such beauty, softness and fineness to equal other rare fibres such as cashmere.

In 2003 the next logical step - a global award - the **Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum International Trophy** was launched simultaneously in the world's major fine wool producing countries Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and South Africa. Invited to compete for the title of producer of the world's finest and best Golden Fleece, the winner will receive gold in equivalent weight to the winning fleece and a replica of the Not Vital Vellus Aureum Sculpture.

In addition, an **Ermenegildo Zegna V. A. Challenge** competition for wool of 17.9 to 14 microns established inviting woolgrowers in Argentina, New Zealand and South Africa to enter fleeces in a competition similar to the very successful Australian awards.

Winners from each country entering the Vellus Aureum and V A Challenge competitions will also be awarded travel and accommodation to attend the Ermenegildo Zegna Awards gala presentation in Melbourne (Australia) 29 March 2003.

Annually, fleeces from all Australian superfine areas are submitted for judging. Entry numbers have grown significantly since the Zegna Trophy national competition was established. In 2003 a record 287 fleeces were accepted for judging in three categories. (282 in 2002).

In the first international competitions 53 fleeces were entered in Argentina, 49 in New Zealand and 54 in South Africa.

Trophies are awarded for the most outstanding fleeces submitted to an independent panel of judges who select winners according to criteria set by the ASWGA.

In the 40 years since the Ermenegildo Zegna Awards commenced in Australia, strong bonds have developed between the Zegna family and Australian woolgrowers who work closely with them to improve this elite fibre, to their mutual benefit, and with it a perfect example of successful niche marketing has resulted.

THE TROPHIES

Fine works of art have been a very important feature of the Ermenegildo Zegna Awards. Artists of international acclaim were commissioned to create works for each new trophy and Australian museums have been the beneficiaries.

In 2002 famous Swiss sculptor, **Not Vital** was commissioned to create a work for the Vellus Aureum Trophy and his magnificent bronze sculpture, "Vellus Aureum", from which a replica will become part of the prize for the winner, was donated to the Powerhouse Museum collection in Sydney.

In 1979, world acclaimed English artist, the late **Graham Sutherland**, was commissioned to produce the "Rams Head" gouache, from which lithographs were produced to form part of subsequent prizes. The National Museum of Australia now houses the gouache and a ceramic plate, also produced from the "Ram's Head" design and donated to the Australian Superfine Wool Grower's Association.

In 1963, Australian sculptor **Steven Walker**, who had studied in Rome and Florence, created an intricate work in platinum, gold and silver piece for the first trophy which is housed in the Tasmanian Wool Museum.
