



AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION INC

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ASWGA Ararat/Barunah Regional Report

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What does the future hold for the Australian Wool Industry? According to recent reports National wool production is estimated to fall to a sixty year low of 385 million kilograms. The merino is slowly being replaced by the more easy care, highly productive crossbred type, suitable for meat production. When comparing returns for prime lambs against that of wool the decision to change is not a difficult one.

Broad acre cropping also is gaining in popularity. It is not unusual to find expansive areas of historically pastoral land in central & Western Victoria where large flocks of fine wool sheep once roamed to now be set aside for cereal & oilseed production. The 'old wool classer' is being replaced by the modern plant agronomist & the Shearer has lost favour only to be replaced by state of the art tillage equipment.

The Ararat/Barunah region in particular is under pressure from such production trend changes. Our climate easily lends itself to such enterprises.

With diminishing production also comes loss of experienced personal. If the industry becomes stagnant for any prolonged period of time I fear that any failure to attract the next generation of thinkers will ultimately prove catastrophic. However all is not lost. Often it is during times of such despondency that strong leadership qualities emerge. Experiencing hardship can strengthen ones resolve, promoting a drive & determination to move forward. Would it be too bold of me to say that this lull may encompass some hidden benefits? Only the future will determine that.

Currently we are in the midst of winter, encountering all the complications & unpleasantness associated with this time of year. As the breaking rains did not arrive until late, growth has been slow, resulting in short pastures. Stock are still requiring some form of supplementary feed in most areas. This will continue until the warmth of spring arrives, hopefully bringing with it some timely rain events. We shall keep our fingers crossed!

The show circuit is in full swing here in Victoria, with a number of members being heavily involved. The high standard of superfine entrants on display is most encouraging to see, making for an enjoyable day out.

With the spring shearing season fast approaching we anxiously await to see how the clip has been affected this past year. I suspect that as we still seem to be suffering from a frustratingly dry climate, yields will be nothing spectacular & the problems relating to staple strength remain. Hopefully though there may be some improvement on last year.

Our region has once again been recognised in the Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum International fleece competition thanks to the achievements of the Horsham Wool Factory. Following on from last years first place, this years' fleece again measured an impressive 10.7 um, only to be judged runner up to another outstanding fleece from New Zealand. A fine effort indeed.