

Australian Superfine Wool Growers'

ASSOCIATION INC

ANNUAL 2022-2023

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Cover Image: Any chance of a lift? By Suma Reid

Picture above: Sheep near a Redgum. By H Phillips.

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AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION INC.

COUNCIL 2022-23

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the 2022-23 edition of Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association Annual.

For this edition, I am editor in name at most, as I have been in hospital most of the time since early April and as recently as copy deadline week.

Unfortunately, I have not had the time nor capacity to read any of the articles. Consequently, I am unable to provide enticing insights to the articles, but I am indebted to members of the Annual committee who have taken up the task and enabled a worthy issue of the Annual to appear.

Firstly, our past Administrative Officer, Melissa Mulley ensured most of the foundation work was completed before her final days which included sourcing and coordinating articles, to finding a new publisher.

Again, without the multitude of challenging tasks taken on by Melissa this Annual would not be what it is.

With Melissa's departure Bianca Heaney has fortunately filled the void ensuring completion of the Annual.

Secondly, to committee member Lyndall Eeg who undertook the task of initial proof reading of articles.

Thirdly, I thank other members of the committee Lesley Prior, Susan Rowbottom and Simon



Cameron who offered ideas and suggested articles.

Unfortunately, Vera Taylor resigned from the Committee although still providing an original article.

Finally, we are grateful to the advertisers who have ensured financial support for the Annual - an important and necessary requirement.

I hope you find this issue of the Annual covers issues of current interest to superfine wool grower members who have enjoyed respectful wool prices and a universally good season

culminating in belated, but revered celebration of the Association's fiftieth anniversary.

Whether you are reading the Annual in detail or skimming articles, again give some thought to the articles you would like to be covered in next year's edition and let a member of the Annual's committee know your thoughts, even to the extent of penning an article for next year's issue.

All the best and happy reading.

JOHN IVE

"Talaheni"

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2022

I am pleased to report on the 51st year of the Australian Superfine Woolgrowers Association. You have placed a lot of faith in me to continue and build on the work done previously.

This year has been a disjointed year with the COVID-19 pandemic still rumbling along, restricting travel meetings and social events.

When we have been allowed to travel it's wonderful to meet old friends and new and hear their stories.

Seasonal conditions for the last twelve months have generally been excellent. This has aided members to increase sheep numbers and production which was severely reduced in the drought years of 2018-2020.

While the rain is very welcome, we feel for our fellow Ag communities in coastal areas which have been



inundated by two or three floods this year with massive losses and property damage.

Sheep graziers have their own issues with increased worm, fly and feet

◀ problems meaning extra workload and big increase in costs.

The wool market continues in an upward direction with the market indicator up 5% for the year. Superfine types are seeing higher rises and some fantastic prices, some towards \$100 a head.

The ultrafine wools are now experiencing large differences between points of microns. Members should be aware that classing decisions exist to access this extra money.

Supply of superfine wool continues to diminish as the trend towards larger framed merinos and heavier cutting sheep continues.

Buyers are facing huge increases in freight with the cost of containers having risen three- or four-fold due to the pandemic and the contraction of sea freight to the more lucrative routes.

Processing mills in some areas are experiencing large increases in energy costs.

This is mainly due to the war in Ukraine which has interrupted supply of gas and oil. It is remarkable and pleasing that the wool market is strong despite these events.

I was invited to be the ASWGA representative on the recent wool poll vote, the result was to continue the tax rate paid by Australian woolgrowers of 1.5% for R&D and Marketing.

I want to thank AWI for its continued research and development in all areas of the wool industry and their commitment to marketing.

Simply, growers need to grow a superior product and it has to be sold to happy customers for all growers to be profitable!!!

Our highlight this year was the Annual Dinner weekend in Ararat after the previous two were cancelled due to COVID-19.

The event also incorporated the annual Zegna wool competition award presentations. I want to sincerely thank the Zegna family for placing trust in ASWGA for running a truly fantastic event.

Most attendees thought the combined event meshed which resulted in the most enjoyable dinner and farm tours' weekend ever.

A big thank you to Geoff Phillips and Penny Hartwitch and the Ararat/Barunah branch for the workload and attention to detail. Thanks to the Reid, Phillips, Barty and Barber families who hosted farm visits.

This event was a massive social, financial and informative win for the Association and we look forward to the 2023 dinner weekend.

The Zegna winners of the wool trophy competition were David and Angie Waters of Tarrangower, runners up were Simon and Anne-Louise Cameron from Kingston, with third place to Clive and Margaret Smith from Mulgowan.

The Vellus Aureum Award was won by the Sandilant family from Pyrenees Park, Lexton, with a superb fleece measuring 9.8 micron, the finest ever measured in this competition.

ASWGA fleece awards were also presented. Grand Champion Fleece was awarded to David and Angie Waters with a special 80's fleece.

I would like to thank the Australian Council of Wool Exporters and Processors Inc for sponsoring the ASWGA Grand Champion Fleece Competition. Congratulations to all other section and regional winners.

I would like to commend the Goulburn/Yass members who helped at the above two competitions on judging day. We gratefully thank our many sponsors for this competition.

I watched the Schneider Online Wool Forum earlier in the year. They assembled an experienced array of speakers from growers, brokers, mills, brands, environmentalists, marketers, and AWI. An interesting development is the number of brands whose push for RWS-accredited wool supply is growing fast.

Many of these brands wish to use RWS wool exclusively in five years' time. This is a strong message to growers

but we need to see price increases to cover the extra workload, auditing and data collection.

The New England Merino Field Days in January were well attended by committed growers. Many ASWGA studs were on display.

Sheep were extremely well-presented reflecting two wonderful growing years. It was nice to attend and talk with fellow growers about good prices, good seasons and quality sheep.

There are many other issues facing the wool industry - this may be a real fork in the road situation. Shortages of shearers, shed staff and farm workers is resulting in long delays in jobs. Even though AWI is spending plenty of time and money on these, the results are quite slow.

Chemicals to treat worms and flies are weakening, meaning extra treatments used and higher workload for growers to maintain animal health. Alarmingly there are no new chemicals in the research pipeline.

Animal welfare is a growing concern. We are being advised to use pre-operative and post-operative pain relief for operations like lamb marking and breech modifications.

The drive by activists to have human rights and animal rights interchangeable is growing and our industry needs to be well aware to so we can be proactive in our defence.

Cost of fertiliser has almost doubled and fuel prices have increased 50%. Foot and mouth disease is on our doorstep and we need governments to act decisively to exclude this disease otherwise our industry could be devastated.

Product environmental footprint (PEF) is a proposal to give an environmental score for products on sale in the EU.

These calculations are poor and just plain wrong when synthetic fibres have a better environmental score than natural fibres. We have been working with English member Lesley Prior, AWI and stud breeders to get this proposed legislation altered.

Continued on page 8



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Continued from page 6

The latest news is that Norway will not support the PEF and ASWGA hopes that other countries follow and this crazy scheme can be put in the rubbish bin where it belongs.

I would like to thank all councillors and regional participants for their continued support and input for ASWGA. Cathy Hayne spent many hours having meetings with the wool industry consultative panel and also doing the PEF submissions.

Brad Venning represents us on WoolProducers Australia animal health and welfare committee. Huge thanks to Danny Picker who is a great sounding board for the new President.

He has plenty of knowledge and experience of industry and ASWGA matters. Thanks to John Ive and the Annual Committee for their efforts in delivering a splendid magazine.

On a sad note, our office expert Melissa Mulley has decided to resign from ASWGA to move closer to family. Melissa has spent 15 years with us spanning many Presidents and Councillors.

There have been many words used to compliment Melissa. – “incomparable, a saviour, a gem, her intangible value”. She has always showed efficiency and effectiveness in her job and her industry knowledge and contacts certainly made an easier job for all Presidents.

Her willingness for correspondence to show the best meaning and outcome

was welcomed by all. She had a very hands-on roll in collecting and collating articles for the magazine.

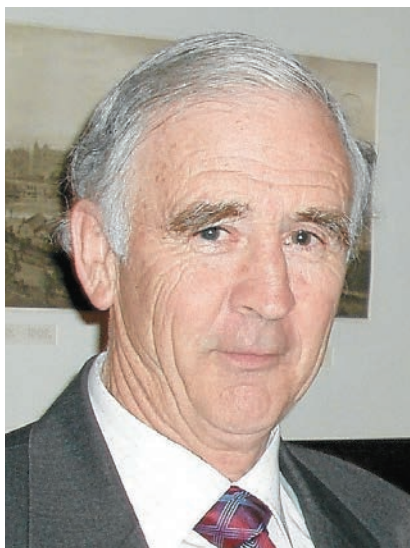
Her management between the Zegna family and the Council kept the Zegna competition as a great focus for both parties. There was considerable time and effort sourcing sponsorship for both the magazine and the dinner weekends.

In between these larger projects were all the day-to-day chores that are more important than most members realise.

Thank you, Melissa, from all ASWGA members past and present and we wish you health and happiness in the future.

**MARK WATERS
PRESIDENT**

A LOOK BACK OVER 50 YEARS OF HISTORY



ASWGA would like to thank founding member and Past Federal President Kevin Dunn for his research, compilation and understanding of the history of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association.

This delves into the reasons why the Association was formed and outlines the progression from an idea to an organisation that enjoys peak body status.

The determination and commitment to follow this path, despite being a relatively small subgroup of the whole wool industry, is greatly appreciated. It has benefited growers, purchasers, mills and retailers.

We have tackled many issues in our 50 years - with wins and losses - but have not shirked from what we believe in.

The keeping of the Ararat Branch Minute Book provided invaluable assistance in portraying an accurate account of the early history.

There was special mention of the more significant contributors to ASWGA who ranged from growers right through to retailers.

Please enjoy this recall of the first 50 years of ASWGA

**MARK WATERS
PRESIDENT**

ASWGA HISTORY SPEECH BY KEVIN DUNN DELIVERED AT 50 YEAR ANNIVERSARY DINNER 2022

The word “History”, for most of us from our school days, is synonymous with a jumble of hard-to-remember names, dates, places, events and people.

To many, therefore, it is also synonymous with the word “boring”.

It would be impossible to talk about the history of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association without using some of those terms. The challenge then will be to try to limit the “boring” aspect.

The following covers mostly the early days of ASWGA, and draws mostly on the Ararat Region.

ASWGA began as an idea in the mind of sheep breeder Arthur Beggs, from “Buln Gherin”, Beaufort, following some years of low wool prices,

and the mindset of a few people in positions of power within the wool industry, that superfine wool had “outlived its usefulness, and no further time or effort should be wasted on it”. Arthur disagreed.

After talking with a number of growers (most of whom thought as he did), he wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Ararat woolgrower Dick De Fegely in December 1969, seeking support, help and ideas.

A series of meetings called by Arthur in key fine wool growing areas of New South Wales - Yass, Armidale, and Mudgee and in Hamilton and Barunah in Victoria - backed his ideas and in March 1971, around ninety people in Ararat pushed for work to start on forming a Superfine Wool Growers' Association.

Firstly, by writing a Constitution stating the aims of the Association and secondly, by setting out a list of discussion points for Arthur to raise with processing and user companies in May and June of that year, when in his role as a member of the Australian Wool Board, he would be overseas and thirdly, to elect two delegates to a meeting of a Central Council after his return to Australia.

The two elected were Arthur and Jack Russell from Nurrabiel, south of Horsham. A Regional Committee was also elected, consisting of Hugh Stewart, Rich King, Hugh Ranken, Kenneth McKenzie, Claude Notman and Jim Dyer.

On the 5th July, Arthur reported back to another Ararat meeting (this time to around 135 people) of the progress made with several key players in Europe, USA and Japan. Most were happy to take part in negotiations with a newly-formed group of Australian growers, with a view to increasing prices for the top end of the Australian clip, although pointing out that recent wage rises of 35% in the USA and Italy presented problems for them.

It was to be hoped that some bridging finance from the Australian Wool Commission might be available to start the process. In between these two meetings, three important things happened –

1. A Constitution suggesting, amongst other things, four delegates from New South Wales and Victoria to represent those two States;
2. An invitation to be involved was issued to the already existing Tasmanian Fine Merino Breeders' Association;
3. A questionnaire to 900 potential members was sent out – 716 of whom replied.

The action next moved to the Theatre of Shell House, Melbourne where the first Annual General Meeting of The Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association took place. The following people formed the first ASWGA Council. Arthur Beggs and Jack Russell representing Ararat; John Williams representing Armidale; Michael Darmody and Bruce Merriman, representing Goulburn/Yass; J R. Lonergan, Mudgee; Peter Kininmonth, Barunah; John Silcock, Hamilton; Rod O'Connor, Alan Cameron, R.W. Scott and Jim McEwan, representing Tasmania.

(This requires a little explanation:— Tasmanian Fine Merino Breeders' Association had agreed to become part of the new body and had been allocated four delegates, to preserve the equity of each State. So with three States, seven Regions and twelve Councillors. ASWGA was officially off and running!

To jump ahead briefly, some years later a Region was formed around Albury-Wodonga, but this was disbanded after some productive years of operation, and members north of the Murray river were allocated to Goulburn-Yass, and those south rejoined Ararat.

Later still, members in Western Australia obtained regional status, so today there are still seven Regions, albeit with some alterations in boundaries and names. Both South Australia and south-eastern Queensland have grower members (and there is one very keen breeder and grower in Devon, UK) leaving the Northern Territory as the only part of the nation without that curious individual - the superfine wool grower.

The addition of mill memberships, both in Australia and overseas has been

an integral part of the development of ASWGA.

Back to History

Two further meetings of the Executive of the newly formed Association took place in September and October - the Executive having been defined by the new Constitution as the elected National President, (Mr. Beggs and three elected Vice Presidents, one from each State, (Mr. Darmody, Mr Russell, and Mr. O'Connor).

It was proposed to put prices on 37 of the 38 top types on the Australian Wool Commission type sheet which, it was hoped, the Commission would then underwrite for the duration of that season. (It should be noted that the elite type 1PP was not included.)

The actual change of ownership for these types, it was suggested, should be initially through the auction system, but by the next selling season this was to be done by either a small specific Superfine auction, by negotiation with buyers and buying houses, or by tender on a monthly basis.

At the second of these meetings, David Asimus, a member of the Commission, and Jim Young the operations manager, having themselves just returned from Europe and Japan, pointed out areas of the proposals which they thought would not be feasible. Negotiations by ASWGA on behalf of the growers of Superfine wool to improve their lot had commenced.

At Ararat's second AGM in June 1972, the Chairman, Mr Russell suggested that we adopt a symbol for use by members – the origin of the present-day “rams head” - to be made by a company in Sydney, to cost \$1.50, and to be stencilled on bales.

Much of the discussion during those first two years had been centred on what sort of a scheme should be adopted for setting prices for the top-of-the-table wool types, and at the 1973 meeting, it was moved that an agreed list would be presented to the Commission for their support at auction for the 73-74 selling season. Sometime between June and October of 1973, AWC had apparently refused support for such a scheme, because a Regional Committee meeting expressed disappointment at this

◀ decision and moved to recommend to members that they announce that they were not prepared to sell at prices below those minimums.

A further motion asked the ASWGA National Council to explore all avenues to obtain financial backing for a scheme of our own.

Arthur Beggs organised a group of growers to travel to the UK and Italy in 1974 (the first of several ASWGA mill tours) and one of the things which the group was commissioned to further discuss with Russell Smith, the head of Allied Textiles in Yorkshire, was a letter he had written to the Association floating the idea of a “club” for superfine wool growers and users (interesting, in view of the much more recent “club” formed by the Italian company Vitale Barberis Canonica).

Apart from a few very small grower-to-mill direct deals by individuals over the years, the early visions of the top end of the wool clip controlling their own scheme for transferring ownership and promotion, did not materialise to any degree until the organisation of

contracts, principally by Italian mills, in the last few years.

Another idea from UK mill members, in 1975, was the promotion of swing tickets of items at retail level. This was generally seen to be a step forward, but turned out to be very expensive, and in fact, later, almost bankrupted the young Association.

With the generic wool industry adopting objective measurement at a fast pace, Geoff King moved, at the Ararat AGM in 1975, that the principles of visual appraisal be upheld for Superfine wools, something I supported very strongly on that occasion.

The following year, the then National President, Rod O'Connor sent a notice of motion to all regional meetings, that our types be sold without objective measurement, but after what I remember as a long discussion, the move was defeated.

The outcome has been a hybrid system of buyer valuing, still used today, in spite of many more added measured properties. Importantly,

sale by description never became the norm.

The Australian Wool Corporation was once again buying a large proportion of the clip in the years 1976 to 1978, and the Minutes of the Ararat AGM in July 1977 record that Kevin Dunn moved that the Corporation be advised that the Ararat region was very disappointed with the down typing of ASWGA wool types at valuation. Looking back, this was part of a one-man war waged with the Corporation over several years.

At the 1978 Ararat AGM, we observed a minute's silence in memory of Arthur Beggs, AM, who had passed away earlier that year. His influence and importance on the beginnings of our Association cannot be overestimated.

Also at that meeting, we heard that our UK members were not buying New Zealand Superfine wool because of a deterioration of classing standards, perhaps a thinly veiled hint for us to keep our classing standards high.

A well-known identity from the International Wool Secretariat at Ilkley,

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Doug Hardisty, spoke to the group on that occasion, outlining new efforts to promote the use of more Superfine wool in men's casual trousers, to replace the fashion trend away from men's suits.

Over the next five years, Doug spoke to us twice more, with exactly the same message on each occasion.

In 1979, members from the Barunah region joined us for our AGM, with a formal amalgamation of the two regions, to become the Ararat-Barunah region taking place.

In 1980, together with Tom Harmsworth and the Melbourne College of Textiles, we ran for the first time, a Superfine wool classing course, and, after some years of running a fleece competition in Tasmania, the Ermenegildo Zegna Company added an Australia-wide competition, open to all ASWGA members.

Whilst all this was going on, and in the 40 years to follow, there have been many initiatives embraced and many battles fought, where ASWGA was either playing the major role or helping to find a way forward - with the interests of Superfine woolgrowers always paramount. To avoid keeping you here all night, I will just briefly mention a few.

On at least three occasions our end of the wool industry was facing extinction:- in 1971, but was headed off by Arthur Beggs forming ASWGA; in 1980-81 by Merv Mibus continually carrying arguments to the Corporation and the bureaucracy about Reserve Price valuations, and refusing to accept counter arguments and setbacks; and in 1995, by Barry Walker taking telling statistics to the mills and convincing them their future was linked to our future.

Among many ASWGA successes are:—

- Almost the entire Australian wool clip is now packed in Nylon packs
- The acceptance of the Australian Superfine Certificate
- ASF types in wool valuing
- Registration and protection of two trademarks, the "Ram's Head" and the Australian Extrafine Merino logo, which was used commercially for some time before being merged with the "Ram's Head"
- The use of the AEM brand in a test marketing program, run by Brenda

McGahan and David Connors, with Sax 5th Avenue and Dillard's in the USA

- A pilot marketing program in Japan, overseen by Rod Thirkell-Johnston, and financed by contributions from 70 of our grower members, and in-kind contributions from some of our mill members
- A regular market report collated by Peter Morgan, Chris Wilcox, and Rod and Ian Thirkell-Johnston, which our downstream users regarded highly
- Melissa's weekly E-Updates
- Member surveys, for use by processors in their planning
- Major input into periodic updates of the AWEX Code of Practice for Woolclassers, especially in areas such as branding codes, the treatment of exotic breeds, and dark and medullated fibres, retention on the show floor, at growers' request, of show bales at the top end of the clip
- The addition of grower member numbers to the station brand on packs
- Exchange with WoolProducers of meeting attendance rights
- Retaining the iconic 1PP type
- Conditions under which New Zealand Superfine wool was to be allowed to be sold in the Australian auction system
- The initiation of our own ASWGA fleece competition in 2014 and an annual photographic competition for members and their families, starting in 2012
- Consultation with the Zegna Corporation about any proposed change to the Zegna Competitions, such as the addition of a protected section in 1998, and the Vellus Aureum section in 2002
- Support for other awards and competitions such as the Lumb Golden Bale, Ottens Premier Wool Cup, Loro Piana Record Bale, Cheil Award of Excellence, New England Ultimate Clip, and Itochu/Primac Clip Preparation award; plus numerous discussions with The Merino Company to try to put in place niche supply chains
- Peak Body status accreditation from the Department of Trade

There were, of course plenty of occasions on which our suggestions fell on deaf ears, or where our initiatives failed to achieve our aims,

but it was always evident that nobody else pushed issues if we did not.

If you grow Superfine wool, the only way to have your voice heard on any relevant matter is to be a member of ASWGA.

Any history of this organisation needs to acknowledge the part played by our staff over the years, going right back to Colin Woodfull (the initial Secretary when the office was based at the Melbourne Showgrounds) and succeeded by Tom Love and Colleen Egan. The latter moved with ASWGA to become part of Australian Wool Industries Secretariat, briefly to South Melbourne and then Bourke Street.

Since that time, Peter Morgan, Megan Moloney, Maryanne Schembri, Bianca Heaney and the incomparable Melissa Mulley have been excellent officers at the Victorian Wool Selling Centre and currently at Vella Drive.

Each of the seventeen Presidents, now over 51 years have contributed in different ways in the face of different challenges, and the various skills of Councillors and members have added to the mix.

Also, there have always been people from outside our Association who have been actively good friends to us and our work. At the risk of leaving out people who should be included, let me run through some names which many people here will remember:-

Firstly, Eliza Forlong, 150 years before ASWGA, but central to the whole concept of Australian Superfine Wool, then others in no particular order; Brenda McGahan, Malcolm Campbell, Peter Ackroyd, Count Aldo Zegna, Count Paolo Zegna, Mike Kuritani, Ken Fuji, Teddy Lumb, Tom Harmsworth, Laurence Modiano, Bob Jennings, Kelly Mills, Bob O'Brien, Don Belgre, Tom Towers, Chris Thierry, Rebecca Kelley, Tom Talbot, Tim Marwedel, David Connors, Carlo Barbera, Jim Konishi, Harald Menkens, Bill Waterhouse, Max Tully, Chris Kelly, Andrew Blanch, Jonathon Dyson, Jong Chan Lee, Peter Meakes, Sidney Sinclair AM OBE, Hyunwon Lee, John Colley and Bruno DeMattia.

The work continues. We look forward to the next 50 years.

ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA GROUP CELEBRATES THE 58TH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR WOOL AWARDS

2022 marks the 58th anniversary of the Ermenegildo Zegna Group Wool Awards and while the past years have been very challenging, the Group is even more determined to strengthen their collaboration with woolgrowers and the ASWGA, to continue to ensure the role of the Australian wool as a true symbol of excellence in the vast panorama of global production.

Ermenegildo Zegna Group was indeed the first woollen mill in the world which, with great pride, defined its entire production around the use of Australian wool and, in its communication strategy, specifically indicated the name and origin of the raw material, weaving the title Superfine Australian Wool into the selvedge of its fabrics.

This was a big step on the path to building awareness of the yarn, promoting it and ensuring it took its place above all the other wools in the world.

Over the years, the goals that Ermenegildo Zegna Group has worked towards, together with the ASWGA, are outstanding - highlighting the pursuit of the highest quality has always been accompanied by a focus on the farmers, on the sheep, on the care and attention devoted to the protection of the environment and its natural resources with a shared commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of Superfine Australian wools.

From Zegna Group's contribution to woolgrowers determined to invest into projects for better supply and management of their water resources to the proposals from the wool growers intertwined with innovative and progressive ideas looking forward and planning for the future.

This year the Zegna Group spearheaded a reforestation project that has been an integral part of the Group's sustainability ethos.

This has led us to also encourage the woolgrowers to make personal investments into building local forests with the aim of contributing to build a better future together. The Zegna

Continued on page 14



*Vellus Aureum Trophy Winners
Bradley and Melissa Sandlant
with Paolo Zegna.*



*Superfine Wool Trophy Winners
David and Angie Waters
with Paolo Zegna.*



**EACH YEAR
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THE CORRECT VACCINATION TECHNIQUE BY CLASS OF STOCK

Class of Stock	Needle Gauge	Needle Length	Needle angle to skin
Lambs	18G	¼ Inch	45°
Adults off-shears/ short wool/low body condition score	18G	¼ Inch	45°
Adults with wool growth	18G	¼ Inch	90°

Human safety – use the Gudair sekurus safety vaccinator

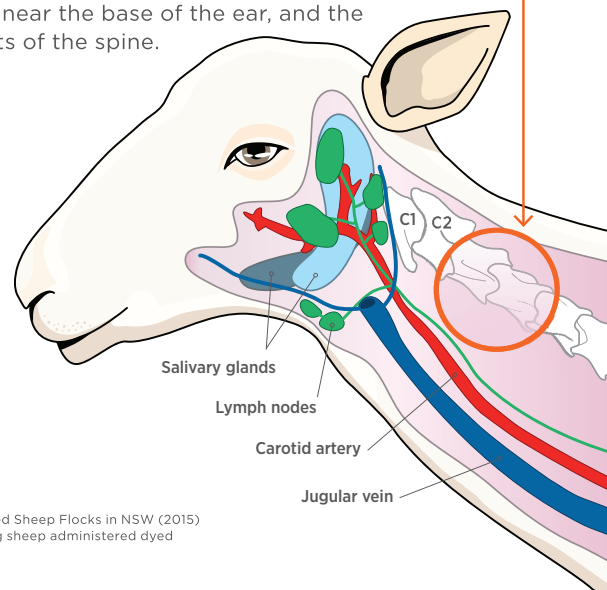
All oil vaccines are known to be reactive. Take care to avoid accidental self-injection by ensuring: In the case of human exposure (self-injection, scratch), seek medical attention immediately. Take the vaccine box for the healthcare professional to read.



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- ✓ Delays shedding for 12 months

The orange circle on the sheep anatomy diagram indicates the correct site to vaccinate, under the skin, on the side of the neck, avoiding critical structures near the base of the ear, and the C1/C2 joints of the spine.



Reference: 1. Toribio, J; Bush, R; Windsor, P. OJD.023 A Study of the Biological and Economic Impact of OJD in affected Sheep Flocks in NSW (2015) Meat & Livestock Australia Limited. 2. Robertson, N. Study of OJD vaccination techniques: Revelations after dissecting sheep administered dyed Gudair® vaccine. Proceedings of the Australian Sheep Veterinarian's Conference, Dubbo, 2016.

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Group contributed approximately 50% of the investments presented and approved for woolgrowers.

Ermenegildo Zegna Group, whose relationship with Australian wool dates from the beginning of the 20th century, established its inaugural Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophy to award and incentivise growers to improve the quality of Superfine merino.

Zegna has consistently worked to celebrate the importance of this fibre and to support growers in their quest to produce the best-in-class wool in the world.

This year, the 58th anniversary of the prestigious program, Zegna Group took the ceremony to Ararat, Victoria, celebrating alongside the ASWGA at the birthplace of the Association for its 50th anniversary. Once again, we were honouring the world's best woolgrowers by awarding the Superfine Wool Trophy and the Vellus Aureum Trophy.

The first of the two is the oldest and most prestigious competition in the world of wool.

On the other end, the Ermenegildo Zegna's Vellus Aureum Trophy, was introduced in 2000 to reward the grower who has produced the finest of the finest merino fleece in the world.

This year we have the winning Vellus Aureum Trophy fleece recorded at an exceptional record-breaking 9.8 microns from the previously held record of 9.9 microns in 2016.

The 2022 Ermenegildo Zegna Superfine Wool Trophy was won by:

- **David and Angie Waters (Tarrangower Merinos - Hillgrove, NSW)**
- 2nd Place - Simon and Ann Louise Cameron (Kingston - Conara, Tasmania)
- 3rd Place – Clive and Margaret Smith (Mulgowan - Amiens, QLD)
- 4th Place - Allan and Carolyn Phillips (Glen Stuart - Deddington, Tasmania)
- 5th Place – Dan and Sarah Calvert (Kalgara – Armidale, NSW)



David and Susan Rowbottom, and Aaron and Rebecca Rowbottom.

- 6th Place – Ed, Andrew and Penny Hundy (Windradeen - Pyramul, NSW)
- 7th Place – Charlie and Dorianne Coventry (Achill Station JV - Armidale, NSW)
- 8th Place – Joan, Richard and Sharon Gee (Snowhill – Avoca, Tasmania)
- 9th Place – David and Simone Sweeney (Willow Tree – Walcha, NSW)
- 10th Place – Brett, Susan, Cameron and Ellie Picker (Hillcreston Heights -Bigga, NSW)

The winner of the 2022 Ermenegildo Zegna Vellus Aureum Trophy was:

- **Bradley & Melissa Sandlant (Lexton - Lexton, VIC) with a remarkable record breaking 9.8 microns**
- 2nd Place - David and Susan Rowbottom (Rowensville - St. Helens, VIC)
- 3rd Place - Aaron and Rebecca Rowbottom (Myndarra – Orford VIC)
- 4th Place – Robert McClenaghan (Rockvale North – Armidale, NSW)
- 5th Place - Danny and Megan Picker (Hillcreston Park – Bigga, NSW)

“Over the years, the Ermenegildo Zegna Group has collaborated with the Association to reach remarkable

goals,” Paolo Zegna, Member of the Board of Directors of the Ermenegildo Zegna Group, said.

“The search for the highest quality fabrics apparel has always been complemented by a careful attention to breeders, animals, and specific environmental conditions. We have worked closely with breeders to support them in producing and promoting the highest quality Australian wool, while respecting sustainability and responsibility initiatives.

“At the Ermenegildo Zegna Group, we are confident that if we continue to work together, if the Australian Superfine Wool Growers’ Association will believe in the goal of excellence. Together we will be able to continue to elevate Australian wool as the best wool in the world.

“We are particularly thankful to Danny Picker, past President of ASWGA for having started the process of this edition of the Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophies and to Mark Waters who has taken over very actively. We look very much forward to working with him and the new council of the Association in the years to come.”

THE STORY OF THE SCHNEIDER COMPANY



100

By Tim Marwedel

The story of the Schneider Company begins in Sydney in 1922 on the initiative of Giovanni Schneider, a young wool buyer who migrated to Australia a couple of years before.

Giovanni Schneider was born in Italy in 1899 and served in the Italian Army from the beginning of 1917 (during the First World War), when he was not yet 18 years old – like many young boys of his age who were named “the boys of ‘99”.

At the end of the Great War, he decided to leave Italy; too many horrors, too much blood had marked his life as a young man and for this reason he wanted to go far away from Europe, the scene of so much suffering.

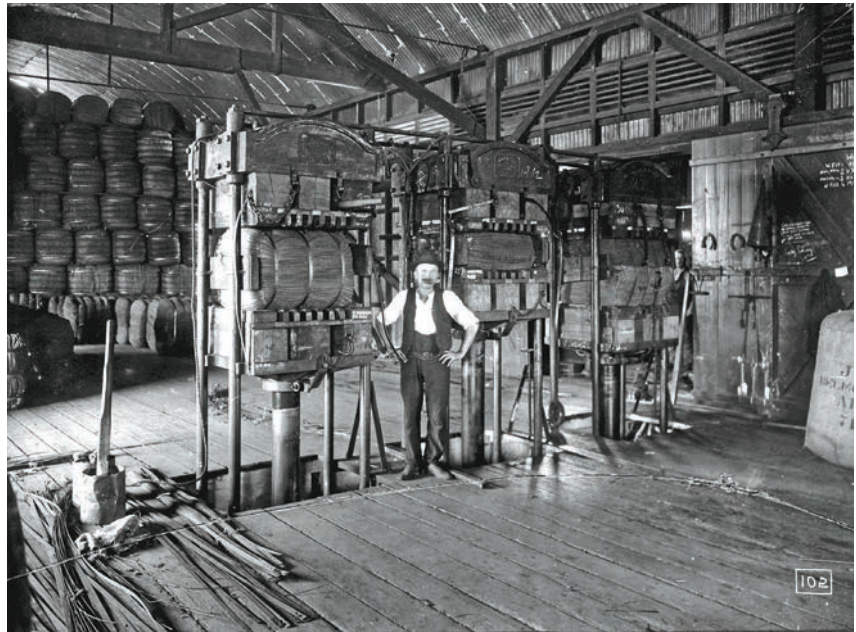
The newly-formed company based in Australia immediately benefitted from the important connections that Giovanni Schneider had with the Italian textile industry. His family migrated to Italy from Alsace at the end of 19th century and his father, Daniele Schneider, was a skilled technician who worked for some of the most important Italian textile companies.

For many years the business was carried on by Giovanni Schneider who was alternating his job as a wool buyer with the commercial activity carried out through regular trips to Europe.

The main business of the company at that time was pure brokerage and his role was crucial to the success of the business. Customers, through him, had a continuous contact with the supply market, but even producers, through the auction system, could count on an important alternative to the British market that at that time dominated the scene of the wool trade.

The company continued to trade successfully until the mid-1930s, when sanctions against Italy were introduced by the League of Nations and Italians living in Australia ran the risk of being confined.

Giovanni Schneider then decided to return to Italy and the company's activity was dramatically reduced.



During his stay in Italy, he got married and, at the end of the Second World War, in 1946, he decided to open an office in Biella, the textile centre from where he started 24 years earlier.

The company fully resumed its brokerage and trading activities immediately after the War through its offices in Australia (in Sydney and in Melbourne where a new office was opened) - Italy (Biella) - and UK (London). The business was mainly concentrated on greasy wool but soon a topmaking venture was started in order to cope with the growing demand for semi-processed products.

At that time, a profound change was taking place within (omit the) textile companies and the demand for wool tops took the place of greasy wool. Although a good number of commissioned combing mills were still operating, English and French topmakers entered the Italian market.

The Schneider Company was relying on commission combing mills for the production of its tops and this was a considerable disadvantage vis-à-vis its main competitor. Giovanni Schneider was an elderly man and he didn't want to place on his son (still young), the responsibility of undertaking major industrial investments.

Furthermore, he was convinced that artificial fibres would soon replace wool.

It fell to his son Marco, who joined the company after completing his university studies, the challenging task of turning Schneider into an industrial company - a decision that required a lot of courage.

The first investment in an industrial activity was made in December 1987 when the company purchased a scouring plant in Rieti, in central Italy. In 1989 a second important investment was made through the acquisition of Pettinatura di Verrone, a very well-known company which specialised in combing high quality superfine wool.

With these important acquisitions, Schneider became the first Italian topmaking company with its own processing plants and this was a considerable competitive advantage that enabled the company to offer quality and service to the fast-growing high quality Italian textile industry.

The growth of Schneider in the 1990s was astounding and the enthusiasm of Marco Schneider (who took over the company from his father Giovanni Schneider who died in 1980), strengthened by the results obtained in the field and led the company

◀ to collect important international successes and grow rapidly.

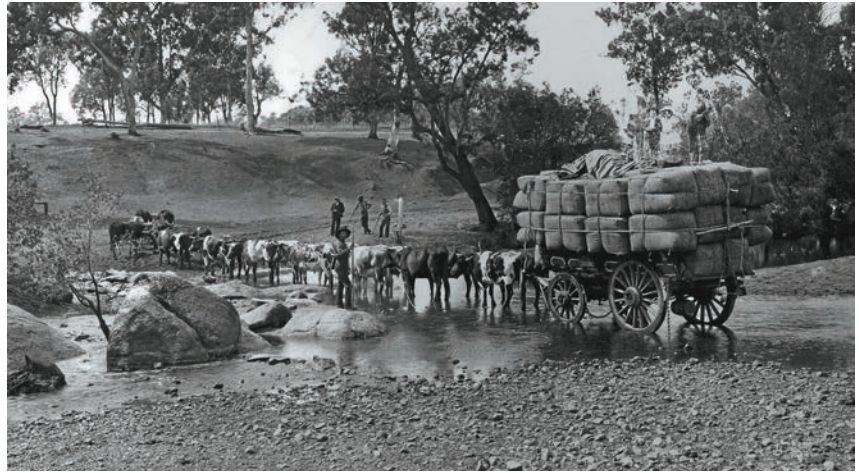
The constant increase in the use of high-quality raw materials by the Italian textile industry has prompted Schneider to combine the production of superfine wools of the highest quality with other precious natural fibers such as cashmere.

The structure adopted in the wool sector was replicated for cashmere and in 1997 Monital was created, an industrial plant based in Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) for processing raw cashmere.

In the meantime, Schneider could not forget the fast-growing Chinese market and after establishing their first trading company in 1994, Italian machinery was installed in 1995 in Shanghai with the purpose of processing and recycling wool by-products.

This was just the start of the Schneider's adventure in China. In 2002 it was decided to create a new modern combing mill in Jiangyin, near Shanghai and in June 2004 the plant was completed, together with a carbonising mill - an important complementary addition to Schneider's activities in China.

In 2007 a further investment was made for the creation of a new fibre treatment plant within the same premises.



But the world is big, and Schneider could not look only "towards the east". In 1997 a project for the creation of a new combing mill was started in Trelew (Argentina), the site was purchased in December 1997 and the

new mill started its production at the end of 2000.

The purpose of this investment was to take advantage of the great opportunities that the Argentinian wool was offering. The vastness of the

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But the path of growth is not always all downhill; the dynamics of labor and energy costs forced Schneider to close the Rieti plant, what had been the first step towards its industrial adventure.

The decision was extremely painful but necessary. The factory was closed in July 2008 and the machinery was shipped to Egypt, where a new industrial and ambitious adventure of the Schneider Group

began in the same year - the newborn company, Mediterranean Wool Industries, an industrial complex comprising a combing mill and a carbonising plant, which started its activity in 2011 in Sadat City, close to Cairo.

In the history of Schneider there is certainly no shortage of failures, as always happens in all companies. The acute textile crisis in Europe, which began in the early 2000s and the financial crisis of 2008 has profoundly marked Schneider's activities which, despite everything, have managed to reach the 100-year milestone.

Schneider's future is now in the hands of the third generation. Giovanni and Elena, Marco's children, are facing the challenging task of guiding the company towards new horizons. The most important challenge for them is "sustainability", a word that has now become a commonplace in all sectors of activity.

Giovanni Schneider, the founder of the company, feared that artificial fibres would forever undermine the future of wool; yet wool is today more than ever present in the hearts of new generations of consumers - a missed forecast but also a wonderful opportunity.

A WORD FROM GEOFF PHILLIPS WITH THE ASWGA 2022 DINNER REPORT

In mid-May this year, the ASWGA was able to celebrate their 50-year anniversary. This event took place in Ararat after several cancellations last year due to the global pandemic.

With property visits on Saturday and Sunday, our main event was a Gala Dinner held at historic Ararat Town Hall, the same venue where the first meetings were held some fifty years ago.

We were thrilled when the opportunity arose for the Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophies to be presented alongside our anniversary celebrations and ASWGA Fleece Presentation Ceremony. When we think of our history, there is no greater element than the relationship with Ermenegildo Zegna.

The idea of quality, the respect for each other's input and indeed the delight of the customer are all shared. No better example than the regard for each other with the combining of our two functions under the one roof.

The Ermenegildo Zegna Group conducted the award ceremony for their Wool Trophy and Vellus Aureum Trophy during the day with all these wools on display during the evening. It was truly a sight to behold.

There was a real buzz as we all enjoyed drinks and canapes in the foyer of the Town Hall with wool



Barry and Kristiane Walker with Penny and Geoff Phillips.

growers and industry stakeholders, both national and international, appreciating rubbing shoulders.

We then moved into the main hall "the room where it happened" revealing the spectacular dining set-up with the wonderful array of Zegna wools sparkling under the lights.

ASWGA President, Mark Waters welcomed all to the event, referring to the delay due to COVID, and the wonderful pleasure of being there to celebrate this special occasion and thanking all those involved in the organisation of the event for their efforts.

Mark spoke of the positive state the superfine wool industry is currently experiencing, with the overall market in

a good position while also noting some current challenges facing the industry including shearer shortage, some drench and fly treatments breaking down - with the requirement for development to be done in these areas.

He noted that there seems to be a lot of pressure from industry in regard to improving the size of our animals and providing more meat which will generally have the inverse effect on wool quality. We need to be mindful of the value of the superfine merino, as they have a wonderful ability to thrive in many harsh environments and efficiently produce an extraordinary fibre.

MC Geoff Phillips acknowledged all the sponsors for the weekend,

◀ thanking all for their generous support and contribution.

Ararat Rural City Council Mayor, Jo Armstrong, officially opened the event and welcomed all to Ararat saying how delighted she was that the event had returned to its “home paddock” to celebrate its fifty-year milestone.

Mayor Armstrong highlighted the progression and innovation made in the Ararat Rural City region in regards to agriculture and explaining the importance of this to the region, citing several projects underway.

She noted that the Zegna Award Presentations had been held in the adjoining textile art museum, and that its emphasis on textile and fibre was “a tangible representation of Ararat’s rich historical association with fine merino wool production”.

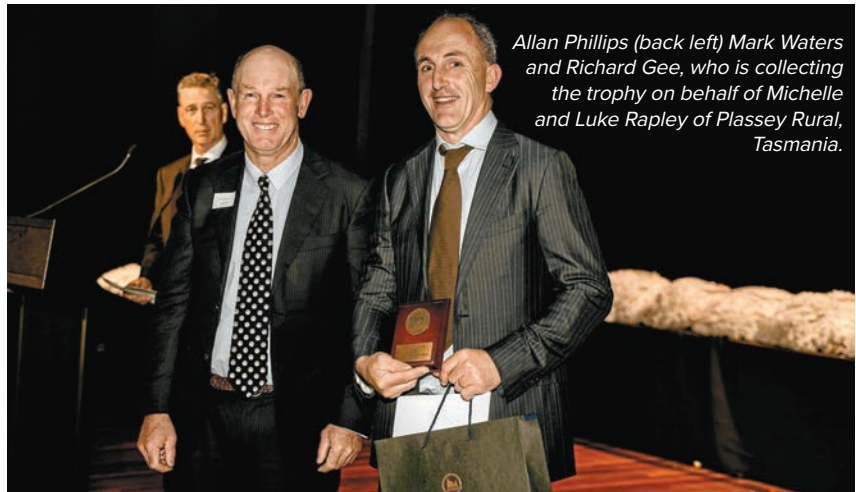
Australian Wool Innovation Chairman Jock Laurie, also addressed the audience. He described AWI’s marketing strategies, explaining how the pandemic had restricted them in the past two years.

With 92% of Australia’s wool going to China where lockdowns are still being experienced, he said heavy investments won’t be made until the market opens up again. He also spoke of AWI’s need to focus on research and development which could pay dividends on the farm.

Worm and flystrike problems were noted, along with the important issue of staff shortages and the need for industry-wide training. Carbon sequestering and carbon neutrality are ongoing issues, and he stressed that as an industry we need to be “across that”.

He echoed ASWGA’s views about the circular nature of wool, describing it as an ethically and sustainably produced biodegradable product. He said the challenge is to get customers who are seeking these qualities to understand that wool is the fibre of choice.

After our delicious main meal, former ASWGA President, Kevin Dunn, described how the ASWGA history was inextricably linked with Ararat. In May 1971 prominent local superfine wool grower Arthur Beggs of “Buln Gherin” saw the need to protect the premium superfine wool growers, forge closer ties with major overseas



Allan Phillips (back left) Mark Waters and Richard Gee, who is collecting the trophy on behalf of Michelle and Luke Rapley of Plassey Rural, Tasmania.



Vellus winners Alessandro Macri, Zegna Group with Bradley and Melissa Sandlant.

processors and effectively promote the product to consumers.

This proved the genesis for ASWGA. Today the ASWGA remains a strong advocate for superfine wool growers and has forged valuable links with industry stakeholders both nationally and internationally.

Its main aim is still to promote superfine wool as the most ethical and prestigious natural fibre produced in the world. Kevin relayed a detailed history of the ASWGA’s progression over the years, noting many significant events and contributors to the Association.

Count Paola Zegna then addressed the audience and spoke about the Ermenegildo Zegna Group respect and enthusiasm for superfine wool and its producers. Ermenegildo Zegna’s aim is to pursue the highest possible quality apparel with superfine wool being a main contributor.

This incredible natural fibre, with its excellence and unique characteristics allows the Group to constantly evolve the beauty and performance of its product. Superfine wool has been and continues to be the key to creating many prestigious fabrics and exclusive garments.

Count Zegna spoke of the history of the Wool Trophy and Vellus Aureum Trophy with both awards centred around quality of the fibre. Mr Zegna stressed that as producers of the world’s most excellent wool, it was important to maintain their determination to keep the value of Australian wool high.

He described Australian wool growers as the “formula one of wool” and said they deserved to be encouraged in their efforts because the world is “looking at them”.

Count Paola Zegna then invited all of the winning finalists to stand and be acknowledged by their peers. The

winner of the 2022 Wool Trophy were David and Angie Waters, "Tarrangower Merinos", NSW. Second place Simon and Ann Louise Cameron, "Kingston", Tas and third place Clive and Margaret Smith, "Mulgowan", Qld.

The winners of the 2022 Vellus Aureum Trophy, were Brad and Melissa Sandlant, Lexton, Vic. Second place was David and Susan Rowbottom, "Rowensville", Vic and third place Aaron and Rebecca Rowbottom, "Mindarra", Vic.

After an enjoyable dessert, the ASWGA Fleece Committee Chair Allan Phillips, presented the ASWGA fleece competition winners. He acknowledged the fleece competition sponsors for their support and thanked the judges for all their efforts in adjudicating all the wonderful fleeces.

The Fleece awards were then presented by Mark Waters, with the President of Australian Council of Wool Exporters & Processors Josh Lamb. The awards are as follows:-

ASWGA Fleece Competition:

70's Class: Michelle and Luke Rapley, 'Plassey'

74's Class: Leslieann and Mark Waters, 'Riverton'.

80's Class: Angie & David Waters, Tarrangower Merinos

90's Class: Penny and Andrew Hundry, 'Windareen'

Regional Awards:

Ararat-Barunah: Heather and Geoff Phillips, 'Currawong'

Mudgee: Irene and Daryl Croake, 'Oak Hills'

Goulbourn-Yass: Sue and Brett Picker, 'Hillcreston Heights'

Western Australia: Faye and James Pepper, 'Mumballview'

Hamilton: Kathy and Trevor Mibus, 'Glenara Merinos'

New England: Angie & David Waters, Tarrangower Merinos

Tasmania: Michelle and Luke Rapley, 'Plassey'



David and Angie Waters with Josh Lamb ACWEP President and sponsors of Grand Champion Trophy for Best Overall Fleece.

Grand Champion Trophy for Best Overall Fleece:

Angie and David Waters 'Tarrangower Merinos', NSW.

The fleeces all looked magnificent. It was a feature of the evening, that during the various breaks people could not help but gravitate to the front of the hall to view and feel the wools on display. It is simply a reflection of their quality and everyone's passion for superfine wool.

Raffles were then drawn by Life Members Barry Walker and Peter Morgan with Russ MacGugan winning the suit length. Laura Ros, Craig Potter and Angie Waters all won a multi-min injection pack.

We then had some entertainment in our "Guess the Micron" competition for two beautiful fleeces on display in the foyer. We seemed to take a while to arrive at the winners, with some confusion. Gary Fenton and Leo Blanch ultimately were the winners, taking home a drum of combination drench each.

After a short break, Geoff Phillips thanked many people who had contributed to the evening including the chef for the wonderful meal, and various Ararat Barunah members and Town Hall representatives and Zegna Group

representatives who had contributed to the organisation of the weekend.

The guests were encouraged to take home a tree from the centre table pieces as a memento of the weekend, and indeed as these trees grow in some small way, they help offset our activities for the weekend.

Special thanks was reserved for Penny Hartwich, Regional Secretary, and Melissa Mulley, National Secretary, who have both been nothing short of outstanding.

Everyone appeared to thoroughly enjoy the evening, with people constantly in conversation, looking at the wools whenever possible and all very attentive to the excellent array of speakers. The hall looked spectacular, creating an atmosphere that seemed to light up the evening as we were all transported into the world of superfine wool.

The MC Geoff Phillips concluded the evening with the following.

The one ideal I would like us to all take home tonight is the love and respect for superfine wool. We are all woven together by the wonderful, practical qualities of the fibre and the intoxicating pleasure of "The Look".

ASWGA FLEECE COMPETITION



Trevor Mibus with ASWGA President Mark Waters.

Angie and David Waters won in three categories of the ASWGA Fleece competition, the class 80s quality along with first place in the New England region and the big one, the “Grand Champion” Trophy for the best overall fleece sponsored by Australian Council of Wool Exporters and Processors.

David and Angie said it was a true honour to be involved in the competition and to have their wool recognised at a high level.

“To win the Grand Champion Trophy was a wonderful surprise and we are so proud to produce the fibre we do.

We strive for excellence and have a real passion for producing high quality superfine and ultrafine wool,” they said.

“We would like to thank the many sponsors and judges of the competition and a huge congratulations to the organisers of the Presentation Dinner and farm tours- a very successful and enjoyable weekend hosted by the Ararat/Barunah region.

“Congratulations also to all other placegetters and entrants.”

ASWGA congratulates all winners of respective regions and quality classes.



Angie and David Waters.

There were 54 fleeces entered in this year’s competition and as always, the results were very close.

Thanks must go to the sponsor, the Australian Council of Wool Exporters and Processors, for the grand trophy and to AWTA for arranging transport of fleeces for judging.

The Australian Superfine Wool Growers’ Association would also like to thank Natsun for sponsoring the quality class section along with Nutrien Wool, AWN, Fox and Lillie Rural, Riverina Wool Testers and Zoetis for sponsoring the regional awards.

FULL LIST OF WINNERS

PLACE	SCORE	WINNERS
Grand Champion Fleece	93	Angie & David Waters of Tarrangower – New England
90’s	92	Penny, Andrew & Ed Hundy of Windradeen – Mudgee
80’s	93	Angie & David Waters of Tarrangower – New England
74’s	91.6	Lesleann & Mark Waters of Riverton – New England
70’s	80	Michelle & Luke Rapley of Plassey Rural – Tasmania
Ararat/Barunah	92.3	Heather& Geoff Phillips of Currawong – Ararat/Barunah
Goulburn/Yass	91.2	Sue & Brett Picker of Hillcreston Heights – Goulburn/Yass
Hamilton	92.1	Kathy & Trevor Mibus of Glenara Merinos – Hamilton
Mudgee	92.8	Irene & Daryl Croake of Oak Hills – Mudgee
New England	93	Angie & David Waters of Tarrangower – New England
Tasmania	90.2	Michelle & Luke Rapley of Plassey Rural – Tasmania
Western Australia	77.2	Faye & Jim Pepper of Mumballview - Western Australia

ASWGA PHOTO COMPETITION WINNER 2022

A special thank you to the fleece committee for their assistance in arranging and sorting the fleeces. Once again a special thanks also to AWTA, Nutrien, SBBL and AWN for assisting in the transportation of fleeces. Thank you to Mark Hedley and AWN for assisting with space made available for storage of fleeces and judging. It was a huge effort and greatly appreciated by the Association.

Finally, thank you to judges Rowan Woods of Jemalong Wool and Mark Symes of G Schneider.



Suma Reid's winning image.

Suma Reid snapped this candid shot of her children, Duncan and Georgiana, with an orphan lamb.

The children called the lamb 'Rosi' after one of the ladies in town to help them out with milk powder.

"It was so very special for me that I am able to share my love of sheep and good wool to my children" she said.

"And this was such a wonderful moment of kids just being kids; abet with a wagon and lamb."

LUNCHEON AT COLIBAN PARK

A marvellous luncheon was held at "Coliban Park" on the Sunday of the ASWGA 50th anniversary celebrations.

Whilst some got lost getting to the property, all eventually arrived. A very casual lunch was enjoyed in the surroundings of the wool shed, built in 1944.

It was wonderful to host Count Paolo Zegna along with Mark Waters and the many ASWGA members had travelled from far and wide.

Duncan Barber spoke briefly about the history of the property -

unfortunately neglecting to talk about the history of the sheep. Maybe a story for next time.

Lachie Brown (Elders State Wool Manager) congratulated ASWGA on the 50th year celebrations, commending the group on thriving through some tough times. He also touched briefly on the forecast for the wool market in coming months.

Mark Waters used the occasion to wrap up the weekend's events and congratulate all attendees on making the entire event such a successful one.



Duncan and Jess Barber.

Geoff Phillips reinforced Mark Waters' message to all attendees, congratulated all those who made the weekend such a wonderful success and thanked everyone for attending.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE KOORINGA FARM TOUR

William Reid, Stephen Reid, Garry Fenton and Heather Reid share their experiences.

We enjoyed being part of the farm tour experience. We were hesitant at first because we didn't want any photos taken of the sheep but with your wonderful support to have people informed of this and signs made for the buses and the shed and the co-operation of our visitors, we need not have worried.

We were overwhelmed by the support and practical help we received from

all those involved in the setting up and smooth running of that day.

We especially thank Penny and Russell Hartwich for the work and the passion they extended to us behind the scenes to help us with the presentation and the practical work we needed to do in preparation for the tour.

We thank Bronwyn Phillips and her entire family – Barbara, Libby, Penny and Andrew for all the preparation, transportation and presentation of

their delicious morning tea which I hear was also breakfast for many.

We thank those who drove the buses and those who manned the registration desk and those who did everything else we didn't do.

We thank Cathy Haynes for taking those lovely photos recording the event and of our farm and garden.

From William

William enjoyed the morning most when he was amongst his sheep talking to our visitors as they walked ▶

through his shed asking him lots of questions about his work with them. He was also happy to find his sheep didn't seem to mind having strangers around and some even came forward for his assurance and to check out what was going on.

From Stephen

Stephen was most impressed to learn from the address by Laura Ros, CEO of the Schneider Group that for the marketing of our collective wool, during the processing of the fabric - the name of each grower is woven into the selvedge of the exact piece of fabric that contains wool from that particular farm.

He valued this recognition and appreciation of our individual contributions in the manufacture of their finished products.

He was also interested to learn from the address by Rodney Evans of Virbac about the research findings of the implementation of the injectable supplement Multimin where there

was an increased percentage of lambs born in that flock together with an increase in the weight of the weaners born to those mothers.

From Garry

Laura Ros from the Schneider Group gave a wonderful presentation at "Kooringa" about the history of their company. Whilst it is an Italian company, it was founded in 1922 by Giovanni Schneider with their first office situated in Sydney.

They purchased Australian wool and sold it to Italian and English weavers. Schneiders is now a very large international company.

The ASWGA Award Night and Dinner, was exceptionally well organised and showcased some of the best wool in Australia - if not the world.

From Heather

Heather welcomed this moment of reflection especially as it afforded her the opportunity to extend her story to amend an omission which

the questions of some of our visitors brought to her attention. When, in her story, she referred to Kooringa Farming as "we", she also included Garry Fenton, who from the very beginning has been a fourth partner in Kooringa Farming.

He has not only been the inspiration of our enterprise as she mentioned, he has been our driving force, our mentor, our educator and worker in the field in every way from sourcing stock agents and shearers to building the new shed to working with the sheep and the seasonal practical routine of caring for sheep, their feeding, lambing, marking, fly strike etc.

It has been ill health that has meant he is not able to continue to be as physically involved in the practical work of the farm as he has been in the past, but he remains very much a part of our enterprise and his continuing involvement is invaluable to us.

We again say thank you to those who visited our farm and helped us all enjoy that memorable weekend.

CURRAWONG FARM VISIT: A REFLECTION FROM GEOFF AND HEATHER PHILLIPS

We were thrilled to be one of the host properties for the ASWGA 50th anniversary celebration, providing lunch and welcoming people to our property and wool shed.

The following is an overview of the presentation made to all in attendance.

The Phillips family started farming here in the 1920s, with several brothers purchasing land in the district. My father Allan purchased Currawong in the early 1960s where my brother Allan and sister Heather grew up. Dad had a keen interest in fine wool and ran a stud and so sheep and wool were front of mind.

In the late 1980s Allan and I began purchasing this property "Rivernook" from our uncle, Bob Phillips.

In the mid-1990s, Allan and Carol purchased a property in Tasmania with the stud and flock sheep split in half, with Heather and I running the

two properties here. We have been fortunate to have four children, three which are here today and will be helping tonight.

Our stud was based upon "Sierra Park" until the early 1990s, when we transitioned gradually to some Merryville type genetics. We used a "Gilgunyah" ram around this time which proved to be very successful. Since this time, we have predominantly been using "Rockbank" with some Merryville and Merryville type blood interspersed.

The aim of our breeding is based around wool quality and production. We are simply trying to grow the best wool we can, ensuring it is on a reasonably-sized animal with good production.

In the late 1980s we did a great deal of micron testing where patterns emerged for different characteristics. The crimped wools with well-aligned, reflective and well-nourished soft wools appeared to have the capacity



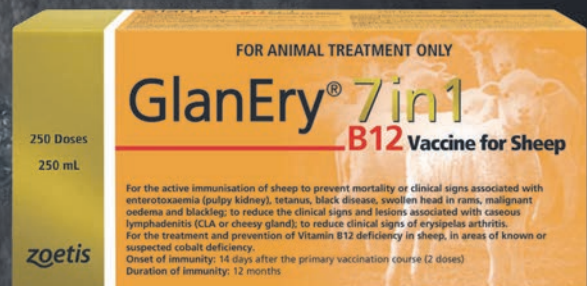
to be finer with more production. This period helped establish a type in our selection which has remained constant.

Continued on page 24

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Continued from page 22

We are running about 1800 acres, generally shearing about 5500 sheep. We operate a cropping program generally in the range of 600 – 700 acres depending on the seasonal break and ensuring I have enough feed for sheep. Over the winter period we are running at least 5 sheep to the acre.

Our average micron has been around 15.7 micron for quite a few years now. Last year the wool from this property, (on around 2500 3 – 9 year-old ewes) averaged 16.1 micron cutting 5.23 kg. We were certainly pleased with the micron and production.

At our Currawong property, the wool from the hoggets, 2 year-old and 3 - 4 year-old wethers averaged 15.4 micron and 4.4 kg.

The sheep are classed as hoggets with these being sold direct to abattoirs with these averaging over 20 kg dressed weight. They are classed again as 2 year-olds with classed sheep breeding

prime lambs and wethers sold to a producer near Ballarat.

I would like to mention a couple of the challenges on our property. Tensile strength is a great frustration. Often the wool we produce has a three in front of it rather than a four. The country here is very productive in the late winter and spring with potential for long dry summers - therefore a variable feed regime.

Obviously supplementary feeding is our main tool for maintaining the sheep health and the strength, and you can see from the silos and hay up the road we are not shy in this area.

We have not mulesed on the property for the past six years. We have been aware through the ASWGA and the links to the mills of customers' demands and obviously are keen to have our wool accessible to the top end of the market.

This has been a difficult transition, primarily due to the feed produced in the late winter and spring and the dag this can create. During this period we have developed a process using

rubber rings under analgesia to remove excess skin around the breech area.

We have been constantly improving this technique, and are now at the stage where the sheep are manageable from an animal health perspective and safe manual handling for crutchers/shearers and this allows us to still have full selection on wool quality and production.

While we have some green grass around us now after some early summer rain this is not always the case in summer/autumn. As a way of combatting the drier summers, we have been using the technique of basically getting the sheep off the paddock when the conditions demand.

We have containment yards set up at each property, enabling efficient feeding of stock while allowing existing pasture to go into a stagnant phase without being grazed into submission.

This technique has undoubtedly resulted in improved pasture quality and duration as the plants can respond after rainfall growing to a point where their leaf area allows good production. We have been fortunate to agist sheep in the summer to neighbours, which is in effect the same.

Another management technique which has been extremely helpful is the use of grazing crops. After the break, these are generally the first sown allowing for optimal growth before the colder winter. These can then be grazed in July/August period when growth is very slow and feed a premium. In turn this spells the pastures, allowing leaf area to build up, increasing faster production. These two techniques have without doubt enabled us to grow more feed from the rainfall we receive, leading to more production and increased animal health.

Following Geoff's summation, Paul Swan spoke around the SustainaWOOL program. He began by thanking Mark Waters for the invitation and some kind words about the fifty years of ASWGA. He also acknowledged the attendance of the Zegna Group and Giovanni Schneider. Paul also acknowledged Andrew Blanch as founder of the SustainaWOOL concept.

Paul spoke mainly about superfine wool being part of the noble fibres and the wave of sustainability that is



sweeping the world. He pointed out that sustainability is much more than merely non-mulesed and encompasses the overall circle of renewability and ongoing production systems including the major importance of wool quality. The wool quality aspect is one of the important arms of the SustainaWOOL program and should not be overlooked in the race for sustainability.

Paul spoke of innovation being important to the wool industry, and how the adoption of pain relief in various practices has the added potential of production increases citing a recent study at CSIRO revealing

several production increases with the use of pain relief.

After Paul's presentation, a warm and tasty lunch was enjoyed by all. The crowd gathered their food and filtered through the shed and yards with the hum of good conversation ever present.

On display were some fleeces from last year's shearing, all being indicative of the type of wool we are trying to produce. Some rams which had just been removed from the flock and stud in the past few days and in the sheep yards outside, some hogget rams, 2 year-old ewes, mixed age stud ewes, 3 and 4 year-old wethers and

an entire mob of 3 year-old ewes. We were trying to provide a good cross section of our flock. In all, there were plenty of sheep on display and people seemed to enjoy being able to view and feel the wools and sheep.

There was also a revolving video of activities on the farm throughout the year which people appeared to appreciate.

It was a great atmosphere with wool growers leaning over the pens along with textile manufacturers, wool buyers and industry leaders discussing superfine wool and being hands-on, it provided greater perspective.

LOCAL MANUFACTURING

By Susan Rowbottom

Since the dropping of tariff protections to the textile and other industries in Australia, we have seen the demise of these icons.

Fletcher Jones, Warrnambool Woollen Mill, Bradmill, Pelaco, Merino Gold - to name just a few and where are the knitting machines Jeff Kennett sponsored many years ago? At the Australian Sheep Show at Bendigo this year Australian Knitting Mill indicated that they are winding down manufacturing. Today the Bendigo Woollen Mill, (incorporating several brands), Creswick Woollen Mill and

Tasmanian Waverley Woollen Mill are still manufacturing.

We have been fortunate to hear from three Australian manufacturers for this annual.

Geelong Textiles/Dying Mill has recently been purchased by an Australian consortium led by Floyd Legge.

Great Ocean Road Woollen Mill was established in 2015 to fill the void of an Australian processor. They have recently moved to Ballarat and plan expanded production with new machinery purchased from Italy.

Valia, a women's fashion brand was founded by a design graduate Valentina Verbni who migrated to Australia from Ukraine in 1990s. She uses Superfine Merino in her garments, which are manufactured in Melbourne.

I hope you enjoy the stories of these brave entrepreneurial Australians who are retaining or bringing into fruition paddock to clothing manufacturing onto our shores.

As wool growers, we warmly wish them well in their endeavours.

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GREAT OCEAN ROAD WOOLLEN MILL

By Nick and Isabel Renters

Our story began in the hinterland of the Great Ocean Road, not far from Timboon. After having a tree change escape and purchasing some alpacas, a love affair with fibre was born and subsequently Great Ocean Road Woollen Mill (GORWM) was established in 2015 by Isabel and Nick Renters.

With no prior knowledge of fibre or processing, the only thing that we did know was that on-shore processing was really limited and difficult to access, so a business case was investigated and the need seemed to exist for a small local processor to be located in Western Victoria.

In the early days we focused on alpaca, doing our own small herd and that of others, that was until we met Barbara Linley (from Ambleside Pastoral Company, Berrybank).

We met Barbara through the alpaca world but was quickly fascinated with her Superfine Merino. In 2016 we purchased four bales and our world changed forever.

It was through the introduction of Superfine Merino into the mill that we learnt about EP Robinson's (our local scourer), a 100+year-old family business still processing in Geelong. We also learnt about the decimation of the local industry that occurred over the last 30-40 years and the need to save what was still here.

So we began processing more and more Superfine Merino, turning it into amazingly soft yarn for the craft market and undertook the mammoth task of supporting the other remaining processors in the production line - Cashmere Connections, a top maker in Bacchus Marsh and Geelong Dyeing, one of the last yarn dye houses in Australia! And of course E P Robinson's.

The response from our customers was astounding. Not only did they fall in love with Superfine Merino, but they began to realise how much false advertising, false/misleading labelling exists and how little yarn is actually made in this country! Coupled with this was our environmental credentials.



Nick and Isabel Renters, Great Ocean Road Mill.

I often explain to people, our yarns aren't the most sustainable and greenest in the world because I am a tree hugger - they are like this because it is actually cheaper and easier (for us).

We buy fibre from nearby farms, it travels to Geelong and back again (about 250 km) - that's it. Our alpaca fleece is washed in rainwater and a solar system has our electricity bill at about \$400/quarter. It just made sense.

It was with this passion for local production and a need to show the public what we were learning, that we threw open our cellar door and our 20-acre farm, showing people the process, hosting tours and explaining the progression from paddock to product.

In 2018 we purchased a commercial knitting machine to close the loop, so in one place people could see the whole procedure - washing, picking, dehairing (alpaca only!), carding, drafting, spinning, plying, cone winding and knitting.

Then came COVID. Doom and gloom hovered in every corner but something else happened, people were stuck at home, people found craft and we were flat out mailing yarn around Australia and the world.

A small, homegrown business was reaching capacity. So after a glass or two of wine and much thinking, we decided if we wanted to grow, we would need to expand. If we wanted to expand, we would need to move.

That was a big decision. It meant finding a new location, a new property, moving very heavy equipment, buying



more equipment and shifting our herd of alpacas - not to mention the dogs and cat.

In December 2021, we bought 22 acres on the outskirts of Ballarat (Burrumbeet) and moved our equipment to an industrial shed in Delacombe whilst we got planning and building permission to build the mill at Burrumbeet.

The decision of Ballarat was a fortuitous one. It is close to a large wool growing district, it is closer to the scourer and the dyer and is a UNESCO Craft City. They welcomed us with open arms and we have loved the move, albeit a bit more complex and slower than first thought.

In May 2022, our new Italian equipment arrived, a new, larger carder, pin drafter spinner (three times the size of the old one) as well as a new cone winder and skein winder. A whole lot of new equipment to learn and play with, though allowing us to increase our production fivefold.

May also saw us granted our planning permission to build, which will hopefully begin late July. Until then we can't offer tours, but we are still producing yarn.

Talking of yarn, what do we make?

As I said at the start we began with 100% alpaca, and whilst we still do some 100% alpaca, now about 90% of our yarns are Superfine Merino blended with other fibres. Our merino/alpaca blends use the natural alpaca colours to give stunning naturally coloured yarns, with the softness and spring that merino brings along.

We have done a gorgeous merino/cotton blend, this was hand dyed and was simply divine, for baby knits.

Recently we did a 3-ply merino/linen blend. Something a little different.

All our yarns are designed, first and foremost, for the handcraft market, knitters and crocheters, but we do a small range that we use to produce amazingly soft beanies and scarves.

People have said we have ruined them, they can no longer buy yarn from Spotlight or Lincraft, because it doesn't feel as nice as ours. They always want to know why! The answer is simple.

We use some of Australia's best fibres. Australia grows the best fibres in the world - we should process them here! That's what we do. Superfine Merino is that fibre, that is the basis of our yarns and is the basis of our success.

So, Isabel and I would like to thank all of you for reading, but more importantly, for growing some of the best wool in the world!

Please note: We do not offer commission spinning. Sorry.

WOOL GROWER WOVEN INTO TEXTILE PURCHASE - GEELONG TEXTILES AUSTRALIA

Floyd Legge, a passionate woolgrower, purchased a textiles company to secure wool manufacturing within Australia.

Floyd Legge, alongside his sisters, own and operate a family-run farm in Central NSW. The farm is predominately a sheep meat producer

in the prime lamb industry, producing prime lamb and operating the 'Ridgehaven' Poll Dorset Stud.

Ridgehaven is running over 1000 stud ewes and is having an influence on the direction of the lamb industry through the latest in innovation.

The Legge family has been growing Superfine Merino wool for over 150 years.

Their merino sheep have a flock average of 18 micron with the weaners averaging 16.5 micron. The origin of breeding merinos in their business started in 1853 at "Alexlea" in Dutton, Victoria, by Floyd's ancestors (six generations ago).

Floyd's grandfather purchased land and moved the merino flock to Bairnsdale, Victoria. Floyd's parents continued there until relocating to Central NSW. The sheep are now at Forbes and have continued with the same focus on breeding a high quality merino.

"Our focus is high yielding, white, bright, waxy, traditionally crimped wool," said Floyd Legge. Without changing their genetics they decided to cease mulesing to meet with customer expectations.

Floyd Legge was involved in the 2018 AWI (Australian Wool Innovation) Young Wool Growers trip to China, which inspired his interest in wool manufacturing, giving him a greater understanding of the wool supply chain beyond the farm.

After the trip, he researched the capability of wool processing within Australia in order to produce a 100% Australian-made wool suit in time for his wedding.



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Wool is natural and sustainable.
Photo by Richard Weinstein

This project connected Floyd with Geelong Textiles and Geelong Dyeing. The staff were friendly and helpful in connecting him with the right people and assisted him to complete the project in time for his wedding.

Tom Yearwood, Manager, Geelong Dyeing said: "With 44 years manufacturing in the textile industry, I have worked all kinds of textiles. A stand out without hesitation was working with the superfine apparel fabric provided by Floyd to be used as his wedding suit. It was luxurious, sophisticated and had a definite



Floyd and his groomsmen made from "alexlea-fabrics". Photo by Dave Brodie

superiority. It was a pleasure to work with fabric of such high quality."

In the process of the suits, Floyd's desire is to commercialise the product from farm to end consumer. The fabric will be sold under the brand name "alexlea-fabrics" as 200gsm super 140's. It is available in both black and dark navy. The fabric can be ordered directly through Floyd Legge. Tailor enquiries are welcome.

JH Cutler in Sydney was the first Tailor to use their product. John Cutler along with his photographer brought the first "alexlea-fabrics" customer to see where the wool was produced. The

customer was delighted to be able to meet the people behind the product.

James Zhou, Mill Manager at GTA, stated: "Floyd's wedding suit was woven with 100% fine merino wool. The finished fabric felt like silk and was as good as anything one might expect from an Italian made fabric."

Floyd became aware of the sale of Geelong Textiles and Geelong Dyeing as he was looking to continue value adding his wool.

Floyd along with investors purchased the business, Geelong Textiles and Geelong Dyeing, on 10 June 2022 in its 100th year of operation.

The business is in three parts: Geelong Textiles Australia works on commissioned weaving and niche projects to supply wholesalers to interior design specialists, offices, office screen, upholstery fabrics for public places, public seating and other furniture items, public transport, school wear apparel, suiting fabric (produced by Floyd Legge), homewares including tea

Since 1663 we have been led by the passion of a family that is committed to creating the best Made in Italy textiles and are one of the oldest wool mills in the world. Heritage, Innovation and Sustainability are the pillars of our philosophy. In the constant search for excellence, we scrupulously select the best natural fibres, sustainably grown by conscientious farmers, respecting their animals and the environment. We have sourced wool in Australia since the 1970s and now are forging our own path with the establishment of Vitale Barberis Canonico Wool, thus strengthening our synergistic partnerships with Australian wool growers.

VITALE BARBERIS CANONICO
1663
WOOL

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towels, blankets, acoustic panels in public places and hospital privacy screens.

Geelong Dyeing works on commissioned dyeing and niche colour projects. They dye – loose stock, tops, yarn on a cone, fabric on a roll and offer ethical chemical and mechanical finishing. Geelong Dyeing have their own laboratory on site with the knowledge and expertise to deliver on desired results and are set up to immediately start working on projects.

This is where your ideas come to reality through design. Stock service is available where you can purchase raw material. Geelong Dyeing works with all fibres both natural and synthetic. The staff have 80+ combined years of passionate industry expertise and the technicians have great confidence in colour.

Geelong Weaving Mill is the business's retail brand for the marketing of the blankets and tea towels. The blankets origin was to reduce the old stock that had been purchased by customers but not used for their desired product so was repurposed into the blankets.

Geelong Textiles Australia as a whole entity creates bespoke custom orders

to your desired woven patterns and colours through the work of on-site designers who work with the customer to achieve the imagined design.

GTA can do niche projects at a minimum of 240-metre batches whereas a minimum order from an overseas suppliers require orders of 1,000 metres.

The stock service currently provides a 20.5 micron but can do finer at your request. Our business is 80% wool. The Dobby loom can weave a plain or geometric pattern including stripes and checks with four to five different colours.

The Jacquard loom presents greater opportunities for unlimited design given each thread in the warp can be controlled individually.

Now is a great time to focus on the manufacturing of Australian textiles as the cost of importing stock from overseas suppliers has increased and is not as secure and as reliable as in the past. COVID and the war in Ukraine have impacted the ability for resources to quickly move around and require a longer lead time which can be at least double what it used to be to get the products into the country.



*A selection of woven fabrics.
Photo by Geelong Textiles*

GTA is currently undergoing an energy and environmental audit. As a company their goal is to eliminate waste, divert waste from the landfill and improve efficiencies. They are looking to utilise the best of the technologies available to create an environmentally friendly workplace to support the Federal Government's Carbon Neutral initiative.

Floyd Legge, his wife Kimberley and their investors are excited about the potential opportunities in being able to continue the operation of textiles manufacturing in Australia.

EXPRESSION OF LOVE FOR AUSTRALIA - VALIA

24 February 2022, The Grampians

It was a glorious, sunny morning. Driving along the sun-dappled Western Highway between Horsham and Ballarat in Victoria, I stopped to take a photo of my favourite river gums. I inhaled the fresh Australian air, tinged with the unmissable scent of Eucalyptus.

Their leaves, the bark; glorious reflections of light. Gleaming deep greens, earthy browns and all things in between! I was headed home after visiting our loyal Valia customers.

24 February, Kyiv (Ukraine)

The bombing had started. The ABC News Radio didn't have precise details. There wasn't enough information. I dialled international

numbers, finally getting through to my sister.

My family, my sister, my brother, her two sons, his daughter, their children. I couldn't stop worrying about whether they were all safe. My friends, too many to list, my god daughter, all of them frightened, unsure, confused. Cowering from rockets overhead, the noise of the bombs.

The threat of Russia's wrath very real.

1992 saw me leaving Kyiv, with these shores firmly in sight. I had been seduced by the movie *All the Rivers Run*. Sigrid Thornton's character, Philadelphia, lives on a houseboat and gives birth on the banks of the Murray River.

The land was so distant but beautiful, and the women so brave. They were pioneers, and I was instantly inspired.

I boarded a plane for the first time in my life and arrived with my young son on my hip, having never set foot in Australia. The nerves didn't have a chance to settle. My mind was on the many reasons, but just the one: to give my son one chance to have a safe life, in a civilised country.

To change the generational path that is set simply from being born in the Russian regime.

Raising my son in a new country wasn't easy, but the Australian people – especially women – were welcoming and supportive. I would

take my son with me to work at the Beba (previously called Bella) knitwear factory in Richmond, Victoria.

I'd start the boiler early in the morning, eat breakfast in the factory and watch the knitters arrive. I saw everything: selecting the yarns, designing knitwear, making patterns, adjusting fully fashioned fit, and of course, knitting and finishing garments. It was truly a formative experience.

At the same time, I enrolled into a Bachelor of Arts in Fashion at RMIT and continued onto a Ph.D where I examined wearable technological knits. Fashion has always been my passion.

Even in Art College, I was fascinated by fashion as an art form, applied to practical use. As a dressmaker, I loved imagining the designs encasing the body, complementing the body, making the wearer feel good.

I knew I had to marry my love of the Australian landscape, my fascination with colour and my passion for making women of all ages feel confident and comfortable together. I wanted so much to give back to this beautiful country, its beautiful people, and weave seamlessly into the modern Australian woman's lifestyle.

Valia was founded in 2010 and is proudly based in Melbourne. We founded on one premise: to give back to this country on every level. We have not chased big profits. We keep our overheads as low as possible by not buying expensive ordering or stock control systems.

We do not mass produce; we do not chase high margins or high-volume fashion. We just keep getting better each season as we explore different fusions of yarns, fabrics and colours.

We support local industry with all our garments made locally and using sustainable natural yarns and fabrics. We make our own fabrics, and create our own colour palettes, with our unique jacquards. We are so proud to say that every single Valia garment is made in Melbourne.

I combine my unique experience from both art and fashion and push boundaries to break the rules in



Valentina Verbni, founder of Valia

construction and pattern. I start with the conventional patterns, then drape them to create flattering shapes and silhouettes that wrap the body, sometimes leaving spaces in between.

I'm proud to be always creating jobs for Australians by supplying to family-run boutique small business owners while supporting generations of sheep farmers. We are utterly committed to keeping the Australian heritage alive. So committed, in fact, that we bought our own knitting machines when everything moved offshore.

We love to explore natural fibres: linen, cotton and Australian grown and produced Superfine Merino wool. Everything we do ensures our garments can return to this beautiful earth at the end of their long lives.

Our process is intricate, and exacting, reflecting our relentless drive to bring the best quality to you. We handpick our fleece, to create the finest merino wool, design a unique colour palette and design and craft our exclusive Valia jacquards.

We can't do this without our fantastic Australian Superfine Merino sheep farmers. Like the Italian design houses,

we only use the best quality superfine wool. This gives our fabrics a denser weight that drapes beautifully and has a soft handle.

Each garment requires minimal washing, saving water and the environment.

The new generation of superfine merino wool is nothing like it used to be; it is ultralight and can be worked into the finest fashion garments. As a reflection of this, our signature fabrics are also incredibly light, with a modern three-dimensional effect.

We create fashion that is functional, fun, and comfortable to wear – reflective of the modern Australian woman.

We pride ourselves in giving opportunity to the artisanal team of creative and manufacturing people, whose livelihood depends on local jobs. This country and its people gave my son and me a new path to tread. We want to give back to you.

We believe that by staying local we make this country better.

We love Australia.

**- VALENTINA VERBNI,
FOUNDER OF VALIA**

BIODIVERSITY AT ROWENSVILLE - WHAT DO YOU HAVE ON YOUR FARM?

We have bandicoots on our farm and the bush. Prove it.

Just how do you prove it?

When we shifted onto our newly-leased property in a very wet 1976, my husband David (Rowbottom) spotted a Southern Brown Bandicoot on the roadside adjoining the St Helens Racecourse, which was opposite our house.

David was able to identify the Bandicoot signs because in his youth he trapped rabbits in an area from Bessiebelle, Orford to Willatook, stone barriers where he observed the signs. Bandicoots and rabbits inhabited the same areas. Farming practices have since reduced the rabbits and hence the bandicoots, which succumbed quicker than the rabbits.

They had been pushed back into small thick remnant bush areas such as the St Helens Racecourse by the 1970s, where one of the last populations managed to survive.

The farmland and the Parks Victoria area - St Helens Flora Reserve (Pleasant Park) - was gazetted "as a site for a Racecourse and other purposes of Public Recreational" reserve in Portland Court in May 1889.

The advertisement for entries for the first race meeting was March 1891 was from the St Helens Racing Club. Races continued under the Yambuk Racing Club until WWII. In the late 1950s, 360 acres (144 ha) of the original 440 acres (176 ha) was sold off leaving 80 acres (32 ha) of virgin bush.

We own 160 acres (72 ha) including the "Grandstand" and a lightly-treed area which has been fenced to exclude stock. It is in this area that several of the "finds" have been recorded.

In 1976 a deliberately-lit fire burnt out a large portion of the reserve. The reserve was rendered lifeless though a very small number of bandicoots survived in the roughly cleared farmland on the north side.

Our relentless battle with the CFA and Parks Victoria to save them, began.



They refused to accept that Bandicoots or much else lived in the reserve.

Nine years ago, how to prove existence of bandicoots or any wildlife was the big question we faced, as the authorities just didn't believe an untrained, thorn in-their-side sheep farmer. We had fought them for years, continually stopping plans to burn the reserve.

We knew an abundance of native wildlife lived there. We weren't believed. So we asked for help to prove to authorities that the bandicoots (plus we knew not what) lived there and on our farm too.

Enter recently appointed Basalt to Bay Landcare Network Facilitator Lisette Mill (a New Zealander) who had worked in New Zealand on reserves and recently re-trained for Victorian conditions at the local TAFE with a Diploma of Conservation and Land Management.

She was enthusiastic and willing to listen and to solve the "get the proof" problem. It had been twenty years since the last recorded 'official' sighting of a Southern Brown Bandicoot in the area. The reserve was on the burn plan for the following autumn, so we had to work fast.

First step was to obtain a grant from Pacific Hydro Community Fund for four remote control cameras. Next was working out how to use them - they are motion sensitive so no waving grass, rushes or limbs.

Then how to hide them so the sheep wouldn't damage them and still



capture images of bandicoots, etc. Bandicoots are elusive and live most of their lives as solitary individuals, so you must try and find out where they're passing by. First cameras were black and white, later colour with better quality photos.

They were erected in the reserve in November and by Christmas Day, we had the first photos of Bandicoots in several places.

This was a catalyst to get the reserve off the burn plan. The authorities lost their argument and an ongoing partnership with Landcare to record biodiversity there and on our farm was initiated. This has been conducted non-stop for eight years.

There has been an incredible array of species proven this way. Creatures that we didn't know existed (alongside our flocks on land we have farmed for decades) because they're secretive and hard to spot.

Sugar Gliders, Olive-backed Oriols, Buff-banded Rails, Whites Skinks - alongside an array of biodiversity and bird species - not all known to locals. ▶

◀ The reserve too has shown itself to be what we always said it was – a resource of unknown quantity that has kept its secrets for hundreds of years.

Now it is being used to educate the younger generation through school programs, WAVE fencing and bandicoot motels. Pest control people now have first used ejectors for fox control in the district.

Adult groups frequent the reserve, also bird watchers (some from as far away as Horsham and Melbourne), U3A, flora and fauna groups and TAFE environmental courses. It even has its own millipede *Somethus n. sp.* “Orford”! What else is hidden under its

canopy for it to give up to those willing to be patient with their observations?

Being woolgrowers who supply the world markets through our Rowensville brand, plus our adjoining land and the reserve via the camera monitoring (via Lisette at Basalt to Bay), educates the wool-consuming world that farmers can be environmentalists without being radical nuisances.

We have planted thousands of trees in plantations that support many native animals and birds plus giving both our sheep enterprises, Merino and White Suffolk stock much-needed shelter from both heat and cold during the seasons.

This is entirely different from what the forefathers who set the reserve aside for - with many of the older generation clearing and burning vegetation with little thought of the consequences for the native wildlife. Today bush walkers, bird watchers and naturalist visit the reserve to exercise, relax or study what has been preserved.

To view some of the unique photos captured by Basalt to Bay cameras over the years go to: - <https://youtu.be/WdcAqVC1viA> <https://www.basalttobay.org.au/> or https://twitter.com/agvocate_au

- **SUSAN ROWBOTTOM,**
“**ROWENSVILLE**”

AWEX SUSTAINAWOOL - WHEN QUALITY AND INTEGRITY MATTER

A good year for Superfine Merino and SustainaWOOL

It is a pleasure to report that 2021/22, the 51st year of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association, has been a strong year for the superfine Merino community, and the wider Australian wool industry. As major economies have emerged from COVID, we have witnessed the resurgence of demand for premium Merino worsted wear in key markets and strong price support for superfine and ultrafine wool.

We have also seen ever-increasing interest by brands, retailers and processors to preferentially source from farmers who can demonstrate a commitment to quality and sustainability.

Nonetheless, many of our growers have experienced difficulties accessing shearers when needed, shortages of competent farm labour, and rising input costs.

We are also now witness to the Ukraine crisis, escalating inflation in key markets, rising energy costs and logistical challenges for our processor partners, and growing emergency animal disease risks on our doorstep.

Against this backdrop, the SustainaWOOL Integrity Scheme has continued to grow and develop, connecting customers who care about



Dr Paul Swan

farm production standards, integrity, and wool quality to growers who share those values.

Continued growth

2021/22 has been a challenging but positive year for SustainaWOOL, and we have continued to grow both our domestic and international footprints.

- SustainaWOOL growers produced 10.5% of Australia’s Merino production at auction, and over 7% of all auction offerings – making us comfortably Australia’s largest wool sustainability integrity scheme. To put this in context given our strict eligibility constraints, 1 in every 7 eligible wool bales are now SustainaWOOL-certified.
- We concluded a mutual recognition and equivalence arrangement with Segard Masurel’s Abelusi® scheme in South Africa, opening the

opportunity for our SustainaWOOL GOLD and GREEN members to supply certified Abelusi consignments. This complements the arrangements already in place with Cape Wools in South Africa, and with Schneider’s Authentico program.

- We established a SustainaWOOL social media presence on Facebook and Instagram and generated over 1 million impressions in our first 9 months.

Enhanced integrity

ISO-certified integrity standards operate in a state of constant review and refinement, and 2021/22 saw a number of positive developments in our integrity systems:

- After a 6-month development process, in October ‘21 we released our new Version 8.0 Grower Standard – a complete rewrite with greater readability and alignment with other major international standards.
- At the same time we released an update of our Content Claim Standard, which outlines the standards and procedures for our downstream partners when certifying product.
- In December ‘21 and in June ‘22 we successfully completed internal and external ISO audits, recording nil non-compliances.



Jennifer Lau

Cross-sectoral collaborations

A common challenge for all integrity schemes is the cost of compliance – especially conducting farm inspections across our extensive landscapes.

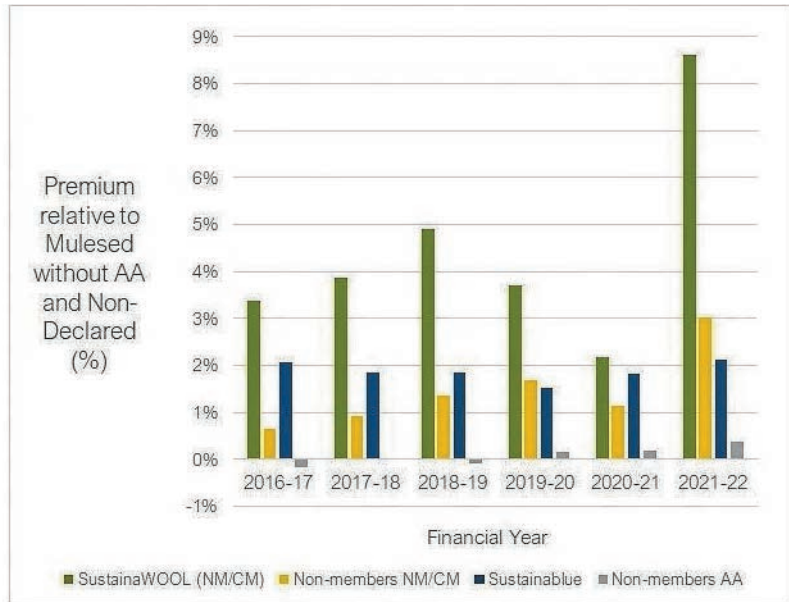
Similarly, a challenge for farmers is being subject to multiple farm inspections by different programs each year. To this end:

- We put a proposal to the red meat sector to co-operate in conduct of our overlapping farm inspections, and we concluded the year having completed a pilot analysis of farm compliance outcomes, showing helpful correlation between LPA and AWEX farm inspection outcomes.
- With MLA, AWI, and other partners, we participated in the Commonwealth-funded Australian Agricultural Data Exchange Project, which looks at sharing farm compliance data across sectors in Australia.

Refreshed program leadership

2021/22 marked the 3rd year of AWEX's ownership of SustainaWOOL and also Dr Paul Swan's leadership as SustainaWOOL Program Manager. In February Paul advised of his intent to 'retire' from the manager role to permit a leadership renewal, reflecting both the technical maturation of the scheme and the growing importance of building our brand and retailer profile.

According to Paul: "It has been a privilege to be able to lead this program through its transition to industry ownership and its ISO certification, and I'm very grateful for the support provided to me by our many growers, our partners, and by the Board and staff of AWEX."



Kingstron Farm. Picture by Melanie Kate Photography

We've worked hard, and achieved a lot - however, it is time for someone with different skills from mine to take us forward."

Mark Grave (AWEX CEO) said: "AWEX is grateful for the extensive work of Dr Paul Swan over the past three years. Paul has represented AWEX and the Australian wool industry in global forums to ensure that SWIS and the quality and integrity of SWIS members is recognised, respected and the equivalent to or better than other Certified Integrity Schemes."

"I am pleased to announce that Paul will continue his relationship with SWIS in a technical advisory capacity. This will provide ongoing continuity, support and resources for SustainaWOOL and ensure SustainaWOOL continues to meet and lead in the evolving sustainability landscape."

"I am also delighted to announce the appointment of Ms Jennifer Lau, as incoming SustainaWOOL Program Manager. Jennifer comes to SWIS with highly experienced and respected credentials in international marketing

and brand management, and several years of senior management, key account management and strategic consulting across a variety of industries.”

Jennifer said: “I am looking forward to working with Members, Supply Chain Partners and Paul to further develop, grow and create value along the supply chain for the SustainaWOOL program globally.”

Jennifer’s appointment demonstrates a clear strategic focus of the future of SustainaWOOL – to increase the global awareness and recognition of the SustainaWOOL Integrity Scheme (SWIS), its members and its world-class Integrity Scheme credentials.

Recovery of price premiums

2021/22 has seen the recovery and indeed strengthening of price premiums for our members, reflecting the post-COVID resurgence of demand for Merino worsted-wear.

The chart below shows the premium received on average by SustainaWOOL fleece lots (15.6 – 20.5 microns) compared to those outside the scheme, and those who do not declare, or use pain relief when mulesing. The data shows our GREEN/GOLD members have this year received an average of 8.6% higher prices than non-members for equivalent lots, and our BLUE members received close to 3% more for theirs.

Using a nominal Superfine fleece bale value of \$3,000, an additional 3% received means the typical SustainaWOOL membership fee (\$150, including GST) is recouped with the sale of only 2-3 bales of fleece wool.

The upshot is a continuation of a long-term evidence of preferential demand enjoyed by SustainaWOOL growers, reflecting recognition of the commitment to quality and integrity they embody.

The year ahead

For the year ahead, we will intensify our focus on our international partnerships and profile, while anticipating another strong year of price support for sustainability-certified superfine Merino wool. For our members, our tips are:

- Use our streamlined registration tool to ensure your registration is current, at <https://sustainawool.com.au/integrity-scheme-membership-renewal>
- When you are selling wool, please check to make sure your broker is correctly including your SustainaWOOL status in the wool catalogue – best not to assume the buyers have been made aware of your status.

AWEX WoolClip Update

AWEX WoolClip is a user-friendly web and App tool which facilitates the transfer of information between

upstream and downstream parties in the wool pipeline.

From an on-farm perspective WoolClip provides wool growers and wool classers the tools to capture and transform mob and bale data into Specification, Consignment and National Wool Declaration (NWD) documents, always using the most up to date versions.

On completion these documents are released instantly to the nominated marketing organisation in data (server to server) and document formats. WoolClip is also eBale ready, allowing for greater traceability from farm through the supply chain.

WoolClip Training and Support

In January 2022, AWEX appointed John Cox as WoolClip Coordinator. John is well known in the Merino and superfine merino industry.

John and our team are available for training, 7 days a week and is available to be usually delivered in person, phone or online. Additional online resources are available, including a training site.

To learn more about WoolClip and the benefits it can deliver, or a short training session please email woolclip@awex.com.au or call 02 9428 6170.

AUSTRALIAN WOOL TESTING AUTHORITY ANNUAL REVIEW 2022

AWTA has been a longstanding supporter of ASWGA through the provision of direct sponsorship to the organisation in combination with support of associated events such as the prestigious annual Ermenegildo Zegna competitions which are keystone events in the ASWGA calendar. Through this and other sponsorship or support arrangements to ram sales, sheep shows and fleece competitions around the country, AWTA aims to encourage the progression and development of the industry. These events provide not only a commercial opportunity for members of the ASWGA, but also an opportunity for the industry to interact.

About AWTA

Over the last 65 years, AWTA Ltd has built a highly successful business providing independent test information to its customers, primarily the Australian wool industry. The company has established and maintained a national and international reputation for technical expertise, commercial independence and professional integrity, while its corporate structure facilitates the minimisation of the fees that it charges for its services.

Over the past two seasons the volume of wool tested has increased by 7.4% and 5.3% respectively, arresting a steady decline over the prior decade. Over

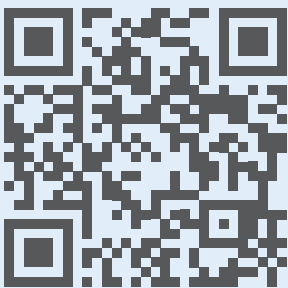
the previous decade from 2002/03 to 2011/12 the volume of wool tested declined an alarming 28%. During this period the declining testing volumes impacted on AWTA Ltd revenue. At the time AWTA responded by reducing costs through improved labour productivity, rationalisation of facilities and the diversification into related testing markets to improve profitability by growing revenue from non-wool sources.

As a consequence of its rationalisation and diversification strategy adopted in the mid 2000s, AWTA is now in strong financial position.

Continued on page 36



For all your wool, livestock and property needs



Contact an AWN team member
by scanning the QR code or
go to awn.net/contact-us/



Proudly 100%
Australian owned

AWTA Ltd, as a consolidated group, now comprises three operating divisions in Australia (AWTA Raw Wool, AWTA Product Testing and Agrifood Technology), as well as its wholly owned subsidiary NZWTA Ltd and its joint venture, JinAo Testing Co Ltd.

Wool Testing Volumes

Wool testing volumes increased during season 2021/22 as a consequence

of both better seasonal conditions across Australia and the recovery of the wool industry from the effects of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. Slightly improved fleece weights and the release of wool held over on farms or delayed-to-market resulted in an increase of 5.5% in the number of bales sampled during 2021/22. The average tested lot size declined slightly from the previous season, hence the

number of core tests conducted by AWTA increased by 6.7% contrasting with a 5.5% increase in the number of bales tested. The AWI Wool Production forecasting Committee remains optimistic with a further but slight increase in wool production of 2.5% predicted for 2022/23. This is as a result of a modest increase in the number of sheep to be shorn and a slight increase in an already high cut per head.

Industry Support

- Whilst having to operate in a commercial environment, AWTA Ltd is committed to its industry good purpose underpinned by its not-for-profit status.
- Since its inception, the company's key goal has been to keep the fees it charges for wool testing to a minimum and predominantly under the rate of inflation. The company's major business strategies continue to be developed around this goal.
- The company sponsors agricultural events and plays a key role within the International Wool Textile Organisation, whose mission is to promote wool as a sustainable and accessible premium fibre.
- AWTA Ltd collates and freely makes available to the public, a significant amount of information to aid all facets of the wool industry, including promotion, production and productivity.
- The company invests significant resources in research and development activities which have advanced the objective measurement of wool, reduced costs for the industry and led to more efficient testing methodologies.
- AWTA Ltd maintains two full-function raw wool testing laboratories in Australia (Kensington, Victoria and Bibra Lake, Western Australia) and one in Napier, New Zealand, to comfortably meet peak demand loads and to provide disaster recovery or back-up facilities in the event that one or more laboratories is taken out of service for whatever reason.
- AWTA Ltd provides educational scholarships and university cadetship program placements. It provides administrative and accounting support to the Australian Wool Education Trust. The Trust, which AWTA Ltd established, endeavours to advance education in wool and textile science and technology. It funds educational resources, programs, institutions, students and colleges, as well as scientific research undertaken for the advancement of education.

Volume of Australian Wool Tested - '000 Tonnes

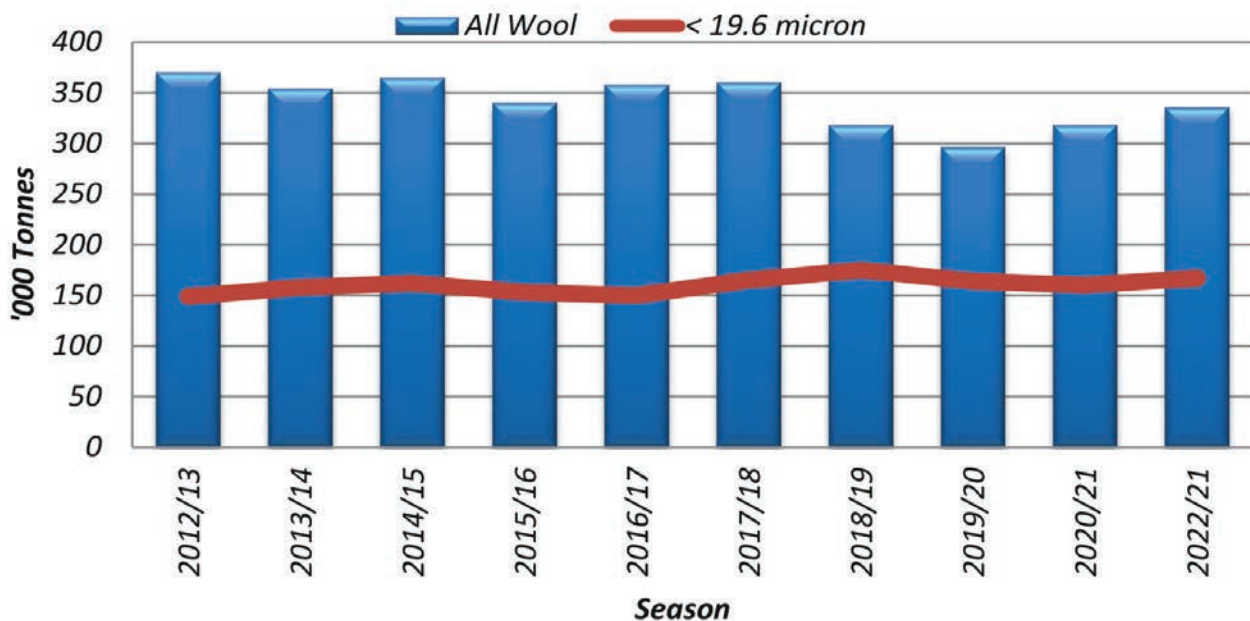


Figure 1 Volume of Australian Wool Tested

Table 1: Australian wool tested ('000 Tonnes)		
Year	All Wool	< 19.6 micron
2021/22	335	167
2020/21	318	160
2019/20	296	164
2018/19	318	175
2017/18	360	165
2016/17	358	150
2015/16	340	153
2014/15	365	162
2013/14	354	158
2012/13	370	149

During the 2021/22 season the volume of wool tested increased in most Australian States but declined in Tasmania (-27.4%). It is important to remember that volumes of wool tested by State are reported by testing location, not the state of origin or production. The decline in Tasmania can be mainly attributed to businesses deciding to ship wool to the mainland for testing. The greatest increases in wool testing volume were in Queensland (+13.6%) and WA (+9.8%).

Table 2: Wool tested by State ('000 Tonnes)				
Tonnes	Change	2020/21	2021/22	
Qld	13.6%	7,130	8,102	
NSW	6.0%	91,936	97,457	
Vic	3.7%	114,971	119,252	
Tas	-27.4%	6,518	4,731	
SA	4.9%	36,793	38,595	
WA	9.8%	61,029	66,995	
Australia	5.3%	318,376	335,131	

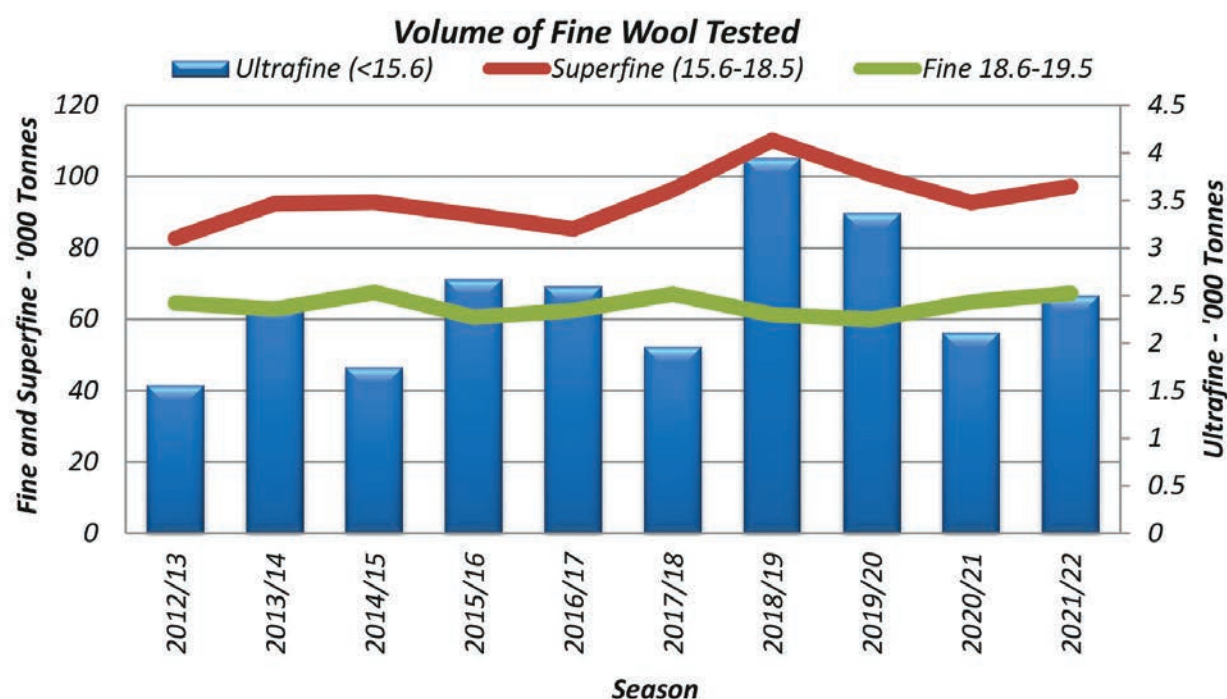


Figure 3 Volume of Australian Fine Wool

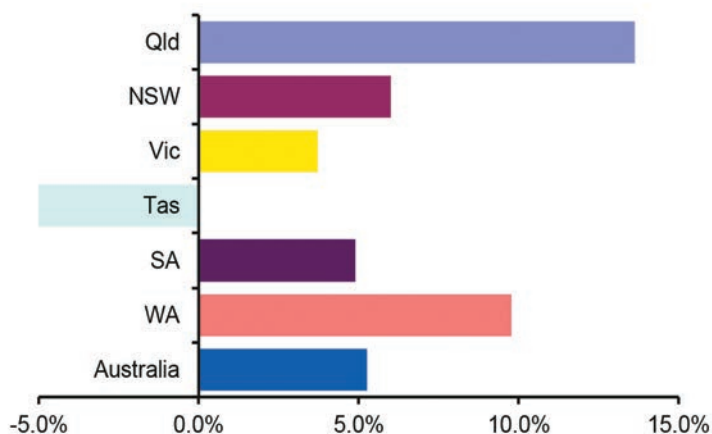


Figure 2 Change in Volume of Wool Tested

Superfine Wool Production

The volume of wool tested that is finer than 19.6 microns increased by 4.2% to 167.0Mkg, complementing a 5.3% increase in the volume of all wool tested during 2021/22. During the past 12 months, the proportion of wool measuring less than 19.6 microns has rebounded to 55.1%, which is close to the highest ever recorded two seasons prior in 2019/20 when it was 55.4%, having dipped to 50.4% in the intervening season.

The profile of the fine wool component of the Australian wool clip continues to change with 4% more Superfine (15.6 – 18.5 micron) and 18% more Ultrafine (<15.6 micron) wool being tested during the past 12 months, both categories having dipped in the previous season. The volume of Fine (18.6 – 19.5) increased by 3.7%.

Season	Ultrafine (<15.6)	Superfine (15.6-18.5)	Fine 18.6-19.5
2021/22	2,494	97.2	67.3
2020/21	2,114	92.7	64.9
2019/20	3,368	100.5	60.0
2018/19	3,943	110.2	61.3
2017/18	1,963	96.4	67.1
2016/17	2,596	85.4	62.5
2015/16	2,670	89.3	60.6
2014/15	1,745	92.8	67.6
2013/14	2,402	92.4	62.9
2012/13	1,555	82.7	64.6
2011/12	1,037	68.9	61.6

AWN OFFERS CLIENTS EXPERIENCE AND OPTIONS FOR BEST RESULT - ADVERTORIAL

At a time when ultrafine and superfine wools are commanding impressive price premiums, it's important to have experienced marketing specialists tailoring strategies to achieve the best returns for growers.

AWN's national team of wool specialists work with clients providing personalised service to maximise returns through a variety of marketing solutions including auction, direct-to-mill, and forward contracts.

Specialty bale-to-retail programs such as SustainaWOOL,

Authentico and AWN's own Direct Network Advantage (DNA) marketing tool assist to connect growers, processors, and brands and provide sought-after traceability.

AWN is proud to be affiliated with ZQ and ZQRX, the world's leading ethical wool brand which teams with world-class brands to provide ethical and sustainable wool supply contracts. AWN is the exclusive partner of the ZQ Merino program in Australia offering clients another unique marketing option for this

versatile, practical, and luxurious product.

Founded in 1999 on a vision of building a unique wool marketing organisation that brought growers and suppliers together, AWN, formerly known as Australian Wool Network, rapidly grew to become Australia's largest independent wool broker.

AWN has built a reputation for innovation, passion, and commitment to delivering the highest level of service to clients. Today,



Kelvin Shelley and Jason Rothe from AWN with a 12.8 micron bale which sold for 8100 cents greasy.

AWN is one of the fastest-growing Australian agricultural businesses with wool, livestock and rural property agents located across rural Australia.

AWN's Central and Western NSW regional manager Brett Cooper said it was fantastic to see the traditional superfine wools being extremely well supported in the marketplace, particularly by the Europeans.

"With everything else that has been going on in the world they have remained in high demand, especially in the micron-driven market we have been seeing in recent months," he said.

"As a marketer of these elite superfine and ultrafine wools, AWN has extremely capable and experienced staff who separate the company from the rest of the field. We have marketed a large percentage of these wools for more than 20 years, since the inception of AWN, and many of our staff have been very involved in that side of the industry for up to 35-40 years.

"The relationships we have built with the mills, the spinners and weavers has placed AWN in good stead to be leaders in the marketing of these types of wools, ensuring the best returns for our clientele."

AWN's Northern NSW and Queensland regional manager Harold Manttan agreed the superfine market was witnessing one of the biggest

micron premiums in the market for some time.

"In the late 90s to early 2000s, 14.5 micron and finer was averaging \$10,000 a bale. It's not quite as good as that now but it is good to see the growers achieving the returns they deserve," he said.

"I recently had a 15-micron clip at Walcha return more than \$100/head and another superfine clip in the Armidale area return \$130/head.

"AWN has, over the years, established contacts to market this type of wool very successfully. In addition to this, Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) has become a standard that is becoming well sought after by the trade. It is a standard that is not suitable for every woolgrower's operation, however we are able to assist if growers are looking to go down this path.

"There are also a few clients rugging their sheep to produce speciality bales and it is good to see the superfine and ultrafine markets the best they have been since 2018.

"Here at AWN some of us go back to 1984 with our association with the buyers of these wools and that would make us the most experienced team around in this particular market."

Mr Cooper also emphasised the importance of effective marketing when selling a clip.

"The company's wool marketing solutions enable a strategy to be tailored which delivers the best results for each client. To deliver the highest returns and level of service to clients, we invest in attracting, developing and retaining the best talent," he said.

The wool trade is well known for its generosity to charities and AWN is no exception. Wool buyers turned out in force to support the Michael Manion Wool Industry Foundation (MMWIF) which was established in 2015 in honour of a mate whose legacy lives on through its work. AWN donated and auctioned a bale of 15.4-micron fleece wool to raise funds for MMWIF which provides immediate support for rural families and children in crisis.

AWN State Manager NSW/ Queensland Mark Hedley said the company was very pleased to support the foundation, which had an ability to 'cut through the red tape'.

"This is a big part of why we are very happy to be involved as they are making a real difference to families in need," he said.

AWN has also been supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) through charity auctions for the past 20 years, with more than \$200,000 donated to the worthy cause through the sale of specially selected bales.

Not only are clients and charities a priority, AWN is a proven leader when it comes to looking after the mental health of its staff and clients. AWN is one of only two Australian agribusinesses to have been awarded gold status in the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Skilled Workplace Program, and now has more than 50 employees fully qualified through the program. This enables staff to support clients facing challenges such as drought, bushfires, floods, trade wars, and the global pandemic.

A commitment to expansion and excellence has seen AWN acquire and establish numerous livestock and property agencies across Victoria, NSW, Tasmania, and Western Australia. This has been a natural progression for the company as it seeks to grow its agency business and offer more services to clients across rural Australia. ▶

AWN offer complete livestock marketing solutions, including traditional and online livestock sales, as well as expert breeding and production advice including seed stock, genetics, and classing to help maximise clients returns. The rapidly growing agri-services business also offer rural property services in numerous areas across rural Australia, including marketing, auctions, private treaty, plant and equipment, pre-purchase due diligence, production analysis and forecasting, lease deals and agreements to disposals and acquisitions.

Property prices continue to astound right across the country on the back of good commodity prices, increased demand, and affordable interest rates.

Farmers are faced with many challenges from floods and fires to shearer shortages and pandemics

however their commitment to excellence remains and AWN's team of experienced team of rural services specialists are proud to be able to offer the best in marketing options to ensure their commitment is rewarded.

AWN clients know the benefits of working with a network of talented wool, livestock, and property professionals who deliver an exceptional level of service.

A leading independent, Australian-owned agribusiness, AWN offers unique wool, livestock, and property marketing strategies and a successful expansion has resulted in more producers taking advantage of this and gaining maximum returns.

For more information, contact your local AWN representative, or visit awn.net.



SUPERFINE WOMEN - CHARLOTTE DRINNAN, FIBREFINE MERINOS EARLSTON VICTORIA

The eldest of five daughters, I have been around sheep as long as I can remember. My father, Tom Tenniswood, was the manager of the Cressy Research Farm in Northern Tasmania when I was born.

From there our family moved to Murrayfield on Bruny Island. Once again, Dad managing that property for Hazell Bros. A change of scenery saw us move to Port Arthur where we had a dairy farm but also ran some Herefords, pigs and Dorset Horn sheep.

The high rainfall got a bit much and in 1977 we moved to Rosedale at Little Swanport on the sunny East Coast. Dad continues to live on a section of the original property.

My mother's family, the Headlams, were a prominent early settler family in the Midlands of Tasmania. Mum was raised at Pipers River and later at Swanston Homestead, Stonehenge - literally a stone's throw over the hills behind Rosedale.

I treasure my memories of the Rosedale shearing shed. Now back in the hands of its original settlers, the Castle family, the shed still stands.

Typical of East Coast sheds, it was built in three sections with rooflines heading in all directions, often stretching down to below head height.

The poles of the shed are Oyster Bay Pine, beautiful with their knots and twists, smoothed by years of sheep grease to soften them. With sawn timber rails and a combination of sliding and swinging gates, the flooring has an interesting variety of levels.

We avoided the third catching pen and stand wherever possible, with sheep having to jump down a foot into the catching pen and us needing to duck our heads to keep our hair from catching in the overhead gear!

Rosedale comprised 2,000 acres plus 'unlimited' access to the Buckland Training Area that ran up behind it. A long property with an easterly aspect, the ewes and young stock stayed in the paddocks and the wethers were sent up into the run country, of which there was plenty.

As was common in Tasmania at the time, our flock was Polwarth / Comeback. Rams which were

purchased from a variety of properties, including Polwarths from Lewisham at Ross and Merinos from Nant at Bothwell, Belmont at Swansea and nearby Mayfield.

They were fantastic sheep and did very well in that country. I was a real "Dad's girl" and was outside working with the sheep, horses or cattle at both Port Arthur and Rosedale whenever possible.

I was milking cows single-handedly at six years old, 'broke in' a calf and rode it everywhere, did all the usual yard work and shed work with the sheep, often working late into the evenings to press up with Dad during shearing.

We also bred Australian Stock Horses and enjoyed attending shows with the Gee family from "Snow Hill" and hunting with the Midland Hunt Club. We used the horses for mustering - they had loads of stamina and never got lost out in the run country.

I first met Stuart when family friends, John and Vera Taylor, of Winton, mentioned to my parents that they had 'a nice young fellow managing Court

Farm' at Buckland. In no time at all, Mum had invited Stuart to dinner.

In short, I was in Adelaide at Uni for much of that time and had no intention of falling for Mum's set-up. It was not until 1994, after my return to Tasmania from an agricultural exchange to the UK, did our relationship begin to grow.

In 1998 Stuart and I, together with 8-week old Evangeline, moved to Murchison, Victoria. We purchased a property at nearby Warring (between Murchison and Nagambie) but rented for some years until we were able to build our lovely, rammed earth home.

Only a few years after that, Stuart's brother, Andrew (who had married my sister, Francesca), purchased a property at Malmsbury. The time had come for Stuart to start his own Merino breeding program and this is how FibreFine Merinos began. Stuart's passion for Saxon wool and genetics is intense and unwavering.

After working for Elders Wool, Liberton Corriedales and his dream job of

being part of the Winton team, he was now able to breed his own sheep. With cast-for-age ewes from the Phillips and Frys, rams from Winton and Sierra Park, off we went. Stuart is the brains behind FibreFine.

As a full-time secondary school music and agriculture teacher at Greater Shepparton Secondary College and the Saxons being on a property away from home, my role with FibreFine is often shed work at shearing and other husbandry jobs.

I am also a sounding board for Stuart's many ideas and thoughts. FibreFine has now moved to Earlston near Violet Town, where we face new challenges with the Saxons, including a different climate and more fragile soils.

As a musician, I not only teach but am a committee member and performer with the Goulburn Valley Concert Orchestra, usually on double bass but also on piano. A few years ago, I completed post-graduate studies from CSU in Sustainable Agriculture so I could also teach Agriculture.

Three years ago, Stuart and I completed a course in Holistic Management with Brian Wehlberg. I cannot recommend this training highly enough – it has changed our whole paradigm on farm management and life in general. At our Warring property we have ELM Southdown stud and run a Corriedale flock, breeding prime lambs that we sell direct to customers under the Blackthorn Farms label.

We are now four years into regenerating the farm, focusing on building soil biology to create healthy soils, healthy plants, healthy animals and healthy people. I am so passionate about rebuilding our depleted soils and I cannot wait until we are able to do a bit more fencing at Earlston so we can start regenerating that property as well.

The sheep will benefit with cleaner wool, greater tensile strength, improved overall health and lambing percentages and all this with less inputs. Our three daughters, Evangeline, Luella and Miriam all share that passion for rebuilding our country's soils.

THE FORLONG LEGACY: A HISTORY OF THE MERINO AND WOOL IN TASMANIA BY VERA C. TAYLOR

Vera Taylor's book *The Forlong Legacy: A History of the Merino and Wool in Tasmania*, began, as she notes in her introduction, as a review of the life of Eliza Forlong, the remarkable woman who walked many miles around northern Germany in the 1820s gathering the very best Saxon Merino sheep, then transported them to the UK and finally to Van Dieman's Land, from where, ultimately, they spread throughout the fine wool growing areas of Australia.

However, as she gathered material, the book broadened into a more general account of the traditional Superfine Saxon flocks on the island, which "have flourished and faltered" over the years and of the families and wool growing properties which depended on them.

The initial success of the unique Saxon Merino and the reasons for its decline on an island so well suited to growing

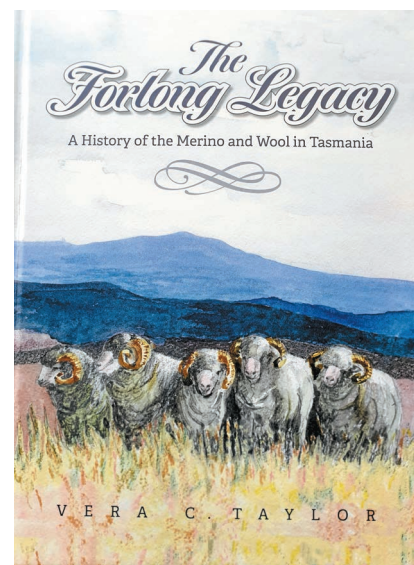
it, are described without sentiment but with inevitable regret.

The rise of synthetics and the fickleness of fashion affected the entire wool industry - the traditional Saxon Superfine sector more than most. The development and availability of more Dual Purpose Merinos meant many wool growers had little choice but to move away from "the wool of kings" in its purest form, so they could secure a future for their families.

The irony is that Eliza Forlong's move to Australia in the 1820s, was for precisely the same reason.

There is an excellent, comprehensive account of the early development of Merino in Europe and the first exports to Van Dieman's Land and NSW.

Eliza Forlong's incredible journeys on foot around northern Germany to collect



The Forlong Legacy – A History of Merino and Wool in Tasmania ISBN:978-0-646-85246-1

Distributed by Vera C Taylor.
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the right animals from the elite stud properties, make fascinating reading.

Eliza had the foresight to see the potential of Saxon Merino and the drive to realise it. At the time, Saxon wool was the fibre of choice for the best English and European cloth makers.

Then as now, economies of scale meant large volumes could be grown more cheaply in Australia than in Europe. Eliza set out to make that concept reality and to secure a future for her family.

The Forlong property Kenilworth, founded in 1829, was stocked with sheep selected by Eliza. Many other families picked up on the idea in subsequent years. Winton, the Taylor property, was founded in 1835 with sheep purchased from Kenilworth, and, despite Eliza's pioneering work, it is the Taylors, rather than the Forlongs, who have been the faithful custodians of her pure legacy through the generations.

The story of the other wool growing families and their properties thread through the whole book. Some names appear on many pages, some on only one or two but all are accompanied by details and personal accounts which make this book a unique record of wool in Tasmania.

Only someone immersed in that world could have written it. No outside historian would have access in quite the same way to the wealth of personal memories and anecdotes recounted.

The Taylor family itself has an archive of papers full of fascinating insights, such as a letter from Alfred Noske to the Taylors detailing a trip to Dresden in 1936, where the once famous Saxon Merino Stud

he visited was "corrupted" with British breeds and no longer producing pure wool, apparently on the orders of Adolf Hitler who required all German sheep to be good meat producers. "They are sorry now", he wrote.

There's a detailed account of the ancient European practice of Transhumance, the movement of stock from winter grazing to summer pastures many miles away on high ground.

Many Midlands property owners, presumably bringing the idea with them from their European homes, took sheep to the Central Highlands for the summer grazing, where they were cared for by dedicated shepherds and their families. A whole community and way of life developed which would have been very familiar to Alpine shepherds in Switzerland or Italy.

But, as in Europe, the conservation movement has now largely ended the practice and the Central Plateau Conservation Area manages most of the former sheep runs for tourism, the timber industry and as a water source for hydro-electric power generation.

The importance of the Saxon strain to the wider Australian industry is covered very well. As an example, Vera's comments that in 2020, a foundation sire of the famous Ringmaster family at Merryville, was the ram Silky Snowy - a 14th generation Saxon Merino ram, whose ancestry can be traced back directly to the ram Sir Thomas - lambed in Tasmania in 1868 from Saxon stock.

The fortunes of the Saxon Merino suffered multiple ups and downs in the 19th and 20th centuries and many properties moved away into more modern Merino types producing bigger,

faster maturing sheep with bolder, broader wool and a good carcass.

In the 21st century a small group of committed growers remains, producing the highest quality. How long that can continue is debatable. While the concept of fineness is well understood in the processing industry, the other characteristics of traditional high crimping Saxon Superfine wool, are not. Getting that message across is an ongoing challenge.

Yet Saxon Merinos have an increasingly valuable marketing advantage - they can tell a good story. Most are produced on family properties with years of recorded tradition, as evidenced in this book.

They are smaller than the newer strains, lighter on their feet and thrive on native pastures. Traceability, provenance and good environmental credentials are easy wins for Saxon Merino and it is these "soft" attributes, not just the physical characteristics of the wool, which are so valuable in today's market.

The debt the entire Merino industry owes to Eliza Forlong is acknowledged with deep respect and admiration in this book. And Vera's husband John's family passion for the Merino and, in particular, the traditional Saxon sheep her family have so carefully nurtured for nearly 200 years, is evident on every page.

The purity of that unique strain is now under serious threat, in step with an alarming decline in pure Merino sheep generally. The book is a paean of praise to both. Let us hope it is not also a swan song.

- LESLEY PRIOR

TASMANIAN WOOL CENTRE - ASWGA MEMBER

Thirty-four years ago, in 1988, the Tasmanian Wool Centre was established at Ross as a Bi-Centenary project. Situated in the heart of the Tasmanian Midlands, it has provided an attractive tourist destination and an opportunity for employment in the district.

This not-for-profit business is an important showcase for the whole wool industry and is ideally located in

Ross where it is surrounded by many wool-growing properties.

The initial focus remains featuring the educational museum, the extensive information centre and the popular retail outlet with a long list of wool products. A continuing awareness by the general public and the role of the wool industry is evident.

As the new manager since 2021, Tamara Baker brings vision and new ideas to complement the experience established over the history of the facility. Tamara has a personal passion for the love of wool, evolving from her family connections in the wool industry, her father was a local shearer and her uncle is a shearing contractor.



Tasmanian Wool Centre was a major sponsor of the Sport Shear Tasmanian Event at the Campbell Town Show (provided Merino Jersey Singlets). Image by Tasmanian Wool Centre

Her extensive interest led her to qualify for a wool classing certificate, broadened her knowledge and gained an appreciation of quality wool from the raw product to the finished garment.

Visitors to the Tasmanian Wool Centre are welcomed by a team of dedicated staff. With a superb array of woollen products from a wide colour palette, the displays are vibrant and appealing. On show are well-known labels of Toorallie, Humphrey and Law, Uimi, Bridge & Lord, Aklanda and a line of baby wear by Merineo is also available.

Among new products stocked in 2022 are items from Iris and Wool, Otto and Spike blankets, Bluey Merino and Lady Kate Knitwear. There is also ASWGA Cleckheaton knitting wool in stock and many other well-known knitting wool labels.

Hand knitting has been revived and promoted through the centre. New groups have been formed to further these relationships.

Support provided by the Centre also extends to sponsorship of the Midland Agricultural Association (MAA) annual show based in Campbell Town.

Here the Tasmanian Wool Centre proudly promotes and supplies a range of garments of many well-known labels. It provides upmarket Australian wool brands showcasing quality collections ranging from wool blend jeans, all-wool slacks, skirts, tops, jackets, scarves and head wear for the popular annual Fashion Parade.

This year the Tasmanian Wool Centre focused on the 'Campbell Town Knit', a timeless and elegant V-neck design which was a collaboration between AWI Ambassador Catriona Rowntree and Iris and Wool.

The second collection of garments on the catwalk in 2022 featured warm natural tones showing textures and patterns highlighting Tasmania's wilderness and landscape.

Sports Shear is another event conducted at the MAA Show with which the Tasmanian Wool Centre has a close association and provides generous sponsorship. This very popular competition promotes shearing and wool handling with the aim to encourage the next generation into the industry.

The Tasmanian Wool Centre portrays a diverse combination of interests for



Tasmanian Wool Centre garments on the catwalk at the Campbell Town Show Fashion Parade. Image by Picture Haus

the wool industry and all Tasmanians. This investment continues to promote the sustainable and superior qualities of wool with timeless products for the customer. It cleverly advertises the Centre as 'Wool & History Knitted Together.'

- JOHN AND VERA TAYLOR

EU COMMISSION - SUSTAINABLE WOOL AND COTTON: AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS FASHION AND EUROPEAN DESIGN PERSPECTIVES

The European Commission published the Circular Economy Action plan at the end of March 2022 and the sustainable consumption of textiles and clothing in the EU will very much be the focus of upcoming regulations.

If the current standard “footprinting” methods should be applied, natural fibres such as wool and cotton stand to be disadvantaged by rating schemes used in the current PEF methodology.

As part of the international efforts to redress the balance, the Agriculture Team at the Australian Mission to the EU arranged a Presentation and Round Table discussion for EU bureaucrats and officials on 19 May 2022.

The objective was to highlight the Australian wool, cotton and fashion sectors’ sustainable (environmental and social) production practices and explain how wool and cotton are responding to consumer expectations and regulatory requirements to deliver high quality, sustainable textiles.

The event was opened by Caroline Millar, Australian Ambassador to the EU, NATO, Belgium and Luxembourg and moderated by Joanna Grainger, Minister-Counsellor Agriculture at the Australian Embassy in Belgium.

Dalena White, Secretary General of the International Wool Textile Organisation gave an introduction on the place of wool in the world textile market and its environmental credentials. Dalena highlighted the “Make The Label Count” campaign

funded by AWI among others. It’s an essential tool in our ongoing attempt to get wool’s true worth recognised.

Renee Anderson from Queensland joined us online and outlined the importance of sustainably grown cotton and its surprising role in keeping young people in the agricultural industry.

She highlighted the use of Genetically Modified cotton. GM is currently viewed negatively in Europe and there is very limited use throughout Agriculture. Renee made a compelling case for a rethink – lower use of pesticides, higher yields, less water usage etc.

Amanda Healey, Managing Director of Kirrikin, a designer fashion company featuring Indigenous designers and makers, spoke about the real change working collectively had brought to designers/artists and their communities.

Respect, pride in their achievements and of course, money, all flowed back from the company to those producing amazing art works which featured on the clothing. Amanada made a point of mentioning that although their cloth is currently mainly cotton, she will be printing on Superfine wool very soon.

Reina Ovinge, a Dutch designer and owner of the KnitWit Studio spoke next. Reina has a small flock of Dutch Merinos producing 22 micron wool which she turns into an extensive range of high-end designer pieces on farm.

Everything apart from the early stage processing which is done in Italy, is done on farm. She spoke about the need for high prices to pay the realistic costs of producing such garments.

Cheap garments are paid for by cheap labour somewhere along the line. Social Responsibility is as much part of Sustainability and Ethical Production as sourcing the right wool.

I spoke about my Merino enterprise in the UK, highlighting my work with Australian friends and colleagues to bring the best and most appropriate genetics back to Europe, and producing the very best quality Superfine wool.

I featured the environmental benefits of sheep and wool production and how sheep and Nature can work together, not in opposition. Many pictures of beautiful landscapes and equally beautiful sheep got the message across.

A Q&A session followed which extended on well past the close of the event with informal conversations taking place. It was very gratifying to feel that we had collectively opened the eyes of some in the room to the fact that wool and cotton were being grown well and responsibly in Australia and elsewhere and that they should be taken into account when working in their respective roles in the EU.

LESLEY PRIOR

CAMPAIGN FOR WOOL

The launch of Why Wool Matters film from The Campaign for Wool, featuring our patron, now His Majesty, King Charles III, has been distributed far and wide through social channels,

wool supporters, educational platforms, farming communities and the media.

The film was created to remind consumers about the benefits of

buying wool over synthetic fibres, in a bid to help the planet by reducing plastic waste and micro fibres.

To date the film has had 59,373 film views, the trailer has been viewed

367,000 times and social channels have reached over 110,000 views. We are in the process of collating the additional shared statistics from the launch.

With the increased world crisis awareness, highlighted daily through media channels and consumer-increased interest and concerns for the planet, this can only help in making wool a more prominent and hopefully desired fibre of the future.

Maintaining the message of 'Why Wool Matters' for the Northern hemisphere's Autumn wool season and 'Wool Month' (which is now accepted as the extended Wool Week that was originally launch some 12 years ago), this overriding message allows for the segmenting of messages to highlight wool's natural eco and performance benefits across all market sectors from superfine and next to skin apparel, interiors and flooring.

Wool Month will be from 3 to 30 October.

Series of events and collaborations are in discussions for highlighting wool during the month. Brands include Jeremy Hackett, Anderson & Sheppard, Hobbs, John Smedley, Marks & Spencer, Fox Brothers, Brora, Next, Ensembler, John Lewis Partnership, Smalls Merino, Johnstons of Elgin, Alternative Flooring, Brockway, Vi-Spring, Harrison Spinks, Hypnos and The Wool Room.

This is reflected in recent updates from the wool-cloth producing mills. In May and June there were encouraging signs emerging in the weaving community as good news stories flowed from a number of high-end North American and European menswear retailers (even as supply side problems continue to bedevil both woollen and worsted mills struggling to meet repeat fabric orders for autumn 2022).

Quoting twenty to thirty weeks' delivery is not particularly helpful for an industry eager to recover from three lean seasons. Of particular note are recent comments made by Bosse Myhr, menswear and womenswear director at Selfridges in London, who noted, "Menswear is performing particularly well across all channels.

The business is being driven by a more diverse category mix compared



to a lockdown period, where we saw casual and outerwear as the dominant categories."

Current pre-trade fair optimism in the menswear sector across the Northern hemisphere raises a number of questions for the wool industry.

Is the return of up-market formalwear fuelled by rescheduling of postponed events, the opening up of entertainment and a gradual return to the office, ephemeral 'revenge buying', or, is it a 'one shot wonder' or, as the currency dealers say, 'a dead cat bounce'?

Sir Paul Smith and his Superfine suppliers dare to think otherwise as business in the USA, in particular, returns to pre-pandemic levels. Sir Paul commented "The Death of the Suit has been greatly exaggerated", and it was rather pleasing to hear on his first visit to New York in more than two years, that sales of Paul Smith suits in the USA had risen by +150%.

"During COVID, they said nobody will ever wear a suit again, which I

never believed. People are looking for refinement. They are going back to work, getting married, going to events. And there is also a big trend in colour, which is really resonating with people", said Paul visiting his new Wooster Street store in New York's SoHo for the first time.

In addition to suit sales, Paul Smith is perfectly placed to benefit from any move towards hybrid dressing for home, socialising and the office, as it was he who probably started the trend in his Floral Street store in London, some 30 years ago. Paul Smith suits in the colourful hues Vogue alluded to, are selling well in across Europe, as are those from Hugo Boss.

According to Richard Boidé, Sales Director of Dormeuil, made to measure (MTM) suits and tailored jacket sales in the USA are performing particularly well. The immediate problem the rebound is facing is an over-dependence on China for USA MTM manufacturing, as the only real facilities available in North America are in Canada.

There is a palpable feeling of optimism in Europe amongst spinners and weavers of finer micron yarns and fabrics as manufacturers look forward to a series of trade fairs for the Northern hemisphere Autumn/Winter 2023/4 season. Pitti Immagine Filati in Florence, Première Vision in Paris and Milano Unica in Milan are all hoping for a record number of exhibitors receiving a record number of buyers from key markets (which have been missing in meaningful numbers for over two years).

Virtual events, as bold attempts to fill a gap in the supply chain created by COVID, were never going to be digital solutions long term for an essentially tactile industry.

Needless to say, all in the industry are eagerly awaiting the outcome of impending trade events in Italy and France, as clothing manufacturers and retailers restock for 2023/4.

- R. PETER ACKROYD



Scan the QR code to go to *Why Wool Matters* online.

IWTO

ASWGA is very fortunate to have Peter Ackroyd, The *Woolmark* Company's Global Strategic Advisor, as a good friend and correspondent.

In this year's Annual I have gathered and paraphrased some of his recent comments. Space does not permit the full extent of his writing, memorable for its individual style and incredible depth of industry knowledge.

Peter paints a positive picture for wool, especially the superfine sector.

Here are a couple of reasons why:

Luxury menswear enjoys a global revival

There is an acknowledged revival of "posh" menswear with increasing evidence of a return to more sophisticated dressing and particularly strong growth in (expensive high end) tailored products in finer micron fabrics.

This optimism is echoed in performance surveys of key players across Europe. Federica Montelli, head of fashion at Milan's La Rinascente, "Men are not only buying office clothes, which they didn't need for a long time, but are also experimenting with outdoor looks, which is gradually replacing streetwear, even though the more urban and younger look is now at higher levels compared to pre-pandemic".

Federica went on to note that "Traditional sartorial pieces are not a relevant business for us anymore. We are moving forward to create a menswear wardrobe that looks at tradition, yet is cool, comfortable and

that can accompany our customers from more casual to more formal occasions".

US top end retailers are witnessing a strong return to more formal fashion. Consequently premium UK and Italian weavers are seeing encouraging signs across the US market that bodes well for strong fall/winter sampling and pre-season orders for 2023/24.

Sir Paul Smith reported that sales of his label suits in the USA had risen by more than 150% and commented "During Covid they said nobody will ever wear a suit again, which I never believed.

People are looking for refinement. They are going back to work, getting married, going to events.....".

Current optimism in the menswear sector across the Northern Hemisphere raises a number of questions for the wool industry. Is it ephemeral, fuelled by 'revenge' buying and could it be a 'one-shot wonder'?

Maybe not if current conditions remain 'post pandemic' and hybrid working retains the eclectic mix of looks, both formal, semi formal, both smart casual and casual that many top end mills are spinning and weaving to capacity. July and September will indeed be seminal months for the trade.

It is encouraging processors are planning a major return to winter trade events and Woolmark will be accompanying them in Milan, Paris, Florence and Munich to amplify wool's environmental credentials to an ever-changing audience of yarn and fabric



Peter Ackroyd.

selectors and merchandisers whose knowledge of fibre is scant to say the least.

The other burning question mills not in the top tier are asking is "Will the positive trend in the premium market trickle down to the middle market and raise morale at those mills as well?"

Is the fast fashion lobby running out of fuel?

"Never has there been a more propitious moment to promote the environmental excellence of wool, coupled with a particularly robust message about its long life qualities, with wool in the wardrobe having a guaranteed return on capital invested", noted Nicholas Coleridge, current co-chair of The Queen's Jubilee Pageant, chairman of the Victorian and Albert Museum and of course, chairman of the Campaign for Wool.

Wool has several other powerful allies whose voices are increasingly being heard across the globe. One leading long-standing advocate for wool is, as

we all know, His Majesty King Charles III via the Campaign for Wool and the solid support it has garnered globally from farm through to fashion over the last 12 years.

It seems, albeit gradually, the lies and coverups of the fast fashion industry, hiding behind a screen of clever greenwashing, are being systematically exposed for what they are, by an ever-growing number of important decision makers in government corridors of power in Brussels, London, New York and Tokyo.

Published recently, the EU Commission's five point vision for 2030 is, under the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, comprised of the following key points paraphrased as:

1. All textile products placed on the EU market are, durable, repairable and recyclable. To a great extent made of recycled fibres. Free of hazardous substances. Produced respecting social rights
2. Fast fashion is out of fashion-consumers should benefit longer from high quality textiles.
3. Profitable re-use of repair services are widely available.
4. In a competitive, resilient and innovative textile sector producers take responsibility for their products along the value chain.
5. Circular rather than throw away clothes have become the norm, with sufficient capacities for recycling and minimal incineration and landfill use.

Could there ever be five more potentially wool friendly initiatives?

There is growing evidence this once in a decade opportunity to position wool as a fibre of environmental preference in the minds of the those in power has not been ignored, and that the work of AWI in tandem with IWTO on the Product Environmental Footprint, and in particular the MAKE THE LABEL COUNT campaign, has not fallen on deaf ears.

Many thought it would, and the voice of the mighty Swedish and Spanish super stores would prove too powerful and intimidating a lobby in Brussels. Not so!

Thank you, Peter. Keep in touch.
SIMON CAMERON

TURKEY LANE MERINOS

Jo & John Symon

My father was allocated Turkey Lane as one of the 174 Soldier Settlers on Kangaroo Island who carved their blocks out of native scrub. Our family moved on to the 1,396-acre property in February 1956, which had 790 acres of "pasture" that had been very roughly cleared. The only other improvements were a house, shed and three dams. On reflection it must have been a daunting task to erect the fences, nurture very poor pastures and build all the necessary infrastructure to have an operational farm. I was 12 years old in 1956 and well remember weekends and school holidays fencing, picking stumps, grubbing shoots, digging trenches to bury pipes, etc. From the late 60s to mid 70s the remainder of the native vegetation on our farm was cleared, apart from 196 acres in creeks and shelter belts, increasing arable pasture to 1,200 acres (485 hectares).

We have an average rainfall of 720mm, with 71% of that falling between May and September with little precipitation over summer, but fortunately the rainfall is quite reliable. Winters are generally very wet making it impossible to drive a normal 4WD vehicle around during winter in an average year. Soils are iron stone gravel over clay, with some



sandy loam over clay, which require an annual fertiliser application, but will grow up to 12 tonnes of dry matter in a good year.

When the property was developed enough to begin buying livestock, my father decided that wool growing offered the best opportunity to become viable, though to purchase sheep on Kangaroo Island at the time, with more buyers than sellers, was a difficult task. For us that meant Collinsville blood line was it. My father wasn't impressed with the productivity of our sheep and in the drought of 1967, a line of Bungaree blood on the mainland became available, and by then the Island had a roll-on roll-off ferry, so we made a transition to that blood line. As time went on, we stopped buying Collinsville blood



rams and used heavy cutting strong Bungaree blood rams to increase wool cut. Buyers weren't paying for quality, so we were on a roll. In the 1980s our records show we were growing up to 29 micron fleece wool.

During the late 70s and early 80s, I started to source lower micron rams, but despite my best efforts, wool cuts were falling at about the same speed microns were reducing. History sadly reflects what a pickle we were in when the floor price mechanism crashed, and our type of wool made up the majority of the stockpile. In 1993, a good year, we produced a clip with an average micron of 25.8, and an average gross price of \$2.98!

In the late nineties I realised to remain viable as a wool producer I needed

◀ to reduce micron significantly and put my faith in Breeding Values that had me intrigued. Bio-security was very important to us, so I approached the local vet and farm adviser Greg Johnsson, to assist us to transition our flock to an average of 20 microns without losing wool cut within a 5-year time frame. Fortunately, Greg jumped at the challenge as he wanted to demonstrate the effectiveness of Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) coupled with best farm management practices.

To start this process, we selected the best two hundred ewes on the property, based on wool cut and micron, and artificially inseminated those ewes with sires selected for our breeding objective. We had one fine ram with reasonable cut that was used as backup over the 200 ewes in the nucleus flock. Following joining in 2000, all older rams on Turkey Lane were shipped out, relying on ram lambs for the next year's mating. (It transpired that 2001 lambing produced the best lambing percentage we had achieved for many years, an experience that was valued in 2020 as well.) Full pedigree at birth from the nucleus has been recorded since 2000, and all data of fleece measurements, character, colour, wrinkle scores, weaning weights, WEC, face cover, feet and legs etc is recorded and uploaded into Sheep Genetics to rank our flock against other breeders that submit data for ASBVs.

When we embarked on this journey Greg realised the maintenance of these records on available software wasn't going to work, so he set off developing "BreedElite" a data base used by many flock owners today. History will tell that we cracked the twenty-micron mark well within our planned time frame, and data from this year's clip shows we had an average adult clip of 16.9 microns with an average gross price of \$16.77/kg, but the real bonus is an increased wool clip with an average adult greasy fleece weight of 5.8kg.

In 2017 our younger daughter, Hannah along with husband Brian, returned to Turkey Lane to take on farming. Everything was tracking along very nicely until 20 December 2019 when lightning struck about 6 km away on a

catastrophic day. Fortunately, Turkey Lane escaped any damage from that fire, but many others weren't as lucky. This fire coincided with another fire on the Island which started first, plus a major fire that was burning on the mainland. As a result, local land holders did what they could without the help of the CFS. This fire over the coming days became quite large, and we eventually had it on our Northern and Western boundary. Hannah and Brian had planned to have Christmas at Swan Hill, and they finally left on 31 December when our local fire appeared under control. A lightning strike in Flinders Chase had started a fire on 30 December and when it escalated, they headed home on the 3rd January but we were burnt out before they reached the SA border. I will always be grateful they were absent when the front hit.

We got a call from a friend on the south coast, about 30 km away just after 7pm to say the wind had changed and we had better prepare for the worst. An hour and twenty minutes later all hell broke loose. In that short time, we filled gutters on both houses, Jo gathered some valuables, and I moved our 1,550 weaners to another paddock. By the time I got back to the house spot fires were igniting and it was obvious we should have already left. The plan was to shelter on a local air strip which was a bit over a kilometre away, but we were totally unprepared for the horrific conditions. We got separated trying to drive in total darkness which headlights couldn't penetrate. Unbeknown to me Jo made it to the strip but my ute I was in didn't survive when I retraced my path looking for her. Fortunately, it sheltered me long enough for the main front to pass but eventually caught fire. I escaped into a burnt paddock. Records show from a temporary weather station nearby wind gusts to 145 kph, and temperatures over 480 deg C, which later explained why I couldn't keep my balance after vacating my burning ute.

Losses were catastrophic - 2 fatalities, 86 houses, 60,000 livestock, countless sheds, machinery, vehicles, hundreds of kilometres of fencing and an environmental disaster. We lost our house, an implement shed, shearing shed, mouse-proof barn, 45 kilometres of fencing, all our hay, a myriad of



sundry losses eg water reticulation. The greatest toll was the loss of 2,500 sheep with weaners the most affected (96% loss), ram team (100% loss) and nucleus ewes (60% loss). Our adult wethers (1% loss) and fortunately our ram lambs came through relatively unscathed with only 4% loss. The miracle was that Hannah and Brian's house survived along with the cover over the sheep yards and contents of the workshop.

Deb Lehmann our local vet arrived the morning after the fire to assess health and welfare of our surviving sheep. We decided very quickly that we would endeavour to breed up again from the remaining sheep. As a result, we commenced treatments on a hospital flock of 1,290, of which 973 survived. Of those survivors 699 were ewes. Although this was a huge workload it enabled us to muster 1,300 ewes for mating. (Deb has written a report about our experience to present to a veterinary conference this year <https://turkeylane.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/turkey-lane-2020-fires-paper-by-deb-lehmann-1.pdf>) Unfortunately, thousands of livestock were euthanised on other properties that could have been nursed and survived. Our flock was full wool with shearing scheduled a couple of weeks after the fire, so one of our early challenges was to shear without a shearing shed, damaged yards and very patched-up fencing. Once the wool was off, fly strike was eliminated from burn injuries and the healing response was remarkable.

The number of people who arrived to assist the morning after was mind blowing, and for the coming days and weeks, was truly inspirational. It helped having four of us to share the load of organising those who simply wanted to help us, and on reflection a mountain of work was accomplished in the next three months. We worked seven days a week for the first seven weeks and by then I recall having a few things in order. The Army was

posted to Kangaroo Island and they worked tirelessly pulling down burnt fences, felling dangerous trees and a myriad of other useful tasks.

Fencing was high on our priority to contain sheep that had survived, with a complete boundary fence as the first step. We were fortunate to employ a fencing contractor from the mainland to knock in all the posts and build end assemblies. My diary entries say we finished shearing on 16 February, contractors started knocking posts on 17th, and Blaze Aid came helping to stand up exclusion fence on the 18th. By the end of April, we had our fencing completed. I can't emphasise enough the fantastic effort by Blaze Aid and the Army and other volunteer helpers.

From previous experience we knew that ram lambs could successfully mate the remaining ewes if we pumped enough nutrition into them to increase body weight and condition. This was a challenge as weaner rams are normally run as flock sheep. By 11 March we had most rams up to speed and enough paddocks to commence mating. Pregnancy scanning revealed 98% were pregnant which was



phenomenal since over half our ewes came out of the hospital flock.

Once animals were back to health and fences were completed, we moved onto building infrastructure. Our implement shed and workshops were built during April, and a new 4 stand, raised board, AWI design, shearing shed was underway in September. The slab for our new house was poured in July and the house was ready for us to move into in March 2021.

Currently in June 2022 we have the property at near maximum stocking rate and are hoping to be able to sell around 1,200 sheep at the end of this year, and the remainder of old sheep at the



end of 2,023. Our breeding objective is to breed sheep with elite wool, maximising wool cut while reducing micron on plain bodied sheep that are free of fleece fault with high resistance to fleece rot and worm parasites. Currently our ram team sits in the top 1% for Fibre Production index (FP+) and we endeavour to keep pushing the boundaries to reduce micron while increasing wool cut. In the years leading up to the fire we were cutting 38 to 40 kg of clean wool per hectare with around 13DSE's per hectare stocking rate. For more information on current performance and semen availability check out our website www.turkeylane.com.au or our Facebook (Turkey Lane Merinos) and Instagram.

MONTEREY - THE START OF A JOURNEY TOWARDS CARBON NEUTRAL WOOL

Ruminant livestock generate higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE) compared to other types of farming.

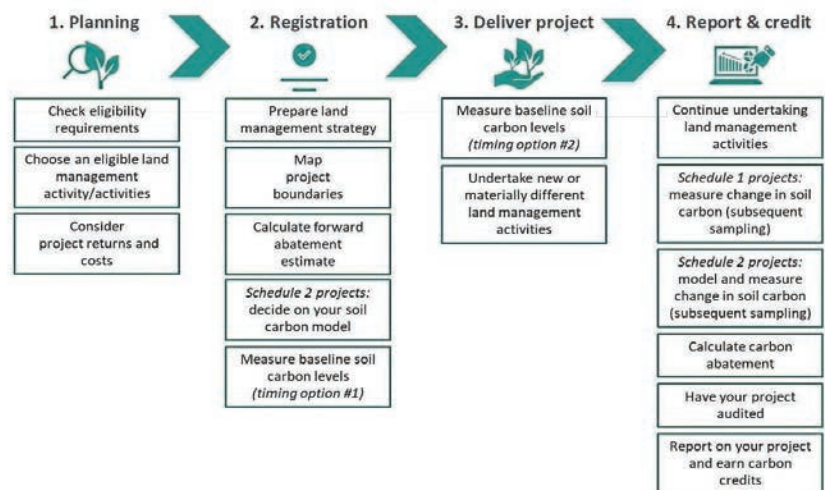
A farming system focussed largely on superfine wool production doesn't fair well, in the calculation of GHGE's since superfine wool sheep tend to spend their lives on-farm.

When a ruminant spends their life on-farm, the mitigation options that exist through early turn-off, flock structure and breeding management don't assist as carbon emission reduction strategies.

A CSIRO Research Article published in 2015/16¹ on John Ive's property "Talaheni" established that from when the farm was purchased in 1980, by 2012 the farm had sequestered eleven times more carbon dioxide equivalents

Project lifecycle

You need to undertake the following actions at each step of your soil carbon project.



Reference: Australian Government, Clean Energy Regulator, DRAFT: Understanding your Soil Carbon Project, Stakeholder Consultation Version 2.0 - 2021

◀ (CO₂e) in trees and soil than was produced by livestock and energy. Between 1980 and 2012, a total of 31 100 t CO₂e were sequestered with 19300 and 11800 t CO₂e in trees and soil respectively, whereas farm emissions totalled 2800 t CO₂e.

Therefore there was sufficient increase in soil carbon stocks alone to offset all GHGE at the study site.

Some brands² are already sourcing carbon neutral wool, and other brands are still working through their carbon accounting, however, the Eco-Labeling work in the EU is ongoing.

On our 955 ha farm Monterey, we started looking for increased productivity, but were never satisfied with the agronomist's response of application of single super. Our two farms (6 km apart) are very different – one having been heavily grazed and farmed for a century, and the other, left largely in its natural woodland and ecological state.

Whilst we hadn't actually 'measured' what was happening on the two farms, we had observed, that on the more ecologically sound farm, the merinos always had less worm and fly issues - which in turn lead us towards a more ecologically sustainable approach.

During 2021, the Landcare Farming Program Team delivered a series of carbon footprint and natural capital accounting workshops nationally. The workshops were delivered (at least locally) by Integrity Ag³ and involved as part of the learning, the development of a customised financial model to measure your own farm emissions.

However, as noted above, the retention of SF wool growing sheep, is not a conducive enterprise to mitigating those emissions, and thus the way forward (at least on our existing properties) is to experiment with alternative strategies. So, for Step 1 – we at least have a model which we can use to calculate our emissions.

The next hurdle was whether to register with the Emissions Reduction Fund, though registration for only one farm (circa 450 ha), was to cost in order of \$40–\$50k - with no known outcome of whether or not we could actually sequester carbon.

And that didn't include the additional fencing nor pasture improvement required to achieve results. As well, we are still debating whether the 25-year covenant which accompanies the ERF registration, is of benefit or detriment in terms of capital return.

We are still not ready to commit to register our project, since it will involve a complete change in grazing management to a full rotational basis – which, we have seen so far, requires sufficient concentration of animals to achieve the nitrogen inputs at sufficient levels.

We were then fortunate enough to be involved with an interested international party who has funding to encourage Australian wool producers to adopt changed management practices to sequester carbon.

By good fortune, we visited a FarmTech day, and found Farmlab¹, and with the assistance of a PhD in soils, we have been able to map our farm, determine soil types, map our randomised soil test sites within those soil types, generate

soil samples, and have just had the lab tests results returned. So, for a limited outlay of circa \$5k, we have at least generated base line carbon levels on a randomised basis (with the \$5k including nutrient soil test results as well).

Our ongoing focus will be on our land management strategy, establishment of perennial pastures, utilisation of alternative biologically stimulated fertilisers to promote soil health and a complete movement to rotational grazing – except for joining and lambing, with, hopefully, associated increases in productivity.

In association with Landcare, we are also considering the financial assistance available through the Federal Government's pilot Soil Monitoring Incentives Program² which provides some funding for farmers for soil tests and the costs of gathering data for ERF projects.

Registering a carbon project for a small/medium-sized farm business is currently financially out of reach for many small wool producers, and it would be hoped that there is more organisation and support for woolgrowers from the supply chain – due to the benefits the supply chain can achieve, by having the ability to source carbon neutral wool.

Cathy & Bill Hayne

“Monterey”

- 1 <https://www.farmlab.com.au/>
- 2 cu.edu.au/pilot-soils-program/

- 1 [Publish.csiro.au/an/an15541](https://publish.csiro.au/an/an15541)
- 2 Sheep Inc - <https://au.sheepinc.com/>; MJ Bale/Kingston
- 3 <https://www.integrityag.net.au/>

HOW WOOLGROWERS CAN REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Prof Richard Eckard, Primary Industries Climate Challenges Centre, University of Melbourne

Why should we care?

While the discussion on carbon footprints is not new to the wool industry, COP21 Paris Agreement established a global agreement to limit warming below 2°C, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

The recent COP26 meeting in Glasgow has now increased short-term ambition, by setting targets to start reducing emissions by 2030.

While governments have been tardy in their responses, we have seen many multinational agri-business companies

set targets for their supply chain starting in 2030.

A recent Oxfam study quoted that, of the 100 largest economies in the world 69 are companies not countries.

As over 70pc of Australian agricultural produce is exported, these supply

chain targets are more consequential to agriculture than government targets, and this will become critical for supply chain and market access by 2030.

The Australian red meat industry has proactively responded to this emerging supply chain constraint, by establishing a target for carbon neutrality by 2030 (CN30).

This was not done in isolation, as several other jurisdictions around the world have set similar targets; for example, Mato Grosso do Sul state in Brazil, New Zealand Zero Carbon bill, Californian cap on methane and Global Methane Pledge emerging from COP26 meeting in Glasgow. All of these are proposing at least 30 to 40pc less methane from livestock by 2050.

In addition to this, we have seen active discussion on border adjustment tariffs aimed at levelling the playing field, by imposing equal carbon pricing from countries deemed to have insufficient policy ambition.

Canada, Japan and United Kingdom are also contemplating carbon tariffs so that tougher domestic carbon prices do not negatively impact local competitiveness.

What can wool growers do?

1. Methane is the largest form of energy loss from livestock production systems, and it should be in our own productive interest to minimise this loss.
2. Almost 60pc of the nitrogen consumed by sheep never completes the cycle and is lost to the atmosphere. It should therefore also be in our interest to improve nitrogen use efficiency, thereby reducing loss of the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide.
3. Soils with higher organic matter are more productive, cycle more nutrients and hold more water, making them far more resilient in future climates. Therefore, it is also in our own interests to maximise soil organic matter in our pastures, which then has the co-benefit of a drawing more carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Fortunately, good pasture fertility, good species composition and good grazing management all contribute to maximising organic matter in our pasture systems.
4. Planting more trees on wool farms, if done correctly, would confer

significant productivity benefits through reducing wind chill and reducing heat stress, with carbon being a co-benefit.

Methane

In a typical wool production system, methane from rumen fermentation makes up more than 75pc of all emissions, which is where the rest of this article will now focus.

- **Efficiency:** There are simple things that wool growers can do to improve the amount of methane per unit product, including reducing unproductive animal numbers, improving flock health and reproductive efficiency. All of these can reduce the methane produced by at least 10pc.
- **Better use of legumes in our pastures** is also critical to reduce our reliance on imported protein or synthetic nitrogen fertilisers, but also recognising that some of these legumes (e.g., Vetch, Lotus, Sulla) have a direct effect on reducing methane in the rumen by up to 15pc.
- **Oils and tannins:** Significant research have also been conducted on diet supplements that reduce methane, including oils (e.g., cold pressed canola meal), tannins (in some forage legumes), and some commercial products on the market that are based on essential oils (e.g., MOOTRAL and AGOLIN). These supplements can reduce methane by as much as 20pc. However, the challenge in wool production systems would be how to practically supplement grazing animals. This is an area of current active research, which could include pelleting of the active ingredient with a high-quality forage, through to slow-release bolus technology.
- **Breeding:** There is potential to breed animals that produce less methane (residual methane production) or produce less methane per unit of production (improved feed conversion efficiency). While these gains are initially slow, perhaps only achieving 1pc less methane per year, this would mean 10pc less methane in a decade as a permanent reduction in methane.
- **Methane oxidation:** Just when we think that all the options are inside the animal, the zero emissions livestock production (ZELP) company has produced a wearable



Professor Richard Eckhart.

- device that hangs around the animal's neck and can break down up to 50pc of the methane as the animal breathes out.
- **Next 1 to 5 years:** Strategies that are emerging from research in the next 1 to 5 years, would include a methane vaccine (achieving around 20pc less methane) and at least two methane inhibitor products (Asaparagopsis/Seaweed and Bovaer®/3-NOP), both of which have reduced methane by as much as 80pc in confinement studies. While the methane vaccine is a logical solution for more extensive grazing conditions, the use of methane supplements is still limited by practical delivery methods under grazing.
 - **Early life programming:** Ultimately where research should aim is a technology called *early life programming*, based on the concept that human gut microflora is a product of our upbringing, and the same appears to be possible in the rumen. A recent study showed that cows and their calves supplemented with a methane inhibitor during weaning, produced around 20pc less methane for the next 60 days without the supplement. This raises the prospect of intervening once in a generation with subsequent animals being low in methane production.

There is no doubt now that all sectors of the economy will need to demonstrate carbon neutrality by 2050. While initially perceived as a threat to the livestock industries, the more proactive response by research has started delivering tangible solutions that mean that carbon neutral wool production is quite possible within the next decade or two.

PLASSEY, ROSS IN TASMANIA

It is a family success story when Plassey won two category awards at the ASWGA 2022 Fleece Competition.

Plassey is owned in partnership by brothers Mark and Luke Rapley who inherited the historic 1100-hectare property west of Ross in Tasmania's Northern Midlands from their entrepreneurial aunt Susan Rapley.

Susan had bought the wool growing property in the mid-1990s to complement her smaller Roseneath holding closer to Ross where she first began her flock of Saxon Merinos based on Trefusis bloodlines in 1989.

Luke, a qualified Forest Entomologist and his wife Michelle, a General Practitioner, had been pursuing their careers in Northern Queensland before they returned to Tasmania and moved to Plassey in 2008.

Here the couple quickly learnt about sheep farming. While Michelle contributes to the need of rural health in her role as a GP locally, Luke conducts the management of Plassey.

With help from a contractor for shearing and some contract cropping, Luke found great support from their immediate neighbours.

Plassey dates back to the 1830s and has been run as a wool growing property utilising the dryland country for almost 200 years.



Ivy, Michelle, Edwin and Luke Rapley.

Statistically, Plassey is made up of 1/3 native bush run, 1/3 native pasture and 1/3 arable land – the latter on which crops of lucerne, barley and wheat are rotated. The Isis River provides water supply for the property and the family has utilised the opportunity to access water from Arthurs Lake through the Northern Midlands Water Scheme.

The Plassey sheep flock has become a particular interest for Luke and with assistance from sheep classer Brett Cox, the flock has seen an increase in wool quality and quantity and flock fertility.

The flock of 2500 merino sheep is comprised of 1000 ewes, 800 wethers and 700 hoggets. Ewes are joined in April for a Spring lambing - 700 to merino sires and 250 to white-faced Suffolk sires to produce first-cross lambs.

Now in 2022, following the registration of Luke's stud in 2014, there are 200 stud ewes on Plassey. Initially using rams from Conrayn and the purchase of 50 ewes from Glen Stuart, Luke later added Merryville and Glenara bloodlines.

Success for the wool produced on the property was first achieved in 2018 at the ASWGA Fleece Competition when Plassey was placed first in the Tasmanian category.

This was followed up in 2022 from two fleece entries when Plassey was awarded first in the Tasmanian Regional Fleece Section and first in the Fleece of 70s category.

These visually white, bright and sound fleeces were selected from up to eight two-year-old wethers, selected in the race prior to shearing. Val Byers who classes the Plassey clip selected the winning fleece entries.

The Plassey wethers run in the foothills of the Western Tiers, grazing on diverse native pasture ideal for superfine wool production.

In December of 2020 and 2021, the Rapley family entered their rams in the Multi-Vendor Ram Sale held at the Campbell Town showgrounds.

Here the young stud averaged \$4,200 for their rams offered. Luke, Michelle and their children Edwin and Ivy along with Mark and his family are to be congratulated on their achievements at Plassey.



Peppa the kelpie keeping an eye on the wethers in the foothills of the Western Tiers.

VERA TAYLOR

NATURAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTING: MEASURING SOIL CARBON AND BIODIVERSITY - MARK GARDNER, VANGUARD BUSINESS SERVICES

On many wool-producing farms, areas of remnant woodlands, and tree plantings can be an important part of the grazing enterprise and have long held value in the enterprise for stock shelter, aesthetic and other reasons.

Recently studies have shown that these areas can store substantial amounts of carbon and as well, add important biodiversity value to the farm business.

Their, value may be greater than just the production gains at important times of the year, such as for shelter at lambing or for shade in summer.

A new approach has been developed to commence to quantify the value of the timbered non-pastured areas of the farm as well as the productive areas.

This approach is called “Natural Capital Accounting” which measures the living part of the farm.

In a recent study, which is now being expanded, the application of farm-scale natural capital accounts to wool-growing businesses in temperate Australia demonstrate that some wool growers may be managing these areas of woodland in ways that have sustained, and at times regenerated, carbon and other natural values, while at the same time the businesses are achieving strong financial goals.

These timbered and often native areas can provide some grazing shelter for livestock while at the same time allowing for the preservation of carbon and biodiversity.

The natural capital accounts conducted in the study highlighted that for some

farm businesses, net sequestration of carbon can occur at farm-scale, often due to the management approach applied to these remnant and timbered areas.

They can act as an individual and informal farm “offset” for the higher input grazed areas of the farm.

While the higher input areas of the farm may emit relatively high levels of carbon dioxide equivalents, the areas of timbered and often native areas can draw down these emissions, the rate depending on the condition and size (ha) of these areas.

Small areas can have a large impact.

With current worldwide focus on achieving net zero emissions, there is an opportunity to conserve, and in some cases regenerate, these remnant woodland areas on farmland while they remain part of the productive areas of the farm, through planned grazing.

This could contribute to reversing biodiversity loss and help to offset farm emission balances while allowing for continued and planned grazing. Tree planting can also be part of this solution.

Some woolgrowers may be interested in becoming part of a new Natural Capital Accounting project, Farming for the Future, being run in partnership with the National Farmers Federation, Australian Wool Innovation, Meat and Livestock Australia and the wonderful Macdoch Foundation which is leading the program.

It's a great way to quantify the levels of Natural Capital on your farm, and it's currently at no cost.

For some businesses this process may open up new income-producing opportunities through stewardship payments and other natural capital payments, as long as they are already in good condition or a measurable positive change can be documented.

For other businesses this process creates a strong *providence* story, and this, coupled with modelled changes in carbon emissions can create a market advantage when selling wool.

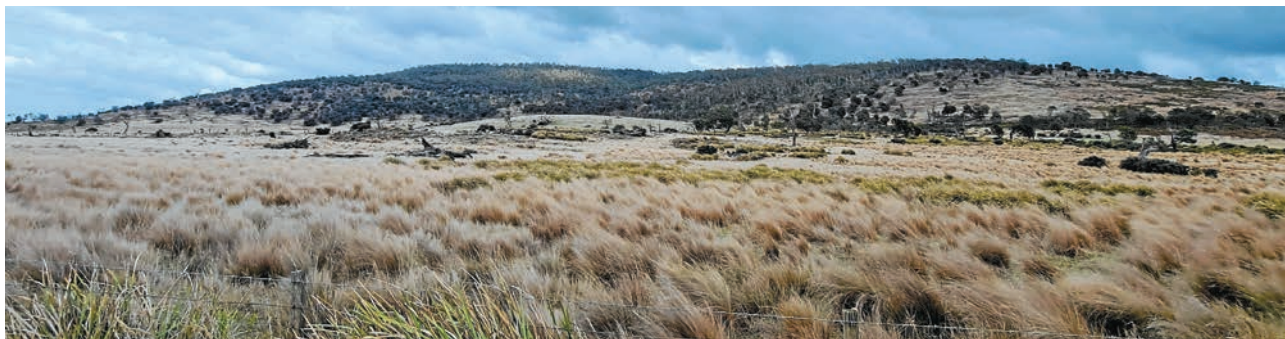
There are a growing number of case studies that illustrate this. Natural capital is fast becoming part of the language of brands and consumers.

A great example is the relationship between MJ Bale and the wool-growing property “Kingston” in Tasmania: mjbale.com/pages/kingston

Natural Capital Accounting is important, as for the first time, carbon and biodiversity can be measured and become part of the normal farm management view of profit.

It can also create new business opportunities.

The team at Farming for the Future will work with you to do an on-farm assessment and collect data - to demonstrate how the natural resources of soil, waterways, productive plants, animals and ecological health can be connected and accounted for, in terms of farm productivity and profit. To enquire, find out if you're eligible to participate - or to apply, register here: <https://farmingforthefuture.org.au/farm-participation/>



M.J. BALE, SUSTAINABILITY LEADER

In July, premium Australian-owned menswear brand and great supporter of Australian merino, M.J. Bale, was named one of *The Australian Financial Review's* Sustainability Leaders for 2022.

The list was compiled in association with the Boston Consulting Group.

In addition to selection in the overall List, M.J. Bale was awarded the special distinction as a Category Innovator in Retail, Hospitality, Travel and Entertainment.

The award recognises the brand's journey to complete carbon neutrality in 2021 when M.J. Bale became the first Australian retailer to be Climate Active-certified as 100% carbon neutral, covering both products and organisation.

The Australian Financial Review also cited the brand's pioneering work in livestock methane reduction with the world-first zero-emission wool trial and the Lightest Footprint, an end-to-end project to create knitwear entirely in Australia with minimal carbon footprint.

In reflecting on the award, the journey preceding it and the opportunity now presented, M.J. Bale founder and CEO, Matt Jensen, had the following to say:

It's an irony, but one of the most unfashionable industries worldwide right now, due to its damaging environmental footprint, is the fashion industry. Depending on which report you read, the global garment sector is responsible for anywhere from 4% (McKinsey) to 5% (Climate Council) of greenhouse-gas emissions.

Most reports also note that these numbers are likely highly conservative. In 2021 the World Economic Forum named fashion as the world's third biggest industry in terms of pollution. From being in vogue to becoming a worldwide rogue, it is nothing short of a faux pas.

Our company, M.J. Bale, is not perfect. In 2021 our carbon footprint assessment revealed that we contributed almost 12,000 t CO₂e for both products (10,399 t CO₂e) and organisation (1,462 t CO₂e).



Two Dogs leaving Kingston with methane reduced wool and accompanied by M.J. Bale CEO Matt Jensen. Photo: Melanie Kate Photography

In terms of product, our largest source of emissions was from fabric/textiles (35%), followed by fibres (22%), logistics and retail (both 16%).

The fibres contribution was a shock. This was despite our historical embrace of primarily homegrown natural fibres, and our long-term partnership with some of Australia's most ethical farmers.

For example, the conservationist and carbon negative (i.e. sequesters more than emits) Kingston farm in Tasmania, owned and managed by Simon Cameron, produces world class Superfine Merino wool for us via strict regenerative agricultural practices.

I have always believed that unlikely alliances bring unexpected outcomes. We have found that working collaboratively with science and agriculture can bring positive changes to our footprint, while offering the market a point of difference.

I also think that in the future Australian fashion as a collective can responsibly lead the world in local solutions to global problems, if the three industries combine.

Australia is blessed with one of the world's best publicly-funded scientific institutions in the CSIRO, multiple world class STEM-focused university departments, and a highly educated population hungry for invention.

Working with these experts we can leverage emerging technology, balancing economic prosperity with environmental sustainability on the journey to net zero. We must test a collective hypothesis that it is possible to decarbonise the fashion industry, with multiple experiments throughout the supply chain.

*One example is our experimental work to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions in Merino wool production. CSIRO science unearthed in 2015, commercialised by Sea Forest Tasmania, reduces methane production in livestock by up to 90% through a feed supplement derived from a native seaweed called *asparagopsis taxiformis*.*

Partnering with Sea Forest and Kingston farm, in 2021 we produced the world's first zero-emission wool. I am currently looking at the end result: a Superfine Merino wool sweater hand-knitted in Ballarat by 78-year-old artisan, Val Chaffey.

Beginning last month, an adventurer called Two Dogs transported 35 kg of greasy wool from Kingston farm to regional Victoria, solely by bicycle and his engine-less sailboat. Together, we have created a product that has been grown, processed, spun and knitted entirely within Australia with as close to zero carbon emissions as possible.

Does the success of this one experiment provide us with a blueprint for a globally scalable solution to fashion's pollution problem? Of course not. What it has shown us, though, is a glimpse of what is possible, as the quest to decarbonise our economy intersects with the need to return value-added manufacturing to our shores.

Looking back, it was the 2019-2020 bushfires that compelled us to move beyond discrete projects, with the objective of achieving total business and product carbon neutrality.

What had seemed like an important but not particularly urgent problem to solve, highlighted by projections of sea levels at distant dates in the future, was right here on our doorstep. Beyond the emotion of these catastrophic events, we reasoned that if we lost our environment, we would lose our partners on farms and entire rural communities.

In the short term, expediting business carbon neutrality through an end-to-end reduction program where possible, and by purchasing quality offsets for whatever remained, is not a perfect solution. But perfection is always the enemy of progress.



Asparagopsis in production. Photo: Melanie Kate Photography

Doing nothing isn't an option.

At its best, the fashion industry anticipates and satisfies the highest lifestyle aspirations of its customers. Today, pursuing a more environmentally ethical life consistently ranks in the top three motivators of premium brand customers, most notably among the younger Millennial and Gen Y cohorts.

This presents the fashion industry with both a formidable challenge,

and, I believe, a transformational opportunity.

What is good for the planet has to now undeniably be good for business.

As wool growers we need to do some thinking ourselves and, where we are able, to map our own paths to carbon neutrality even if it looks like a long journey. This way we will both reduce our own emissions and be in sync with our customers.

SIMON CAMERON

ARARAT-BARUNAH REGIONAL REPORT

Once again we have been fortunate to enjoy a kind 12 months in regard to rainfall.

The spring was very good across our region with good pasture growth providing good feed levels well into December/January.

This allowed good lambing percentages with healthy stock ensuring pleasing body weights going into summer.

Fodder conservation was plentiful, enabling good supplies for the year ahead. The crops all grew well across our region, with good yields and quality.

The summer was once again delightful with good rains enabling an early start

to the growth season, giving good length of grass by late autumn.

While areas varied slightly across our region, generally a good break for all to once again set us up for the winter period with good feed levels. We have been very fortunate for the last three years to enjoy summer rains which have followed through to establish good feed levels in the winter/spring period.

This has made farming life much easier with the nutrition for sheep provided from our pastures rather than the silo.

The commodity prices for meat and wool have continued to stay at a good level, with the finer microns increasing in value. This has been a very satisfying result for our

organisation, reflecting good demand for our product.

After the COVID cancellations last year of the local shows, we had several members – “Beverley” and “Kelsedale” – exhibiting at the Ballarat Sheep Show recently both with good results.

Our main event for the year has been our Fifty Years' Celebration weekend held in Ararat in mid-May. We were very pleased with the result as the weekend went off as we had all hoped and enjoyed by all.

With the cancellation last year due to COVID the preparations for this event had been going on for quite some period, lengthening the whole process.

◀ Our organising committee did a wonderful job and I would like to thank all those involved as we seemed to have many meetings.

Whether it was driving buses, preparation of food, setting up and decorating the hall, handing out gift bags or serving of drinks we had many people who contributed their time and effort to the event and I would like to thank them all very much.

My main thanks go to Penny Hartwich and Melissa Mulley.

Both these ladies were incredibly diligent and thorough in their pursuit of a successful event, and without their input the event would not have run as smoothly or as rewardingly as it did.

All the farm hosts did a wonderful job, and I thank them very much for

opening up their properties for our ASWGA fraternity to visit.

The simple pleasure of viewing sheep, the lay of the land and seeing firsthand another enterprise, once again proved a successful formula for all those who attended. We were very fortunate to have the Zegna Group hold their Wool Trophy and Vellus Aureum Awards during the weekend.

While this added to the complexity of the organising, this was a wonderful addition to the success of the weekend. The display of the Zegna wools combined with the winning ASWGA fleeces were a sight to behold at the Town Hall and without doubt added to the ambience and wonder of the whole event.

It was fitting to have two of our regional members, Brad and Melissa

Sandlant of Lexton winning the Vellus Aureum Trophy with a record breaking 9.8 micron fleece.

A wonderful achievement. Geoff and Heather Phillips, "Currawong", took out our local regional award in the ASWGA Fleece Competition.

Thanks again to Penny for all her work at Branch level. Thanks to Mark Waters for all his help during the organisation of the 50-year celebrations and in leading our Association.

A special thanks and gratitude to Melissa Mulley who has been looking after us for the last 15 years. We have become very comfortable with her thorough administration skills and care for our Association. While we will all miss her, we wish her well in what lies ahead.

CHAIR - GEOFF PHILLIPS

HAMILTON REGIONAL REPORT

Three very good springs in a row finished of 2021.

Good hay cuts, prime lambs and sheep, and very good grain yields. The summer of 2021-22 again had areas of heavy thunderstorms in the Western District. If you were lucky enough to get under two or three of them you got another green summer and autumn, if you missed them you had to wait until early May for your autumn break.

So the areas that had an early break will have had much better grown wool and stronger micron, the late breaking areas will be very similar to last year – finer and shorter than normal.

Production in the Western District is continuing to decline for wools 17.5 and finer, superfine and ultrafine wool rams are becoming less and harder to find.

Many farms are breeding stronger to take advantage of higher lambing percentages and bigger animals, leading to early maturing lambs to take advantage of high meat values.

Cropping is still taking hectares out of wool production also. The returns for Canola, Wheat and Beans is well in front of wool meat enterprises.

The price of 16 micron and finer wool has been good for more than 12 months, which has let all producers sell into this market, for the first time for many years. There is still a hole around 16-17 micron that needs to lift, the or the move finer or stronger will continue.

Shearing and production costs are increasing out of control. The cost of shearing has risen markedly; drench, vaccine and other animal welfare products, fencing, fuel and feed have all risen.

Fertiliser has doubled in 12 months, and it is one product that you can cut back on, but not for long before you start to lose production in South West Victoria.

Local members have had success again this year in many competitions. David and Susan, and Aaron and Rebecca Rowbottom gained 2nd and 3rd in the Vellus Aurium. Trevor and Kathy Mibus and family won the Hamilton Region fleece competition and had a good showing at the Bendigo Sheep Show.

It has been good to get out and about again, to see other people's sheep and to see which direction the industry is going in. Thank you to the Ararat Branch on the 50 year celebrations in May. It was a good weekend.



David and Susan Rowbottom.

Thank you to Melissa for all her hard work over the years in helping the Hamilton Branch and the wider Association.

Going forward the small group of ultra and superfine wool growers in the South West of Victoria will continue to grow stylish superfine wool with best practice animal welfare. The foot and mouth outbreaks in other parts of the world will keep us on our toes and make up keep up to date on our bio security on farm, and as a country, adding another level of complexity to growing wool, through animal and wool traceability.

CHAIR - BRADLEY VENNING

GOULBURN-YASS REGIONAL REPORT

The year has passed quickly with many issues affecting the superfine woolgrowers of our area.

On the weather front the season has been a wet one again for the third year in a row. A wet cool summer and an early autumn break saw paddocks often too wet to get onto to sow winter cereal crops.

Along with the wet summer came the prolonged fly strike and ongoing Barbers Pole worms affecting all ages of stock. Many weaner lambs have been lost this year to the ongoing struggle to drench and achieve some effectiveness.

The current winter feed has not seen much sun and is of poor quality and the condition of the stock is variable across each mob and across the property.

A shining light to the growers has been the current wool prices - throughout the past season and the start of the new selling season.

The largest support of our type of wools are coming from Europe, in particular Italy. Reports from local growers are stating returns of over \$100 per head for sub 17 um sheep.

Highlights for the Goulburn-Yass Region:

- Brett and Sue Picker of Hillcreston Heights' win in the Goulburn-Yass Region ASWGA Fleece competition for 2022.
- Danny and Megan Picker of Hillcreston Park were awarded nine 1PP bales for the year.
- Danny and Megan Picker of Hillcreston Park were back to exhibit rams at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.
- Neil Carey of Kashmir, Wee Jasper was awarded four 1PP Bales for the year.

CHAIR - NEIL CAREY

MUDGEE REGIONAL REPORT

The season in the Mudgee region is continuing to be very wet and moving towards being a very cold winter. Most of our region has enough feed on the ground to carry them through to spring but some hand feeding will occur through winter as the grass feed has not enough nutrition in it.

Some losses have occurred in weaners during this period due to nutritional problems and worm. Wild dogs and feral pigs are still a major problem in our region. Properties

are still being sold and taken out of production in the region, which means we are losing more and more wool production in this area.

The wool market remains strong and will support well grown, well-prepared wools. Seed is an issue for premiums, due to the season.

Premiums will be paid for good preparation to keep VM to a minimum and tensile strength as high as possible. The better prepared superfine wools



Daryl and Irene Croake



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are in demand because of supply being low in these categories.

Robyn and I attended the 50th plus 1 Anniversary celebrations on the Australian Superfine Woolgrowers Association in Ararat on the 13th – 15th May 2022.

140 People attended the dinner with most of these members participating in the farm tours as well. A very well organised and well-run weekend by the Ararat/Barunah region. Congratulations to all involved.

Congratulations to Penny, Andrew & Ed Hundy, winners of the 90's section of the ASWGA Fleece competition, Daryl & Irene Croake winners of the Mudgee Region ASWGA Fleece Competition and Ed Hundy, 6th place in the Ermenegildo Bale Award.

Our members have had a very successful wool showing season.

Daryl & Irene Croake – The Sydney Royal Easter Show 2022

- Winners of The Australian Council of Wool Exporters Perpetual Prize – Best Collection of 3 Spinners type Merino Ewe/Wethers fleeces unhoused & unrugged.
- The Brian Devereux Memorial Prize – 2nd Place & 3rd place
- 1st place & 3rd place – Skirted Fleece, Superfine Merino or finer, either ram or ewe/wether, best in quality



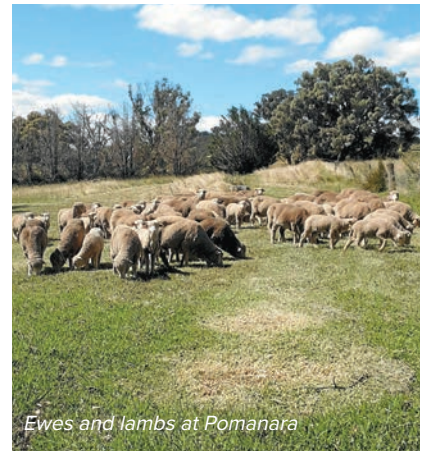
Geoff & Robyn Rayner – The Sydney Royal Easter Show 2022

- 1st Place – Skirted Fleece, Ultrafine Merinos, ewe or wether
- 1st Place – Skirted Fleece, Superfine Merino, Ram Grand Champion & Reserve Grand Champion Fleece at:-
 - Royal Bathurst Show 2022
 - Wellington Show 2022
 - Dubbo Show 2022

I also had the honour of judging the Superfine wool sheep section (Feature breed) at the 2022 Royal Easter Show.

Kerry & Brendan Cole

- Champion Lambs Fleece – Royal Bathurst Show 2022
- 1st Place Superfine Wool Rams Fleece – Royal Bathurst Show 2022



Ewes and lambs at Pomahara

- Champion Hoggets Fleece – Mudgee Show 2022

A special thank you goes to Murray and Nella Price for all their years of dedication of the Mudgee Region. This is my first year as president and I am greatly honoured to represent the Mudgee region. We may be small in numbers but we can always manage to produce top winning fleeces for all competitions we may enter in.

Shearing time in our region is about to start and everything looks positive for a bright selling season. Keep safe and warm, we look forward to another good season.

PRESIDENT - GEOFF RAYNER

NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL REPORT

Introduction

Despite ongoing COVID lockdowns (both nationally and on-going in China), intense shipping and supply chain difficulties, and some challenging weather conditions, our New England growers are experiencing some welcome price premiums. These premiums demonstrate the superiority and suitability of the SF genetics of our New England stud breeders for our summer high rainfall climate, and the ability of these sheep to produce bright and white wool, even in the wettest conditions.

Competition Winners

Congratulations must go to David and Angie Waters, Tarrangower

(Merinos, Hillgrove) as the most decorated of our growers at the 50th Anniversary Dinner in Ararat in May. Their bale of 15.0 micron super fine wool, won the prestigious Zegna Wool Trophy (their fifth trophy). The paddock grown bale had a tensile strength of 47 Newton/kilotex and a yield of 75.7%. Their winning fleece in the ASWGA fleece competition, took out the Grand Champion Trophy for the best overall fleece sponsored by the Australian Council of Wool Exporters and Processors, the Class 80s quality, and New England Region award.

Also successful in the competitions were Clive and Margaret Smith (Mulgowan) achieving 3rd place with their bale in

the Zegna competition and Mark and Lesleann Waters taking out the Class 74s in the ASWGA competition.

Leo and Judy Blanch have also had a very successful year, with their Grand Champion Ultrafine Ram at Sydney Royal, and Reserve Grand Champion Superfine Fleece at the Bendigo Sheep Show, as well as successes at regional shows at Tenterfield and Walcha.

50th Anniversary Week-End in Ararat, Vic

A very special congratulations to the Ararat team who organised the 50th Anniversary dinner and week-end. It was a very special success, with attention to every detail. So

wonderful to welcome international guests, Paolo Zegna, and from the Schneider team, Laura Ros, Jeffrey Losekoot and Helen Cameron. And for the opportunity to visit grower farms in the Western District and learn about their particular challenges.

Leo Blanch showed his prowess at guessing micron and fleece weight for a lucky door prize fleece during the Ararat evening. And, just to top it all off, David and Angie Waters won a lucky door prize in addition to their winnings on the evening...

Nikke & J Press

During Danny's presidency (in 2020 and 2021), G Schneider Australia Pty Ltd (Tim Marwedel) put together circa 13 tonnes of ASWGA certified wool (sourced from Yass, New England and Hamilton regions) which was processed by Motohiro and Nikke. Nikke's client, Onward Kashiya Co (J.Press) who are an up-market Japanese men's suit retailer, wished to use the ASWGA website photo and ASWGA trademark in their promotional material. With significant assistance from Valerie Chang of Nikke, ASWGA signed off a Licence Agreement with J.Press for the use of ASWGA collateral. This is the link to the garments - Website: <https://crosset.onward.co.jp/items/SROVNM0112>

AWI Wool Harvesting Open Day

The writer attended the AWI Wool Harvesting Open Day at Falkiner Memorial Field Station, which coincided with the return trip from Ararat. Impressive to see the experimental work to alleviate the 'drag and pull'. Also very impressive was the shearing cradle developed by Peak Hill Industries – which is now being used by shearing contractors to shear very large rams. Peak Hill have been working on the design for decades, and the cradle

is a very neat piece of equipment. The wait list is a minimum of 6 months.

Reda Visit

Our President, attended the regional visit from Reda representatives Francesco and Fabrizio Botto where 50 growers gathered at Gostwyck woolshed. We heard their thoughts on the market, supply of traditional superfine wool and soaring energy and shipping costs. Andrew Blanch visited with them and AWI chairman Jock Laurie also attended.

New England Wool

After 32 years, June 2022 also brought changes to respected and influential wool exporter New England Wool, to allow its Italian stakeholders to explore new but separate supply chain options. Vitale Barberis Canonico and Successori Reda will now buy separately in the sale room, hopefully bringing more competition for our grower's wool, and increasing future demand.

New England Merino Field Days/ Annual Armidale Ram Sale/ On-Property Ram Sales

Held over 1 day only in January 2022, the New England studs presented their ram teams on-property and at Uralla Showgrounds with the Armidale Show and Sale following in February. A total of 50 rams sold at the Armidale Sale, to an average price of \$4,855 and 75% clearance rate. On-Property ram sales at our other New England studs were also well supported during the season.

AWI – WICP & WCG Meetings

Most of these meetings have been held via Zoom over the last 12 months, and Mark Waters and I have been tag teaming attendance. AWI publish meeting summaries which can be found here <https://www.wool.com/about-awi/how-we-consult/stakeholder-consultation> and are circulated to members by the ASWGA secretariat.

ASWGA is a recognised and respected industry body, and these forums are an important avenue to receive and provide feedback to AWI. Just a reminder to ASWGA members that their feedback to industry bodies ie AWI, AWEX, AWTA – is important – and if you have feedback, this can be provided via ASWGA.

Representatives of ASWGA who attend these meetings are remunerated by AWI for their attendance, and these monies are returned to ASWGA, except for any out of pocket costs of attendance.

Reward for Effort

The reward for effort for our grower members has been realised over the last 12 months, with some stunning price premiums. Top Auction Prices realised during the current season include 15,000 c/kg (greasy) for 12.1 micron sold by Peter and Rosemary McNeil, and 4,000 c/kg for certified 1PP lots 14.3 micron offered by Clive and Margaret Smith (Mulgowan) – grown up on the trap-rock near Stanthorpe, Qld.

Other members frequently featured in the Top 5 Australian Auction Prices for Sale Week, clearly demonstrating the ability of our quality clips to achieve above average prices.

May these price premiums continue!

The Carbon Space

Everyone is no doubt overwhelmed with the chatter over carbon and clearly the new Federal Government will be reviewing the former Government's policies in this area. There will be much more news in the space – but the challenges are clearly how to reduce the carbon footprint of our fibre, and produce carbon neutral wool. So, its important to start collecting your soil carbon baselines.

CHAIR - CATHY HAYNE



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TASMANIA REGIONAL REPORT

Overall Tasmania experienced another good year for producing Superfine wool. The seasons have been very good with a good spring allowing lots of hay and silage to be stored and a decent grain harvest to refill silos.

With a wetter than average summer there was a challenge with fly and dags.

Between the combination of COVID, rain and labour shortages the biggest challenge for many growers was getting sheep crutched and shorn on time. This issue seems to be getting worse, year-on-year.

Tasmanian growers performed well in this year's Zegna Wool Awards with the following places in the top ten bales -

- 2nd Kingston - Simon and Anne Louise Cameron
- 4th - Glen Stuart - Allan and Carol Phillips
- 8th - Snowhill - Richard and Sharon Gee

The ASWGA fleece completion was well supported by Tasmanian growers with Plassey - Luke and



Campbell Town Show Fleece Competition - the winners were Allan and Carol Phillips.

Michelle Rapley winning the 70s section and the best Tasmanian fleece.

The Campbell Town show was another successful few days with the New England fleece competition being won by Glen Stuart.

Congratulations to the Ararat region on hosting the very enjoyable ASWGA 50-year reunion weekend which combined with the Zegna presentation, was a great success.

Whilst wool prices received by members have continued to increase

to a good level so too has our cost of production increased.

Fertiliser, diesel, fencing materials, shearing, labour etc have all increased dramatically. The current wool prices need to continue to increase to cover these rising costs

The demand for this great product that we as growers produce should be strong into the future.

CHAIR - RICHARD GEE

WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGIONAL REPORT

The last year has been relatively kind to us in the West. The summer wasn't too severe, just a week or so of extreme heat, a few fires caused some anxious times for some land owners.

For those cropping, a good season was had. We had an early false break to the season in March. Most pasture just survived until better rain in April - May. So as far as the weather is concerned, we in the West escaped the extremes in weather that the East coast has endured.

Sheep prices have been good like everywhere. Wool has also seen some high prices which is very pleasing to see. At last, the buyers are looking West to source good wool.

It's very satisfying for those of us who have a passion for superfine wool and have stuck with it to be finally rewarded.


Member numbers have dwindled in recent years, although there are growers out there who have the wool. I'm not sure how we will inspire them to join our Association.

We are relatively isolated in the West and this creates the problem of sourcing good genetics locally. We need to know who has semen available so we can tap into the breeding to get the best sheep we can. If we had some way of

connecting to studs that have available semen, it would be helpful.

I hope everyone is coping with the extremes in weather, price hikes and difficulty in sourcing materials, and we all hope wool prices stay up so dedicated woolgrowers can stay in the business they love, producing the best natural fibre - superfine/ultrafine wool.

James Pepper



THE FEMALE PHENOMENON
By Tim Austin of Elfinvale Stud Kelpies®

Enquiries further to Mr Ian Gills review:
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SOUTH AUSTRALIA REGIONAL REPORT

Another year goes past very quickly, more things get thrown our way to make life interesting.

South Australia has enjoyed a fair 12 months for the most. The Adelaide Hills where we are can't complain too much. It was a good start to last Winter, a reasonable Spring which saw good harvests and hay cuts. Summer was cool and dry - at the most, a couple of rains.

Then early May the season broke properly and while May was wet, June was dryish and cool without frosts, thankfully. Parts of the state have had big rains and flooding early in the year, while other parts remain dry. Everyone is looking forward to a good spring to finish off nicely.

Last year's wool clip was another good one with pleasing results, we managed to crack 2000 cents for the first time with our hoggets' wool which was pleasing. The market remains solid which is gratifying, given what is happening in the world right now.

Sheep and cattle prices also remain strong, as does grain. The downside is when you need to purchase. This will only get worse this year with the rise in fuel etc - not sure where it will all end and who will be left standing.

As with everyone else in the industry we just grin and bear it and ride the wave with hope.

On a brighter note it's been good to be able to get out and about again. After two years off with COVID the Royal

Adelaide Show is back this year, as are a lot of the country shows and field days. People are glad to travel to these events and support their communities which really have struggled over the COVID era. Let's hope this can continue.

On the home front, lambing is just about finished. We got caught with some weather early, numbers look ok and most people around are boasting good percentages. Sheep are in decent condition which is good for July and therefore a good shearing looks promising. With only a couple of frosts, pastures are growing nicely also.

Wishing you all a good year, and stay safe.

CHAIR - NICK SEAGER

ELVIS SUIT - FIT FOR 'THE KING'

By Lauren Ellis, Curator Manager, Bendigo Art Gallery, Elvis: Direct From Graceland

In the late 1960s, Elvis Presley's career was in trouble. His star-power had waned considerably from the dizzying heights of his breakout years a decade earlier. His image had dramatically altered from the edgy icon of generational change almost to something approaching a caricature of a cheesy Hollywood heartthrob. Although his explorations in music were continuing – in 1966 Elvis won the first of his three Grammy Awards for gospel music – his career was dominated by his commitments in Hollywood during this era. Despite his early promise as an actor and the relatively high quality of certain early films, by the late 1960s he was stuck delivering a production line of flimsy formulaic movies with underwhelming soundtracks in relentless studio contracts.

Then the stars aligned to bring Elvis a creative project which would become the catalyst for his dazzling second coming as a live performer and master of stagecraft in Las Vegas and across the United States

– the 1968 NBC television special known today as the '68 Comeback Special.

A key member of the team who made the show so innovative and career-redefining was costume designer Bill Belew. A graduate of Parsons School of Design in New York, Belew had previously worked with the director of the '68 Special, Steve Binder, on a Petula Clark special. For Elvis, Belew designed a remarkable suite of costumes drawing heavily on Elvis's cultural and musical roots in the South, recast with a distinctly contemporary edge. Several of the costumes, including the famous white suit from the emotionally-charged finale song 'If I Can Dream', were produced in a fabric Belew called 'stretch wool jersey'. Belew has said this fabric was popular at the time in men's tailoring, but it was thick and very hot to wear – and Elvis was already prone to extreme perspiration thanks to his vigorous performance style. Today this beautifully tailored suit is still in fabulous condition,

lined in silk, with perfectly intact seams and no discolouration or visible deterioration. The dense twill-like weave has a finely ribbed texture; the garment was tailored to fit tightly on Elvis's slender body. It has very little give and must have been awkward for Elvis's instinctive body movement while singing.

Belew was invited back to create new costumes for Elvis's first residency in Las Vegas in 1969, a high-profile concert deal with the new International Hotel, signed in the wake of the success of the '68 Special and a popular 'rediscovery' of Elvis the musical innovator. Belew has explained in later interviews how he struck upon another wool blend for the 1969 (and subsequent) costumes: "I contacted Ice Capades, and I talked to some friends of mine there. And I said, 'Would ya'll be interested in making Elvis Presley's clothes for Vegas?' Because I would like to use what is known for ice skaters as stretch gab, or gabardine. And it allows skaters to do their splits, their turns, and everything. And I thought it would be great for

◀ Elvis because the one thing he said that he wanted to incorporate in his act was his karate.”

None of Elvis’s costumes contains any kind of fabric tags, nor does the Graceland Archive have records of precisely the composition of this stretchy wool gabardine. Vice President of Archives and Exhibits, Angie Marchese, believes the fabric was imported from Italy for use in Belew’s studio. Gene Doucette, the designer who worked extensively on Elvis’s costumes from 1972 onwards, calls the fabric “ski cloth” and also recalls it was imported from Italian mills which later closed down. Today, these costumes are still in great condition, despite the visible traces of Elvis’s wear, such as boots scuff marks on ankles and sweat stains in the armpits. The fabric is thick by modern costuming standards, clearly robust and hardwearing enough to withstand multiple uses for long, sweaty performances and multiple launderings. The suits are indeed stretchy, hugging the body and its movement and they are substantial in terms of weight also, especially those which are embellished with studs and beadwork. Yet the dense weave has maintained its strength and shape and managed to hold the clawed studs and beads well; some suits are only missing a couple. Some have become discoloured in places due to leeching metal, and some of the colour-dyed suits have faded over the years. However, overall it’s striking what good condition these durable and well-tailored pieces are in after their adventures on the road with Elvis. White is the colour most famously associated with Elvis; in fact the ‘white’ suits are quite a creamy off-white – apparently chosen deliberately to absorb colourful stage lighting and pick out Elvis’s silhouette for the audience, but not be so bright to appear as a ‘flare’ when captured on old film.

Interestingly, other blends of ‘wool jersey’ seem to have remained in use by Belew for tailored suits for Elvis’s stylish home wardrobe, even after switching to the ice-skating inspired stretchy blend for stagewear. Some suits are made from fabric with a similarly firm



Beaded jumpsuit worn by Elvis Presley during the 1970s. Photo by Leon Schoots.

twill texture of the 1968 television costumes, and some of a slightly softer feel and appearance which seem to have greater flexibility. It’s hard to imagine these suits being anyone’s first choice in the peak of a Memphis summer, but Elvis was not one for casual dressing and presumably the natural wool fibre was more comfortable to wear than synthetic fabrics of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Unpacking Elvis’s jumpsuits and carefully dressing mannequins during the installation of the

exhibition, I was struck by how recognisable the Elvis silhouette is – the high ‘Napoleonic’ collars, the broad shoulders, narrow hips, flared pleated ankles finishing well above the heeled boot, enhanced by the semi-circular cape and wide stiff belts slung low on the hip. Belew’s skill in creating this iconic shape on stage goes hand in hand with the skilful tailoring, and the richness and integrity of the wool gabardine fabric – still beautifully supple and strong almost half a century on from its creation.

VALE MURRAY JAMES BRAGG - 16TH SEPTEMBER 1970 - 10TH APRIL 2022

Extracts from the Murray Bragg Eulogy – Celebration of Muzza's Life 22nd April, 2022

By Andrew Blanch

Murray James Bragg (Muzz) passed away in the early hours of Sunday morning 10th April after an eight-month battle with esophageal cancer. He was 51. He received his diagnosis at the end of August 2021 and had been doing reasonably well up until Christmas having periodical treatment and making some country and coastal trips. But the cancer was very aggressive, and things progressed very quickly in the March and particularly the first week in April when he spent three days in ICU. With a lot of pushing from his partner Paula and family, and an amazing team at Campbelltown hospital, we were able to organise for Murray to go back to his home on the Friday night, which was his wish. Palliative care teams, friends and family made this all possible and he was able to receive some visitors on the Saturday. He passed quietly and calmly in his own bed in the early hours of Sunday morning 10th April.

To the last day, Murray still had that cheeky grin, those smiling eyes and continued to make funny, "one liners". He was calm, strong and accepting of the cards he had been dealt.

Too bloody young and vibrant. He was a character who was deeply loved and respected and will be a hard act to follow. He touched everyone in his own unique way from all along the wool industry chain (Australia, NZ, South Africa, South America and of course Italy), to his many friends outside the wool world. His infectious personality, sense of humour, professionalism, integrity and strong work ethic...just some of the many characteristics that endeared himself to many.

Most of all, it was the strong love he had for his family. I always knew it was there, but I feel honoured and humbled to have witnessed this love displayed by Murray in so many

beautiful ways in the last weeks of his life.

When Murray "told me" (not asked me) to speak at this celebration, he just said with a cheeky grin "Blanchy, make 'em laugh, and make 'em cry". I told him that there was no shortage of material!

And that's my problem. How do I do justice to all the unique characteristics that made up the man....Murray, Muzz, Mozzarella, the Twig? One message from a mate suggested we would need a weekend to cover such a full life...even if that life has been cut way too short. If we added in Muzza's love of music, then a "MURRAY BLUES AND YARNS FESTIVAL" could have been on the cards.

So where to begin?

Murray James Bragg was an opinionated, self-righteous, argumentative, stubborn, cheeky brat.....and I loved him!

I can't sugar-coat it! There was no grey area with Muzz. It was Black or White! You were never left in any doubt as to where he was coming from, on almost any subject. He had no time for fools at all. Yet he tempered all this with his intelligence, sunny nature, sense of humour and his ability to "charm" anyone and everyone in any setting. He could move effortlessly in any number of circles. Put him in a bluey shearer's singlet, in stubbies and thongs or in a high-end Italian suit. He could fit in anywhere. Actually, I have to say that Murray was always impeccably dressed and chose his clothes carefully, always appropriate for the occasion. One thing he did hate was wearing a tie. He hated it with a 'passion' and I believe that some of the officials at the RAS Dining Room, after judging fleeces at the Sydney show, who advised Murray that the dress code strictly included a tie, will never forget Murray's verbal rant after being told he had to put one on.

I know that there are friends and family who would be better equipped than me to talk about Murray's younger days growing up at Kentlyn. However, I believe being the youngest of three very competitive siblings would have made for a pretty wild ride and many a headache for Ron and Joy, his parents. But the grounding that Murray received in those formative years taught him about respect, (if it was earned), instilled him with a strong work ethic and gave him an enthusiasm for life, work and play that was truly infectious.

The Wool Industry is obviously where our paths crossed. Ron was already in the trade but instead of following directly into the travelling circus that was the life of the exporter at that time, Murray did travel of his own. Leaving home at 17 with a boombox on his shoulder, Muzz caught a train to Goulburn where he joined a shearing team which was to be his family for the next 6 months. This took him to the far reaches of western NSW and introduced him to the raw world of the hard-working/hard drinking life in the sheds. It was a baptism of fire which only fuelled his passion for wool, and after applying for and being accepted to join one of the Sydney based buying companies, he managed to hitch a ride on the mail plane out of the outback shed he was working in and ventured back to Sydney to begin his career as an exporter.

Now Murray was not an overly religious man. In fact I think that would be an understatement. Actually, the closest thing Biblical I can think of was the loud call of "Jesus, Murray" that came regularly from his first boss, Brian Power. God only knows what Murray had done wrong, probably pushing the boundaries just as Brian was known to do too. Funnily enough, the bond between Brian and Murray was a strong one and I have to thank Brian for giving Muzz his

◀ blessing to join New England Wool, or “the Italians” as he put it, in 1994. Murray’s good friend, Hamish McLaren called one of his sheep dogs Murray (his best one he said), so the cry of “Jesus, Murray” as Hamish tried to control this hound, could be heard in the paddocks and sheep yards around Walcha for many years.

Now when work was involved, Murray and I were a tight unit, but we didn’t live in each other’s pockets. Our private lives were kept quite separate, and I think that was a great thing for our relationship. But come Monday morning, or any day that involved New England Wool business, he was 110% committed and we made a bloody great team. Some might say Ying & Yang, but a formidable team all the same. He was my first employee, and I would say that he will be irreplaceable. His work ethic I’ve already mentioned. His attention to detail was phenomenal. He had the prettiest and neatest handwriting I think I have ever seen. His desk was ridiculously clean and organised, unlike the chaos of mine. In the saleroom, he was in his element... ..a fierce competitor and one of the best, if not THE best, at putting wool together on the run and making smart ass comments on the way. But when it was all over, the horns went back into his head and a friendly beer with his woolly mates was the completion of a great working day. He enjoyed dealing with growers and he definitely had his favourites, many of which are with us today at this celebration. When dealing with our friends in Italy, he was professional, humble when required, forceful when required, but most of all he carried himself with a sunny disposition and a respectful confidence. He liked handling and buying top quality wool. He respected those who respected quality and he strove to do the best for the producer, the client and the Company.

He loved his sport, particularly the NRL and his beloved Roosters, but he could always appreciate every other team. Even my team Manly, the team everyone loves to hate. I know George (Company accountant) is missing that side of our office life. George and I regularly turn around to look at the chair and desk where Murray used to work. George introduced Murray and I to Holy Basil, a Vietnamese/

Thai/Laos restaurant in Canley Vale. This became our “go to” place to take bankers, insurance people, logistics providers and other work colleagues. Truth be known, it was all about the fried ice cream! In fact, it was all about the fried ice cream economy. If we made a good saving on something in the business, or made a good profit on a sale, Murray used to always say “how many fried ice creams is that worth, George?”.

Murray watched Shane Warne’s memorial service intently a few weeks ago, commenting particularly on how brave Warne’s kids were to speak in front of that huge crowd. It’s hard not to think what was going through his mind about his own personal challenges throughout that telecast.

Which leads me to his family.

If there was ever any doubt as to the phenomenal amount of love out there for Murray, the phone calls, messages, emails, letters that have flowed throughout his illness and in the past week since his passing would be all the proof his family needed. Murray personally took many phone calls in those last days which showed his true inner strength. I watched on a number of occasions where he was consoling the very people who had called him to express their love and sadness. I know it gave me comfort to know that there was a calmness to him and acceptance of the cards he had been dealt.

The hospital allowed us to bring some Limoncello into the hospital. As long as it was written on his chart, that was apparently all ok, so the head nurse could tell us! We poured shots into those little pill cups and about eight of us, including Muzz, took a hit. Murray’s eyes went as wide as saucers, and he radiated the biggest smile.

With a huge push from Paula and the family, when it was clear that there was little else could be done, Murray was able to return home to spend his last days. The look of relief and contentment on his face as he was laid into his own bed is something I will never forget. Murray’s niece and nephew, Rocco and Carla, were there to greet him with “I love you Muzz” in a room that was decorated with all things Italian. If he couldn’t get to Italy then Italy was coming to him!

I have to give a big shout out to the nurses, OT’s, admin staff, palliative care teams, and patient transfer personnel from Building B 3rd floor at Campbelltown Hospital who were nothing short of extraordinary in rallying together to organise Murray to get home late on a Friday. I think they treated it as a kind of challenge to get it achieved.

Murray and Karen were together for 12 years and together they nurtured 2 very strong, independent and intelligent young women in Jenna and Shelby.

Paula and Murray were together for just shy of 12 years which afforded Murray an additional family in Jessica-Ree, her husband Brad, and their son Leo, to all intents and purposes, his grandson. He gladly and enthusiastically took on the role of Pa.

At this point I would really like to focus on three extraordinary young women, Jenna, Shelby and Jess. The maturity and resilience these guys showed, well beyond their years and in the face of something that no one should have to go through, is something that was beautiful to experience and something they and their parents should be so, so proud of. The love that I witnessed in those last days in their various interactions with Murray.....gestures, things said and unsaid, knowing looks, touches.....will be something that will be entrenched in my mind for ever.

That then brings me to Paula, Murray’s rock. You dedicated your life to give Murray the best quality of life as humanly possible. You were his passionate advocate with a steely determination to achieve the very best outcomes. Your heart has always been firmly in the right place and full of love.

If you would indulge me with one more thing, I have a couple of special messages from Murray’s Italian family.

Dear Paula, Jenna, Shelby, Jess and Karen and dear friends of Murray

We want to express our deepest condolences to you all.

We had the honour to meet Murray about 30 years ago. If we had to describe him with just a word, we’d say he was a “sunny” person...

We hope now that his light may be a strong help in going with us on our own paths.

*Alberto Barberis Canonico, Alessandro Barberis Canonico and all the VBC staff

To Paula, Jenna, Shelby, Jessie-Ree and Karen.

Ciao Murray or Muzza or the Italian way, Mozzarella,

This is a very sad moment for the wool industry. You were too young to leave us, but it is even more sad because you were my friend, my small brother in Australia.

I will always remember you for your sarcasm, for your joke, which sometimes I had difficulty to understand because of your slang, but will always remember you for your professionalism, for your dedication and for your passion. We have been working for over twenty-eight years together and it has been an incredible adventure.

I like to remember you here in Biella. We had a great time, probably too much to drink but this is part of the game, and we knew how to play it.

My last trip to Australia was for you. It was the highlight of the trip and was the main reason to come after two years of lockdown. I was able to stay with you and Paula for a beautiful lunch and we were remembering different moments of our past. I can say now that it was a marvellous moment and one that I will always remember.

.....What I like to remember of you, besides your laugh, were your smiling eyes. You could see from those eyes the smart ass you were, the kindness and the devotion to friendship. Thank you for being my friend.

Murray, you have been a strategic asset to our company and on behalf of the Botto Poala family and my company Reda we thank you for all the time, passion and effort you have dedicated to your role, and thank you for enriching our lives.

My little brother, I know that now you are looking down on us from the cloud.....probably made of wool. I want to toast to our friendship with a limoncello.



Ciao

*Francesco Botto Poala, Reda

I met Murray 10 years ago in Yennora.

It was the first time I came to the NEW office. He was sitting at his desk looking at the door and his smile is the first thing I spotted.

I went to Yennora dragging my hand luggage and since that time our greeting became the imitation of the noise made by the wheels of my luggage on the tiles leading to the office: tchack, tchack, tchack!

“Davide is coming”, he used to say!

I travelled with him, enjoying a “roadie” in the car, attending crutching in the New England area, and meeting our big family of woolgrowers at the pub in Uralla.

I travelled with him in Italy, in the Monferrato area. I was there when he gave Paula the wedding ring in front of an amazing Moscato vineyard. I was there, and in that moment, that I saw the happiest man on earth.

He merely was happy! As well as he was in his job: he was merely happy to do it, well and passionately!

This is what I want to keep with me about Murray: face everything, in the daily routine, with my dear ones and friends, in my job, with his spontaneity, his irony and also with his accuracy.

Thank you Murray for what you taught us. With your smile it is easier now to achieve our goals!

*Davide Fontaneto, VBC

I feel like I've lost a brother having worked with Muzz for 28 years. He was my dearest friend, my sounding board, and if I ever needed an opinion on anything, he had one!! But I can honestly say that we never had a fight. We agreed to disagree a lot, but that's life! Murray was a unique individual, and when he was made, they truly broke the mould!

I know the extended New England Wool team, here and in Italy, feel the same sense of loss and sadness, but we celebrate and are thankful for the many wonderful memories we have.

And as a true mark of respect, I think I need to remove this bloody tie.

Love ya mate, always will.



THE AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION INC

ABN: 41 338 467 905

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

Telephone: (03) 9311 0271

E-mail: aswga@woolindustries.org

Facsimile: (03) 9311 0138

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION & MEMBER UPDATE, 1/7/2022 - 30/06/2023 RECIPIENT CREATED TAX INVOICE

Please ensure that all shaded areas are completed and personal details are checked for errors.

TRADING NAME	
ABN please	

Office Use:

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FULL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION :

Base Annual Subscription (GST Inclusive)	\$265.00
Number of Superfine Bales (19.5 microns and finer) in your last clip	
Bale Levy @ \$2 per Bale (GST Inclusive) up to a maximum of 300 bales	\$
Region Levy (GST Inclusive) (If Applicable)	

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Associate Member (GST Inclusive)	\$100.00		
Please tick if you require a receipt		TOTAL AMOUNT	\$

PRIVACY POLICY - I CONSENT TO THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THIRD PARTIES - Yes/No

AWTA AUTHORITY - I CONSENT TO AWTA RELEASING MY TEST DATA TO ASWGA - Yes/No

MEMBER RECORD

Signature: _____

Nominee who is to receive correspondence:

TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr)	
NOMINEE'S NAME	
PARTNER'S NAME	
TRADING NAME	
PROPERTY NAME	
ADDRESS (line 1)	
"" (line 2)	
"" (line 3)	
"" (line 4)	
ASWGA REGION	
MEMBERSHIP TYPE	
AREA CODE (Phone)	
PHONE	
FAX	
MOBILE	
E-MAIL	
WOOL BRAND	
SELLING CENTRE	
BROKER	

ANNUAL SURVEY INFORMATION: (Not Required if Associate Member)

How many sheep do you have in your Superfine flock (19.5 microns and finer) at 30 June 2022?	
How many Superfine ewes have you joined to Superfine rams at last joining?	
Please indicate your seasonal conditions as Good/Average/Poor	
Please estimate this year's (July 2022 to June 2023) Superfine clip in bales	
What is your Average Fibre Diameter?	
What is the Fibre Diameter of your Finest line?	
What is the Fibre Diameter of your Strongest line?	

Your Signature & Date Please: _____

EFT payment is preferred - Please quote your member number when paying (see top of this page)

National Australia Bank - BSB: 083 091 Acct: 5151 69630



MODIANO

EST.1957

G Modiano Ltd would like to thank the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association and its members for your support. We wish you all much fulfilment and continued success growing such a beautiful and noble, natural fibre.

Established in 1957 by Mr Jo Modiano, G. Modiano Limited is based in London.

We have grown to become one of the world's largest wool trading and processing companies.

We sell greasy wool, wool tops, including superwash and Basolan treated, noils and wastes. We also supply wool grease from our factory in Nejdek, Czech Republic.

AWI WOOLGROWER MENU

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS



- FLYSTRIKE CONTROL
- PAIN RELIEF
- PARABOSS: LICE, FLIES, WORMS
- BIOSECURITY & SHEEP DISEASES
- DROUGHT & NATURAL DISASTERS
- CONTAINMENT FEEDING
- PRICE RISK MANAGEMENT



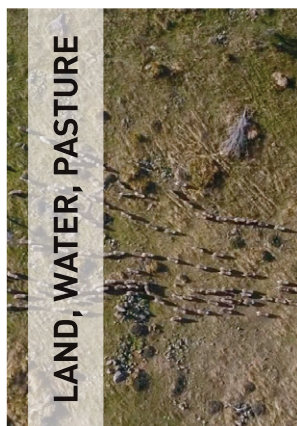
- LIFETIME EWE MANAGEMENT
- PICKING PERFORMER EWES
- RAMPING UP REPRO
- WINNING WITH WEANERS
- FOUNDATIONS OF SHEEP & WOOL PRODUCTION
- LIFTING LAMBING RATES
- BREEDING & SELECTION



- WOOL MARKET INTELLIGENCE
- SHEEP INFRASTRUCTURE
- NUFFIELD SCHOLARSHIP
- BREEDING LEADERSHIP
- NATIONAL MERINO CHALLENGE
- YOUNG FARMING CHAMPIONS
- SOCIAL LICENCE
- KEY PROFIT DRIVERS & COST OF PRODUCTION
- SHEARING & WOOLHANDLING



- AWI SMART TAGS
- FARMERS2FOUNDERS
- WOOL HARVESTING TECHNOLOGY
- WOOLQ
- MERINO LIFETIME PRODUCTIVITY
- MAKING MORE FROM SHEEP



- PASTURE, WEED & SOIL MANAGEMENT
- PEST ANIMAL MANAGEMENT
- FEED ASSESSMENT & BUDGETING
- GRAIN AND GRAZE
- EVERGRAZE
- WATER



- AWI ON-FARM PROGRAM UPDATES
- AWI OFF-FARM PROGRAM UPDATES
- WWW.WOOLMARKLEARNINGCENTRE.COM
- WWW.WOOL.COM
- WWW.WOOLMARK.COM
- AWI COMMUNICATIONS

AUSTRALIAN WOOL INNOVATION – SUPPORTING THE WORLD'S BEST WOOLGROWERS.

Visit wool.com/menu to view publications, presentations, workshops and education options that work for you.

