



# AUSTRALIAN WHITE SUFFOLK ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2015





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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

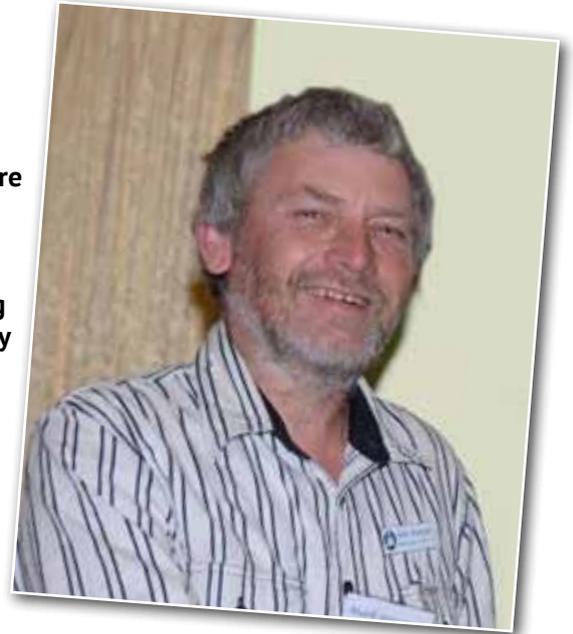
MARK GROSSMAN

Welcome to the August edition of our AWSA newsletter.

The first six months of our 30th anniversary celebrations has passed and there have already been a number of feature shows held and more to come during the Winter and Spring show season.

Many producers across our nation are experiencing yet another dry winter with a range of weather conditions, from some regions coming through very dry conditions to other regions having an excellent early start to the season. The hope is there for continued rainfall to ensure good crop and pasture growth into spring, and forecast El Nino events are minimized.

Sheep and lambs are currently achieving high levels with many record prices being received for saleyard or across the hooks returns. These returns are providing a very positive future for the sheep and lamb industry and continued demand from both domestic and export markets look promising.



The White Suffolk breed has come a long way since its foundation in 1985. White Suffolks now provide all round performance to the lamb industry, offering stock of high yielding superior eating quality carcasses. Along this journey many have been involved and I congratulate you all for your support and drive for our great breed. From a well laid foundation we now offer the sheep and lamb industry much into the future. Our branded product sub-committee have been actively working on this project and I also wish to thank all breeders and agents for your support in promoting our commercial register.

The White Suffolk breed has performed very well at Autumn shows across the country. Congratulations to all champion sheep winners and breeders that have placed their stock before the industry for display. Our breed has a number of feature shows in the show program in coming months. I encourage all breeders to try and attend these shows and sales, as they are an excellent opportunity to catch up with fellow breeders, and also inspect the genetics available in the breed. It is also important to help to promote the White Suffolk breed at shows and sales across the country.

The 2016 National White Suffolk conference will be held in Albany, Western Australia, and the conference steering committee are planning a very informative and social time for all breeders. I encourage everyone who can attend this conference to please place the dates in your diary for March 13th to 15th, 2016.

Finally, as our major ram selling period is rapidly approaching, I wish all breeders success in their sheep sales ensuring we place before the sheep industry the right genetics to suit the prime lamb industry. Hope to see you at coming events.

*Mark Grossman*



## MATERNAL TRAITS OF WHITE SUFFOLK ADD UP TO A SELF-REPLACING FLOCK FOR TABLELANDS PRODUCER

BY KIM WOODS, APRIL 13, 2015

While many prime lamb producers use White Suffolks as a terminal breed, Bob Williamson is capitalizing on the maternal traits of fertility, lambing ease and milking ability.

The northern NSW tablelands grazier is retaining his White Suffolk-Border Lieicester-Merino cross ewe lambs, and joining them at eight months of age, or 50kg, to a White Suffolk ram. Mr Williamson was encouraged to retain the ewe portion as an experiment by his ram supplier, Dugald MacIndoe, Smithston Farms, Glencoe, NSW.

Last year, 100 maiden ewes marked 115 lambs with just a single dry ewe. “These ewe lambs did lamb out later than normal but in saying that we get an extra lamb from that ewe over her lifetime,” Mr Williamson said. “By the time they are two-years-old, these ewes have paid for themselves. However, nutrition pre and post lambing needs to be spot on. There is no discount for the wool from these ewes as it goes into



**Bob Williamson and his son Chad with September 2014 drop White Suffolk cross ewe lambs to be joined at seven months to White Suffolk Rams.**

the same bin as the wool from our Border Leicester-Merino cross ewes to average 580c/kg greasy.”

Bob, wife Belinda and son Chad, run their grazing enterprise across the 1012ha property, Neeworra, at Guyra. The 800mm basalt country supports 350 Shorthorn-Hereford breeders, producing European Union accredited weaner steers sold on AuctionsPlus and surplus heifers for the supermarket trade. Chad also runs registered cattle under his own prefix of Chadwick Shorthorns.

The Williamsons run up to 1200 Border Leicester-Merino cross ewes joined to White Suffolk rams, turning off 1400 lambs over-the-hooks a year. Bob was sourcing the first-cross ewes from a NSW breeder and later turned to other suppliers on AuctionsPlus. “I look for bigger framed ewes capable of rearing multiple lambs,” he said.

The ewes are joined from March for six weeks for an August-September lambing and shorn in May. “We used to shear in July-August but it was too close to lambing if we were pushed into a corner weather-wise,” Mr Williamson said. The ewes are pregnancy scanned in July and split into multiples, singles or dries with the empty ewes sold at the markets. Multiple bearing ewes are given preferential grazing and a grain supplement while singles receive no special treatment.

“This country has always been crossbred lamb country – years ago Merinos were tried but crossbred ewes and lambs are a better enterprise on the basalt soils,” Mr Williamson said. A dry spring in 2014 resulted in all lambs being early weaned at eight to 10 weeks of age and fed adlib with a barley ration. A portion were sold at six months of age over-the-hooks to Woolworths for 560c/kg (HSCW) (plus \$8 skins) on February 2. The consignment averaged 24.6kg carcass weight. A run of 500 lambs were sold in March to Woolworths to average 23.7kg carcass weight at 520c/kg HSCW plus \$5 skin.

Mr Williamson said prime lambs had been the “life saver” over recent years for local grazing enterprises. “Our steer weaners have averaged \$800

at nine to 10 months of age but there's definitely more money in sheep although they are more labour intensive," he said.

When selecting rams, Mr Williamson looks for high eye muscle depth, growth for age and maternal traits. "As I am retaining the White Suffolk cross ewes, I want those ewes to be fertile and milk well with the aim of having a self replacing flock," he said. "Dugald helps me with ram selection and I pick his brains for advice." Last year, the entire ewe flock scanned at 140 per cent lambs and marked 125 per cent. "To further improve lamb survival, the ewes are lambed in smaller mobs of 150, we bait and shoot foxes and monitor their nutrition," Mr Williamson said.

The sheep are run on improved pastures of fescue, ryegrass, red and white clover, while 70ha of Eurabbie oats will be grazed then locked up for hay and seed. A crop of superdan has been grown this year for additional hay or silage. Pastures are fertilized with high analysis super at 120kg/ha. The sheep are rotationally grazed behind the cattle to reduce the worm burden.

Mr Williamson welcomed the prospect of being able to value add his lambs with a potential White Suffolk branded product in the market place. "We have found the White Suffolk cross lambs have a leaner carcass," he said. "Like every breed, the White Suffolks need to be out there in the public and pushing their brand." "We can't afford to play second fiddle these days – input costs are so high and every cent counts."

In February, local agents randomly drafted off 50 lambs from an over-the-hooks consignment of 300 September-drop mixed sex White Suffolk cross lambs averaging 55kg. From these 50 lambs, 25 were in turn drafted off to enter the Guyra Show Society's annual prime lamb competition. The competition drew 3000 lambs with the Williamson's winning champion export and overall champion pen on their inaugural entry. Lambs were judged on the hoof by four independent lamb buyers using a points system.

**The maternal traits of the White Suffolk are used in a crossbreeding program by the Williamson family of Guyra.**



# WHITE SUFFOLK LAMBS WIN BACK TO BACK IN TASMANIA'S PADDOCK TO PLATE

MAY 31 2015

After winning the prestigious Paddock to Plate competition at Tasmania's Campbell Town Show in 2014, White Suffolk lambs have again won the award on May 29th.

The three October drop trade lambs entered by John and Kerry McLauchlan, Leith White Suffolks, Westbury, won the T.P.Jones trade Class (18-22 kg).

A healthy 22 entries were received across the trade and export sections. One lamb was judged as a carcass while the other two were assessed live on the hoof at the show, with equal points awarded for each section.

Judging the carcass section was Doug Piper from MLA, while Stephan Spiker from Advance Livestock Services judged the live on the hoof.

The three Leith lambs were awarded a combined 91.5 out of 100 points, to be the leading aggregate point scorer. This meant the McLauchlan's also were awarded the Peter Williams Memorial Trophy as the overall winner of the competition.

The live lambs were weighed, scanned and visually assessed by Stephan Spiker. They weighed 40.5 and 41 kg respectively and scanned 35 and 34 mm eye muscle depth.

John and Kerry McLauchlan run 1250 stud and flock White Suffolk ewes and have previously won the competition's trade class in 2011, 2013 and 2014, while they won the export section and the Peter Williams Trophy in 2014.



# WHITE SUFFOLK CONFERENCE 2016

The Regional Port City of Albany has been selected as the location of the 2016 Annual White Suffolk Conference to run from Monday 13 March through to Tuesday 14 March.

Albany is situated 416 kilometres south of Perth and is renowned for its scenic coastline and history being the location of WA's first port. Albany has strong links to the ANZAC tradition being the port of departure for many Australian Convoys.

Getting to Albany can be by car or bus via the Albany Highway or by air with Virgin Airline.

Visitors to WA for the conference can break the trip with a visit to the Wagin Woolorama just a short detour half way between Perth and Albany.

As Albany is suited on the south coast, visitors can expect a mild climate with cool evenings at this time of year.

A visit to Albany would not be complete without a visit to the newly constructed ANZAC Centre. Visitors are urged to spend some extra time in and around Albany to relax and experience the history and scenery that is on offer.

## ACCOMMODATION

Conference & Accommodation

Motel Le Grande,  
479 Albany Highway, Albany  
Ph: 0898413600 / 1800 113 600  
[www.legrande.com.au](http://www.legrande.com.au)

## CONTACTS

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## PROGRAM

**Friday 10 and Saturday 11 March**  
Wagin Woolorama - Wagin  
AGM AWSA (WA Branch) @ 11.00am

**Sunday 12 March - Albany**  
Federal Council Meeting  
Evening Welcome Function @ 5pm

**Monday 13 March**  
Registration - 7.45 - 8.15am  
Opening 8.15am  
Barbecue in evening

**Tuesday 14 March**  
Day begins at 8.30am with Dinner in evening

**Wednesday 15 March**  
Farewell Breakfast

## CONFIRMED SPEAKERS

**Professor David Pethick/Dr Graeme Gardner**  
- Murdoch University

**Lambplan**

**Dr Kelly Manton-Pearce**  
- Nuffield Project & WAMMCO Board Member

**Branded Lamb Update**

**Ross Ditchburn**  
- White Suffolk Breeder, Men's Health & Carlton Legend

With more to come!!

## ALBANY ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

**National Anzac Centre**  
[www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au](http://www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au)

**Albany Visitor Centre**  
[www.amazingalbany.com.au](http://www.amazingalbany.com.au)

**Taste Great Southern - Food & Wine Festival**  
mid-February to mid-March 2016

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# BIOSECURITY BEST PRACTICE

EMMA ROOKE, REGIONAL OFFICER – SA, LIVESTOCK BIOSECURITY NETWORK

Don't get more than you bargained for!

Whether you buy animals from a trusted source, the saleyard or a neighbour, a good biosecurity strategy will go a long way towards minimising the risk of introducing disease with purchased sheep.

Just some of the common diseases that you could inadvertently 'import' on seemingly normal looking sheep include footrot, lice, ovine brucellosis, Johne's disease and multi-resistant worms. All these diseases have impacts on productivity and time and costs associated with their management.

A good biosecurity plan doesn't have to be expensive or elaborate but the benefits are immediate, ongoing and cumulative. For purchase of sheep, it can be useful to think about pre- farm gate, farm gate and post- farm gate.

## Pre-farm gate biosecurity

Pre-farm gate is about knowing the risks associated with the source from which you are buying. A National sheep health statement is an essential tool for initial risk assessment so it is important to read and understand it. Ask questions of the vendor if you need more information. If you're not satisfied, find another source of new stock.

Buy from reputable vendors and limit the number of sources you buy from. The more sources you buy from the greater the risk. If you are happy with the sheep you bought last year, consider buying from the same source again. Buying direct is less risky than buying through saleyards.

Examine sheep before you buy. Get in the pen and check for footrot and lice. Target any that look suspicious (e.g. lameness or pulled wool) and check their feet and fleece. For lice, you need to check 20 sheep, 20 partings per sheep. If you find any evidence of lice or footrot, find another source.

For rams, make sure they have been tested for ovine brucellosis or are in an accreditation scheme. Examine the testes for any physical abnormalities. If you find abnormalities, find another source of rams.

## At the Farm Gate

Sheep should be transported in a clean (and ideally disinfected) truck. When you get home, consider footbathing in Zinc Sulphate on arrival. Although this won't cure a pre-existing footrot condition, it should remove any footrot bugs acquired in the saleyards or on the truck.

To prevent inheriting someone else's worm resistance problems, it is essential to give a quarantine drench for multiple resistant worms. This must contain 4 different active ingredients and must include either Startect (derquantel and abamectin) or Zolvix (monepantel). If the animals come from fluke country, a flukicide should also be given. Keep animals in the yards for 48-72 hours to empty out and then perform a faecal worm egg count 10-14 days later to make sure the drench has worked.

If you chose to treat introduced sheep for lice, pay attention to the manufacturers recommendations and only treat if sheep are less than 4-6 weeks off shears and then only by dipping. If sheep have more than 6 weeks wool, or if you want to use a backliner, you'll need to shear them first.

## Post Farm Gate or On-farm

Even though you've done everything right up to this point, the new sheep could still pose potential disease risks to your resident sheep. Ideally, you should keep the introductions segregated or isolated from other sheep until you are sure they don't have footrot or lice.

For lice, it can be up to 6 months before an infestation becomes apparent. For footrot, it could be months until a good spread period of warm wet weather, when you can tell whether the animals are infected or not.

The benefit of good on-farm quarantine is that if you inadvertently introduce a problem with your new sheep you have limited it to a small proportion of your flock, meaning it is a lot cheaper and easier to deal with. The golden rule for sheep in quarantine is that other sheep can't cross their paths for 7 days using the same yards or laneways.

If quarantine is not possible or practical, monitoring your sheep becomes more important so you can pick up problems more quickly. Monitor all your sheep regularly and investigate illness or poor performance. Seek advice from your local vet or local animal health officer and take advantage of subsidies for disease investigations in your state. Keep records of introductions, treatments and observations.

Taking some basic biosecurity measures for introducing sheep requires a little effort and some planning but in the end costs very little and can protect your sheep and your business from the impacts of a range of common diseases.

For more information on how to protect your livestock and business from diseases, pests and weeds, go to [farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://farmbiosecurity.com.au) or contact the Livestock Biosecurity Officer in your state: [www.lbn.org.au](http://www.lbn.org.au)

### Key messages

- Normal looking sheep can still be carrying disease
- Use a National sheep health statement and ask questions before you purchase
- Examine animals before purchase
- Treat and monitor on introduction
- Quarantine if possible
- Practice flock monitoring, surveillance and recording
- Investigate illness or poor production

### Protocol for purchase of sheep

- Buy direct if possible from reputable breeders
- Ask for and read their National sheep health statement
- Inspect 20 sheep for lice and footrot
  - Consult sheep vet if suspect footrot
- Rams
  - OB accredited free only
  - Examine testicles on all sheep, other abnormalities
- Drench 4 way combination including Zolvix or Startect for worms
- Run through footbath 10% Zinc sulphate
- Leave in yards for 48-72 hours if possible
- Quarantine

### Quarantine

- Faecal egg count 14 days after arrival
- Quarantine if possible
  - Until after appropriate spread period for footrot
- Spring
  - Lice easily missed - monitor up to 6 months
- Sheep in quarantine not mixed with other sheep and no sheep to cross paths for 7 days
- Join ewes with cull rams or rams join quarantine



## EDUCATIONAL WHITE SUFFOLK FLOCK FOSTERS FUTURE PRIME LAMB INDUSTRY LEADERS

BY KIM WOODS, APRIL 13, 2015

A White Suffolk sheep flock at one NSW high school is playing a key role in shaping potential leaders for the nation's sheep and wool industry.

The flock at Tamworth's Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School has been introducing young men to the prime lamb industry for 30 years, giving them hands-on livestock skills, self confidence and knowledge.

Year 10 Animal Management students are actively involved in stud breeding decisions and management. This ranges from routine chores of feeding, vaccinating, drenching and crutching through to genetic selection, artificial insemination, pregnancy scanning, data collection and DNA testing. It also extends to photographing rams, compiling the sale catalogue and conducting the sale each September.

While the Farrer flock has been recognised by Lambplan as having gold quality data since 1997, the sheep are probably among the most studied in the nation, being the focal point for many school assignments from ration formulation to lamb marketing.

Farrer hit the headlines when a ram sold for the breed's top price at auction in 2014 of \$17,000. Year 10 Animal Management students and the stud manager Darren Smith were elated over the result. The sale went on to average \$1445 and record a 100 per cent clearance, selling to 11 studs over three states.

But it was no one off – Farrer has always been at the cutting edge of objective measurement and performance recording, with last year's sale rams ranked in the top 10 per cent on Lambplan's 2020 index.

Its core role has always been an educational stud, playing an integral part in the delivery of the Year 9-10 wool science program.

The flock's management calendar is structured to fit around the students to ensure they are able to undertake or be directly involved in each and every activity. This starts with Lambplan testing in January using an accredited operator and selection for the Dubbo Show team. It culminates with lamb weaning



**Tom Carlon, Alex Roseby and Charlie Shadwell are directly involved in breeding and management decisions of the Farrer White Suffolk Stud.**

and breeding ewe structural assessment in November, followed by worm egg count sampling of young rams and ewes in December.

Agriculture is a compulsory subject for all students in Years 7 to 10, and an elective subject for Years 11 and 12. Aside from prime lambs and wool science, students can also study agronomy, beef management, dairying and horticulture.

The boys concede the passion and knowledge Farrer stud master Darren Smith has for the sheep and wool industry is inspiring and motivational.

Tom Carlon, 15, grew up on a Merino stud at Kentucky, north of Tamworth, and was introduced to prime lambs at Farrer by Mr Smith. The year 10 student enjoys taking his new found knowledge home to share with his family.

"I plan to go back to the farm and work once I leave school – the White Suffolks have definitely taught me a lot about meat quality and Lambplan," Tom said.

He has played an active role in collecting blood samples for DNA testing for carcass quality. Farrer has used the DNA 50K SNP testing for hard to measure carcass traits since 2012.

“The DNA tests give us more information on traits like tenderness and meat quality,” Tom said.

Year 10 Animal Management students are involved in Farrer’s annual White Suffolk artificial insemination program, including semen selection, CIDR insertion and programming, data recording and assisting the AI technician.

Back-up rams are selected after analyzing their Lambplan data and structural soundness. Students then draft out the sale rams and replacement ewes, along with surplus young ewes for prime lamb carcass competitions.

“Mr Smith guides us in selecting the rams for the annual sale – it’s very much our own stud,” Tom said. “There’s been a few buyers talk to Mr Smith about rams so he passes on the feedback to the class – what we need to aim for and what the market is doing.”

To maintain that commercial focus, surplus ewes are targeted at the Northern Schools Prime Lamb competition, with students formulating rations to ensure animals reach the right fat score and carcass weights.

Fourteen-year-old Charlie Shadwell has the commercial sheep and wool industry firmly in his sights. The Year 9 student grew up in suburban Dubbo but has embraced agricultural studies since starting at Farrer. He won the junior fleece judging at the 2014 National Merino School Wether Challenge.

“I’d had no contact with White Suffolks so it’s been good to learn about a meat breed apart from wool production,” Charlie said.

“I’m studying wool classing through TAFE and I’d like to get into something to do with livestock – a little stud of my own would be a good way to start. We need to have more programs like Farrer’s running at schools to get more young people interested in the prime lamb industry. Agriculture is developing and changing, and people are now seeing how important it is from a food security point of view.”

Charlie said a prime lamb mentoring program to help interested youth establish industry networks would be ideal. “It would teach young Australians it’s a good industry to be in,” he said. “If you are motivated, you will be rewarded.”

Charlie said a White Suffolk youth group and a greater use of social media could also help spread the message.

“I know Border Leicester over Merino is the traditional first-cross but White Suffolk over Merino is becoming a popular prime lamb option, so we need to get the word out,” he said.

“We like to support the sheep shows and carcass competitions in the rural areas so people can see the hard work we put into the breed.

“It is great to see the Australian White Suffolk Association encourage schools as we love competing against the other schools at Dubbo Show each year.”

These schools include Yanco Agricultural High School, at Yanco, St Paul’s at Walla Walla, Mudgee High School and Red Bend Catholic College, Forbes, with their Lachlan Valley stud.

Tom Carlon conceded the success of the Farrer breeding program ultimately depended on how well students tackled the breeding decisions and management duties on a daily basis.

“It is a big commitment out of hours and everyone has to be motivated,” he said.

When that ram sold for the record last year, Mr Smith was near crying and all the boys were pretty happy.”



**Charlie Shadwell and Alex Roseby with rams from the school’s show team.**

## WHITE SUFFOLK CROSS LAMBS CREATE CASH FLOW FOR NEW ENGLAND WOOL GROWERS

BY KIM WOODS, APRIL 13, 2015

Woolgrower Clive Pearson was determined to prove the old timers wrong when he was told crossbred lambs would never suit the western tablelands country of northern NSW. A third generation grazer at Boorolong, near Armidale, Clive had been a “dyed in the wool” Merino producer for decades until poor wool prices convinced him to give White Suffolks a go.

Old hands had told him crossbred lambs would never finish on the native pastures in the 750-800mm undulating to hilly country. “They were lambing in October and the springs were cutting out before the lambs got going,” Clive said. “I have pushed back lambing to July-August and am able to finish the lambs in the spring. This enables us to catch the gap in the market before the southern suckers come on.”

Clive and his wife Natasha run 2300 self-replacing Merino ewes, 1500 Merino ewe hoggets, 560 Border Leicester-Merino cross ewes and 200 first-cross ewe lambs on their 1420ha property, Glenbrook. They also run a spring calving herd of 230 Santa Gertrudis-Shorthorn cross cows, producing weaner calves for local markets. The stock are grazed on a mix of native pastures, ryegrass, fescue and clover, aerially fertilized most years with 100kg/ha of single super.

The Pearsons have observed a shift in enterprise mixes across the district from superfine wool production and beef cattle a decade ago to prime lamb production. Woolgrowers turned to White Suffolks for the quick cash flow, lower input costs, and less shearing and animal husbandry work. Producers preferred the White Suffolk’s lambing ease out of the smaller framed New England ewe over other prime lamb breeds.

Clive said producers were able to value add their fine wool ewes by selling them scanned-in-lamb to White Suffolk rams on AuctionsPlus. “We were running a flock of 16.5-17 micron ewes but superfine prices collapsed and we couldn’t make ends meet anymore with Merinos,” he said. “By 2008-2009 we just couldn’t hang on any longer and market signals were telling us to diversify into prime lambs. It was disheartening as we had backed wool for so many years – shearing costs were killing us.”

Clive began to introduce Roseville Park and Rockbank genetics into the Merino flock to increase fleeceweight and frame size. “We are aiming to increase micron to 18.5-19 and average fleece weight from 4k to 5.5-6kg,” he said. Fertility in the Merinos was averaging 90 per cent lambing.

Clive turned to Border Leicester rams to breed first-cross ewes which were sold on AuctionsPlus. “Those ewes were selling up to \$200 and there was no freight while the wether portion were sold as store lambs,” he said. “Three years ago I decided to start keeping the first-cross ewes for myself but wanted to increase the frame size.” Armidale agent Paul Watts recommended Clive try White Suffolks and suggested the Wilsons Creek stud at Uralla. “Paul told me the lambs would be born small but grow quickly,” Clive said.

He has been impressed with the White Suffolks lambing ease, quick finishing ability of the progeny and the longevity of the rams. Clive even watched the White Suffolk judging at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show, at Bendigo, to learn more about selecting the correct breed type.



**Clive Pearson has moved his enterprise from superfine Merino to incorporate prime lamb production to generate cash flow.**

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He runs the lambing ewes in mobs of 300 in the remnant bush and has averaged 115 per cent lambing. They are lambed in the wool to reduce mismothering in cold weather and then shorn in November-December. The first-cross lambs are tipped in April and shorn again in December.

Instead of running Merino wethers on the hills until they were four to five years old, Clive is now able to turn off the August-drop White Suffolk-cross lambs by the end of January. He sold 460 mixed sex suckers at Guyra saleyards in late January – his numbers will increase to 600 next year. “The tops of our lambs were 58kg live, with the majority averaging 48-50kg, and sold to \$130 and averaged \$113,” he said. “Those lambs were born in a drought, and spent all their life on dirt and sheep pellets – the bottom end sold to store buyers at the same sale.”

Clive classes his own Merino flock, joining 25 per cent to Border Leicester rams and 20 per cent to White Suffolks, with the balance back to Merinos. He selects White Suffolk rams on body length, muscle, birthweight and high mature weight, paying up to \$1400. The rams are conditioned pre-joining with pellets and joined for six weeks. Clive said the prime lambs out competed both Merinos and cattle on gross margins. “The crossbred ewe returned \$144 per head with the wool and lambs while the Merino returned \$40 in wool – it’s been a tough cattle market with weaners averaging \$450,” he said. “The result makes crossbred lambs an attractive proposition in this country.”

Clive is looking forward to the prospect of value adding to the White Suffolk cross lambs with the breed’s own lamb brand. “I will definitely supply lambs – it’s a great idea as long as we are guaranteed a good price.”

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## GENETICS GENERATE CASH FLOW IN DIVERSIFIED TASMANIAN CROPPING OPERATION

BY KIM WOODS - JUNE 10, 2015

A diversified Tasmanian farming operation has integrated White Suffolk cross prime lambs as a profitable side-line to a mix of alternative and mainstream crops. The 3500ha “Tullochgorum” at Fingal is operated by the Marshall family and produces beef cattle, prime lambs, poppies, potatoes, peppermint, fennel, forage crops and winter cereals.

Rob Marshall, his wife Pam and son James run 2500 Merino ewes, with up to 1000 older and cull ewes joined to White Suffolk rams for prime lamb production. The family uses cell grazing and low stress stock handling techniques and are certified under the new Global Animal Partnership.

Historically, the main farming mix in the district has been Merino sheep on the hills and cattle on the river flats. The introduction of irrigation resulted in a shift to a diversified enterprise at Tullochgorum encompassing poppy, potato and prime lamb production.

Mr Marshall said the prime lamb enterprise had come into its own across the last decade. The family sells their White Suffolk cross lambs direct to Tasmanian and mainland processors. “We lamb from October 1 so are able to get the first cross lambs off by the end of June,” Mr Marshall said.

Set in a 500mm rainfall zone, the property comprises black cracking soil down to solid rock, and sits in the shadow of Ben Lomond. The irrigated essential oil crops are processed in an on-property distillery, and marketed through Essential Oils of Tasmania Pty Ltd. The 28ha of peppermint was harvested in February and 20ha of fennel in April. Tullochgorum also produces wheat, oats, forage rape, wool and cattle, and has grown poppies and potatoes in the past.

The station was originally settled in 1836 by James Grant, with the homestead built by convict labour. Straddling the South Esk River valley, Tullochgorum’s original shearing shed, stables and machinery sheds were destroyed by flood in 1929. Rob’s father Bob Marshall moved from Deniliquin, in southern NSW, to Tullochgorum in 1947, and was faced with ridding the country of gorse and rabbits. The gorse continues to be a problem and the property is a host for trialling control methods although Rob does concede it provides shelter during lambing.

The family runs their Merino wethers up to three years of age in the steeper bush country and the prime lambs on the irrigated river flats. The original Peppin ewe base has been crossed with Oakhampton and Egelabra bloodlines to result in an 18 micron fleece with an average fleece weight of 5kg. The ewes are classed by an independent classer, with about 30 per cent joined to White Suffolk rams.

Lambing in the Merino ewes joined to White Suffolks has averaged 100 per cent compared to the Merino-Merino joinings of 85 per cent. Ewes are shorn pre-lambing in late August and lamb from October 1.

With an absence of foxes and wild dogs, the main factor affecting lamb survival is cold weather and mismothering. Mr Marshall selects rams on their low birthweight ASBVs and shoulder conformation for lambing ease.

“We began using White Suffolk rams 10 years ago to generate cash flow – they are easy lambing over Merino ewes and have done well for us,” Mr Marshall said. “The wether and ewe crossbred lambs are finished on lucerne and forage rape, and, depending on the season, we might sell the bottom section as stores. “The lambs are finished to 45kg liveweight and are bought either by JBS Australia, Hirds or the Australian Lamb Company, Victoria.



Rob Marshall with White Suffolk cross lambs being finished on Tullochgorum

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“We are lambing later to avoid the cold weather but sometimes it works against us as the weather can be unpredictable in October. “But we find the feed is starting to grow then and we can run more DSEs. “We are now running more stock to cater for periods of higher pasture growth.” The Marshall family uses low stress stock handling techniques and partially cell graze. “I did the Grazing Profit course and the idea of that was to keep things simple so I apply that to the sheep breeding program as well,” Mr Marshall said.

He is keen to see the White Suffolk breed roll out a branded product as he considers Tasmania perfectly placed geographically to supply out-of-season lamb.



**James Marshall with his young Kelpie pup, Bella.**

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## PREDATOR CONTROL

ARTICLE PROVIDED BY RENMARK HIGH SCHOOL

Agriculture students were devastated when 13 of the 2014 drop ewe lambs were killed or put down as a result of a vicious dog attack on the White Suffolk flock owned by Renmark High School in March 2015. The only lamb to survive the attack was “Katie” who had been bottle reared by the students. She is still recovering from a broken nose, a broken jaw and multiple bites to the muzzle.

The school has always run an alpaca with the ewe flock, but he is old and has been retired due to arthritis setting into his hind leg as a result of injuries received while protecting the flock from a previous dog attack in 2009. It was decided to not replace the alpaca, but to obtain a livestock guardian dog, which would hopefully be more effective at protecting the sheep from dogs roaming off the chain from within the nearby local urban community.

The Maremma breed was chosen because, generally, the animals are more placid and more accepting of strangers in the paddocks – and the school needed to be able to have students work safely with the livestock when the guardian dog is nearby.

It is important that the guardian dog comes from working parents and not from a show dog bloodline to ensure that the guarding instinct is strong. An eight week old Maremma puppy was purchased from the Gossip family at Francis where Maremma and Ovcharka guardian dogs are used to protect both sheep and goats from foxes.

So Leilani arrived in Renmark and was immediately penned with Katie – who was not impressed at having a dog in her recovery yard. However, within 2 days, Katie and Leilani were bonded and Leilani was

licking Katie’s face removing the scabs and discharge from the wounds.

Since Leilani’s arrival at Renmark High School, she has bonded with both the White Suffolks and the Boer goats – although she prefers to cuddle up to Katie at night. Guardian dogs spend 2-3 months bonding with two to six young animals before moving out into the larger paddock with the whole mob/flock which the dog will be guarding. Leilani is showing great skill in moving in front of her “family” when visitors arrive near the paddocks, barking warnings and signalling to the rest of the flock to move behind her and away from the “predator”. One of the techniques guardian dogs use is the disruption to predator hunting by the warning barks of the guardian dog. Another technique is the establishment of territory by the guardian dog and Leilani has been patrolling the fence lines early in the mornings and again at dusk. It is hoped that Leilani will also chase away crows and other birds of prey – not just from the livestock, but also from the almonds in the adjoining paddock!

The hardest part of training a guardian dog is not being able to treat it as a pet. The students are not allowed to pat or play with Leilani, they are not even allowed to talk to her. This is to ensure that there is no relationship built up between humans and Leilani (except with the farm staff who feed her).

One of the conditions of purchasing a guardian dog for the school was that it be included in the school agriculture curriculum. So for the past couple of weeks, students have been researching predators of livestock in Australia and considering the ethics of all the control methods currently used by farmers. They have looked at the various breeds in Australia



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and looked at case studies using guardian dogs as alternative methods of protecting sheep, cattle, poultry and native wildlife from wild dogs, feral pigs, foxes and feral cats. The students now have a better understanding of the reasons for the training methods used for Leilani and why they may never be able to pat her. The big decision now is whether to have her desexed or to mate her and have a litter of puppies to sell to other livestock owners in the Renmark area who have had problems with dogs attacking their sheep, goats and horses.

**Further Information:**

- Invasive Animals CRC, 2010, Guardian Dogs: Best Practice Manual for the use of Livestock Guardian Dogs. <http://www.invasiveanimals.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Guardian-Dogs-web.pdf>
- Invasive Animals CRC, PestSmart Connect, <http://www.pestsmart.org.au/>



## DUBBO SHOW RESULTS 2015

15-17 MAY, DUBBO, NSW

JUDGE: PAUL DAY (SUNNYBANKS), TAS



(RIGHT) CHAMPION RAM - ASHBANK  
(LEFT) RESERVE CHAMPION RAM - BARINGA

### RAM under 14 months, no more than 2 teeth shorn NOVICE

1. Mudgee High School
2. Mudgee High School
3. Mudgee High School

### RAM under 14 months, no more than 2 teeth shorn OPEN

1. Ashbank Stud
2. Warburn Stud
3. Premier Stud

### RAM showing milk teeth only, shorn - born between 1/6 & 31/7/14 NOVICE

1. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
2. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
3. Yanco Agricultural High School

### RAM showing milk teeth only, shorn - born between 1/6 & 31/7/14 OPEN

1. Ashbank Stud
2. Baringa Stud
3. Baringa Stud

### RAM showing milk teeth only, shorn - born after 1/8/14 NOVICE

1. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
2. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
3. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High

### RAM showing milk teeth only, shorn - born after 1/8/14 OPEN

1. Ashbank Stud
2. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
3. Premier Stud

### RAM born after 1st April no more than 2 teeth, woolly NOVICE

1. St Pauls College

### RAM born after 1st April no more than 2 teeth, Woolly OPEN

1. Warburn Stud
2. Premier Stud
3. Milton Park Stud

### PAIR OF 2 RAMS shorn, born after 1st April no more than 2 teeth

1. Baringa Stud
2. Ashbank Stud
3. Warburn Stud

### RAM over 1 1/2 yrs woolly or shorn

1. Baringa Stud
2. Smithston Farms
3. Caringa White Suffolk

### RAM objective measurement class

1. Warburn Stud
2. Kinellar Stud
3. Warburn Stud

CHAMPION RAM - ASHBANK  
RESERVE CHAMPION RAM - BARINGA

### EWE under 14 months, no more than 2 teeth shorn NOVICE

1. Mudgee High School
2. Mudgee High School
3. Mudgee High School

### EWE under 14 months, no more than 2 teeth shorn OPEN

1. Milton Park Stud
2. Ashbank Stud
3. Merton Stud



CHAMPION EWE - WARBURN STUD

**EWE showing milk teeth only, shorn - born between 1/6 & 31/7/14 NOVICE**

1. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
2. St Pauls College
3. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High

**EWE showing milk teeth only, shorn - between 1/6 & 31/7/14 OPEN**

1. Ashbank Stud
2. Warburn Stud
3. Smithston Farms

**EWE showing milk teeth only, shorn - born after 1/8/14 NOVICE**

1. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
2. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
3. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High

**EWE showing milk teeth only, shorn - born after 1/8/14 OPEN**

1. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High
2. Smithston Farms
3. Baringa Stud



KEITH MCINTOSH MEMORIAL SHIELD  
SIRE'S PROGENY GROUP - ASHBANK

**EWE born after 1st April no more than 2 teeth woolly NOVICE**

1. St Pauls College

**EWE born after 1st April no more than 2 teeth woolly OPEN**

1. Warburn Stud
2. Baringa Stud
3. Milton Park Stud

**PAIR OF 2 EWES shorn, born after 1st April no more than 2 teeth**

1. Warburn Stud
2. Milton Park Stud
3. Baringa Stud

**EWE over 1 1/2 yrs shorn or woolly**

1. Warburn Stud
2. Smithston Farms
3. Baringa Stud

**EWE objective measurement class**

1. Merton Stud
2. Milton Park Stud
3. Warburn Stud

CHAMPION EWE - WARBURN  
RESERVE CHAMPION EWE - MILTON PARK

## DUBBO SHOW RESULTS 2015 CONTINUED



Ashbank White Suffolk Stud won the Supreme Champion White Suffolk Exhibit and took home the Bromar lick feeder, donated by Bromar Engineering, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the White Suffolk breed at the Dubbo Show. Pictured from left are Bromar Representative Mark Liebich, Daryl Dixon, Ashbank stud and Judge Paul Day, Sunnybanks stud, TAS.

### KEITH McINTOSH MEMORIAL SHIELD

1. Ashbank Stud
2. Baringa Stud
3. Warburn Stud

### GROUP 1 RAM & 2 EWES, milk tooth only, wool length open

1. Baringa Stud
2. Ashbank Stud
3. Farrer Memorial Agricultural High

### BEST WHITE SUFFOLK HEAD, RAM OR EWE any age

1. Kurraview Stud
2. Baringa Stud
3. Milton Park

### SUPREME CHAMPION WHITE SUFFOLK EXHIBIT

ASHBANK

### MOST SUCCESSFUL EXHIBITOR

WARBURN

## TOOWOOMBA ROYAL SHOW

MARCH 2015

Judge: Barry Lang

Milton Park White Suffolk Stud, of Allora QLD, won the Supreme Ram and Supreme Breeders Group

Holding the ram are Josh Milton & Sarah Williams

