

Standout rams fill up more bales at Glen-Ora

A SWITCH to Collandra North bloodlines nearly 20 years ago has seen Glen-Ora Station in western NSW filling more wool bales and turning off more lambs from its self-replacing Merino flock.

John Johnson and his wife Cheryl, who run the 24,290 hectare property 100 kilometres north-west of Ivanhoe, were looking for a change of bloodlines when they ventured to the 1997 Mid North Merino Field Days.

Mr Johnson said the Poll Merino rams from the Lawrie family's Eyre Peninsula-based stud were "standouts" from the large number on display at Burra because of their large frames, wool cut and polled attributes.

"We got 30 kilometres out of Burra heading for Broken Hill on our way home but turned and came back. We bought six rams for \$400 each and have been back to the stud every year since," Mr Johnson said.

"Once we bought the first rams the good part was we could put them with the ewes straightaway. Sometimes you buy rams and you need to look after them for three to four months before they go out."

The Johnsons have never looked back and are among the stud's loyal clients.

Each year, they buy 18 Poll Merino rams through Collandra North's annual on-property sale and out of the paddock.

"We are looking for big, bold, open faced rams with a good long staple and carrying plenty of wool," Mr Johnson said.

"At 15-18 months of age if they are about 100 kilograms-plus we are happy. "We like to get them home as 21-22 microns and by the time they have been here for 12 months they are about 23M which is about what the flock averages."

Glen-Ora, which comprises mainly loamy red clay soils, supports between 6000 and 8000 sheep depending on the season.

Mr Johnson's grandfather came to Glen-Ora in 1927 and his 21-year-old son John is the fourth generation on the property.

The flock structure includes 3000 to 4000 ewes which are spring lambing in September-October.

The sheep must be hardy to cope with the variable seasons, with an average annual rainfall of just 225 millimetres.

Mr Johnson is pleased their ewes are consistently achieving lambing percentages of 80 per cent to 95pc.

"They will rear a lamb and look after you with 6.5 kilograms or more of wool – you can't ask for much better than that," he said.

The top half of young ewes are classed on structure and wool type and retained within the flock. The surplus to replacement young ewes – about 750 – are sold as rising two-year-olds.

"They usually go to repeat buyers. One of them bought our ewes and put them out of stubbles and then topped the Hillston, NSW, market," Mr Johnson said.

In good seasons, wether lambs are sold over-hooks at 18-20kg at 10 months but if feed is short they are sold as store lambs.



LOYAL CUSTOMERS: John and Cheryl Johnson, Glen-Ora Station via Ivanhoe, NSW, have been using Collandra North bloodlines for nearly 20 years.

Last year, a draft of 1204 lambs were sold at Ouyen, Vic, market for \$94.

The oldest age group of Poll Merino ewes are joined to White Suffolks at six or seven years and then sold on-property or through AuctionsPlus, mainly as offshears with their lambs-at-foot.

Glen-Ora had received just 88.9 millimetres of rain until mid-June but after several falls in the past month, had a good growth of winter grasses.

"It had been dry until mid June but we finished the month with 50.8mm and have had 2.5mm and 5.1mm since then so we have good growth about 2.5 centimetres high," Mr Johnson said.

He said wool prices had been especially good early this year.

"We sold some wool at the end of April for 860 cents/kg – that is a good return for a 200kg bale," Mr Johnson said.

"We are shearing now and they are coming off the boards well so hopefully the good prices continue."



POSITIVE RESULTS: Charmayne and Matthew Clarke with their children Bella and Billy, at Pine Grove Station, Cradock. The family has been using Collandra North rams for more than 30 years.

Big, bold, bale-fillers boost Pine Grove

By CARLA WIESE-SMITH

LARGE framed, heavy cutting, fertile sheep which are sought after by feedlotters have been a winning mix for the Clarke family of Pine Grove Station, Cradock.

For more than 30 years they have been utilising Collandra North bloodlines on the 26,305-hectare property, which mates about 3500-4000 ewes each year alongside a 150-head cattle herd.

Matthew Clarke says he could not be happier with the size and shape of his sheep as a result of using Collandra North rams.

"Off our grown sheep, we are cutting about six to seven kilograms of 22-micron wool," he said.

"They're good mothers too; except in the bad years, we generally average more than 120 per cent lambing."

The sheep are traditionally shorn in September, but the Clarkes are in the process of moving this, and wool is sold

through the auctions, with the occasional dabble in forward contracts.

"We haven't tried to get down to the lower microns," Mr Clarke said.

"A good wool cut is better than 4kg of 19M wool."

Pine Grove usually buys about 20 rams a year from Collandra North.

"We get some out of the auction and then top up from the paddock after, averaging about \$700-\$800," Mr Clarke said.

"We select for size and big wool cutters. "Micron is a consideration, and we want reasonably plain rams so we can avoid fly problems."

While the wool side of the business is cruising along, demand for lambs from feedlots is also strong.

"The majority of our lambs are sold through AuctionsPlus," Mr Clarke said.

"It's good because the prices are set before they (lambs) leave the place.

"We have a lot of repeat customers who have been buying lambs for five to six

years; feedlotters seem to like them."

To this end, Mr Clarke said they usually aimed to breed good, stretchy lambs which would prosper in the feedlot.

About six years ago, the Clarkes decided to diversify into a White Suffolk-cross to enable them to turn the lambs off younger and increase turnover.

The Clarkes class out about 30pc of their Merino ewe lambs.

"The past few years we've started keeping the culls to mate to White Suffolk rams, along with our older (cast-for-age) ewes," Mr Clarke said.

"Graeme (Lawrie) helps us class; it's good to have someone more objective, and it also helps him to pick rams for us that best suit our sheep.

"We try to keep it simple."

Mr Clarke runs Pine Grove Station alongside his wife Charmayne, and this year employed a semi-permanent worker.

Pine Grove consists of 30pc open plain with spear grass and blue bush, while the balance is spinifex ranges.

CN

Collandra North
Rams that produce results

On Property Auction
120 Poll Merino Rams
12 August 2015

Royal Adelaide Show