

PRIMARIES - THE GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM FOR WEST AUSTRALIAN WOOL

More Merinos on the menu for Cascade farmers

Trevor and Phyllis Pengilly were one of a number of South Australians who sold their farms for good money in the 1970's to take up the cheaper land and new challenges of the Cascades area north of Esperance.

Today Bruce and Trudi Pengilly and their family retain a successful mix of cropping and Merinos on around 3,000 hectares of land at Cascades, confident that demand for Merinos will continue to improve.

"We started out by keeping and mating our older Merino ewes to increase numbers," Bruce said. "I can see that situation being repeated if there is a lift in the wool market and as farmers affected by droughts in the East, try to restock."

The Pengilly family has retained its Penrose Merino stud founded in 1979, and has steadily moved the stud objectives to longer staples of finer wool.

"Our stud sheep have no fancy titles but they do have long, stylish wool and they have helped us to improve from cuts of 4 kg of 24 micron wool to an average of 6.5 kg per head of 20 micron wool, with our weaners currently producing 4.5 kg of 18 micron wool at 10 months of age."

Marketing the wool clip from a flock of about 4,000 sheep is something Bruce takes seriously, not only in terms of assessing his returns, but also the suitability of his wool. "I am careful about what goes into the bale and I like to know how my wool performs," Bruce said. He works closely with Don Pentz from Primaries to present his wool to the best advantage - and to liaise with buyers for their feedback.

He has been a successful user of Wooltrade and credits the system with showing him the need to know the production cost of his wool in order to market it.

"I have not done a direct comparison of Merino production costs versus grain, but I believe with wool and livestock prices as they are, and with fuel, machinery and other input



Donald Pentz, left; Bruce Penilly, Alan Powell & Trudi Pengilly with some of their wool.

costs for cropping on the rise, the sheep are coming out in front."

Bruce was walking back to the farmhouse from a bogged tractor when he was 'picked up' as a client by Alan Powell, well before he became a livestock representative for Primaries. Many of Bruce's surplus sheep and lambs are sold each year to John Reid at the local Shark Lake abattoirs.

"The buyer knows that if Bruce says the stock are ready and in top condition, they will be fully as represented," Alan said.

Bruce is one of an increasing number of Esperance farmers looking to improve his pasture productivity, with shorter cropping rotations and new pasture varieties.

"This year we have had green medic clover since January," Bruce said. "When it looked as though it was on the wane, there would be another summer shower, and away it would go again," he said.

Esperance Update

New Esperance Partnership

A new partnership between Primaries and Esperance Rural Supplies is away to an excellent start with valuable synergies for Esperance farmers emerging from the combination of wool and livestock expertise of Primaries and the exceptional cropping/pasture/merchandise operations of Greg Hard and his team.

Greg and wife Leonie have built Esperance Rural Services over the past four years to one of the most successful and popular farm service businesses in Esperance.

Primaries moved their regional base into the Esperance Rural Services complex in October last year, with Diane Flynn taking charge of the new office as receptionist/secretary for Primaries' newly appointed wool



Diane Flynn, Alan Powell, Greg Hard and Donald Pentz.

representative, Donald Pentz and livestock buyers Alan Powell and Stan Zuglian.

"It is surprising how many farmer clients we already share, and how those of Primaries or Esperance Rural are beginning to take advantage of the combined services we now offer," Greg Hard said last week.

Esperance begins to Rebuild sheep flock

The Esperance region sheep flock reached nearly five million in the late 1980's on a land development boom, secured by high wool and stable meat prices.

Today the region is slowly rebuilding its flock from a low base of around one million sheep, this time to cater for a strong demand for crossbred lambs and shipping wethers.

Primaries livestock buyer Alan Powell is urging his clients to use Merino ewes in their rebuilding process.

"Many people are ready to supplement their cropping operations with more sheep, and at present the incentive is to restock with crossbreds, still based on Merino mothers.

"But with the indicators now there for a more viable wool market it will be important for those farmers to keep their sheep enterprise options open."

Alan said Esperance was also prime territory for those wishing to trade in sheep. One client who had no sheep two years ago, was now trading around 20,000 sheep a year, with plans to increase this number.

Greg Hard said there was a pasture technology 'revolution' under way in the region. "Farmers realise that the knowledge and the seed and fertiliser products are in place to dramatically boost pasture productivity. Our agronomist Les Spencer and seed supplier Irwin Hunter are being kept busy meeting the demand from local farmers wanting to capitalise on better pastures," Greg said.

Primaries Esperance livestock representative Stan Zuglian said cattle numbers were also increasing significantly, despite the increase in cropping and tree plantations over the past few years.

High Calibre Clip Quality

Primaries is receiving some of the best Autumn shorn clips on record with increases of 15-20 percent in cuts per head and staples in many clips longer by 3-4 mm.

Trevor Pedler said the percentage of wools tested at more than 40 nkt was also the highest for probably 15 years.

However the market continued to be challenged by the volume of offerings.

"Every time the offering goes above about 65,000 bales, prices retreat," Trevor said. "Even so the recent higher rates are 8-18 percent better than the price levels at Christmas and it is heartening to see Autumn and Winter fashion

wool component.

Trevor said the positive side of higher auction offerings was that collections via the levy for the IWTO test Marketing Campaign in the US had already exceeded the March deadline target by more than \$100,000. He said the industry could be pleased with its contribution to date of around \$700,000 for the campaign and was hoping for a positive outcome for wool from this project.

Primaries will continue its association with IWTO this year, with Matt Pedersen heading for the annual conference in Egypt early in May.

"We look forward to a positive

The Gentle Santas of Monivae



Left to right, Margaret, Keith, Sam, Bonna, Steve, Stan Zuglian, Shelby & Emily with prize Moriatta Bulls.

Keith and Margaret Gentle took their family the 'long way round' from York to Monivae at Esperance.

Keith founded the Moriatta Santa Gertrudis stud No 138 at York in 1964, and was one of the first WA developers of the breed. A visit to the U.S. with other Australian breeders in 1967 convinced him to move to Queensland in the late 1980's, but the family walked into several years of crippling drought.

They chose Esperance as target for their return to WA, securing 2,000 hectares of loam/gravel duplex soil country at Coolambidgup. Through the efforts of son Steve, wife Donna and children Emily, Shelby and Sam, the Gentle family have developed Monivae as an attractive cattle sheep and cropping property where the children learn a wide range of animal management skills.

Sam recently acquitted himself well against much older contenders in the cattle judging competition at Wagin Woolorama, whilst Shelby is showing promise in campdraft events and Emily has won several prizes for cattle preparation and parading at agricultural shows.

The stud has been a regular supplier of Santa Gertrudis bulls to Pilbara pastoralists including Stuart and Tracie Blair of Prairie Downs station, who purchased two of the four bulls offered by Moriatta at the recent Narnungulu bull sale.

There is an ongoing family faith in Merino sheep based on big framed, fine wool rams from Victoria and wool sales through Primaries, and a balanced wheat and barley cropping program.

Stan Zuglian of Primaries assists the family with sales of their prime beef animals.