

# Downsizing for drought

THE 2006/07 northern drought has forced long term Chapman Valley farmers Kevin and Jim Mazuchelli to their lowest sheep numbers since their father Matt left Balla, near Yuna to purchase their Dindaloo property.

Annual rainfall totalled a paltry 168mm, down from the normal 250mm.

"Last year's shearing took seven to eight days," Jim said.

"This year it was all over in two."

The poor start with no finish, put an end to a successful wether rotation plan operated by the Mazzuchelli brothers under good seasonal conditions for the past 10 years.

"On the advice of respected local

woolclasser Forbes Spillman, and Graham Densley of Primaries we changed from running ewes and lambs to buying in young wethers," Jim said.

"We were paying about \$40 per head, they were giving us wool and free weed control, and we were selling them as five year-olds for around \$60.

"That all ended last year when the season failed and we decided to offload all 4,500 wethers as shippers."

The recent purchase of two new properties offered the prospect of extra pasture and stubbles, and the wethers have since been replaced with 1100 2.5-3.5 year-old ewes mated to White Suffolk rams.

Jim said depending on the start to the season, there would be a major lift in cropping in 2007, and the cropping/livestock strategy would evolve from there.

"At least we have come through this with some Merino ewes, but the prospects both seasonal and economic will still need to improve for us to return to a major Merino component," he said.

Primaries' Trevor Pedler said the case of the Mazzuchellis was typical of many farmers in the north.

"The Dindaloo wool clip fell from 144 bales last year to 38 this year and it is not hard to see why raw wool stocks have fallen so rapidly."

## The direct link

**PRIMARIES** representatives attended a function to report on the performance of the first year results of the Roberts Wool Link program in Tasmania last week, which coincided with the launch of the 2007/08 program.

Wool Link is the initiative of Roberts Ltd of Tasmania and The Merino Company – also the template for the newly formed Prime Wool partnership between Primaries and The Merino Company in WA.

Matt Pedersen said the benefits of much of the pioneering phase of Wool Link in Tasmania would be available to Primaries clients, through Prime in WA.

"There is growing interest in the Prime partnership in WA and we are inviting interested woolgrowers to consider an involvement with a new program beginning in July," Mr Pedersen said.



At the Woolink conference in Hobart last week were Tim Chapman (left), of Primaries, Angus Hooke of The Merino Company, Primaries Matt Pedersen and Trevor Pedler with Yoshimitsu Hamano the Japanese representative for The Merino Company based in Tokyo.

## Wearing wool at Williams

PRIMARIES and Prime are in the final stages of negotiating with the "Wear Wool Wednesday" committee to participate as major sponsors of this year's event at Williams in early June.

Mr Pedersen said he was hoping to arrange for a Prime Wool presentation by The Merino Company at WWW to demonstrate how woolgrowers were working direct with processors and retailers to achieve bold new marketing initiatives for wool.

## AWEX update

THE Primaries wool team will be meeting with AWEX next week for an update.

Changes to the code of practice, and to AWEX reporting services will be on the agenda.