

Wool pooling gains favour

PRIMARIES of WA expects its Prime Wool Pool to mirror the growth of its highly successful WoolTrade electronic marketing system as another alternative to the auction system for WA woolgrowers, Managing Director Matt Pedersen told 120 growers at a forum in Perth last week.

"We do not expect that Prime will be for everyone, and it will not replace the auction system but the pooling concept does offer a new viable marketing alternative for growers," he said.

"The Prime Wool Pool project has been a work in progress over the past three years with Primaries trying to interest WA woolgrowers both in pooling and in partnering with The Merino Company to forge direct links with global retailers and suppliers.

"The response from growers at today's forum indicates we will see Prime significantly increase the percentage of wool going into our pools."

Matt said Prime was not targeting fine wool but was seeking to represent a good cross section of WA merino wool.

"Our role is to improve your terms of trade for wool and we believe the offer of an 80 percent up front advance serves as a valuable incentive for growers to commit to pooling.

Bonnie Rock farmer Stephen Sprigg told the forum he had supported the first three Prime pools through Primaries and would be

committing most of his clip to the current pool.

"It seems that there is now vertical integration for every primary product – with the exception of wool," he said.

"So when Greg Tilbrook explained how Primaries through The Merino Company were trying to create a new perception for wool by moving into the supply chain, via the Prime Wool pool in WA, I immediately said: 'count me in'."

Stephen said he estimated that Prime returned him a gain of 8-10 percent in the first year.

"I choose to market my own grain because our buyers know that WA noodle wheat is the best in the world.

"But marketing wool in the changing global environment is a very different proposition and I am happy to leave that job to the people who know."

Prime coordinator Greg Tilbrook said



Mark Brooks formerly of AWI, now with TMC, discusses global wool promotion with Bonnie Rock woolgrower Stephen Sprigg and Prime Wool Coordinator, Greg Tilbrook of Primaries.

Primaries was delighted with the level of interest shown in the forum by clients and potential clients of the company, and with the follow-up responses for the current pool.

Greg said growers were also showing interest in the Fine Ends Wool (FEW) program developed by WA's Department of Agriculture and Food, and now promoted as 'Austral' by TMC.

He said the current Prime Wool Pool was open until June 30. Growers with any queries should contact him on 0429889053 or talk to their local Primaries representative.

A small gesture for wool

BODDINGTON woolgrowers Richard and Simon Kelsall are hoping their 10 bale contribution to the Prime Wool Pool may lead to bigger and better things.

"There are not many new things happening for wool and we believe initiatives such as the Primaries/TMC sponsored Prime pool deserve encouragement," Richard said at the Prime Wool Pool forum on Friday.

The Kelsalls committed 10 bales of their 19.5 micron, Wallinar-based wool to the Prime Pool in March.

"We are impressed by the amount of research and marketing The Merino Company has undertaken in a relatively short time to increase the perception and market acceptability

of wool. Anything that improves the demand and price for wool has to be good for growers."

"TMC may have done better by buying our wool at auction and then dealing direct with retailers to adapt new wool products for them. The fact that they have included woolgrowers as an integral component of these new partnerships is commendable."

Richard said the Kelsall family had recently increased its Merino ewe flock and reduced the number of wethers.

"We are staying with Merinos but we are constantly fine tuning the operation to maximise profit," he said.



Richard Kelsall of Boddington admires new wool garments with TMC's Claire Drum and Carl Poingdestre of Primaries.

WA woolgrowers urged to commit more wool

MARK Mackinnon, CEO of The Merino Company (TMC), has called upon Western Australian woolgrowers to commit more of their wool to the Prime wool pool, at a forum held in conjunction with Primaries, at the East Fremantle Yacht Club on Friday.

"TMC have made a huge investment in building our supply chain capabilities around the globe to provide our retail and apparel brand customers the ultimate manufacturing solutions. Our sales teams have been working hard and we are really starting to see a huge momentum in sampling and customer enquiry. Our aim over the next few months is to move these programmes to firm contracts for a significant amount of pool wool" commented Mark.

"More wool in the Prime pool will ensure we can meet demand and provide us with the ability to deliver the long term stable and sustainable returns the programme aims to

deliver".

"The previous two Prime pools really just tested the waters but the 2010/09 pool, which is open for contracting now, needs significantly more wool to help us drive the industry forward and put wool back on the map".



Boyup grower Tim Bleachmore with TMC Manager Knits Mark Brooks, TMC co-founder and CEO Mark Mackinnon and TMC Pools manager Bruce McDonald.

The forum also included a Pool Progress Report and highlights of some of TMC's exciting developments and product innovations from their Knits division, including a report from Mark Brooks who had flown in from an industrious two week trip visiting customers abroad.

Wool finds new markets

THE large gathering of growers at the Prime forum on Friday were also presented with an insight into the busy life of a TMC's sales manager when Mark Brooks reported on his recent trip to Asia, Europe and the UK.

Former Global Sports/Activewear Manager at AWI, Mark has only been with TMC for six months but has already made significant progress and inroads with some of the worlds largest brands.

Mark visited up to 3 – 4 current and potential customers a day during his two week trip and believes there are "massive opportunities" for 100% wool and wool

blends in the intimate apparel and sports markets.

"Customers perceive wool as expensive so we had to come up with innovative products to open new markets. Levana Textiles, our manufacturing company in New Zealand, has been heavily developing innovative wool and wool blend fabrics, some of which I recently presented to customers on my trip" said Mark.

One of those fabrics is a blend of Merino wool and ADVANSA ThermoCool™ – a unique moisture management and thermoregulating fibre technology. The

resulting fabrics offer superior moisture management performance. TMC is the only company in the Southern Hemisphere to integrate ADVANSA Thermo Cool™ with Merino wool.

"The majority of customers I visited had little or no wool in their range but after discussing their fabric and performance requirements, and explaining the benefits of having this wonderful natural fibre in their range as opposed to 100% synthetics, they become interested. We have already begun sampling with many and some orders have been signed. Our products gained a huge reception in the marketplace and by tapping into these new markets, we are sure to lift demand".