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LOOKING BACK PUSHING FORWARD: DON'S PERSPECTIVE

To say the last six months have been difficult would be an understatement. In addition to losing our best friend and valuable staff member Luke Fitzgerald, the wool market has done what other rural commodities have done and retreated considerably.

Luke and I both began our careers in wool brokering at Starlotters, Yennora in the mid 1980's. I was in my late 20s and Luke was straight out of school. He started in admin and was the go-to person for us woolstore people for classer species and sorting out issues. We both stayed around four years and I moved to Dubbo to commence my own business and he joined French wool buying firm VanLaine. The collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme ended the fortunes of VanLaine, so Luke moved on to travel and odd jobs for a few years before turning up at our showfloor one day looking for a job. And so began a 30 year working relationship and close friendship.

Over those years Luke built close friendships with many of his clients and many of our staff became best mates with him. Professionally as a wool broker it was hard to fault his attention to detail and thorough knowledge of wool. His time with VanLaine and the years in brokering built an incredible respect which became very evident when he passed. Wool sales in both Sydney and Melbourne paused for a minute's silence and the attendance at his service in Dubbo was a who's who of the wool industry. Christine, Nicola and William were justifiably proud of the husband and father that he was and moved by the love, respect and generosity of so many people. As the dust settled, we had to quickly move to fill the

roles that Luke played in our business and fortunately we had made some very good appointments over the past year or two. We looked at Luke's client base geographically and split it into three areas. As Murray Bragg was already servicing clients on the Northwest he took over those from districts like Goodooga, Carinda and even Cunnamulla. Jeanine, who is our RWS on farm auditor assumed responsibility for the Wellington, Goolma and Orange clients, and Veronike took up the bulk of Luke's clientele in the Baradine, Coonamble, Gulargambone, Coonabarabran, Binnaway, Tooraweenah and Gilgandra districts. And just for good measure Peter Walsh took over a few clients that he knew well.

We also needed to ensure that the technical skills Luke provided were covered. Checking test results and catalogues to valuing and attending sales and auctioneering is a critical component of our business. The depth of experience in our team proved immeasurable with Ian Sharp and Jason Carmichael in Sydney, being complimented by Andrew Mills, Chris Drum and even myself at sales. Andrew leading the technical room in Dubbo has Murray, Jeanine and Veronike filling any technical wool gaps.



DON'S PERSPECTIVE...

On to the wool market... since the Xmas recess the EMI has fallen around 10% or 145 cents as global fears of recession, rising interest rates and energy costs bite into consumer confidence.

Economic growth in China post Covid has been sluggish by their standards, and this has stalled the expected recovery of the wool market.

Recently the China central bank did the opposite of what other central banks were doing, and lowered interest rates! Clearly, they have a different perspective on inflation. Another rate fall in China would not surprise me if the economy doesn't meet their objectives of 5-6% economic growth.

The fortunes of a recovery in the wool market do lay with China, and several of the big players there in early stage processing are refurbishing and renewing machinery to capitalize on increased throughput when the orders begin to come in again. This past season produced 348mkg of wool, up 3.9% on the previous season taking us back to pre-drought production levels. Next season is expected to be slightly higher with just over 350mkg produced, the most in the last seven years. NSW produced 37% of the nation's clip (128mkg) which is equivalent to the entire New Zealand clip, most of which is a broad type of little value. Interestingly the NZ government recently awarded a large school carpet contract to a Nylon carpet supplier, despite being the largest producer of carpet wool growers who are suffering terribly!



A new national committee has been formed to address wool harvesting and training. It is known as the National Wool Harvesting Advisory and Training Group (NWHAT). This committee comprises representatives from each of the State Training Advisory Groups, the Shearing Contractors Assoc., the National Council of Wool Brokers, Wool Producers, AWEX, AWI and training organizations.

I was elected as Chair, and now after 3 meetings the committee is working well together and exchanging ideas about how the wool harvesting issues can be best addressed. In summary, without a "silver bullet" to remove wool through the use of robotics or laser removal after enzyme injections, we should plan to continue shearing as we know it.

We know there are production peaks and troughs and it's during these peak times our domestic workforce cannot cope.

This peak period is in September to early December and late January to end of March. AWI and other training organisations have ramped up activity the last two years and it is beginning to bear fruit. The enrolments at learner and novice schools have lifted and to date retention rates are ok. While each state has slightly different peak times and issues, there are common elements.

The frame of the sheep is becoming more of an issue especially in older sheds. While on farm conditions have improved, many sheds still need improvements like flushing toilets, running water and lunchrooms. A recent AWEX wool classer survey highlighted cultural issues involving bullying, sexual harassment, drugs and alcohol.



These are unacceptable behaviours in the 21st century, that must be addressed despite the challenges involved. The level of industry consensus on what the next steps should be is varied, and who's responsibility it is to act on these matters. Is it the contractor who often isn't in the shed or the farmer who ultimately pays the bill? There are laws in place to protect employers and employees and there is broad agreement on what constitutes acceptable behaviour.

A potential starting point is the strong culture that is prevalent in most of the wool harvesting sector, and all sides need each other to be successful. It came to my attention recently that there are 2 styles of shearing competitions that are currently underway. One is "Sports Shear" which has a very high quality standard on both the shearing and the wool handling. Dubbo Show for example is one of the biggest Sports Shear competitions. The other increasingly common one is the "Speed Shear or Quick Shear". One is like comparing Test cricket with T20 cricket. The latter throws quality to the wind, especially with wool handling and are often held in back yards of pubs and clubs promoting loud music and alcohol.

You need to go and watch both competitions in action and decide which culture you want in your shed and on your property.

At Macdonald Woolbrokers we feel strongly about this quality factor and now favour sponsoring "Sport Shear" competitions, and urge any local committee that wants to hold a shearing event to aim higher.



MACRURAL CRT IN DUBBO!

We have recently opened a CRT outlet on the front of our Dubbo woolstore. We want to provide merchandise to our wool clients and farmers in the surrounding areas on the western side of town. It helps secure our supply chain for our Brewarrina CRT outlet, reducing the time to acquire key products.

We supply selected shearing supplies, sheep and cattle health products, vaccines, poly fittings, cattle feeders, rainwater tanks, pet food, dog collars and other miscellaneous items.

Ian Parkes (pictured) has just started in our new Dubbo MacRural store. Ian comes to us after 2 years with D&J Rural and 18 months with AGnVET at Wellington in customer service & storeman roles. Ian comes from the Yeoval/Wellington area, where he has lived all his life. You can contact Ian Parkes on 0400 846 353 or Dave Moore 0419 379 931 or ring the wool store on 02 6884 1004. Come in and see us and find out why....



"WEST IS BEST"

STAFF PROFILES

VERONIKE HARTMEIER



Veronike Hartmeier has been working with us for the last 12 months in a number of capacities at our Dubbo wool store. Veronike has a Cert IV in woolclassing, a Diploma in Agribusiness Management.

Veronike has experience in animal health merchandise, store manager, auctions and admin at Moses and Sons Woolbrokers over 4 years. Veronike also has significant sheep husbandry experience.

Contact Veronike on either veronike@macwool.com.au or 0437 913 771.

MURRAY BRAGG



Murray Bragg began as a wool broker with us in October 2022. Murray most recently managed Beemery Station for 20 years. Murray has worked on a number of western division properties prior to that.

Murray worked as a wool broker in Bourke under Ian Sharp earlier in his career. Murray grew up in the central tablelands and has a deep knowledge of the western division, sheep and wool.

Contact Murray on either murray@macwool.com.au or 0427 747 370.

JEANINE RETI



Jeanine has worked at our Dubbo store for 2 yrs in a number of capacities and is our internal RWS Auditor.

Jeanine has spent 33 years in the wool industry as a wool handler, registered Australian wool classer for 25 years, and continues to train wool handlers, pressers, and classers. Jeanine has travelled the world competing in wool handling & shearing competitions and has represented NZ.

Contact Jeanine on either jeanine@macwool.com.au or 0429 269 385.



2L RICHARDSON RD

SMOKO TIME

FRUIT SLICE RECIPE (from Vicki Moore)

An amazing, easy to create smoko treat that will satisfy just about anyone.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of SR flour
- 1 cup of desiccated coconut
- 1 cup of brown sugar
- 1 cup of mixed fruit
- 1 egg, well beaten
- 5 ounces of melted butter
- 1 tablespoon of golden syrup.

Mix all the dry ingredients together with a wooden spoon. Mix in a well beaten egg.

Melt butter and golden syrup together on stove top. Pour them over the other ingredients and mix together.

Press into a greased slice tray.

Bake at 180 degrees for about 20 minutes until golden brown. Allow to cool in slice tray before cutting....then enjoy!

TIM'S TALK

BY TIM GOLE "FOR FLOCKS SAKE"



Our association with Dr. Tim Gole continues to deliver benefits for our clients and staff. Tim provides contract services in training our staff, and information to our clients on sheep health and genetics. Tim's article focuses on pregnancy toxemia in down ewes and the persistent worm burdens.

The **last trimester of pregnancy** offers a lot of challenges for a ewe. Her energy needs are going up especially if carrying twins, her mineral needs are going to go up and her ability to eat is going down. Her ability to eat goes down because the room inside her is shrinking due to the lambs becoming bigger.

Pregnancy toxemia occurs when the glucose needs of the lamb exceed the ability of the ewe to provide enough levels for herself and the lambs. At this point she goes into a start similar to a human diabetic coma unless rapid energy can be provided. Mineral deficiencies such as low calcium or magnesium occur when there is a high need particularly in the last few weeks and a management event occurs to go off feed such as shearing. The other cause of **mineral deficiencies** occur is when fast growing grazing crops are grazed and the mineral balance goes out of whack. Even as vets it can be hard to tell with difference between the different causes without a lot of testing which is why we bundle it up as the "down ewe".

So the treatment protocol is

- Ketol (liquid energy) - 125mls (or more) per day orally
- Flow pack - Mineral bags 100mls per head
- Water and good quality feed if possible
- Take ewe back to house yard so others can help treatment (family bonding?)



Mineral bags don't have enough energy which is why ewes need the oral energy as well. Overall if you are having a lot of down ewes it's a data point that suggests there are a few issues occurring under the surface and there could be some tweaks to your management to get better gains such as body condition scoring, nutrition management, lick provision etc. Down ewes can have complex conditions so go hard or go home, treat for both and then after lambing review potential causes because the sheep game is **all about getting better each year.**

Worms - Worm counts that require treatment are still prevalent. While there has been some very cool starts recently, there hasn't been a prolonged period of extreme cold weather to help reduce the worm burden in paddocks. Growers still need to be on top of their worm counts particularly on younger sheep. The impact of worms last spring is still fresh in all our minds. Worm counts are a cheap (free at Macrural) effective tool to help you manage the worm burden in your sheep. Resistance management through rotation of worm drench actives is an important consideration also.

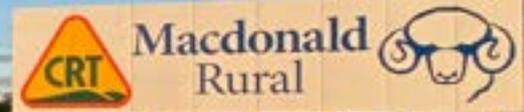
WOOLCLIP & eBALE

Earlier in June, AWEX held a wool forum in Dubbo which was very well attended. The topic of discussion was all about WoolClip and eBale, two related initiatives that will provide efficiencies right along the supply chain. WoolClip digitises specification sheets making them clearer, error free and delivered to the wool store via email. Errors on specs are commonly duplicates in bale numbers, incorrect/incomplete description of wools, mulesing status, mob numbers, and poor bale marking. WoolClip is all about making the grower transaction easier enhancing efficiency throughout the supply chain. When Woolclip is combined with eBale, a built in QR code that can be read as the bales come into the store, traceability will be significantly enhanced. Here's what one of growers, Warwick Moppett and classer Rachel Hutchinson thought of their first experience with the initiative...

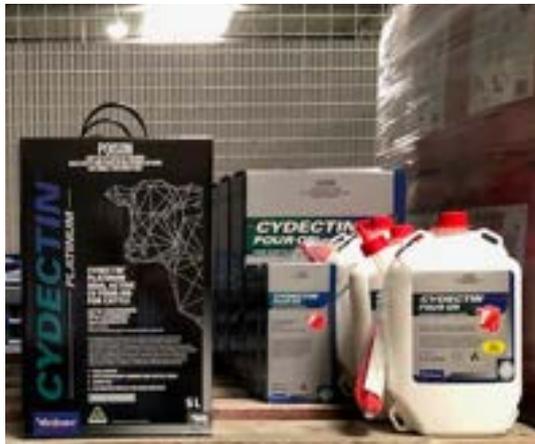
"After attending the Macwool Tooraweenah wool industry update on WoolClip I could see logistical benefits however, opportunities for my farm seemed to start appearing as I explored the information. Veronike came out to assist setting up the WoolClip app weeks before the shearing. It was easy and surprisingly useful. Our classer uploaded the app overnight to start and we sent a signed final speci in seconds on the last day. All the mob details and numbers were done days before we started with descriptions and declarations prepared. So easy, less paper, great info." - Warwick Moppett



Rachel said, "It is very easy to implement into the classer's role. Simple to use and very effective for the farmer to monitor wool production from individual mob to mob. Key is communication between farmer and classer to have prepared mob numbers and set up complete prior to shearing start date."



RICHARDSON ROAD DUBBO - WEST IS BEST!



CONTACT: IAN PARKES 0400 846 353 OR 02 6884 1004

