

GLEN DEVON

Poll Dorset Prime Lamb Sires



Each new generation is always exciting

2014 sale rams

Welcome

Welcome to our 2014 newsletter.

This is an exciting year for several reasons, the most obvious being the buoyant lamb market, with all indications that future market prospects are also very positive. There is a current drop from the Autumn/early Winter highs, but this is in line with ever increasing new season supplies which happen every year at this time.

It is not often we get to see a positive market place combine with a relatively good season in most areas of southern Australia. There were early rains in a lot of areas and

even in those that missed some of the great early rains, the season has developed into a promising one. As always a good finish to the season will be welcomed by all areas.

The final point is that 2014 marks the 60th year celebrations since the foundation of the Poll Dorset Association. Glen Devon has been breeding Poll Dorsets for 55 of those 60 years. We are proud to be part of this great breed and to constantly accept the challenge of breeding productive and profitable sheep for our lamb industry clients.

Rob, Helen, Lachlan & Mileah Hart

Key Glen Devon Dates 2014

Saturday September 6th - from 9am

Poll Dorset Feature Breed Judging

Adelaide Royal Show - 273 entries

Sunday September 7th - 2:30pm

Elite RAS ram sale - offering 2 Glen Devon stud rams

Monday September 22nd

Glen Devon annual on-property ram sale - 1pm

Inspection from 11am Auction at 1pm

Offering 100 rams including 10 specially selected stud rams

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Lambex 2014

What a fantastic event this turned out to be! With such a huge list of world leading speakers on a total range of industry subjects, anyone who attended is probably still trying to absorb all of the information given. For those who didn't, we will try to impart some of the information when relevant to topics under discussion.

From a personal perspective, as President of the Adelaide Poll Dorset region, Lachlan played a role in the setting up and running of the Poll Dorset stand. That was a well worthwhile project with good visitation and feedback.

The big bonus for the breed was that Poll Dorset sired lambs received 3 Gold Medals in the 'Australia's Best Lamb Competition' and had 50% of the finalists. Congratulations to those involved. Poll Dorsets have consistently high performance and taste!



Proud sponsors

We have proudly provided sponsorship to Ouyen Livestock Exchange and the Walpeup/Underbool and Ouyen football clubs for many years as a small way of saying thank you to the producers from these regions who have supported our sale for such a long time.

They are good producers out in the Mallee. It is a challenging environment in which to farm and while this season has been a good one to date, the livestock producers continue



to produce terrific quality lambs. Anyone who visits the Ouyen Livestock Exchange will surely appreciate that.

We were pleased to receive livestock agent feedback that the Dorset sired lambs were consistently producing heavier and higher yielding lambs than alternative breeds. (photo courtesy Stock Journal)

2014 Sale rams

The quality of our 2014 sale rams is on par with other years. The season has been very good. With an early break the rams have had good quality paddock feed all year. We are pleased with them and while you can make up your own minds on their quality, we do recommend your inspection at the least. We are proud to offer them to you.

While we are not an advocate of 'buying ribbons', 2 lambs from last year's Adelaide Royal have come through exceptionally well.



For example, tag number 30/13 (far left) won the ram lamb class. He is the son of tag 10/12 (middle left) that won the year before. This has proven to be a successful breeding line. The 3rd photo (below right) is of our champion ewe. This was the second year in a row we have been lucky enough to win this award. The relevance is it is the quality of our ewe flock that enables us to breed top industry relevant rams.

Lambing percentages and survival

We touched on this subject in last year's newsletter in our birthweights segment. From Lambex, Jason Trompf's session on 'Survive and Thrive' was a very emotional presentation on the most important factor in sheep profitability. Anyone who has experienced one of Jason's presentations on better ewe management and lamb survival will understand his passion for the subject. There are so many factors that can affect lambing percentages, their survival and whether they thrive, that anyone who can pick up on just one of these factors can improve the outcome. This reinforces our message from last year. Birthweights are not the only issue to be addressed, but just one of many.

Good management of your ewes is important, not only for the current year's lambing, but also to have them repeat good results in following years. Much of this is around good nutrition at vital times.

To keep it simple and to quote South East industry identity Wally Jenkin, "You just want lots of lambs and they grow quickly." Most ewes have 2 teats and are capable of rearing 2 lambs more than adequately with good nutrition.



From a Glen Devon perspective it is very pleasing to hear our clients reporting very good lambing percentages this year. In our flock we are consistently 140%. We have embedded the twinning gene. Only 26 lots from last year's ram sale were singles. As mainly terminal sires there is argument that this is of very limited value to commercial lamb producers, but research has shown that even in a terminal sire role, twin rams do sire more lambs than singles. Positive client feedback is always nice to hear. A client from Goulburn has reported that after years of lambing troubles he has had none since purchasing from Glen Devon. We don't claim to have exclusivity to the production of easy care trouble free genetics, but it is reassuring to know we are assisting one client reduce their problems by using our genetics.

We have included an abbreviated producer story on one of our Mallee clients, Neil Hamilton that appeared in the Stock Journal in June (see end of newsletter). There are many important messages in this, none more so than the opportunities for improved profitability and cash flow that is easily available to croppers.

Glen Devon 10/12 is just one of the prominent sires of this year's sale rams when used as a ram lamb. A son of the very successful Wyndamah 691, he is very balanced physically and in his EBV figures. Besides 10/12, there were also 3 other ram lambs we used for the 2013 drop; tags **33/12**, **40/12** and **42/12** with the latter being the most prominent of them. He is very much like 10/12, with very balanced figures. **Glen Devon 310/11** is a very thick ram with excellent hindquarter conformation and also breeding very well.

Leenala 181/09 is similar to the ram lambs in balanced figures, but has the runs on the board as a top producing ram within our stud.

As a stud we need to aim for higher figures than needed commercially as they get watered down with each commercial crossing. This is especially so for muscling. We would ideally like our muscling figures up around 1.5 which should indicate even higher yielding progeny, but we have not been prepared to chase that objective to the detriment of all the other attributes that have made our rams consistently successful for our clients.

However, for this 2013 mating we used 4 rams with muscle figures from 2.0 to 2.9. These have assisted in lifting our overall muscling figures. **Hillcroft Farms 587/10** and **672/10**, **Valma 420/11** and **Ulandi Park 54/11** were the rams, with 3 of them having Carcase Plus indices over 200. For the figures minded people, they should like what they will see this year.

Derrynock 143/10 is another successful ram in our sire bank. Our article on lambing birth weights last year is particularly relevant here. He has a higher birth weight EBV of 0.75, but such is his efficient body shape we have had no birthing troubles from him, and his progeny certainly grow rapidly!

Breeding Objective

To simplify our breeding objectives, we are aiming to produce rams that will enable our commercial clients to breed lambs for most market weights. That flexibility is important as seasons and markets constantly fluctuate. Producers need to constantly adjust their management and target markets to suit. Rams that only allow efficient production for one market weight range do not give lamb producers that ability to adapt their management and marketing.

We seek balance in our breeding, for both phenotype and genotype. Some breeders are obsessed with figures. For us, it is not a competition or race; it is extra information to assist buyers in their selections. We want our figures to have accuracy, consistency and repeatability. As Lambex 2014 pointed out, the consumers of lamb are the ultimate judges. Eating quality is so important. Excessive emphasis on lean meat yield is negatively correlated to intra muscular fat and thus eating quality (taste)! Balance is so important.

The future

We will continue with our breeding objectives as outlined and make decisions on client and industry feedback. Our 2014 drop has been very good. We purchased **Leenala 420/12** and used **Leenala 161/10** via AI. **Ulandi Park 82/10** that has the runs on the board was also used, while 2 more of our 2012 drop rams, **83/12Tw** and **215/12 Tri** were used for the 2014 drop. These latter two were originally catalogued last year. Both have muscle figures near our target range (+1.3). They joined **10/12** and **42/12** as home-bred sires for the 2014 drop. We look forward to presenting them to you at next year's sale.

2013 sales



We sold our 2 rams offered at the Adelaide Elite ram sale. Both went to Mary Burzacott, Mulgundawa stud, Robe for \$4000. (pictured left)

Following is an abbreviated summary from last year's very pleasing on-property ram sale.

In a wonderful sale result, the Hart family sold all 108 Glen Devon Poll Dorset rams offered to a top of \$1500(x2) and at a great average of \$1023. Competition was strong from the outset with the top selection rams twice selling to \$1500, and no rams selling under \$1000 until half way through the sale. Commercial breeders travelled from Central NSW, the Victorian Riverland and Mallee regions, and from Orroroo to Naracoorte in South Australia.

Sixty one rams were purchased by interstate growers. Kevin Collins and sons Steven and Ryan from Crookwell use Glen Devon rams on both crossbred and Merino ewes. The twenty they purchased averaged just under \$1000. *"If they weren't doing the job, we wouldn't be here"*, Kevin commented.

Strong support came from long term supporters in the Ouyen district where 42 rams were purchased by Landmark, Elders and BRC agents.

Long term repeat clients S & R DiGiorgio & Sons purchased 16 head at a \$1250 average. The DiGiorgio family from Lucindale always turn off top lambs and are very happy with the way the Glen Devon rams perform. Frank Nutt from Black Rock, via Orroroo was the most northerly buyer, securing 5 rams for an average of \$1170, paying to a top of \$1300.

The top price honours were shared by Lot 3, which sold for \$1500 to McInerney Brothers at Port Clinton and by Lot 5 to MT & DL Clifford at Balaklava. Both of these rams were ribbon winners at the recent Adelaide Show.

Jim Downer, Mount Beevor Pty Ltd at Nairne was selective and secured three much admired rams for the highest average of the day of \$1366.

Local area buyers included LW & SD Tiller, Balaklava who took home 2 rams, JH & WA Franks, Mallala (4 rams), Adalis Pastoral, Snowtown (5 rams), MD & TL Clifford, Balaklava (3 rams) and LE & AH Mudge, Port Wakefield (4 rams).

Pictured right are David Heinrich, Landmark Key Account Manager at Naracoorte, Nanni DiGiorgio, Lucindale and Robert Hart, Glen Devon. Nanni purchased 16 rams at an average of \$1250.



Rory Singleton (right), BRC Agent from Ouyen travelled to the Glen Devon sale and purchased 19 rams for 8 clients including two at the equal second top price of \$1400.



Producer story

Neil Hamilton started his livestock enterprise many years ago with just 50 Merino ewes and has never looked back. Farming on the 1100 hectare property, 'Cloverdale' at Ouyen in the Victorian Mallee, Neil and family are one of the few in the area that have livestock as a main enterprise in conjunction with cropping, rather than total cropping.

"Livestock and especially sheep have been very good and made us a lot of money for a long time, so when on a good thing, stick to it," Neil said when explaining why.

Regular followers of the Ouyen sheep and lamb market, would be well aware of the regular sale topping lambs produced on 'Cloverdale'. In their sheep enterprise, Neil and family run 550 bought in SAMM/Merino cross ewes. They mate these to Poll Dorset rams to produce heavy export weight prime lambs.

"Prime lambs are our main product, with wool as a secondary product. Therefore we want a lamb factory as good as we can get and these ewes are outstanding. We sacrifice one kilogram of wool, but because of their far superior milking and mothering ability and carcase attributes, they produce a much better overall outcome," Neil said.

The mature ewes are mated in early November for an April/May lambing, with young bought-in ewes mated from the end of January, with lambing, including maidens consistently averaging over 120%. Neil is adamant that the prime lambs he produces must be well muscled. He has tried other breeds but found they were behind Poll Dorsets for growth.

"They have excellent growth rates, muscling and hindquarter conformation and because of their frame size they produce lambs that continue to keep growing through to big heavyweights, our target market. Also their wedge shaped bodies and open faces make them very easy care. I can't remember the last time I had to pull a lamb at birth.

"With quality genetics that have these attributes you can always find a home for lambs, whether that is in a market for finished lambs, or to a feedlotter when times are poor. They are worth good money all the time," Neil said.

"We buy our rams from the Glen Devon stud in South Australia. The Hart family produce the type of rams we are after and put up a hundred for sale each year that are like peas in a pod. That consistency ensures we can produce a consistent quality lamb product that attracts buyer attention," he added.

Neil believes in conservative stocking rates as this allows him to finish lambs consistently despite the variance of climate in this area. "Every year is different in the Mallee. You need to be selling lambs when they are ready, not when you need money. You need to be able to read the season and the markets the best you can and try to get your management and marketing decisions right," he said.

Neil targets the heavy export weights, selling 40 to 80 at a time, mostly weighing in excess of 30kg carcase weight. He said the genetics he is using allow him to target that market efficiently and effectively but realises it is not for everyone.

Neil Hamilton is also a man who loves a challenge. He has been heavily immersed in the local Mallee Prime Lamb Group, running many lamb trials and has soaked up the information available.

"I always challenge myself to produce the best product I can, whether that is lambs or crops. Without accepting a challenge you're not going to push yourself to get a better result. Also to be successful you've got to be prepared to spend a quid to make a quid," he said.

"Too many want to buy \$10 ewes and \$100 rams and expect to produce good lambs. A superior \$1000 ram soon pays for itself."

Accepting these challenges has driven Neil to achieve regular sale topping results at Ouyen or at Bendigo if that market is more appropriate. He was the first producer to top \$200/head at Ouyen and recently received \$206/head at Bendigo for the first of the late 2013 drop lambs taken through to these heavy weights. The balance were sold at Ouyen over the next few weeks and before the new season suckers came in to the market in numbers, and he received over \$180 or better for the whole drop.

With a conservative stocking rate, it also opens up the possibility of opportunistic store lamb purchases. If the season permits and the lambs are available, he buys up to 200 lambs per year, providing they have a quality genetic background. Besides a concern for where future 'lamb factory' ewes are going to come from, his dilemma is the thousands of stubbles that are wasted.

"There is a huge potential income option being bypassed by total croppers every year. If you put something into sheep you get rewarded three times over. They could easily utilise these wasted stubbles and the returns could easily offset their fertiliser and chemical costs at the least," Neil said.

"I like a feed and I also like to feed my livestock well. Good feed allows the full expression of their genetic potential. It costs the same to feed poor ewes as good ones, so choose good ones. They are the 'factory' for a successful prime lamb enterprise," he said.

"Also, it is important to keep learning. You are never too old to learn something new that can improve your overall results," Neil concluded.



Ouyen prime lamb producer Neil Hamilton is pictured in front of mostly July drop Poll Dorset sired heavyweight lambs. The first of these made \$206/head at Bendigo and the balance all sold in excess of \$180 at Ouyen.



These SAMM/Merino cross ewes are the 'lamb factory' foundation for Neil Hamilton's successful prime lamb enterprise. Their Poll Dorset sired lambs were dropped in April with over 120% marked.