

# MERINO EWE RECORD SHATTERED

A new South Australian record price of \$261/head for commercial Merino ewes was achieved last Friday at Snowtown when Richard and Barbara Turner, 'Rayville Park' dispersed their Leahcim bloodline flock at their clearing sale.

This not only beat the previous record of \$180/head set last October at Warrawee Park, but shattered it by a staggering \$81. This may also be a national record, but is as yet unverified. This price was paid by Mark Kerin, Yoeval, NSW for 130 of the Turners' 2008 drop ewes that were pregnancy tested 'in lamb'. He travelled from NSW to purchase these ewes, buying through Dubbo based agents Christie & Hood. He then proceeded to purchase the top 138 2007 drop ewes for \$241/head, plus 110 2006 drop ewes for \$250/head.

Other successful buyers of the second pens of these age groups, or older drop ewes were Soil Management Systems, Orroroo, who paid to \$120/head for 3 pens and DP & VL Stott, buying through Landmark Loxton who purchased 2 pens to \$149/head.

There was exceptional interest in these ewes with enquiries from Qld, NSW and Vic as well as South Australia. This converted through to actual strong demand on the day which was very much focussed on the fact that they were very well presented breeding ewes from a well recognised bloodline and with a measured performance background. They also fitted into a non-mulesing management system, with the top young ewes all being non-mulesed. Such quality sheep are very hard to source and with current sheep meat market prices setting a high base, plus the recent rains in the eastern states fuelling strong grazer demand, good prices were assured.

The demand was so strong that there were still five active bidders on the top pen of 2008 drop ewes at \$220/head. Anthony Glasson, Thargaminda, Qld; Bill Holcombe, Goulburn and operating through Elders Clare; Mark Kerin's brother Nigel who operates separately from Mark; and David & Tim Graetz, Mundulla were the underbidders who pushed the top ewes to the new record levels.

Vendors Richard and Barbara Turner recently sold a portion of their property and leased the balance, due to a change in family plans.

"We sold to allow ourselves to take life a little easier and to help other family members to pursue their dreams. To have continued to farm on our own would have restricted our sons David and Craig and families in their endeavours," Richard said.

Commenting specifically on the record priced paid for their ewes, Richard said, "We are still in shock. It was certainly the highlight of the clearing sale. We had hoped to get \$150/head and when they hit \$200/head we couldn't believe it. Then they still kept going, so I think you could say we are pleasantly shocked," Richard said.

"Naturally we'd like to thank all the buyers and bidders for their support and also Andrew Michael who has classed our sheep and assisted us so much over the years in selecting the right rams to match our flock objectives," Richard added.

Selling agents were Landmark Snowtown Jon Reinke Agencies. Landmark's state livestock representative Gordon Wood said that he was very impressed with the quality. "They would have to be one of the best lines of Poll Merino ewes I have seen to date. Their superior genetics stood

out and this result is further proof that people will travel, compete and pay a premium for the right product," Gordon added.

Local manager Jon Reinke said he'd never experienced a sale anything like this in 40 years of involvement with livestock.

"However having said that, these February shorn and scanned in-lamb ewes were in first class condition and a credit to the Turner family. What we have to remember is that as clearing sale lines, these ewes were the vendor's top sheep and not just good quality discards that we tend to mainly see in off-shears sales. I think they sold according to their presentation," Jon said.

"The pendulum has certainly swung with a lack of income in cropping turning more producers into looking at sheep for a more reliable and better spread of income," he added.

Leahcim's Andrew Michael, who classed the flock and has supplied rams to the Turner family for 16 years, said they had always placed strong emphasis on easy care sheep with quality skins and advanced meat and wool performance data.

"I would say their hoggets were the equivalent quality of any stud or commercial advanced performance genetic sheep that I have seen anywhere in Australia. In the last seven years the rams they have purchased from us had average ASBVs of +4.1 for yearling weight and +16 for clean fleece weight. Their wool clip micron average was 20.9 for their breeding ewes and 18.8 for their weaners, with staple length of 105mm and 74mm respectively and a VM of only 0.8," Andrew said.

"That might go a long way towards explaining why producers who seek performance tested genetics would come from far and wide to compete for these ewes," he added.

Andrew Michael said that he had fielded three enquiries from the eastern states for similar ewes, if available since the sale.

"One of these was a prominent interstate agent who said several of his clients had achieved great success with our Leahcim bloodline sheep," Andrew said.

"He also indicated that quite a lot of his clients had tried some of the newer imported options in an attempt to increase returns and to ease management demands, but those who had also run the performance selected Leahcim blood Poll Merinos alongside them found the Poll Merino progeny were 10% heavier and the necessary culling percentage for water stain, or lack of performance was less than 0.05%, whereas it was as high as 30% in the other option tried," Andrew concluded.

## Sale summary

Sale was conducted by Landmark Snowtown, Jon Reinke Agencies.

Purchasers:

Christie & Hood, Dubbo NSW, A/C Mark Kerin, Yeoval; 130 x 2008 Drop, \$261ea.

138 x 2007 Drop, \$241ea; 110 x 2006 Drop, \$250ea.

Soil Management Systems, Orroroo SA, 84 x 2006 Drop, \$119ea; 160 x 2005 Drop, \$120ea; 76 x 2004 Drop, \$112ea.

Landmark Loxton SA, A/C DP & VL Stott, 136 x 2008 Drop, \$149ea; 109 x 2007 Drop, \$146ea.



**These impressive young 2008 drop Poll Merino ewes offered by Richard & Barbara Turner, Snowtown sold for a SA state record of \$261/head at their clearing sale last Friday. They sold to Mark Kerin, Yeoval, NSW.**



**Landmark Snowtown's Jon Reinke spots a bidder on this pen of 138 2007 drop Poll Merino ewes that sold for \$241/head, also going to Mark Kerin, Yeoval, NSW.**





**Mel Haynes, auctioneer (left) and Geoff Knapstein (right), Landmark's selling team offer the top pen of 2007 drop ewes at Richard & Barbara Turner's clearing sale last Friday. This pen sold for \$241/head to Mark Kerin, Yeoval, NSW, who also purchased the \$261 record shattering 2008 drop top pen.**



**David Graetz (right), Bordertown is pictured inspecting the Turner family ewes pre sale at their 'Rayville' property clearing sale at Snowtown, last Friday. David was one of the very strong bidders who pushed these ewes to record levels. The ewes in the foreground are the top 2007 drop ewes that made \$241/head, while the pen behind that he has just inspected are the \$261/head record breakers.**