



CONNEMARRAN

MERINO STUD

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Greetings to all from the team at Connewarran. Another year has passed. It's been a dry one, although thankfully many of us have received good rain recently. Our thoughts remain with our friends to the north. Wool prices have dropped, but they're still very good, and sheep and lamb prices are wonderful. Generally, we feel there is great cause for optimism. As always there has been plenty of activity at Connewarran. We'd like to share with you some of the things we are working on to make our business, and the businesses of our clients, stronger, along with a couple of things about which we are, quite simply, quietly proud.

Richard, Jenny, Hamish and Eli Weatherly



ECO-AGE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARDS

Congratulations to Richard and Jenny, who in September last year, along with Tasmania's Matt and Vanessa Dunbabin, were presented with the Eco-Age Environmental Stewardship Award on behalf of the Australian Woolgrower. In black tie, standing in front of over one thousand people in Milan, the award was presented

by Cate Blanchett, who explained, 'It gives me particular pleasure to present tonight's Eco Stewardship award to a group of people from my native Australia who are genuinely leading the sustainability charge, and in an aspect of the fashion industry that is foundational – the production of Merino wool.'

In receiving the award Richard and Jenny acknowledged the many great growers and farmers in our industry, 'We are very honoured and very proud. We feel that we are representing other woolgrowers, who have shown remarkable stewardship of their country'.

What a week! Yes, there was the excitement of rubbing shoulders with the glitterati, and getting a peck on the cheek from Cate, but perhaps more importantly, we got a crash course in the way that provenance and ethics are becoming a part of our product, and how our care for our land and animals is becoming increasingly important for us, as woolgrowers, to sustain a competitive advantage. There is a genetic component to this, and we discuss more on our efforts in this regard elsewhere in this newsletter.



SIRE EVALUATION TRIALS

With the publication of Balmoral 2017 drop trial data earlier this year, we now have a full decade of data relating to the performance of Connewarran sires in comparison with other leading sires in our industry. Over 200 pages of data and analysis have been produced as a result of these trials, with much to be gleaned from them. The overall trend from the results suggests that a decade on Connewarran blood will:

1. Increase clean fleece weight
2. Slightly reduce micron and C.V.
3. Hold body weight relatively constant

Each trial produced three or four indexes, which are an attempt to aggregate the overall merit of a sire in comparison to other sires (typically 15–20) in the trial.

- The Connewarran sire ranked in the top three of an index in 6 out of 10 trials
- The Connewarran sire ranked 1st in an index in 2 out of 10 trials
- The Connewarran sire ranked 1st in all four indexes in one trial.

The trials also measure a range of key production traits, such as clean fleece weight, body weight, micron, etc.

- Connewarran sires ranked above average on clean fleece weight in 7 out of 10 trials
- In aggregate, across the 10 trials, Connewarran sires added 5% to clean fleece weight
- Weaning weights and adult body weights were average over all, and were positive in 5 trials and negative in 5 trials
- Fibre diameter and C.V. was slightly below average.

It's important to note that these results are not measured against an average sire, but the very best our industry has to offer. What stud breeder would submit a sire for such public scrutiny without belief the sire was of very high merit? As such, we believe that these trials are a rigorous and comprehensive assessment of the value of the Connewarran product and demonstrate that it is worthy of consideration. In addition to the productive capabilities of Connewarran sheep, the qualitative aspects, namely wool type and quality, ensure that the sheep are very well suited to a high rainfall environment and their wool commands a premium in the market.

What will the next decade hold? We hope to give you some indications of some of our plans below.

OUTSIDE SIRE: MERINOTECH 100115

The 2019 drop of Connewarran stud lambs has a new outside sire represented, Merinotech 100115, who came about thanks to a great deal of research, a little red wine, and plenty of discussion, which can be summarised as follows:

1. We believe that the Merino is a dual purpose animal, it can produce food and fibre, but that its competitive advantage lies in the production of wool. No other breed can compete with a merino in producing apparel fibre, but other breeds can outperform merinos in the production of meat. As such, we aim to breed a balanced sheep, sound in both carcass and wool producing characteristics, but with slightly more emphasis on the production of wool
2. There is strong evidence from trials and the market place that our wools are of high quality, so our endeavours are mainly focussed on producing an increasing amount
3. Because our sheep already perform well in terms of production of clean fleece weight, we believe that the best way to make further gains, on a whole-of-farm basis, whilst maintaining a balanced animal, is through increased selection pressure
4. We feel that the most significant path to increasing selection pressure is increasing twin lamb survival at birth, followed by survival of lambs over summer, followed by maiden conception
5. The clearest and simplest path to these objectives is to strengthen the EMD, FAT, and WEC credentials of our sheep.

Merinotech 100115 is a sire who has been tested in Western Victoria, through the 2013 Elders Balmoral Sire Evaluation Trial. He acquitted himself very well in our local conditions, leading the DP+ index and ranking in the top three of all other indexes. He was a trait leader for EMD, FAT and WEC, demonstrating his capacity to transmit these characteristics to his progeny. In addition, his progeny exhibited a long-stapled, bright white wool. It is the combination of local progeny testing, complementarity of wool type, and outstanding performance on the key traits we are seeking to strengthen, that has led us to this sheep. We look forward to presenting his progeny to you in 2020!

MULESING UPDATE

We currently have a sire entered in the 2018 drop North East Sire Evaluation Trial, Connewarran 15024. This is a non-mules site and, with 15024 being one of our less plain sires, this is a good test of how our sheep can perform in a non-mules environment. Although direct data has not been collected on incidences of breech strike, data to date has shown that 15024 progeny had:

- The 2nd highest rate of survival
- The 2nd lowest losses
- The 2nd highest weaning weight
- An average post weaning weight (end of summer)
- The 3rd highest greasy fleece weight.

All of which would suggest that fly strike has not been a major constraint on productivity in this instance.

On farm at Connewarran, we are intending to trial the liquid nitrogen ‘Steining’ process of breech modification in the commercial flock this spring. This process qualifies as un-mulesed. Early feedback from contractors has indicated that this process has merit and that Connewarran blood sheep, with their relatively loose skins, are likely to respond well to the process. We’ll keep you up to date with what we learn in our 2020 newsletter.

CONNEWARRAN ‘TOMBLE’, AKA TOMAS WILLIAM WEATHERLY

SIRE	Connewarran Hamish	SIRE OF SIRE	Connewarran Richard
		DAM OF SIRE	Connewarran Jenny
DAM	Connewarran Eli	SIRE OF DAM	Medellin Marco
		DAM OF DAM	La Ceja Carmen
BIRTHDATE	23/10/18	BWT	2.6kg
WWT	8.0kg	FAT	PLENTY!



At 9.12pm on 23 October 2018, incredibly, 364 days and 12 hours after the birth of Tomble's late sister, Isabel Amalia, Hamish and Eli were joined by Tomas William Weatherly. Early on he's demonstrated a clear taste for premium fibres, loving being placed in the AAAAM bin, kicking up quite a stink about being placed in the LKS, and banned by his Mum from visiting the dags! Tomas is the 6th generation of Weatherly sheep breeders in Australia and it is a joy for all to see him happy and healthy. He reminds us each day just how lucky we are to be in a genuine family business, and to serve so many other passionate family businesses just like ours through the merino stud. Connewarran Tomble will be on display at Site 367 at Sheepvention. So, when you come by this year to pick up your coffee and brownie, please do take some time to inspect the cream of the 2018 drop!

**WHERE YOU CAN SEE
CONNEWARRAN RAMS IN 2019**

4th, 5th & 6th August
Hamilton Sheepvention, Site 367 (No pen of 5 this year)

1 pm, Wednesday 16th October
Annual on-property ram sale

Any time
By appointment to inspect on property

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