

Orrie Cowie breaks new sales ground

In an Australian first, the Orrie Cowie Merino and Poll Merino studs based at Warooka staged a genuine stud ewe reduction sale last week through the Auctions Plus network.

This was the first stud Merino ewe sale held solely on this system and a pioneering marketing move by Orrie Cowie principals Dennis and Heather Dalla in a bid to reduce their stud breeding ewe numbers. The catalyst was enterprise restructuring following their son John's return to the property, including a reassessment of the number of their highly productive and fertile stud ewes needed for their ongoing ram breeding program in the revamped property management plan.

Offered on Auctions Plus with extensive background and performance description, plus visual assistance through video, enhanced the health and well-being of the PTIL ewes, thus eliminating the need for potential buyers to travel. Dennis Dalla said that following a good promotion program, awareness of the sale was very good with Australian-wide interest and over 4000 hits on-line, converting to 3300 viewings of the full catalogue, 240 logged in for viewing the March 7th - 8th sale, including over 100 registered bidders.

Catalogued in 98 lots, a 65% clearance at auction resulted in 285 of the PTIL ewes selling to a \$730 top price and averaging \$359.93. Negotiations are continuing to sell the remaining ewes to another producer who has shown strong interest.

"Considering this was the first sale of its kind, it was a very good result," Elders Yorktown manager and co-assessor Adam Pitt said.

In paying tribute for the success of the sale Dennis Dalla said, "Recognition is required for the effort and commitment from Elders and the Auctions Plus team. While it was an all-round team effort, special mention should be made of assessor Scott Thrift, Tom Penna and Adam Pitt in particular. This whole exercise when you look at the big picture has been a huge success, regardless of what the clearance ends up at."

"These ewes have over eight decades of rigorous high selection standards behind them, with the most sought after of our bloodlines being Exceller, Earle, Eclipse and Prince, plus Collinsville lines such as Majestic and Imperial.

"At their most recent shearing, the sale ewes on offer cut from 7 to over 9kg of skirted fleece into the press with 11 months wool growth, while the hoggets cut 5kg with just 6.5 months wool growth," he added.

The \$730 top priced ewe was a single Merino ewe offering lot, the 2.5 year old RP14, sired by the \$28,000 Coddington Poll 'Eclipse' and PTIL to O.C. Majestic 623, a massive son of the \$30,000 Collinsville Majestic. At her January 12th shearing, the 2.5 year old, 78kg and 4 score ewe cut 9.2kg of 20 micron and 69% yielding, crimped, white and well-nourished wool, typical of Orrie Cowie wools.

While the sale received widespread interest and buying support it was near neighbours, Garry, Gwen and Joseph Murdoch, North Cowie who made the winning bid on the top priced ewe, one of four single ewe lots they purchased.

“They certainly did their homework; they picked out extremely good ewes with outstanding depth of pedigree and performance,” Dennis Dalla said.

South Australian buyers accounted for 37% of the sales, but it was the state of New South Wales that provided the strongest buying support with 55% of the sales. John Dalla’s return home has allowed more extensive showing and displaying of the Orrie Cowie sheep over the last few years, and the stud’s many successes at Dubbo, Sydney, Hay and the just completed Canberra show has obviously heightened the awareness of the qualities of the Orrie Cowie sheep in that state.

The balance of actual buying support came from Victorian buyers.

In highlighting the emphasis that Orrie Cowie places on the quality its breeding ewe flock, Dennis Dalla said, “To date many have underestimated the breeding value of their ewes. With the benefit of forty years of experience, in my opinion the ewe pedigree is the most important ingredient in breeding your next top sire. Those who supported this sale probably agree.”

Photo caption: Pictured with Graham and Susan Coddington, and Heather and John Dalla is the ram, Coddington Poll ‘Eclipse’, purchased for \$28,000 by Orrie Cowie at the 2013 Bendigo Sheep & Wool Show. This ram has blended in so well with the Orrie Cowie flock and is sire of the \$730 top priced ewe in this sale.