

Kurralea still strong despite drought

After such a promising start to the 2007 season in the Ariah Park region, the season turned badly with little prospect for any crops yielding grain. However, prime lamb industry stud and commercial buyers from 3 states competed for the tremendous quality line up of Poll Dorset and White Suffolk rams at the Kurralea annual ram sale. Just 34 rams were passed on the day from the 316 offered; 23 of these being in the last 45 lots as demand finally ran out.

Principals Jim and Kim Prentice and family are to be congratulated on presenting such a high quality offering in such a poor season, especially considering the big, long and open faced and very well muscled rams had been grown out only on grass or failed cereal crops.

The highlight of the sale was the strong Poll Dorset stud ram competition, especially during the top half of that offering. Lot 6, Kurralea 267/06, an impressive son of Valma 435 with super and well balanced Lambplan ASBVs was offered first. After strong competition between bidders at the sale and others on the Auctions Plus network, it was Grant & Bryce Hausler, Janmac Poll Dorset stud, Goroke, Victoria who won the bidding duel at \$12,000; bidding on Auctions Plus. This was ultimately the sale's top price.

A terrific young August drop son of Kurralea 809, the stud's on-property Poll Dorset record priced ram at \$26,000 when sold in 2005, catalogued at lot 10, was offered next. Again the Auctions Plus network provided the winning bidders with Clayton and Andrea Rowett, Ulandi Park stud, Marrabel, SA purchasing him for \$10,500.

Leigh Clifford, Gowanbrae Poll Dorset stud, Furner via Millicent, SA attended the sale and topped results from those present. After securing lot 4 at \$7,500 through his independent livestock agent Denis Manhood, he then successfully bid for lot 5 at \$11,000. These two rams were both sons of Valma 435 and besides being great structurally, they also excelled for performance. Mr Clifford has regularly purchased top Kurralea genetics.

SJ & MJ Male, Henty, NSW went to \$8,000 to secure another impressive August drop K809 son at lot 1, while MJ & D Page, Peshurst, Vic paid \$6,500 for lot 2, a son of K412, a ram used heavily in the stud and sold last year for \$8,000. They later added a Deepdene 52/04 son for \$2,400.

James Patterson, Goolagong, NSW, the purchaser of K412 last year for \$8,000, this year bid by phone to \$5,500 to purchase lot 9, another K809 spring drop son.

Paying \$5,000 and \$2,000 was Verge Pastoral Co, Euroa, Vic for K412 and K426 sons, while the Doorlan and Murndown Poll Dorset studs combined to purchase a son of Deepdene 52/04 for \$6,000 through agents LMB Linke, Hamilton.

Astute flock ram buyers were able to compete at the bottom end of the stud offering with 8 of these successful in securing these top rams from \$800 to \$1,200. Glenfarne Investments, Forbes, purchased 3 at \$1,000 each, while Hovell Pastoral Co, Burrumbuttock also purchased 2 at that price. Grange Pastoral Co, Duverney paid \$1,200 for one, while BM & RM Adams paid the top of \$1,500 for one of those stud rams for flock use.

The demand for White Suffolk stud rams was somewhat disappointing. While the Kurralea White Suffolk stud does not yet have the high profile of the Kurralea Poll Dorset stud, there is no disputing the quality. A supreme all breeds title in Melbourne last year is testimony of this, with the stud picking up reserve breed champion in Melbourne this year in the stud's only show outing. At this stage in the stud's development it has tremendous growth and length in particular in its White Suffolks, but the ASBVs for muscle on most are not yet up where the Poll Dorsets are; this being a work in progress for the Prentice family.

MA & TJ Ireland, Tullibigeal, NSW; Peter and Carly Brown, Grenfell, NSW; and Ian and Pam Kyle, Bairnsdale, Vic couldn't believe their luck, picking up their pick White Suffolk stud rams, (weighing up to 139 kgs at 17 months) at only \$1,800, \$1,800 and \$2,000 respectively.

The Melbourne reserve champion sold for only \$2,000, going to commercial breeders J & G Storer, Crookwell, NSW. Eight of these 12 stud rams went commercially, with Robin Jackson, Lake Repose Partnership, Hamilton, Vic picking out 2 great carcass rams at \$1,000 each, while also purchasing 2 at \$900 each for HV & IB Trompf, Dunkeld, Vic.

No doubt the poor season over most of Australia contributed to restricted budgets for the flock rams, with most bidders hoping to operate in the \$600 to \$800 area. The trouble with this was that to secure select rams it was necessary to go beyond this figure or be on the right leg in bidding.

FS Falkiner, Deniliquin were seeking large numbers of flock rams from both breeds and were prepared to bid to \$800 to get them. Only 20 Poll Dorsets and 3 White Suffolks attracted bids above \$800 in the flock ram sections, indicating how tight buyers' budgets were. Falkiners purchased 43% of the flock ram offering on the day.

There were eight buyers who were prepared to go above \$800 and secure the elite performance sires in the catalogue and they included B & N Gallagher, Shelbourne, Vic (7 Poll Dorsets from \$900 to \$1,000); Viv Sinclair, Mulvan Pty Ltd, Cowra, NSW (6 Poll Dorset rams from \$600 to \$1,000); WW & JH Kember, Ganmain (6 Poll Dorset rams, all at \$900); and NL & MA Trembath, Barellan (4 White Suffolks from \$700 to \$900).

Mr Sinclair only selects Kurralea rams that are plus 2 for their muscle ASBV and -1 for fat, with as high growth ASBVs as possible. He puts these over Border Leicester/Merino first cross and SAMM ewes. Last year he sold over 2,000 lambs up to 45 kgs, with nearly every one fitting into the preferred 2 to 3 fat score range.

Brian Gallagher said the Kurralea stock were recommended to him and he liked what he saw on his first buying visit to the stud. He said he selects on structure first and then figures and will put his purchases over both Merino and first cross ewes

Other volume buyers in the flock rams included McDonald Farming, Cobdoblin (11 Poll Dorsets from \$500 to \$750); Bygalorie Pastoral, Tulliegal (10 Poll Dorsets from \$500 to \$750); while Lake Repose Partnership, Hamilton, Vic added 11 White Suffolks from \$600 to \$800 to their 2 earlier purchases from the stud catalogue.

Sale Summary	Offered	Sold	Top	Gross	Average
Poll Dorset stud rams	33	33	\$12,000	\$111,600	\$3,382
Poll Dorset flock rams	182	157	\$1,000	\$113,350	\$722
White Suffolk stud rams	12	12	\$2,000	\$15,000	\$1,250
White Suffolk flock rams	89	80	\$900	\$54,550	\$682
Overall	316	282	\$12,000	\$294,500	\$1,044
Agents	Elders Ltd Wagga Wagga				
Auctioneers	Michael Glasser & James Tierney				



1. Lucy and Ben Prentice hold the \$12,000 top priced ram at the Kurralea sale, Poll Dorset sire Kurralea 257/06, purchased by the Hausler family, Janmac Poll Dorset stud, Goroke, Vic, via the Auctions Plus network.



2. Ben Prentice holds the Kurralea sale's second top priced ram @ \$11,000. Also pictured are the buyer, Leigh Clifford, Gowanbrae Poll Dorset stud, Furner (centre) and his agent Denis Manhood, Denis Manhood Livestock, Millicent.



3. Ben Prentice, Kurralea holds this top White Suffolk stud ram, purchased for a bargain \$1,800 by Carly and Peter Brown, Grenfell, NSW.



4. Key flock ram buyers at Kurralea were Viv Sinclair, Mulvan P/L Cowra, (6 rams to \$1,000); volume buyer Stuart Murdoch, FS Falkiner, Deniliquin, NSW and Brian Gallagher, via Bendigo, Vic (7 rams to \$1,000).