

weekender.

RAMS READY TO ROCK

BY GREGOR HEARD

ROCKLYN Merino Stud, Grenfell, NSW, has a long history dating back to 1938 when the Diprose family set up the stud.

However, this distinguished past has not meant current studmaster Ralph Diprose has not kept an eye firmly on the future in regards to breeding decisions.

"ASBVs (Australian Sheep Breeding Values), along with visual and measured data, play an important role in allowing us to make better decisions in terms of breeding and genetics," Mr Diprose said.

Rocklyn has used ASBVs since 2001 when data was sent to the Merino Validation Project before Rocklyn joined the Sheep Genetics program in 2005.

Mr Diprose said he felt the use of ASBVs allowed Rocklyn clients to be well informed in their decision making when choosing a ram from the stud.

Rocklyn also benchmarks its rams by entering sire evaluations and has entered most sire evaluations in the South West Slopes region since 2003.

Mr Diprose said that Rocklyn sires have always achieved above average results in these evaluations.

In the latest report from the MerinoLINK 2019 Drop Sire Evaluation at Yass, Rocklyn's sire 170184 has done particularly well in the post-weaning analysis.

Mr Diprose said he felt the ram exemplified Rocklyn's goals of balanced breeding, demonstrated with the data showing he was a trait leader in all indices.

The progeny of 170184 had the heaviest average fleece weights and body weights.

"This long-term testing and evaluation regime ensures that buyers at our on-property ram sale in September are able to select high performing rams," Mr Diprose said.

"This year, all rams will be in the top 10 per cent for the DP (Dual Purpose) + Index, and the majority will have ASBVs in the top 10pc for Ycfw (yearling clean fleece weight) and Ywt (yearling body weight)," he said.

The stud is run on the Diprose family's 2400 hectare property Elon, between Cowra and Grenfell.

Along with the stud, which comprises 900-1000 ewes, there is a commercial Merino enterprise of 4000 breeding ewes and a 1600ha cropping program.

Rainfall is 600mm per annum, split roughly evenly between summer and winter and nearly the entire property is arable.

On the stud side, the flock has been carefully built up over many years, with genetic gain fast-tracked in recent years through the use of DNA parentage to establish full pedigrees and 50K Genomic testing for all ram progeny.

Mr Diprose said Rocklyn began using artificial insemination (AI) in the 1980s, using outside sires besides superior Rocklyn sires to make significant genetic gains and offer top genetics to clients.

Rocklyn now has an annual AI program involving 700-800 ewes.

"We worked to get a big framed, heavier cutting sheep without compromising the wool quality," he said.

In general, he said the ewes now cut around 8-9kg of fleece each year, depending on feed availability and stocking rates.

However, he said wool quality has been maintained.



Rocklyn Merino Stud has been immortalised on silo art in Grenfell.

ROCKLYN MERINOS

Grenfell, NSW

- **Principal:** Ralph Diprose
- **Contact:** 02 6343 6331
- **Sale:** September 10
- **Offering** plain bodied, big framed Merinos

"We still target that bright, soft handling wool around the 18-19 micron mark."

He said patience and balance have been the keys in developing the Rocklyn ram of today.

"We haven't just targeted one trait at the expense of others, we've looked at yearling growth rate, fibre diameter and clean fleece weight as critical, but we have also recognised you can't just focus on one or two traits at the expense of everything else."

The stud also places great importance on achieving high fertility with the scanning results for the stud ewes due to lamb in July / August showing a potential of 158pc for the AI and AI back-up ewes, and 152pc for the

natural mated maiden ewes.

Mr Diprose said the stud's emphasis on breeding plainer bodied sheep began 15-20 years ago and now means the commercial flock is non-mulesed.

Sires suitable for non-mulesed flocks are offered at the annual on-property ram sale.

The cropping side of the farm business is an integral support to the livestock.

Mr Diprose said dual purpose grazing crops provided valuable late autumn / early winter feed for the pregnant ewes, while lambs in the system are finished on the crops.

An on-property ram sale is held annually in September.

This year's event falls on Thursday September 10 and will feature mainly poll rams with some horned rams.

Mr Diprose said much of the clientele was local.

"We do a lot through our own South-west Slopes region and then pushing down into the Riverina and across to the Central West.

"One of the most satisfying aspects of the stud is seeing the positive results that our clients are achieving," he said.

For a full report on the Rocklyn genetics visit www.merinosuperiorsires.com.au





2020 RAM SALE

THURS 10TH SEPT

Inspections from 10am - Sale at 1pm

60 Hogget Merinos and Poll Merinos

View the sale catalogue online early September at www.rocklynmerinostud.com.au

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Displaying at the SWS Merino Field Day