

CALCOOKARA STUD



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Hi People,

I'm finally getting around to this newsletter! Well, the end of 2020 wasn't much better than the start here. We did get a good dousing of spring rain, but sadly it was too late for our crops. It equates to another failed season crop wise (3 in a row) which is wearing very thin. We did however get a good flush of spring feed which was a great relief.

In October we had a very ordinary experience with what is now our ex-bank. We had been working on purchasing part of a neighbouring property for more than 12 months. We had attempted privately well before it hit the market which resulted in at least getting a price given to us back in March 2020. We thought this was a good step for us, so handed all the necessary information to our then bank manager. To cut a long story short we were meant to have the offer available in June. June, July, and August all went by with numerous phone calls and no answers, then in September the property hit the market for expressions of interest to close at the end of October. Needles to say we were very disappointed but thought we'll just have to go through the process now. We had lifted our business to 85% equity and stood firm, even though we were in our third year of drought, so we felt confident enough. Our biggest mistake was not changing banks in August. To cut to the chase with only 10 days before expressions were to close, we still had nothing from the bank and also found out that our information still hadn't left for Adelaide to be approved. After handing all necessary paperwork & budgets over in May! This obviously made our blood boil so in desperation we contacted our managers boss via email (because you can't actually talk to anyone at a bank) expressing our dismay over the whole process, expecting to hear something from someone. The silence was deafening!! With 48 hours left we were told we had no support from this less than average, unprofessional institution we called our bank for 25 years. We were left high and dry, struggling to come to terms with what had just happened and missed out on our opportunity to expand through the fence. We are pleased to say that the person handling this lost his job soon after and we have now changed banks. We wanted to share this with our clients so that you don't make the same mistake we did and trust your bank. If what you want isn't happening, especially if you are in a good position to expand on or off farm, change. What we have learnt from all of this is to respect & trust nobody from a bank as they are there to serve you!!

2020 wasn't all bad for us. We had a ripping sale with the best line up we have put up yet. Our average was only up about \$80 so good for everyone, but we put an extra 5 rams in with a total clearance on the day. We also went on to sell every ram kept for private selection during spring and summer. We received a lot of positive feedback from the few field days and inspection days attended for 2020. I really do believe that our sheep are just getting better & the fact that we are now doing embryo transfer with our very best ewes should only enhance this, along with a 2-300 strong AI program annually. At Calcookara we are investing heavily into our genetics to lift all areas of production for us and our clients. Proof of this is the fact that we are averaging over 4kg in 6 months at about 70mm. All of this on wrinkle free animals at 19 micron. We stopped mulesing in 2016 and have had no

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issues since. The only chemical for fly prevention for our flock is on the lambs at marking time.

We were actually due in October for our 6 monthly shearing, but because of a lull in the market at the time, we opted to crutch them with the intention to shear in March at 12 months. However after setting the ewes up for mating in November we soon realise that they would be well over length, so decided that a January shearing at 9 months would be the best option. That is the beauty of working on a 6-month shearing, it gives you much flexibility for management of stock as well as dodging troughs in the markets. Overall, we shored 833 stud ewes and averaged 6.5kg/head of 19-micron wool. Averaging 94mm length for the 9 months. A result that we were extremely proud of. I don't think we could ask for much more when you take the seasons into account.

Speaking of seasons, we were sure that after 3 droughts in a row that 21 would start reasonably early and kick off with early feed etc. for lambing. WRONG!! Apart from a fluky rain on our coastal country our ewes have had to lamb down in bare paddocks again. We are still buying hay & to my astonishment after keeping about 120T of grain back for feed we've just bought more! However, as I finish this newsletter, we've just had a wonderful 25mm. Bring it on!!

On the home front we were thrilled to have Jamie find employment straight out of school. He landed a job with Ramsey Bros. in Cleve as a diesel mechanic starting in late January and is loving it. He shifted into our house next door & seems to be loving his own freedom. We are very proud of the young man he has become.

Cameron continues to challenge himself down at Sacred Heart in year 11 & is cruising with many A's to his tests and assignments. A great achievement for him, & finally Levi has just had a good report on his shoulder after having nerve surgery this time last year which meant he regained the use of his left arm following his motorbike accident. Hopefully in another 12 months he will regain most or all of the strength back in it.

On a more sombre note, just prior to easter sadly Dad found out that the prostate cancer had escaped the prostate. We won't know much more until later in the year & wish him all the best with his treatment & offer our full support for the future.

In March we attended the SA Merino Field Day at Burra. We were quite apprehensive about this as we only had paddock run rams (& ram lambs at that). When you are at these days 95% of the animals are fed to the hilt. This is something we are trying to avoid. Sadly, we have found out both the hard and expensive way that many of these animals just don't perform once in the paddock There are quite a few horror stories that come from shedding rams, & we've been on the end of a couple of those. To put it bluntly there are quite a few of them over cooked which can render them infertile, sometimes for life. We have had this with 3 sires purchased in the last 6 years. We've had no issue with getting our money back (\$33,000 in total), however we don't find this out until it's too late to find another sire or sadly we end up with a heap of dry ewes.

The take home story is "Buy Paddock Run". If a stud has a special built ram shed or echo shelter be very wary. A lot of other issues come with shedding such as many shedded rams

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will be more prone to develop kidney stones and premature death due to being basically obese with little to no exercise during this period. Many don't live to make old bones. Sorry, I'll get off of my soapbox. Back to Burra. Anyhow we backed our ram lambs in but also took 2 of our embryo donor ewes over as well. These ewes stole the show on the day and attracted much attention. They are very plain bodied ewes with extreme staple length and wool quality. Upon bringing them home I shored them at right on 12 months of growth with one of them cutting an impressive 9.3kg of pure silk at 165mm length. Please check them out on our face book page if you haven't seen them, they're exactly what we are aiming for.

As you know 400 broke his leg in 2019. He had just come out of his plaster when we did his AI program in December 2019. We preferred to use fresh semen from him as long as its quality was up to it. Which Margie thought was fine on the day. We did about 160 ewes to him thinking how lucky we were, only to scan them in March and find only 6 scanned in lamb. Obviously, the semen wasn't as good as we all thought on the day. Unfortunately, we had also purchased another ram that was infertile. Add in a few dry ewes from every other group and you have your worst nightmare to deal with as a stud. Knowing numbers were going to be low we (after much anxiety and thought) called Margy and had to do another AI program in April for an October drop. Fortunately, by this time 400 had had sufficient time to recover from his broken leg and the AI program was a success. **This means there will be a younger group offered in our sale this year. Please take note of this.**

For those of you that do face book we ask you to click on the like tab at the top of our Calcookara page so that you receive our posts, of which there have been quite a few of late. It's a great way to stay up to date with what's happening here & with our clients' flocks. This years rams are steaming along nicely, they have had little to eat in the paddock at times but look good thanks to barley feeders. There's plenty of quality coming through especially for the size of the drop we had. We haven't seen much of them as they are where they belong. In the paddock. Soon we will have them in to choose 10-12 for the Eyre Peninsula & South East field days. Last time they were in we were very happy with the way that they are progressing and hope that with this wonderful rain they'll finally get some green feed soon. We are hoping that we have enough demand this year to place 100 in our auction & will be in touch soon to verify this. We are well aware that as demand grows our sale team must grow with it to keep prices in tow. All rams will be sold on property. Please remember that we have a pre-sale inspection day of the whole sale team 1 week prior to the sale. This caters for a lot of our local buyers or anyone that may not be able to make it on sale day, to possibly bid on Auctions Plus on the day with confidence. Please put these dates on your calendar.

Calcookara Pre Sale Inspection Day 12th of August 1pm to 4pm.

Calcookara On Property Sale 19th of August. Inspection from 11am, sale at 1:30pm.

Cheers, Brenton, Jane and Boys.