



Leicester Lowdown

December 2019

Issue 8

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From the President's Pen

Welcome to the 2019 issue of the Leicester Lowdown. I hope this year with the severe drought affecting a large part of eastern Australia, has been as kind as possible for you and that your sheep are doing well, under the difficult circumstances.

The Association has produced and made available to members, very attractive gate signs, which I hope will be put on good display and help breeders promote the breed.



In April the Tasmanian breeders held an open day and an English Leicester Lamb Dinner in the evening. The event proved to be very successful with several mainland breeders attending the event. The dinner was attended by several non- English Leicester breeders who were interested in the taste of a heritage breed.

During the past year, 100 Australian English Leicester embryos, were collected from 20 ewes and 3 rams and sent to members of the Swedish Leicester Sheep Association. In July Anne and I had the pleasure of visiting Sweden, to see the resultant lambs and I can report that the Leicester breeders there are very pleased with the lambs.

English Leicesters have been well represented at various shows throughout the year. I thank those breeders who have gone to the trouble and work to put their sheep before the public as this is good publicity for the breed and the breeders involved.

Brenton Heazlewood

President English Leicester Association of Australia.

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Vale Victor Goring

All English Leicester breeders will be saddened to have heard of the recent death of Victor Goring from Wellcamp, near Toowoomba, Queensland.

Victor founded his flock in 2015 with the purchase of 10 ewes and 2 rams from the Ostlers Hill stud of Ethel Stephenson. Victor's stud was only the third registered stud of English Leicester's to be based in Queensland since the first flock book was produced in 1898. Victor was a great promotor of the breed and during the few years that he had the sheep he showed them at many country shows as well as the EKKa.

The good news is that the whole flock has been purchased by George and Paul Willows of the "Nant" stud at Evandale in Tasmania. This is an important purchase as it saves this blood line from going to the meat works. The breeds indebted thanks must go to George and Paul.

The English Leicester Feast

On Friday, April 12 the English Leicester breeders in Tasmania held an open day to showcase their sheep, followed by an English Leicester feast to demonstrate the eating qualities of their meat.

The event was organised by Paul Willows of the "Nant" stud at Evandale. Four English Leicester breeders from Victoria attended the day as well as Tasmanian breeders and those interested in the English Leicester wool for craft work.

The day commenced with morning tea and an inspection of George Willow's sheep at Evandale before travelling to Brenton and Anne Heazlewoods at Whitmore. After a light lunch a tour of Heazlewood Seeds cleaning plant was undertaken before inspecting sheep from the Melton Park stud.

The highlight of the day was the dinner at night with over 35 people in attendance. This was held at The Sebel Hotel's, Bluestone Bar & Kitchen in Launceston. The menu consisted of English Leicester lamb presented in three different ways by chef, Michael. The evening was a great success with everyone enjoying lamb being presented in not the usual way. A very talented group of ladies put on a significant display of cleverly designed crafted garments made from English Leicester wool which very much added to the theme of the evening.



BLUESTONE
BAR & KITCHEN

Lamb Ramen

Homemade noodles / soy marinated egg / smoked lamb backstrap / sticky honey lamb ribs

Marinated Lamb Cutlet

Parsnip puree / fried chive gnocchi / blueberry & rosemary sauce / pea tendrils

Lamb Galbi

Confit garlic potatoes / bok choy / coriander / chilli / galbi sauce

(Korean style marinade consisting of apple, soy and garlic)

Fig cake

Brandy snaps / crème Anglaise / rhubarb gel

Bluestone Bar & Kitchen

12-14 St John Street, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia 7250
+61 (0)3 6333 7522
www.bluestonebarkitchen.com.au



Dinner guests were treated to an impressive display of English Leicester craftwork.

Photo by Steven French

Embryos to Sweden Brenton Heazlewood

In 2016, I was asked by a member of The Swedish Leicester Sheep Association, with whom I had been corresponding with for some time, if it would be possible for Australia to send English Leicester embryos to Sweden. My initial research indicated that this would be possible and in early 2017, the Swedish Association asked the English Leicester Association of Australia if any of its members would be interested in being part of a program, to send embryos to Sweden.

Jason Southwell and myself indicated that we would be prepared to supply ewes and rams for this project. As the program did not get the official request for 100 embryos from The Swedish Association until after we had put the rams out with our ewes for the 2017 mating, it was decided that everything would have to be put back until 2018.

After much discussion with Adrian Veitch (Allstock WA Pty Ltd) and Jean and Moozie Niekerc from Murray River Genetics, Moama, NSW, Jason and I delivered 20 ewes and 3 rams to Murray River Genetics, in early March 2018 to start the program. The sheep were in quarantine at Murray River Genetics for 3 months, during which time the 100 embryos were successfully collected. They were then sent to Adrian Veitch in Western Australia, where he combined them with other embryos that he was sending to Sweden.

Adrian Veitch travelled to Sweden and implanted 38 embryos in 2018, resulting in 11 ram lambs and 11 ewe lambs being born in April 2019. The breeders who purchased the embryos are very pleased with the resultant lambs, as they have a good growth rate, confirmation and are exhibiting more muscle than the Swedish lambs.

In 2018 there was 1164 Leicester ewes registered with the national Elitlamm sheep program in Sweden belonging to 84 Leicester breeders.

The Leicesters in Sweden, along with the Gotlands (Sweden's main breed of sheep), could be described as pelt sheep. When being assessed the main consideration is what their pelt will be like when they are dead. The 'whole' sheep is given limited consideration and the wool is looked at with the resultant pelt in mind.



This is because the pelt industry has always been a big industry in Sweden, and it is in many cases, the main income from the sheep.

All sheep are shorn twice a year and housed over winter. No sheep are tailed (it has been banned in Sweden since 1980) and ram lambs are not castrated.



In general the Swedish Leicesters could be described as having a bigger frame than the Australian sheep. They are longer in the legs, have a good long body and have a big barrel with well set in shoulders and a good backline. Some tend to be weak behind the shoulders.

The wool can be a bit variable and uneven but the better woolled sheep exhibit the true Leicester wool. As they are shorn twice a year it is difficult to accurately judge their wool.



The Swedish Leicesters do not have any wool on their legs (bare legged like the Border Leicester) and are bare headed with no top-knot. Many have brown hair on the back legs.

Pigmentation. This is quite variable on the sheep I have seen. In general they are quite spotty on the face. Some ewes can have very good pigmentation on the ears and around the eyes, exhibiting the true 'blue' colour the

Typical Swedish Leicesters

breed is known for, but have a pale nose and white hooves. Some ewes have a dark skin colouration (the Swedish breeders say that these sheep will have a good pelt) but have the white wool.

The Leicester Longwool has been in Sweden for a long time. There is some strong evidence that Alstromer (1685-1761), who introduced the Merino into Sweden also brought Leicesters to Sweden. Leicester's from England were again introduced in the 1930's which evidently improved the sheep for some time.

Hamilton Sheepvention judges report Pam Tait

Allan and I stayed with Shirley and Graham Foster going each day to the Show. There were four breeders so it was good competition. Colin Taylor, Nick & Vanessa Wootton, Wendy Beer and Jennifer Shields. Colin is an excellent exhibitor and brought his sheep out well, with his older ram gaining Champion of the breed and Supreme Longwool ram. I know he did well with his ewes too. The Woottons brought their sheep out in top condition too which saw them win Champion ewe; she had a beautiful fleece and conformation was tops even though she was to lamb any day but being two year old ewe she was good. The others are having a tough season with feed for their sheep, which were good but small and the wool a bit dry. I commented and congratulated them for their effort.

They weren't disheartened but encouraged to keep up the good work trying to have them well fed for next time.

It was a great time for me renewing friendships and getting to know more sheep farmers. Allan had a great time too.

My friend Diane whom I went to Bendigo with last year, was judging the Corriedales just beside me and she was busy.

We had quite a few classes to judge. I also judged the Lincolns. The Christies and Helen Raven exhibited. There might have been more as I can't remember. All good fun and so nice that the sheep are all haltered! we don't do that in New Zealand and it is so hard to study the sheep.



Colin Taylor with his group of 3, with Barry Shalders and Nick Cole



Colin, Hannah Miller Beth McDonald, Pam Tait and Diane Rawlinson



Colin with his Champion Ram

Vanessa Wootton with her Champion Ewe

Benalla Strong Wool Fair judges report Brenton Heazlewood

It was a pleasure to have presided over the English Leicesters at the recent Benalla Strong Wool fair. It was pleasing to see so many sheep at the show with some of them traveling a long distance to be there. While some of the sheep lacked condition due to the dry situation, the overall standard of the sheep presented was of a good standard with the Champion ewe and ram being extremely good representatives of the breed. Both had very good structure and confirmation and exhibited true to type wool with good style, crimp and luster.

It was good to see some first time exhibitors presenting their sheep as this is a good way for them to learn and compare their sheep against others. The Champion Novice Sheep of the Fair was won by first time English Leicester exhibitor, Jennifer Shields from Dookie.

Colin Taylor won the Champion and Reserve Champion English Leicester Ram and Ewe awards, the Reserve Champion Ram and Ewe in the Interbreed Championships, best woolled sheep of the fair and The Ray Brooks Transport Interbreed Group of 3 sheep - any age.

The show organisers must be congratulated for the effort that was put into the day. It was good to see all aspects of the strong wool sheep being represented with 15 fleece entries and crafts also on display. The delightful day was topped off with wonderful country catering.



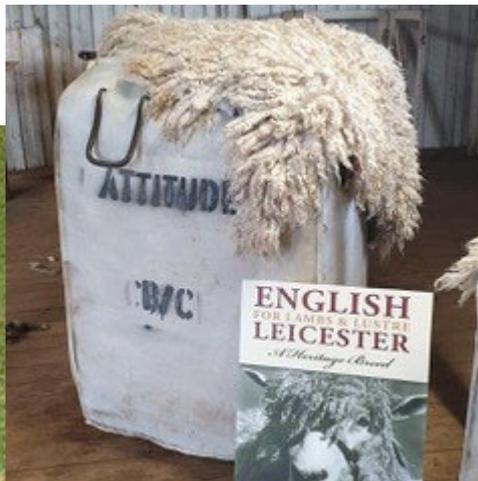
Colin and Del Taylor at Benalla

English Leicester Gate signs!

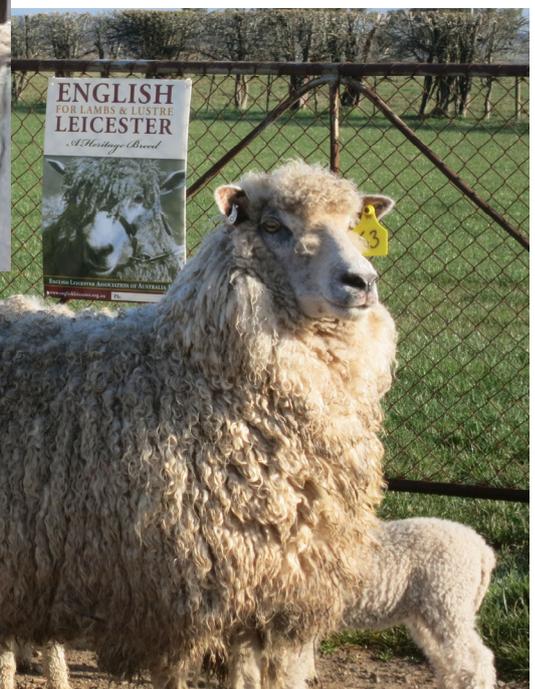
Fiona Hume:
Macquarie Plains, Tasmania



George Willow: Evandale, Tasmania



The English Leicester Association of Australia recently commissioned gate signs for all members. Here a few in action. If you haven't received your gate sign yet please contact the secretary.



Brenton Heazlewood:
Whitemore, Tasmania