



Leicester Lowdown

December 2014

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From the President's Pen

Welcome to our Christmas newsletter. I hope that everyone has had a good lambing and are therefore helping to keep the English Leicester breed alive and at least stable in numbers.

I thank those breeders who exhibited sheep at shows during the year. Sheep were shown at the Hamilton, Launceston, Warrnambool and Geelong shows as well as the Strong Wool Breeders Sheep and Wool Fair and the Bendigo Sheep and Wool Show. There is a lot of work required to prepare sheep for showing but it is an excellent way to put our breed before the public.

As breeders of this historically important breed of sheep we face the same challenges that our fellow breeders do in other countries of the world. That is low numbers of sheep and therefore a lack of genetic diversity within the breed. This is not helped by the fact that we can only in practice introduce new genetics from New Zealand. It would benefit breeders worldwide if the trade in semen was possible between all countries.

On a more positive note it is good news to learn that the UK Rare Breeds Survival Trust have moved the Leicester Longwool out of the Endangered category to the Vulnerable category. We congratulate the UK breeders for the effort they have put into looking after their Leicester Longwools.

Our AGM was held in October and I thank those members who have once again accepted positions in our Association. The office bearers elected were:

President – Brenton Heazlewood
Vice-President – Colin Taylor
Secretary – Margaret Kingman
Treasurer – Lisa Docherty

Do not forget that the Board of Directors and members of the Leicester Longwool sheep Breeders Association of the United States have invited breeders to join them in celebration of twenty-five years since the re-establishment of the breed back to North America. Celebrations will be centred around the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival to be held on May 2 and 3, 2015.

Welcome to new members

We can once again welcome new members from WA, Peter and Jo Gelmi from Burekup. Peter, who is an Animal Production teacher is interested in the heritage sheep breeds. It is pleasing that once again English Leicesters have a presence in WA and we wish Peter and Jo well with their sheep.

Brenton Heazlewood - President

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Classy classless sheep show

Marg Kingman

The concept of a sheep show without competitive classes is not something we are used to in Australia, but whilst on a farming tour of the U.K. earlier this year, that is just what John and I were able to see at first hand.

Every second year, the National Sheep Association holds its Sheep Event one day at the end of July on the Three Counties showground in Malvern Hills, Worcestershire, from 9a.m. to 5p.m.

It is like a trade day where sheep breeders, breed societies, sheep equipment manufacturers, veterinary product companies and all things sheepy, get together and promote their industry to the general public, politicians, and each other.

The Event is preceded the night before with a formal dinner for farmers, industry representatives and trade stand holders and is an important industry get-together.

On site at the showgrounds, there are 200 trade stands plus 60 Breed Society and individual sheep breeder stands. All the displays are judged on the day.

Trade stands need to be interesting, friendly, informative and eye-catching, whilst the breed society stands aim to be attractive, welcoming, informative, including sheep which are true to type and prime examples of the breed and its purpose.

The Leicester Longwool (English Leicester) stall was well

presented and informative. Unfortunately there were no sheep on display, but a good selection of lustre wool products and two breed representatives made sure visitors were well informed.

There is a wide assortment of fleeces from various breeds and these too are judged and displayed for all to see.

Other competitions include Shearing, Young Shepherd of the Year final, National Lamb Carcass Selection, and cooking.

The Young Shepherd of the Year is judged on seven different tasks

- sheep handling skills,
- sorting finished lambs,
- demonstrating vaccination and dosing techniques,
- shearing,
- utilising an ATV,
- health and management questions,
- plus a mystery challenge which is revealed to them on the day.

There are 20 finalists who have won regional heats.

Out on the arena the Wire Fencer of the Year challenge takes place, where teams of fencers compete against each other to complete a section of farm fencing. Such competitions are very popular in the U.K.

A video competition wherein sheep farmers explain what they love about their job is voted on by the public.

Non-competitive entertainment includes clinics, demonstrations, and workshops on farmland trees, vaccination techniques, solar panels, youth required to sustain the sheep industry, outlook for the sheep industry, sheep parasites and diseases, electronic tags and data bases.

On the arena, an auction of working sheepdogs is held while the dogs take it in turn to work sheep and show their abilities. 40 dogs were demonstrated and sold on the day.

One of the trade stands featured Australian Kelpies and generated much interest.

The Farming Tour also took us to the Great Yorkshire and Royal Welsh shows where there was much competition between sheep breeders, however this trade day at Malvern was refreshingly different.

Without competitive classes there is a greater opportunity for the public to mix and mingle and speak to breeders and breed society members. None of the pavilion was cordoned off and it was a relaxed hub of information.

Out doors was a colourful hive of activity. Non competitive display might be a viable alternative for some of our show societies to consider.

Web sites:

www.nationalsheep.org.uk

www.sheepvent.org.uk

Sheep are highly intelligent

By: Robert Suter, Statewide Veterinary Officer—Sheep, DEPI Attwood

Sheep are known to possess intelligence that is in some ways equivalent to that possessed by people, and often exceeds that of other animals.

It is known that sheep can remember a face in the mob for about two years. We also know from experience that, if we teach weaners where the water is, they will remember for the rest of their lives (in the same way as imprint feeding works). If you think about the evolution of sheep, remembering a face in a mob means that a lamb can find its mother, and its mother will teach it how to survive: what to eat, where to find water, and how the mob migrates from season to season to find the best feed and shelter.

I was struck by this aspect of their intelligence when I had the opportunity to accompany a flock of sheep to their summer pastures on the high mountains (above 1000 metres) when I was in Norway. I was amazed at how the lead ewes in the flock knew their way up the mountain, following the same route every year; and how the mobs stuck together, even when they encountered other flocks. After the sheep had spent four months free to roam on 35 000 hectares at the top of the range, the farmer (whom they could also recognise) would collect them from one of their regular locations to return them to the barn for winter, rarely recording a lost sheep.

In some aspects of cognitive thinking—using reason to find a solution to a problem—sheep are closer to humans in ability than even monkeys and apes. For this ability, sheep are being used as models in human research into degenerative brain diseases such as Huntington's disease, to better the lot of humans.

So in no way should we consider sheep as 'dumb animals'; they are just stoic.

Original source: Sheep Notes Spring 2014, published by Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Victoria

Mans debt to sheep – Author unknown

The debt which man owes to the sheep is beyond reckoning.

If he is cold it provides him with clothing, if hungry with meat.

Its fat gives him candles for illumination.

From its intestines he makes catgut for his stringed instruments of music.

He casts sheep's eyes at the lady of his heart and draws her attention to his elegant appearance by wearing gloves made from the same animal's skin.

If exposure to severe weather should make his face sore and his nose like a watchman's lantern, he applies ointment extracted from the grease of sheep's wool.

If he composes a poem he thinks worthy of immortality he will write it on parchment, which ought to be made from sheepskin, even if it isn't.

When he courts slumber at night he wraps himself in a blanket supplied by sheep- when he rises refreshed at cock-crow, or a little later, he steps on a carpet from the same benefactor.

For food- light- warmth- comfort, decoration, the sheep has been something of a Fairy Godmother to man, and all it asks in return, is to be allowed to crop the grass of his fields or his hill-sides without disturbance by ravening wolves- and to live its life in peace and quiet contemplation.

Long may it do so.



Spring
lamb



Melton
Park

Mongolian Barbeque

– Brenton Heazlewood

While Anne and I were in Mongolia recently on a farmer's tour we were treated to a traditional Mongolian barbeque. When we arrived at the river bank site for the barbeque we were greeted by some of our hosts in traditional dress singing traditional songs.

Formalities over, we were told that the sheep for the barbecue was to be killed and dressed in the Mongolian way if we wished to watch. The sheep was laid on its back being held with the front and back legs outstretched. A small cut was then made just below the brisket and the third man pushed his arm through the cut and up into the chest cavity to squeeze the heart with his hand to kill the sheep. The reason for this method of killing was firstly to have the sheep bleed internally so the blood could later be saved and used, and secondly it was against their beliefs to have any blood spilt on the ground.

The three men then started to skin and cut up the carcass. All the meat was cut into small pieces, the stomach paunch emptied of its contents but it and all the other stomach parts kept. The blood was scooped out of the carcass and later used for black pudding. The only parts we saw put aside were the head, spleen and gall bladder.

While the sheep was being prepared they had 2 large pots of water boiling over a fire and one of warmed fermented mare's milk. Once the meat had been cut up it was put into one of the pots of boiling water and stirred occasionally. While the meat was cooking the ladies cleaned all the entrails, some of which were filled with the saved blood to make blood sausages and cooked in the second pot of water.

Once cooked the meat was served along with plenty of Vodka and the warmed fermented mare's milk. The time from killing the sheep to eating was about one hour. We could at least say it was fresh.

Sheep crossing a 4 lane highway in China



Bendigo Sheep Show – July 2014



Ethel Stephenson once again exhibited her English Leicesters at this year's Bendigo Sheep and Wool Show. Ethel, who is a passionate breeder and conservator of the breed, exhibited 7 sheep which were magnificently presented. Visiting the show this year were several New Zealand breeders who presented Ethel with a special ribbon to mark the occasion of their visit.

Pictured is Ethel with 3 of her sheep assisted by Nea Burgun and Pam Tait, President of the English Leicester breed committee of the New Zealand Sheepbreeders Association. They are holding the ribbon presented to Ethel by the New Zealand visitors.

Through the hands of an English Leicester wool user

Rebecca Kissling is a Textile Artist, Fashion Designer who has fallen in love with the lustre and versatility of English Leicester wool.

Rebecca said, "Who can resist those luscious lustrous locks !!! English Leicester has become one of my absolute favourite wools to create with. Not only is it very feltable it has by far, more lustre in the wool than many other sheep breed. The softness and aesthetic beauty of the fibre gives you an inkling of the magnificent animal from which this wool is produced. I am completely sold!"

"I am completely sold!"

Rebecca has a Studio and Gallery in Battery Point, Hobart where she creates individual, unique wearable garments handmade from the best natural fibre. Visit Rebecca's website at www.rebeccas.com.au



Rebecca standing with one of her felted wraps featuring English Leicester locks, her red neck collar also features the lustrous locks.

Did you know?

The word *felt* comes from the German *falzen*, meaning to groove or join together, and accurately describes a characteristic of wool fibre.

Felt

The surface of the wool fibre is distinguished from hair by overlapping scales that project towards the tip of the fibre. This means that, when the fibres are subjected to moisture, heat and pressure, they can move in only one direction. This causes them to become entangled and to form a fibrous mass by clinging together, of felting. The word "felt", which comes from the German word "fulzen", carries out this thought, for it means "to groove or join together". It is the ability of these serrations to felt that made sheep the most valuable of all animals to man, even in prehistoric times.

From: The story of wool – Leggett

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

S C H K E E D P G R E O W T F
 W R L O T E B R E C T H A Y L
 E I A R U N M T E I L T H E O
 M M Y H A E A E V H E E I G C
 H P U T A A L I V E S T O C K
 O E N T E F Y E A R E O L D S
 H D E S T E P G N I R A E H S
 I H M D S O C A L L O E D A H
 O A G R G E N T A T V W O Y G
 R I E E S A R S O L I D S R H
 E R E H P E I S E C B A A A L
 L E D P A T D W O W R Z T W O
 O T D E T A C I T S E M O D H
 E W E H S G I V H E H O B I R
 T H T S N R O H O T L W I N S

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Circle each letter one by one. Each letter of the sheep word search grid may be used in more than one word. **When the word search puzzle is complete, read the remaining letters left to right, top to bottom, to learn several interesting facts about sheep.**

WORD LIST

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| BAA | HORNS |
| CRIMPED HAIR | LAMB |
| DOMESTICATED | LIVESTOCK |
| EWES | MEAT |
| FLEECE | MILK |
| FLOCK | MUTTON |
| GRAZE | RAMS |
| HERBIVORES | SHEARING |
| HERD | SHEPHERD |
| HIDES | WOOL |

Merry Christmas !

Q: How do sheep greet each other at Christmas?
 A: Merry Christmas to Ewe!

Office Bearers

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 Brenton Heazlewood

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 Colin Taylor

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 Margaret Kingman

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 Lisa Docherty

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.englishleicester.org.au

