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Grower sticks to his formula

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CARNGHAM Merino woolgrower and ram breeder Sandy Jelbart knows that wool marketing starts with growing good quality wool and it continues with careful preparation and presentation.

After 30 years of growing wool and now as a ram supplier from his Strathcona stud, Mr Jelbart is recognised for breeding uncomplicated Merinos that produce bright, white and lustrous well-nourished fleeces with good style and character.

He resolved to grow “armfuls” of 19-20 micron wool back in his 20s, long before he took up stud breeding, because he believed it was the least volatile diameter category in the market.

“I want to grow good gutsy 19 and 20 micron wool and a fair bit of it.

“We are cutting a fair quantity of wool and the price peaks and troughs are nowhere near as extreme.”

Mr Jelbart said the 19-20 micron Merino was also the most versatile sheep that there is.

“You can do anything with a reasonable frame and cutting an armful of wool.”

Although he has dabbled in wool futures, Sandy said he now sells his wool after he has shorn, rather than try to hit price peaks.

“This year it happened to be perfect timing because it was near enough to the peak of the market after shearing the sheep in late April and selling the wool in late May,” he said.

The cheque for his 63-bale 2011 clip from 1900 sheep was double last year’s result. All the adult fleece lines sold for 1050-1150 cents a kilogram greasy, were 103-111 millimetre staple length, and with the good season the wool had greater tensile strength.

“There is no substitute for green feed,” he said.

“All the ewes of all ages cut 7.5 kilograms and tested between 19.5-21.5 micron.

“Obviously it was out a little bit in diameter this year because we had tremendous feed, but that type of wool was selling beautifully at the end of May,” he said.

The April-shorn August/September 2010-drop lambs cut three kilograms of 18.2 micron wool that sold for 1480c/kg greasy and tested with a 74mm staple length and tensile strength of 42 Newtons/kilotex.

He said feedback from buyers this year gave him encouragement to keep doing what he was doing with his breeding program and wool preparation.

The operation’s pre-shearing preparation involved ensuring the Strathcona sheep were clean and well-presented for shearing and seeing there is adequate staff in the shed.

“There are three blokes looking after three shearers and it all works pretty well.”

He said it was important the shed staff had enough to do a good job with the wool and he worked closely with the classer.



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