



POLWARTH

SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

2023 - it's June already

By Kaye Potter

I want to start by apologising to members for being quiet in the early part of the year. In mid January, I had a total hip replacement and needed to prioritise recovery and rehabilitation. Five months down the track I'm feeling strong and enjoying pain free movement.

My routine of ringing around the states once again confirmed the variable weather conditions members have experienced in the first half of 2023, with extremes from 'the best autumn' to 'I haven't joined the ewes'.

Unfortunately, the common thread was the downturn in lamb and sheep prices.

While historically we all know this is part of farming, it is still a bitter pill to swallow as it impacts our bottom line, forces us to take cost saving measures and slows the rate of improvement on our properties.

Although a bit fickle, the wool market appears to be holding. As an example, at Fairview in January 2022, wool between 19 and 22 micron sold between 1157 and 1037 cents. In February 2023, wool between 19 and 22 micron sold between 1318 and 1053 cents.

Our broker made the comment that buyers were discerning, paying a reasonable price for good wool as opposed to wool which just filled their orders.

Best ever autumn!

Over on Kangaroo Island in South Australia, David McArdle reported that it's the best autumn he's had since being at Parndana.

While Talisa and Jock live in a dryer pocket of the island at Haines, about 30 minutes from David, Talisa said both properties have spring flush type grass at the moment.

What a bonus for Taljar and Taljade to have such excellent conditions as they head towards lambing in early June.

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The results of a perfect Autumn on Kangaroo Island can be seen top and middle.

Right, the hogget ewes have also done really well, please excuse the dirty bums.



Blue Gum Park, TAS—John Watson

John runs a small flock of Polwarths on small acreage about 20km south of Devonport. The area did have some good rain late summer/early autumn where the grass got away, however now, the grass is green but it is dry and they could do with 2 inches of rain.

John lambs in mid-July so that the young growing lambs can take advantage of the spring flush. He loves the temperament of the Polwarth; if there's a problem during lambing he simply picks up the lamb and the ewe follows him into the shed. Each year his shearer enjoys shearing the rams who just sit there without struggling.

John works for Elders in merchandise, selling 'anything and everything'. He 'lives in his car' servicing the north west or Central Coast, an area which receives an annual rainfall of 50-60". The dominant agriculture includes cropping, cattle and dairying. Sheep are secondary, mainly composite breeds used to clean up crops. The area grows a diverse range of crops including spuds, poppies, pyrethrum, wheat, barley, onions, broccoli, cauliflowers, cabbages, brussel sprouts, beans, peas, berries, spinach, celeriac, sweetcorn and vineyards.

John commented that in the last 5 years there has been unlimited spending in agriculture, however fortunes have now changed. According to John, there is a shortage of labour in the area with one dairyfarm investing in robotic milkers to overcome the problem. Mostly though, farmers have adopted a conservative approach and John predicts there will be another shortage of spuds later in the year.

In his spare time, John breeds and shows chooks. He is regularly invited to judge which can involve travelling interstate as well as around Tasmania.

Excellent learning for CMC students

Students from Catherine McAuley College recently experienced some extra learning with one of their ewes coming up to lambing.

The students noticed a ewe with discharge and looking miserable. She was brought into the shed where a vet initially treated her for a urinary tract infection. However, a few days later she aborted her lamb. Follow up treatment from the vet included antibiotic and anti-inflammatory injections.

Teacher, Scott Vaughan said the incident provided valuable learning for the students and demonstrated one of the potential problems associated with lambing.

Below: Students watch on as the vet administers an injection. Students will have some graphic pictures for their assignments, showing the process of a ewe aborting her lamb.



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Dry dams and held off joining!

At Carinya Haven near Roma in Queensland, things are not going so well. The dams are dry, the stock are on bore water and Alan has held off joining.

The Aisthorpe family live some 480km northwest of Brisbane. Alan describes the area as on the edge of the desert and in a pocket which can miss out on rain. The grass was good until March and since then it's been a dry downhill slide. If they are lucky, they may get rain in June/July but its more likely to be September/October.

Fortunately at the start of the year, Alan locked in a contract price with a local butcher to gradually sell his hoggets which dress out at around 30kg. According to Alan, it's no good trying to sell lambs here, they are all mad on Dorper's!

If its not going to rain, there is one consolation. The clear crisp mornings turn into beautiful warm blue sky days with not a cloud to be seen. This sounds idyllic to a Victorian living in the south-west of the state, where there is cloud cover much of the time.

Top right: Dam that has dried up recently

Middle right: Bore water flowing into dam

Bottom right: Dam that is holding bore water for storage

Below: Looking across the paddock with some ewes in the background.



Vale—Barbara Dohle (Life Member)

Flock No.256—Sazli (1952 to 1999)

Recently, Greg and Kaye Potter were pleased to attend the funeral of Barbara Dohle, a life member of the Polwarth association who died on 25th May 2023 at the amazing age of 95.

Barbara was born in 1928 on the family property 'Sazli' located due south of Dunkeld, VIC. She was home-schooled by a governess up to the age of 11, before going to Alexandra College in Hamilton and then onto boarding school in Melbourne.

Her childhood was largely spent outdoors in the bush and on her parents farm where there were endless pet lambs, dogs, horses and animals of every kind.

Following school, Barbara completed a Diploma in Horticulture at Burnley Horticultural College and became a qualified wool classer. As you can imagine, these were unusual qualifications for a woman in those times.

While away at boarding school and then college, Barbara returned to the family farm as often as possible to work alongside her father, Leigh Simpson.

They started a Polwarth flock in 1946 with 30 CFA ewes from Kooraweera (flock no. 70) and Jellalabad (flock no. 14). In the ensuing years, the flock increased in size and was registered with the association in March 1952 under the name of Miss Barbara Simpson.

Barbara showed at all the district shows, often winning much to the annoyance of the men she competed against.

As her father's health deteriorated, Barbara took on more of the farm management with the help of a jackeroo. The jackeroo soon learnt it was better for him to cook the breakfast while Barbara got the stock horses ready! Incredibly, the jackeroo Don Hearn, was one of Barbara's pall bearers at her funeral.

Barbara and John Dohle were married in 1961 and settled on a farm southeast of Dunkeld aptly named 'Jobara'.

Their family of three daughters, Joy, Kay and Lyn survived and thrived amongst the sheep and farm work as Barbara preferred to be outside working on the farm. She was no stay at home mum and housework was something to be done quickly!

Barbara and John's Polwarth stud, Sazli, was regis-



tered with the Polwarth association from 1952 to 1999, a period of 47 years. During that time stud numbers remained relatively stable at around 200 animals. Sazli was well known for its excellent sheep and outstanding wool.

For the first twenty or so years, Barbara and John used Kooraweera (70) rams. This was followed by rams from Wolbunya (124), Bowen (333), Willow Vale (419), Mt Alma (294), Challicum (125) and Homeleigh (213).

Into their 70's, Barbara and John sold the farm in 2001 and moved into Dunkeld. Both, were awarded life membership of the Hamilton P&A Society and in 2003, life membership of the Polwarth Sheep Breeders Association of Australia. Sadly, John passed away in March 2004.

Barbara was an extremely community minded person, volunteering for organisations including Red Cross, the church guild, the Dunkeld Arboretum, the Dunkeld Museum and Dunkeld Information Centre.

In 2009, Barbara received an Australia Day Award in recognition of her service to the Dunkeld Community. At 85, in 2013 Barbara was further recognised by the Victorian Council on the Ageing as a Senior Achiever. Both awards were richly deserved. Community service was not just something Barbara did, it was who she was.

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Barbara Dohle obituary continued.....

Barbara, who never saw herself as old, remained independent and active into her 90's. When daughter Kay noticed she had become a little unsteady on her feet, she purchased a walking stick for Barbara to use. "Oh goodness no", says Barbara, "Walking sticks are for old people". Lyn, then had the idea of getting her a 'trekking pole' instead. Barbara thought this was far more appropriate!



Daughters, Joy, Kay and Lyn described Barbara as a strong, independent, hardworking, gifted woman who lived a simple purposeful life. Underneath her steady, understated persona was a delightful sense of humour and quick wit. She had a cheery disposition, a ready smile and a positive outlook on life. Barbara especially loved the Grampians, birds, wildflowers and animals. Farming was in her blood and alongside John and their family, these were the things she treasured in life.

Thanks to Kay Dohle for allowing me to use Barbara's eulogy notes to write this article and to Lyn Dohle for supplying photo's of Barbara and John and eldest daughter Joy.

Feeding hay and grain since January

Wayne and Maxine Walker live about an hour northwest of Hobart at Gretna. Conditions there in the first half of the year have been dry with only 50mm of rain. The sheep have been on hay and grain since the start of the year and they are hoping to get rain before it gets really cold.

One bright spot in the year has been the birth of their first grandchild, a little girl Lexi, born on 30th March to daughter Nicole and partner Zac. Congratulations to all.



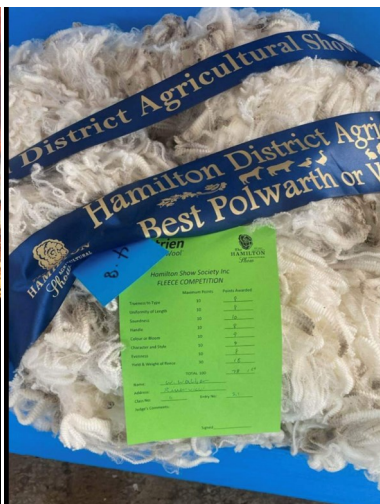
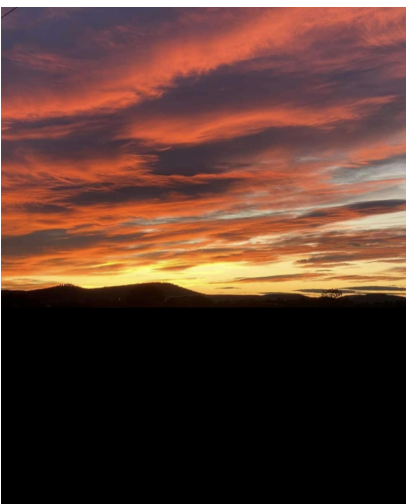
Right: Wayne and Charlotte at the Brighton Show

Below right: Charlotte at the Campbell Town Show

Below: A blue ribbon for Best Polwarth Fleece at the Hamilton Show

Below left: Sunset from the verandah at Gretna

Left: New granddaughter, Lexi



Back to Back International Wool Challenge

The Back to Back International Wool Challenge is a timed event in which teams compete to process the wool from a sheep's back into a jumper in the fastest possible time.

Each year, teams from around the world participate in the challenge during the month of May. The Australian part of the challenge was held in Ballarat on 22nd May as part of the Heritage Festival.

Our number 1 flock, Tarnswarncoort has had a long association with the event. Wendy Dennis is the co-ordinator and responsible for starting the event back in 1994 to raise funds for cancer research. Nearly 30 years later, Wendy is taking more of a back seat, leaving Tom and Jason to organise the sheep and other practicalities.

Held at the Ballarat Mining Exchange, two teams of seven spinners and knitters assembled with their spinning wheels and knitting needles, in front of a stage, where the sheep were blade shorn and a large digital clock kept track of the time. The 'blue' and 'green' teams worked diligently for 10 hours to spin and knit their jumpers which unfortunately, they did not finish in the time allowed.

However, their competitive juices have kicked in and I feel sure they will be back in 2024 to improve on their times. During the course of the day the event was well supported by an estimated 1200 members of the public who watched, asked questions, were fascinated with the blade shearing and keen to touch the sheep and fleeces.

Top right: The Blue and Green teams pictured before the start of the challenge

Middle right: The Blue and Green shearers blade shearing the wethers. The teams started spinning as soon as the wool was shorn off

Right: MC, Judith interviewing Back to Back Coordinator, Wendy Dennis (back right) with the green team focussed in the foreground

Below: The Blue and Green teams happily show off their nearly completed jumpers as the clock ticks over to 10 hours



SA autumn show circuit

Back in early autumn the Polwarth breed was well represented at the Central Districts Shows Association which takes in the Angaston, Mannum, Tanunda, Mt Pleasant and Mt Barker local shows.

Narang Polwarths, Murrawooda Polwarths and Bel-Antha Polwarths had a busy few weeks supporting their shows with sheep and fleece entries, as well as, taking on judging roles.



Above: Mt Barker 150th Show—Murrawooda Polwarths won Champion Polwarth Fleece and Champion Lambs Wool amongst a quality line-up of fleeces. (We may need to advise the show committee of the correct spelling of Polwarth, not Polworth).



Above: Mt Pleasant Show—Our studs entered a staggering 15 fleeces in the fleece competition. Narang's ewe fleeces won 1st and 3rd in their classes.

Right: It was a great day out for Narang as Peter and Caroline's ewe went on to win Supreme Champion Long Wool Exhibit against a very handy Border Leicester ewe.

In celebration of the 150th Mt Barker Show, Peter is pictured with local Mandy Lintern, who was dressed in period costume for the occasion.



Above: Tanunda Show—Narang and Murrawooda put together a quality line-up of six ewe lambs. The blue ribbon went to Murrawooda.

Right: Mannum Show—Bel-Antha and Murrawooda put together an outstanding line-up of 11 fleeces for the Mannum show. Murrawooda took out first in the ram and ewe fleeces.



Above: Tanunda Show—Narang's Peter Williams and Caroline Sanders with the assistance of Kayla Starkey showing the Breeders Group with their blue ribbon. The group of 3 still had their milk teeth.

Right: Mannum Show— Sam Edwards and Josh Wiltshire from Murrawooda (middle and right) won the Champion Polwarth Ewe.



Campbell Town Show, TAS

Riverview represented the Polwarth breed at the Campbell Town Show held on 2nd June, entering both the wool and sheep competitions.

Life member, Ken Arnold was judge and commented that he was impressed with the quality of sheep presented by the Walker family.

Bottom right: Judith Nicolson presented the Supreme Champion ribbon to Wayne Walker with judge Ken Arnold looking on.



ASWS - Bendigo

14-16 July 2023

Judges

Joaquin and Fernando Martincorena from Uruguay

Judging

Friday 14th July at 9.00am in the Regional Exhibition Centre.

Entries Close

Friday 16th June at 4.30pm

Schedule

Online at

<https://sheepshow.com>

Junior Competition

Students from Catherine McAuley College will participate in a Junior Handler Class and Junior Fleece Competition.

The Junior Handler class will run in conjunction with the main judging with students holding sheep on behalf of the breeders.

Polwarth Dinner

Friday 14th July at 6.00pm at the National Hotel

Includes presentations.



Adelaide Show

Polwarth Feature Breed

2-4 September 2023

Judge

Peter English

Judging

Saturday 2nd September

Major Sponsor

Rabobank

Entries Close

Fleece competition: Friday 7th July at 5.00pm

Sheep competition: Friday 7th July at 5.00pm

Schedules

Online at

<https://theshow.com.au>

