

Sizzling Coolawang 30 year celebration sale

(Photo & story courtesy of Catherine Miller, Stock Journal)

The James family's Coolawang Border Leicester stud celebrated its 30th year of breeding with a total clearance and outstanding demand for its high quality stud and flock rams. The good crowd of prospective buyers contained 34 registered bidders, including many Coolawang regular buyers.

The celebratory sale continued the run of strong Border Leicester sales this year and reflected the strength of the prime lamb market and the quality on offer. It also added to the high expectations for upcoming first cross ewe sales.

In the break up of the sale results, Trevor and Judy James and family sold seven selected stud rams to a top of \$4,100, plus 95 flock rams all sold for an average of \$1,139. This was up more than \$300 on their successful 2009 sale and topped off a very successful year for the stud to date.

Coolawang has had a great showing season with many awards that included the champion Border Leicester ram in this year's Adelaide Royal feature breed showing; this ram going on to be awarded the interbreed longwool champion ram title. He is regarded as one of the best the stud has ever bred and despite many enquiries, it is being retained by Coolawang for stud breeding duties.

On the back of this success, it was not surprising that the stud experienced its best stud enquiry at their on-property sale for many years. The \$4,100 sale top was knocked down to first time Coolawang buyers Simon and Jeff Makeham, North-South stud, based at both Walcha and Gundagi in New South Wales.

The Makehams have followed the progress of Coolawang's breeding program with strong interest for the past few years and selected the late July 2009 drop ram for his size, excellent breed type and all round balance. An extra feature was that he had the highest eye muscle depth at scanning.

"He is a really good carcass ram and I also like his strength of bone. He is a ram that we believe will match in very well with our ewes," Simon said.

The sale topper was a son of New Zealand sire Te Taumata 133, part of the semen bank that the James family purchased in 2008 from the renowned Oaks stud at Kerang in Victoria after it was dispersed.

While at the sale, the Makehams negotiated the purchase of five Coolawang stud ewes to add to their 180 head breeding flock.

For just one bid less than the sale top, Rob Starling, Telang, Kingston outlaid \$4,000 for a top quality ram that was the winner of the 1.5 year old woolly ram class at this year's Hamilton Sheepvention and was also leader of their Breeders' Group of 1 ram and 2 ewes that won the Paternoster Trophy for the best British Breeds group at the Adelaide Show. Rob also paid \$1,500 for another of the stud rams.

Repeat buyer Pat Lawlor, Marjong Park, Furner and the breeder of the top priced first cross ewes at the 2009 Naracoorte sale was back again with his agent Denis Manhood from Millicent. They purchased eight rams at the top end of the catalogue, paying a top of \$1,900 and averaging \$1,650 for their selections.

The Millicent area again provided particularly strong buying support, with BJ & RJ Smith purchasing 12 rams between \$900 and \$1100. GB Gilbertson & Sons, Rendelsham snapped up 8 rams in a similar price bracket. A feature of the sale was the buying strength in the \$1,000 to \$1,300 range.

JW Green & Sons, Naracoorte also bought 8 top quality rams to a \$1900 high.

Strong bidding was sustained to the final lots in the auction and even into the impromptu mini-auction where 11 more rams were quickly snapped up at an \$850 average.

In commenting on the sale's success, stud principal Trevor James said, "The strength of the sale was definitely the repeat buyers; most have bought before but the difference was that this year they all turned up together".

Trevor said Merinos and first cross ewes remained the two dominant breeds in the maternal sheep flock of Australia which was at critical low levels and first cross ewes had a niche for producing fast growing prime lambs which could be turned off in late August to mid September during periods of shorter supply, thus reaping the higher prices on offer then.

"Buyers were looking for quality rams to produce quality first cross ewes. If the ewes are good enough they can produce lambs in a short period of time. Two weeks ago prices were \$5/kg and now they are \$4.60/kg and heading to \$4.40/kg, so clearly the best money is for those lambs that can be sold slightly out of season," he said. He also made mention of the large number of ewes being bought out of Western Australia by SA breeders and this was adding extra demand on studs to supply additional rams that were not necessarily available.

Elders auctioneer Laryn Gogel commented that the Coolawang sale offering was the most even line up for many years and said the top end rams were particularly good.

He said many buyers had already sold their first cross wether lambs for excellent money and suggested the increased sale average may still only equate to the value of five first cross ewes at upcoming sales.

Sale summary

Flock rams	2010
Offered	102
Sold	102
Top Price	\$4100
Average	\$1136

Agents: Elders

Auctioneer: Laryn Gogel



Simon and Jeff Makeham, based at Gundagi in NSW bought the \$4100 top priced ram at the James family's annual Coolawang ram sale for their North-South Border Leicester stud. They are pictured with Lachie (front), Angus and Trevor James, Coolawang, Mundulla West.