



24 November 2003

Australian Wool Innovation must do more to inspire all woolgrowers.

The finalisation of the recent wool poll ballot and the stability of the Australian Wool Innovation Annual General Meeting have been welcomed by the Australian Wool Growers Association.

The wool industry experiencing extremely volatile markets and ongoing pressures from drought in some regions is in desperate need of strong committed leadership, industry unity and above all, widespread industry participation.

"Now is not the time for the industry to be faced with politics, division and squabbles," says AWGA Chairman Mr Will Crozier.

"Whilst the Wool Poll result offered no surprises, it is of ongoing concern that a downwards trend of participation in the ballot has been witnessed. "

"In 2000, the wool poll achieved 51% participation yet in 2003 only 38.7% of eligible voters actually participated in the ballot for the level of compulsory wool tax for the ensuing 3 years" said Mr Crozier, Chairman of AWGA.

"Equally for the AGM of AWI only to just manage a quorum suggests that many woolgrowers are not relating to the activities of the industry owned and funded R& D body" says Mr Crozier.

In 2003, 28,996 eligible wool growing voters* who by their inactivity, have lost faith in the system, or are feeling disenfranchised, or simply did not have the desire to participate, highlight the necessity for significant industry consultation into the future of the research and development activities undertaken by AWI.

The significant and increasing numbers of non participating woolgrowers, who still are required to pay the compulsory levy, are of concern to the Australian Wool Growers Association. The industry must address this trend and work towards an inclusive participation in all aspects of industry funding and expenditure.

For instance the recent announcement of the AWI funded Australian Sheep Genetics Database ASGD, has raised serious concerns within the Australian Wool Growers Association, and sheep breeders generally.

How will any such quantitative genetic reporting factor in the very nature of wool growing, that is fibre characteristics, with consideration given to differing climatic and environmental influences, over and above the already freely available information from the various sire evaluation trials and regional wether trials conducted at no cost to the wool growing levy payer? asks one leading sheep breeder. There are scant details on how the data will be collected and from whom and under specific protocols. Where is the consultation with those, who every day as part of their business, go about seeking genetic improvement?



AWGA - News Update

AWI desperately needs to increase the level of grower participation and involvement in all its activities says AWGA. “It is now time to forget the politics of the past and instigate a mood of cooperation and consultation.”

“To rest on one’s laurels and suggest a ballot result is a clear endorsement of future activities is simply not enough”.

”The industry faces considerable challenges in the next few years. To rely on a majority vote from a minority actually voting will not be enough, much more whole of industry involvement through consultation and ownership of projects delivering real commercial benefits will need to be achieved” concludes Mr Crozier.

* Total Prospective voters 47,274; valid voting papers received 18,278; balance 28,996
Source Computershare Returning Officer Report 17th November 2003

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