**11 July 2012**

# AWI plan for nucleus flock

Weeklytimes

**AUSTRALIAN Wool Innovation is considering a proposal to fund a nucleus flock, separate to the flock it rejected in December.**

Details of the latest proposal from the NSW Department of Primary Industries are sketchy, but were outlined to AWI's industry consultative committee meeting on June 22.

This was the meeting where AWI gave its reasons for rejecting a $4.8 million application for ongoing research over nine years for the existing nucleus flock.

The NSW proposal involves 2000 Merino ewes divided into two flocks - one representing the SRS (soft-rolling skin) and the other "mainstream" type and joined to 20 sires.

One of the flocks would be run on the Trangie Research Station.

Progeny would be evaluated and measured for a range of wool traits, reproductive efficiency, feed efficiency and genetic gain.

In a recent letter to wool growers, AWI chief executive Stuart McCullough and chairman Wal Merriman didn't mention the NSW proposal but alluded to ongoing work.

"We continue to pursue new and practical genetic and genomic research proposals including a project that will offer a bridge to the genomic research carried out so far as well as the greater industry," AWI wrote.

WoolProducers president Geoff Power, who attended the ICC meeting, said he was sceptical of the latest proposal particularly as it was likely to duplicate work currently being done with the Sheep CRC.

Mr Power was also sceptical about the cost of AWI funding a flock by itself, whereas the current nucleus flock was jointly funded by the Federal Government, Meat and Livestock Australia and AWI with other parties contributing support.

At the ICC briefing AWI said it was looking to develop research projects which addressed staple strength, reproductive efficiency/lamb survival, feed efficiency, early life and lifetime productivity traits, sheep selection and measurement of genetic gain.

AWI also cited investigation into what it described as one of the "more interesting" proposals.

This project proposal was looking at the genetics of lifetime productivity of Merino sheep.