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## Lamb demand intensifies as TFI goes to 480c/kg on grid



*These 17.6kg cwt Poll Dorset-Lambpro cross lambs at Ararat sold for \$84.50 on AuctionsPlus this week.*

Competition for quality lambs intensified this week with national processor Thomas Foods International lifting their lamb grid price to 480c/kg for early December delivery.

Quality lambs in saleyards are selling above grid prices and up to 500c/kg cwt for the best trade and heavy drafts at Victorian centres.

Processors are also competing strongly at most centres for heavy sheep, with little or none of the weight and fat discounts still

being applied on over-the-hook grids.

TFI national sheep and lamb livestock manager Paul Leonard said the 20c/kg cwt lift in the top grid price for 16-34kg cwt crossbred lambs to 480c/kg cwt was made on Monday to ensure the company's share of quality lambs. This is believed to be 10c/kg above the nearest competitor.

TFI's Murray Bridge plant is closing for Christmas, with its last 2014 kill on December 18, recommencing on Monday January 5. All the company's other facilities, Tamworth (NSW), Wallangarra (Qld) and Lobethal (SA) will kill through summer, other than the normal public holidays.

"We just want to stay out in front and get a good share of the quality lambs," Mr Leonard said.



## SA leads national grid prices

The National Livestock Reporting Service this week was quoting average SA grid prices from 440c/kg-480c/kg cwt, with Victorian rates at 430c/kg-465c/kg, NSW at 400c/kg-467c/kg, WA at 425c/kg-445c/kg and Tasmania at 430c/kg-470c/kg. After Tuesday's sales, the NLRS was quoting the Eastern States Trade Indicator up two cents to 463c/kg cwt, and the heavy lamb indice at 462c/kg cwt, also up two cents. The ES mutton indicator finished at 309c/kg cwt, up two cents.

The national lamb indicators also improved on Tuesday, especially for restocking lambs, while the mutton indice lost ground. The national lamb rates are: restocker 476c/kg cwt, up 6 cents; Merinos 391c/kg, up 13c; light 439c/kg, up 4c; trade 462c/kg, up 2c; heavy 461c/kg, up 1c. The national mutton is at 309c/kg cwt, down two cents.

## Over-the-hook rates firm to higher in NSW

In NSW, the NLRS said trade weight over-the-hook lamb rates remained firm this week, while heavy weight lambs, over 24kg, edged slightly higher. Mutton rates across all weight categories were unchanged. The NSW average OTH rates for 2-4 score lambs are: 18-20kg, 463c/kg cwt, no change; 20-22kg, 467c/kg, nc; 22-24kg, 463c/kg, nc; 24-26kg, 460c/kg, up 1c; 26kg+, 440c/kg, up 3c; Merinos 16-22kg, 400c/kg, nc. Mutton rates are: 14-18kg, 248c/kg, nc; 18-24kg, 277, nc; 24kg+ 293c/kg, nc.



## Victorian OTH rates lift

In Victoria, the NLRS said OTH lamb rates lifted slightly across most categories, with trade weight lambs reaching 480c/kg cwt. Mutton rates remained unchanged week-on-week, with medium weight carcasses averaging 272c/kg cwt. The Victorian average OTH rates for 2-4 score lambs are: 16-18kg, 450c/kg, nc; 18-20kg, 445c/kg, up 2c; 20-22kg, 464c/kg, up 2c; 20-22kg, 468c/kg, up 3c; 22-24kg, 468, up 3c; 24-26kg, 453c/kg, up 3c; 26kg+, 440c/kg, up 10c; Merinos 16-22kg, 405c/kg, nc. Mutton rates are: 14-18kg, 250c/kg, nc; 18-24kg, 272c/kg, nc; 24kg+, 253c/kg, nc.

## SA OTH lamb rates hit 480c/kg cwt

In South Australia, the NLRS said over-the-hook rates increased across all lamb categories week-on-week, with trade weight lambs averaging 480c/kg cwt. Medium and heavy weight mutton carcass rates lifted by an average of 5c/kg cwt. The SA average OTH rates for 2-4 score lambs are: 16-24kg, 467-480c/kg, up 17-20 cents; 24-26kg, 467c/kg, up 17c; Merinos 16-22kg, 440c/kg, up 20c. The mutton rates are: 14-18c/kg, 215c/kg; 18-24kg, 275c/kg, up 5c; 24kg+, 250c/kg, up 5c.

## WA lamb and mutton OTH rates firm

In WA, the lamb and mutton rates are unchanged. The average OTH rates for 2-4 score lambs are: 16-18kg, 425c/kg; 18-22kg, 440c/kg; 22-26kg, 445c/kg; 26kg+, 433c/kg; Merinos 16-22kg, 393c/kg. The mutton rates are: 14-18kg, 235c/kg; 18-24kg, 250c/k; 24kg+, 250c/kg.

## Tasmanian OTH rates unchanged

In Tasmania, the NLRS said the OTH lamb and mutton rates are unchanged. The average OTH rates for 2-4 score lambs are: 0-16kg, 430c/kg; 16-18kg, 460c/kg; 18-26kg, 470c/kg; 276kg+, 460c/kg. The mutton rates are: 0-14kg, 250c/kg; 14-224kg, 280c/kg; 24kg+, 250c/kg.



## Heavy lambs firm at Dubbo

In NSW at the Dubbo saleyards on Monday, the agents yarded 10,475, 905 more than last week, and 10,155 sheep, 265 more. The NLRS said the yarding included fair numbers of trade and heavy weight lambs along with a good percentage of light weights. Properly-finished Merino lambs were in limited supply. All the regular buyers operated.

Light weight lambs sold firm, with 12-18kg 2 scores selling from \$55-\$79. Trade weight lambs were firm to \$1 cheaper, with 18-22kg new season lambs selling from \$82-\$112, to average 461c/kg cwt. Trade weight old lambs sold from \$78-\$110. Heavy weight lambs were fully firm, with over 22kg old lambs selling from \$107-\$139. Limited numbers of well-finished Merino lambs were also firm, with trade weights selling from \$74-\$87. Lambs to restockers were a little dearer, selling to \$84, and the best hoggets sold for \$90. Mutton quality was also mixed, with some good lines of heavy ewes and wethers along with a good percentage of light weights.

The better conditioned sheep were \$4-\$6 dearer, but plain condition ewes were \$4 cheaper. The 2 score ewes sold from \$22-\$66, while the better 3 and 4 scores sold from \$48-\$110 for Merinos and \$102 for crossbreds. The 3 and 4 score Merino wethers sold from \$65-\$98.

## Trade lambs \$4-\$6 cheaper at Tamworth

At the Tamworth saleyards on Monday, the agents yarded 1700 sheep, 280 more than last week, and 2870 sheep, 2150 more. The NLRS said lamb quality was fair to good, with an even split of young and old drafts. The usual buyers attended. Market trends through the lambs were generally cheaper, with odd sales firm. Trade weight lambs were \$4-\$6 cheaper. Heavy weight lambs remained firm with some quality related price change.



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The big increase in sheep numbers included some large lines of medium weight shorn Merino ewes and wethers. The increased numbers eased pressure on buyers to secure requirements and resulted in cheaper trends. The increase also brought about some average quality variations and this was reflected in price changes.

## Quality sells better at Forbes

At the Forbes saleyards on Tuesday, the agents yarded 13,500 lambs, 2850 more than last week, and 7000 sheep, 700 more. The NLRs said the yarding included 3000 new season lambs and quality continued to be very mixed. There were both well-finished and plainer lambs, along with the light store drafts. Most of the usual buyers competed in a market that was slightly dearer for the better lambs and held firm for the plainer secondary lines.

New season lambs to restockers sold from \$55-\$93. Light lambs held firm to sell from \$78-\$102, while trade weights were firm to \$2 better, with prices ranging from \$98-\$116. Heavy and extra heavy lambs were also firm to \$2 better. Heavy lambs sold from \$112-\$124 and extra heavyweights made from \$126-\$143. Carcase prices averaged from 470c/kg-489c/kg cwt. Old trade weight lambs sold from \$80-\$105. Heavy lambs made \$104-\$115 and extra heavy weights from \$114-\$141. Merino lambs sold from \$71-\$100.

Mutton numbers were made up of mostly Merinos and quality was again mixed, with prices holding fairly steady. Merino ewes sold from \$72-\$97, while crossbred ewes ranged from \$75-\$95. Dorper ewes sold from \$64-\$82, while Merino wethers ranged in price from \$85-\$96.

## Fresh lambs \$2-\$5 dearer at Bendigo

In Victoria on Monday at the Bendigo saleyards, the agents yarded 17,052 lambs, 2123 more than last week, and 8531 sheep.



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As Bendigo's regular combined sales re-commenced this week, the NLRs said quality in the lamb run was boosted by several drafts of young lambs from the southern grazing areas of Mansfield, Pyalong and Kilmore. These lines presented in fresh condition with good clean skins and received strong support from export and domestic buyers to average \$2-\$5 higher for most sales.

Bidding was more selective on the secondary lambs which lacked finish and were dry in the skin, with most of these plainer pens firm to slightly cheaper than a week ago. The market reached a top of \$143.60 for young lambs estimated to have a carcass weight of about 29kg, and it was one of just two extra heavy pens to make over \$140. Prices for light lambs did fluctuate based on breed quality and finish. Restockers from Finley, Echuca, Shepparton, Birchip and the local Bendigo area paid from \$72-\$88 for most store lambs, with some sales working-out a few dollars dearer. The plainer lambs to slaughter mostly made from \$80-\$96 to generally average a couple of dollars easier.

Bidding for quality slaughter lambs was solid from both exporters and the major domestic buyers. The best trade weight lambs sold from \$105-\$118, while the heavier types over about 24kg cwt benefited from both export and domestic competition. It resulted in bigger numbers selling above \$120, with about 40 pens of young lambs making from \$120-\$135. Sales over \$136 were limited to a few pens of extra heavy export lambs. Most of the quality slaughter lambs averaged an estimated 465c/kg-480c/kg cwt, with odd sales of well-presented trade weight lambs out to about 500c/kg.

The sheep sale included another good line-up of heavy crossbred and Merino sheep. Prices for heavy mutton were similar to the previous week, with extra heavy crossbred ewes selling from \$80-\$98 and averaging about \$92. Heavy Merino ewes in a big skin sold to a top of \$96 and wethers made to \$96. The market showed a dearer trend for trade and lightweight Merino sheep. On a carcass basis the extra heavy crossbreds were estimated at about 268c/kg, while the quality Merino sheep averaged ranged from 290c/kg-320c/kg cwt.



## Best lambs \$2-\$ dearer at Ballarat

At the Ballarat saleyards on Tuesday, the agents yarded 41,752 lambs, 2908 more than last week, and 14,850 sheep, 4167 more.

The NLRS said quality over the trade and heavy lambs was good with many lambs showing more finish and this was reflected in the prices obtained. The better presented lambs sold \$2-\$4 up on last week. The usual buyers operated strongly, with a quality pen of heavy young lambs reaching \$149.

Large numbers of light lambs were also offered that were suitable to restocker and processor orders. Restockers were very active, paying mostly \$72-\$96, but from \$40-\$66 for the light drafts. Most restocking lambs were a few dollars dearer. Light weight 1 and 2 score lambs sold from \$65-\$78. Light trade 2 and 3 score lambs sold from \$70-\$98, with the heavy lots selling from \$85-\$110. Trade weight 3 and 4 score lambs sold from \$95-\$115, with the heavy drafts selling from \$106-\$125, ranging from 400c/kg-500c/kg cwt, to average 470c/kg cwt. Heavy 3 and 4 score lambs sold from \$120-\$135.50, to average around 475c/kg cwt, with the extra heavy drafts selling from \$132-\$149, averaging 460c/kg cwt.

The good quality sheep offering included all weights and grades. The usual buyers attended but not all operated fully, with light and medium sheep selling generally firm on last week and the heavy ewe and wether mutton easing \$2-\$5 on last week. Light weight 1 and 2 score sheep sold from \$40-\$60.50. Medium weight 2 and 3 score sheep sold from \$52-\$88, and ranged from 250c/kg-330c/kg, to average 300c/kg cwt. Heavy sheep sold from \$65-\$93, with heavy Merino wethers selling from \$74-\$96.50 and the medium weights making \$57-\$84, at around 300c/kg-305c/kg cwt.

## Heavy trade lambs \$3 dearer at Naracoorte

In SA at the Naracoorte saleyards on Tuesday, the agents yarded 11,883 lambs, 4302 fewer, and 3128 sheep, 1555 less.



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The NLRS said lamb and sheep numbers fell, but overall prices remained firm to \$3 dearer. The usual trade and processors were present, while the restockers were boosted by an extra buyer who bid freely on suitable lines.

Large numbers of extra light lambs were offered and sold from \$28 up to mainly \$65, while the lightweight lambs ranged from \$74-\$85, to be up to \$3 dearer. Lightweight trade 2 and 3 score lambs sold from \$83-\$90 to be firm, while the restockers operated at \$32-\$88. Medium weight 3 and 4 score trade lambs were also firm, to range from \$90-\$111, with the heavy trade lambs mainly made \$110-\$122, with a market top of \$129. These lambs were up to \$3 dearer to sell at an average 430c/kg cwt.

The few wethers offered sold from \$83-\$94, to be firm week-on-week. The light weight ewes sold from \$25 to \$62, with the medium weights ranging between \$55 and \$75/head, to average 300c/kg cwt. These ewes were up to \$5 easier, while the heavy weight ewes sold from \$62 to \$95, to be firm to \$3/head dearer. Rams improved in price, ranging from \$15 to \$44/head.

## Heavy lambs ease \$4 on quality at Dublin

At the SA Livestock Exchange at Dublin on Tuesday, the agents yarded 8024 lambs, 208 fewer than last week, and 3824 sheep, 434 fewer.

The NLRS said the yarding of crossbred and Merino lambs sold to fluctuating competition from the usual trade and processor buyers. The quality of the yarding was the poorest seen for some months and the percentage of lambs suitable for slaughter was small.

Feeder and restocker buyers had a good selection of light weight crossbreds and spirited bidding from Yorke Peninsula, Adelaide Plains and mid-north agents ensured light weights sold on a par with last week. The very light weight crossbreds sold to feeders from \$26-\$67, light weights sold from \$52-\$80, and some 3 score lambs sold to feeders from \$70-\$86. Light weight 3 scores to trade buyers lifted only marginally, selling from \$80-\$95, averaging 420c/kg cwt.





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Lighter trade weight lambs sold from \$92-\$107, averaging 457c/kg cwt, while heavier trade weights eased \$8 selling from \$100-\$110 and averaging 416c/kg cwt. Heavy weights eased \$4, selling from \$110-\$128 to average 452c/kg cwt, with the few shorn pens returning the best results. Light weight Merino lambs sold to restockers from \$19-60, with light weights to processors making to \$75 and averaging 397c/kg cwt. Trade weights lifted \$4, selling from \$79-\$95 and averaging 422c/kg cwt. The very few heavy weights sold to \$110.

The smaller, better quality yarding of sheep sold to stronger processor bidding, and restockers operated on wethers up to \$80. Light weight 2 score ewes lifted \$5, selling from \$57-\$83, to average 259c/kg cwt. Heavy weight 3 scores lifted \$10, selling from \$60-\$89, averaging 270c/kg cwt. Heavy weight wethers were plentiful and they lifted \$5, selling from \$64-\$87 to average 262c/kg cwt, and heavyweight rams made \$46-\$59.

## Trade lambs back \$8 at Muchea

In WA in the Muchea saleyards on Tuesday, the agents yarded 4600 lambs, 1100 more than last week, and 7257 sheep, 2987 more.

The NLRs said the yarding included moderate numbers of trade and heavy lambs, but most were light weight and store drafts. Competition remained solid from a full field of processors and restockers, with selective live export competition on wether lambs. The prime lamb spike seen in recent weeks disappeared, with prices returning to normal levels. Mutton prices were close to firm with light store ewes very strong due to restocker demand.

Light and store lambs to restockers were back \$3, with most from \$40-\$80, while the Merino lambs were mostly made \$30-\$55. Light lambs to processors and air freight orders eased \$4, with prices from \$65-\$96. Trade lambs made \$87-\$115, back around \$8, and heavy lambs sold from \$110-\$118.50, or 480c/kg cwt.

Ewe prices were close to firm, with light weight ewes making \$27-\$63.50, supported by strong restocker demand. The 2 score processor mutton sold from \$46-\$76, to be firm to \$1 cheaper, with the better 3 and 4 score ewes including heavy weight drafts making \$60-\$90, easing \$3. Ewes to restockers were back \$3 with better conditioned drafts making \$55-\$87. Wether prices eased slightly, with minimal live export activity. Heavy wethers made \$77-\$90, to be firm to \$6 easier, with most going to processors. Store and light weight wethers sold from \$52-\$79 and were \$1-\$6 easier. Ram prices remained firm, with ram lambs making \$70-\$85 to processors, while other young ram drafts to export and feeders made \$40-\$57. Old rams to processors made from \$5-\$45.

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