

17-09-2014

Prices, pests, productivity: wool's woes



“
*A concerted effort
across the industry is
required to ensure the
continuation of
committed growers*
”

WOOLPRODUCERS Australia (WPA) has given the industry a far from glowing report in its annual review, with lacklustre prospects for superfine wool and wild dog predation both major concerns.

WPA chief executive Jane Brownbill said in the [recently released review](#) there was an urgent need for: better prices for wool; control of wild dogs and other pests; disease management; an increased community interest in what occurs on-farm, and a focus on greater productivity gains.

Ms Brownbill said WPA was concerned about slackening wool prices coupled with a forecast of easing wool production in 2014-15, on the back of last year's 3 per cent reduction in production.

She said the superfine sector was of particular concern as the "persistently low price for the high quality, luxury fibre was actively working against farm families", and reiterated the message from the Superfine Industry Review that growing superfine and ultrafine Merino wool was currently not viable.

"This challenge must be accepted and a concerted effort across the industry is required to ensure the continuation of committed growers producing this product," she said.

A fine dilemma

WPA director and NSW Farmers representative Ed Storey said superfine and fine wool growers were questioning their continued investment in the industry, while medium woolgrowers were in a "sweet spot" with prices for their type spending much of the year in the 85th percentile or better.

"Fine wool prices need to be more sustainable to see continued investment in the industry."



AWGA - News Update

WPA also reconfirmed their opposition to the proposed introduction of mandatory electronic identification of sheep.

WPA drove a co-ordinated approach between national bodies, including Sheepmeat Council of Australia and Australian Livestock and Property Agents, in their support for the retention of the current mob-based identification system.

Mr Storey said it was clear NSW Farmers members did not want the costly system imposed on them.

"Sticking RFIDs on all sheep and goats will not solve all biosecurity issues as some believe. What it will do is impose a massive cost structure on the sheep industry and do untold damage to the goat industry in NSW," he said.

WPA director and Western Australian Farmers Federation representative Ed Rogister said WA producers were shocked by AWI's decisions to withdraw funding to Sheep CRC Information Nucleus Flock 2 Program and to cut funding from the "successful" Bred Well Fed Well program.

Mr Rogister said WAFarmers were also concerned the proposed Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines posed a risk of inconsistencies between jurisdictions.

WPA independent director Steve Harrison, Victoria, voiced his concern that the current wool clip was overclassified with the average lot size being a "mere" 5.9 bales.

"A team effort from brokers through to growers is required to lift the average lot size and average bale weight to maximise returns to the woolgrowers," he said.

Highlights

- Sheep CRC was awarded a five year extension
- WPA committed \$750,000 to a Sheep CRC program "Enhanced monitoring systems for wellbeing and productivity"- focussed on early intervention against animal health risks
- The development of the National Wild Dog Action Plan
- Funding provided for 10 positions at Foot and Mouth Disease preparedness training in Nepal
- The completion of the North West Victorian Sheep Biosecurity Area agreement which allowed sheep to again be sold into SA without the producer having to supply a negative OJD test

Lowlights

- Growing superfine and ultrafine wool not viable at current prices
- AWI cut funding to the Bred Well Fed Well program
- Out of control pests eg: wild dogs, kangaroos
- Over half the Merino clip below 19 micron
- Overclassified clip

<http://www.theland.com.au/news/agriculture/sheep/general-news/prices-pests-productivity-wools-woes/2712299.aspx?storypage=0>