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Woolly questions for AWI



SO, Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) invested a measly \$3.3 million in sheep genetics and genomics research during 2010-13.

AWI released a media statement this week to announce an independent analysis (it commissioned) had revealed growers lost 55 cents from every dollar spent on genetic and genomics research during that period, mainly in support of the Information Nucleus Flock (INF) and MerinoSelect.

Big deal! AWI's various predecessors lost billions of dollars of growers' money during the past 40 years (with the help of previous federal governments).

And will growers (and taxpayers) be told exactly how much bang they got for every one of the 80 million dollars the AWI will spend on their behalf this financial year?

Surely any funding of genetics and genomics research by bodies such as AWI should be seen as part of a long-term goal to steadily accumulate the facts, knowledge, data and tools for the selection of more productive, more profitable, more disease- and pest-resistant sheep.

But, no, AWI obviously believes its investments in this complex science have to deliver positive returns for growers virtually in the year the money is spent.

AWI spends a lot of time (and no doubt plenty of money) cosying up to top fashion designers and luxury fashion brands and supporting promotions such as Prince Charles' Campaign for Wool.

How much extra cash do these activities put in growers' pockets?

Where's the independent analysis of their value to growers' incomes?

These initiatives generate plenty of "free" publicity but does this generate increased wool consumption and higher on-farm returns?

Does the AWI really need to keep upwards of \$70 million in reserves?

Would this money produce more returns back in growers' hands?



AWGA - News Update

How much money will be spent on the AWI's independent current review of the wool selling system? Will there be an independent review of its value to growers?

Selling wool by open-cry auction hasn't changed much in two centuries, so what's going to happen now?

Investment in better genetics doesn't seem to have harmed the pig, poultry and dairy industries.

AWI should be doing everything in its power to modernise wool breeding, production, selling and promotion.

And that includes helping bring certainty to efforts to improve Merino performance and profitability through improved genetics.

<http://www.theland.com.au/blogs/a-matter-of-opinion/woolly-questions-for-awi/2734050.aspx>