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WAFarmers

Introduction

Seasonal conditions in almost all regions across WA have been excellent with some regions reporting the current seasonal conditions are the best in many years. With such good seasonal conditions, there is plenty of feed and this will push fleece weights up in 2016/17 to historically high levels.

The good season could also see an increase in the average micron. Average wool cuts per head are expected to increase by 3.8% in 2016/17. However, this will be partly offset by an estimated 5% decline in opening sheep numbers. Sheep shorn numbers are not expected to fall by as much as opening numbers as there are expected to be more lambs shorn and more double-shearing. Shorn wool production in Western Australia in 2016/17 is therefore predicted to lift by 2% to 66.5 mkg greasy.

At the WAFarmers Annual Conference dinner in March 2016, the feature event of the evening was a wool fashion show featuring professional models showing-casing some of the wonderful wool garments now available to the public. Ed Rogister was also awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the WAFarmers President Dale Park during proceedings.

Policy

Wool Council members' have dealt with numerous topics throughout the year including wool marketing and pricing, the proposed Wool Exchange Portal concept, the introduction of mandatory RFID in sheep in Victoria and the implications for WA wool growers, new wool bale trials being done by AWEX, shearer safety protocols, wild dog management programs, and sheep health, welfare and biosecurity programs. A particularly focus has included the promotion of the National Wool Declaration to increase the uptake in WA and the use of pain relief during husbandry practices.

A priority policy area is wild dog controls and the importance of eradicating dogs on the inside of the state barrier fence. WAFarmers commends WPA and AWI for their continued support and funding to help resolve this important issue for the State.

WA Footrot Control Program

WAFarmers encouraged the Sheep and Goat Industry Funding Scheme (IFS) Management Committee (MC) chaired by Ed Rogister, to formally seek funding from Animal Health Australia (AHA) to use unallocated levy funds to manage the surveillance of footrot at abattoirs in Western Australia. WAFarmers applauds the efforts being made by Fletchers for collecting and disseminating disease related information for the industry.

The WA Footrot Control Program is funded by voluntary contributions collected and managed by the Sheep and Goat IFS MC. Its purpose is to prevent the spread of infection within flocks. The new strain specific vaccines currently being trialled provide another valuable tool for the management of virulent footrot on properties.

Trade and Market Access

Access to markets is reliant on robust reporting mechanisms. WAFarmers encourages all wool (and livestock) producers to complete the national vendor declarations and the National Wool Declaration (NWD) correctly. We also encourage sheep producers to use pain relief as this could become compulsory in the future. Only 45 per cent of WA growers completed the NWD's correctly at present and this is the least number of growers across all states.

Shearing Shed Safety

WAFarmers supports the WA Shearing Industry Association (WASIA) and Wool Producers Australia (WPA) with efforts to improve shearer conditions, which includes shearing shed safety protocols for all wool handling staff. WAFarmers ran a campaign encouraging the use of the new 'Rambuster' shearing table aimed at preventing shearer injuries as a result of shearers having to shear heavier sheep. WAFarmers have warned wool producers to check with their insurers to make sure their policies cover all potential risks that may occur during a shearing season, which may result in workplace injuries and claims. These risks could include statutory liability which is not covered by a public liability policy.

Australian Wool Innovations

The Wool Exchange Portal (WEP) Working Group voted unanimously to support the development of a portal at the AWI AGM in November. However, WAFarmers has told AWI that a decision on whether to support the development of a wool exchange portal can only be made if they have sight of the business case options and costings. To date very little consultation has occurred on the portal concept with WAFarmers or other industry stakeholders in WA.

Levy Payer Transparency

The Wool Council supported the Primary Industries Levy and Charges Amendment Bill and recommendation to develop a national database to identify levy payers, and who has access to this information. Producers and Growers pay \$750 million in levy contributions at the moment with the Federal Government contributing \$250 million in match R&D funding across all sectors.

Peak Industry Council Representation

Ed Rogister from Albany is the WAFarmers representative on the Wool Producers Australia Board and Max Watts from Wandering WA sits on the Board as an independent director. In November Ed chose to step down from the WPA Board and his position will be taken over by Scott Pickering from Esperance in 2017. WAFarmers looks forward to attending the WPA Board and Committee meetings in Perth WA in March 2017.

Ed Rogister was also elected as the new Chair of the WA Sheep and Goat Industry Funding Scheme Management Committee taking over from Jeff Murray. John Moyes from Bridgetown continues his appointment on the Committee. Guy Bowen from York and Steve McGuire from Kojonup were nominated and joined the Committee mid-2016. All four men sit on the WAFarmers Livestock and Wool Council.

WAFarmers extend its sincere thanks and gratitude to Ed and Max for their tireless efforts over the year both through their contributions to the Livestock and Wool Council and their commitment to carry WA wool industry priorities forward to the national peak industry council.