

The next generation at Oaklea



Don's daughter Catherine along with her husband Alex Lyon and daughter Molly have moved onto Oaklea as partners and to eventually take over the business.

Alex previously worked in marketing in the wine industry for Yalumba for 10 years before a shift to 'Stoller', selling fertilizer across the South East of S.A. For the last 4 years Alex has been working for his families business Fleurieu Peninsula Agriculture (FPAG) in Strathalbyn with his brother, before making the move back down to the South East. FPAG run a fertiliser and agriculture merchandise business.

Alex has always had a passion to work on the land and he is particularly interested in livestock breeding and management along with good pasture and fodder production.

Catherine previously worked as a midwife at Women's & Children's Hospital in Adelaide and then had a 18 month stint with the Hamersmith Fire Brigade in London. On her return to Australia she decided on a career change, returning to university to gain her masters in Urban & Regional Planning. Catherine then worked at Wattle Range Council as the Planning Officer for a few years, and for the last 4 years has been based in Adelaide working for the nbn in a Land Access & Statutory Approvals role covering WA, SA & NT.

Catherine and Al are loving their new career and the lifestyle that they now have amongst family and friends and are sure that it is the right move for Molly and her future siblings.

We are enjoying teaching them everything we know and handing over the reigns as they feel comfortable in taking them up.

Cashmore Oaklea September 2020 Newsletter



Economic progress 2019 was \$7.45 per ewe mated.



Maternal sale rams

Hi all,

For all those that have invested in good maternal genetics a great season has allowed amazing expression of that potential.

Over in the South East reports from two large properties had ewe lambs pregnancy scanning at 155% while in southern Victoria adult ewes have hit 220%.

The slightly dryer winter has been beneficial for lamb survival so many farms will be stocked up with much product to move come sale time. Quite a good risk position to be in during these uncertain times!

We continue to put large amounts of thought and action into our breeding program via extensive performance recording plus research into early puberty, short tail length and easy care options. We trust our sheep are improving your bottom line and providing farming satisfaction.

Regards,

John R. Keiller Don Pegler

John Keiller and Don Pegler

RAM SALE Friday 9th October, 11am

Offering 450 Maternal Rams and 50 Nudie Rams

MATERNAL \$ INDEX 168 - 180

MCP + INDEX 145 - 165

**SALE 1 COMMENCING 11am AEST 200 MATERNAL COMPOSITE RAMS
ALL IN THE TOP 2% FOR LAMBPLAN MATERNAL \$ INDEX 173 TO 180**

**SALE 2 COMMENCING 12 noon AEST 250 MATERNAL COMPOSITE RAMS
ALL IN THE TOP 5% FOR LAMBPLAN MATERNAL \$ INDEX 168 TO 173**

SALE 3 COMMENCING 1pm AEST 50 CASHMORE PARK NUDIE RAMS

RAM INSPECTION DAYS, 10am

Friday 2nd October - Oaklea, Meyers Rd, Kongorong SA

Monday 5th October - Cashmore Park, Wilmots Rd VIC

- Our sale rams deliver \$20.70 per ewe mated above industry breed average
- Our Stud and Commercial Ewes scanned 185%, under high & challenging stocking rates
- Many Stud Sires are now 90% below breed average for worm egg count

Genomics for better reproduction

Reproduction is a key production and profit driver and never more so that when you don't have it. It is an extremely interesting trait to select for as there are many facets and variabilities that come into play before you can actually have a weaned lamb and associated proceeds in the bank. Leaving aside the environmental and feeding manipulation and concentrating on the genetic aspects we find a trait with a low heritability. This means that only a small amount of superior or inferior genes are passed from generation to generation, hence genetic change is slow.

Background noise creates this, for example starting with ovulation we may have many eggs shed, then some are lost, most in the first thirty days, then we have deaths at birth, some genetically derived, some environmental, then post birth loss to weaning, which could be disease, nutrition or accident. So from a great potential start we get a final much lower ending.

The more information we can get "around" reproduction the better as ASBV accuracies can then be lifted, with every little bit helping.

Genomics come into play here with their ability to link traits and build a better picture. The issue until recently has been that Maternal sheep have not had enough samples collected to create an effective reference population and for lowly heritable traits that is approximately 10,000 recent DNA samples.



Tissue sampling unit for DNA collection

Recently MLA have funded a major research initiative for Merino and Maternal sheep aimed at improving reproduction with 10,000 ewes from each breed type genomically sampled. Cashmore Oaklea took 4000 samples across our recorded maternal flock from ewe lambs and 1.5 YO ewes. We hope this will increase improvement to our NLW ASBV from the + 1.2 % NLW that we have averaged across the past 8 years.



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Parasites are on the run

Well an amazing thing happened at Cashmore for the period July 2019 to July 2020. For the first time ever the adult ewes only required drenching twice. When I first started farming back in the late 1980's our BLM first cross ewes required 4 drenches a year to keep them upright, being the two recommended summer drenches, a pre lambing drench and one at marking. The Coopworth, then the Maternal Composites are much better and brought that back to three however we have been striving to get that lower.

Starting 25 years ago we began to collect individual samples from rams and use that data in calculating breeding values with the general opinion at the time being "you can't breed high performance animals with low worm levels". It was thought that the animal had to put a large amount of energy and body resources into keeping parasites burdens at bay so then would not have enough surplus energy to grow well and reproduce.

For about 4 years not much happened with high performing rams being positive for FEC and probably protected by too much drenching. So Don and I ramped up the testing numbers with data showing we started back in 1995, 25 years ago and have taken a combined 18,074 individual samples. Once we had just a few better performing, low FEC animals we simply multiplied them up to the position now where we have the best maternal flock for parasite resistance with the best rams out to minus 90% PFEC. For the 2020 year we have made targeted matings and hope to crack a minus 100% animal or two.

Rams or the drenching gun, you choose!

The latest breeding values are back in and its pleasing to see that we have four sires minus 90% for FEC and another 7 out the back at minus 80.

The top rams 173282, 182214, 182445 and 183861 have produced 850 progeny to date and have been mated to another 950 ewes and ewe lambs this 2020 year.

These rams are in the zero % band for FEC and index. Our approach has been to lower costs associated with chemical use and labour and to drench less and certainly more strategically. We find that the sheep of yesterday and those bred up north with ASBV numbers around zero for WEC just can't handle the pace anymore. Our farm system has changed as it's grown larger, we have less time to apply husbandry practices and don't wish to return to the bad old days.

If you reflect on anthelmintic chemical use in sheep, prior to 1950 it was nicotine and tar, then white, clear, mectin and orange drenches. This took some natural resistance pressure off sheep for 50 years and all we are doing now is rebuilding their immune systems again.



The top four "bomb proof" rams in our flock have said goodbye to drench

Embryo transfer 2020

We sorted through 3000 classed stud ewes and selected the best 8 on ASBV, type and structure to enter the embryo transfer program. Seventy five collected embryos then went into recipients which have had a high retention rate. Some of the 2019 embryo rams are in this years sale.



Counting embryos from the 8 best ewes selected from 3000 potential candidates, March 2020

Twinner cattle

Grading up to higher MARC Twinner content has increased the twinning rate of our cattle further. This year 40 cows pregnancy scanned multiples from 115 cows and heifers. We are selecting replacement bulls from repeat twinning cows, black or red in colour, DNA tested polled and also incorporating some 1% band EBV easy calving daughters and direct Angus genes.

The herd has been entered on the American IGS data base of 20 million animals which can accommodate cross bred cattle and generates breeding values weekly.



Cashmore Twinner cow Green 4339 and August 2020 drop twins

Pregnancy scanning compared

We compiled the following graph from 50,000 pregnancy scan records to see how our sheep have tracked over the past 5 years. The OAK COMS are Dons demoted stud ewes run as commercials and joined on Jan 1 each year. A 169% pregnancy scan average from an early joining is a great result. The OAK STUDS and CP STUDS are our adults ewes and average 196 and 191 respectively.

Every ewe lamb is joined each year regardless of size with some only being 4.5 months, and potentially under 30 kg live weight when exposed to the ram and 103% is quite creditable. There is large variation in the 1.5 year olds and highlights the sensitivity they express to nutrition and their previous lambing history. We are certainly testing this age class out.

5 year scanning %, Don's commercial Maternals and Studs, John's Stud and Nudies



Terminals

Each year we do an AI program on our Terminal ewes and then use the best sons from the previous year as back up sires. We aim for rams that will suit the 22 kg carcass weight range but keep a close eye on birth weights. Our rams have proved very popular joined to Maternal ewe lambs for easy lambing.



August 2019 Poll Dorset rams

DATA, DATA, DATA

A quick glance shows Don and I entered 5350 Maternal lambs into sheep genetics in 2019. They have already had 16,380 weights entered during their growth phase. This year 9700 pregnancy scans have been entered into the reproduction data base and we expect to tag 6000 lambs at birth.

