

# LIVESTOCK



**PRIME PRICES:** Brian and Anne Tucker, Tuckerland, halfway between Brimbago and Wirrega, broke the State record for lambs, selling 92 White Suffolk-Merinos at \$235 to T&R Pastoral at Naracoorte saleyard last month.

## Top lambs at Tuckerland



**TEAM TUCKER:** The team behind Brian Tucker's success (pictured with Brian), his Rodwells Keith agent Craig Escott, and Aylesbury Park White Suffolk breeder Andrew Krieg, were pleased to hear how well the Tuckers' lambs had sold at Naracoorte market in the past month.

By MIRANDA KENNY

**W**HEN it comes to lamb markets, record-breaking prices have become commonplace in the few months, rewarding committed producers who are breeding quality lambs and turning them off at the right weights and time.

One such prime lamb producer is Brian Tucker, who with his wife Anne, runs Tuckerland, halfway between Brimbago and Wirrega, in the Upper South East.

On February 15, the Tuckers broke the State record for lambs, selling 92 White Suffolk-Merinos at \$235 to T&R Pastoral at Naracoorte saleyards.

While the national record was broken a day later, and the State record also broken within a week, the Tuckers also broke their own record at the same saleyards a week later, selling 107 lambs to \$238.

Brian estimates the lambs would have weighed-in at an estimated 32 kilograms to 33kg carcaseweight.

The April-drop lambs were put in a confinement pen before sale and fed ab lib with lucerne and oaten hay, and a grain mix of 70 per cent oats and 30pc barley.

They were also vaccinated with a three-in-one to prevent pulpy kidney, black leg and B12 vitamin deficiencies.

Interestingly, the \$235 lambs were first offered for sale late last year, but when they reached a bid of only \$120, Brian decided to pass them in and take them back home.

### 5 Critical Factors

- 1 Aim to sell lambs before November
- 2 Select rams with clean faces, points
- 3 Work with agent to decide when to market stock
- 4 Buy-in lambs if feed is available
- 5 Choose quality replacement ewes with good wool, length

So he was delighted when he sold them later for almost twice that price.

Brian credits Rodwells Keith stock agent Craig Escott with helping him to achieve such great results.

"He told me to hang on to the lambs and consider selling them after harvest, because there would be none around," he said.

"Selling in the marketplace, compared with on-hooks, has been much better this year.

"Victorian buyers have a bigger influence at Naracoorte market – and the quality of lambs sold there has also been good.

"Nothing happens here (with the livestock) unless Craig says so!"

Brian, who jokingly calls himself a hobby farmer, downsized the scale of his enterprise several years ago.

He breeds 500 lambs a year, and regularly buys-in more when the season permits.

"How many lambs I buy-in is anybody's guess – it can be up to 200 to 300 a year," he said.

His 500 Merino ewes are crossed to Aylesbury Farm White Suffolk rams.

Ewes are bought at local off-shears sales – the current breeders came from Bordertown.

"I look for a large-frame ewe with a plain body, something you can get a good lamb out of," Brian said.

With an average of 21.6 microns and cutting 6.5kg fleeces, the ewes also turn a healthy profit when it comes to producing quality wool, especially when prices are as high as they have been this year.

He has used White Suffolk rams for the past 11 years.

Rams are bought from his son-in-law, Andrew Krieg.

"They produce high-quality stock," Brian said.

"When looking for a ram I select ones with good plain faces, clean points, large frames and good length.

"It's also critical to have rams that produce quick-growing lambs that suit domestic and export markets."

Brian aims to have sucker lambs weighing 22-24kg at time of sale.

Lambs are born in April to coincide with autumn rains keeping feed fresh and green.

They are then sold from mid-September as woolly suckers, with any remaining lambs shorn and sold when they reach desired weights.

Brian aims to sell most of his lambs by November, before grass seeds can become a problem.

At the moment he has another 350 lambs he plans to sell shortly.

### MyTake

with ANDREW KRIEG  
Aylesbury Farm White Suffolk Stud

#### Overview:

The White Suffolk is an excellent choice for the prime lamb producer who demands high returns on investment. With the market at all-time highs there has never been a better time to invest in quality rams that, together with retaining first-cross white Suffolk ewe lambs, will reward the producer with returns they can rely on year-in, year-out.

#### The good:

High growth rates and excellent feed conversion for earlier sale of lambs. Also have the ability to 'go on' if market or seasonal conditions require. White Suffolks with strong Suffolk traits are very hardy and perform very well in all districts.

#### The bad:

Because of the high fertility of the White Suffolk, it can be more labour intensive with increased lambing percentages and higher marking rates.

#### The way forward:

Retain White Suffolk-Merino ewe lambs for use in your self-replacing prime lamb-producing flock. It is important to select rams with clean points, especially if retaining these ewe lambs.

#### My top 5 tips:

1. Use White Suffolk rams that have length of carcase and depth of muscling.
2. Select ram with smooth shoulder and long neck extension for ease of lambing.
3. Select ram with large wool-free testicles for high fertility.
4. Rams with clean points, clean open face and legs, and bare bellies will tend to breed a lamb with more muscle and less energy into growing wool, which equals heavier carcase weight at point of sale.
5. Buy rams from a registered White Suffolk breeder with appropriate flock health status.

**Need to know more?**  
0409 169 693.