

# WAMMCO *Info*

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WAMMCO *International*  
A DIVISION OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MEAT MARKETING CORPORATION

## Young farmers urged to rebuild sheep flock

YOUNG WA farmers have been urged to commit some of their 2011/12 cropping 'bonus' to rebuilding their sheep infrastructures.

WAMMCO's new CEO Scott Weir said the scale of the exodus from sheep and the loss of sheep farming infrastructures from the WA landscape over the past few years posed a historic challenge for the sheep industry.

He told a group of young grain dominant farmers at Morawa recently that crossbred lambs and Merinos were shining out more than ever as a worthy diversification to their cropping operations.

"Many young farmers in the Wheatbelt have removed all their fences and yards and no longer keep sheep even to manage the weeds in the house paddock," he said.

"I believe WAMMCO can assist with the incentives and security to bring a component of sheep back into their enterprises and I am urging them to consider setting aside funds from the promising grain season to get started."

Mr Weir has travelled widely throughout the State meeting producers and familiarising himself with challenges and opportunities facing the co-operative.

He said WA's recent sheep and lamb workshops "It's Ewe Time" had provided a valuable insight into the status and potential of the State's sheep industry.

"There are many prospects and problems for WAMMCO to consider with its producer members and they range from wild dogs to

embryo survival, to genetics and management variations that may better suit some pastoral and Wheatbelt environments," he said.

"We need to collectively look at how we increase lambing percentages from our reduced breeding flocks. Exploring opportunities for more feedlotting programs and even irrigation-based lamb ventures may also better utilise the wide diversity of conditions throughout the State to harvest more lambs."

Mr Weir said it was pleasing to see WA consumers relishing the taste of WAMMCO's export quality lamb previously destined for the tables of the United States and Europe.

"As the Australian dollar continues to surge to record levels, WAMMCO has been working with Coles and other local retailers to promote our heavier, export quality lambs at home," he said.

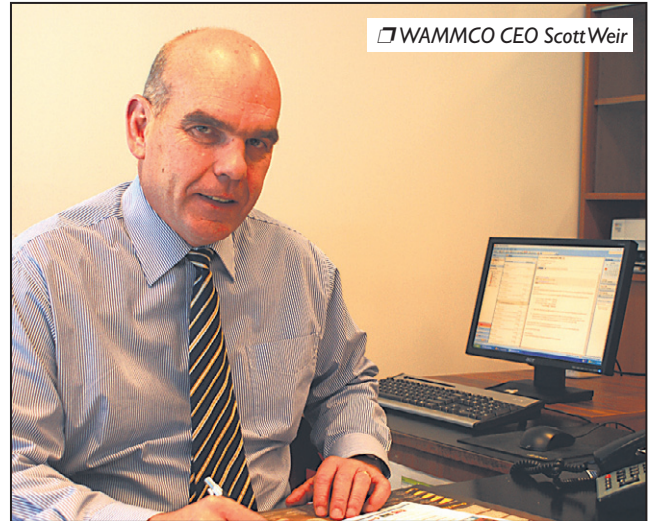
"The reaction of local consumers has been sensational, not only with the ready acceptance of heavier cuts and higher lamb quality, but also to the much higher domestic retail prices being charged.

"Global demand for our lamb remains high

and WAMMCO enjoys a diversified mix of markets. These include the developing markets of Asia and the Middle East with demands that increase the degree of profitable value-adding in our processing operations.

"However volatile currencies and changing economic conditions particularly in the USA and Europe are already putting pressure on some export markets."

"While the very first of the new season lambs, destined for best paying chilled markets will make around \$6 per kg this week, it looks as though the schedule prices will still be a very respectable \$5.50-\$5.80 as lambs come on stream over the second half of August and the first week of September."



WAMMCO CEO Scott Weir

## State Carcase Competition commences

SUPPLY Development manager Rob Davidson outlined to the *Farm Weekly* that the 2011/12 WAMMCO State Prime Lamb Carcase Competition has commenced and will run through until March 1, 2012.

The competition, which is a fantastic learning experience, has been extremely well supported in the past few years and this year the WAMMCO Livestock team has set themselves the ambitious task of bettering last year's record participation and are aiming for 150 entries.

The competition has separate divisions for export grade, trade weight and large consignments and is sponsored by Primaries, Elders, Milne Feeds, CSBP, *Farm Weekly* and WAMMCO.

Entry forms will be published in the *Farm Weekly*.

Mr Davidson said he expected the Co-operative would be processing limited supplies of lamb and mutton until the flow of new season lambs started in late August to early September.

He said he wished to flag some potential problems not seen for a few years.

"With lower stocking rates and plentiful feed, over fat carcasses and grass seeds may need to be managed this season," Mr Davidson said.

Mr Davidson reported results of a recent WAMMCO member survey which indicated that members had joined similar percentages of ewes to Merino and terminal sires as they did in 2009/10.

"The pleasing outcome was the percentage of members trying to boost their lambing percentages by either mating ewe lambs or cast for age ewes, delaying joining or introducing lick feeders to their nutritional program," Mr Davidson said.

Members needing any advice regarding livestock sales or production should contact:

Lamb & mutton sales: Peter Krupa 0427 810 613, Wayne Radford 0429 944 733 or their local agent.

Bookings: Fiona Clay or Rose Armstrong 9821 2000

Production: Rob Davidson 0429 380 195

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## Changes and a good season show promise for WAMMCO

A GOOD season and sustained demand for lamb, a new CEO and a new business in NSW are highlights for WAMMCO going into the 2011/12 financial year, according to co-operative chairman Dawson Bradford.

Mr Bradford said a busy start to the season had seen Scott Weir move across from New Zealand to take over as WAMMCO's CEO from Coll MacRury.

"Scott has settled in quickly to addressing our supply problems and has been working on a number of short and longer term solutions with the directors and the team at WAMMCO," Mr Bradford said.

The chairman has just returned from Goulburn NSW where he spent several days with Coll MacRury assessing the Southern Meats business recently acquired by WAMMCO.

"An early bonus has been that Goulburn has enabled us to maintain a flow of quality lamb to our customers while WAMMCO's Katanning plant was closed for three weeks," Mr Bradford said.

"Producers in the Goulburn region are also enthusiastic about WAMMCO's arrival and the competition we are providing.

"They are very keen for us to develop the supply chain and feedback systems we offer to our WA members."

He said Southern Meats at Goulburn was a

natural sheep and lamb producing centre that was currently enjoying an excellent season.

"Lambs of 28kg and above are the norm and they are already making a significant contribution to WAMMCO's range of product on offer both locally and overseas," he said.

He said the Goulburn plant required only

minor upgrading to achieve good productivity and most of the former key staff were now employed by WAMMCO.

"There will be many decisions required to determine the future status of Goulburn, but we have made a positive start and I am excited by the potential," Mr Bradford said.

## Reciprocal trade for lambs from Eastern States

WAMMCO has asked WA's sheep meat industry to consider options to allow the importation of lambs from Eastern Australia to offset the State's serious lamb production shortfall.

WAMMCO CEO Scott Weir said an opportunity had recently existed to import prime lambs from South Australia to boost numbers for the reopening of the Katanning processing plant.

"Having access to imported lambs during a serious seasonal shortage in WA and at the shoulders of each season would create certainty and continuity in our operations," Mr Weir said.

"The longer we can remain open, the more benefits we create for staff,

producer members and our market customers."

"We have been working with the Department of Agriculture and Food and producer organisations on the issue of import protocols but no decision has been finalised and the window of seasonal opportunity is now rapidly diminishing.

"The obvious solution is for WA to dramatically increase its sheep flock and its productivity as quickly as possible but we sent more than a million sheep and lambs from WA to the east last year and that gap will continue to have serious consequences for our sustainability."

## Katanning reopens

WAMMCO reopened its Katanning processing plant this week despite a tight immediate supply situation.

Katanning manager Tony Bessell said the slaughter floor workforce had returned for a reopening on Tuesday with the first carcasses due for boning on Wednesday.

The three week closure from July 21 had enabled some essential repairs and maintenance at the plant.

"We are anticipating a tight local supply situation for both sheep and lambs during the initial period but WAMMCO believes that it is important for producers that we can provide both processing capacity and competition even when numbers are low," Tony said.

Tony was pictured with WAMMCO's Engineering Supervisor, Aaron Boyd as the processing chain at Katanning was made ready for action last week.

