

## TIGHT TIMES UNTIL THE NEW SEASON

WAMMCO is battenning down for a tight trading time between now and the new lamb season, following record exports in February.

“Australian lamb exports for February were up by nine per cent on the February 2013 total and WAMMCO’s Katanning and Goulburn plants were major contributors to Australia’s lamb shipping export record of 19,229 tonnes,” CEO Coll MacRury said.

“However the heightened processing activity in February has been followed by deteriorating supply and we face several months of difficult conditions with very tight margins,” Coll said.

“I believe that we are shaping up for a traditional WA winter with smaller numbers from March to August before the annual lamb flush.”

Markets are continuing to be positive but trading margins will remain extremely tight over the next few months.

“WAMMCO’s practice of maximising producer returns by way of rebates based on annual results is now being more widely recognised by our producer members and we would expect to rely on that system again in the current year.”

“For that reason I would again urge producers to make sure they have adequate shares and are using the correct selling procedures to qualify for a rebate,” Coll said.

Coll said the WAMMCO Board had welcomed Planfarm chief Greg Kirk to replace Gerard O’Brien as a new director of the co-operative at its meeting in Goulburn in February.

“We welcome Greg and look forward to benefiting from his considerable expertise in agriculture and commerce,” Coll said.

Another pleasing trend was the strong interest being shown by producers and sponsors in WAMMCO’s State Prime Lamb Carcase Competition.

“I believe that there has not only been a significant increase in entry numbers, but that this year’s competition will include producers from many more areas of the State.”

Coll said North America, the Middle East and Europe remained the strongest markets for WA product.



□ **WAMMCO Chief Executive Coll MacRury.**



□ **Planfarm managing director Greg Kirk has joined the Board of WAMMCO following the retirement after many years of service of Gerard O’Brien. Mr Kirk attended his first WAMMCO board meeting in Goulburn in February.**

## CARCASE ENTRIES CLOSE TO RECORD

SOLID producer interest across all Agricultural regions since WAMMCO’s State Prime Lamb Carcase Competition opened on September 1 last year, has already pushed entries close to record levels.

Co-ordinator Rob Davidson said WAMMCO had already received 89 entries, representing 29,493 carcasses in the 2013/14 competition with more than two months to go before entries close at the end of May.

“We are already close to the record the numbers in 2010/11 when there were 30,287 carcasses from 123 entries and 2011/12 when 30,369 carcasses represented 115 entries,” Rob said.

“About 30 per cent of producers have opted to enter more than one entry, and with most nominations again coming from the Great Southern.”

There has again been strong support from competition sponsors, Primaries of VVA, Elders, Landmark, Zoetis, Milne Feeds, Superior Livestock Services, NAB, Gallagher, Farm Weekly and WAMMCO.

All entries are eligible to win the door prize, a Gallagher W610 weigh scale indicator.

Rob said lambs were assessed on carcase weight, fat score and lean meat attributes, within four major categories:

- overall heavy weight;
- trade weight ( average between 18.1-21 kg);
- drafts of 300 or more lambs;
- lambs from a Merino dam (ie traditional first-cross prime lamb production).

There is a \$50 entry fee with a minimum of 100 lambs per entry, and ram lambs, long tailed lambs and pink tag lambs are permitted.

Entry forms appear regularly in Farm Weekly or can be downloaded from the WAMMCO web page or obtained from the co-operative’s livestock team.

Further details are available from Rob Davidson on 0429 380 195

## SATURDAY SHIFTS BOOST OUTPUT BY 12.5 PERCENT

INCLUDING Saturday shifts as a requirement of a new Single Enterprise agreement with staff, has enabled WAMMCO to lift production volumes by about 12.5 per cent since the agreement came into effect in August 2013.

WAMMCO’s Katanning manager Tony Bessell said the mandatory agreement to work Saturdays had involved just over 300 workers and concluded for the season early in February.

Fifteen extra workdays had been completed, assisting the co-operative with heavy lamb numbers in the spring and to meet extra demand for mutton since later in 2013.

He said Katanning workers were now being offered Saturday work on a voluntary basis and there were indications of good support.

WAMMCO now represents more than 28 per cent of WA’s lamb slaughter in the year to date and about 22pc of total sheep processed so far this year.

There has been a significant increase in WA’s processed lamb and sheepmeat product over live exports which are expected to fall to around 1.5 million sheep and lambs by years end.

“The extra capacity generated by Saturday shifts since August, also assisted us to lift production of chilled product, which now represents about 40pc of our output from Katanning,” Tony said.

“Production is now swinging from mutton back to lamb as we target chilled lamb consumers in Europe, North America and the Middle East.”

An increasing percentage of the lamb processed at Katanning was now being pre-labelled and prepacked, ready to go straight onto the shelves of leading overseas supermarkets.

Tony said a second water frenching machine to produce lamb racks was currently being installed at Katanning.

The second NZ unit will assist to meet a massive growth in demand for the high value product.



□ **Rob Panting (left), Boning room superintendent Adam Tainui and leading hand Lin Xiao Yan with a new shoulder processing unit from Denmark, under MLA-supported trial at WAMMCO Katanning.**

WAMMCO was also partnering MLA and a Danish manufacturer in a trial of new shoulder processing technology which is scheduled to begin this month.

Tony said scoping work to upgrade and replace existing freezer/chiller capacity at Katanning was now in its early stages.

“This promises to be one of our biggest capital investments for some time and is expected to add a hot boning facility to further increase the range and versatility of our processing capacity,” he said.

## VITAMIN E TIME?

IF your lambs are on feed and are healthy, but not bolting ahead, they may be deficient in vitamin E.

WAMMCO’s Supply Development Manager Rob Davidson said vitamin E functions as a natural antioxidant to prevent damage by free radicals to animal cells, and along with Selenium, has an important role in reproduction and muscle functions as well as potentially assisting disease resistance and immune systems maintenance.

“Vitamin E is plentiful when stock are grazing green pastures but animals can only store sufficient levels for approximately two months after which supplementation is required,” Rob said.

Rob said there are various forms of Vitamin E supplements; it can be included in loose mineral and vitamin mixes, injected with other vitamins, added to water, sprayed on grain or

given orally using a standard sheep drench gun.

“If green feed becomes available, ie from summer active perennials, deficient stock should respond in seven days,” he said.

A vitamin E deficiency can cause weaner ill-thrift, reduced wool and body growth, reduced ewe fertility and can lead to the sheep muscle wasting condition – nutritional myopathy.

“Rapidly growing lambs, weaners on dry summer feed, and late dropped lambs which have had limited access to green feed are most vulnerable,” Rob said.

If you suspect your stock may be deficient in Vitamin E it may be wise to consult your local veterinarian.

Further details may be obtained from Rob on 0429 380 195



□ **WAMMCO QA managers Clare Ward and Ali Moqadasi with Dr Kelly Pearce (left) of Murdoch University, Research Fellow CRC for Sheep Industry Innovation with the new probe.**

The probe, which uses electrical impedance, aims to increase the accuracy of determining carcase fat score along with other carcase quality attributes including intramuscular fat.

Meat and Livestock Australia, the Australian Meat Processors’ Corporation and Murdoch University have already conducted initial tests with the new probe at Katanning and plan to use it as part of a full scale calibration on DAFWA’s Katanning Research Station Resource Flock being processed throughout the plant over the coming months.

WAMMCO Chairman Dawson Bradford welcomed the co-operative’s ongoing involvement in the program that promised many long term benefits to the lamb industry.

WAMMCO international’s Katanning Plant manager Tony Bessell confirmed that the co-operative was pleased to be able to continue to work as a participant within the federally funded Sheep CRC project.

Especially of interest is a new probe designed by Danish company, Carometec.