



AUSTRALIAN WOOL EXCHANGE



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Drought Management: Wool Preparation

Article supplied by
**Steven Read, General Manager,
Wool, Elders Ltd**

Australia's current drought conditions have exacerbated the supply demand squeeze that has seen prices continue to rise in a volatile market increasingly driven by domestic and international buying pressure as bale numbers available continue to decline.

In this market scenario growers are in an excellent position for both spot and forward marketing and should consider all options available to them before making final marketing decisions.

To ensure you, as a grower, are managing your price risk, Elders strongly recommends you consider the following advice:

- **Shearing Early** - With shearing occurring up to four months early in areas throughout all states the

average wool length is significantly shorter. Our suggestion to wool classers is to make sure you keep the length within the tolerance levels as detailed in the AWEX Code of Practice. Ensure you do not have mixed lengths and even though wool is premature, use the branding codes that are applicable, such as AAAM, AAM, BBB etc. Premature wool at auction has been selling at high prices over the past six months.

- **Avoid Over Classing** - When classing drought-affected wools we strongly recommend you do not over class. Inherently drought affected wools have a lesser tendency to be effected by colour, hence minimum skirting is usually required, making sure severe colour only is removed.
- **Yield** - Although yields are generally uniform within the one mob it is worthwhile noting many Chinese

end users, for example, place yield restriction on their purchases and if required a second line should be made for lower yielding wools.

- **Second Pieces Line** - Given that much of the drought-affected wool has less colour tendencies it may be worthwhile having a second pieces line. More specifically good colour pieces bring a significant premium to poorer colour pieces and should be separated to attract this premium.
- **Attention to Detail** - With most wool currently attracting the highest prices in more than a decade it is sensible not to skimp on shed staffing levels. Premiums in the market place exist and an extra wool roller or skilled shed hand can take pressure off the classer and ensure mistakes are not made and that skirting is sufficient to ensure line integrity, but not so excessive as to throw money away.

If I have not completed the WDP?...

Blair Brice, AWEX

The Woolclasser Development Program (WDP) will be finalised at the end of this year. This will conclude a two-year period of unprecedented professional development for Woolclassers in the history of the industry. All AWEX registered Woolclassers who have completed the WDP are now operating from a common base of updated knowledge, enhanced by their individual skill levels.

However, those registered Woolclassers who have not embraced this opportunity to advance their knowledge need to be aware of the ramifications of not completing the WDP. Any Woolclasser that is currently registered but has not completed the WDP by the end of 2002 will have their registration cancelled. This means that wool that is classed after the end of 2002, bearing the stencil/stamp of a Woolclasser who has not completed the WDP, cannot be traded through AWEX as "classed wool".

These Woolclassers will not be able to place their stencil/stamp on bales of wool again until they have completed the WDP. The WDP will need to be completed at those Registered Training Organisations (RTO), such as TAFE colleges, who choose to offer the WDP and at a fee the RTO determines; this may well be more than the \$170.50 that currently is being charged for the WDP. These fees will be the responsibility of the Woolclasser to pay directly.

Another point to consider will be the availability of locations that will offer the WDP. The extensive range of locations that the WDP has been offered at during the last two years will not be available after this year. It will be the responsibility of the Woolclasser to attend the WDP where it is being offered by an RTO.

To monitor compliance AWEX will be increasing its auditing activities for wool offered for sale through its managed facilities and between its members. This will include ensuring that every classed lot in every sale, each week conducted through AWEX, has been prepared by an AWEX registered Woolclasser. The auditing process also extends to ensure that any lot carrying a Classing House stencil is correctly identified in the sale catalogue.

Therefore all registered Woolclassers who have not completed the WDP must do so before the end of the year, if they intend to place their stencil/stamp on wool offered through AWEX as "classed wool". Woolclassers need to contact their State WDP training providers or call 1300 133 488

Woolclasser Development Program soon to complete

Article supplied by
**David Crean,
National WDP Manager,
Western Institute of TAFE, NSW**

The Woolclasser Development Program (WDP) has now entered the final stage of delivery and will be complete by the end of December this year. To date, 21,500 Woolclassers have attended the 12 hour program, at over 400 locations involving 1400 training sessions across Australia.

The majority of Woolclassers have been satisfied with the content of the WDP, the manner in which the information has been delivered, the resources and facilities used to deliver this professional update. Over 96% of Classers responded that they were satisfied with the content of the WDP and in excess of 99% believed any concerns they had were well answered.

Evaluations completed at the end of the program indicate there have been significant improvements in professional knowledge base of Woolclassers. Areas such as quality assurance and AWEX ID recorded the largest increases, with less than 2% of Classers reporting their knowledge after the program still required some

improvement. Knowledge and skills, such as completing the Woolclasser Specification and clip preparation, also showed significant gains with over 75% of Classers now rating their knowledge as very good to excellent.

The WDP had the aim of assisting Classers to confidently perform their duties. The vast majority of Woolclassers (over 98%) indicate they now feel more confident to fulfill their classing obligations

Comments from Woolclassers have also indicated the value of the WDP to the industry.

'This course is an excellent idea. As Woolgrowers and Woolclassers we must move with the times and be constantly striving to do a better job. For too long we have tolerated a lack of professionalism in our industry.'

'Wool is a first class fibre with unique characteristics. This course helps update us on how to maintain standards to benefit the customer. The focus is on the future needs of the wool industry.'

'Most informative and great to have a refresher course for a person who has been Woolclassing for a good number of years.'

Time is quickly running out to

complete this necessary professional update. Successful completion of the Woolclasser Development Program is a requirement for continued registration as either an Australian Woolclasser or Owner Classer from the end of 2002. If you haven't completed the training, require details of upcoming programs, or need to check your course booking, please contact the toll free number - 1300 133 488 - for information and assistance.

inside

- Contamination caused by branding fluids
- Comparison of Dark Fbre Discounts
- Working with drought affected wool
- Australian Fleece Competition Sets the Benchmark
- Around the Regions

- 2001 -

WDP

- 2002 -

Woolclasser Development Program

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Bale Marking Face Branding continues...

- **FOR BALES WITH LABELS**
Woolclassers **MUST** use and complete all details on the label with a stamp or a black permanent marking pen and the classer stamp **AND** must brand the face of the bale. Woolclassers must also ensure the bale is folded with the label flap on top.
- **FOR BALES WITHOUT LABELS**
Woolclassers must brand both the head and the face of the bale. **For more information see Figures 1 & 2 on Page 19 of the AWEX Code of Practice - The Woolclasser.**

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Sheep Brand Contamination - a lasting problem

Despite the AWEX Code of Practice - The Woolclasser, specifying that any wool with sheep branding or marking stains must be removed from all other wool, buyers and processors are still

finding problems with unscourable colour from livestock brands in the Australian wool clip. Recent correspondence received from several wool buyers and processors requested all

Woolclassers to be more vigilant in preventing contamination resulting from brands and marking agents on wool. Expressing dissatisfaction with the

preparation standard of good carding wool, buyers and processors informed AWEX that more and more coloured marks resulting from brands that are not being removed properly during classing in the shed are being found to contaminate otherwise clean wool.

One wool buyer noted that "Colour from the branding of sheep, as it is often applied, is not scourable and is causing no end of problems, with even one small portion of contamination sufficient for the entire lot to be downgraded. Good coloured wool is a specialty and requires absolutely no foreign colour or matter, especially with today's labour costs preventing any intensive picking. We rely on the producer and Woolclasser to package their product in an efficient and correct manner and unless the wool is presented without unscourable colour

from branding and other contaminants, the lot will be discounted."

Contamination from brands is not only a problem in top lines but also in carding types. All possible steps should be taken to prevent sheep brands from contaminating the clip in the shearing shed. This includes classing branded wool into one line in accordance with the AWEX Code of Practice - The Woolclasser, encouraging wool producers to use branding fluid on sheep stock only where necessary and ensuring any branding occurs with a light application according to the products directions.

For further information, please contact the Australian Wool Exchange (02) 9428 6100 or email woolclasser@awex.com.au.

Working with drought affected wool

Lionel Plunkett,
Market Analyst, AWEX

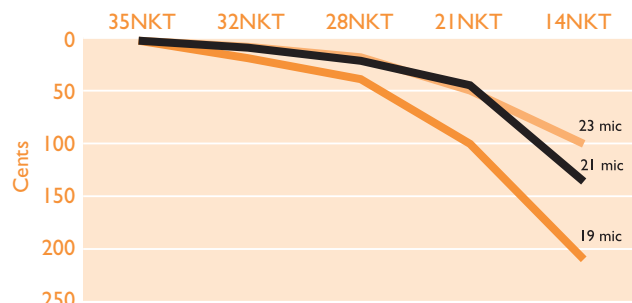
With many wool areas around Australia receiving below average rainfall during winter, many classers will be faced with drought-affected clips over the coming months. In most dry areas, Woolclassers may come across wool which has increased dust levels, lower staple strength, reduced fibre diameter, and lower fleece weights. While the prime aim when classing these clips is still to present uniform lines to the trade (and therefore maximise competition on each line) there is some flexibility that the Woolclasser can use to advantage in preparing each clip.

One of the more common characteristics that is often seen during, or after, a drought is the change in staple strength (newtons per kilotex, NKT). While discounts for tender wool change over time, the table illustrates the general micron / NKT

price relationship at the time of writing. It shows that for the medium and broad types (21 and 23 mic), the discount for part-tender types (28NKT) is reasonably small at around 15 cents clean, while for the finer 19-micron types the discount increases to approximately 40 cents clean. Discounts starts to kick in sharply once the test results move down into the "W2" category, or less than 24NKT. At 21NKT, the discount is around 100 cents clean for 19 micron, rising to 200 cents at 14NKT.

Depending on the total size of the clip, it can be beneficial to pull out the "soundest" fleeces in order to make a small line of sound wool. This should have minimal impact on the overall strength of the main line.

Before shearing commences the Woolclasser should discuss with the Woolgrower the condition of the sheep being brought into the shed. Grazing conditions may have differed from mob to mob during the year, and this information can be critical in planning the classing strategy.



National Bank releases wool swaps to provide better control of wool marketing

Article supplied by
Anna Kalma,
National Australia Bank

The National recently launched a suite of commodity hedging products, including wool swaps, that enable wool growers, processors and merchants to set a price for their wool for up to 3 years. This can assist in more accurate planning and budgeting and better control over margins.

National's Head of Agribusiness Risk Management, Tim Keith, has been pleased by the uptake of the new product and said: "The wool industry currently has some very attractive forward pricing."

How farmers use this product depends on the price risk strategy developed in conjunction with a National Agribusiness Manager and Risk Management Specialist.

"Typically we recommend that a portion of a farmer's wool clip be

hedged, which provides some certainty of return," Mr Keith said. "This still allows the farmer to benefit from any upside in pricing on the remainder of the wool clip but protects them from any downturn in commodity prices with the wool that has been hedged."

The National offers the services of a

National Risk Management Specialist to help establish a risk management strategy. In addition, advice from an Independent Licensed Futures Adviser (ILFA) will ensure that customers fully understand the hedging strategy and risks that have been discussed with their National Risk Management Specialist.

Features of National's Wool Swap?

- A Wool Swap is a cash-settled instrument offering the holder a fixed wool price exclusive of basis risk.
- Wool swaps cash settlements are based on the average of the Northern and Southern Indicator quotes - as published by the Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX).
- Wool Swaps are available for terms of up to three years.
- There are no exchange traded brokerage fees or daily margin calls.
- There is no requirement to physically deliver wool.
- Ensures the holder a fixed wool price (AUD cents/kg - clean) covering the majority of the holder's wool price risk.
- The wool swaps are available to growers, merchants and processors with a minimum of \$300,000 pa turnover and net assets over \$1m.
- The holder cannot participate in any future favourable price movements on the quantity locked in once the swap has been implemented, unless that holder wishes to settle the existing swap and establish a hedge at a new market level.

Preparation of Superfine wool in times of drought

Article supplied by
Tony Gall, President,
Australian Superfine Wool
Growers Association

When asked to put a few words together about preparing superfine wool that are showing the affects of drought, my first thoughts were that the principles of classing such clips are still basically the same as a normal year. However, there are a few important attributes that require further consideration in such times.

The noticeable differences in the clip would be the greater penetration of dust, shorter and more variable length, and more variable tensile strength. Difficulty can also be experienced with wool being thinner as well as fleeces not holding together well. This can require having to address the level of shedhand staff, or reducing the number of sheep to be shorn per day.

It is particularly important to remove the very dusty backs, as these areas will be more concentrated, and thus lower yielding. Apart from a lower yield, dust will wash out readily in the scour, and cause little concern to processing otherwise.

Length variability is a more major area for the classers to be conscious of. In most cases the staple will be slightly shorter, but probably more so in the back, so again it is important to remove short and dusty backs. Also there can be greater variability in length of skirtings, so shorter skirts

should also be closely watched. It is important to be conscious of more cotty edges during these tough years, and ensure that these are also removed.

The tensile strength can be affected more in times of drought with changing nutrition levels and feeding strategies. Naturally, all tender wool must be kept separate and a separate line for the very soft (window) type of fleeces.

One must be careful when checking fleeces for tensile strength during these critical times, as the degree of strength can vary considerably across the fleece or have patches of tender. Thus checking staples at various spots across the fleece must be considered. The wool on the shoulder, although often the finest, can also be the weaker spot.

The correct preparation of these traditional well bred superfine wool is paramount in identifying them against the increasing volume of micron fine or drought fine wool coming onto the market at times like the present, with the much increased production of 19.5 micron and finer wool.

Superfine wool with style, even though showing more dust, once prepared to best advantage will still command a premium. Members of the Superfine Wool Growers' Association are encouraged to use the Ramshead stencil on their bales, mention it in the classer's report and request its use in the sale catalogue. Other quality assurance schemes can also assist in identifying this special wool.

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Comparison of Dark Fibre Discounts

Article supplied by
Malcolm Fleet, SARDI

Merino wool contaminated by pigmented fibre, especially in crossbreeding with "exotic" breeds, has taken the attention of the wool industry in recent times. However, it is clear that other sources of dark fibre are just as important to avoid or segregate (if present) and substantial penalties apply in the auction market for identified affected lots.

Malcolm Fleet SARDI Scientist (Wool) recently sought an analysis of the auction market database to identify the quantities and average levels of discount applying to wool containing dark fibre from pigmentation (Y), sheep brands (R) and dark stain (S). This analysis conducted by AWEX Market Analyst, Lionel Plunkett, has made use of the AWEX-ID scaled qualifiers (1 = Light/Odd; 2=Medium and 3=Heavy).

In 2001/2002 the proportion of all wool sold at auction that was identified

as containing: pigmented fibre = 0.41%, brands = 2.21% and dark stain = 4.5%. There was very little Merino fleece wool (0.006%) identified as containing dark stain (S1) suggesting, as far as can be ascertained by visual appraisal of greasy wool, that this fault is being effectively controlled in those wools. However, it seems unlikely that sheep are always crutched sufficiently pre-shearing to remove all stain and that some fault may be escaping visual appraisal. The amount of stain in Merino pieces wool (S1=1.94%; S2=6.23% and S3=1.74%) reflects portions removed on the skirting table. Just a few staples of dark stained wool in each bale could produce problems for processors.

Wool identified as containing brands or spray marks of potential concern are surprisingly common and likely could be minimised by following application recommendations and, in the case of spray marks, applying a small spot to the sheep's face hairs instead of wool.

Table 1 provides estimates of the average reduction in the clean price

(cents/kg) of Merino fleece wool (pigment and brands) or Merino pieces and belly wool (dark stain), within fine and medium micron bands, for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002. The number of lots shown (brackets) is not the total affected but those tested lots that could be used in the analysis.

It appears the penalty for pigmented fibre is on average greater than for stain and stain greater than for brands. This trend could reflect the expectations of the buyer and processor about the relative darkness of these fibres, that approved sheep brands should be scourable and likelihood of the darkened fibre being recognisable as faults in the end product. The flexibility of end-use of black wool is very limited while wool with lighter stain or persisting brands could be used for a wider range of the darker dyed applications. Processing of coloured wool lots could also lead to the need for expensive cleaning of processing equipment to avoid subsequent contamination. In general the penalties

| Diameter (µm) | Year | Clean price reduction and number of lots (brackets) | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------|---|---------|------|---------|------|-------|
| | | Y1 | | Y2 | | Y3 | |
| Merino fleece | | | | | | | |
| 17.1 - 20.0 µm | 1 | -143 | (6) | - | - | -576 | (2) |
| | 2 | -67 | (71) | -288 | (1) | -359 | (19) |
| 20.1 - 23.0 µm | 1 | -66 | (62) | -172 | (7) | -190 | (19) |
| | 2 | -92 | (159) | -210 | (4) | -281 | (13) |
| Merino fleece | | | | | | | |
| | | R1 | | R2 | | R3 | |
| 17.1 - 20.0 µm | 1 | -32 | (1,134) | -73 | (51) | -177 | (15) |
| | 2 | -18 | (2,527) | -101 | (78) | -142 | (93) |
| 20.1 - 23.0 µm | 1 | -3 | (2,522) | -15 | (20) | -76 | (3) |
| | 2 | -2 | (4,078) | -28 | (20) | -77 | (31) |
| Merino Pieces and Bellies | | | | | | | |
| | | S1 | | S2 | | S3 | |
| 17.1 - 20.0 µm | 1 | -54 | (1,262) | -183 | (2,542) | -195 | (458) |
| | 2 | -39 | (1,543) | -173 | (3,219) | -178 | (623) |
| 20.1 - 23.0 µm | 1 | -28 | (591) | -99 | (2,032) | -107 | (815) |
| | 2 | -33 | (265) | -141 | (960) | -154 | (440) |

were higher for the finer wool band and this likely reflects differences in end-use (eg. white and pastels) and higher risk of appearance of dark fibre in fine yarn applications.

Clearly there is potential to reduce the amount of white wool found with stain or brands through improved management in yards or shearing shed

and the cost-benefit of this can be estimated using values such as those in Table 1. In contrast, since pigmentation is initially inherited, the amount of Y1 wool is mainly determined by the choice of breed.

Malcolm Fleet can be contacted by: email fleet.malcolm@saugov.sa.gov.au or phone (08) 8524 9664

Australian Fleece Competition Sets the Benchmark

Article Supplied by
Tim Doolan, Wesfarmers Landmark

Two years ago Wesfarmers Landmark and the Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA) took up the challenge to develop a modern and relevant fleece competition for the Australian Sheep Breeders Association (ASBA). As a result, the Australian Fleece Competition was established and

is setting out new benchmarks with a strong emphasis on predicted processing performance to reflect commercial realities of the Australian wool industry. The competition is now in its third year and is held annually at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show at Bendigo, Victoria in July.

Wesfarmers Landmark, AWTA and ASBA are continually working towards achieving the competition's three main objectives.

- To conduct a commercially relevant fleece competition utilising current technology.
 - To encompass all main fleece types.
 - To provide educational outcomes for entrants, woolgrowers and the wool industry at large.
- The competition has seven merino sections ranging from Extra Ultrafine to Extra Strong. There are three classes in each section - Merino Ram, Merino Ewe/ Wether and Commercial Ewe/ Wether. There are also sections for Polwarth, Corriedale and British Long Wool.

Important commercial attributes including Clean Fleece Weight, Hauteur (predicted fibre length of top) and Co-efficient of Variation of Hauteur (CVH - variation percentage of hauteur) are benchmarked for each sex and micron section. Predicted processing performance is calculated using industry standard TEAM 2 formula. Benchmarks are derived in consultation with the Australian sheep and wool industry and adjusted annually.

How It Works:

All fleeces are delivered to the closest regional Wesfarmers Landmark Woolstore and then delivered free of charge to the Melbourne Woolstore. Fleeces are weighed, sampled and fully tested including length and strength by AWTA. Fleeces are allocated into sections according to their micron.

The point scoring system is designed to calculate points for each fleece against a benchmark for that section. Maximum points awarded for Clean Fleece Weight are 35. Maximum points for Processing Performance are divided into 25 points for Hauteur and 10 points for CV of Hauteur.

A total of 30 points are awarded for Subjective Values including Uniformity (8), Handle (8), Colour (6) and Style/ Character (8).

Two experienced judges comprising a

wool broker and a wool exporter/ processor visually assess each fleece on its subjective characteristics. The judges use objective measurements such as Co-efficient of Variation of Length (CVL), Comfort Factor (CF), and Co-efficient of Variation of Diameter (CVD) as a guide.

Polwarths, Corriedales and British Long Wool are judged on a modified subjective basis using all objective measurements as a guide for predicting processing performance.

The point scoring system allows the Grand Champion to be drawn from any section.

All fleeces are appraised using AWEX-ID wool descriptions. The Australian Wool Exchange produces a special Premium and Discount schedule for the Australian Fleece Competition which incorporates all main wool types and is based on a 12 month seasonal average. This information is a

separate element of the competition providing a trend of relative wool values.

For more information contact: Athol Frederick (Wesfarmers Landmark) 03 5448 3881

Peter Vile (Wesfarmers Landmark) 03 9261 5288

Andrew Ternouth (ASBA) 03 5439 5094
Tim Steere (AWTA) 03 9371 2100

Sample Score Card

| Exhibitor | Section | Class 12 | Entry No |
|------------------------|--------------------|--|-----------------|
| AW Example | Fine Merino | Commercial Ewe or Wether | 3000 |
| Green Park | 18.1 - 20.0 Micron | | |
| Greenstone, NSW | | | |
| Competition Results | | | Score Max |
| Micron: | 19.6 micron | Vegetable Matter: | 1.0% |
| Std Deviation: | 3.8 microns | Greasy Fleece Weight: | 6.4Kg |
| CVD: | 19.4% | Yield: | 79.6% |
| Comfort Factor: | 98.9% | Clean Fleece Weight: | 5.1Kg 31.3 35 |
| Curvature: | 82 degrees/mm | Hauteur: | 78.5mm 22.8 25 |
| Staple Length: | 104 mm | CV Hauteur: | 47.1 mm 10.0 10 |
| Staple Strength: | 41 N/tex | Uniformity: | 8.0 8 |
| Tip: | 5% | Handle: | 6.5 8 |
| Middle: | 10% | Colour: | 5.5 6 |
| Base: | 85% | Style/Character: | 7.0 8 |
| | | Total Score | 88.1 100 |
| Commercial Information | | Commercial Value | |
| Stud or Property: | Green Park | AWEX ID: | MF4E |
| Location: | SW NSW | Clean Price: | 990 cents/kg |
| Shedline: | Blue Park | Greasy Price: | 716 cents/kg |
| Average Mean Micron: | 21 micron | Fleece Value: | \$45.95 |
| Fleck Size: | 2531 | Phone 08 12 month average for Dec 1 July 2001 - 30 June 2002 | |
| Average Rainfall: | 625 mm | APIC data only supplied by AWEX Ltd | |

Repaired Packs

Blair Brice, AWEX

All AWEX approved packs, both new and repaired, carry the AWEX Bale Label on the top flap of the pack.

In accordance with AWEX Rules only wool packed in approved new or repaired packs can be sold through AWEX.

Approved repaired packs are repaired to a specific standard that stipulates the requirements for

selecting suitable packs for repair, steps in preparation for repair, the quality of repairs and the identification of repaired packs. AWEX currently registers all organisations that repair

packs for sale through AWEX. These companies have signed an agreement stating that they will comply with the Standard for repairing packs.

AWEX has received a number of comments about the poor appearance of repaired packs and their overall performance in pressing. AWEX has reminded its members that these packs are a "second-hand" product and overall performance cannot be expected to match that of new packs.

Woolgrowers using second hand

packs should be informed of this fact at the time of purchase.

AWEX Rules require any wool packed in repaired packs to be identified in the sale catalogue (both electronic & printed versions) with the catalogue symbol "V". Failure to identify repaired packs at the time of sale is a breach of AWEX Rules and requires action to be taken in accordance with the Rules breach procedures. Monitoring the use of the "V" catalogue symbol is part of the AWEX Sale Audit process.

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Wooltrak Market Reporting

AWEX is offering all Woolclassers a special* annual subscription rate to the WOOLTRAK website of only \$44.00 (including GST). This represents an annual saving of over \$130.00. To qualify for this special* Woolclasser rate all you need to do is email AWEX at subscriptions@awex.com.au and provide your Woolclasser ID / Stencil Number.

* This special offer is not available to AWEX Members or their staff. Upon payment your access will be granted and you will receive an email informing you of your USER I.D. and password.

How to benefit from maximum competition and sell forward

Elders Exchange desk provides you all the benefits that come with maximum competition whilst allowing you to sell your wool while still on the sheeps back

This provides you with the opportunity to take advantage of favourable market conditions or to protect yourself against adverse market movement.

For more information please contact your local branch

Australian Wool
It's a miracle



We're investing in the future of Australian wool

Be a bale weight watcher

- OVERWEIGHT BALES** are a significant cost to the Australian woolgrower – an estimated \$800,000 per year.
- OVERWEIGHT BALES** cause delay in processing wool.
- OVERWEIGHT BALES** can cause the wool pack to split and create contamination.
- OVERWEIGHT BALES** are outside the industry and OH&S agreed regulations.
- OVERWEIGHT BALES** cause delivery and shipping problems. Dumps are not designed to compress overweight bales.
- OVERWEIGHT BALES** cause injury.

To avoid the pressing of overweight bales all press and shed scales should be calibrated prior to the commencement of shearing and all bale weights should be checked regularly during shearing.

Recently at the Elders Ltd – Lara (Vic) complex, a bale of AAAM (21 micron, 68% yield, 1% VM and 90 mm) weighed in at 265 kg. An amazing feat

given that it was pressed in a 20 year old press! The weight of this bale was checked three times as staff looked on in disbelief, and special care had to be taken to repack the bale.

There is no winner in pressing bales above the industry agreed maximum. Make sure no bale, including bulk classed wool, regardless of description exceeds the maximum of 204 kg.



WOOLCLASSERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
Serving Professional Woolclassers & the Woolclassing Industry across Australia.

Enquiries: Federal Secretary
Tel. (03) 5333 4011 Fax. (03) 5333 4012
Email: woolclasserassoc@netconnect.com.au

Around the Regions

Northern Region

Woolclasser Responsibilities

According to the AWEX Code of Practice for the Preparation of Australian Wool Clips the woolclasser has three main responsibilities. They are:

- Prepare the wool clip to the standards required by the Code of Practice.** The woolclasser must ensure that there will be adequate facilities to enable all wool to be prepared according to the requirements of the Code of Practice. Discuss this with the grower.
- Prevent contamination of the wool from non-wool articles.** The woolclasser must undertake an inspection of the shed and associated facilities prior to the commencement of shearing to ensure that the shed is clean, that all potential contaminants are removed, and that there is adequate lighting and equipment. Items such as cans, clothing, bale hooks, baling twine, wire, tools and cleaning rags must not be lying around the shed.
- Accurately document the wool clip.** The Woolclassers Specification is the only formal document a Wool Handling agent has concerning the complete wool clip. The handling agent uses the Woolclassers Specification to make commercial lotting decisions, therefore it must be legible, accurate and complete. Take the time to do it properly.

As reported in the last edition of BOARDtalk, adherence to the requirements of the Code of Practice will put you the Woolclasser at the forefront of quality management within the Wool industry. The Code of Practice document is the single most complete and comprehensive quality management package currently available in the wool industry.

The Woolclasser, as the person responsible for guaranteeing the standard of preparation of wool in the bale, must insist that the facilities and conditions enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the Code of Practice.

Non-conforming Lots

Each sale week in the Northern Region a number of lots are identified as not conforming to the classing standards outlined in the Code of Practice. Reasons for non-conformance may be:

- Mixed length
- Mixed breeds
- Mixed quality
- Pigmented wool in white
- Stain in fleece

In all such cases Woolclassers will receive a letter from AWEX asking them to identify the cause of the problem and describe steps taken to ensure it does not happen again. By following more rigidly the three basic responsibilities of the Woolclasser as outlined above, much of the time consuming inconvenience to Woolclassers, clip inspections at Showfloors, and very low net return to Woolgrowers for these lots, may be avoided.

Chris Miley
Northern Regional Manager

Southern Region

Common preparation faults

Branding Fluid
In the last few sales the presence of branding fluid has again appeared as a problem and it is timely to remind classers that it's removal is still necessary. The Code of Practice states that "wool containing sheep branding fluid" must be removed where evident. Failure to remove brands will attract a discount. (See page 3 for article from Malcolm Fleet.)

Jowls or Cotts in skirtings

The presence of jowls or cotts in skirtings will also attract a discount and classers should instruct shed staff to remove them where evident. The Code of Practice states that cotted pieces should be kept separate.

Bale Descriptions

Since the introduction of Exotic breeds into Australia, a lot of work has gone into ensuring that these breeds or there crosses are identified. There does appear to be some confusion about application of the "Y" symbol. Remember it is intended for breeds that have a risk rating of 5 (see the Code of Practice), or where the Classer observes pigment fibres and is usually not applied to Downs wool (eg. Dorset Horn, Southdown). For example, a line of Dorset Horn should be branded AAA DN, not AAA DNY. If you are unsure of what to brand any line of wool please contact the Wool Exchange or refer to the Code of Practice.

Also ensure that lines of pieces designated as Stain lines are described as STN PCS. There have been a number of instances where lines which are clearly prepared as Stains but have only been described as PCS. This is misleading and the Wool Exchange has been in contact with Woolclassers where descriptions are significantly different from the Code of Practice.

David Williams
Technical Controller-Marketing Systems

Western Region

The little things that count

While every endeavour is made to 'get it right' when selecting rams for breeding purposes or maintaining a constant watch on the supply of adequate nutrition during the critical wool production period of the merino's life. It seems at times that all this well intended effort can be somewhat lost when it comes to shearing and maintaining acceptable wool preparation standards.

At times during the hectic shearing season, the main objective is centred around getting the 'sheep mustered and shorn as quickly as possible' and that the actual wool preparation can take somewhat of a secondary role.

As a result, the actual classing can become something that just needs to occur as part

of the overall 'shearing time' focus. As far as preparation is concerned, this leaves much to be desired. From the time the fleece is removed from the board and thrown onto the wool rolling table (sometimes simply just bundled onto the table so that another fleece can be cleared from under the Shearer's feet) the actual preparation can become a challenge indeed for the conscientious Woolclasser who becomes overworked and stressed.

The Woolclasser must rely on his or her experience, if not overly experienced support comes from the rest of the shearing team, to get the job done to everyone's satisfaction and this objective can be a major challenge itself.

To assist the main wool preparation objective, which should be to maximise future sale opportunities for the wool producer, every endeavour should be made to understand that it is the 'little things that count' as part of the overall clip preparation and shearing process.

Little things like, understanding that when the Woolclasser is preparing a line for sale it's not just those 20 bales of AAAM or that line of LKS, but ultimately the 6 to 8 kg sample which will go on display for the potential buyer. So, if it means taking a little extra time at shearing or a little more support so that the Woolclasser can do his or her job properly, then perhaps that's a major action that should be considered before shearing time commences again.

Keeping lines as even as possible and eradicating any possibility of surprises, such as stain, odd cott, shanks or unscourable colour, from 'popping up' in the display sample that can effect the entire line are indeed 'little things' which can help achieve that well established objective of maximising returns for not only the Wool Producer but for each and every sector of the wool pipeline.

David Aslett
Western Regional Manager

From the Registrar of Woolclassers: Monitoring Clip Preparation Standards – Part 2

To ensure that all registered Woolclassers and Classing Houses maintain the clip preparation standards required by the Code of Practice, AWEX undertakes several different activities. These include:

- Sale Audits
- Clip Inspections
- Contamination Identification
- Mill Reports
- Complaint Handling

The objective of these monitoring and audit functions is to ensure wool that is not prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice is identified, and the Woolclasser addresses the preparation problem.

In the last edition of BOARDtalk we looked at the important activity of Sale Audits. In this edition, we look at the other activities in monitoring clip preparation standards.

Clip Inspections

All wool offered for sale through AWEX is inspected by AWEX staff for the standard of wool preparation and to apply an AWEX-ID to the lots. Where the wool, for any reason, does not meet the required preparation standard, a clip inspection report is completed. The Woolclasser or Classing House responsible for the preparation is asked to explain how the problem occurred and what they will do to ensure it does not happen again. In most cases this is sufficient to see that the problem is addressed and the overall standard of wool preparation is improved. Occasionally Woolclassers may be asked to retrain or have their registration suspended until appropriate corrective action is taken.

Contamination Identification

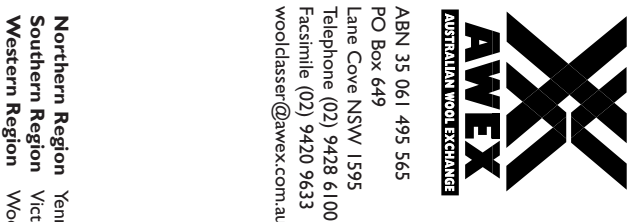
Jointly AWTA and AWEX operate a contamination screening and identification program. All wool tested goes through the Vegetable Matter (VM) test, which allows foreign matter contamination to be identified in the sample. Whether contamination is identified through this process or AWEX presale inspection, the seller is identified and often the bales must be stripped down to find the contamination. In all cases the Woolclasser will be asked to explain how the contamination got into the bale.

Mill Reports

All early stage processors (scourers and top makers) have available AWEX Mill Report forms. These allow the processor to notify AWEX of any wool preparation fault. This includes misdescribed bales, poor preparation, contamination, etc. As with all other reports, AWEX follows up directly with the Woolclasser. On occasions the processors have made claims against the seller for compensation or replacement wool based on the identified problem.

Complaint Handling

The registrar is required to deal with all complaints related to registered Woolclassers. Each year AWEX handles complaints about Woolclassers' performance in relation to the Code of Practice and the Rules of Registration. The Rules detail the procedure that is followed in these cases. At all times (except where required by law) AWEX keeps personal information about Woolclassers confidential.



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If you have not registered or have changed your details for the 2001-2003 registration period, please fax (02) 9420 9633 or email woolclasser@awex.com.au with your scencil number and address details.

Change of address details –
Please fill in below and post or fax this coupon to AWEX Head Office or email us

Telephone: _____
Facsimile: _____
Mobile: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Email address: _____
Woolclasser ID Number: _____

For Owner Classers
Registered Bale Brands

| | |
|----|-------|
| 1. | _____ |
| 2. | _____ |
| 3. | _____ |