

Anden defies seasonal challenges

Just two years ago the Victorian Mallee region was wet and lush, but it is a stark contrast this year. Despite that dramatic change of seasonal conditions, the Donnan family, Anden sheep studs, Woomelang achieved a very good result at their three breed, 23rd annual sale last Thursday.

They sold 185 head of rams and ewes in an 87% clearance, to a top of \$9500 and averaged an extremely solid \$1414.

With the big dry meaning crops north of Warracknabeal are now virtually non-existent, and many below now being cut for hay, there is a sombre but resilient mood in the region, with finances very tight. However, the saving grace for the Donnans was that the prospects of good income from a lamb drop is considerably higher than from a grain crop this year.

It is quite probably for this reason, combined with the long-earnt reputation of the Anden elite performance genetics in being able to produce lambs with rapid growth and exceptional muscling, that brought so many of their regular client base back to this sale again this year.

There were 54 registered bidders from four states in attendance, plus others connected through the Auctions Plus network. Forty-one of them were successful in their buying endeavours, on either the stud White Suffolk and Suffolk rams and ewes, the White Suffolk flock rams, or the relatively new Ultra White rams.

The top price was a somewhat modest, but still significant \$9500 for Anden 170045, the first of the 22 specially selected White Suffolk rams. Sired by Langley Heights 090160, this very impressive and stylish late May drop was supported by exceptional Lambplan EBV figures, including 18.19 for post weaning weight, -0.67 for fat, 1.06 for eye muscle depth, culminating in a carcass plus index of 205.83. The successful bidders were Nick Cheetham, Cheetara stud, Narembeen, WA and Brenton Fairclough, Stockdale stud, York, WA in partnership. Jono Sutherland, Elders Bendigo assisted with their travel and buying needs.

Anden's first son of their record-breaking sire, 'Cruiser' 150277 that sold two years ago for \$68,000, was next to grace the sale ring. A170046 was used over many ewes in the stud as a ram lamb with his progeny showing exceptional promise. A post weaning weight EBV of 16.22, an eye muscle EBV of 1.90 and carcass plus index of 204.91 only added to its appeal. Consequently, Paul and Peter Routley, Almondvale stud, Lockhart, NSW and accompanied by Paul's children Lachlan and Grace, couldn't believe their luck in being able to purchase this much-admired ram for just \$9000. They later invested their 'savings' in A170070Tw, a Farrer 150049 son with very similar figures, for just \$2000.

The draft of 22, with Lambplan C+ indices up to 232.12 and averaging 210.71, sold for an extremely good value average of \$3145, with 18 going to stud buyers.

The wide choice of top-quality rams enabled most to pick up new sires against limited bidding competition, hence that value. Three were purchased via Auctions Plus, while four other breeders made the most of the value on offer, and picked up two rams each; these being Merran Park Pastoral through BR & C, Swan Hill (\$5500 and \$2500), Weidemann Pastoral, 'Sunnydale', Rupanyup (\$4000 and \$2500), Elders Horsham a/c Hannaton (\$3000 and \$2500), and P & M Rentsch, through Elders Hamilton (\$3000 and \$2000).

Senior principal Andrew Donnan said post sale, "In a tough season, things always tighten up a bit, but it was a good result. Most went to studs which is good, but we are happy those buyers who have kept coming back have got very good rams, and at that value will hopefully keep coming back."

The highlight of the sale was undoubtedly the 81 strong White Suffolk flock ram draft, which demonstrated the resilience of the local region's lamb producers. The stud principals and the Elders sale agents put in a lot of effort to assist these producers in their buying needs, and 23 bidders were successful in purchasing from one to 11 rams each, these topping at \$2000 and averaging \$1280. Against a downward trend, this was actually up \$45 on last year.

In explaining the strength of that competition, Elders Birchip's Shane McLoughlan said, "There were a lot of repeat buyers as it is very seldom that they miss out on a decent price with their stock, and in years like this there is very little expense compared with a cropping program."

"There is no doubt this Anden set up is a centre piece in the local lamb industry. You can see the fruits of it in the lambs being produced. Even in this year we have had good suckers get away under very trying conditions."

P & J Harris, through DMD Nhill paid the \$2000 top price in this draft for a 221.13 C+ indexing ram. They also purchased one from the specially selected line at the same money, plus two other flock rams at \$1900 each. Their four purchases had a C+ average of 218.93 and an average price of \$1950. Over sixty percent of the flock ram draft exceeded 200 on the C+ index.

Buying through Landmark Ararat, the biggest volume buyer was P & K Hartwich. They purchased 11 White Suffolk rams from \$1000 to \$1300 and averaged \$1145.

Very strong bidders at the top end were S & G Wilson, buying through agents McKean McGregor, Bendigo. They purchased nine rams to \$1900 and averaged \$1522. Not far behind in numbers was Pira Farms through BR & C, Swan Hill, purchasing eight rams at an average of \$1200.

A very impressive run of 60 Ultra Whites was also offered, these being appreciated by another group of mainly repeat buyers. Developed by the Donnans, these stabilised Dorper/Poll Dorset composites were first offered in their 2016 sale when 21 all cleared at a \$1274 average. Their success for clients has seen demand grow, with 48 selling this year to 7 buyers, with three dominating.

Greg Rae, Warrawee Pastoral, Kyalite and buying through BR & C, Swan Hill was the biggest volume buyer in the whole sale. Warrawee Pastoral purchased nine two years ago and Greg increased his buying to 17 of the very best this year, paying to the equal top price in the draft of \$1800 and averaging \$1429 in very determined bidding.

Also buying through the BR & C Swan Hill agency, and twice paying to \$1800 for 12 rams while averaging \$1358, was Saxilby Park Pastoral Co.

Wirrinourt P/L, buying through Landmark Ararat was also very prominent, with 11 to \$1500 and at a \$1118 average.

The Kerangie Suffolk rams met solid, but restricted competition. P & A Bone, through Westech Ag Kyle Livestock paid the two top Suffolk ram prices of \$1700 and \$1500, while G & H McKenzie through Elders Ballarat purchased three of the six rams to sell at auction to \$1200. The 6 that sold averaged \$1167.

It was a similar story with the stud ewe offerings. Seven of the nine Suffolk stud ewes and 21 of the 28 White Suffolk ewes found new homes, but at prices considerably lower than the last couple of

years. The Suffolks sold to \$900 three times and averaged \$714, while the White Suffolks topped at \$1600 and averaged \$643.

Elli McDonald, Hopea Suffolk and White Suffolk studs, Dadswell Bridge purchased two Suffolk ewes and then two White Suffolk ewes at averages of \$850 and \$1000 respectively.

David Pipkorn, Detpa Grove stud, Jeparit paid the \$1600 top White Suffolk ewe price, while Nick Cheetham, WA purchased five White Suffolks and two Suffolks, paying to \$900 in both drafts.

In summing up the whole sale, Anden’s Joel Donnan said, “It was a very good day right through in these conditions. It was good to have clients asking our recommendations on the most suitable rams for what they are trying to do in their breeding programs.”

“When they are wanting to do better, we like to set them up with the right rams for the right job.”

Sale Summary

	White Suffolk SS rams		White Suffolk flock rams		White Suffolk ewes		Ultra White rams		Kerangie Suffolk rams		Kerangie Suffolk ewes	
	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017
Offered	22	29	81	81	28	36	60	57	12	15	9	11
Sold	22	29	81	81	21	35	48	51	6	15	7	11
Top	\$9500	\$11,000	\$2000	\$1600	\$1600	\$1400	\$1800	\$1800	\$1700	\$2000	\$900	\$1200
Average	\$3145	\$3588	\$1280	\$1235	\$643	\$791	\$1317	\$1424	\$1167	\$1073	\$714	\$900

Agents: Elders Wycheproof

Auctioneers: Ross Milne & Aaron Zwar



Pictured with Anden 170045, the \$9500 top priced ram at the Donnan family's annual sale are Jono Sutherland, Elders Bendigo; Joel Donnan, and joint WA purchasers, Nick Cheetham, Cheetara stud, Narembeen, and Brenton Fairclough, Stockdale stud, York.



Pictured with Anden 170046, the \$9000 second top priced ram at the Donnan family's annual sale are Joel Donnan and the purchasers, Lachlan, Grace and Paul Routley, Almondvale stud, Lockhart, NSW.