

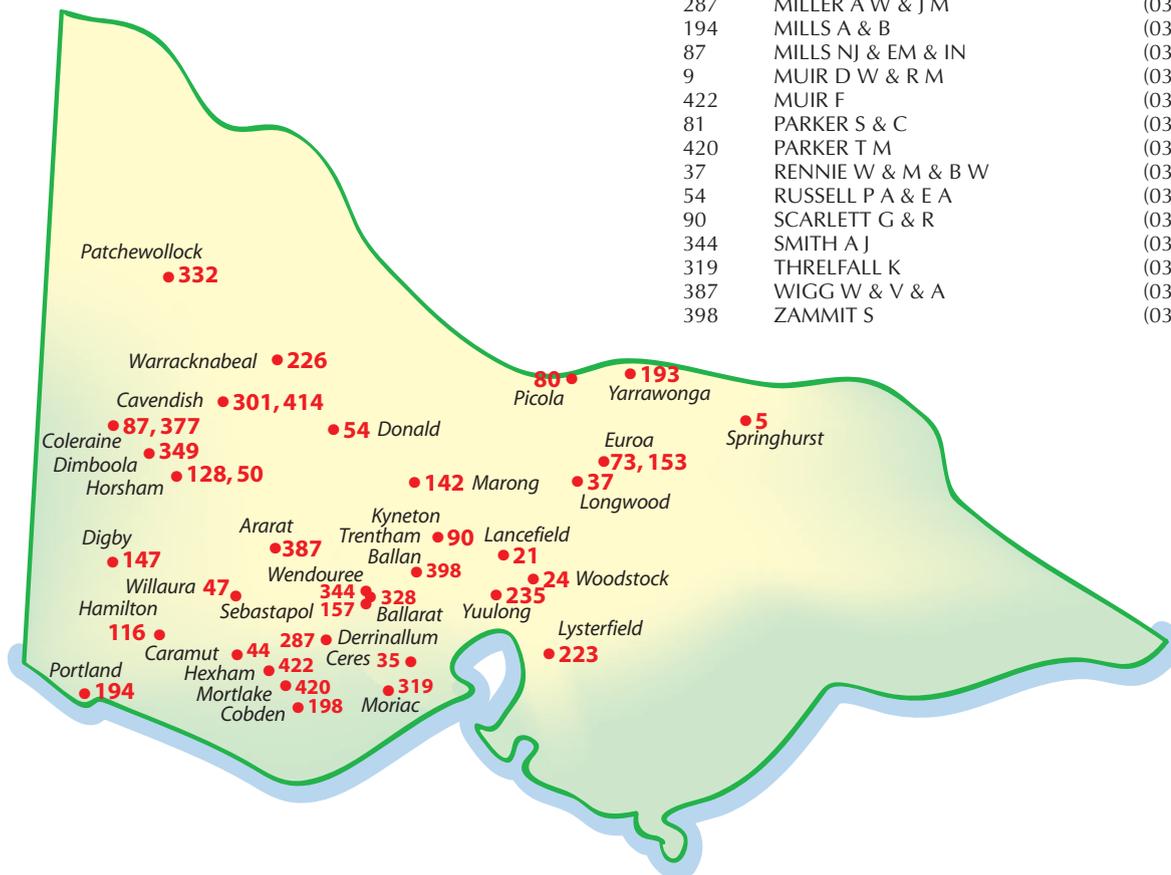
TASMANIA

397	ADAMS A	(03) 6249 1145
333	BOURNE BANK TEXELS	(03) 6261 1857
248	BRESNEHAN J B & M	(03) 6254 6141
55	COOK G & B	(03) 6443 4155
310	FRENCH M H	(03) 6260 2371
162	GLADWELL J B & P D	(03) 6436 3116
322	HALL G & K	(03) 6259 5524
418	HAMILTON N J	(03) 6396 3386
331	HAMMOND A V & M J	(03) 6295 1393
416	HODGSON J	(03) 6391 8395
425	MOORE K J & DENNIS T A	(03) 6352 3724
395	NICHOLS V S & C A	(03) 6257 8285
67	PROSSER PASTORAL	(03) 6257 5110
350	SERPENTINE TEXEL STUD	(03) 6492 1333
103	YOUNG N L & D	(03) 6362 2422

VICTORIA

198	BAKER G & N	(03) 5595 1585
50	BAKER R & F & M & S	(03) 5384 7383
414	BARBER M T	(03) 5380 1532
73	BOTTCHER DCJ	(03) 5790 3268
223	BUCKLAND A J & H J	(03) 9752 2229
147	BURGESS H	(03) 5579 3228
377	BYAMBEE PARTNERSHIP	(03) 5575 8229
116	CALDOW H M & J A	(03) 5572 1801
142	CHAMBERS K & M	(03) 5435 2216
226	CLARK BJ & JVR and SMITH GJG	(03) 5394 1178
47	COOLANA RURAL	(03) 5350 5561
193	COOPER JA & BS & DA	(03) 5743 1816
24	DAREBIN PARK TEXEL STUD	(03) 9408 1498

328	DAVIS R A & D F	(03) 5334 7588
44	DODGSON, MISS H S	(03) 5571 2653
153	ERICKSEN J C	(03) 5795 1961
128	GUEST C R & J H	(03) 5383 7518
157	HAM WS & JE & NM	(03) 5344 0604
80	HOLLAND K & N	(03) 5869 1274
235	ILUKA TEXEL STUD	(03) 5237 5264
349	JORGENSEN B A & H A	(03) 5397 5224
21	KNIGHT B&J and RUSSELL P&E	(03) 5497 1682
35	LEIGH PARTNERSHIP	(03) 5249 1380
301	LOMAS R G & C A	(03) 5574 9244
332	MCLEAN E M FAMILY TRUST	(03) 5084 1235
5	METHERALL I & R	(03) 5726 5251
287	MILLER A W & J M	(03) 5597 6508
194	MILLS A & B	(03) 5526 7263
87	MILLS NJ & EM & IN	(03) 5575 2119
9	MUIR D W & R M	(03) 5350 5522
422	MUIR F	(03) 5350 5557
81	PARKER S & C	(03) 5599 2476
420	PARKER T M	(03) 5599 2477
37	RENNIE W & M & B W	(03) 5798 5303
54	RUSSELL P A & E A	(03) 5497 1682
90	SCARLETT G & R	(03) 5423 2138
344	SMITH A J	(03) 5339 2184
319	THRELFALL K	(03) 5266 2005
387	WIGG W & V & A	(03) 5352 3645
398	ZAMMIT S	(03) 5368 2205



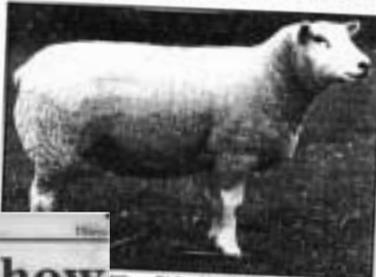


Inspecting the quarantine farms



Texel tipped to rival Merinos

Text describing the Texel sheep's characteristics and its potential to rival Merinos.



If you're not on the plane, you might miss the Texels.



VPC introduces the lean, low-fat prime lamb of the Texels. Text describing the benefits and features of the Texel breed.

AMLC carcass tests show profit potential of Texels



Text describing the results of AMLC carcass tests and the profit potential of Texel lambs.



The original Texel tour to purchase Texels Sept. 1989



Now open. The future of Australian lamb.

Text describing the benefits of Texel lamb and providing contact information for Texel Australia.

TEXEL Lean Lamb, Fat Returns

Phone: (02) 454 7802

Trade Inquiries: Mike Morrison (014) 823 199

General Enquiries: Geoff Phelan (014) 825 634



BUYING SPREE: Teeranga sheep-buyer Alex Sinclair... Text describing the purchase of Texel sheep by Alex Sinclair.

MAFFAC elite sale of Texel
(& other exotic breeds)
\$56,000 ram



Wally Fehring, Victorian Producers Co-op and Mike Herman, Lamb XL cook meat for John and Simon Goddard, "Yattandou", Cosh.



Geoff Plaato from Wellington, Bill Wyatt from Sydney and Bob Andrews from Dubbo at the presentation.

LIVESTOCK

NZ Texels to boost local lamb this year

By DAVID JENNINGS

A \$6,000,000 flock of sheep bred for the elite sale of Texel and other exotic breeds, including the new breed, the Texel, will be available to New Zealand farmers from next year.



New Zealand's largest, greatest range of the Australian Texel Elite flock, including some of the best and finest Lambs, is available to New Zealand farmers from next year.

The flock will give a jump of 11 years selection in one lot - they will grow out to 25-27kg without adding fat beyond seven days, experience price almost 100% of other, and every weight of prime car.

LIVESTOCK

Lamb breeders eager to enter Texel market

By ANDREW BARNHILL

NEW ZEALAND lamb breeders are eyeing the \$6,000,000 Texel flock with interest. The flock, which is being bred for the elite sale of Texel and other exotic breeds, is expected to be available to New Zealand farmers from next year.



The flock will give a jump of 11 years selection in one lot - they will grow out to 25-27kg without adding fat beyond seven days, experience price almost 100% of other, and every weight of prime car.

The fashion parade of the Gotland Pelt garments



RURAL UPDATE

New leaner lamb to arrive in Australia next June

NEW Zealand lamb breeders are eyeing the \$6,000,000 Texel flock with interest. The flock, which is being bred for the elite sale of Texel and other exotic breeds, is expected to be available to New Zealand farmers from next year.



Peter White, Bob White, and other breeders at a presentation.

The flock will give a jump of 11 years selection in one lot - they will grow out to 25-27kg without adding fat beyond seven days, experience price almost 100% of other, and every weight of prime car.



Gotland Pelt sheep (they never did make it to Australia)



Michael George from Wellington, Eric White from Sydney and Bob White from Dubbo at the presentation.

New Zealand to Australia

Edited address from Wally Fehring to the 10th Anniversary Dinner, Bendigo, Vic. on 19th July 2003.

The big Russian Ilyushin jet screamed in over Adelaide at 2.00 a.m. breaking the time and sound curfew. It was late leaving NZ as it took longer to load and was heavier than expected. It struggled to clear the lights of the airport plus the city of Palmerston North, then headed to Australia into a headwind where it had to have special clearance to land after the 11.00 p.m. curfew.

The Texels had arrived in Australia. Adelaide talkback radio went mad!!!!!! not because of *these magnificent sheep*, but because the populace had been woken at 2.00 a.m.

It seemed a fitting controversial arrival after the years of hard work and supreme effort to get them here. They were destined for the Kirra quarantine station, a place the Kiwi's called a beach without the sea.

This is a story of many dedicated people, of LambXL, of Mike Hermann, Dr. Willie Vivanco and myself, the financial backers Rod Barnett and Roger Mason, of lots of extras, Bill Close and Graham Gilmore etc.

The first I heard of Texel sheep was when travelling with David McKibben from Coles Myer. He had a promotional Texel video sent to him by Mike Hermann from LambXL. After dinner that night in May 1989, we got the motel manager to put the video on so we could see it in our room that night. My first impression was that they had a place in Australia. I then took the video home and watched it more closely to really get to understand what was offered. From here the General Manager of VPC, Gerald Jongebloed, and other staff agreed that I should meet Mike Hermann and find out all we could about Texels and the chance to introduce them into Australia. This first meeting took place in Melbourne.

Following meetings in Melbourne at VPC it was decided that VPC would take up the marketing role for LambXL. I took my first trip to New Zealand in June 1989 to see these animals for the first time. I must say that I just stood there for quite a while to take in what impressive sheep they were. The video did not do them justice. On this trip all the marketing plans were drawn up and I could see that LambXL were going to be very good in this department. After the first advertising campaign over 150 inquiries had come in from all over Australia plus one international Texel breeder with a property in WA. After all the information was mailed out 44 potential buyers booked for the first inspection tour of the LambXL Texel flock. This group landed in Wellington, NZ, on Monday, 11th September, 1989.

After the greetings were made at the airport and we got everyone on to the coach, the first call was Parliament House, NZ, where we were welcomed by Deputy Prime Minister and later, Prime Minister, Mr. Mike Moore. He was very keen to welcome us because he thought we were going to help his balance of trade figures in a big way. Mike and his team showed us various Texels and Texel cross lambs on various farms. After our second visit to the Australian quarantine farm we all congregated on the magnificent lawns and garden in the Hoto Poroa Boys School.

While most of the tour enjoyed a fashion parade and tasted the local wines a meeting of interested buyers was held in the headmasters study. This group formed a common view on what they felt the Texels were worth. Before lunch we watched master butcher Laurie Hunt cut up a Texel cross lamb carcass the first time into new trim lamb cuts. This was the turning point for most interested buyers seeing just how much red meat yield there was without fat. The balance of interested buyers soon changed their minds on how good Texels were once they tasted this meat expertly cooked in this new way. On arrival back at the motel the group all changed and met at the bar for drinks prior to dinner. Meanwhile I had a spa before walking to the next door motel to meet with John Parker, Chairman of LambXL and his fellow directors. This was a heavy meeting because I told them that their idea of price and ours were miles apart. I indicated where I thought we would get to. They did not look happy at all.

Before we all went into dinner we held a meeting of all interested buyers in the upstairs conference room. At this meeting after much grandstanding by a certain few we finally agreed on an offer price. Bill Rogers then got all interested parties to indicate how many Texels they would buy. Bill and I then added on the orders from buyers not present. We all then went down for dinner where we were seated among LambXL directors and staff.

I held a quick meeting with John Parker and Mike to inform them of our final price offer and numbers indicated. It did not go down well and was told the only way we could get the deal was for this group to take a minimum of 300 Texels at this price because they were setting the price for all other Australian buyers in the future. After sitting down to start dinner I could not stand the feeling of loss at this chance to get a deal done, so I stood up and went around each table and got all interested buyers to come back upstairs for a meeting. At this stage LambXL thought we were walking out before dinner in protest.

Once upstairs I put it very bluntly to those present that if they were going to push the buying price down so far that LambXL wanted the ones setting the price to take 300 sheep minimum. After the ones buying the least but with the most to say had their say, Karl Danker stood up to say he would take 10 more ewes to help make it work. Slowly the other quiet ones stood up and added to their orders. This seemed to embarrass the loud ones and they increased their orders begrudgingly. After we added up the numbers of those present we were still 50 ewes short of the numbers required. With all the work that had gone into this time I did not want to let it slip, so on behalf of one international buyer who had left earlier in the day I took it upon myself to add 50 more to his order. The group then went down for dinner hoping we had a deal. I told John Parker and Mike Hermann on returning from the upstairs meeting that we had reached the 300 Texel minimum order number. Parker, Hermann and I shook hands on a done deal and the whole room went into party mode. One of the most memorable things about this whole day was how Jack the coach driver, saw it unfold. In his words "It was like the election of a new Pope. Secret meetings, then a puff of smoke going off. Another meeting and more smoke until we finally announced an agreement and sat down for supper."

Our last night in Auckland was full of excitement among the group. A meeting was held early evening to sign sale orders and start the ball rolling for the formation of a Texel Breed Association. A meeting was set down for Wagga Wagga, NSW. The party went until the 5.00 a.m. call for the coach to catch the plane for home. Four more trips to NZ of potential buyers over the next 18 months was undertaken. As always Mike and his team treated us first class. It was a lesson in marketing for most Australians. At the end of these trips over 600 Texels were signed up for delivery into Australia in June 1993.

The first official meeting of Texel buyers was held in Wagga Wagga on December 1, 1989, to form the Australian Texel Association and elect the first office-bearers. I had the pleasure of chairing this meeting until the election of office-bearers. One of the elections that took the most time was the election of the Australian selectors to do the classing of Texels before they came to Australia. Graham Gilmore, Neville Schoenmaker, Gordon McMaster were elected, with Bill Close the emergency. I was to represent VPC.

Well this was some heavy two days of refereeing three different points of view. Three of the first pen of six ewes presented for classing were pulled out. Mike Hermann at this stage was ready to throw us all out there and then. Gordon was running around putting coloured pegs in the wool, Graham was trusting his eye and wanting them long. Neville was wanting them short and thick. Steve Moss thought we were all mad and Willie just stood there ready to correct us all when we went off the rails, with his breed plan measurements. Gordon was still suffering from eating a mushroom filled with hot mustard from the night before.

Over the next 18 months VPC and LambXL did Texel road show promotions in all states of Australia. At each of these road shows a Texel X carcass was cut by Laurie Hunt or the local butcher into trim lamb cuts. As a result of these promotions breeders and butchers could see first hand that these new cuts had a future if you could get larger weight, lean, high yielding lamb carcasses. The taste of Texel meat freshly cut and cooked is still the best selling point for Texels. It seems to me that this advantage has been lost, especially the Texel lean lamb logo the Texel Corporation developed.

It was when Mike and I were driving back to Melbourne from one of these shows that the news came in that ovine Johne's disease had been found in the Australian quarantine flock in NZ. AQIS at this stage ruled that the sheep could not come to Australia and we had to rip up many millions of dollars worth of sale contracts. As we were

passing over the West Gate Bridge, Mike wanted to get out and jump off. It all seemed too much, five years of work and dreams gone up in smoke. This was one night when Mike did not want to party.

A meeting was held in Melbourne at the World Trade Centre with AQIS and Chief Veterinarians from four States of Australia plus LambXL to work out a health protocol for the sheep to come to Australia. At this meeting you would have thought WA was a different country to us. As well it seemed as if John's was as bad as mad cow disease. All States said that there was no John's in Australia, therefore the Texels had to finish their quarantine at Kirra in the desert of South Australia. We had to keep the Texels separated from Australian sheep, take the embryos out and transfer them into Australian bred recipients. We could then release the recipients carrying a live foetus. One of the conditions was that we had to blood test all recipients for John's before they went into Kirra even though Australia supposedly did not have John's. Guess what, we found one flock in the south east of South Australia which tested positive.

After we got agreement to bring the Texels to Australia we decided to call a meeting of all past buyers and interested buyers to see if they would purchase the Texels under these new sale conditions. This meeting was held on Saturday, 6th January, 1993, at the Commodore Hotel in Albury. Well wasn't this some meeting, the Australians smelt blood on the floor and new more aggressive buyers were trying to push the price right down. John Parker and his team were trying to get the best deal they could under the circumstances. Parker was used to dealing with hostile negotiators in his role as Vice-President of the NZ Dairy Board. The scene was set for a real showdown.

After some morning meetings no real ground was made. Twice while I was meeting in Parker's room going through all the options put forward, two private buyers came up and made ridiculous offers to buy the lot themselves. As it turned out neither of them had enough to buy 10 let alone 500. In the afternoon open meetings things became very heated, neither party wanted to give ground. Parker made the decision to fly back to NZ and forget about it. Mike Hermann at this stage lost it, it seemed as if everyone blamed him for letting John's into the flock, this certainly was not the case. Mike in his role as General Manager of LambXL met all the disease control protocols set in place by AQIS and NZ authorities.

Over the next six weeks a lot of work went on behind the scene to bring together a group of private buyers to get the sheep into Australia. After some heavy negotiations a deal was finally struck between Roger Mason, Rod Barnett and Partners, with LambXL. It was then a mad rush to form the Australian Texel Corporation and arrange for the sheep to be flown into Adelaide and trucked to Kirra. While this was being arranged we had to put together an ET team to carry out the largest single ET program carried out in Australia. At this time one of the worst droughts on record was ravaging the country.

One month after the Texels had arrived in Australia the first round of ET work began at Kirra. The huge success of this programme goes to Dr. Willie Vivanco and his team of dedicated workers. Over 18 months in some of the harshest country in South Australia, 10,000 lambs were produced, a remarkable achievement.

Today I have people say to me why did you push so hard to get them in and what would you do different? Firstly, let me say that Texel genetics coming to Australia made every other meat breed lift it's game, because for the first time there were genes available that improved red meat yields and reduced fat content. I still have no doubt that the introduction of Texel was the turning point in the fortunes of the Australian Prime Lamb Industry.

Secondly, if I had the chance again I would have brought from NZ far less pure bred to make sure only the absolute best came. This would have helped the Texel gain a much bigger market share much earlier. As well the secret to marketing is to control the supply lines, a slower more controlled release of superior Texel sheep would have helped to keep prices up and made sure that the sheep had a bigger impact more quickly.

I cannot write this story without thanking my wonderful wife Irene who helped me out through the good and bad times of this extraordinary lifetime experience. There were many times I could have given up if it wasn't for her support.

Finally I wish all past and present Texel breeders all the best because you will win in the long term.

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“If you’re not on the plane you might miss the Texels”

(Summary from the Address by Roger Mason, ATC Chairman, to the 10th Year Anniversary Dinner, Bendigo, Vic. on 19th July 2003)

This was my first exposure to the Texel breed in August 1989. A half page advertisement in the Weekly Times paid for by Victorian Producers Cooperative. Many breeders here had an earlier knowledge of the breed, having seen the Texel’s in Europe and UK in the early 80’s but this was the beginning of some real action to get them to Australia.

The above statement sounds like Wally Fehring’s style. Did you help with that Mike Hermann? Gerald Jongebloed of VPC authorised and numerous people helped to introduce the Texels but I would like to touch briefly on some of the earliest visionaries who had a significant role in the delivery of the Texel to Australia.

Mike Hermann was the General Manager of LambXL NZ, the company breeding the sheep up for sale to the Australians. He later became GM/Director of ATC. Dr. William Vivanco (Willy) one of the world’s great sheep geneticists was responsible for the breeding program in NZ and he later became Technical Manager for ATC in Australia, producing 10,000 Texel & Finn fetuses by embryo transfer in 18 months, a huge operation! Steve Moss was LambXL Farm Manager at the Palmerston North properties and he was to later manage ATC’s farm operations at Keith, SA and Mathoura, NSW.

Wally Fehring was working for VPC in 1989 when he visited Mike Hermann in NZ and Wally got very excited about the Texels. When Wally gets excited about something he’s unstoppable! Gerald Jongebloed was soon to become MD of VPC, he supported the plan and the VPC Board backed Wally, a bold move and an important part of the story. Wally infected all of us with his excitement and it spread throughout the prime lamb areas of Australia.

I was on the second trip to NZ to inspect the LambXL sheep in November 1989. Most of the Australians on that trip were to have a big impact on the introduction of the Texels. Two in particular were

Graham Gilmore and Bill Close who were to become our Australian selectors with the enormous responsibility of selecting the right type of sheep for our Australian conditions.

After about 40 Australian breeders had snapped up most of the sheep, the plan was to deliver them to our farms in the Autumn of 1993 – 3 ½ years later. The ATSBA was then set up by Barrie and Josie Knight – an enormous job. As the time for delivery got closer, we started to get very excited. Unfortunately, our dreams turned to dust early in 1993. AQIS would not allow our sheep to be delivered to us. Force Majeure would apply and our contracts were cancelled. To save the situation ATC was formed on the spur of the moment to facilitate the delivery of Texels to Australia.

I had the privilege of being Chairman of ATC for the four years it was active and I was extremely proud of the whole ATC team and what we achieved. Our people were the very best in their fields and of the highest calibre. (Over 60 people were employed over the period). The massive project ATC took on needed two years planning but we had only two weeks! Mike, Willy, Steve, Wally, Rod and I all ran on pure unfiltered adrenalin with a passionate desire to successfully carry out this vital task.

The first Russian Ilyushin air transport load of sheep from NZ arrived at Adelaide on 15th March 1993. (There were two loads of about 400 per load). The Russian pilots broke the curfew waking the Adelaide residents and causing political turmoil in Adelaide for a day. The sheep went into quarantine at “Kirra” Keith, SA. In the lead up, we had reports by the hour, day and night. “Graham and Bill are flying to NZ, they are drafting the sheep in NZ, the sheep are ready to load! They are airborne!”. I can’t possibly express our excitement at the time – we were ecstatic – we were floating. Wally got on his mobile to anyone who would listen saying:

“The Eagle has landed!”

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At Mertex Texel Stud we aim to breed Texels with more meat and excellent carcase attributes without losing the features of our breed.

Mertex 008/02 at 13 months. Wt. 111.5 kg - 7mm Fat-Eye Muscle 43mm. Reserve Champion Ram at National Show Bendigo. Champion Ram at Ballarat and Sheepvention Hamilton.

Mertex 005/02 at 13 months. Wt. 131.5 kg - 9mm Fat-Eye Muscle 50mm. First Under 1 & 1/2 years in Wool at National show Bendigo and Reserve Champion Ram at Ballarat.



Semen is available from both Rams. They both have lambs on the ground which look very promising.

**Contact: Basil, Heather and Tim Jorgensen
Ph/Fax: 03 5397 5224
Mob: 0428 975 224**

FLOCK No: 349

A High Risk Encounter

By Rod Barnett. A Director of the Australian Texel Corporation

Many of us experienced the trip to N.Z. and committed to purchase contracts for stud sheep in the region of \$7,000 to \$12,000 per animal and we were comfortable with this.

In February 1993, just prior to the planned delivery of Texel stud stock to Australia, at a meeting convened by Lamb XL we were advised that the project would not proceed. At this meeting an alternative proposal was put forward that would enable importation to proceed but which would change the character of the project substantially.

Roger Mason, Terry Heggaton and I were appointed, as a sub committee, to consider the alternatives and report our findings, within five days, to the committee of Texel breeders. Roger and I worked around the clock within the deadline and submitted an outline of a plan for the breeders, at the same time highlighted that any such proposal would be impossible within the time constraints, since the sheep were almost ready for transport. If this did not occur at that time Texels would probably never be delivered to Australia.

At this stage we had to negotiate with Lamb XL from a cold start. Initially, we had no idea of the scale of such a project and the financial implications.

Roger, Wally Fehring and I swung into action and we attempted to attract investment from some potential breeders. This proved to be too difficult. Eventually, Roger and I and two other interested parties agreed to contribute \$500,000 each as capital and Lamb XL agreed to a term's sale. The project was now under way.

To get started, we formed a company with a name that we considered would provide an appropriate impression, the Australian Texel Corporation Pty Ltd. Use of the word 'corporation' was very deliberate. The company was formed as a result of our preliminary work in the sub committee, where it was apparent that we had to work with like minded people and set aside vested interests. A legal entity was required to unite a small group of focused, uncompromising, committed people. We had to always be conscious of the scale of investment, the high level of integrity required and our responsibilities under our contractual obligations. An address in Collins Street Melbourne was chosen for the corporate office to create a favorable impression. We appointed four directors, namely Roger Mason, Wally Fehring and Mike Hermann and myself. Also appointed were Willy Vivanco as project manager and Steve Moss as farm manager. At the same time we entered into a contract with Lamb XL for a commitment in the region of \$3 million and engaged the services of many experienced Lamb XL personnel. This all came together within days.

Once arrangements with Lamb XL were confirmed, the selling program was undertaken and deposits accepted from purchasers. At all times we had to be ever conscious of our responsibilities to those who had entrusted us. Throughout a period of approximately four years, the Australian Texel Corp fulfilled all of its contractual obligations. Total sales were in the region of \$8.9 million.

Due to the circumstances prevailing at the time we did not carry out any due diligence, we relied upon our own judgement – we took a punt. We did however rely upon the integrity of Lamb XL and they did not disappoint. We were mistaken however, in our expectation of support at the start. If we could have imagined the prospect, we would not have taken the risk.

The Australian Texel Corporation was born out of crisis and often operated in chaos but was kept under control by a strict set of imperatives.

Changes were required from time to time and sometimes, often. The level of confidence we aroused to initiate this project was, as we later found out, unwisely based on the assumption that those who had contracted with Lamb XL would contract with ATC to at least the same level. Other difficulties included the setting up and management of a large ET centre and program, a very new experience. New markets had to be established at great expense, to fill in the gaps created by the departure of many of the Lamb XL contracted clients. The larger livestock agencies offered little support. This in turn led to our inability to sustain a high level of interest amongst farmers and the excitement of a new breed waned. Added livestock costs and poor interest were also incurred due to the 1994 drought.

In general we never lost sight of our purpose. We enjoyed very cordial relationships with our clients. We often had to adjudicate and balance competing interests. We had to review policies and decisions to preserve the integrity of the project. We could never overlook the singular purpose of our existence i.e. the development of the Texel and Finn breeds. We also attempted to develop a lamb business for the benefit of breeders through Texel Lamb Pty Ltd.

In all, we succeeded in accomplishing our primary objective – the delivery of two new breeds into Australia, against the odds. The lamb industry has been enhanced as a result. We also managed successfully, the importation and distribution of sheep on a scale never before undertaken.

Upon reflection I consider that we were in the right place at the right time, we adopted the appropriate principles and practices, fostered the right attitudes and employed capable personnel. We have fulfilled our purpose, ultimately, even though we may have experienced some diversions along the way.

Along the way we were exposed to many first time experiences, took chances, trusted people and expected that others would be as enthusiastic as ourselves. We did, however, depart from our primary objective of preserving an exclusive elite flock as a result of market imperatives.

The result was clear. The delivery of Texel and Finn sheep to Australia on the most economical basis, far more favourably than originally contemplated. We were not rewarded financially but have the satisfaction of knowing that the Texel breed is now able to celebrate ten years of involvement in an invigorating industry that has benefited from our efforts

WILLAREN TEXELS

BRUCELLOSIS ACC\FREE



LAMBPLAN (GOLD)MEMBER



Karen & Bill Agnew
P.O. Box 940
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Periplo from Echuca to Echuca

by Dr. William Vivanco

After 5 years (1988-1992) of a challenging and intense experience in New Zealand performing the genetic evaluation, selection and multiplication by embryo transfer of five exotic breeds of sheep (Texel, Finnish Landrace, Oxford Down, White Headed Marsh and Gotland Pelt) and developing or improving technologies (hormonal regimes, embryo flushing and embryo transfer methods, embryo bisection, etc.) to increase the efficiency of the Multiple Ovulation and Embryo Transfer (MOET) system in sheep (we produced 30,000 lambs from 300 original donors in a period of 5 years), we were faced again by an even more challenging task: reproduce in the middle of a desert in Australia a group of 300 Texel and Finnish Landrace ewes to achieve 10,000 confirmed pregnancies for The Australian Texel Corporation in 18 months!! So in early 1993 here we go to Kirra station in South Australia and start programming ewes just coming down from the Russian plane. After the autumn transfers were completed, we shifted to Echuca-Moama for the spring season and the new autumn season. By December 1994 and after many litres of adrenaline through our veins all 10,000 plus lambs have been achieved and was time to pack up and go back to dear old New Zealand with mixed feelings of satisfaction for the task achieved, sad to leave the Aussie friends but extremely excited to go to NZ to join one of the most renowned teams in reproductive technologies in the world at AgResearch Ruakura in Hamilton, NZ.

At that time (early 1995) the technologies of Ovum Pick Up (OPU), in vitro embryo production (IVP), embryo sexing, sperm sexing and cloning were all in the research pot in many laboratories around the world. Ruakura was one of them. The difference at Ruakura was the vision of the AgResearch CEO at that time, Dr Bill Cain, he wanted the research to get out of the library shelves and laboratories and go to serve the industry. So he envisaged the "Technology Development Units" or TDUs.

The Technology Development Units (TDUs) at AgResearch had the fundamental role of linking science with the market place. The TDUs had to transform scientific discoveries into useful technologies, develop the technologies up to a level of commercial efficiency and then implement services for the industry either directly or in joint commercial ventures with industry partners.

I was employed to develop and manage the Animal Reproductive Technologies TDU. At that starting point the TDU had only 2 employees working exclusively in research and development in bulk in vitro embryo production from abattoir sourced ovaries. Very soon after, the sperm sexing machinery (flow cytometer) was sent to us by "Mastercalf" from UK in virtue of a sub licence given to AgResearch. The plan was to develop the sperm sexing technology to levels of efficiency that will permit to massively produce Sexed Male Embryos from oocytes sourced from abattoir ovaries (without knowing the actual breed of the donor cow) and sexed sperm from beef cattle breeds. These male embryos to be implanted in dairy herds. This same approach had been used by Mastercalf in the UK but they had failed to achieve commercial efficiency. After playing with this concept for some time and evaluating the capabilities of the technologies at that time, I realised that the whole plan needed to be changed. I saw the main role of the IVP technology not as a production tool for massive reproduction but as a powerful instrument for genetic improvement. So I focused on the development of the technologies of Ovum Pick Up (OPU) from live donors to harvest genetic material (oocytes) from the very top females of the population. A successful technology for OPU in live cattle was achieved and personnel were trained. The in vitro embryo production process (in vitro maturation, fertilization and embryo culture) for eggs recovered from live cattle donors was also developed very satisfactorily at the TDU based on co-culture systems and after some pilot trials to define systems we achieved to put commercially the services for OPU and IVP in 1996 and formed the company "arTech".

This company had at some point more than 14 technicians and by June 2002 had produced more than 35,000 embryos for the local NZ market and for export thanks to an embryo freezing methodology I developed for the in vitro embryo allowing to freeze successfully the embryos with holding rates of 40% post freezing/thawing. Up that point the freezing of the in vitro embryo was not successful in most of the laboratories around the world.

Once we achieved the successful commercial application of OPU and IVP in cattle, we started the development of a more friendly technology of OPU in sheep and we also applied successfully the IVP and sperm sexing technologies in sheep. Having a strong technology for in vitro embryo production allowed us to develop other complementary technologies like embryo sexing, sperm sexing, embryo cloning and cloning from somatic cells.

arTech under my management was the first to produce in the southern hemisphere a calf on the ground from sexed semen. Under my leadership arTech produced many calves of predetermined sex, and genetically identical individuals via embryo bisection, embryo cloning and cloning of adult individuals from somatic cell lines. My team in collaboration with Dr David Wells was the first to produce by somatic cells nuclear transfer technology a live cloned individual after Dolly, we produced the calf "Elsie" cloned from the Enderby Island Cow "Lady" that was the last survivor of an extinct breed. We also were the first to produce a set of cloned calves from embryo cloning having "in vitro" embryos as the original embryo donors of the blastomeres.

The commercial services that were provided by arTech successfully applying the developed technologies were:

- Production of bull calves for progeny testing for the Livestock Improvement Corporation utilising OPU and IVP technologies ensuring each selected dam produces at least a bull calf on the ground (three if gene markers are to be used).
- Generation of offspring from suddenly dead, slaughtered or reproductively compromised high genetic merit cows via OPU and IVP.
- Production of herd replacements for dairy and beef herds via OPU, IVP, embryo sexing.

In April 2002 after a holiday in the Murray (Cohuna) visiting my "best Aussie mate" Wally Fehring during Easter, I had a phone call from him tempting me to come back to Australia and repeat the arTech experience in Echuca, serving initially the dairy and beef farmers of Australia and growing into other species (sheep, goats, alpacas, horses) once the cattle services are up and running. It took not too much convincing. In May and June I did all the planning for the set up, the laboratory was built in July, the set up was made in August and September as well as the selection and training of staff, in mid October we were offering the services. To June 2003 we have produced more than 6,000 in vitro cattle embryos for more than 72 dairy and beef farmers of Australia. This week we had our first Australian babies born at a dairy herd and at a beef stud farm and many others are coming. Our holding rates have been variable but within our expected range of 40% for frozen and 50% for fresh embryos. We have now our system ready to roll for sheep and goats and we are undertaking a major research in sperm sexing by photo imaging. I am very happy to be back in Australia, I enjoy making science to work for the farmer, I am always with my neck on the line but that is the way progress is made. The support of the Aussie farmers has been great.



TE RAKAU

BREEDING CHAMPIONS FROM A BROAD GENETIC BASE.

Te Rakau 980044 (centre) three times Champion at Perth Royal Show, pictured with progeny.

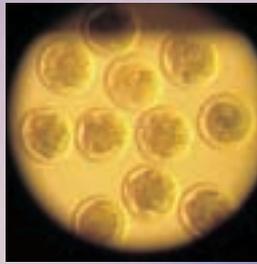
Robert and Maria Wood. Te Rakau, Bindi Bindi, Western Australia. WA 6574

Ph/Fax 61 8 9654 3012 email: terakau@bigpond.com www.texel.org.au/te-rakau

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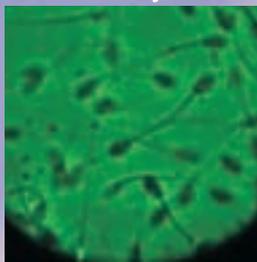
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