



CLYNTON COLLETT

~ superior genetics ~

SUPERIOR GENETICS NEWSLETTER ~ Issue # 2

By CLYNTON COLLETT



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AUSTRALIA TRIP

During the month of July, Dora and I once again visited Australia. Different to most years was the fact that we found Western Australia looking beautiful and having a lot of rain while over in South Australia we found many Farmers still in the grip of a devastating drought. Generally the stock in South Australia was in a very bad condition but the optimism regarding the SAMMS was still very good indeed.

The joint field days held by the South Australian SAMP breeders was to my mind a splendid idea and I am sure they will reap the benefits of their joint advertising campaign. The idea of a field day is something we South Africans can truly learn from the Australians.

WHAT IS A FIELD DAY? What the Aussies do is to pick a week in which all the Stud Breeders in a specific district or a few surrounding districts will open up their farm to any visitors wanting to view their Studs between certain hours for at least two days. This gives all interested parties wanting to know more about various Breeds, or a specific Breed, or all Farmers wanting to buy Rams, a chance to visit a large number of Studs in a short period. This gives them excellent experience not only of the type of Sheep the different Farmers farm with but also as to how they feed and manage their Studs.

During this time we were on the farm of Bruce and Debbie Nulty where I had the honour of addressing groups of Breeders visiting their field day. I also had a quick trip to the farm of Megan Heddle to have a look at what she had for presentation at her field day. I found their SAMMS in excellent condition and also saw the few Afrinos they have.

The Punari SAMP Stud Rams look much better this year than last year and I am positive that they will once again have a good production sale if judged by the interest at their field day. Our thanks go to all at Punari for making us still feel such a part of the Punari SAMP Stud. I hope we were able to contribute in a small way both with the classing of the Sheep and by addressing your visitors, to the long term success of Punari SAMP Stud.

In Western Australia we visited the Dorper Stud of Adrian Veitch and found his White and Black Dorsers looking as good as always. According to Adrian they had excellent sales both in Australia and substantial exports to the Falkland Islands in particular.



SAMMS

I found it most interesting that both the SAMMS and Dorpers in Australia are structured and go about their business in very much the same way as both those Breeds conduct their activities in South Africa.

Just looking at the Australian SAMM Journal with its photos of beautifully prepared Sheep at shows and exhibitions immediately makes me realize that Feeding, Showing and Management plays the same role of importance in Australia as it does in South Africa. It is very difficult for Australian SAMM Breeders whose intention it is to breed truly adapted and profitable farming SAMMS to gain their rightful place in the market.

The SAMM game, like most Breeds, is unfortunately being played in the glitz and glamour fashion. My advice to SAMM Breeders in Australia is thus to join the game and play it according to the rules which is unfortunately a competition more between how well I can Feed, Manage and Breed my SAMMS as one of how successfully I am improving the SAMMS regarding ***actual economic factors***.

At the same time they must however strive to use the excellent opportunities they have in Australia of valuating production and reproduction factors to improve their Sheep genetically regarding economic aspects rather than just breeding bigger, better, prettier Sheep which becomes eventually less efficient.



DORPERS

The Dorpers are all still classed in the same way as in South Africa, mainly by South Africans. This is in spite of the fact that almost all Australian Dorper Breeders admit that the pretty Sheep selected by the South African experts are not the best performing Sheep according to their records.

My advice to the Dorper Breeders in Australia is very straightforward – you do have our Dorper genetics at your disposal, evaluate and utilize the genetics in a manner that will give Australian Sheep Farmers the type of Dorper that they can ***make the most money from commercially***.

The Dorper is a good Breed but what their wise men have done with the breed in South Africa the past twenty years have undoubtedly reduced the Breed's ability to perform out in nature which it was able to do so effectively.

Make your Dorpers truly Australian Dorpers, select them strictly for their efficiency of production and reproduction under your natural conditions and you may find the South African Breeders having to buy genetics back from you in the not so distant future.



AFRINOS

The Afrino's of the Madrino Afrino Stud of Evan and Ruth Maddock were once again to me a highlight of my Australian tour. I cannot believe just how well the Afrino's are doing in that marginal wheat belt area.

It is astonishing to me how the production factors of the Afrino are any day as good as those Breeds with which they are to compete with in Australia. This is highlighted by the excellent production figures of the Rams on offer for sale this year. The average weight of the Rams under just their natural conditions at a year old was 94.28 kg with an average fat score of 4.17 and a terrific rib eye depth average of 41. The average micron of the Rams was tested at 22.34 micron with a range between 20.4 and 24.5 micron.

What excites me most is the fact that if the Afrino's can match the Breeds regarding weight and carcass traits of Lambs produced and give a Wool clip of lower micron than most other Mutton Breeds, then when their really strong points of survivability and reproduction come into play they will really blow the other Breeds away.

My advice to the Afrino Breeders and potential Breeders is please don't get carried away by these very good production results but keep selecting your Afrino's as well balanced, well adapted Sheep producing in total harmony with your natural conditions so as to make sure they will be the **most profitable Sheep** with which to farm with. Don't join the glamour race of the other Breeds chasing Size, Muscle, Wool or the perfect Carcass as inevitably you will lose reproduction, survivability and the efficiency of production.

Remember balance regarding all factors is the key to success.

If you can remain focused on selecting your most profitable Afrinos effectively, the Breed will, like in South Africa slowly grow from strength to strength amongst the commercial Breeders. The commercial industry should for all Breed Societies remain the focus point as this ensures the long term success of the Stud industry.



MEATMASTERS AND DAMARAS

I was glad to hear for the sake of the Damara Breeders that the live Sheep Export Market was again opening up to the Australian fat tailed Sheep meat Producers.

My personal point of view however is still for Australians to concentrate their efforts on breeding Meatmasters as we are managing to do so effectively in South Africa. The Meatmaster offers you the best of both worlds as they will also be acceptable for export in the live Sheep trade but at the same time be most acceptable in the Australian domestic market.

Meatmasters if bred correctly are undoubtedly able to compete with other Breeds regarding their various carcass traits. This has undoubtedly been proved in South Africa by how well the Meatmaster fared in two National Carcass Competitions this year. Meatmasters bred and selected like we do in South Africa can only become hugely successful in a country like Australia. You have a harsh climate, you have very limited labour and droughts are a common factor. All these adverse conditions are exactly what the Meatmasters are developed for.

The huge success we have in South Africa will only be achieved in Australia if all those with a common goal of wanting to breed a Meatmaster type of Sheep, will be able to get together, strategize, market and advertise the Breed in unity rather than each one trying to do his own little thing in his own small way. The genetics for the Breed is all out there. For Meatmasters worldwide we hope you can get your act together. Australian Sheep Farmers deserve it.

If you would like to know more about how we have gone about things in South Africa make sure to [download the Meatmaster Presentation](#) available on my Website.



SOUTH AFRICA OR AUSTRALIA?

On numerous occasions fellow South Africans have accompanied me on my visits to investigate the possibilities of immigrating to Australia and many more always want to know what my impressions are concerning the two Countries.

Regarding the people I think there is extremely little difference between the Europeans of the two countries and adapting either way should be very easy indeed. At the end of the day it all boils down to perceptions. The general feeling amongst both South Africans and Australians is one that South Africa is all bad and dangerous and that Australia is all good and wonderful. I have very good friends in Australia who are literally too scared to come and visit us in South Africa. They do not believe that they will be perfectly safe in doing so.

On our recent visit to Perth I was surprised to read about a bank robbery. On further investigation I learned that this was already the 5th bank robbery in Perth. There are indeed the positives and negatives, too many to debate in just a Newsletter.

It is a very personal matter that I think must be taken by the individuals wishing to make a move. As regards me and my family - ten years of annual visits to Australia had us witnessing too many ex-South Africans literally crying in their longing for their homeland.

We will remain South Africans for as long as we possibly can. I've heard South Africans say that it is all the "chickens" leaving South Africa. I have learned that it is just the opposite - you have to be extremely tough and brave to make it in a new and strange environment.

In South Africa we really have a high standard of living and excellent lifestyle, plenty of opportunities and a Country with diversity of natural beauty and animal life other countries can only dream about.

Are you prepared to sacrifice it all for a bit more security and safety as this is what it all boils down to?



VISIT FROM FALKLAND ISLANDERS

I was honoured to receive a visit by Dough Martin from the Agricultural Department of the Falkland Islands. They are in the process of sourcing Sheep and Cattle Breeds to help and improve the existing Breeds on the Islands. From all accounts it is a very hostile environment with plenty of wind increasing the chill factor substantially. They are looking for Breeds that can improve their fertility, survivability of Sheep and Lambs and also reduce their micron.

A week later I was again visited by Neil Judd, also from the Falkland Agricultural Department as they had become extremely interested in what the Afrinos could achieve. I was most impressed by the knowledge of both these government officials. It is seldom that you find people open minded enough to investigate and dig deeper to make sure that they achieve what they have set out to achieve.

I have found that most people and officials are usually overwhelmed by the Breeds that select for what I call the glamour and glitz that play the show game and try to impress with Size, Feeding and Management. Both these gentleman are prepared to search for Breeds that will improve things down at the grass route level where the commercial Farmer has to make his money.

I found Doug to be a human warehouse of knowledge; he seemed to know something about everything. Neil has a very clear picture of exactly what he is looking for to improve the domestic animals of the Falkland Islands, both extremely good ambassadors, although being Australian, for the Falkland Islands.

If they decide on the importation of Afrinos, which seem more than likely, I appeal to my fellow Breeders to make sure that we give them the very best we have to offer but also make a fine study of exactly the attributes they are seeking in the Afrino. I am convinced that the Afrino Breed can offer them the best of exactly what they are looking for, being toughness, hardiness, easy care, low mortality rates, good growth and carcass and a low Micron Wool.

I hope to someday visit the Falklands so as to witness for myself what they are achieving with the South African Breeds they have already imported.



FALKIRK INDEX SYSTEM

The Falkirk Carcass Analysis System is causing quite a stir in the Stud Sheep Industry at present. As so often happens, even the animal scientists are at logger heads concerning the advantages or lack thereof regarding the indexes given. I always laugh when I hear people making the statement of “but I read it myself” as if, when you read about something in an article it is automatically taken as a true fact. This is again to me one of those circumstances. So often scientists or intellectuals write a book or an article causing a new stir and always get a lot of followers only to a few years later write another book or article saying how wrong he was but that these are now the absolute correct facts and again he finds a new following. With the Falkirk system I think it again calls for a clear head and balanced thinking.

My opinion regarding the matter, after having had our Afrinos in Australia evaluated on the same basis, is that it is good to have the carcass analyzed and know the exact muscle weight and fat present. The best age for doing it would probably be as close as possible for Rams to the marketing age of the specific Breed. For Ewes and analysis done as close as possible to the first mating would be the ideal.

The problem arises whether the Falkirk index given for each Sheep calculated according to their unique valuation system is correct and enables you to select the most fertile, the best carcass and fastest growing animals. They lay claim to this but nowhere have I seen an analysis of long term evaluation that can prove their point. If these indexes are used for selection and the Ewes perform over a seven year period as projected by the index, I will indeed become a follower. Before that happens I will continue collecting the data and experiment myself as to the accuracy of the system.

We have got the tools at our disposal to give us the measurements and it would be of great value to find an evaluation system that is correct. I however feel that before I totally accept the Falkirk system, I must be very sure of its accuracy. My gut feeling is that various analysis systems will have to be calculated for different environmental conditions and that one method of calculating can never be correct in a Country with as diverse Farming conditions as found in South Africa and Australia. Because fat is so important regarding fertility and fertility the most important regarding income, different amounts of fat and muscle must be calculated for different areas.

Let's not reject it but further watch and test it.



SUPERIOR GENETICS BREEDS

MEATMASTERS

When I ventured out with the breeding of Meatmasters I had no idea of just what a tremendous need there was for a Breed like the Meatmaster.

Our Meatmasters are indeed doing better than what we could have ever hoped for. With direct selection for only the economic traits of the Breed it is unbelievable just how quickly progress is made.

First Lamb dates are down to 12 months, inter lambing period down to 367 days, average 100 day weights up by 3 kg, death from birth to weaning down to 0.8%, no tick infections and to date also no trouble with any virus diseases.

We also never dose our Meatmasters and thus build up a tremendous resistance to internal parasites. Thanks to all our clients and the positive feedback we are receiving about the Breed.

Last year I sold more Meatmaster Rams than what I ever sold of any other Breed in 30 Years of Stud Breeding. As an experiment we also took slaughter Lambs to 2 National Slaughter Lamb Competitions. We where very surprised to receive a 5th and 7th placing. It was interesting to note that judges still do not recognize the good carcass qualities in the live Meatmasters but are very surprised at the carcass quality once the Lambs has been slaughtered.

With the results we are achieving with our Meatmasters I will be very surprised if this Breed does not grow to rapidly become one of the biggest Breeds in South Africa and indeed make a definite impression on the overseas market as well.



AFRINOS

With climatic change, the fall in the Wool Price and the good demand for meat, the Afrinos are for sure establishing themselves as a very dominant dual purpose Breed in South Africa.

We are finding that more and more Farmers are not interested in the show performance of Breeds any more but are truly looking for Breeds that can put more money in their pocket. It is interesting to me how Farmers that breed different dual purpose Stud Sheep will come and buy Afrino Rams to use in their commercial flocks. The secret of the Afrino being able to do so well commercially is undoubtedly to be found in the fact that all Afrino Stud Breeders have for the entire existence of the Afrino been willing to allow the Breed to be developed under the natural conditions no matter what the weather or the seasons hold.

The Afrino has been the only Breed willing to leave their veldt Rams at the total mercy of nature. Our national veldt Rams where most of the Stud sire's are sourced is the only sale of any Breed where the Rams are run under harsh natural veldt conditions with absolutely no licks, feeding of any kind or even finishing off for the sale is done. The first Lambs have been born from the proven Stud sire bought last year whose progeny has performed very well at the national veldt Rams trials. Our Lambing percentage this season is up to 145 % and I can only pray that we get rain as the Ewes are expected to rear these Lambs with the assistance of no licks or feeding.

We are extremely happy with the performance of our Afrino's, but would appreciate it if the Society as a whole can learn to concentrate just on the economic factors, and learn to pay as little attention as possible to silly fancy points such as negligible creeping belly.

For example, if it has been proven that the most fertile and higher producing ewes bringing in the highest income are inclined to breed Lambs with an indication of creeping belly, we should allow it.

The important factor regarding Wool should be measured in the ability of a Sheep to give you a good income on the Wool side, thus the economic value of the Wool should be evaluated and used for selection and not the little pity aspects of Wool as so evaluated by the so called Sheep and Wool experts.

With an increasing interest being shown in the Afrino both locally and internationally we look forward to a bright future concerning this Breed.



POLLED NGUNI'S

We have now reached a stage with our Nguni breeding where we can afford to sell all the horned animals still present in the Stud.

We will be doing this with our Annual Production Sale in February; we then hope to continue with a genuinely pure polled herd. We can see a definite improvement with the crop of Calves each year, as the high quality of the polled Bulls we use starts to have an effect.

The ability of Cows to calve at 2 Years and every 365 Days after that and to rear their Calves successfully is still something we have to put a lot of selection in to. As we also follow a policy of no dosing and no feeding achieving the above aims remains a challenge.

We have found Nguni's that have an excellent depth of body and sufficient muscling to be the best to achieve the desired results. Be careful of Nguni's' not showing enough spring of rib and good capacity with sufficient muscling over especially the loin region. We have found the flat sided barrel shaped to fine boned Nguni's to disappoint us most.

The thickness and length of tail, the shape of the horns or weather it is polled and some of the other traits inspectors are incline to look at play no role according to our observation and measurements in improving the economic traits of the Nguni.

In spite of these slight differences of opinion we remain extremely impressed by what our Nguni's are doing for us and look forward with eagerness to the improvements regarding the financial aspects as we start to reap the benefits of selection for these traits.



SUPERTALER

In August we bought two Supertaler bulls from Mr. Hardus Steenkamp, who is the Farmer who started with the development of a composite Cattle Breed by crossing the African Nguni with a European Breed called the Pustertaler.

The Pustertaler is often referred to as the European brother to Nguni. The Nguni is a tough and hardy Cattle Breed, excellent in the harsh and excessive heat environment of our Country. It is also very resistance against ticks and other South African Cattle diseases. It is inclined to be vulnerable in the cold wet and windy winters. The Pustertaler is again very tough under these circumstances. The Nguni, lacking muscling to a degree, is well compensated by the extra muscling, marbling and carcass quality of the Pustertaler.

The two Breeds do definitely compensate each other very well and with the emphasis in the future being placed on high quality organic grass fed beef, the Supertaler must indeed have a very good future. With what we have learnt thus far we will be concentrating the breeding of our Supertalers on $\frac{3}{4}$ Nguni and $\frac{1}{4}$ Pustertaler. From what we have seen this blood composition appears to give us the best of both Breeds. The F1 and F2 bulls we bought will be put back to Nguni Cows to further develop our Supertalers.

The bulls we bought took some time to adapt to our colder climate and different surroundings. Having been used to very dry, hot and sandy conditions with plenty of trees on which to brow, they took some adapting to get used to our hard rocky and open veldt.

Our first 17 Calves have been born from the Cows inseminated with the imported semen last year. The young Calves look extremely promising with clearly more muscling over the loin and hind quarters.

We are excited about working together with a Society that appears in this stage to be very broad minded and eager to allow Breeders to utilize their vision in the development of the Supertaler.

Past experience has thought me that there is no such thing as a poor or bad Breed; there are just poor and bad Breeders and Societies.



GLOBAL WARMING

Global Warming is no longer just a myth but something we are all beginning to experience.

Reading just recently about Global Warming over the internet I learnt that the Fynbos of South Africa – one of the world's most remarkable floral kingdom which holds more than 8 000 endemic wild flowers will be dying because of Global Warming, the Amazon jungle will slowly be dying as well.

The countries hardest hit by Global Warming or the Greenhouse effect will be Southern Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the European Alpine regions. It is feared that the human race will experience the full impact of Global Warming during the second half of this century. Projections are that crop losses will lead to severe hunger with many plant species disappearing and severe crop failures taking place.

We as Farmers must not feel threatened by these forecasts of gloom, but rather act wisely and in plenty of time so as to prepare ourselves for what lies ahead. I have always advocated Breeds well adapted to the environment and the necessity for this will become more evident in the very near future.

You can read more about Global Warming at the following Websites:

- www.climatehotmap.org
- www.exploratorium.edu/climate
- www.worldwildlife.org/ccj/index.cfm
- www.globalwarming.org
- www.nrdc.org/globalwarming



FUTURE EVENTS

We will be having a **Meatmaster Course** and **open day** during November. Please contact us if you are interested or watch the press for adverts.

We still have a few Meatmaster and Afrino Rams left for sale this season but are concentrating on having good Ngunis, Meatmasters and Afrinos available on our production sale in February.



AND FINALLY ...SOME TIPS FOR THE SEASON

Make sure your Farming and the Breeds with which you farm are geared to help you make it through the bad times. Good times will look after themselves.

Remember Farmers go bankrupt in bad times and not in the good times, but are inclined to make their decisions in the good times instead of strategizing in the tough, dry and devastating times.

Gain knowledge and wisdom from as many people and Farmers as possible that have got a track record to prove their superior wisdom. Be careful of agents, inspectors and other wise guys freely giving advice because they are paid to do so without a track record of success or being participants in Farming that will suffer the results of their advice and schemes.

If ever you do not know who to follow it is always best to follow the one whose scheme don't sound so good but makes a success of everything, rather than the person with a fantastic scheme but a record of disasters.

From COLLETT FARMING and SUPERIOR GENETICS we wish you all an excellent spring with plenty of rain and healthy Animals with Lambs and Calves aplenty.

With best regards,

CLYNTON COLLETT

~ superior genetics ~

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