



## First Cross Ewe Season Upon Us!

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With widespread rain offering a great start to the season, many growers are looking to restock and rebuild their flocks to take advantage of the strong store and prime sheep and lamb markets. So, leading into a key selling and buying time for First Cross Border Leicester/Merino ewes, the AuctionsPlus Market Insights team have reviewed historical data to highlight the major players in the market.

The Central West of NSW is the dominate player when it comes to offering First Cross ewes. The region accounts for 28% of the 1.4 million ewes offered for the past five seasons, equal to the next three biggest regions combined (The Riverina and North West Slopes & Plains of NSW, and the South West of VIC). Michael Anderson of JJ Dresser & Co at Woodstock, NSW highlights that “*Central West lends itself to the First Cross ewe due to safe reliable rainfall and much of the area having irrigation for finishing lambs*”, with the region along with the Tablelands key in the supply chain for domestic processors.

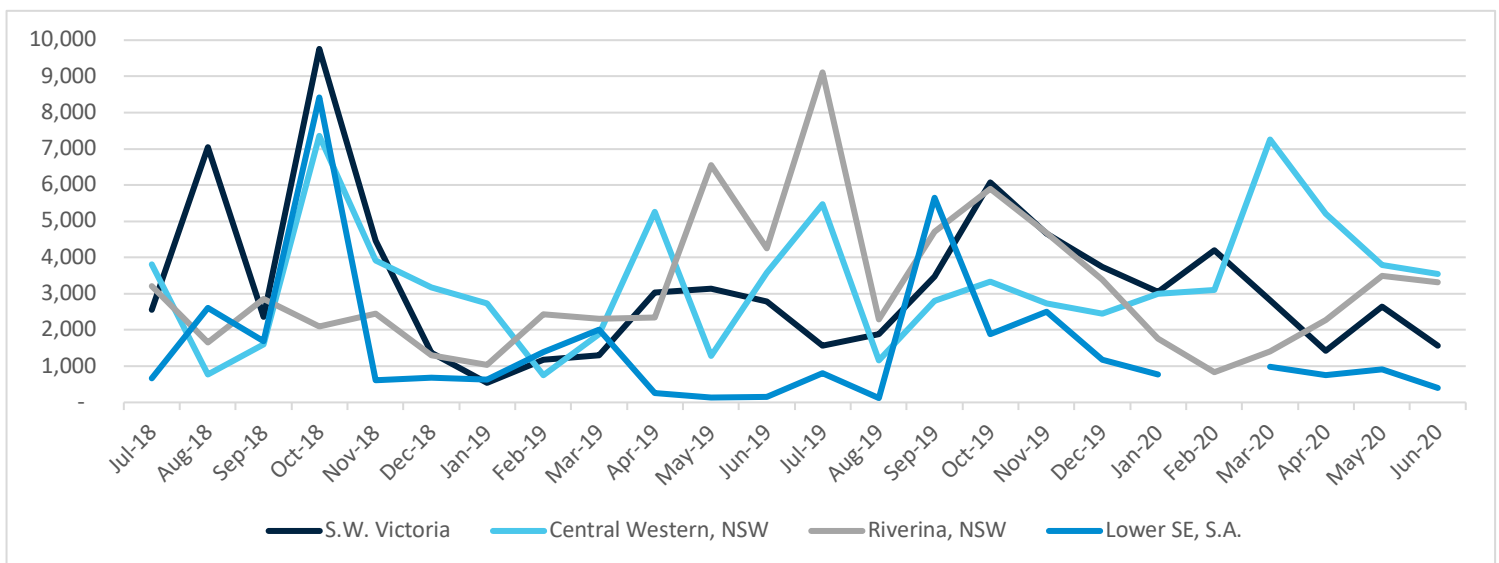


Figure 1. The number of First Cross Border Leicester/Merino Ewes purchased on AuctionsPlus by Region July-18 to current

Conversely the buying front is a much more competitive space. Figure 1 above highlights the seasonality impacts and pressures on growers purchasing decisions. With South West, VIC (Oct 2018), The Riverina, NSW (July 2019) and more recently The Central West, NSW (March 2020) all jostling for position of top buyer. With much of NSW in buying mode after rainfall there is opportunities galore, however, Michael Anderson feels that the Central West will take some beating to move out of top position, “*Producers in the area still have a fair amount of purchasing to do for*





*the remainder of the year especially coming into spring for joining” with many “selling their older ewes for good money allowing them to purchase younger ewes while the market is hot to reduce the cost”.*

And just how “hot” is the First Cross market?

Since December 2019, the entire sheep market has jumped ahead as growers scramble to find stock, and First Cross ewes have been no different. Since that point in time Ewe lambs have risen by 67% to average \$300/head, while Ewes with lambs at foot, SIL ewes and Unjoined ewes have all risen 42%, 115% and 20% respectively. These record price increase across all stock categories has resulted in some individual online records. In May, a line of 81 SIL first cross ewes from Deniliquin, NSW offered by “Riverina Irrigation & Property” returned a record \$446. This record was then beaten on the 30<sup>th</sup> June when vendors “RK & SA Mumford” offered 171 SIL Border Leicester/Poll Merino ewes which returned a staggering \$476. The 13 – 14-month-old ewes are 82kgs and are SIL to Poll Dorset rams.

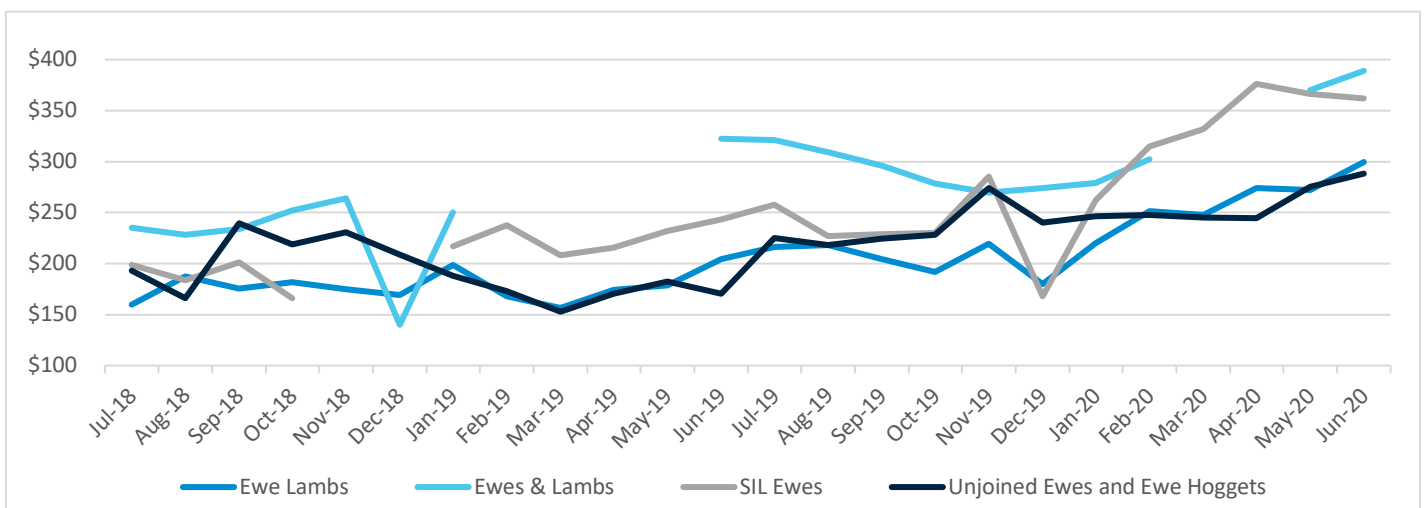


Figure 2. Average prices from July 2018 to date for First Cross Border Leicester/Merino Ewes sold on AuctionsPlus

The Riverina who were strong buyers last year, will no doubt be solid buying contenders in the remaining months of 2020. James Tierney of Riverina livestock Agents, Wagga, NSW said that “our clients will be looking to purchase, but not to the extent of last year” as flock numbers in the area have not been decimated like the Central West resulting in less restocker demand.

The first cross ewe market has gone from strength to strength this year with records tumbling in a matter of months and considerable price increases reported across all stock categories. Looking ahead, what does the future market hold and can the records continue to tumble? For all your buying and selling needs on the box contact your local assessor to see how they can market your First Cross ewes to a national audience.

