

A Unique Opportunity – APS Dispersal – 8th April 2021

Fellow breeders,

After 36 years of breeding, including eight years of initial quarantine, the Advanced Performance Suffolks (APS) flocks of Suffolk and White Suffolk sheep are being dispersed.

In 1984 we formed a syndicate in response to a one-off opportunity, and imported Suffolk sheep from the USA under an 8 year trial ‘Scrapie Assurance Quarantine Program’.

Initially importing two Suffolk rams and four Suffolk ewes, the principals, Stan Dorman (WA), Ian Turner (SA) and Gerald Archer (Tas) have successfully added genetics from a further four top USA sires (in 2003, 2004 and 2006) plus two Suffolk rams and 10 Suffolk ewes from the UK (in 2004). Texels were also included in the UK importation.

The greatest motivation for the syndicate was to accommodate a need to expand the genetic base of Australia’s sheep industry, especially at a time when the Australian prime lamb industry was rapidly expanding through exports to many countries; in particular the USA, where they required large lean lambs suitable for new boned out cuts. We were extremely fortunate to get access to some of the very best and highest performing genetics away from the show scene from both the USA and UK.

Other than from New Zealand, the original imports were the first new sheep genetics to come into Australia for well over 30 years. By 2004, it was over 50 years since the last successful importation from the UK.

These importations came at huge expense, plus enormous time, energy and committed determination to overcome the many challenges to see them through to release. The initial quarantine release of USA genetics provided an important infusion into Australian and NZ flocks, with the top 6 rams from that release selling to \$30,000 and averaging over \$22,000.

The foundation years of the development of the White Suffolk breed in Australia coincided with our initial import quarantine program. With this breed expanding rapidly, we decided to introduce white genetics into the breeding program in 1990. Sales from this decision reached \$15,000 at release.

However, as good as these sales were, they did not get near to covering the huge cost of the importation project, with original purchasing costs, artificial breeding programs, raised quarantine and government agistment charges etc, all adding substantially to the overall cost.

Another issue that raised its head mid-quarantine was the disclosure that a fatal recessive genetic disorder (labelled Spider Syndrome) existed in some American Suffolk flocks. Unfortunately, it was later verified that some of our imports were carriers.

We were totally open about this issue and fully cooperated with the Suffolk and White Suffolk breed societies and researchers in Australia, New Zealand and the USA in their quest to find a gene marker. It is pleasing that the data we were able to provide went a long way towards achieving that and now a simple genetic test is available to verify the status of rams and ewes before they enter a breeding program. All the later imports from the USA are Spider Syndrome free and to the best of our knowledge, every ram or ewe being offered in this dispersal is Spider Syndrome free, either through genetic testing, or as progeny of tested free animals.

The Australian lamb market has constantly changed over these last 28 years since the initial release and the APS syndicate has moved with it. Being successful in our quest to import UK genetics in 2004 enabled us to work on producing “blends” of these two widely differing bloodlines and types.

We felt these blends would offer outstanding new breeding options, either in a direct cross, or with our established Australian lines, to better suit current industry needs and Australian free range grazing management systems.

The USA Suffolk is a large, easy care sheep with huge growth rates and outstanding feed conversion ratios, having a later maturity pattern, being primarily developed around a feedlot industry. This enables their progeny to be targeted to multiple weight range market options, while still retaining leanness.

The UK genetics also grow rapidly, but as they were developed to suit the short UK spring/summer growing period, they have a much earlier maturity pattern and are lower set and stockier in type.

At APS, we were determined to produce genetic blends that could produce top results in our environment and under normal paddock grazing conditions, which has been severely tested through to a string of poorer seasons over time. We are pleased to say that the cull rate of unsuitable sheep within our flocks is now virtually non-existent and over the last 3 decades, we have produced a flock that we are extremely pleased with. We have also aimed for high reproductive rates through culling of non-lambers. The lambing percentage to weaning regularly averages 150% or better.

The white development within our White Suffolk flock has fluctuated, as each introduction of new Suffolk genetics (imports or their descendants) re-introduces colour. However, with patience and some strategic Australian infusions, we now have a flock with a high percentage of white, or predominantly white sheep carrying these imported genetics. The UK Texels have also been utilized in this breeding program.

While limited sales have been made to Australian and New Zealand breeders for the 28 years since the initial release from quarantine, we have retained a relatively low profile for several reasons.

After working to achieve further imports from 2003 to 2006, we made a deliberate decision that we would not market any genetics from our actual imports into the Australasian industry, other than one of the 2 UK rams that was released without our knowledge by a third party. Instead, we decided we would consider any enquiries for their blended progeny. This was a threefold decision.

Firstly, we needed to retain our premium genetics and to be positioned to continue producing these unique genetic lines. This was necessary to be able to recoup the costs of these importations and ongoing breeding programs.

Secondly, we did not wish to promote and sell genetics to our industry participants without having first-hand data on their performance in our environment and management systems.

And finally, through the hard work of our principal partner Stan Dorman, we have been fortunate to consistently obtain genetic orders from China; these financing our ongoing breeding programs.

In this dispersal, we are offering all the breeding ewes (2014 to 2019 drop) from both flocks, mated by AI and then run with back-up sires. The current paddock sires on hand are also being offered.

In the 2020 drops, we are offering all the retained 2020 drop ewe lambs, plus 20 select ram lambs from both our Suffolk and White Suffolk flocks.

In the AI program (8th & 9th Feb), 16 of the best Suffolk rams were used over the Suffolk ewes, including 5 of the 6 imported USA sires and 1 of the 2 UK sires. Eleven rams were used over the White Suffolk ewes, with that program primarily aiming to produce a high degree of whiteness in the

progeny. Due to a poor 2020 season and very low on-farm water supplies, available grazing paddocks are limited so only two back-up sires for each breed will be used.

Full extended pedigrees on all rams used in the flock will be available in due course. We will inform those interested either directly, or via our online site: (<https://www.facebook.com/Advanced-Performance-Suffolks-590735598283742>).

As these flocks are run in Western Australia, for logistical reasons due to COVID-19 restrictions, this dispersal will be an Auctions Plus only sale. It will be held on 8th April. It is planned that every animal being offered will be videoed, with our agents organizing this.

From an Australian animal health perspective, the flocks are accredited Ovine Brucellosis free. Although there has never been any known instance of Ovine Johnes disease on the property, these sheep are not accredited under the national MAP program; or been inoculated. This is because our regular Chinese importing contacts would not buy if any sheep on the property had been inoculated. While that is without logic, it was the reality we were dealing with. No notifiable disease outbreaks have occurred on the property they are run on for at least 10 years. We are currently liaising with NZ Animal Health authorities on these sheep being eligible to enter New Zealand. While it is our belief they should qualify under their listed protocols, we are still awaiting clarification.

We plan to pregnancy scan all mated ewes on 23rd March to give results from the AI program. The catalogue will list both the AI sire and the back-up sire for each mated ewe.

Decisions on the sale, or disposal of any surplus semen stocks that may exist will not be made until after this dispersal.

This sale is your chance to invest in some of these exciting genetics that have had very limited exposure to the Australian or New Zealand marketplaces previously.

We welcome your interest and enquiries.

Advanced Performance Suffolks

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