

Sheep paying Luke's bills this season



□ Kolindale Stud founder Colin Lewis, Perth, Elders Pingelly/Wickepin representative Darell Shaddick, Kolindale principal Luke Ledwith, Mr Lewis' friend and neighbour Herb Boltong and Elders Upper Great Southern wool manager Tim Burgess inspecting the Kolindale wool samples recently.

By MAL GILL

SHEEP are paying the bills this season on Kolindale, Dudinin, according to Luke Ledwith.

At just 26, he runs Kolindale and Lewisdale-Corrigin Merino and Poll Merino studs, Yanda White Suffolk stud and farms about 9000 hectares over two properties at Dudinin and Newdegate with his parents Mathew and Shirley.

Kolindale stud founder Colin Lewis acts as studmaster and an uncle, Stuart Ledwith, also helps with the studs.

Mr Ledwith's operation is 60 per cent cropping and 40pc sheep.

He said his harvest yields this year were only "average and below average".

"We had a fairly dry finish so the heads didn't fill out," he said.

"But the sheep have been good - they've paid the bills this season."

The annual Kolindale clip of 207 bales from the main ewe flock of 2600 went for auction with Elders at the Western Wool Centre (WWC), Bibra Lake, two weeks ago, selling

for \$1619 a bale to sweep the floor.

"I was really pleased with the strong result, the good wool sold very well," said Mr Ledwith, who drove in to the WWC for the day to watch his clip sold.

For a February shearing the wool averaged an exceptional 69pc yield.

With an average of 20.5 micron, 95mm staple length and 36Nkt across the clip, it attracted strong bidding competition between buyers.

Three bales of oddments, which sold for 50 cents more than the estimate to a top of 871c/kilogram greasy, were the highlight and three bales of pieces sold for 842, 806 and 780c/kg, indicating the level of demand for this type of wool from Chinese garment makers.

The Kolindale fleece wool sold in 15 lines to a top of 970c/kg and averaged 878c/kg in a soft market that was slipping 15c on the previous day and had handed back the gains of the previous Wednesday.

One line of weaner wool just failed to make the reserve price.

It was sold by Elders immediately after the auction.

Mr Ledwith said his stud rams had also been earning their keep.

"We've sold 980 rams this season, right across the State from Mount Magnet in the Murchison to east of Esperance," he said.

"We've also exported some into western NSW and Victoria.

"A lot of our clients are repeat business so that's a good indication they are happy with the performance of our Kolindale and Lewisdale-Corrigin rams."

Mr Ledwith has invested heavily in improving bloodlines and on sheds and equipment since merging the studs about six years ago.

That investment included paying \$39,000 for Collinsville Majestic, a spectacular ram from the acclaimed South Australian Collinsville Merino stud, in 2010.



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