

Quality Rams at Affordable Prices

Spring is certainly here in Western Victoria and the drier last 8 weeks or so has brought some welcome relief after what was one of the wettest June's on record. We are excited about the quality of the young rams coming through all our breeds this year and look forward to presenting the first draft at our upcoming October sale and another run of rams at our Summer sale in mid January 2024.

The last 12 months has certainly thrown some challenges our way as both commercial and stud producers. It would be pretty fair to say we've possibly had it a bit easy the last 3 or 4 years and when times are good it's very easy to become a bit complacent and take a few things for granted. When times get tough that's when the best producers, coupled with good management and genetics knuckle down to get through these tough periods. The current low prices being received for sheep and lamb coupled with other influences like, the threat of live export ban, drought conditions pushing into parts of the country and, for some, the cost of shearing, it's likely the decline in the national sheep flock will be rapid. Once this all settles down the old supply and demand will come into play once again and we will see some return to the norm going forward.

Eating Quality Trial

We continue to invest in industry projects and research, with 2 sires entered in an extensive eating quality trial, facilitated by Coopworth Genetics Australia and supported by MLA. After getting many raw data measurements including worm egg counts, weaning weight, fat depth and muscle scanned, the total drop of lambs will be slaughtered in December this year after which eating quality and IMF traits will be measured. The trial lambs also had DNA samples taken at lamb marking. Trials like this help to link our flock to the Lambplan database and increase accuracies of the traits we measure on our own animals.

At Chrome we have a strong commitment to breeding consistent lines of high quality rams for our clients and fully guarantee every ram we sell. We look forward to catching up over the coming weeks. If anyone would like a farm visit to run through your rams please touch base.

Ewe wanted it - We've delivered it

Balancing moderate frame score and mature ewe weight in maternal ewes continues to be an important objective and talking point. At Chrome we think there needs to be some balance when it comes to mature ewe weights- our stud ewes this year averaging 74kg at condition score 3.

When feed is plentiful in the Spring, it's basically free, so our maternal ewes need the capacity to make use of that, to put on condition for use over the Summer and Autumn, which means they will be heavy. What we need to be careful of as an industry is making sure we are not selecting slow growing, low condition score animals when putting pressure on reducing the mature weight of our ewes. We still need lambs that grow and finish and get ewe lambs to adequate joining weights.

At Chrome, our aim is to balance a consistent phenotype along with improving performance data for various other maternal traits along the way.

We have long term clients who consistently benchmark in the top percentiles against other leading prime lamb operations. Scanning rates consistently in the 160-190% range are not uncommon. Our clients often comment on the easy doing ability of the ewes, evenness and how great they are to manage.

Value for Money Rams

Our Maternal rams are great value when compared to our competitors on a \$ value per MCP+ index point – You do the sums.

Last year we averaged \$13 per index point – This year likely to be less!!

EVERY 6th Ram Free adds a further 17% discount on rams.

MATERNALS

Chrome Shedders

Over the last 2 or 3 years the cost of shearing coupled with low wool prices for strong wool has led to a lot of discussion around sheep that don't need shearing. Issues around shearing and crutching, low income from strong wool and other associated costs has prompted prime lamb producers to do the sums on the option of either reducing wool or removing it entirely. Our current 2023 drop lambs mark the start of our new non shearing line of maternal sheep at Chrome.

We purchased a number of full blood shedding ewes, of which the best went into embryo transfer programs to increase the numbers of “full blood” shedders. We currently only have small numbers of these and the genetics to a degree need to prove themselves in Western Victoria.

The use of shedding rams and semen in AI programs last year over a run of bare bellied and bare breech stud ewes has produced over 700 F1 progeny this year. The best of the resulting ewe lambs will be mated in Autumn 2024 to produce F2 shedding progeny this time next year.

Obviously there will be a focus on getting wool off, but we are committed to maintaining the correct and consistent type that Chrome has become known for. This may mean that it takes us a little longer to get to “full shedding” and the early ones may only be crutch free but we will not compromise the tough reliable sheep our reputation has been built on.

“Our ultimate aim is to produce Chromedale sheep that don't need shearing.”

There may be a limited number of F1 shedding ram lambs available in Autumn 2024. Talk to us if you are interested.



Embryo Transfer Full-blood composite shedder lamb on recipient dam

ELFs

In response to several clients wanting to join their ewes earlier, Chrome has recently developed a line of **Chromedale Maternals** that are designed to produce daughters to lamb earlier than the traditional Chromedale Maternal, the **Chromedale ELFs** (Early Lambing Flocks). The ELFs have captured the best of the maternal traits - high fertility, lamb survival, worm resistance and tough well-structured feet from the Chromedale but have tighter skins, more carcass, as well as early lambing attributes. Although the Chromedale ELFs are targeted to clients who lamb earlier, they can be used in any prime lamb ewe base to bring the natural joining cycle forward or tighten skins up.



ELF Rams



Chromedale Sire 202672 heavily represented in this sale with 54 progeny



Chromedale Sire 202217 has progeny in this sale and was one of the sires used in the Meat Eating Quality Trial

TERMINALS



Alongside the Chrome self-replacing maternals are the Chrome terminal sires, the **ICON Southie**, **ICON Poll Dorset** and the **ICON 25's**. Chrome have a regular and growing client base returning to source their terminal ram requirements, some liking the shorter leg, early maturing, attributes of the Icon Southie and ICON 25.

The ICON Southie has been extremely popular due to their early maturing attributes. Clients are seeing the lambs hit the ground running and are a very easy doing lamb that is marketable straight off mum or easily finished. The easy lambing attributes of the Icon Southie make it a great terminal option for ewe lambs and maidens. Such has been demand, we've had a total clearance of Southie rams since we first started them in 2013.

The Icon 25 (predominantly 75% Poll Dorset, 25% Southdown) has been proving itself as an in between option. Our clients comment that, the lambs sired by the 25's are "kegs on legs" that look very much like Poll Dorset sired lambs, but carry the shorter leg and great finishing ability of the Southie.

This year our Poll Dorset catalogue boasts some high profile industry sires including Felix 19.141, Felix 20.213 and Valma 20.0076, Rangeview 19.0065 and Valma 17.0044, a ram that structurally has stood the test of time and was still being used as a 5yo. Eye muscle and growth have taken a significant jump this year and the rams display these attributes and will present very well on October 5th for commercial run rams.

Sale lambs

Traditionally we've been selling our maternal wether lambs before Christmas, however given the record wet spring last year and the penalties for lambs that weren't quite finished we opted to take them to the next level with great results. The performance of our sale lambs over last season is testament to our aims of producing animals that finish and perform. Our drafts of 2,452 lambs averaged 25.1kg and were mostly finished on summer crops with a small amount of grain and hay.



Meat Buyer Rob Cross had this to say

Love the Chrome lambs.

The yield, shape and overall carcass quality stands up against any lambs that I see.

When doing a trade lamb job with Hardwicks and SA Meats the Chrome lambs were always a standout in the fridge and slipped straight into any top end job.

Since moving to a heavier export focused job with Tatura Lamb Co the Chrome lambs continue to be a highlight and have no competition when they go through the boning room.

In the first week or two at Tatura there was a load of Chrome lambs come in and I was speaking to a couple of blokes in the yards up there and I asked them what they thought of the Chrome lambs. They said yeah look they are very neat but they aren't overly big and might be a bit light for the job.

They turned out to be the heaviest mob of lambs processed the following day.

CARL'S CORNER

We are very fortunate to have Carl Anker as a valuable team member over the last 2 ½ years. Carl grew up and worked in the UK where he built his sheep experience in both stud and commercial sheep.

His wealth of experience has been a tremendous asset to Chrome. Carl has taken on the role of single handedly managing our Chrome property and takes a leading role in the management of our stud sheep, particularly the young rams, which are run at Chrome.

Carl's consistently exploring new initiatives to achieve better outcomes for our farm and his passion for growing and efficiently utilizing feed grown has been a game-changer for us.

Our Chrome block has run at over 21 DSE to the Ha this year, which means the rams haven't had it easy but by rotating the rams in larger mobs means they have all had the same treatment and have had enough feed to express their genetic potential.

This year Carl introduced a couple of new grazing crops, Kale and Fodder Beet, as late autumn/winter feed wedges. These crops were sown in December 2022. Given our containment paddocks had a big build-up of fertility over several years, we'd been contemplating ways to better capture and utilize more of the high fertility there, over and above just sowing Annual rye and clover. The kale, grown in small paddocks, by a wet February a good Autumn break the results were nothing short of outstanding.

The Fodder Beets, were more expensive to grow, but proved to be a wise investment. They produce a massive yield per Hectare, (hard to measure but somewhere around 30t/ha). The terminal rams (ICON Southies, Poll Dorsets and Icon 25's) started in mob of 820 on 5 ha of Barkant turnips which was the progression feed to the Fodder beet, which ran them for nearly 4 weeks from 24th May to the 19th June. The beets had been temporary fenced with hot tapes and the rams were strip grazed with break fence until 4th September - 11 weeks of grazing!!

Rams were given a 2 day grazing strip 3 times a week which gives them all equal opportunity without over feeding. Feet have stood up to the wet muddy conditions very well and anything that couldn't, has since been culled.



South West Prime Lamb Group at Chrome – Feed Budgeting Workshop day

CLIENT PROFILE



Neil and Jo Ham “Knockshinock Partnership”

For Beaufort prime lamb producer Neil Ham, the shift to Chrome Sheep Studs as a source of genetics in 2018 has paid big dividends. Neil had been running a traditional 1st cross ewe and cropping operation on his 1,800 acres of both lease and freehold country but thought there was room for improvement in his sheep operation.

Neil initially started by using Chromedale rams over his first cross ewes and has self-replaced his flock since then. Now running roughly 3,000 mixed age ewes and 1,000 ewe lamb replacements, Neil has reduced his cropping area in favour of sheep and is continually impressed by the Chromedale blood lambs stating “The thing I like about Chrome rams is the consistency of the lambs, it makes a more even line. We tried a couple of other different strains

of maternal rams from other suppliers but found they didn’t stack up. Chrome rams have better skins, higher performance and are preferred by our meat buyer”.

Neil marked over 150% from his mixed age ewes this year which is a solid result. “We’ve used teasers for the last 3 years on all our ewes and cut the joining period back from 6 weeks to 28 days. The lambing period was tightened up which meant lamb marking was timely and all the lambs are very even”.

Ewe lambs are mated at 7 months of age to lamb down at about 13 -14 months after being teased for 14 days prior to the rams going in. Neil likes the ICON Southie rams over his ewe lambs and has been most impressed by the easy lambing attributes and the tight sappy skins they hold. “Our ewe lambs have been consistently scanning around the 130-135% mark and any that are scanned empty are sold”.

The key to any good breeding program is feeding and Neil’s pasture program includes the sowing of annual ryegrass and clover in Autumn on a portion of his farm to provide bulk feed for lambing and then lambs after weaning.

“We put our ewes in containment for about 8 weeks over autumn this year which allowed us to create a feed wedge for lambing ewes. A lot of others in our district have been feeding all winter-but our feeding gear was back in the shed long ago”. That early feed surplus has carried the ewes and lambs through winter well and has also enabled Neil to look towards getting paddocks locked up for silage to get some nice early cuts.

“The installation of automated feeding system in Feedtech has been a great investment. “The record rainfall events in the spring of 2022 meant clover didn’t prosper like it normally did leaving us and most of Western Victoria with an abundance of unfinished lambs.” Neil normally grows summer crops for growing out ewe lambs and finishing the Southie cross spring drop lambs, but it was too wet to get on paddocks to spray them out, let alone sow them until it was too late in the year.

Most years we get about 60% of our lambs straight over the hooks off grass but the big difference between forward stores and proper finished lambs and 22 kg plus carcasses prompted us to put some in the feedlot. “We find our lambs are really smart feeders and adapt really well to feed”

Neil started with a home mixed ration but wasn’t happy with 260 grams per head of weight gain so changed to a more expensive, bought in premixed ration from Rex James Stockfeeds at Nathalia. “The lambs quickly jumped to over 400 grams per head a day which made it a cheaper option and easier than our home grown stuff” he said. “The lambs also yielded exceptionally well (49-50%) which meant we had lambs going overweight” The benefit going forward was less time on feed enabling quicker turnout time and less feed consumed.



Join Our Team

Discover Exciting Employment Opportunities with Chrome!

Are you a experienced professional looking for your next career advancement or a motivated ag student looking to begin your journey? We’re actively searching for the right candidates to become valuable additions to our team. Whether you’re passionate about sheep production or thrive in advanced pasture improvement programs, we could have the opportunity you have been looking for.

Unlock Your Potential

If your heart lies with livestock, you’ll have the chance to engage in every aspect of animal husbandry and the production cycle. Our well-equipped facilities and efficient laneway system ensures a seamless workflow. All you need to bring are your trusted team of canines to support you in your role.

For those who excel in operating machinery and maintenance, exciting opportunities are on the horizon. We’re gearing up for hay/silage making, spring sowing summer crops and pasture renovation. There’s even an opportunity to be the backbone of our farm, ensuring all our farm equipment is in peak condition and operates flawlessly and efficiently.

If any of these opportunities resonate with you and you’re eager to join our team at Chrome, please send to us your resume along with three professional references to office@chromesheepstuds.com.au



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Chromedale® • ELF • Perendale • Coopworth • ICON Southie® • ICON 25s • ICON Poll Dorset

OPEN DAY

Monday 2nd October 11am – 4pm

SPRING RAM SALE

Thursday 5th October

Inspection 9.30am Sale commences 11.30am



Ram sale catalogue will be available on our website in PDF and Excel formats. If you would like a catalogue posted, please email us.



**EVERY 6TH
RAM
FREE**



CHROME GENETIC EWE SALE

December 2023

SUMMER RAM SALE

15th January 2024



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