

Australian Whites- Price increases raise the baa for shedding breed sheep

By Emma Fessey – AuctionsPlus Market Insights

Since their inception into the Australian sheep flock in 2011 as a shedding breed, Australian White sheep have quickly become renowned across sheep meat operations for their efficiency as self-replacing units, minimal maintenance, and superior meat quality. As the Australian lamb and shedding breed industry has continued to rise over the past couple of decades, interest in Australian White sheep - both purebred and crossbred, has also risen.

In developing the Australian White, four breeds of sheep including the Poll Dorset, Texel, White Dorper and Van Rooy were selected to achieve desirable traits and premium eating quality. Of the Australian White ewes listed online through AuctionsPlus, 80% of first cross Australian Whites have White Dorpers as the Dam. Other popular crosses include Composite, Meatmaster, Merino and Border Leicester.

AuctionsPlus Market Insights (AMI) have reviewed data between January 2015 and March 2021, to highlight the significant growth, in both prices and location, of Australian Whites within the sheep meat industry.

Table 1: Year on year (YOY) changes in the listings and average cost of Australian White ewes sold through AuctionsPlus from 2015-March 12, 2021.

	PUREBRED			1 ST CROSS	
	No. Head Listed	Average	YOY Change	Average	YOY Change
2015	826	\$176		\$137	
2016	423	\$191	↑8%	\$133	↓3%
2017	4,615	\$158	↓17%	\$124	↓7%
2018	815	\$99	↓38%	\$99	↓20%
2019	5,005	\$168	↑71%	\$134	↑36%
2020	10,193	\$317	↑88%	\$258	↑93%
2021 YTD	5,290	\$413	↑30%	\$263	↑2%

Between 2019 and 2020 the average year-on-year price increase for purebred and first cross Australian White ewes was 88% (\$149/head) and 93% (\$124/head), respectively. For the year to date in 2021, Australian White prices have continued to rise into uncharted territory, with purebred ewes averaging \$413/head and first cross ewes averaging \$263/head. The current market for the breed remains red hot in 2021, as demand is buoyed by producers looking to restock and maximise future cash flow.

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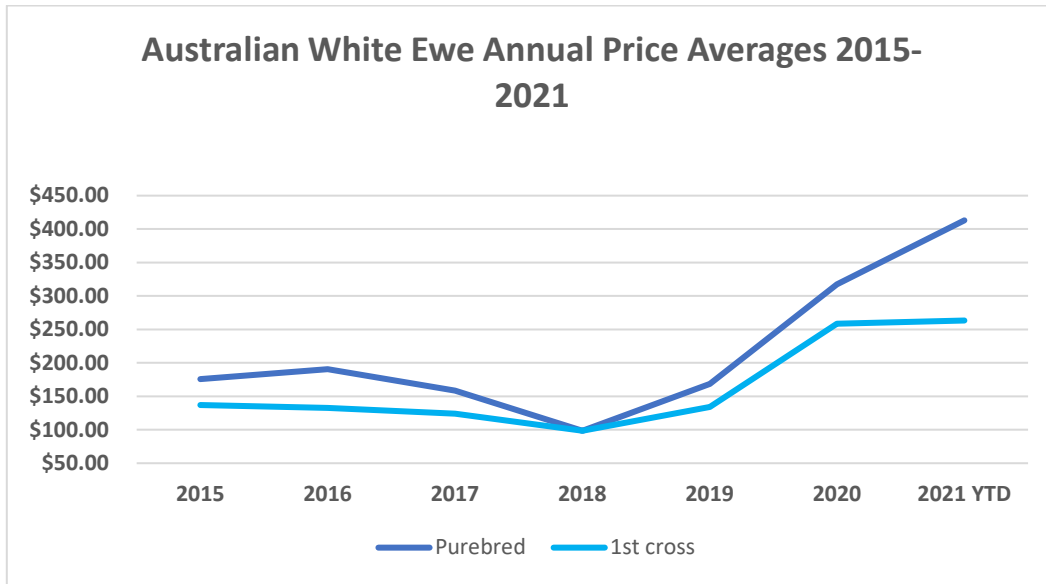


Figure 1: Average yearly price of Purebred and first cross Australian White ewes from January 2015 to March 12, 2021.

The AuctionsPlus weekly sheep sales have become increasingly populated with listings comprised of Australian Whites. Between 2019 and 2020, Australian White offerings increased by 150%. Of the listings placed online in 2020, the Australian White offering comprises of 30% purebred, 42% first cross and 28% second cross - highlighting the versatility of the breed, as their presence in the sheep meat sector increases.

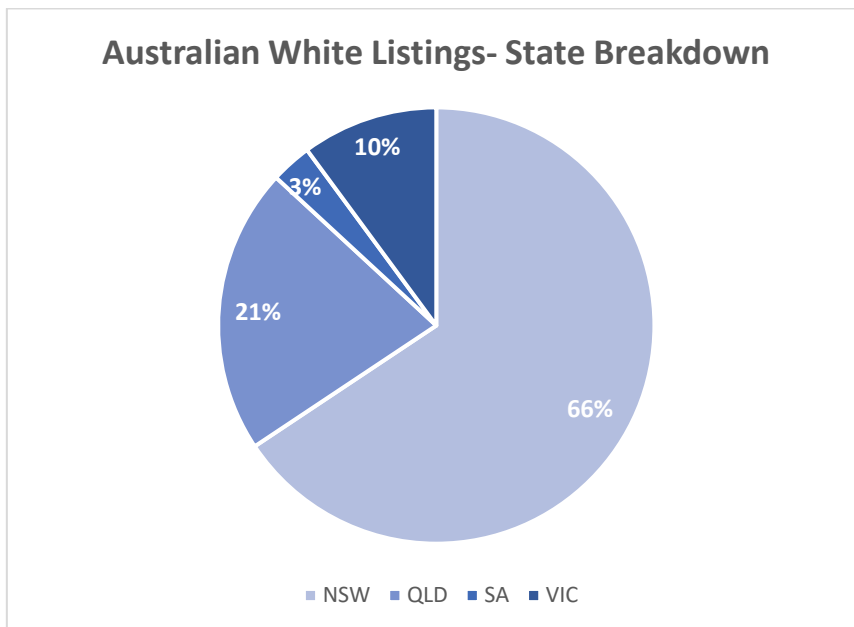


Figure 2: State breakdown of purebred and first cross Australian Whites offered on AuctionsPlus between January 2015 – March 2021.

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Listings of Australian Whites are mostly dominated by NSW, with the Central West accounting for 47% of the states' offering, followed by the Riverina and NW Slopes and Plains, with 16% and 12% respectively. There are 121 registered Australian White breeders in Australia with NSW accounting for 44%, Victoria 32%, while Queensland and WA both making up 8% of studs (*Source: Australian White Sheep Breeders Association*).

With the robust demand for ewes, combined with competitive restocker competition across the eastern states - the market for Australian Whites is expected to remain very strong throughout the remainder of 2021.