

Sheep & lamb monthly summary – March 2021

March was another very strong month for sheep and lambs offered exclusively through AuctionsPlus, with over 400,000 head offered for sale – registering a 73% clearance rate for the month. Widespread inland rain, especially through NSW, during the second half of the month tightened supplies considerably, as many producers looked towards planning for winter cropping programs, confident that pasture and feed supplies would be ample once the cooler conditions arrive.

The largest category for the month was Merino wether lambs, with 69,374 head offered through the online platform. With a clearance rate of 87% for the month, the balance between the buyers and sellers appeared to be consistent, with little change in the average price for the month, at \$141/head – up 1% on February and steady on the corresponding period in 2020. One feature of the month was the larger lines, most in excellent conditions, coming out of the wide expanses of western NSW - with many sellers likely relieved to have sold early in the month, prior to the very heavy falls that created transport and logistics issues heading into Easter.

Very large numbers were also offered through the wide-ranging composite/other breed (63,629 head) and crossbred (44,816 head) lamb categories, with prices for the month averaging \$207/head and \$170/head, respectively. While rebuilding intentions were still very prevalent, both ewe lamb categories registered somewhat subdued clearance rates for the month. First cross ewe lambs, with 30,984 head offered, averaged a 64% clearance rate for March, with average prices back 7% on the previous month, at \$238/head. Similarly, the clearance rate for the 16,119 head of Merino ewe lambs was at 57%, averaging \$191/head. Validation of these clearance rates continues to indicate that the stand off between buyers and sellers is wider for ewe lambs than for other categories, with buyers unwilling to lift, while sellers face little pressure to reduce reserve levels.

Across the sheep lines, the largest category for the month was SIL Merino ewes, with 70,682 head offered – at a 69% clearance rate. With an additional 33% offered through March, compared to February, the average price only decreased 3%, to \$259/head. Similarly, an increased number of SIL first cross ewes, up 80% for the month, at 20,395 head, contributed to the monthly average prices slipping back 5% from February to \$316/head.

Across the other sheep categories, NSM Merino ewes and NSM Merino hoggets both averaged 9% lower for the month, at \$205/head and \$236/head, respectively. Shedding breed ewes averaged 5% higher for the month, at \$315/head, with a 86% clearance rate for the 9,167 head offered.

Classification	Offered	Sold	Clearance	Mar-21	Feb-21	Mar-20	% Change		Low	High	Average
							\$/head	last month			
Lambs											
Crossbreds	44,816	36,823	82%	170	165	168	3%	1%	346	964	452
Merino wether lambs	69,374	60,638	87%	141	139	141	1%	0%	312	575	391
first cross ewe lambs	30,984	19,709	64%	238	255	242	-7%	-2%	341	888	528
Merino ewe lambs	16,119	9,170	57%	191	184	189	4%	1%	373	962	487
Shedding breeds lambs	14,446	11,996	83%	271	268	190	1%	43%	300	1,395	675
Composite/other breeds	63,629	45,349	71%	207	216	175	-4%	18%	235	668	462
Sheep											
Ewes LAF	1,148	1,148	100%	328	294	270	12%	21%	469	655	544
Merino wethers	10,604	5,838	55%	143	159	148	-10%	-3%	242	339	294
Scanned in lamb (SIL)											
Merino ewes	70,682	48,866	69%	259	266	265	-3%	-2%	194	677	410
First cross ewe	20,395	11,030	54%	316	334	315	-5%	0%	313	635	446
Non Station Mated (NSM)											
Merino ewe hoggets	9,803	6,705	68%	236	259	205	-9%	15%	330	616	462
Merino ewes	24,269	17,201	71%	205	225	198	-9%	4%	237	594	370
First cross ewe	1,285	838	65%	253	221	234	14%	8%	283	606	418
Composite/other breeds	3,390	1,692	50%	355	270	241	31%	47%	207	909	505
Shedding breed ewes	9,167	7,845	86%	315	300	277	5%	14%	209	1,153	578

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