

Lamb market steady through April – AuctionsPlus sheep & lamb monthly

The AuctionsPlus sheep and lamb market continued its steady path throughout April, with a total of 292,647 head offered for the month. While total supplies were back 27% on the previous month, markets were disrupted through the Easter period, as producers retained potential breeding lines with seasonal conditions remaining very favorable.

As the young cattle market hogged the price headlines through April, the overall return for lamb producers remained favorable, albeit, with some categories falling below the corresponding period in 2020. For the largest single online category, Merino wether lambs, there was an 85% clearance rate for the 60,345 head offered – with the average price for the month up 4% on March, at \$146/head. Compared to the same period last year, Merino wether lambs averaged 5% lower.

For the other lamb categories, there was monthly and year-on-year declines registered for crossbreds, first cross ewes and Merino ewe lambs. The 23,887 head of crossbred lambs offered throughout April averaged \$165/head – which was back 3% on March 2021 and 8% from April 2020. First cross ewe lambs averaged \$240/head for the month, down 6% and 4%, respectively, with only a 53% clearance rate for the 23,833 head offered. Merino ewe lambs averaged \$188/head – down 2% on the previous month and 11% year-on-year.

The star performance on the lamb front in April 2021 came from the shedding lamb category, which averaged \$309/head – which was up 14% on the previous month and 35% on the same period in 2020. The sharp price increase came even with a 28% jump in total offerings for the month, to 18,544 head – as the popularity of shedding breeds continues to expand, especially as prices for Australian white lambs captured headlines.

Across the ewe categories, the market was largely stronger from March 2021 for the SIL lines, but back for the NSM categories. For the SIL Merino ewe category, with 49,907 head offered for the month, prices averaged \$258/head for April, steady from March 2021, but back 7% year-on-year. Similarly, SIL first cross ewes averaged 2% higher in April, at \$322/head – but back 10% from April 2020.

The only ewe category to be up both monthly and year-on-year was SM Merino ewes, which averaged \$236/head for the 12,856 head presented – up 6% on March 2021 and 3% on April 2020. In contrast, NSM Merino ewes averaged 11% lower in April 2021, at \$182/head – with a 62% clearance rate for the 14,564 head offered.

Classification	Offered	Clearance	Apr-21 \$/head	Mar-21	Apr-20	% Change		Low Mar 21 actual	High	Average c/kg cwt
						last month	last year			
Lambs										
Crossbreds	23,887	91%	165	170	179	-3%	-8%	334	691	503
Merino wether lambs	60,345	85%	146	141	153	4%	-5%	303	721	451
First cross ewe lambs	23,833	53%	240	255	250	-6%	-4%	369	954	584
Merino ewe lambs	19,377	57%	188	191	212	-2%	-11%	397	980	578
Shedding breeds lambs	18,544	75%	309	271	228	14%	35%	372	924	562
Composite/other breeds	16,445	69%	222	207	192	7%	15%	257	680	494
Sheep										
Ewes LAF	2,856	72%	363	270	350	34%	4%	486	591	557
Merino wethers	10,889	92%	156	143	160	9%	-2%	277	442	350
Scanned in lamb (SIL)										
SIL Merino ewes	49,907	66%	258	258	277	0%	-7%	295	697	480
SM Merino ewes	12,856	63%	236	223	229	6%	3%	244	623	463
SIL first cross ewes	13,901	57%	322	316	357	2%	-10%	348	745	550
SM first cross ewes	3,794	56%	289	308	272	-6%	6%	405	750	540
Non Station Mated (NSM)										
Merino ewe hoggets	4,497	44%	202	259	194	-22%	4%	241	594	438
Merino ewes	14,564	62%	182	205	206	-11%	-11%	211	565	400
First cross ewe	958	41%	242	253	237	-4%	2%	315	654	454
Composite/other breeds	11,505	72%	262	355	282	-26%	-7%	262	634	442
Shedding breed ewes	3,216	83%	278	315	296	-12%	-6%	390	765	544

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