

# Don't lose your marbles

By MARIUS CUMING

**T**HE lamb industry is in serious danger of losing touch with its greatest strength – the ability to produce a marbled product from grass.

The somewhat surprising warning comes from the very top of the trade from the mouth of successful lamb producer and retailer Richard Gunner.

He runs five retail stores throughout South Australia that sell premium beef and lamb through brands such as Certified Australian Angus Beef, Hay Valley Lamb, Pure Suffolk Lamb and Samurai Wagyu.

He also sells beef and lamb to more than 100 restaurants.

While he said Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) did a tremendous job of selling lamb to the world and within Australia, he stressed there was more to do when communicating with producers.

"Intra-muscular scanning of sheep needs to be further explored and an intra-muscular fat breeding value as an EBV (estimated breeding value) needs to be a central part of what growers should be aiming to produce," Mr Gunner said.

"Carcase Plus just over simplifies the breeding of lamb. Low fat score lamb is OK, but we can't afford to lose that intra-muscular fat or marbling."

As a premium niche item in the worldwide protein market he believes there is far too much focus on productivity in the lamb industry and not enough on the quality of the item itself.

"At the end of the day that is not how well managed niche markets work," Mr Gunner said.

"Their competitive advantage is in the product itself, not in its price."



■ South Australian-based lamb producer and retailer Richard Gunner says the industry can't afford to lose focus on marbling.

## Gunning for marbling

- ◆ Lamb producers have been warned not to let their meat get too lean
- ◆ Richard Gunner says intra-muscular fat is a major advantage for grass-fed lamb

MLA manager of lamb and sheepmeat research and development Alex Ball said intra-muscular fat was being measured in more than 2000 of the information nucleus lambs, and added that Mr Gunner was involved with MLA funded research into developing breeding values in the area.

## In brief

### Retail therapy for woolgrowers

THIRTY wool growers descended on the hip Chapel Street fashion store Metalicus as part of an initiative by The Merino Company (TMC) to highlight the demand for quality wool garments last month.

For Woodpark producer Carol Huggins Eurolie, NSW, seeing the demand and style of garments that use 48 per cent Merino wool gave her great confidence.

"It was fantastic to see such a fashion forward brand like Metalicus get behind wool and to learn just how strong the demand is for our Merino," she said.

The benefit was two way, with Metalicus general manager Julie Milnes also able to mingle with growers.

"People really love buying our wool garments. Our customers understand wool and it has a great perception. With the recent shift towards natural fibres we find that fine wool far outweighs the demand for synthetic fibre," she said.

**"F EWE TURE FARMING" – Can EWE meet the challenge**



It's a long time since there has been a sheep/wool conference of this magnitude in Victoria and BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB is taking the lead by organizing this challenge for producers across the state to be involved and take the opportunity to be informed of the future of farming.

The Industry Update will start with a dinner in the evening of 29th May at the Quality Resort All Season's Bendigo with guest speaker Richard