

Tell the Merino story

By ROWENA McNAUGHTON

WHEN James Kirkpatrick touched down in Salt Lake City earlier this year he was a passionate wool grower but questioned market intelligence.

Now, after a week at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market trade show in Salt Lake City and meeting some of the US's top clothing retailers, Mr Kirkpatrick is certain Merino wool is on the radar but is concerned farmers are not close enough to the product.

He said retail sales managers down to fashion designers knew about Merino wool – including that supply had slipped to an 80-year low and was likely to fall under 400,000 tonnes – but they were hungry for information about on-farm production.

"They realise the wonderful traits of wool being a clean green renewable fibre but they want to get closer," Mr Kirkpatrick said.

He said Merino wool's sustainable and natural qualities was a marketing edge that retailers want to leverage off but must know the entire story to do so.

"There is cotton to compete with but all of the big companies said they found it difficult to source organic cotton and it does not have traceability as a lot comes from the third world," he said. "With Merino wool we can guarantee traceability – and they want this."

Mr Kirkpatrick spent a day in San Francisco visiting retail managers at Saxons and Bloomingdales and said swing tags on woollen garments telling the farmer's story were common.

In some stores a swipe of a bar code revealed the narrative of paddock to shelf and the natural qualities of the garment.

"It is up to us to tell them about what we do on farm – what chemicals we use, the environment the sheep live in.



■ James Kirkpatrick, Beaufort, pictured in San Francisco.

"They know a lot about processing and spinning, but from spinning back to growing they knew little."

Mr Kirkpatrick and his wife Helen travelled to United States as ambassadors for The Merino Company's stand at the trade show in Salt Lake City, Utah, in August.

The show brings together around 40,000 outdoor specialists from around the globe.

The event is considered a benchmark for standards within the industry.

Once a niche market, the outdoor leisure market has ballooned in the past decade.

The United Kingdom 2008 sports retail report forecast a 16 per cent growth between 2008 and 2013, and 14.4pc rise in the next five years in the sportswear sector.

High prices lure in sellers

THE lure of continued high prices flushed out another sizeable yarding for the Christmas pig market at Ballarat last Wednesday.

Prices held fully firm to a shade dearer for the offering of 1218 head with best demand offered for the traditional shop trade gilts in the 80-85 kilogram weight range.

Strong interstate support for bacon boars plus two keen orders from Gippsland kept buyers on their toes as most sales in the bacon pens made 325 to 355 cents a kilogram liveweight while pork made to 352c/kg lw.

Crawford Dowling's Peter Briody said it was amazing just where the numbers came from after such a long and difficult period for the industry.

He said several large consignments kept numbers adequate for the traditional Christmas pork sale with sellers again well rewarded for their efforts.

Mr Briody said the pork yarding consisted of a quality offering of ideal trade weights with some heavier and super heavy weights scattered through the penning.

The extra competition lifted pork values 5-8c/kg lw as super heavy trade pork made \$260-\$280 and prime medium weights, \$235-\$258.

Prime light pork made \$205-\$235 a head. The baconer sale also contained an excellent supply of trade types in the light to medium weight ranges.

Best gilts, Mr Briody said, sold very firm to 3c dearer while "entires" were mostly firm with odd sales to 3c dearer. Best gilts made \$330-\$367/head while prime medium weights fetched \$305-\$329. Prime light bacon made \$280-\$300.

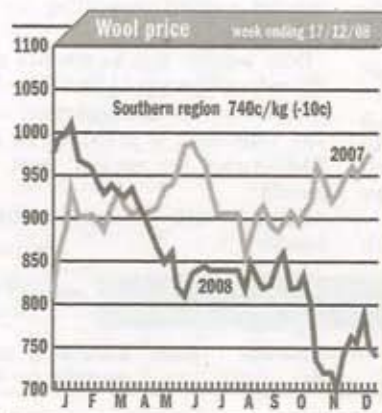
The next sale will be held on Wednesday, January 7.

— MURRAY ARNEL

QUOTES

Bacon: Over 95kg to c/kg lw, avg c/kg lw; 85-94kg to /kg lw, avg c/kg lw; 75-84kg to c/kg lw, avg c/kg lw.

Pork: Over 65kg to c/kg lw, avg c/kg lw. Sows: Heavy \$-\$, medium \$-\$; useful \$-\$.

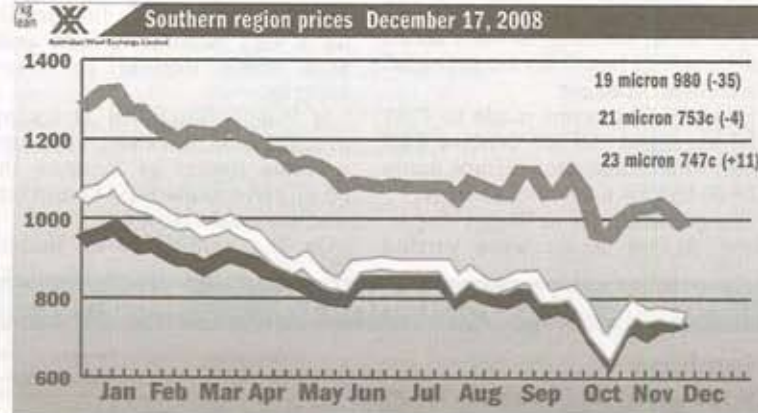


Greasy prices

Vendor

Price Qty

nkt



NEXT SALES

Sydney 29 14, 15 January 2009.

Melbourne 29 14, 15 January 2009.