

# NSW cattle graziers make big

EXCLUSIVE



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— TONY KELLY

By CARLA WIESE-SMITH

NSW graziers Tony Kelly and Jo Eldridge have made the largest purchase of Wiltipoll ewes – and possibly of a wool shedding breed – in Australia from the Hughes family, Kars Station, Broken Hill, and Strathalbyn, after deciding to switch their enterprise to sheep.

The potential for better gross margins, cash flow and market options instigated the

## KeyPoints

- No infrastructure needed for shearing or crutching
- Bought 3600 ewes
- Final truckload of ewes arrived Friday last week

shift from cattle and the 3078 Wiltipolls from Broken Hill will play a critical role in establishing the couple's Mogal Plain flock at Tottenham.

Market research inspired Mr

Kelly and Ms Eldridge to go into Australian Whites – a relatively new composite breed.

"We switched because sheep have better gross margins and cashflow, and better market options – there's not so many with cattle," Mr Kelly said.

"Also, the increase in costs and diminishing returns in cropping played a big part in our decision."

The duo spoke to lamb finisher and buyer Tony Rutter, Tarcutta, NSW, about what sort of lamb he could always sell – and sell well – and he suggested the Australian White.

However, the breed's short supply of ewes meant their best option would be to upgrade from another breed.

"We wanted a shedding breed because we didn't have or want to invest in the infrastructure for wool, and we didn't want to go down the route of Dorpers because they can be hard to manage," Mr Kelly said.

"The advice we received was to go for the Wiltipoll-cross."

But finding a substantial number of Wiltipoll ewes presented a challenge in itself.

"It was just by chance that Jo found Kars Station on the internet," Mr Kelly said.

"They hadn't advertised the ewes; we were after 5000 but said we'd take whatever we could have."

They were able to secure 3078 ewes from three drops,

2009 to 2011, and the last load of ewes arrived at Tottenham Friday last week.

Mr Kelly and Ms Eldridge were also able to source 550 Kars-blood ewes from Coonamble, NSW, giving them a total of 3600 Wiltipolls to start with.

"The Wiltipolls are good, big frame ewes and we're hoping by putting the Australian White rams over them we'll produce an earlier-maturing lamb and keep the shedding ability," Mr Kelly said.

He believes the Australian White has a lot of potential in the lamb industry.

"By speaking to Tony Rutter and the Australian White breeders (the Gilmore family at Oberon, NSW) we are following advice from people who we believe are at the top of their game," Mr Kelly said.

With the anticipation building, "we couldn't get the ewes quick enough."

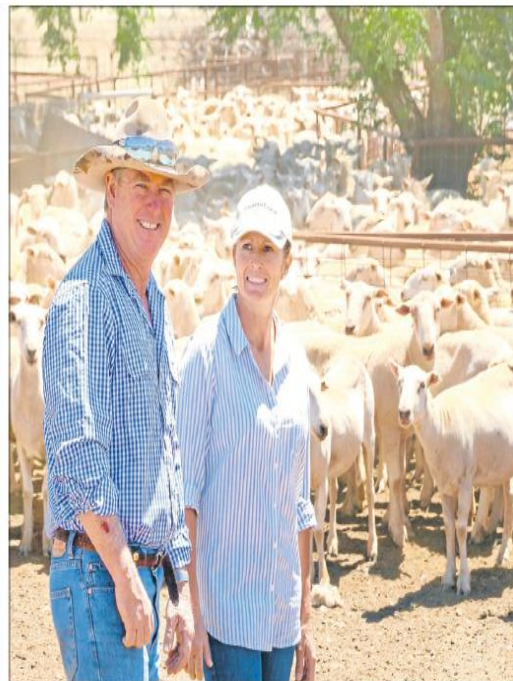
About 58 Australian White rams will make their way to Mogal Plain by the end of December, all contract-bred and ordered three months ago.

"It's ended up as quite a test case for them (the Australian White breeders) too," Mr Kelly said.

"They're keen to get it right and so are we."

"It will be an interesting test crossing shedding haired sheep to shedding woolled sheep."

Before selling their ▶



EXCITING ERA: Tony Kelly and Jo Eldridge, Mogal Plain, Tottenham, NSW, with some of the 3600 Wiltipoll ewes which will be used to establish a new meat sheep enterprise on their property.

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