

28 April 2023

Australian shorn wool production continues a moderate increase.

- The latest Australian Wool Production Forecasting Committee's forecast of shorn wool production for 2022/23 is 328 Mkg greasy, up 1.3% on 2021/22. Most key wool producing regions experienced a favourable summer season, a reasonable autumn and are heading into winter with a sufficient supply of feed.
- The Committee's first forecast of shorn wool production for the 2023/24 season is 332 Mkg greasy, a 1.4% increase on the current season. Sheep numbers are expected to remain relatively stable at 72.7 million, up 1.7%.

The Australian Wool Production Forecasting Committee (AWPFC) has updated its forecast of shorn wool production for the 2022/23 season. This fourth forecast is for production of 328 million kilograms (Mkg) greasy, a 1.3% increase on the 2021/22 estimated shorn wool production of 324 Mkg greasy.

AWPFC Chairman, Stephen Hill said that *"average cut per head is expected to increase to 4.59 kg greasy, (up 2.2%) the result of historically high levels in most states and is a reflection of the current run of three good seasons"*. Most Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA) key test data (Table 3) up to the end of March 2023 are very similar to the same time last season.

"Shorn sheep numbers are expected to be 71.5 million head (down 0.1%), due to reduced sheepmeat prices and a forecast El Niño in spring". New South Wales continues to have the largest sheep flock with an expected 25.9 million sheep shorn resulting in a shorn wool production of 119.0 Mkg greasy. Victoria is expected to shear 16.1 million sheep and produce 70.0 Mkg greasy.

AWTA wool test volumes to the end of March 2023 were up by 2.5% on a year-on-year basis. First-hand offered wool at auction to the end of March 2023 (week 40) was on par with the same time period in 2022, up by 0.7%.

The AWPFC's first forecast of shorn wool production for the 2023/24 season is 332 Mkg greasy, a 1.4% increase on the 2022/23 forecast as a result of modest increases in the number of sheep shorn (up 1.7%). The Committee expects the average cut per head to remain at 4.58 kg greasy which is at an historically high level (87th percentile).

Table 1: Summary of Australian wool production

	2021/22	2022/23 Fourth Forecast	Change y-o-y (%)	2023/24 First forecast	Change y-o-y (%)
Sheep numbers shorn <i>(million head)</i>	71.6	71.5	-0.1%	72.7	1.7%
Average cut per head <i>(greasy kg/head)</i>	4.52	4.59	2.2%	4.58	0.0%
Shorn wool production <i>(Mkg greasy)</i>	324	328	1.3%	332	1.4%

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Table 2: Total shorn wool production by state (million kg)

Season	NSW	VIC	WA	SA	TAS	QLD	AUSTRALIA
2020/21 <i>(Mkg greasy)</i>	99.2	70.7	56.5	51.5	9.4	7.2	294
2021/22 <i>(Mkg greasy)</i>	113.3	73.9	61.2	56.1	10.3	8.9	324
<i>Change y-o-y (%)</i>	14.2%	4.5%	8.3%	8.9%	9.6%	23.6%	10.0%
2022/23 Fourth Forecast <i>(Mkg greasy)</i>	119.0	70.0	60.6	56.7	10.2	11.3	328
<i>Change y-o-y (%)</i>	5.0%	-5.3%	-1.0%	1.1%	-1.0%	27.0%	1.3%

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Table 3: AWTA key test data for 2021/22 and 2022/23 July to March

	2021/22	2022/23	Change y-o-y
Mean fibre diameter (µm)	20.9	20.8	- 0.1
Staple length (mm)	88.6	89.6	+ 1.0
Staple strength (N/ktex)	34.6	34.5	-0.1
Yield (%)	65.3	66.4	+ 1.1
Vegetable Matter (%)	2.2	2.2	0

The AWPFC would like to recognise the outstanding contribution of Dr Peter Morgan who will be retiring on 30th June following 60 years work in the sheep and wool industry and 30 years on the National Committee first representing the Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA) and then the Australian Council of Wool Exporters & Processors (ACWEP) and the Private Treaty Wool Merchants of Australia (PTWMA).

Mr Ian Ashman will also retire from the AWPFC following the April meeting. His valued contribution over more than 23 years representing AWTA is recognised.

The National Committee drew on advice from the six State Committees, each of which includes growers, brokers, private treaty merchants, sheep pregnancy scanners, representatives from State Departments of Agriculture and the Australian Wool Testing Authority. Data and input were also drawn from the Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX),

wool exporters, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Sciences (ABARES), and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA).

The state and national Committees will next meet in mid-August 2023.

The full forecast report will be available on the AWI website at www.wool.com/forecasts from 12th May 2023.

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