



Thursday, January 22, 2015

## Livestock SA: a South East perspective

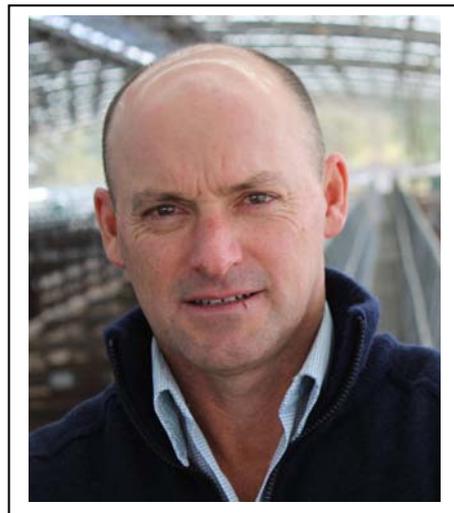
**By Peter Stock**

**Livestock SA Southern Region Chairman and beef producer, Lucindale**

The New Year is often a time to reflect and check-in on personal as well as professional goals and vision.

The start of 2015 has reminded me of the pride I have in the Limestone coast region and its unique qualities in the livestock it turns off.

Sure, our numbers may look a little dim when compared to the colossal numbers in Qld and NSW; however when we look at specific regions around Australia capable of producing quality sheep, lamb and cattle high in eating quality and of significant numbers, our region stands out with distinction.



When we reflect to consider our region's precious underground water supply, usually reliable coastal rainfall, well-drained soils over limestone, warm ranges in winter and productive flats in the summer, plus access to state-of-the-art genetics and markets it starts to become a case of pinching oneself.

I would encourage all livestock producers of our region to share in this pride and help champion our region and its livestock. I believe the formation of our new commodity-based representative groups and the presence of an industry body such as Livestock SA enables producers to do just this.

The uptake of membership over the past year or so in the South East has been promising and demonstrates a recognition that the livestock sector and individual producers benefit from organised industry representation.

Sustained confidence in the sheep and lamb sector underpinned strong demand for first-cross ewes at Naracoorte's annual sales in November, where a number of local Livestock SA executive members were present as an opportunity to meet with our region's sheep producers and discuss policy and membership issues with them.

The Southern Region Group of Livestock SA also partnered up with Natural Resources SE to run four Dry Times workshops in December and I was impressed with the early decision making and pragmatic approach our producers had already taken to deal with the season.

We have been distributing LSA bumper stickers in recent months which proclaim 'Food producer on board' and these are being spotted around the South East and beyond. Such initiatives are simple and inexpensive but effectively promote our organisation and highlight our members' vital role in feeding the world.

January would normally be the month of our quality weaner calf sales with thousands being offered up throughout the South East and Western Victoria. With no spring rainfall and proactive decision making from our region's stock agents and producers, some calf sales were moved forward and the majority were sold prior to Christmas. There are some weaner sales remaining with reduced numbers and steers and heifers are back to being sold on the same day. The cattle sale attracting the most attention this time of year is the PTIC (pregnancy-tested, in-calf) female sale at the Naracoorte Livestock Exchange on Thursday, January 29. Livestock SA will be present to meet our region's cattle producers to listen to their views and opinions on their industry.

Cattle producers this year are eagerly hoping to realise the much-anticipated jump in cattle prices to levels not seen before, mirroring the strength enjoyed in the lamb industry in recent years. After 20 years of consistent cattle prices this must happen for the cattle industry to expand to meet the demands of new trade agreements and seize on the international marketing opportunities created by exporters and Meat & Livestock Australia.

As livestock producers, we are growing food for domestic and international consumption. We need to continually remind some groups of this fact to ensure we can continue to sustainably provide the world's population with the nutrition they require.

With this in mind, Livestock SA is essentially our insurance at a bio-security and policy level to help protect South Australia's livestock industries.

With 2000 members across the state, my vision is to ultimately have that number of members in the South East alone. In numbers there is strength and as livestock producers we all have vested interest. I would encourage you all to have conversations with Livestock SA board members and other local producers to drill down on the positive difference we can make in the protection and promotion of our livestock industries.