The South Africans Importations

The approach to importing South African Angoras was rather different. Technology had moved on since the early 1980's, no doubt assisted by the embryo work on the Texans at Kirra. Approval was obtained to use an **embryo washing** technique which satisfied AQIS that frozen embryos could be imported from Africa with limited quarantine. The problem was that the South Africans had a ban on exports of Angoras at the time.

This was overcome by some enterprising transport of Angoras to Zimbabwe where embryos were collected. A private group of Australian breeders funded the collection and aimed to float a company in Australia to handle the distribution. The float in 1988 failed with the end of the stock market boom and the frozen embryos were purchased by some enterprising **New Zealanders**. The embryos were successfully implanted and born in several quarantine stations and eventually many were sold to Australian breeders who brought them to Australia. In 1992 the ban on exports from South Africa was lifted, allowing embryo collection from named animals (along with **Improved Boer Goats**) which were brought to South Australia at **Terraweena** near Keith. This too was a private venture, but the animals were received gladly by Australian breeders. Several other shipments of frozen embryos have been imported since then, but the activity was stopped when an outbreak of **Foot and Mouth Disease** occurred in northern South Africa in about 2010.

Cudal Mohair Stud purchased its first African bucks in 1996. These were bucks from the first importation and came from the New Zealand based **African Goat Flocks** via **Phezulu**. Comparison of Texan and African sires over the 1995 and 1996 drops at Cudal (87% imports and higher) are presented in the Table 2. and graphed below. Information on the 2001 drop is also included and presents data from an **AI program** using original Texan material.

By 2001, breeding had moved on from a Texan vs African sire comparison, and sires were chosen at Cudal on fleece weight, visual fineness and aesthetic properties. However, for interest, an AI program was instituted using **Texsynd** semen from original imports. The semen was purchased from a Texsynd member and inseminated into Cudal does. This allowed some comparison between what had developed since the release and some of the more highly promoted animals from the importation. Texan sires included **Pember 1900** and **1942**, **Trees 1779**, **Ebeling 1028**, **Ebeling 1062** and **Texsynd 4964** (Ebeling: Pember). Local sires that year were from **Cudal**, **Phezulu, Topbok** and were either full African or African:Texan crosses.

While the AI kids did produce a marginally higher clean fleece weight, the assessment was that the animals were not as attractive as the progeny from the African and cross sires used that year. Two other points should be made. The original Texan and Cross does seem to show a greater **seasonal variation** in fleece growth with the 4^{th}, 6^{th} and 8^{th} fleeces being as much as 0.5kg heavier than the autumn shorn 5^{th} and 7^{th} fleeces. The trend is not marked in the 2001 drop and this may be due to chance seasonal effects. Some kempy fleeces were found at some shearings. Care is needed in interpreting the differences since the small number of animals in the drop limits the sensitivity of the statistic. However, some kemp was observed. It is possible that classers became more critical of the characteristic as time went by.

It is in the nature of animal breeding that ideas and objectives move on. In the case of Australian Angora importations, this resulted in an almost complete replacement of the original strain with a combination of imported strains. The Texans doubled fleece production and reduced kemp to almost nothing. The Africans reduced the grease levels in the fleece and improved the staple structure of the mohair. The next decade and a half saw the refining of the fleece structure and the visual appeal of the animals. Fineness was clearly sought but productivity still seemed to be ignored in favour of show success. The following chapters (9 and 10) deal with what happened next.

It is worth discussing the results of the back-crossing to Texan semen. This was done to sample genetic material that was not included in the original Cudal program. The bucks were originally promoted as special, particularly Pember 1900, and the AI program was something of a test of those claims.

As mentioned above, this was far from a scientific experiment and covered a number of years of drought and uncertainty though animals were supplementary feed when necessary. We still relied largely on visual estimations of "measurements". There were some 40 kids dropped from the AI program and my conclusion at the time was that none of the bucks showed sufficient merit to be used in the stud. They did not grow out well compared to the stud's other bucks, their conformation/size left much to be desired and the animals showed considerable pigmentation on their face and ears. Considering the expense involved, this was disappointing.

Table 2. Corrected fleece weights (6 months), estimated fibre diameters and washing yields, and percentage of fleeces classed as "kempy" from 1995/96 pure imports from Texan and African sires and the 2001 drop from bred-on bucks and original Texan sires by AI.

Shearing	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
1995 - 96 drops pure Texan (T100)								
n	77	77	77	75	70	57	50	35
G Flwt kg	1.22	2.50	3.11	3.28	3.09	3.26	2.91	3.52
Diam um	24.44	27.23	30.10	30.71	32.17	32.96	33.74	34.23
Yield %	85.2	81.5	83.4	82.8	84.14	82.9	84.1	84.4
% kempy fls	1	2	4	1	3	4	0	6
1995 – 96 drop Texan African Cross (TS100)								
n	42	42	42	38	31	21	20	15
G Flwt kg	1.46	2.5	3.06	3.24	2.92	3.63	2.86	3.73
Diam um	25.21	27.07	30.29	30.84	31.29	34.10	34.20	33.73
Yield %	86.0	83.4	84.8	84.3	84.9	84.4	85.9	86.0
% kempy fls	2	0	0	3	0	5	5	0
2001 drop and bred on Cudal purebred imports								
n	20	20	20	20	20	16	16	5
G Flwt kg	1.10	2.63	3.07	2.80	2.80	2.85	2.80	2.90
Diam um	24.30	29.1	30.60	30.00	31.80	32.25	34.00	33.20
Yield %	87.5	85.0	86.8	85.1	85.7	86.3	85.7	85.0
% kempy fls	0	0	10	0	0	13	6	0

2001 drop from pure bred-on does and original Texan sires (using AI)								
n	19	19	19	16	16	16	15	4
G Flwt kg	1.16	2.74	3.30	3.01	3.16	3.02	2.97	2.85
Diam um	24.32	29.26	30.79	30.56	32.50	32.88	33.87	34.5
Yield %	85.1	83.1	84.6	84.3	84.2	86.0	84.4	85.3
% kempy fls	0	0	5	0	0	19	13	50

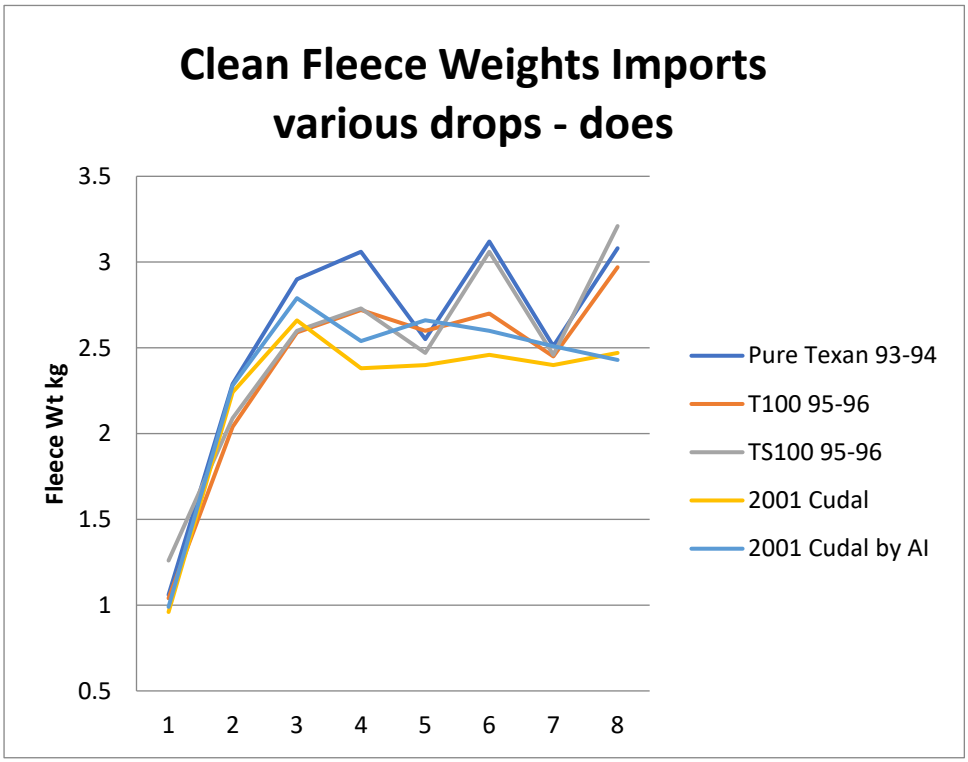

Figure 22. Clean fleece weights of Texan, Texan South African crosses, Cudal bred on animals and a group of back crosses to Texan semen over 8 shearings. Warning there could well be some drop/year interactions in the data because of the succession of droughts during the period.

Conservation of breeding material

Conservation of genetic material is something of a vexed question. Certainly, the conservation of the original Australian strain of the pre-1992 release (the now called **Heritage Angoras**) hardly seems to raise any commercial interest. These animals were at, best an, inferior, light cutting, kempy types. At worst, the strain contained many genetic faults like golden kids, kids with imperforate anus or cryptorchidism. Again, at best they, were high yielding and fine.

The insistence of AQIS to deal with each importer and their animals separately underlies the point that the importations were privately owned and not of specific **national interest**. Despite

considerable trading within the quarantine station between syndicates there was very little cooperation or coordination. While fleeces were weighed, and classing undertaken, this information on assessment was restricted. It is not surprising that importers wished to limit any **objective evaluation** of their expensive imports, but there was also little consideration of any conservation of the material. Such suggestions were rejected.

While it could now be argued that the breed has moved on (just as we have moved on from the Australian strain), it is perhaps a pity that the only conservation of what was an incredibly expensive exercise is some frozen semen, which may be stored by an aging ownership with little information of where it is or who will pay the costs of continued storage. And what for example, happened to the progeny of the largest group of animals brought in by the Johnson syndicate? Perhaps is unfair to single out this apparent loss, since all syndicate have faded away and breeding was first overtaken by South African types, then disappeared completely as the studs retired.

Later imports

As mentioned, there have been 5 sets of embryos from South Africa and one consignment of semen from Texas imported since the original importations (unfortunately the embryos from Texas with this consignment failed). These importations have added to the gene pool and the semen from Texas is especially important since it derived from Texan and Texan South African cross breeding some considerable time after the greasy mohair fad which characterised the 1983 drop of animals imported in 1984.