

**Wind protection.** Banda grass is a windbreak from the strong southerly winds.

**Predators.** A 10 wire electric fence keeps foxes out and usually keeps the Mareema guard dog in with the grazing birds; one dog was an exception because it preferred to jump the electric fence and spend time with the family in the house, rather than do its job and protect the turkeys from predators. The best dog that Matthew had for protecting the turkeys was a cross between a Mareema and an Okshanka. Unfortunately over the years, guard dogs have been killed by ticks, snakes and a few unknown causes.

Figure 67 a and b: Ducks and sheep with turkeys in the grazing paddock

**Other farm animals.** Matthew has a few sheep running with the turkeys because he trains the guard dog to become accustomed to sheep so that the dog doesn't readily attack the neighbour's sheep. He also has a few ducks with the turkeys. The duck eggs are incubated for 28 days before the ducklings are introduced to the brood room. However, the ducks are too easily prey for sea eagles and so not a reasonable commercial product. A few geese run with the turkeys and they have proved to be even better than the dog at protecting turkeys against predator birds.

Figure 68: The packaged product from Sunforest

There hasn't been any disease problem with the poultry, possibly because the birds are very healthy and fed well.

## CASE STUDY: WOOL

Figure 69: Don Macdonald and Cliff McNaught with bales of wool at Keelambara

### WOOL PRODUCTION

Don Macdonald has had many years experience in the wool industry, both as a broker at *Lanoc Wool* in Dubbo and also as a woolgrower at Dubbo and at *Keelambara* at Tilpa in the far northwest corner of New South Wales. He runs 10,000 sheep on the



40,000 hectare property and traditionally reliance on chemicals has been minimal. He has commenced towards certification and is currently *in-conversion* with NASAA.

Figure 70: Wool leaves Keelambara August 2007.



Don's farming philosophy suits him to organic production and he can also see potential for a niche market in organic wool. Don maintains that the traditional problems of lice, worms and blowfly can be managed organically, especially in his relatively dry area of the state, and he can see a future where mulesing isn't necessary. However Don is concerned that the increased labour costs associated with crutching sheep and chipping weeds such as bathurst burr and noogoora burr could make the organic venture unviable unless there is a premium price for the product.

Figure 71: Sheep at Keelambara



Don suggests a few practical considerations for those interested in organic wool production:

- manage shearing, marking and lambing so that you avoid times of possible flystrike: don't mark or mules in mid March or mid October
- be aware that wool which is well nourished and contains a higher grease content is less likely to retain moisture and so less likely to attract flies
- sell-off in dry times rather than spend money and time on hand feeding. The low stocking rate in the rangelands is a benefit in dry times
- get the most benefit from your paddocks by rotational grazing where possible and carefully monitoring the feed in each paddock. Mitchell grass, old man saltbush, bluebush and other native grasses supply most of the feed at Keelambara's rangeland paddocks
- be aware that sheep need access to as many watering points as possible to minimise grazing pressure
- if you cell graze, plan to have enough paddocks so that pastures recover before further grazing
- discuss the state of old sheep yards and shearing sheds with your certifier before you commit to organic production. You may have to remove dust from an old shearing shed (to remove traces of arsenic) and you may have to remove topsoil from sheep yards and cover with a road base if residual chemicals are in the soil.

Don says that the records and other paperwork necessary for certification, although time consuming, are part of good management practice for any enterprise.

## WOOL PROCESSING

Craig French is the Export Manager–Wooltops at Fletcher International Exports Pty. Ltd at Dubbo, the only wool processor in Australia now that others have closed or moved offshore. It follows that they are also the only processor of organic wool in Australia. The company is certified by NASAA for organic wooltop processing and also for slaughtering, boning and packing organic meat.

Figure 72: Typical Certificate of Registration for a processor

There are currently about 50 organic wool (and meat) suppliers to Fletchers but more have indicated an interest in changing to organic production.

Craig believes that the future for organic wool is in a niche market for clients who:

- want a textile free from artificial chemicals in all stages of production: growing, processing and storage. Customers could include people who seek chemical-free products for babies and children and people with allergies to chemicals
- prefer bedding (blankets, doona) free from artificial chemicals
- are interested in the environment and value the philosophy of organic production
- seek cosmetic products based on organic lanolin.

**NASAA CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION**

<b>RELEVANT STANDARD:</b> NASAA Organic Standard	<b>RELEVANT ACCREDITOR:</b> Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS)/International Organic Accreditation Services (IOAS)
<b>CERTIFIED LICENSEE:</b>  Fletcher International Exports Pty Ltd Trading as: Fletcher International Exports Pty Ltd Locked Bag 10 DUBBO NSW 2830 AUSTRALIA ABN: 64 003 213 652	<b>IOAS ACCREDITED</b>
<b>NASAA Certification Number: 2554P</b>	
<b>Products / Processes</b>	<b>Level of Certification</b>
Sheep (Lanolin Grade A)	Certified Organic
Processing of certified organic wool (Scouring - Wool Tops Grade A)	Certified Organic
Slaughtering, boning and packing of certified organic meat (Sheep)	Certified Organic

Issue Date: 03 March 2008 Valid until: 16 November 2008  
This certificate is linked to the above license and is valid until the stated expiry date unless certification is suspended or revoked or defined by NASAA. It is not intended as a commercial or transaction document and remains the property of NASAA and shall be returned to NASAA when certification ceases.

*Brad Neth*  
Operations Manager - "Bird Nest"

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NASAA  
CERTIFIED ORGANIC

Certificate Number: C018502008

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Craig has advice for anyone interested in growing organic wool:

- stay in touch with your processor. The processor is in touch with spinners who, in turn, are in touch with customers. This is the chain of communication that gives customers confidence in the product. A *certificate of compliance* is sent to buyers
- growers who have a production problem can usually find a solution. For example, burred wool could be separated out at the wool shed and sold separately on the conventional market

Figure 73: Flowchart for organic wool processing

The special procedures for processing organic wool are

- use of a natural detergent, approved by the certifier
- removing conventional wool from all parts of the plant where organic wool is stored or processed
- cleaning of all parts of the plant where organic wool is stored or processed
- storing and labelling the organic wool in its special area
- placing signs in the plant to clearly state *processing organic wool*
- supplying the certifier with a list of all the organic wool processed and the quantity of each lot
- keeping all relevant documentation.

