



Adopting blockchain technology to sell ethical wool to high-end brands

Australian Ethical Merino Growers Co-Op launches

MITTAGONG, NSW, AUSTRALIA, March 30, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Australian [Ethical Merino](#) Growers embrace [blockchain](#) direction

This week a start-up Merino wool growers co-operative will start inviting ethically-minded producers to join its ranks, with the launch of its website. From the end of April it will take delivery of the world's first blockchain traceability platform dedicated to premium merino wool fibre.

Blockchain technology has come of age just this year, used for everything from financial transactions in the form of secure Bitcoin to tracing dolphin-free tuna right along the supply chain – but not yet in wool.

The intention is to brand the best wool as ethically produced and in the process attract a premium but to do there must be secure traceback of data from paddock to processor, ultimately visible with just a wave of the consumer's smart phone.

Wool producers can use this open platform technology, an integral part of the farm-management software called MyOrigins, and the Ethical Merino Growers co-operative is encouraging anyone in the industry to lift their transparency and show the world how they grow wool.

Elite Merino product - at a premium price - comes with ethical demands, like a ban on mulesing. Only suppliers who can tick the right boxes according to their end consumers can gain access to this top-end market.

Michael Taylor, the sixth generation on-farm at "The Hill" via Kentucky, was an early adopter of the co-operative idea. He is part of a family that has long embraced ethical production. In fact the family's practice of regenerative farming through planting trees rates a mention in Charles Massy's book, "The Reed Warbler".

"I like to think in the longer term," Mr Taylor says. "It's in the interest of future generations. Seven years on the board of Southern New England Landcare gave me a good understanding of the concerns farmers are facing on the ethical and environmental front. I have a commitment to industry and community. This is about more than just my property."

Closer towards Uralla, Gostwyck is also an early adopter of ethical merino branding and will use it to enhance their already successful brand of next to skin woolen babywear.

"Gostwyck, which produces 15 micron wool, ceased mulesing in 2005 and began traceability in 2007," said owner, Philip Attard. "Our sheep are far better now in terms of flystrike. We change paddocks for grazing twice a week and our flock don't get the chance to go to a sheep camp. Plain bodied sheep also come into it. And as a result our pasture is better with the rotational grazing. It rebounds after drought."

Working together to attract markets

“Developing blockchain traceability is about the same cost as creating a proprietary software, except that with blockchain the doors are open to the exchange of data, and building trust in the provenance,” says Andrew Ross, Bowral, who secured a federal grant from the Farming Together initiative, based out of Southern Cross University at Lismore.

Experienced in branding his own superfine merino wool under the Bluey Merino (www.blueymerino.com) label Mr Ross discovered a wealth of ethical supply in Australia but no central pool that appreciated it or marketed the Australian story, the world's largest grower of apparel wool.

“I found getting ethical supply was no problem,” he said. “There’s 3000 registered growers in Australia. But I felt the rest were missing an opportunity to export the whole story. My aspiration was to build a supply chain enabled by digital traceability.” New supply chains need to be built and that's the best way to access this supply of ethical fibres from Australia.

Visit: www.ethicalmerinogrowers.com.au

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