



## DAVE'S DAIRY

*Stock Journal, 29 February 1968*

We had 140 points of rain the last few days and I am having a worrying time trying to make up my mind as to whether I am glad or sorry about it.

In normal years I don't like summer rains because they spoil the dry feed, but there is no dry feed to spoil this year, at least not on our place, so it won't do much harm in that regard.

On the other hand, there is no dry feed to shelter the seedlings that may germinate with this rain and this means that we have to have a rain about every three weeks to keep the seedlings going, and the chances of getting this from now on, I suppose, are fairly remote.

Anyway, it's no good worrying about it.

It's quite certain that if I end up cursing or blessing the rain, it won't make any difference to the final outcome.

We are sowing barley on some of the ground we have worked up and this is a big adventure for me to undertake at this time of the year.

As I put each bag of barley into the combine I can't help wondering whether it wouldn't be better to feed it to the sheep rather than to cast my bread on the waters in this way.

It certainly seems a long shot to expect to get much feed off barley sown in February.

On the other hand, when you are as short of feed as I am, you haven't much choice.

In my mind I can see potato weed germinating everywhere and the anxiety I expressed a couple of weeks ago looks as if it is going to be justified.

Apart from my anxiety about whether the rain is a good thing or a bad thing, I am having a pretty worrying time wondering about the Merino ram embargo.

I noticed in the farming press the Australian Wool Industry Conference was coming round to having a look at this problem and so I have been turning it over in my muddled old mind.

You will remember that when Clarkson was a back bencher he used to sound off every now and again, saying he thought the embargo was rather silly.

He used to do this particularly when he had come back from overseas having seen the effort being made by Russian and American scientists to breed quite good, fine wool Merino type sheep.

Of course, since old Clarkson has been made a Minister, he has got to keep his mouth shut about things like this in the same way as he has to keep his mouth shut about tariffs.

So it is no good looking to him for the kind of leadership that you would expect from a man in his position.

I have been examining the subject of my own account and I must admit I have reluctantly got to agree the Merino embargo is doing Australia more harm than good.

The embargo started during the depression in the 1930's and it seemed to have two objects at that stage.

One way that it was felt the price of wool could be raised if the supply of good quality, fine wool could be diminished

One way of doing this would be to prevent our competitors in South Africa and the Argentine and similar countries from getting access to fine wool sheep and fine wool blood.

The other argument for the embargo was to prevent the price of Merino rams from getting too high.

Well, dealing with the last question first, one thing I would hate is to pay high prices for my flock rams.

But I don't think for a minute this would be the result of lifting the embargo, particularly if it were lifted gradually.

It seems to me the overseas market would be for top stud rams and I can't imagine our top studs going to part with their top reserve rams, no matter what the overseas demand.

If it is going to increase the demand for top stud sale rams and make these more expensive, I think this would give a shot in the arm to the Merino stud breeding industry in a way that would lead to the production of better flock rams, which are the ones I am particularly interested in.

The argument the supply of more fine wool would depress the market went out of fashion years ago.

After all, synthetics stand ready and able to fill any vacuum in the supply and I would have thought it would do the wool industry good, generally, to have more good quality fine wool to compete with synthetics.

Of course I am not an authority on this, but I notice this is the general opinion of the Wool Board and I have never heard anybody argue against it.

I will be very interested to see how the Wool Industry Conference tackles this matter.

I can't help feeling rather petulant with old Clarkson, who, at a time like this has got to sit around with pursed lips while the rest of us have got to nut out problems which he really ought to do something about.

But I suppose the government has the excuse that, if the wool industry cannot make up its mind on this question, it is unreasonable to expect the government to grasp the nettle.