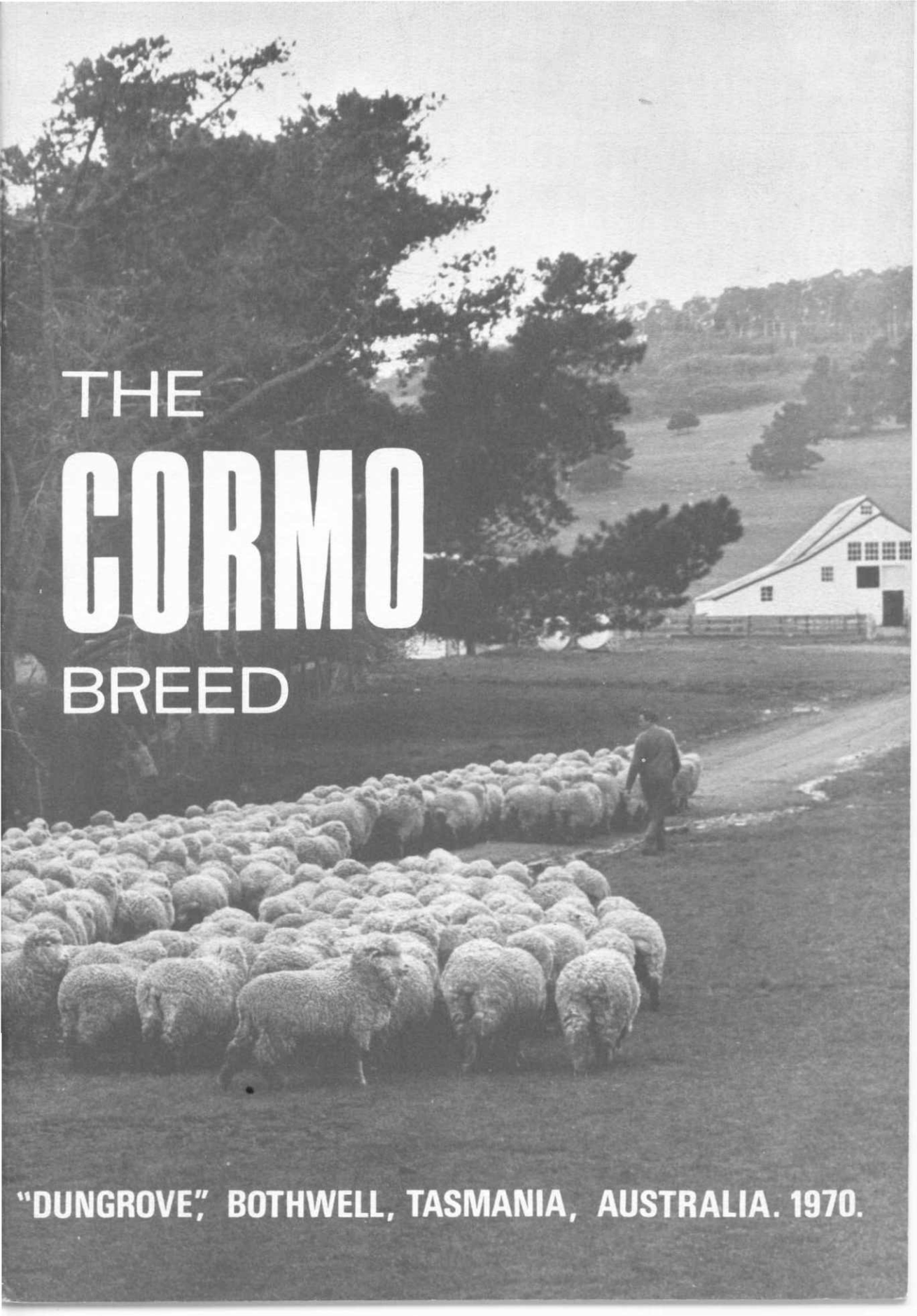

THE CORMO BREED

"DUNGROVE," BOTHWELL, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA. 1970.

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

The development of a new breed of sheep requires not only the application of scientific methods of selection, but also the exercise of considerable patience and perseverance. Mr I.K. Downie is to be commended on having devoted the last ten years to the development of the Cormo breed. Although officers of my Department have been associated with this project, it has been due to Mr Downie's initiative and enthusiasm that the breed has evolved to its present state.

The Cormo was developed by mating Corriedale rams with Superfine Saxon Merino ewes and by maintaining a rigid selection to obtain the desired characters. The Cormo has proved most successful in the environment in which it was bred, and seems likely to be an effective breed for use in many other areas.

E. W. Beattie

(E. W. Beattie)
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

CORMO CHARACTERISTICS

WOOL — Quality 60s–64s, well crimped, dense bright, soft and white.

CONFORMATION — Large, plain–bodied, fast–growing sheep with open faces.

FERTILITY — Twinning encouraged and a high percentage of lambs weaned.

THRIFT — The sheep thrive in country where snowfalls are common in winter and early spring. The wethers are able to work bush country and grow dense fleeces which keep out dirt and remain white.

At the Australian National Fleece Competition judging in October 1970, two CORMO fleeces, not specially prepared, gained second and third placings in the fine come-back wool section. These fleeces were selected from the general flock by the classer at shearing.

WHY T

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WHY THE CORMO?

DEVELOPMENT of the CORMO breed on scientific lines dates from 1960. 'Dungrove' at that time carried a flock of pure Saxon Merinos which had a low cut, a slow growth rate and a low lambing percentage.

A land development scheme was begun on the property and this necessitated a big increase in sheep numbers. The need was recognised for a sheep with a high wool cut, a fast growth rate and a high level of fertility.

With the help of Mr. B.C. Jeffries, then Senior Sheep and Wool Officer of the Department of Agriculture, it was decided to cross Corriedale rams with the Saxon Merino ewes and to fix the progeny as a distinct type.

THIS DECISION HAS SINCE BEEN VINDICATED BY RESULTS AT "DUNGROVE" AND SUPPORTED BY EXPERIMENTS ELSEWHERE.

Hybrid vigour trials at "Beaufront", Ross, Tasmania, and at Condobolin, NSW, have clearly shown that the Corriedale ram–Merino ewe cross produces a better sheep than the Merino ram–Corriedale ewe cross.

"Dungrove" is currently (1970) carrying 20,000 CORMOS and in 1969 produced 641 bales of fine wool. Ten years previously, wool production was 268 bales from 8,800 sheep.

FOUNDATION OF THE NEW BREED

Stud Corriedale rams from "Fairfield", Cressy (Tas.) were crossed with 1,200 superfine Merino ewes descended from the parent superfine Saxon Merino stud at "Winton", Campbell Town (Tas.).

The resultant progeny that met the required standards were used to form a ram breeding flock. This was a flock closed to the introduction of rams from outside but established within a larger flock of the same type of sheep.

SELECTION WAS, AND STILL IS, BASED SOLELY ON MEASURED PRODUCTION AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS.

The structure of the ram breeding flock was based on the results of scientific work done by Miss Helen Newton-Turner of the C.S.I.R.O., Division of Animal Genetics, and by Drs. R.B. Dun and F.H.W. Morley, formerly of the Trangie Research Station, N.S.W. Department of Agriculture.

This work showed that a closed flock of 400 or more ewes, mated naturally with 4–5% of rams that were used for only two years, would give maximum genetic progress with a minimum of inbreeding.

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THE BREEDING PROGRAMME

Since the CORMO breeding programme began, "Dungrove" has maintained a small ram breeding flock within the main commercial flock. Ram replacements come only from the ram breeding flock; ewe replacements can come from the total drop of CORMO progeny.

The principles followed are:

RAMS – All sires are bred within the ram breeding flock which comprises at least 400 selected ewes. The rams are culled rigorously for all economic faults. Samples of wool from those remaining are sent to a wool laboratory. When the results of the laboratory tests are known, a final selection is made on:

1. Clean fleece weight
2. Fibre diameter (microns)
3. Growth rate
4. Type of birth – single or twin (twins preferred)

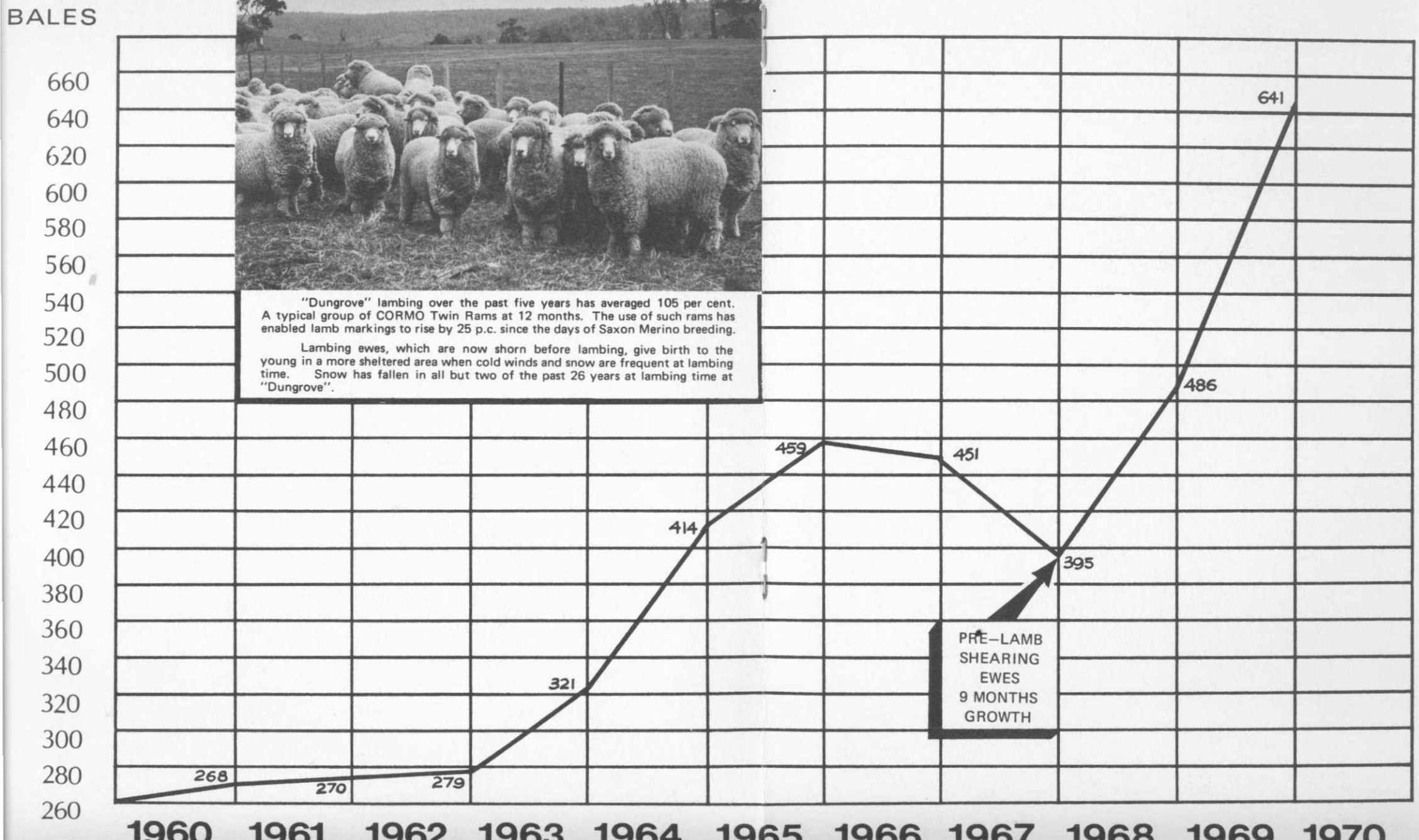
EWES – all ewes, whether they are born in the ram breeding flock or the commercial flock, are culled for obvious economic faults. At the hogget shearing, all those remaining are fleece-weighed. Only those that meet the prescribed standards are retained. Only the top ewe hoggets go into the ram breeding flock no matter into which flock they were born.

Inbreeding is kept to a minimum because the original flock was large enough to reduce the chance of matings between close relatives. In addition, 4 to 5% of rams are used in the ram breeding flock. All sires are used for only two years so that genetically superior rams can enter the ram breeding flock as soon as possible.

PROGRESSIVE RESULTS IN SUMMARY

"Dungrove" lambing over the past five years has averaged 105 per cent. A typical group of CORMO Twin Rams at 12 months. The use of such rams has enabled lamb markings to rise by 25 p.c. since the days of Saxon Merino breeding.

Lambing ewes, which are now shorn before lambing, give birth to the young in a more sheltered area when cold winds and snow are frequent at lambing time. Snow has fallen in all but two of the past 26 years at lambing time at "Dungrove".



MANAGEMENT

The ram breeding and commercial flocks run together under the same conditions. This means that all the rams are born and bred under conditions in which their progeny will live.

No sheep are housed, rugged or given preferential feeding. This avoids the risk that defects will be hidden by special care.

Ewes are shorn before lambing in early spring and then set-stocked with minimum attention until weaning.

The present stocking rate (1970) is 5.5 dry sheep equivalents per acre which is high for the Bothwell district. This has slightly lowered the wool cut per head but increased the cut per acre.

FREEDOM FROM DISEASE

Tasmania, Australia's island State, is completely free from all major stock diseases.

Contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia, foot and mouth disease, Rinderpest, Sheep Scab, Sheep Pox, Scrapie, Bluetongue and Anthrax are non existent.

According to the State Department of Agriculture there is an extremely low incidence of three other diseases – Ovine Brucellosis, Footrot and Hydatidosis. In each cases a sustained eradication programme is well advanced.

All stud flocks from which rams are sold are free from Ovine Brucellosis.

*** MAIDEN EWES AT 14 MONTHS**

"DUNGROVE"

HOME OF THE CORMO BREED

"Dungrove", one of Tasmania's larger "highland" properties, is owned by Mr. I.K. Downie. It is in the Bothwell district, approximate latitude 42°S, and about 2,000 feet above sea level.

The property comprises 3,700 acres of improved pasture, 2,000 acres of native grazing land and 5,500 acres of medium to heavily timbered land. There are 48 paddocks and 14 runs.

Climatic conditions, by Tasmanian standards, can be severe. The Winters are cold and frosty and the Summers dry. Spasmodic snowfalls occur in Winter and early Spring. **RAINFALL AVERAGES 21 INCHES A YEAR, BUT THE PROPERTY HAS PERMANENT SPRINGS.**

In 1969, "Dungrove" won State and regional awards in a Tasmania-wide stock feeding competition. This is a contest in which points are awarded for the quality and management of pastures, forage crops and conserved fodders and in which the judges also consider how the use of these feeds is reflected in the condition of the stock.

Surplus cull CORMO ewes from "Dungrove" topped the annual sheep sales at Oatlands (Tas.) in 1969 and 1970. Seasonal record prices were obtained.

CORMO at home.

The Cormo is achieving widespread popularity among Tasmanian wool producers as indicated by this map.

CORM

Early in 1970 seven CORMO rams were consigned to Mr. J. Blake's Estancia, "Condor", Rio Gallegos, Argentine. The rams are being used for artificial insemination in a ram breeding flock which provides sires for the property's 65,000 Corriedale breeding ewes.

In April and May of 1970 Mr. and Mrs. I.K. Downie made an extensive visit to South America.

They saw at first hand modern production breeding methods used in South America.

Mr Downie is pictured (right) with four of the Cormo rams at "Condor".

Produced by Eric White Associates
Hobart, Tasmania.

Printed by
Mercury-Walch

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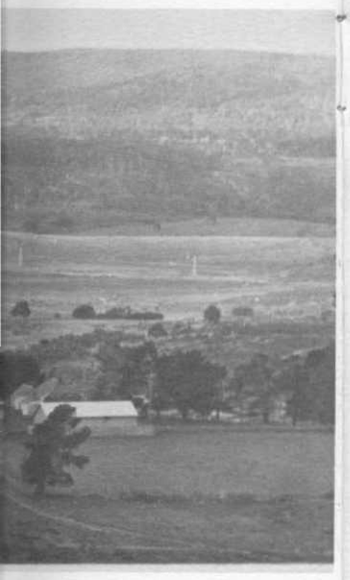

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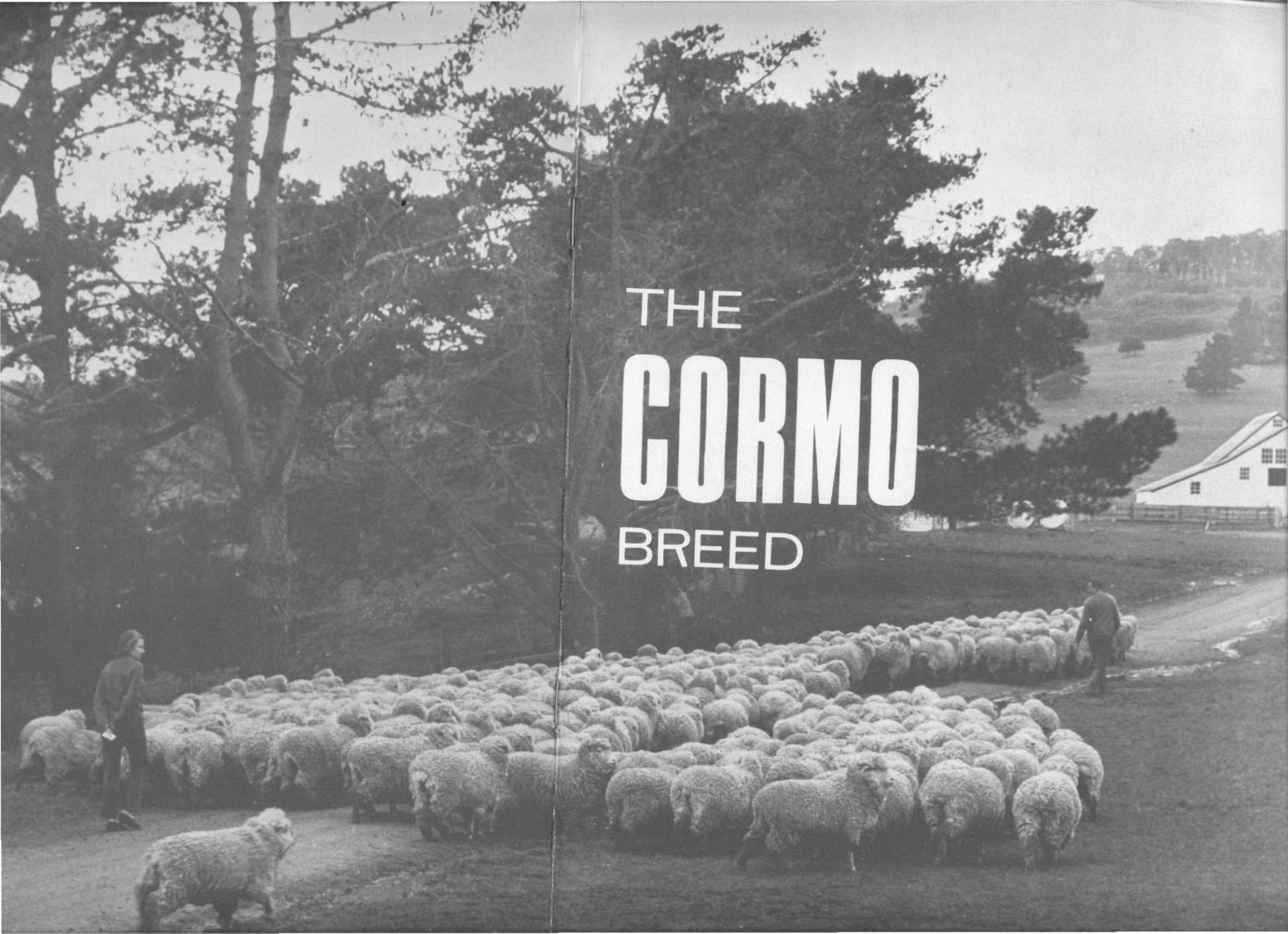

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