2018 Analysis Changes

The LAMBPLAN and MERINOSELECT analyses are continually being developed to improve the genetic evaluation and supply the best tools possible to producers aiming to help improve genetic gain across the sheep industry. Major updates to the Sheep Genetics analyses are implemented once a year to minimise any disruption that may result from the changes. This year there have been a number of smaller improvements, enhancing the large changes that have occurred over the past two years. It is important to understand the enhancements made to the analysis and why you may have seen changes to the ASBVs of your animals. All updates detailed below are to be implemented to MERINOSELECT on the 21st of April and LAMBPLAN on the 1st of May 2018.

Updated Solver Software

To ensure Sheep Genetics is able to maintain the 2 week turn-around period from a run date, updated solver software will be implemented as part of the 2018 analysis changes. The new software has significantly reduced run times and assisted in processing the increasing amount of data coming into the system. In particular, there has been an increasing number of genotypes submitted (with more than 5000 new genotypes coming into the system between October 2017 and March 2018 alone for both Merinos and Terminals). Breeders can expect little no changes to their breeding values as a result of the implementation of the new solver software.

Research Breeding Values for Visual Traits in Dohnes

Currently ASBVs for visual traits are produced for MERINOSELECT. Visual traits can be submitted to Sheep Genetics when they are measured using the visual score guide created by AWI and MLA. Previously Dohne flocks have not had access to breeding values for visual traits due to a lack of records within the Dohne analysis. Recently the number of measurements in the Dohne database for Breech Cover (BCOV) and Dag Score (DAG) have enough records within the Dohne database from industry to produce Research Breeding Values or RBVs. These two traits will now be reported as RBVs when the analyses are updated. It is anticipated that the reporting of these RBVs will promote more widespread recording of the traits among flocks. To find out more on how to visually score the two traits refer to the Visual Sheep Scores Guide. It is important to note that these visual scores produced for Dohnes CANNOT be compared directly with the ASBVs from the MERINOSELECT analysis and will be displayed and reported as RBVs.

Standardisation of the Genomic Relationship Matrix for WEC and Visual Traits

As part of this year’s analysis changes there have been improvements made to use the same genomic information across all analyses. Previously some genotyped animals were in the main analysis but not in the WEC and visual traits sub-analyses. Now however, all genotyped animals have been included in all analyses. It is important to note although that there has been little change to the flock means or trends for these traits however there has been some movement of individual animals. Any breeder that has had major movements in ASBVs for these traits will be contacted by Sheep Genetics.

Maternal$ Index Changes

Updates have been implemented to the maternal$ index given industry feedback. The index now has AWT included with a lessor restriction compared to MCP+ and BLX. A detailed document explaining the changes has been sent to all maternal breeders and can also be found on our website under Resources> Brochures and fact sheets.