

SHEEP GENETICS SUBSCRIBER SURVEY

A survey was sent to all current subscribers to Sheep Genetics in July 2007. A total of 627 surveys were distributed with 98 or 16% returned as at the 25th of October 2007. A summary of the results of those returned are as follows. Please note that where the results do not add to 100%, surveys were returned without answers for those questions.

General Information						
1. What type of Breeder are you?	Terminal	Maternal	Merino	Goat	Other	
	52%	15%	30%	0%	2%	
2. What is the size of your flock?	0-50	50-100	100-300	300-600	600+	
	4%	8%	33%	22%	32%	
3. What is your preferred method of communication?	Phone	Fax	Email	Internet	Mail	
	13%	2%	58%	5%	23%	
4. What is your preferred method for receiving reports?	Mail	Email	Internet	Genetic Advisor	Other	
	24%	56%	19%	1%	0%	
5. Do you use the Sheep Genetics, LAMBPLAN, MERINOSELECT and or KIDPLAN Website/s?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	
	1%	35%	37%	19%	8%	
6. Do you use the web search engine?	Yes	No	Yes	No		
	68%	30%				
7. Do you advertise your sale animals/semen on the web catalogue?	Yes Sale	No Sale	Yes Semen	No Semen		
	6%	78%	13%	59%		

The common theme in the comments is summed up in this example: 'When you use the ASBV enquiries page to search for an animal the ASBV table has too many columns most of which don't appear when printed. Surely a print friendly page can be designed that includes all details for an animal'.

This section refers to the service and products provided by Sheep Genetics.

Products & Services					
	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree		
8. Staff members can be contacted easily	26%	36%	20%	12%	4%
9. Requests are dealt with in a timely manner	28%	41%	15%	10%	5%
10. The products and services offered suit my needs	20%	41%	19%	15%	2%
11. Reports provided can be interpreted without difficulty	27%	44%	14%	10%	3%
12. Resource material supplied is adequate	13%	42%	30%	12%	0%
13. ASBVs help me to achieve my breeding objectives	37%	39%	9%	7%	6%
14. ASBVs are an effective marketing tool	28%	32%	26%	8%	4%

15. ASBVs are used to assist in making joining decisions	39%	40%	8%	4%	7%
16. ASBVs are used routinely by my clients to purchase rams or ewes	11%	40%	24%	14%	8%
17. Would you like to attend an advanced genetics 2 day workshop next year?	Yes	72%	No	17%	? 7%
18. Would you be willing to travel interstate for this workshop?	Yes	32%	No	62%	? 4%

Comment: 'Generally quiet good. It is a good system, it just needs commercial producers to understand the system. But keep it simple'.

The next section refers to the publications produced by Sheep Genetics.

Publications	E x c e l l e n t				
	Poor	Good			
19. Please rate the Breeders Bulletin	2%	8%	43%	34%	4%
20. Please rate the monthly updates	3%	11%	36%	28%	5%
21. Please rate the Breeder's Guide	1%	11%	32%	33%	8%
22. Please rate the QA Manual	5%	9%	37%	23%	5%
23. Please rate the Communications Kit for Ram Breeders	2%	8%	33%	31%	6%
24. Please rate the Introduction to LAMBPLAN	1%	6%	20%	35%	5%
25. Please rate the Introduction to MERINOSELECT	2%	2%	17%	20%	4%
26. Please rate the Understanding LAMBPLAN/Maternal/MERINOSELECT ASBVs	2%	7%	26%	36%	9%
27. Please rate the Lambing Data Entry Book	5%	5%	20%	11%	2%

Generally the comments were that subscribers had not seen some of the publications, thus the high number of no responses.

Apart from material supplied by Sheep Genetics, from where else do you source genetic information?

Please indicate more than one if necessary:

34%	State rural press weekly publications	12%	Stock & Station agents or Brokers
34%	Scientific Journals and other publications	20%	Consultants
41%	Internet sites	20%	Department of Agriculture
12%	Email subscriptions / mailing lists	05%	Peak bodies / lobby groups
39%	Breed societies	62%	Fellow Breeders
08%	Other (CRC, AWI, MLA, Benchmarking Group, I sell 5000 lamb carcasses to consumers a year this is my most valuable resource, Industry field days Sheep flock improvement Otario, Canada, University extension, Superior sires, Sheep CRC).		

This section refers to the accredited scanners, Data Managers and Genetic advisors.

Service Providers						E x c e l l e n t
	Poor		Good			
28. Please rate the service provided by your scanner.	1%	0%	7%	41%	36%	
29. Please rate the service provided by your data manager.	2%	1%	10%	22%	16%	
30. Please rate the service provided by your Genetic Advisor.	0%	3%	8%	16%	5%	
31. Please rate the software that you use * Pedigree Wizard	2%	5%	19%	33%	11%	
Please rate the software that you use Stockbook	0%	10%	30%	60%	0%	
Please rate the software that you use Woolpak	8%	25%	25%	33%	8%	
Please rate the software that you use Macrostud	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	
Please rate the software that you use Ewebyte	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	

* Please note that 59 respondents used Pedigree Wizard, 5 used Stockbook, 6 used Woolpak, 1 used Macrostud and 1 used Ewebyte.

This section refers to DNA Technology.

DNA Technology						E x c e l l e n t
	Poor		Good			
32. Have you ever used a DNA Technology (DNA parentage or performance markers)?	Yes	34%	No	61%	?	0%
33. If no, do you think you will use DNA technology in the future?	Yes	53%	No	9%	?	6%
34. If yes, what was your experience in terms of service and information produced?	5%	7%	11%	12%	2%	

What are the best features of Sheep Genetics?

- Underlying technology is superb.
- Fast turnaround on data.
- Service orientated staff
- Tool for objective improvement
- Opportunities to network

Where are the opportunities for improvement?

- To retain breeders after starting with the program SGA MUST get more people in the field to assist people with their data management and understanding.
- Encourage ram sales to allow presentations of ASBVs. For example, Hamilton multi-vendor ram sale has not allowed presentation of genetic data.

What would help you to achieve maximum benefit from Sheep Genetics?

- More superfine/ultrafine breeders involved for comparison & identification of potential sires & genetic links. Development of ASBVs for style traits and indices that include style traits – suitable for 'high end' apparel wool producers.
- Better education of commercial producers, Stock agents and rural reporters.

Please make any general comments/suggestions here

- More effort need to go into educating the next generation of sheep producers as to the value of ASBVs and their uses. In areas where cropping is trendy a real effort is needed. As a stud we need a lot more support and hands on from the industry e.g. MLA, lamb buyers and processors who see the benefits of better genetics
- My biggest concern with the whole system is those that abuse it. I hear often of people who are doing very dishonest things and then saying "LP doesn't work". People only entering a percentage of their lambs, people not grouping sheep properly and people not being honest about the sire of lambs (i.e. putting out two rams with a mob of ewes and dividing the progeny in half). And as a result of this sort of thing, you buy a young sire and after you enter his lambs his index can drop 30 points, many honest people are hurt by this and then they say LP is no good. Just recently I felt hurt that because I enter all my lambs it can be hard to keep a gold ranking if I sell some off as culls whereas someone not entering all their lambs then culling some can remain gold ranked. I feel it is a very good system and has great potential for helping the sheep industry and I do sincerely hope people will start using it properly.
- Needs more funds applied to R&D projects. Needs across breed maternals ASAP. Needs across breed all.
- Commercial ram buyers still find it hard to believe the system works. Perhaps they need more proof put out there in front of them e.g. trial results etc again and again - much more evidence that stud breeders cannot cheat with their data.
- The friendliness and help given by the staff is amazing especially those who are in the office. It can't be easy making breeders feel less than silly.
- I am happy with the results of LP - frustrating when rams tend to lose C+ ratings - but that is genetics