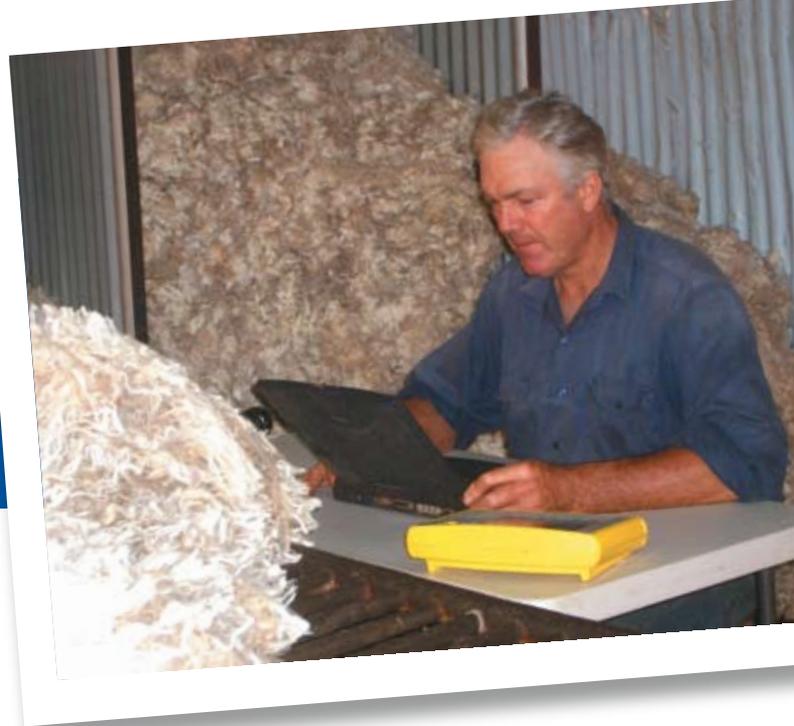




# ERROL & CANDY BRUMPTON'S WELL GULLY MERINO STUD

MITCHELL, QUEENSLAND



Commercial clients of Errol and Candy Brumpton's Well Gully Merino Stud may not ask for Australian Sheep Breeding Value (ASBV) figures when they buy rams, but the figures have been crucial in producing the product.

Errol said his clients are aware that he uses trait leaders in his breeding program to produce the best rams to suit their breeding objectives.

"Producers need as much help as they can get in choosing the most efficient animals and MERINOSELECT is a tool to help us achieve that," Errol said.

*"It gives the client more confidence they will obtain the trait they need to improve profitability in their flock."*

"If people are trying to produce finer wool, I'll use the FD (fibre diameter) ASBV to help select the best ram. If someone is concerned with growth rates, I'll find a ram with a positive figure for yearling weight to produce sheep that mature quickly in their environment.

"This data is a measure of genetic prepotency allowing a positive predictability of the offspring.

"It gives the client more confidence they will obtain the trait they need to improve profitability in their flock."

The Brumptons registered Well Gully Merinos in 1988. They now run 2500 stud Merino ewes on their 2600 hectare property at Mitchell in south west Queensland, producing 18.2 micron wool on sheep growing a clean fleece weight that is 10 per cent of their body weight,

aiming for -0.5 to 0.5 fat ASBV to help reproduction. About 700 rams are sold privately each year.

Although the stud was registered in 1988, Errol has data dating back to 1974 when he started performance recording his first stud sheep.

"I had always measured micron, fleece weight and weaning weights and there were always sheep making double the average and sheep making half in dollars per head and this is a quicker way to eliminate that bottom half," he said. "The traditional way of keeping records involved a lot of paper work, which made analysis very difficult.

Well Gully was one of the first 50 Merino studs to participate in the Merino Validation Project where the aim was to improve knowledge of genetic relationships between wool, meat, reproduction and disease traits in Merinos.

This involvement led Errol to participate in MERINOSELECT and he began lodging data in 2002. He entered his first set of data for fat and eye muscle depth in 2003. "It is much quicker to collect the information these days and the wider range of measurements recorded now means we can push the boundaries of breeding even further."

The Brumptons use All-flex electronic tags (tagging 2300 lambs last November) and collect weights with the Tru-Test XR 3000. This information is downloaded onto a laptop that night.

A contractor scans eye muscle and fat depth and this information is currently entered alongside each lamb's details in the software.

Each electronic tag can be scanned with a reading wand and the information is displayed on the laptop.

"It is an added workload but will be essential for the future of sheep breeding. Faster genetic gains can only be made out of full pedigree data collection. We cannot afford to concentrate solely on the male and ignore the worth of the female in reproduction.

"We've selected future sires for AI that are trait leaders.

"It's not a quick fix situation but we can see different animals now with separate traits and if you go about it diligently you will be able to breed an animal with all the requirements for your environment. That's been the biggest help of MERINOSELECT."

Errol says visual appraisal and MERINOSELECT data are of equal importance when selecting future sires for the Well Gully breeding program. Measurements are collected from birth and visual traits of body and breach wrinkle and pigmentation are assessed at the same time.

"The animal must meet your visual requirements but it's not the only element any more when you can now look up the pedigree to assess the breeding traits as well.

"Then you can assess which ewes he should be joined to."

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