

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Breeder's Bulletin

2016 is shaping up once again to be a busy year for Sheep Genetics. January saw staff visit various producers for the New England Merino Field days, Caris also attended train the trainer workshops for the National Merino Challenge and Bred Well Fed Well. February saw Hamish attending Meat Elite, Dorper AGM and the Dohne Council meetings.

March included White Suffolk conference in WA. It also saw Carcase Scanners convene in Armidale for the annual accreditation process, a list of the accredited scanners is included with this newsletter, if you haven't received one you can also access the list on the website under the service provider menu.

March also brought the end of Will Chaffey's time with Sheep Genetics. Will has been offered a position with Elders as the District Wool Manager for NSW Central West based out of Dubbo. Will has been an important part of our team over the last 14 months and will be missed for his dedication and passion for the industry, we wish him all the best for the future.

Sheep Genetics Regional Forums are planned for May and June, please see over the page for further details on locations, more info on these will be sent out in the following weeks.

RAMping Up Genetic Gain

RAMping up genetic gain is a joint project between Sheep Genetics, AGBU, NSW DPI, and Sheep CRC. The project objective is to develop a suite of tools that can provide insights into the performance of your breeding programs and the opportunities to improve rates of gain.

Tools that have been developed focus on what data is being collected, how effectively that data is being used in the analysis and then how well that information is being used to make selection decisions. The end goal of producing this information is ensuring that Sheep Genetics, service providers and breeders all have the ability to access simple information regarding the performance of their or their client's flocks.

The project has had a focus on using information that is currently produced by AGBU and Sheep Genetics, and will identify and highlight potential areas that can be improved. An interview and consultation process across both breeders and service providers has assisted in producing simple and easier to understand reports that we will be rolling out from July. A key benefit of using this approach is ensuring that what is produced meets your needs while being in a format that you can easily understand. If you are interested in being a part of the testing can you please contact the project leader Luke Stephen on luke.stephen@dpi.nsw.gov.au or 02 6770 1843.

The next stage of the project is to road test the reports with breeders to guarantee they are an easy and understandable way to help them improve their flock. The RAMping Up Genetic Gain reports will be the focus of the Sheep Genetics Service Provider workshop in May and the Regional Forums.

SHEEP GENETICS



Data Checklist - Ewe Management

As the joining period comes to an end for most it is important to consider ewe management and what that means for data management. Pregnancy scanning and ewe management were two key points of areas that need considering in the joining checklist published in the last *Breeders Bulletin*. Both Pregnancy scans and how ewes are managed from joining to lambing can now be submitted to Sheep Genetics and used more effectively in the analysis. It is essential to consider how animals have been managed and whether the management is reflected in the data that is submitted to Sheep Genetics.

Pregnancy Scanning

Lifetime ewe management practices recommend that ewes be pregnancy scanned at day 90 (from the start of joining) to identify multiple bearing ewes. Pregnancy scan results can be recorded and submitted to Sheep Genetics through the Mating Module in most software programs. Ewes scanned for multiple lambs contribute valuable information to the reproduction analysis, giving a measure of both fertility and litter size.

Previously a fictional DRY lamb was required to identify ewes that did not get in lamb. With the introduction of the *Mating Module*, breeders can now submit pregnancy scan information to identify dry ewes. To be included in the reproduction analysis Sheep Genetics still requires lambs that did not survive be identified with a dead at birth (DAB) ID.

Ewe Management and Lambing Groups

The management of pregnant ewes can have a huge impact on the performance of their lamb over its whole lifetime. Identifying and managing twin bearing ewes separately will give multiple born lambs a better chance to perform to their genetic potential and improve on farm productivity.

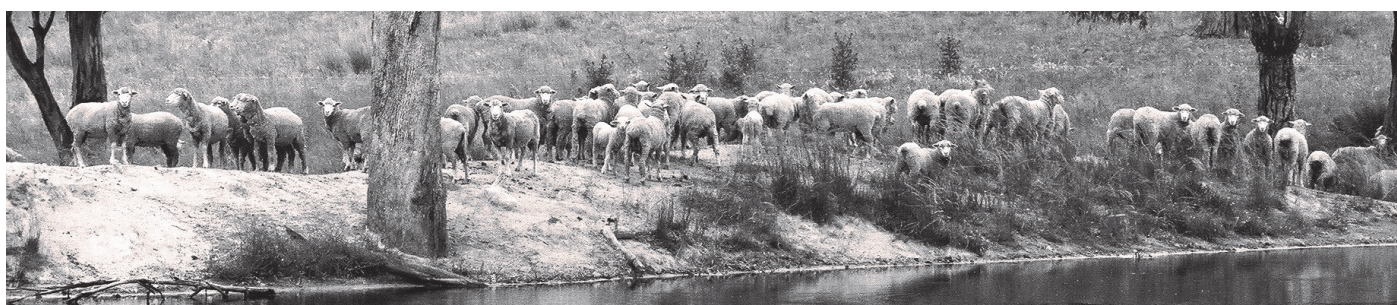
It is important to note that before the analysis is run Sheep Genetics adjust all animals to a level playing field. Including bringing animals that were born as a multiple to the performance they would have had if they were born as a single. When animals have been managed different for example, to account for the extra nutritional needs of ewes they need to be identified in the data submitted to Sheep Genetics. Submitting different management groups ensures that animals will be compared correctly and won't be adjusted twice through management practices and the OVIS analysis.

Ewes that have been managed differently through joining, pregnancy and lambing can also be recorded through your software's mating module. Ewe management groups can be added at any record taken and reflects the group the ewe was run in up until that record. Once there is a management difference between pregnant ewes it is essential that this is also reflected in the birth groups allocated to the lambs born.

Information on the management of ewes from joining to lambing can now be used in the analysis to more fairly compare animals and estimate lamb survival.

When managing your data consider how the ewes were run and ensure that any differences that will affect performance are identified by a different management group in your submission to Sheep Genetics.

Both mating modules and management groups will be addressed at the 2016 Regional Forums. To book into a forum near you contact info@sheepgenetics.org.au or phone 02 8055 1818.



Sheep Genetics Joining to Lambing Check List

✓ Enough linkage in the sire list

- Across flocks
- Across management groups in your flock
- Across years in your flock
- Linked for the traits in **your** breeding objective

✓ Ewe allocation is unbiased

- Record full pedigree where possible
- Randomly allocate ewes to sires where dam pedigree is not recorded

✓ Conception Method and use of drugs identified

- Conception method is recorded (1=natural, 2=ET, 3= AI etc)
- Any assistance from drugs is noted in software for future reference

✓ Syndicates/back-ups

- Back-ups are recorded
- Syndicates that are known have a sire ID including NAM
- **No more than 30%** of my flock are from a syndicate.

✓ Pregnancy scanning

- Pregnancy scanning is recorded
- Scanning for multiples is preferred
- Mating module information to be submitted to Sheep Genetics

✓ Ewe management and lamb groups

- Record difference in management of ewes during pregnancy
- Record difference in lambs performance due to management.
- Groups reflect differences in treatment up to the point that the record is taken.

Regional Forums

Regional Forums are a great way for breeders to keep up to date with what is happening in LAMBPLAN and MERINOSELECT and assist in understanding analysis changes that have been rolled out.

- 17/05/16 - Armidale NSW
- 19/05/16 - Young NSW
- 24/05/16 - Wodonga VIC
- 26/05/16 - Hamilton VIC
- 09/06/16 - Launceston TAS
- 21/06/16 - Adelaide SA
- 23/06/16 - Mt Gambier SA
- 26/07/16 - Williams WA

Please hold the dates, further information, agenda and registration details will be sent out in the next few weeks.

New Contact Details

Please note that Sheep Genetics moved office last September, new details are below:

General enquiries:

02 8055 1818

Fax:

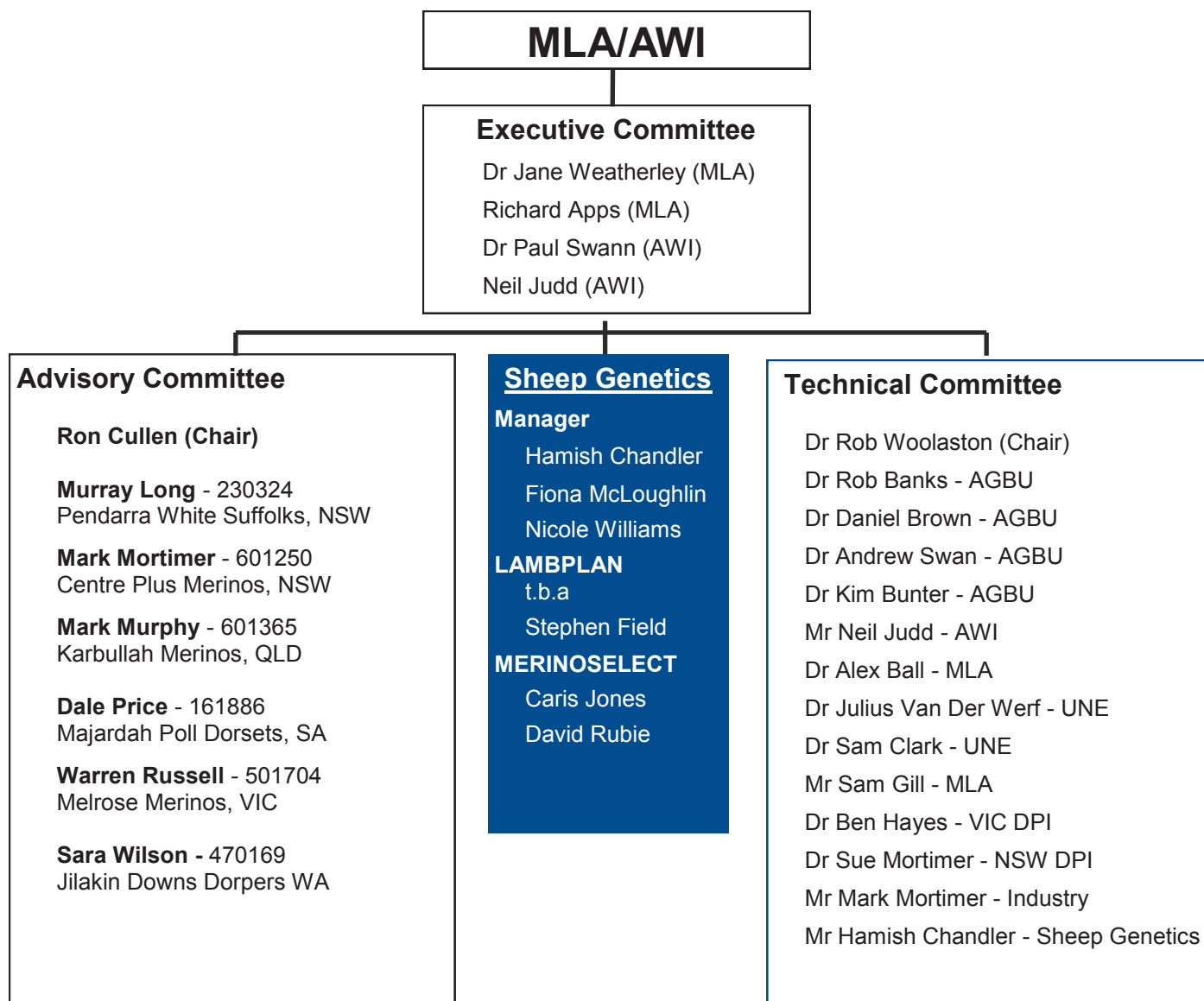
02 8055 1850

Address:

The Short Run,
UNE ARMIDALE NSW 2351

Please note that the old contact details will still appear on some publications, but will be updated as we reprint them.

Sheep Genetics Organisational Setup



**Sheep Genetics staff should always be
the initial contact point for all communication**

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