Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Breeders Bulletin

The lead in to the second half of the year is once again very busy for the Sheep Genetics team with a range of events on around Australia to help improve your genetic gain.

Regional Forums
Are being held over the months of June and July, these are a great opportunity for new and existing members to catch up with staff and go over issues in a small group setting. For breeders that are unable to make it to one of the five venues across Australia, we are going to record one of the sessions so that the information is accessible to all. More information on accessing this will be made available after the events.

Leading Breeder
As a quick recap of the beginning of the year, March saw the Leading Breeder forum run in Adelaide, this was a successful event with over 100 attendees. The fourth annual forum was the biggest and best event yet. We introduced Livestreaming so that breeders unable to attend could log in and watch the presentations suited to them. Later in this bulletin you will be able to read an overview of the presentations, they are linked to our website so you can view them at a time that suits you.

Service Provider Training
The annual Service Provider training was run at the start of May. This was an excellent opportunity for Service Providers to access staff and information, to ensure that they are utilising tools available to assist clients with ASBVs. A fantastic effort, with thanks going to the Sheep CRC for assisting in the organisation of such a great event. It was pleasing to see so many new faces amongst the group, and the obvious interest in ASBVs.

Scanner Accreditation
At the start of June we will have the Scanner Accreditation workshop, this year we are holding it in South Australia. Many thanks to Bill Close of Newbold stud for assisting us, providing both venue and animals to be scanned. The animals are first C.A.T scanned at the Roseworthy campus, and then scanned by each operator to check measurements and repeatability.

A requirement of Sheep Genetics is that all ultra-sound carcase data submitted is measured by an accredited scanner. Accredited scanners are independent operators contracted by breeders to measure C site fat and eye muscle depth. Sheep Genetics requires the use of an accredited scanner to ensure that data meets the QA guidelines.

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There is a list of currently accredited scanners on the Sheep Genetics website under the Service Provider menu.
Sheep Genetics conference encourages producers to prepare for the future

Some of Australia’s most progressive seedstock producers attended the Sheep Genetics Leading Breeder Conference in Adelaide in late March. The Sheep Genetics program delivers both the LAMBPLAN and MERINOSELECT Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) from a database of performance records from over 6.5 million animals.

Almost 100 dedicated clients of Sheep Genetics programs were provided an insight into what the future of the sheep industry might look like as well as new tools provided to help breeders increase their productivity and profitability. The producers were challenged by the presenting researchers, processors and service providers to consider how they might prepare their business to be ready for the introduction of new carcase measurements, continued productivity pressures and an increasing world of powerful data.

Dr Graham Gardner of Murdoch University introduced the group to new hyperspectral imaging technology recently received from Denmark which is showing promise to be able to collect eating quality measurements on carcases, primarily intramuscular fat (IMF). Dr Gardner was also able to show a sneak peek into the next generation of MSA for sheepmeat which combines both yield and eating quality.

David Rutley, Lamb Supply Chain Coordinator at local processor, Thomas Foods International followed with a processor perspective and encouraged the attendees to start making some decisions now to be prepared for the time when price signals around eating quality start being delivered along the value chain.

Dr Janelle Hocking Edwards of SARDI showcased the application of selection for eating quality and lean meat yield in the results of 20 producer demonstration sites. A strong message was conveyed to

MERINOSELECT Development Officer

Sheep Genetics would like to welcome Caris Jones on board as the MERINOSELECT Development Officer.

Caris is from a mixed farming property in the Central Wheatbelt of Western Australia, producing cereals and stud Merino and Poll Merinos. She studied agricultural science at the University of Western Australia and completed her honors on the impacts of improving feed-use efficiency on reproduction in Merino ewe lambs. During her time at university Caris gained experience in the sheep industry as a technician at a wool sampling lab as well as at an artificial breeding centre in Northam WA.

Since graduating, Caris has been working for Murdoch University in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and Food of Western Australia researching maternal efficiency, feed-use efficiency and methane production in Merinos.

She has been interested in the sheep industry for some time being actively involved in the combined use of ASBV’s and visual selection on the family’s stud flock. Her interests outside work include hockey, Aussie rules football and sheep.

Caris is excited to make the move to Armidale and experience the different sheep producing areas of Australia.
attendees about the significant antagonistic relationship between eating quality and lean meat yield (LMY). That is, placing pressure on selection for increasing LMY will result in a decrease in eating quality, a particularly important trait to ensure consumers continue to buy the end product. The good news for ram breeders and lamb producers alike is that new breeding values for eating quality traits enable producers to manage this important set of traits.

With the variable conditions in Australia over the past few years, Sam Walkom-Brown of AGBU presented research that suggested producers should think about developing a ‘robust’ ewe flock to increase profitability. This means selecting for animals, based on Numbers of Lambs Weaned (NBW) that can continue to produce under tough conditions. The reproduction theme continued with results from PhD student, Jo Newton showing promise for increases in productivity through reproduction in young ewes, under 12 months of age.

A new precision joining tool, Matesel was launched by Luke Stephen of NSW DPI. The tool aims to relieve producers of the time consuming process of working out joining regimes ‘on paper’. The resource, available after a series of training workshops in May, will enable Sheep Genetics clients to successfully manage inbreeding, identify their breeding objectives and maximise genetic gain.

Progressive Poll Merino and White Suffolk breeder of the New England, Martin Oppenheimer said, “I missed last year’s conference and afterwards realised how much I actually missed out on. This annual convention is so important in keeping on top of changes in the sheep genetics tools but also being on the front foot of understanding what’s coming towards our industry”.

Sheep Genetics Manager, Hamish Chandler was impressed with the engagement of the conference participants. “The presentations were successful in creating some really insightful and robust discussion. This is a great forum for our leading breeders, making sure they continue to be successful in their businesses and always on the front foot”, said Hamish.

Hamish said, “It is important for our breeders to realise that the importance eating quality isn’t going to wait another 5 years. Processors want to start using technology to measure eating quality as soon as possible and we now have the tools available to select animals for improved eating quality traits. Now is the time for our leading breeders to start including eating quality traits into their breeding programs to maintain the consumers opinion of lamb over coming years.”

“This was also a fantastic introduction to our newest members of the Sheep Genetics team, Will Chaffey and Caris Jones, both recently appointed, respectively as LAMBPLAN and MERINOSELECT development officers. They will be our coal face of Sheep Genetics providing grass roots support for our clients”.

The presentations were recorded and can be viewed at http://www.sheepgenetics.org.au/Resources/Leading-Breeder-2015

Promotional Material

Enclosed with this Bulletin is a series of new brochures that are available for breeders free of charge to assist in promoting ASBVs.

The brochure is small enough to be included in mail outs to clients, and designed that you only need to order the topics suited to your ram breeding enterprise. You can choose from:

- Carcass
- Wool
- Growth
- WEC
- Health
- Reproduction

You can find the link to order them on our website off the Brochures and Factsheets page.
Annual Survey

The annual survey was distributed via email on the 15/10/2014 and closed on the 07/11/2014, a summary of the results is detailed below. The full report can be found on the website.

Breeder Information

The breakdown of breed types shown here is representative of the LAMBPLAN and MERINOSELECT client base.

Sheep Genetics Website

As can be seen from the website questions, the majority of users were positive about the website for sourcing information, with 95% of LAMBPLAN and 87% of MERINOSELECT clients responding it was Excellent or Good. This is a pleasing response.

It is also great to see such high percentage of respondents have used the Animal search.
Annual Survey
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Breeder Information

It is a positive trend to see that the majority of both LAMBPLAN and MERINOSELECT are in Agreement over the use of ASBVs in their ram breeding enterprise.

There has been a definite increase in clients due to demand from their clients to supply ASBVs, but it is good to see that Ram Breeders are seeing the positive aspect flow through to their joining’s and for setting breeding objectives.

Submitting Data
All data should be submitted to the database email address. Sending a data file to a personal email address could mean that it is overlooked and not included for analysis.

Email address to use is: database@sheepgenetics.org.au
It is pleasing to see that the majority of respondents Strongly Agree and Agree that staff are approachable, friendly, helpful and patient.

From the results you can see that there is some room for improvement and a goal for the team to bring the Disagrees down, especially in the helpful and patient area.

It will be interesting to see if there is a different response at the end of 2015, with two new Development officers on board.

**Direct Deposit Payments**

Please remember to use your Customer Code in your payment reference, this helps us to identify and allocate payments correctly. E.g 300000 or 399999

You can also pay multiple invoices as one total payment.
Annual Survey

Sheep Genetics Products and Services - Events

Leading Breeder and Regional Forums are run annually and are a fantastic opportunity for clients to keep abreast of changes within the LAMBPLAN and MERINOSELECT analysis.

Regional Forums are smaller group settings and allow breeders to catch up with staff and other breeders from their local area. Regional forums are on now, so if you get a chance to attend it is strongly recommended.

Analysis dates

LAMBPLAN:
- 1st and 15th June,
- 1st, 15th and 31st July,
- 14th August

MERINOSELECT:
- 5th and 19th June,
- 7th and 21st July,
- 7th and 21st August

A calendar of these dates can be found on the website, and can be printed for future reference.

All data must be submitted to database@sheepgenetics.org.au by 5pm AEST on the dates listed above for inclusion in the analysis.
Sheep Genetics Organisational Setup

MLA/AWI

Executive Committee
Jane Weatherley (MLA)
Richard Apps (MLA)
Dr Paul Swann (AWI)
Geoff Lindon (AWI)

Advisory Committee

Ron Cullen
Murray Long - 230324
Pendarra White Suffolks, NSW

Mark Mortimer - 601250
Centre Plus Merinos, NSW

Mark Murphy - 601365
Karbullah Merinos, QLD

Dale Price - 161886
Majardah Poll Dorsets, SA

Warren Russell - 501704
Melrose Merinos, VIC

Sara Wilson - 470169
Jilakin Downs Dorpers WA

Sheep Genetics

Hamish Chandler
Manager

Will Chaffey
Stephen Field
Caris Jones
Fiona McLoughlin
David Rubie
Nicole Williams

Technical Committee

Dr Rob Woolaston (Chair)
Dr Rob Banks - AGBU
Dr Daniel Brown - AGBU
Dr Andrew Swan - AGBU
Dr Kim Bunter - AGBU
Mr Geoff Lindon - AWI
Dr Alex Ball - MLA
Dr Julius Van Der Werf - UNE
Dr Sam Clark - UNE
Mr Sam Gill - MLA
Dr Ben Hayes - VIC DPI
Dr Sue Mortimer - NSW DPI
Dr Matthew Kelly - U of QLD
Mr Mark Mortimer - Industry
Mr Hamish Chandler - Sheep Genetics

The Sheep Genetics Manager or Staff should always be the initial contact point for all communication

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