

Reproductive performance can have a big impact on the profitability of a ewe flock, particularly when meat prices are high.



# SHEEPGENETICS



Building W41a, The Short Run  
University of New England  
Armidale NSW 2351

Phone: +61 2 8055 1818

Fax: +61 2 8055 1850

[info@sheepgenetics.org.au](mailto:info@sheepgenetics.org.au)

[www.sheepgenetics.org.au](http://www.sheepgenetics.org.au)

**Disclaimer:**

This brochure is intended as a guide only. Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained within is factual but this cannot be guaranteed.

**Acknowledgement:**

Meat & Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation acknowledge the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

This brochure is based on information from the Sheep CRC publication "Australian Sheep Breeding Values - A guide for ram buyers".



SHEEPGENETICS  
REPRODUCTION



# Number of lambs born (NLB) and weaned (NLW)

The reproductive rate of breeding ewes is recorded across a ewe's lifetime, with each lambing opportunity adding further information to the ASBVs for reproductive rate.

The two ASBVs used are not age specific, they are:

1. Number of lambs born (NLB)
2. Number of lambs weaned (NLW)

## How is it measured?

Each time a ewe is put to the ram it is classed as a lambing opportunity. Breeders record whether each ewe became pregnant and if so, how many lambs were conceived. The number of lambs the ewe gave birth to and weaned is also recorded. So the number of lambs born (NLB) is the number of lambs a ewe gives birth to and the number of lambs weaned (NLW) is the number of live lambs at weaning. ASBVs on rams are mainly calculated from records of their female relatives.

## Should I select on NLB or NLW?

Generally, select for number of lambs weaned, as this also emphasises higher lamb survival as well as the total number of lambs.

## What do the numbers mean?

Number of lambs weaned ASBVs are quoted in percentages. An ASBV of +20% means that a ram will have daughters that wean 10% (because a ram only contributes half of the genetics) more lambs than the average of animals in the database in the 1990 drop.

## What to look for?

Look for the highest positive values. For example a range in Merinos can be +25% to less than -30%. There is a similar range in all breeds. The higher the NLW breeding value of a ram the better the reproduction you can expect from its daughters.



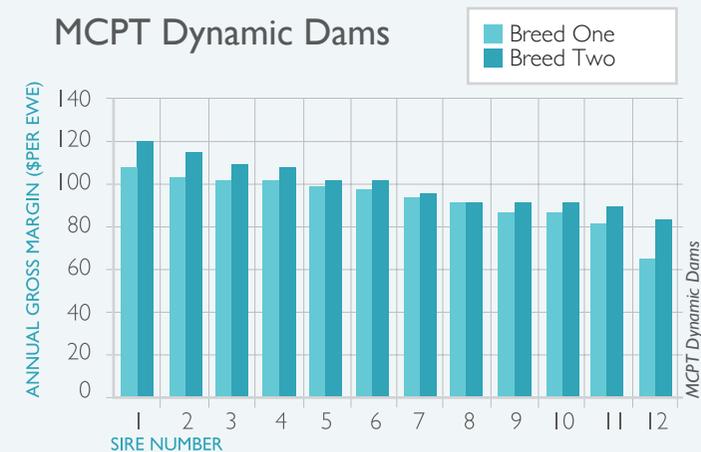
## What else changes if I just selected for the Number of Lambs?

These are what we call correlations, generally if the Number of Lambs goes up >

## What's in it for me?

Reproductive performance can have a big impact on the profitability of a ewe flock, particularly when meat prices are high. The maternal central progeny test demonstrated the large variation in the profitability of sires based on the reproductive performance. The graph (below) demonstrates the range in gross margin in daughters from sires from just two of the breeds. Around 80% of the difference in profitability between sire groups was the effect of reproduction.

## MCPT Dynamic Dams



### THE FREE LUNCHES

Body weight goes up

Growth goes up

Wrinkle score goes down

### THINGS TO WATCH

Lower fleece weight

Lower staple length

BUT remember you can manage these correlations by selecting animals based on indexes or a balance of traits that you are interested in.