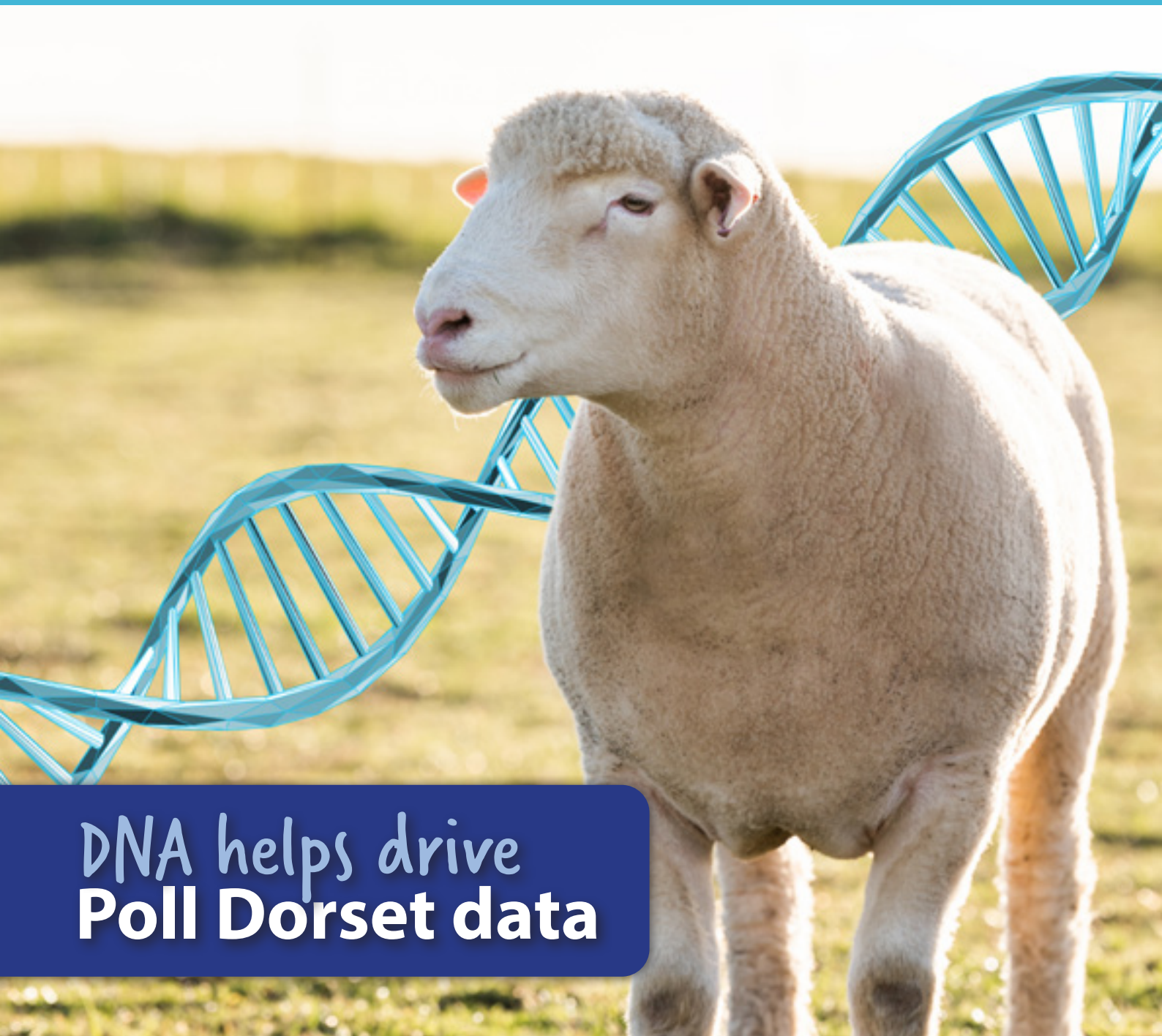




THE AUSTRALIAN POLL DORSET JOURNAL

VOLUME 53 / NUMBER 1

MAY 2023



DNA helps drive Poll Dorset data

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE...



.....
**NATIONAL FLOCK
GROWS TO 78.75M**
PAGE 12-13
.....



.....
**GENOMICS FUELS
GENETIC ENGINE**
PAGE 22
.....



.....
**INTERBREED CLEAN
SWEEP AT SYDNEY**
PAGE 24
.....

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



My deepest condolences to our families who have lost loved ones recently. Our wide Poll Dorset community has been hit hard with the passing of Max Douglas, Dell Iles and Rod Davies. We extend our sympathies to the friends and colleagues of these wonderful people, who have contributed so much to our industry over many years.

Max Douglas of Abelene Park, NSW, was a true gentleman, always a listening ear, and kind words of wisdom. He was a great encourager to all he spoke to, had many a story to tell, and a ready willingness to share his experiences in breeding Poll Dorset sheep.

Dell Iles of Killara, TAS, wife of Julian, had a wonderful way of making you feel welcome and cared for. She was always pleased to see people, and excited to be in the sheep shed at show time.

Rod Davies of Wrattenbullie, SA, our APDA Vice-President. Rod was a valuable part of any discussion at a board level. His conservative nature combined with a clear understanding of future needs, held his opinions in high esteem. Rod was a true stockman, having bred Poll Dorset sheep since 1965, and his knowledge and friendship will be missed.

Our Poll Dorset family is the better for having Max, Dell and Rod a part of it, and their loss will be felt by many.

2023 sees the introduction of DNA sampling for registered rams. This is to allow pedigrees in the future to have the sire verification done. There is a huge confidence value for both the seller and purchaser to know that the pedigree

is correct. Rams (or semen) that are transferred to another stud need to be sampled. For those breeders who are a bit daunted by the process, we are here to help you navigate how to do it. Give Margot a call if you have any queries.

The Special General Meeting, held in Bendigo in March, provided members the opportunity to put forward ideas and opinions about future ram registration regulations. We received a number of written submissions prior to the meetings, and had over 50 members in attendance either in person or via Zoom. A number of motions were discussed and voted on, with directives given to the APDA board.

I was disappointed that a wider discussion was not able to be had. My hope had been for an engaging debate between members in attendance about the future of our breed and the role of the ram regulations in it. My disappointment is primarily in the attitude and behaviour displayed by some of the attendees. This brought the meeting to a culture where open discussion was not possible, and many attendees were not willing to speak out, despite having considered positions to share.

The APDA board will shortly consider what the next step will be. The shock illness and passing of Rod, has meant that we have not met to discuss the meeting outcomes and what to do next.

With lambing season upon us, I am excited to see the next crop of lambs and the outcome of long term breeding programs.

For all of you over the next few months, I wish you green grass and mild weather!

Isabele Roberts

PRESIDENT



THE AUSTRALIAN POLL DORSET JOURNAL

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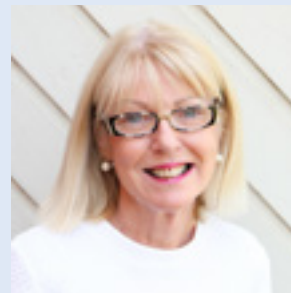
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY 19-20	NSW State Sheep Show - Dubbo
JUNE 16-17	NSW Dorset Championships - Cowra
JULY 14-16	Australian Sheep & Wool Show - Bendigo
AUG 3	The Central West NSW Poll Dorset Youth Day
AUG 6-7	Hamilton Sheepvention
SEP 2-10	Royal Adelaide Show
SEP 8-10	Australasian Dorset Championships
SEP 21-OCT 1	Royal Melbourne Show
SEP 23-30	Royal Perth Show
OCT 5-7	Royal Launceston Show
OCT 20-22	Royal Hobart Show

ACROSS THE PENS

THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

A big thanks to our members who have purchased ads in all three issues of the Journal this year. As a result, our September issue which is always a bumper edition is now starting with a greater number than usual. There is still room for more so bookings to patrick@polldorset.org.au



FLOCK RETURNS

Thank you to those who have already completed their flock returns on the database or have mailed them back to us. If you are having any difficulty at all, please do not hesitate to reach out to Keryn or me – (03) 5443 9902 – we are here to help. Deadline is 31 May so there is still plenty of time before late fees apply.

APDA BOARD

The Board has met twice recently, the Special General Meeting and the March board meeting, minutes of which are included in this issue.

SALE DATES

Please let us know when your sale dates are confirmed so that we may publicise them on the Poll Dorset website.

CONDOLENCES

The office has been much saddened by the passing of our Vice President Rod Davies. Rod was a respected and loved board member and we will miss him greatly.

RAM SALES RESULTS

Stud	Offered	Sold	Top	Average
Abelene Park	58	31	\$4,000	\$1,264
Fairbank	56	50	\$2,400	\$1,471
Maccelslie Park	31	21	\$1,500	\$1,083
Melton Vale	136	131	\$3,400	\$1,620.00
Old Woombi	58	45	\$3,500	\$1,311
Sunnybanks/ Faraday Park	17	16	\$1,400	\$1,187
Valley Vista	68	48	\$3,200	\$1,844

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I read with interest the Meat Industry's objective of meeting Carbon Neutral 2030 target. Are these targets achievable and/or desirable? Will the collateral damage negate any benefits claimed by the Climate Change narrative? We have some of the best coal in the world, so why would we close our power stations for cheap, reliable base load energy? What about loss of income from export opportunities and loss of good old Aussie workforce jobs in the coal industry? It has been argued that renewables are cheaper than coal. It is common knowledge that it is only because they are subsidised - by us. If we move on to reducing methane in our livestock, there is research, showing that a type of kelp will reduce such emissions, for which the food chain will pay a premium. Are consumers willing to pay, say, a 10% add on for the cost of this exercise, or will the producers pick up the tab? Unless I am mistaken, my experience tells me that primary producers are left with the bill. "Buy retail, sell wholesale and pay for the freight both ways". What do Poll Dorset producers think?

Arnie Pfitzner

CONTENTS

President's message	3
Across the Pens	4
March Board Minutes	7
Special General Meeting: Ram registration regulations	9
Sheep Industry Shorts	11
Market Update: Australia's sheep flock to reach largest size in over 15 years	12
DNA and Genomics: Poll Dorsets move to DNA Parent Verification for stud rams	16
DNA and Genomics: DNA Technology – An Important Tool for Ram Breeders	18
Sheep Genetics: MLA Resource Flock	20
Sheep Genetics: Underpinning genomic selection with reference populations	20
Sheep Genetics: Number of lambs weaned offers key data in South African flock	21
Sheep Genetics: Genomics fuelling genetic engine	22
Sydney Show: Tattykeel Poll Dorsets clear winner for top interbreed trophies	24
Wagin Woolorama: Poll Dorset groups win big at Wagin	25
Obituary: Davies remembered for striving for perfection in Wrattenbullie studs	27
Obituary: A lifetime of Poll Dorset passion for Max	28
From the members: Coledale has found a new home	29
Around the regions: Central Region Bus Day and 60th Meeting Celebrations	30
Advertising Rates	31



Front Page:
DNA helps drive Poll Dorset data

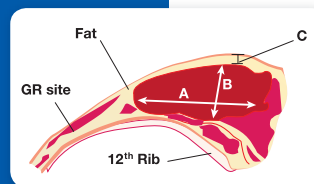
ADVERTISER INDEX

Shearwell	2	Ridgehaven	15
Stockscan	5	Zoetis	18
Newbold	6	Commander Ag	22
Michell Wool	6	Derrynock	23
Coledale	7	Zoetis	29
Springwaters	8	Janmac	31
Kurralea	10	Bromar	32
Valley Vista	14		

ACROSS THE DITCH



Canterbury breeder Speed McIlraith, from the Brooklands stud, holds his Poll Dorset ram which was named supreme champion meat breed at the 125th Mackenzie Highland Show in Fairlie, New Zealand, on Easter Monday. More than 400 sheep were entered in the show and it was great to see a Poll Dorset feature so highly in the placings.



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MARCH BOARD MINUTES

The board meeting of the Australian Poll Dorset Association Inc was held via zoom on Wednesday March 1 and Thursday March 2, 2023

Present via Zoom were Isabele Roberts, George Carter, Damon Coats, Rod Davies, Andrew Gillett, Laurie Fairclough, Tania King, Liz Mann and James Frost.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The following motions were resolved:

That the current budget be accepted. Carried.

That the ASBA monthly charge increase based on CPI increase be accepted. Carried.

That a term deposit of \$88,000 be set up for the Flock Ram levy, Carried.

That the remaining funds from maximiser account and term deposit of \$30,000 be put into a term deposit for six months at 4.1%, Carried.

That the APDA have a credit card with a limit of \$5000 to deal with one off issues where immediate payment is required. Carried.

That Isabele Roberts, Rod Davies, George Carter and book keeper have access to Bank statements, Carried.

PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

There was a general discussion on promotion moving forward with print and online remaining key to the promotion of the breed.

MAJOR EVENT FUNDING

The following funding was approved:

- Central West Poll Dorset Youth Day - \$1000
- Adelaide Region – SA Sheep Expo \$2000
- Central Vic Region – Member Farm Tour \$300 (previously approved 2022)

Regional Advertising Levy

- Central West \$3000 Social Media – various platforms (previously approved 2022)
- WA - \$3000 Farm Weekly and Land Magazine promotion of Ram buying season
- A full review of the current fee structure will take place prior to the August meeting.

ADMIN AND PLANNING

Board is looking to review Rules and Regulations and motion to follow up with Lawyers to assist with update was carried.

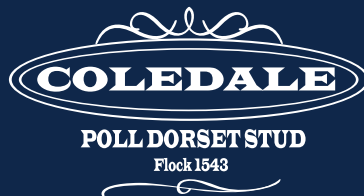
FLOCK COMMITTEE

The following new members were endorsed:

- Mt Ferguson Grazing, number 4670
- Strathfillan, number. 4671
- Lyndan Ridge, number 4672
- Elderada, number 4673

MAJOR SHOW APPOINTMENTS

- Ballarat Sheep Show – Charlotte Close
- Sheepvention –tbc
- NSW Dorset Championships – Garry Armstrong
- Australian Sheep and Wool Show - tbc
- Sydney – Sascha Squiers
- Adelaide – James Frost
- Melbourne Royal -tbc



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A successful dispersal sale of stage 1 of Coledale Poll Dorset Stud

Congratulations to new principal Xavier Burton of Glenrowan West, Victoria

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Ram registration regulations

The APDA Board called a Special General Meeting to discuss the topic of Ram Registration Regulations on Tuesday 14 March in Bendigo VIC. The meeting was called to enable members to contribute to the discussion around the APDA Rules and Regulations that directly relate to ram registration, and the eligibility of rams to be approved for APDA registration. All discussion and subsequent motions from the meeting were taken as recommendations for the APDA Board to use when reviewing the APDA Rules and Regulations. More than 50 members attended the meeting in person and via Zoom and 14 submission papers for consideration from members and member regions were received in relation to the issue prior to the meeting.

History of Registration Regulations

Since the founding of the Australian Poll Dorset Association in 1954, the APDA has been allocating registration numbers for rams, enabling them to be used in registered breeding programs. The allocation of a registration number is dependant on meeting a set of criteria, outlined in the APDA Regulations (currently APDA Flock Book 2022 Regulation 9). The regulations are governed by the APDA Board and administered by the APDA Secretariat.

In November 2020, the pedigree supplied at time of registration changed from Registered Sire, Registered Dam, Registered Sire of Dam to its current regulation that ALL sires in a 4 generation pedigree (where generation 1 is the animal applying to be registered) must be registered – all rams included must have a APDA registration number, and all ewes have a registered stud prefix. The strengthening of the pedigree requirements was put in place to provide more clarity and confidence in the genetics when used in a breeding program. It also brings the registration requirements in line with industry expectations.

APDA Database Error – Ram Registration

In Aug 2022, it was discovered that the implementation of Reg.9h was not completed correctly in the online database development. This process error has allowed rams that do not meet the 4 generation pedigree (where every sire in the pedigree has an APDA Reg. Number), to be registered and therefore available to be used in stud breeding programs. The APDA Board has considered the situation using the APDA Rules and Regulations as our governance source. We have also sought legal advice in the application of the APDA Rules and Regulations. The conclusion is that once a ram has been allocated a registration number, there is no way it can be revoked, regardless of whether it actually met the registration requirements in the first place. The result is, there are now rams with registration numbers with historical pedigrees that don't meet current APDA registration regulations, that have been used in breeding programs in APDA Flocks. Had these rams been registered prior to November 2020, nearly all of them would have passed registration, with only a few not meeting the pre-2020 regulations.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING: The following discussion questions were raised

1. The integrity of pedigree information submitted to the APDA is entirely the responsibility of the breeder of the animal, yet the APDA is tasked with making sure the information is true and correct. Outline how you think the APDA should verify the information that has been submitted.
2. Purity is an undefined concept in the APDA Statement of Purpose and does not appear in the Rules and Regulations.
 - a. What is an appropriate definition for an animal to be classed as “pure-bred”? Is there a breed %?
 - a. What is the advantage/disadvantage of a “pure-bred” genetics compared to animals that don't meet your above definition of “pure-bred”?
3. The current registration regulations allow only genetics that have pedigree animals that are currently part of the APDA registration system. This excludes unregistered Poll Dorset sheep. Should the APDA include a pathway for unregistered Poll Dorset sheep to enter the registration system? If yes, outline what the process would be.
4. The rams that have been allocated registration numbers without meeting current registration regulations have been used in breeding programs and will have progeny in many flocks in 2023. There have been demands from APDA members that these rams should be de-registered. Do you think that the APDA Rules and Regulation should include the capacity to de-register/change registration status of rams? If yes, consider the practical implications on a stud breeding program or ram sale if this were to occur.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING: The following motions were moved for consideration by the APDA board.

Discussion Question 1

- Moved that the onus be on the breeder, on his honesty, with DNA testing. Motion Carried. This is a motion to go to the board.

Discussion Question 3

- Moved that current rules and regulations stay the same. Motion Carried. This is a motion to go to the board.

Discussion Question 4

- Moved that the board has the power to deregister a ram from this day forward. Motion Carried. This is a motion to go to the board.
- Moved that the Board investigate and take action against those who knowingly broke the rules. Motion Carried. This is a motion to go to the board.

Further Discussion

- Moved that board voting on anything with pecuniary interest or a conflict of interest leave the room. Motion Carried. This is a motion to go to the board.

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New online hub a one-stop-shop for grazing land management resources

Red meat and livestock producers have access to a new hub of grazing land management resources on the Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) website.

The Grazing Land Management (GLM) hub has launched today and brings together a range of grazing land management information and tools into a one-stop-shop.

MLA Program Manager, Adoption, Sally Leigo, said that the hub contained the tools, resources and training opportunities to help red meat producers measure available pasture against animal demand, explore improved pasture options, or identify and manage weeds for grazing businesses across Australia.

“This new hub on the MLA website is a one stop shop for producers looking to learn how to do a feed budget on their property, learn how to manage weeds and weigh up options to improve pasture production. The GLM hub directs producers to available online tools, factsheets, events, training courses, and eLearning modules to enable practical decision making with the latest research recommendations,” Ms Leigo said.

“The hub provides a range of new information on grazing land management from written, to visual and in-person activities to ensure a wide range of ways to learn, so there is something for everyone within this online package of resources.

“As well as online information and tools, the hub also helps producers understand how they can try out training and try out the new practices at home through one of MLA’s longer-term programs with other producers.

“It puts producers in the driver’s seat to access the information they need, in the way they want to access it.”

Ms Leigo said that autumn was a perfect time to focus on grazing land management in both Northern and Southern Australia. For northern producers nearing the end of the wet season it is a great time to be getting out and preparing a feed budget for the coming dry season and for southern producers to be preparing paddocks for the winter and the subsequent summer.

“Through the hub, producers can learn at their own pace, while also learning more about in-person events such as MeatUp, BeefUp forums, GLM EDGE and BredWell FedWell workshops.

Producers can sign up to be a member or check their membership status at www.mla.com.au/membership

Access the hub: www.mla.com.au/grazing

WA discount for eID

Enhancing Australia’s livestock traceability systems is a national priority that the federal and state government and the livestock industries are working collaboratively on.

On 9 September 2022, all Agriculture Ministers approved the implementation of the National Biosecurity Council proposal for electronic identification devices (eID) for sheep and goats and agreed to work towards mandatory implementation in each jurisdiction by 1 January 2025.

As of 28 March 2023, discounted electronic identification ear tags are now available for WA producer’s 2023 lamb and kid drop, as part of a Western Australian pilot program to prepare for the adoption of the mandatory eID for the national livestock identification system (NLIS) in January 2025.

The Tag Incentive Payment discount is part of the WA Government’s \$3.4 million commitment to implement the nationally agreed eID system and enhance the State’s traceability capacity in response to increasing emergency animal disease threats.

The department will work with the downstream supply chain to help integrate the new eID technology and is collaborating with the Western Australian Sheep and Goat NLIS Advisory Group to facilitate the adoption of the eID tags.

Fully accredited sky blue tags for 2023 will receive a 75 cent discount per tag via participating manufacturers. Ask your usual retailer which tags are included.

Sheep Sustainability Framework holds first Industry Forum

More than 40 internal stakeholders from across the sheepmeat and wool value chains met last week to contribute to an important discussion on the sustainability topics most relevant to industry, at the first Industry Forum coordinated by the Sheep Sustainability Framework (SSF).

Held in Sydney with representatives from Sheep Producers Australia, WoolProducers Australia, Australian Wool Innovation, Meat & Livestock Australia, LiveCorp, Animal Health Australia, NSW Farmers, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and other agricultural frameworks, the Forum provided an opportunity for stakeholders to be deeply immersed in the analysis of the issues that underpin the SSF.

Discussion canvassed current and emerging sustainability topics, the commercial value of the SSF, and understanding the relative importance of specific measures and indicators of sustainability.

Dr Robyn Leeson from STR Consulting, who specialises in sustainability strategy and reporting, led a session where delegates reflected on the impact of the Australian sheepmeat and wool industry on people and the environment, in addition to evaluating the risks and opportunities to the industry. This also featured a frank exercise in identifying, discussing and elevating the ‘hard basket’ issues.

SSF Sustainability Steering Group Chair, Dr Scott Williams, said the Forum was an important step to shaping the next iteration of the Framework.

“The discussion provided industry with a valuable opportunity to better understand the SSF and what it offers in an ‘in-house’ setting,” Dr Williams said.

“It also allows industry to shape the Framework, as we revisit the materiality matrix upon which the entire SSF rests.

“It is critical the industry understands, owns and has input into the Framework, as we want our customers, consumers and other stakeholders, such as advocacy groups, to accept its credibility and use it as a trusted scorecard of our industry’s sustainability credentials.”

Australia's sheep flock to reach largest size in over 15 years

Courtesy of Meat & Livestock Australia

Key points

- National sheep flock will grow to its highest level since 2007 at 78.75m head
- Record lamb production and exports are forecast for 2023, eclipsing totals set in 2016 and 2022
- The decline of the New Zealand flock size presents an opportunity for Australia to increase its market share as the largest exporter of sheepmeat in the world.

The Australian sheepmeat industry is set for another bumper year in 2023 as the national sheep flock grows to its highest level since 2007 at 78.75m head, according to the latest Sheep Industry Projections update from Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

Driving this increase are optimal breeding conditions nationwide, a genetically superior flock, improved lambing percentages and medium-term industry confidence at the farm gate level.

Growth is forecast across all states, with larger improvements in flock numbers expected from South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania. The key sheep producing states of New South Wales and Victoria are also forecast to lift numbers, although not as significantly as other states.

In 2024 the national flock's growth is projected to moderate and plateau, reaching 79.5 million head, a rise of 1%, or 750,000 head year-on-year. While in 2025, the national flock is estimated to fall to 2023 levels, although it will remain above the 10-year average.

According to Senior Market Information Analyst at MLA, Ripley Atkinson, the growth of the national flock in 2023 will lead to increased slaughter numbers and production.

"Lamb slaughter is forecast to reach 22.6m in 2023 as a result of large numbers of breeding ewes and strong marking rates. This is a rise of 595,000 head or 2.7% year-on-year.

"2022's slaughter performance showed that small stock processors had a greater ability to increase their throughput in line with higher supply, a trend MLA expects will continue in 2023."

"Looking further ahead to 2024, we forecast it to be a record year for lamb slaughter, reaching 23.2m head. This would be a rise of 3%, or 560,000 year-on-year and higher by 1.1m head or 5% on the 10-year average," said Mr Atkinson.

Carcase weights are also forecast to increase in 2023. This is primarily due to structural genetic investment and productive improvement in the national flock over the past two years.

In 2023, lamb carcase weights are forecast to remain high at 25.1kg. This would be 11%, or 2.5kg/head, above the 10-year average. This is despite weather forecasts suggesting drier conditions will occur in the second half of 2023.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has forecast that the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) will enter a positive phase in 2023. A positive IOD results in less rain across southern Australia, where most of Australia's sheep population is located.

As the second largest sheepmeat exporter in the world, New Zealand plays an important role in the global lamb and mutton market. However, according to Mr Atkinson, a decline in the New Zealand sheep flock size presents an opportunity for the Australian sheepmeat industry.

"New Zealand, like Australia, has good market access, quality assurance schemes and a strong reputation internationally meaning that they are an international competitor to Australian lamb and mutton.

"However, new opportunities may be made available to Australian producers and exporters as New Zealand flock size decreases, wool and lamb production become less profitable compared to dairy production, and land availability decreases.

"In recent years, successive Australian Governments have made considerable strides in gaining European market access, with talks ongoing for an Australia (AU)-European Union (EU) Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the AU-UK FTA signed in December 2021.

"As New Zealand sheepmeat exports have increasingly shifted away from Europe, and towards China, improved opportunities for Australian sheepmeat in European markets may continue," said Mr Atkinson.

Sheep Producer Intentions Survey

MLA undertook an analysis of data from the February Sheep Producer Intentions survey, identifying the unique differences in selling behaviour relative to producers' flock sizes and the states they operate in.

The February survey's aim was to identify:

- actual producer reported sales up to 31 December 2022 and reasons behind any changes in performance against October 2022 estimates
- producer forecast sales for January-June 2023
- which market channels producers intended to sell their sheep and lambs.

1. Large producers focus on finish and quality for lambs

The survey data provided unique insights into the management behaviours of different producers relevant to their flock size.

Larger producers preferred to retain lambs on-farm rather than selling in the 2022 spring flush period.

Between October and December 2022, 75% of producers with more than 10,000 sheep stated they sold less lambs than expected, while 83% stated the reason behind reduced sales was the impact of weather on lamb performance.

Large-scale producers preferred to retain lambs to ensure finish, weight and quality rather than offloading and receiving a discounted price. This recognises the importance of weight, finish and even, adequate fat cover as key drivers of price performance and therefore return on investment.

Recent NLRS market reports, commentary and data have confirmed lambs with finish and weight are receiving price premiums, supporting larger producers' behaviour, selling decisions and management.

2. WA and Queensland sheep producers prefer to sell over-the-hooks and out of the paddock

Due to vast distances required to truck sheep to public auction at the saleyards and lack of public saleyards available in Queensland and WA, producers prefer to sell in a direct-to-buyer method rather than at the saleyards.

For Queensland producers, 45% stated that expected sales in the first half of 2023 would be made over-the-hooks and a further 40% expected these sales to be made as paddock sales (Figure 1).

In WA, 16% of total expected sales were to be paddock sales and 45% were expected to be made over-the-hooks.

This is compared to the national average expectation of 28% of sales made over-the-hook and only 6% of sales to be made out-of-the-paddock.

To support the higher preference for more direct sales channel choice in WA, 40% of producers noted the reason for selling fewer lambs than expected was because “prices were not strong enough at the time”.

This indicates WA producers prefer more direct, reliable methods than the potential volatility of saleyard prices, therefore reducing reliance on this sales channel and shoring up expected market performance with more direct channels such as paddock sales or over-the-hooks.

3. Wet weather impacts will ensure the typical winter lull is avoided in 2023

With 43% of producers stating weather impacted lamb performance last year, the typical tightening of seasonal supply into winter may not eventuate. This is due to the increased number of expected sales in the first half of 2023.

As a result of this change – and inclement weather in the second half of 2022 – both yardings and slaughter numbers of sheep and lambs may remain above long-term averages into June 2023.

Year-to-date, an increase in lamb yardings across the states has occurred (Table 1), proving that larger yardings may continue into the middle of the year due to the high retention that eventuated as a result of wet weather in 2022.

Table 1: Year-to-date change in lamb yardings to 31 March

State	YTD YOY (actual)	YTD YOY %
NSW	148,169	14.5%
VIC	62,288	9%
QLD	1,252	9.4%
SA	33,476	28%
TAS	683	4.4%
WA	-58,631	-38.8%
National	240,757	14.4%

Source: MLA

Other than WA, all other states have had increases of 4% or more in lamb yardings in 2023. Importantly, the increase in NSW lamb yardings has accounted for 62% of the total national lift, demonstrating the significance of the NSW flock growth.

The changing landscape of Australia’s flock

MLA’s Market Information team analysed Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from 2016 to 2021 to examine how Australia’s sheep flock is changing.

Between 2016 and 2021, Australia’s national flock grew by 500,000 head and the number of sheep producers grew by 2%.

The most significant increases were:

- Victoria by 2.3 million head, or 18%, to 15.4 million head
- Queensland by 265,000 head, or 15%, to 2.08 million head
- Tasmania by 327,000 head, up 16%, to 2.4 million head.

These increases ensured that every sheep-producing state now has a population of over two million head. This shows the strength of the flock regrowth in Queensland following the significant investment in exclusion fencing in the last decade which encouraged the return of sheep to the state.

Between 2016 to 2021, the historically strong sheep-producing states of WA and NSW both experienced large declines of over 1.1 million head in their sheep populations – NSW decreased 1.256 million head, or 5% and WA decreased 1.147 million head or 8%.

However, while sheep numbers fell in NSW, the number of sheep businesses increased by 68 businesses, or 1%, as more properties ran smaller flocks. By comparison, in SA, the number of sheep increased while the number of enterprises fell, indicating that fewer enterprises were running more sheep.

Despite WA sheep numbers and businesses decreasing – falling from above 3,000 head per enterprise to 2,953 per enterprise – the average flock per enterprise still remains the largest in the country.

Producers in Queensland and Victoria tend to have smaller flocks per property, under 2,000 head per enterprise.

Between 2016 and 2021, total sheep and lamb numbers increased – however not all categories increased. The number of rams and wethers declined in this period by 1.2 million sheep, or 1.2%.

Contributing factors may have been:

- access to shearers
- reduced live export numbers
- the 2020 wool price crash, when the price of wool fell below 900¢/kg.

It is unlikely to have been caused by mutton prices as the differential between mutton and trade lamb prices in this time improved.

Breeding ewe numbers during these five years increased 1%, or 442,000 head. Non-Merino breeding ewes jumped 2.1%, or 250,000 head, to 12 million head compared to Merino ewe numbers which rose 0.8%.

Overall, this demonstrates a movement towards meat breeds within the national flock.

This was further reinforced by the increase in enterprises running non-Merino ewes which was up 7.5% in 2021.

ON PROPERTY SALES

Friday the 6th of October 2023

Friday the 12th of January 2024

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Summer Sale 2023 Results

Thankyou to our valued return clients and friends, and the new buyers who participated in our Summer Sale.

Rams sold to \$3200, averaging \$1844 and SIL stud ewes sold to a top of \$1100 and average of \$750.



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Poll Dorsets move to DNA Parent Verification for stud rams

With technology playing a bigger role in stud breeding, the APDA board has made the decision to introduce DNA testing of registered rams for the purpose of Sire Verification. Sire Verification will give the breeder and the purchaser of stud rams confidence that the sire in the pedigree is correct and will reduce the risk of any legal action against the breeder, should a stud ram be sold and transferred with an incorrect pedigree. An incorrect pedigree can greatly impact on the value of the ram and, in some cases, give the ram a reduced value to the purchaser.

DNA TESTING OF REGISTERED RAMS

The animals we are looking at DNA testing (for the purpose of sire verification of future progeny) are registered rams that are transferred to another stud, and registered rams from which semen is collected and sold to another stud. Sires bred and used in your own stud are optional to DNA test, but we would encourage you to do them too. This maintains a high level of accuracy in the pedigrees of all sires used in your breeding program. It also ensures that future progeny that need to be transferred to another stud, can be sire verified.

The Board's intention is to phase in sire verification via DNA testing over a period of six years. The phase in period should enable the majority of sires used, to have DNA collected and held, ready to be used for sire verification for future progeny.

It will become mandatory on 1/7/2023 to DNA test rams transferred and AI sires, then. Where parentage DNA is already on file with the testing company, sire verification will also be able to be completed.

By 2028 all stud rams transferred to another stud, and AI sires will be required to be DNA sire verified. Where this not be possible, the registration/transfer application will be assessed by the APDA Board. Examples of where this may occur could be:

- where the sire was born before 2022 and there is no DNA test taken
- an inconclusive result from the DNA parentage test

There may be instances where the DNA sire is reported to be a different sire than that shown in the ram's pedigree. It is up to the breeder of that animal to check their own stud records, as well as the accuracy of the DNA collection process, and amend the pedigree to the correct sire. If the breeder is unable/unwilling to amend the pedigree, the registration/transfer application will be assessed by the APDA Board.

The DNA testing and sire verification process will be via members informing the APDA of the test results. This will be done by members emailing/posting a copy of the parentage results to the secretary. The APDA database and Flock Book will be updated to reflect the following:

- DNA Tested
- Sire Verified

DNA TESTING PROCESS

Step 1 Choose a genomic testing company and create an account. This can be done online or over the phone.

- Step 2 Order the appropriate number of TSU or blood cards. If you are using TSU you will need to have a sampling gun as well.
- Step 3 Take a sample from the animal. Make sure you keep an accurate record of the eartag of the animal, and link it to the sample number on the TSU/blood card.
- Step 4 Fill in the submission form. Each company will have their own form. It is important that this is filled correctly and fully. This ensures accurate results, delivered on time.
- Step 5 Post samples and appropriate submission form to genomic testing company. Some companies may also use online forms or email submissions.
- Step 6 Genomic testing company will provide you with a "received" notification, which may include a submission report for you to check and verify.
- Step 7 DNA test carried out at lab. This usually takes 4 -6 weeks for results to be reported.
- Step 8 Parentage result report emailed to submitter of DNA sample
- Step 9 Check results are the same as on-farm pedigree information. If not, investigate why.
- Step 10 Owner forward DNA parentage result report to APDA secretary

What is genotyping?

Genotyping is the process of finding differences in the genetic makeup of individual sheep in their DNA sequences.

DNA is mapped by finding the combination of single nucleotides that make up the DNA or the genome. The genome is the complete map of the individual's DNA.

These single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) show the differences between your sheep across the genome. At each SNP there are two alleles, one from each parent that indicate differences between sheep.

When you send your blood card or tissue sampling unit to a genotyping company (see bottom of page), they extract the DNA and map these SNPs. This shows what your sheep's DNA looks like at each of these SNP locations.

The names of these SNPs relate roughly to the number of SNPs each chip has. For example, a 50K chip has roughly 50,000 SNP locations that will be identified.

Genomics to get Australian Sheep Breeding Values

If you subscribe and submit data to Sheep Genetics, your genotyped animals can receive genomically enhanced Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs). These genotypes estimate how related your animals are to the rest of the animals in the evaluation.

Relationships gives you information for breeding values

ASBVs estimate what genes an animal will on average give to their offspring. Breeding values are estimated based on the traits recorded for an animal and its relatives. Therefore, if your animals are related to genotyped animals in the database, these related animals will contribute information to your animals breeding values. If there is enough information to estimate an accurate breeding value, it will be reported as an ASBV.

DNA AND GENOMICS

These relationships are important for traits that are hard or expensive to measure such as eating quality, traits measured in adults and disease traits.

Collecting more information adds value to the genotypes

Genotyping will help provide information but the best way to get a breeding value is by measuring your own sheep. For more information about how to get involved, contact Sheep Genetics.

MLA genomics database

MLA manage and maintain Australia's sheep industry genomic database.

This database includes:

- Genotypes from the Cooperative Research Centre for Sheep Industry Innovation (Sheep CRC).
- New genotypes submitted from genotyping companies who signed an agreement with MLA.

MLA own the intellectual property of genotypes from the Sheep CRC and have a license to use new genotypes for parentage verification and analysis.

MLA hold all genotypes in one industry database so:

- genotypes are included in the genetic evaluation for genomic relationships between animals
- existing genotypes in the database can be accessed to assign parentage.

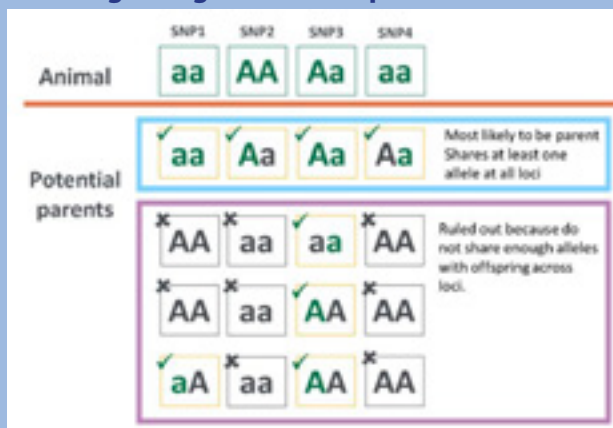
This means whichever company you use, all genotypes can be used together for parentage and genetic evaluation.

How does parentage assignment work?

Parentage assignment uses single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) information to allocate potential parents.

Potential parents are checked to find who shares at least one allele at each loci. For example, potential parents are ruled out in the purple box because they do not share enough alleles as the animal tested.

Parentage assignment example



Accurate sire and dam lists make parentage easier

To assign parents, all potential sires and all dams need to be genotyped. This assignment to parents rules out potential sires and dams that do not match the progeny. For this reason, it is important to submit accurate and complete sire and dam lists for the best results.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who owns the DNA material?

The owner of the animal.

Where is the DNA data stored?

In the case of a Parent Verification test, only data collected from that laboratory will be stored in their database, however, there is an agreement between laboratories to share results (for the purpose of parentage verification) upon request.

When full genomic testing is carried out, these results are forwarded to Sheep Genetics and the DNA results stored at AGBU.

What happens to the results?

They are emailed to the person who submitted the DNA test. This will, in most cases, be the breeder of the animal, but where an animal has been sold, the new owner may be the person who submitted the DNA for testing.

Can I be confident in the accuracy of the results?

The genomic testing companies have a high level of quality assurance in the results from their testing process. They are industry standard and the results from these tests are used as parentage assurance across many animal industries.

How will this information be recorded at the APDA?

The APDA database and Flock Book will identify where a ram has been DNA tested, and Sire Verified.

How are DNA samples collected for testing?

There are three ways you can submit samples for DNA testing.

The first is by taking a tissue sample from the ear by using a Tissue Sample Unit (TSU) with the applicator gun, a simple method which is recommended by the genomic testing companies as it is the most reliable method of submitting samples.

The second is by placing a drop of blood from the ear onto a blood card. There is an additional fee to DNA test sample submitted by this method.

The third is to send a semen sample which is a useful method to DNA test a sire that has semen collected and where the ram is deceased.

How much will it cost?

It will depend which genomic testing company you choose. The following (TSU sample) prices are quoted by Neogen.

Parent Verify Test is \$29.29

50k genomic test is \$32.95

Where do I purchase the TSU or blood card?

TSUs can be purchased through any merchandise agent that is an agent for Allflex products.

RRP \$55.00 for a box of ten. TSU can also be purchased from the genomic testing companies. A box of ten TSUs will cost you \$33.00 from Neogen.

Do I need to purchase an applicator gun?

It is handy to own an applicator gun as this means you can take your DNA sample at your convenience. The APDA is looking at placing TSU guns in regions for use by members who don't wish to purchase their own gun. This would depend on demand expressed by the members in their region.

DNA Technology – An Important Tool for Ram Breeders

Courtesy of Neogen

DNA based technologies have revolutionised livestock breeding in recent times, with DNA testing now routinely incorporated within dairy, sheep, and beef breeding programs around the world.

As with any new and emerging technology, Poll Dorset ram breeders should be considering whether DNA technology offers benefits to their enterprise, and if so, how it is best applied alongside other reproductive and genetic technologies within their breeding program.

Uses of DNA technology

DNA based technologies can be used for several different purposes within a Poll Dorset breeding program, including:

Parentage verification - A small percentage of errors will undoubtedly exist within parentage information that is collected via traditional means due to factors such as cross mothering and human transcription errors. DNA technology enables these errors to be identified and corrected, increasing the reliability of the parentage information that is available for animals within a flock.

Parentage assignment - In situations where parentage information is not available via traditional means, DNA technology can be used to assign the sire and dam of an animal. Use of DNA technology for parentage assignment offers several benefits including the use of syndicate joining groups, or a reduction in the on-farm labour associated with the traditional collection of parentage information.

Incorporation into LAMBPLAN ASBVs - When combined with pedigree and performance information, DNA, or genomic information, adds an additional source of information for the calculation of Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs), as published from the LAMBPLAN genetic evaluation, enabling the generation of ASBVs with additional accuracy, and ultimately enabling more accurate selection decisions to be made.

Genomic information provides the most additional accuracy to the calculation of ASBVs:

- for animals that have incomplete, or a limited depth of pedigree
- for traits that are hard to measure, or traits that cannot be measured prior to an animal entering the breeding flock.
- for traits that have a low heritability.
- in situations where collecting effective performance information is problematic, such as in small flocks, or when an animal has been removed from its contemporary group.

Developing a DNA testing strategy for your flock

Prior to investing in DNA based technologies, it is important that ram breeders develop a specific DNA testing strategy



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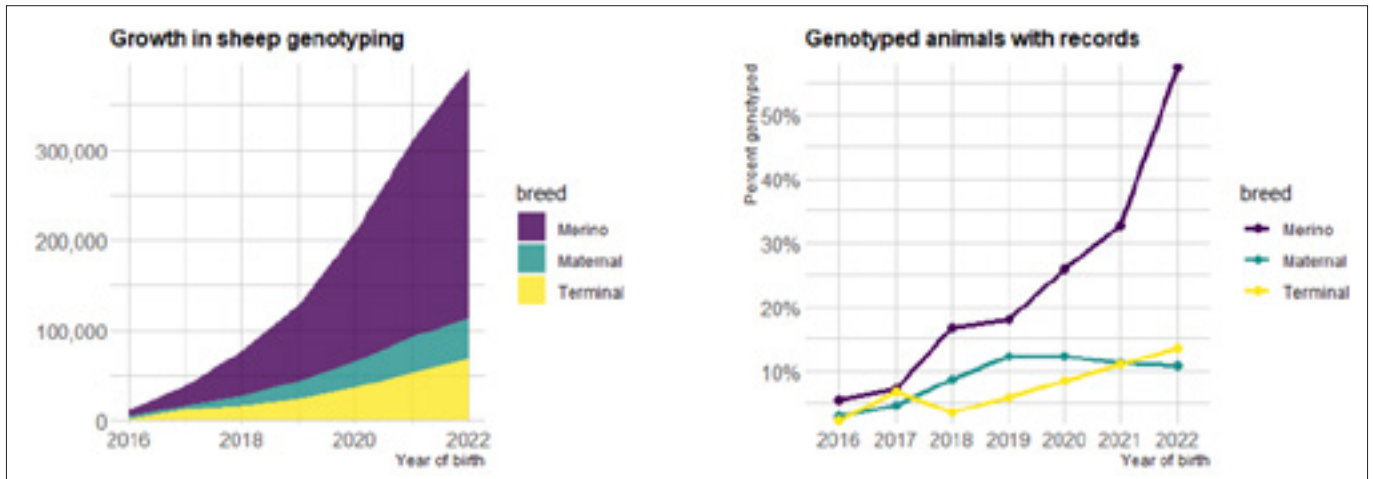
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DNA AND GENOMICS

Figure 1 – Genomics is incorporated into the calculation of Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) for an increasing number of animals each year.



Source: Sheep Genetics Australia

for their flock to ensure that they maximise the benefits that are obtained. When developing a DNA testing strategy, consideration should be given to such things as:

What DNA samples will be collected?

DNA samples can be collected in a number of different forms, including Tissue Sampling Units (TSUs), blood cards and semen straws. Of these, the recommended and most common form of DNA sample collection due its ease of collection and reliability during laboratory processing is TSUs.

Using a specific TSU applicator, TSUs involve collection of a simple tissue sample from the middle of the ear, making sure the TSU has been sealed correctly and then placing it into a TSU box or rack for mailing to the DNA laboratory.

When will DNA samples be collected?

DNA samples can be collected on animals of any age, and so should be undertaken at a time that best fits in with other normal, routine management practices, ensuring sufficient time is left for the availability of results.

DNA results are usually available within approximately four weeks from the time the samples arrive at the laboratory. An additional one to two weeks should also be factored in for the results to be processed through the LAMBPLAN analysis (data runs are conducted on the 1st and 15th of each month).

What animals will be tested?

Testing can be conducted as many or few animals as desired, depending on the objective.

Common testing strategies include a) testing an individual animal; b) strategically testing a group of animals of specific interest. For example, the top 30% of a cohort of ram lambs that have been identified as potential selection candidates; or c) testing an entire drop of lambs.

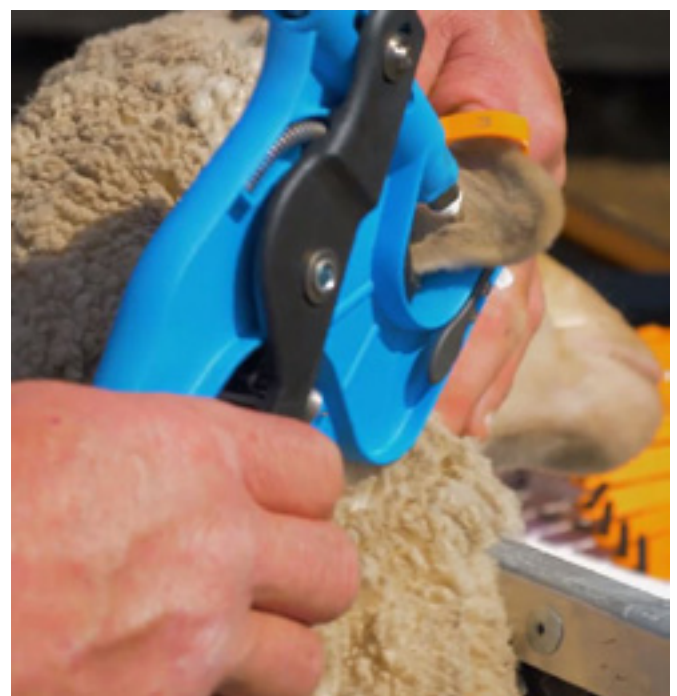
Which DNA product will be utilised?

The two most common DNA products offered by Neogen to Poll Dorset breeders are the 'Parentage Test', which links a lamb to its sire and/or dam, and the 'Genomic Test', which includes the parentage test, along with a high-density genotype for inclusion in the calculation of LAMBPLAN ASBVs.

The 'Genomic Test' offered by Neogen involves genotyping animals with a customised DNA chip that was developed specifically for use in the Australian sheep industry known as the GGP Ovine 50K. The chip was developed in collaboration with researchers at the University of New England, Agriculture Victoria and the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit and specifically includes SNPs that explain the most genetic variation in the Australian sheep population. Research has shown that the inclusion of these SNPs on the chip increases accuracy by 7-10% by comparison to generic DNA chips.

Further Information

To further discuss the utilisation of DNA based technologies within your operation, contact Neogen Australasia's Territory Manager team. Contact details for the Territory Manager in each region are available from the Neogen Australasia website (neogenastralasia.com.au), or by contacting the Neogen customer service team on (07) 3736 2134 or naa@neogen.com.



MLA Resource Flock

Annually you can nominate your sires to be used at the MLA Resource Flock sites. The primary sites are at:

- Armidale, NSW
- Katanning, WA
- Temora, NSW (satellite flock).

Approximately 120 sires selected from the nomination process are artificially inseminated to ewes across these sites. The progeny from these matings are genotyped and measured throughout their life and are taken through to slaughter, where a range of post-slaughter measurements are taken.

In addition to these sites, add-on projects are run to complement the MLA Resource Flock. These projects aim to capture information from breeder flocks, some of which is not captured in the MLA Resource Flocks such as reproduction. Add-on projects also aim to target how information for hard-to-measure traits can be collected on-farm.

Why get involved?

Reasons to use genomics in the MERINOSELECT and LAMBPLAN evaluations include:

- more accurate selection of young animals
- selection of animals for hard-to-measure traits such as eating quality
- more accurate selection of animals for traits expressed later in life such as reproduction.

Selection criteria of sires for the resource flock

The MLA Resource Flock aims to develop an industry reference population and focuses on diversity more than genetic merit.

Key selection criteria include:

- Relatedness to animals already in the MLA Resource Flock – animals that are less related to the animals already used in the resource flock are preferred.
- The age of animal – is the animal reflective of the industry into the future? Younger animals are more likely to be related to future populations.
- Representation of the breed in the industry.

Annually approximately 120 sires are selected from a range of breeds. The number of sires selected from each breed depends on the:

- representation of these breeds in industry
- size of the reference already created for each breed.

How to get involved?

If you are interested in nominating a sire/s to be used at the MLA Resource Flock sites, nominations open annually in spring.

Underpinning genomic selection with reference populations

Genomics has added another selection tool to sheep producers belts, allowing more hard to measure traits to be considered, and stock to be selected at a younger age.

University of New England's Julius Van Der Werf said genomics can now measure many more animals for new traits, and hard to measure traits, which has been a primary outcome of the resource flocks.

Resource flocks measure many animals and DNA test them, allowing us to look at all the different relationships between the information, he said.

"The power here is you can measure animals much more distantly related to your flock, and can measure animals for new traits that are quite far removed from your flock."

"The purpose of the resource flock in the breeding program is new information...we always need information for genomics, without that and phenotypes we cannot do genomic selection."

Each of the resource flocks developed over the years have had important outcomes, the first being the Sheep CRC Information Nucleus (2007-2011) which showed the industry the need to focus on meat eating quality, which led the MLA Resource Flock (2012-2018) to measure meat eating quality on 12,000 lambs.

The current MLA Resource Flock (2019-2023) processes 2000 lambs a year, and now incorporates commercial producer data in its information.

The resource flock is made up of 35% Merinos, with the remainder crossbreds, and Poll Dorsets being the leading number of terminal sires used overall since 2015.

Satellite flocks where commercial lambs produced by breeders who want to progeny test sires are also now contributing information to the flock, with the flocks run on coinvestment.

"We also needed information on reproduction so our strategy was to help breeders who have good reproductive data to genotype their flocks so we had that data as well," Professor Van Der Werf added.

"Coinvestment is important because it is going to be more and more the model of the future, where breeders want to have data, the industry wants to have data and we have to work together to collect it together."

Moving with the times, new research into methane output and feed intake started last year within the flock.

"Because we have the resource flock set up already were we genotype lots of animals, we can measure the same animals for methane and feed efficiency and we measure them for eating quality and carcass traits and there growth traits we have a lot together and can look at how those traits are correlated to each other.

"We have a model to calculate breeding values, so when we do new measurements very quickly it turns into something that can be used to make breeding decisions."

What's next for the resource flock? Maternal behaviour, lambing ease, condition score, parasites and fly strike are all on the list.

And why is the resource flock so important?

“The first instance is because we can now do genomic selection of young breeding stock early on without having to wait for those animals to have phenotypes on those traits,” Professor Van Der Werf said.

“We can also use genomics to predict breeding values of animals that do not measure so much, like at multiplier level and that is quite important for industry to have a quicker rate of improvement down the pyramid of the population.

“If commercial people use breeding values and become breeding value savvy...if people realise how good they (their flock) are genetically they are going to look for a better ram source for next year - information is always helpful in improvement and if commercial people have better knowledge of their stock they will want to get better rams.”

Resource flock data has also proven to increase the variation in estimated breeding values - allowing for better selection - and improved their accuracies.

Professor Van Der Werf predicts genomics will become continually cheaper over time, and an expanded resource flock concept will be needed to accommodate that.

This will require more work with others, and more coinvestment between breeders and MLA, he said.

“MLA have levy money but they want to maximise that by coinvestment - if breeders are interested in getting data on their animals, the question is how much are they willing to pay and would they be interested in being part of the project.”

Number of lambs weaned offers key data in South African flock

Extensive small stock farming is one of the only really viable enterprises in much of arid South Africa, according to Schalk Cloete.

Which means many of these areas rely on sheep for their livelihoods.

Professor Cloete works in the Department of Animal Sciences at Stellenbosch University, and presented at the recent Sheep Genetics Leading Breeder conference.

He added that small stock were also well suited for integration with his country's cropping production.

But despite this, the South African sheep flock has fallen from 30 million to under 20 million.

When it comes to data collection, growth is recorded for all breeds, with wool traits taken for Merinos and Dohnes.

And some measures of reproduction are taken on all breeds, but this has limitations, such as no recording of mating lists and no recording of lamb mortality.

“What I research is establishing genetic parameters for traits not commonly recorded and trying to provide the framework for incorporating these traits into the national scheme,” professor Cloete said.

“I think it will be more profitable but also advantageous for ethical and sustainable reasons - it is early days but slowly making gains - if I could have a superpower it would be convincing people we need to record more traits in our national scheme.”

Professor Cloete believes reproduction is not only crucial economically for sheep production, but has the added importance of being a welfare trait when it comes to lamb survival.

He has been using the Elsenburg Merino flock (a resource flock) to select divergent female lines for reproduction since the mid-1980s.

This selection has been based on the composite reproduction trait of ewe fertility, twinning rate and ewe rearing ability, and is measured by the Number of Lambs Weaned (NLW).

What Professor Cloete has found is that the “high line” of selected ewes, those better performers, have increased the NLW by 1%, while the “low line”, the lesser performers, have decreased NLW by 0.5%.

The research found an impact on the duration of lambing, with the high line having a shorter average lambing time and the low line longer, which showed a genetic correlation between number of lambs weaned and lamb survival.

It also had an impact on post-lambing ewe behaviour, which focuses on the dam staying on the birth site and assisting with the lambs first suckling attempts.

This was also genetically correlated to the number of lambs weaned.

Lambs from the high line selection were better able to maintain rectal temperature and therefore survived better in cold stress; high line ewes made more milk and the progeny were heavier at both weaning and hogget age.

However the sheep in the high line were also found to be plainer in skin, with clean fleece weight and fibre diameter unaffected, but staple strength reduced - an unwanted genetic correlation.

That said, the low line sheep had 8 to 10 times more breech strike as the high line.

“Many traits were affected by selection for NLW, and there were some correlated responses that were neutral or unfavourable, the most important being staple strength being unfavourably affected, but selection for NLW resulted in favourable genetic responses in components, including ewe rearing ability and this was despite an increase in twinning rate, which is quite an important finding,” Professor Cloete said.

There was a substantial difference in the survival of multiple lambs in the high line compared to the low line.

“Survival can be improved along with multiple births by selection of NLW. A great deal of what has been achieved has actually been at the level of better survival of multiple lambs”.

And Professor Cloete believes the Australian sheep industry is well placed to better record, and improve on, reproductive traits, due to its superior data collection in some areas.

“What your scheme allows you to do is target these component traits very specifically and follow quite a nuanced approach to what you want to achieve, depending on your conditions specifically at your farm.”

Genomics fuelling genetic engine

Genetics are the engine of the livestock industry, according to Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit Director Steve Miller.

An engine which takes information producers collect - being pedigrees, phenotypes and genotypes - and turns them into data that can be used to make selection decisions.

With the development of genomic selection, Mr Miller told the Leading Breeder conference in Bendigo in March, the genetic engine has gone from running on steam to internal combustion.

More literally, the rate of genetic gain has gone from 0.8 in 2016, to 1.4 in 2021.

“When you got full single step analysis...you now have the most up to date internal combustion engine available to you as breeders, it is up to you to get out there and use it and make the most of it,” Mr Miller said.

“One of the big advantages of genomic testing is you get a much better pedigree...that has been a big plus for genetic progress.

“New breeding objectives, and getting all the economic important traits, including some of these hard to measure traits like reproduction and eating quality all into your index is also important.”

While genomics has contributed to the increased rate of genetic gain, Mr Miller is keen to point out it isn't the only factor.

“You can't fuel the genomic engine...without the data,” he said.

“We don't get this prediction accuracy from nowhere, it has got to come from somewhere.”

Much like electric cars, the power still has to come from somewhere.

And that power is data that has come from the vast number of sheep that have been measured in the past, with the development of resource flocks crucial to this.

Mr Miller said having that genotype database is now allowing the industry to target the measurement of commercial animals, as well as hard to measure traits such as eating quality.

The American Angus Association is the largest beef breed association in the world and they register 50 per cent more animals

than the entirety of Breedplan across all breeds in Australia.

Mr Miller previously worked at that Association, and said while the organisation now has over one million genotypes recorded, when he left the organisation breeders had stopped recording data as consistently, which was a problem within itself.

“At one stage they were bringing in 120,000 ultrasound records per year for carcass traits, they are now down under 80,000, that's quite a drop - why would that be?

“They can actually get a very accurate breeding value now just with genomics, and if they phenotype the animals on top of that the accuracy really doesn't go up hardly at all - so why would you go through the expense and the risk...to do the phenotyping?

“So how do we keep the phenotyping going in light of really accurate genomic predictions?”

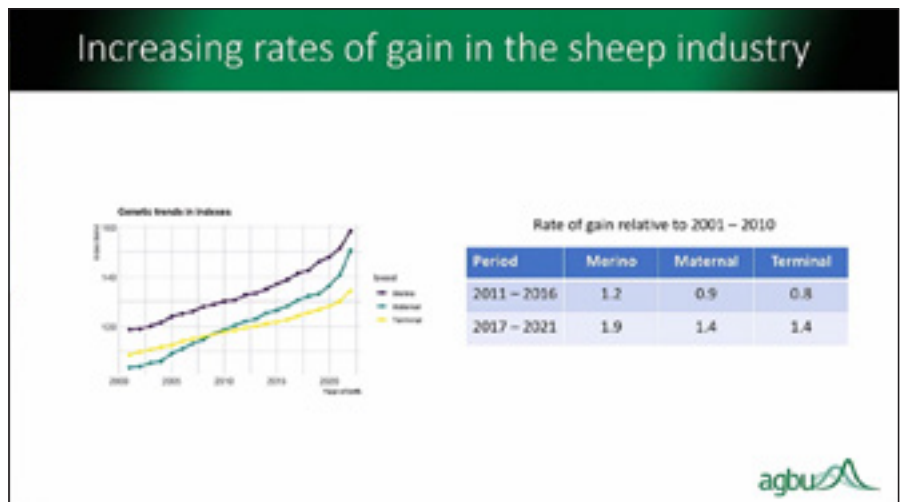
Mr Miller said while this is a good position to be in, not a problem, with genomic breeding values being so accurate, there were lessons for the Australian sheep industry.

Being that phenotype is still king, and we must continue to demonstrate why to the data collectors.

So what will power the genetic engines of the future?

A system that combines pedigree, phenotype and genotype to provide the best selection information.

“The future is going to be based on more powerful information, more phenotypes, more genotypes...more traits, which means for the industry and you the breeders more work, which means for us more research, and we need to develop a system that can handle all that, and that is a little bit us taking the FJ Holden and making it into the Hilux,” Mr Miller said.



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Tattykeel Poll Dorsets clear winner for top interbreed trophies

Courtesy of Karen Bailey, and Clare Adcock, The Land

TATTYKEEL have once again shown their dominance at the Sydney Royal, taking home all five major awards in the interbreed competition, including the supreme exhibit, a champion Poll Dorset ewe.

In a battle akin to sibling rivalry, the supreme ram and ewe, both Poll Dorsets and half-siblings from the Oberon stud, went head-to-head in the contest for supreme exhibit in their debut showing.

When awarding the top prize, judge Peter Matus noted that the milk-tooth ewe was "beautifully balanced", commending her combination of muscle depth and femininity.

"There's a tremendous muscularity that she's got and some would be concerned by this, but she's still a beautifully feminine ewe," he said.

"When I came into the shed, that was the first sheep that I really observed and in my mind, she's a worthy winner."

The pair came together to compete for the JA and MY Gilmore Perpetual Trophy for the best ram and ewe combination, with judge Reece Webster saying the winners "basically just pick themselves".

Fellow judge Paul Routley agreed, saying the pair were "pretty much faultless".

"In my eyes, they're a clear winner," he said.

"There is an extremely strong ram, and as we commented before, he's extremely smooth, great barrel, great bone.

"They've both got great top lines, great softness, great long, neck extensions."

From the same ram, both supreme animals also come from strong ewe lines.

The female's maternal grandsire won champion Poll Dorset ram at the 2014 national sheep show, while the ram's maternal grandsire was supreme Sydney Royal Poll Dorset exhibit in 2014.

Tattykeel's James Gilmore, Oberon, said the ewe would be flushed in May, November and March before being bred, and the ram would be used in the embryo transfer programs next month.

Mr Gilmore said the ewe was a great example of the top-performing animals that were coming out of their program each year.

"She's got that carcass, and when you're a terminal breed, that is our number one," he said.

"Normally, if you have that amount of thickness and power you might lose that femininity, and she doesn't.

"She's still very fine, so that's probably the standout for us.

"She's just soft, deep bodied and an easy going sheep, which is what we're constantly selecting for - an animal that will finish well on pasture."

Tattykeel's Poll Dorsets also won the Peter Taylor Memorial Perpetual Trophy for top interbreed group.



Supreme prime lamb ewe and exhibit with breeder Graham Gilmore, Tattykeel Poll Dorsets, Oberon, and RAS president Michael Millner, Millthorpe. Picture by Karen Bailey.



Peter Taylor Memorial Perpetual Trophy went to Tattykeel Poll Dorsets, Oberon. Pictured with the team is James and Hudson Gilmore, Rachael Wheeler and Graham Gilmore. Picture by Karen Bailey.

Poll Dorset groups win big at Wagin

Courtesy of Lynette Carew-Reid and Tamara Hooper, Farm Weekly

THE Poll Dorset breed section is consistently a strong presence at the Wagin Woolorama British and Australasian Sheep Breeds competition and this year they continued their

strong tradition being the second largest number of entries for a breed once again.

New Poll Dorset Association of Western Australia president Brittany Bolt was present and assisting with exhibiting her family's Rockalong stud, Wagin, entries.

She is the association's first female president and the youngest.

Ms Bolt is very involved in and enthusiastic about agriculture and her appointment to the position is a very positive sign for the future of the breed in WA.

The Poll Dorset section was the first cab off the rank to start the day's events and judge Todd Wilson, formerly Willow Park stud, Gardella, said the entries were of a high calibre

and he was really impressed with the sheep presented on the day.

Mr Wilson was particularly impressed with the scale and constitution of the younger sheep.

He said when judging it really was about what was presented on the day and how this would translate into breeding in the future.

With this in mind it was the second class of the day, containing the largest number of entries, with 12 sheep from the six studs exhibiting, that was the launching pad for the ram

that would ultimately be sashed grand champion Poll Dorset.

The young ram, in the under one year old, showing milk teeth and born before May 31, had caught the judges eye from the outset and was exhibited

by Max Whyte and Gail Cremasco's, Brimfield stud, Kendenup.

When sashed the grand champion Poll Dorset, Mr Wilson said it was the complete package.

"It stands well and presents well," he said.

"It has muscle right through the shoulders, the hind quarter and meat right the way through also.

"It is a very correct ram, with excellent feet and is a very good example of the breed.

"I choose the ram over the ewe as the grand champion because he just carries meat everywhere.

"He is very correct, has a great topline, neck and feet and just a huge amount of meat through the loin."

Mr Whyte said the ram was by sire Pepperton 115/18 and a Brimfield bred dam.

The big Poll Dorset ram was also part of the pair, one ram and one ewe, Brimfield won the champion of champions award later in the day.



Brimfield stud co-principal, Max Whyte, holding the grand champion Poll Dorset ram, with judge Todd Wilson, formerly Willow Parkstud, Gardella and Elders stud stock specialist Lauren Rayner.

The champion Poll Dorset ewe was also awarded to the Brimfield stud and again it was from a younger ewe class, being a ewe under one year, showing milk teeth and born after June 1.

Mr Wilson said the ewe was also an excellent example of the breed, but just didn't have the same volume of meat as the ram.

"She was a very good ewe," he said.

"She had a beautiful shoulder, nice long neck and body.

"She was a very feminine and correct ewe with a really good width of loin."

Mr Whyte said the ewe was by sire Brimfield 942/18 and out of a Brimfield dam.

The reserve champion ewe and reserve champion ram were both from the Squiers family's Shirlee Downs stud, Quairading.

The ram was actually from the pairs class and Mr Wilson said he was very well put together.

"He carried a tremendous amount of muscle and stood well," he said.

While the reserve champion ewe was also praised by Mr Wilson, who said it really came down to small details when making the final decisions.

The closely followed scan class saw the Squiers family's Dongadilling stud

entry win on totals and also separately with the scan results, amassing a total

of 95.3 points, five points clear of its Shirlee Downs stud entry that was second place overall, while receiving the top score from the judge.

Among the group classes, the Brimfield stud was the winner of the group of one ram and two ewes, the group of three ewes and the pair of ewes, while Shirlee Downs won the

pair of rams and the two rams and two ewes group.

With 271 separate entries, from 23 studs representing five breeds, there was plenty of depth to the competition resulting in

WAGIN WOOLORAMA

some tough decisions for the three judges Adrian Veitch, Grant Bingham and Todd Wilson when it came to the Interbreed championship classes at the

end of the day.

The reserve supreme champion ram was a Poll Dorset from Max Whyte and Gail Cremasco's Brimfield stud, Kendenup.

This ram was also a young animal, coming out of the first class judged for the day, the ram under one year, showing milk teeth and born before May 31.

The Poll Dorset entries into the show were the second largest in total for the day.

Judge Todd Wilson, Mardella, said the Brimfield ram was very correct, carried meat everywhere and was an excellent example of the breed.

The big Poll Dorset ram was also part of the pair, one ram and one ewe, Brimfield won the champion of champions award with.

The interbreed judging culminated in the group of two rams and two ewes, a class carrying a Honda XR 190L two-wheel ag bike courtesy of joint diamond sponsors Elders Ltd and

Farm Weekly.

Not one of the joint judging decision was unanimous, but this time it was the Squiers family, Shirlee Downs, Quairading, that rode away on the bike thanks to its group of Poll Dorsets.

Other interbreed group judging gave Brimfield Poll Dorsets a win in the Milne Agrigroup champion of champions pair for best ewe and ram.

Brimfield's Poll Dorsets also won the best interbreed group of three ewes and the best interbreed group of one ram and two ewes.

All through the judging the prestigious Cambell Nalder Memorial trophy for the most points in the section was a tussle between Brimfield and Shirlee Downs but after a run of wins

in the group classes Brimfield amassed 38 points to easily clinch the elegant cup for only the third time in the 35 years since it was first awarded in 1988.



Champion group of two rams and two ewes from the Shirlee Downs stud, Quairading. Judges Grant Bingham (left), Todd Wilson and Adrian Veitch joined Shirlee Downs stud's Chris Squiers, Sacha Squiers, Helen Breeding, Adrian Squiers and Zara Squiers and sponsor representatives, Elders' Michael O'Neill and Lauren Rayner and Farm Weekly's Kyah Peeti.



Winning the Champion of Champions, ram and ewe pair was Brimfield Poll Dorset stud, Kendenup. With the sheep is judge Grant Bingham (left), Williams, stud principal, Max Whyte, judge Adrian Veitch, Narrogin, Kye Brown, Kendenup, judge Todd Wilson, Mardella and Wagin Woolorama 2023 rural ambassador, Chloe Blight, Highbury



Brimfield stud principal Max Whyte (left), Kendenup, with his champion interbreed group of one ram & two ewes. Holding the other sheep are Helen Breeding, Quairading, and Kye Brown, Mt Barker.

Davies remembered for striving for perfection in Wrattenbullie studs

Courtesy of Catherine Miller, Stock Journal

Wrattenbullie stud's Rod Davies is being fondly remembered as a deep thinker who set incredibly high standards for his sheep and cattle studs.

The vice president of the Australian Poll Dorset Association from Wrattenbullie, near Naracoorte, passed away last week after only recently being diagnosed with leukemia.

He had a lifelong love of breeding Poll Dorsets starting the Wrattenbullie stud at just 12 years of age in 1965 with a few ewes he bought with his pocket money.

One of the stud's biggest highlights was winning supreme Poll Dorset exhibit at the 2018 Royal Adelaide Show and in more recent years selling rams into top studs -including Ulandi Park stud at Marrabel- who paid a new stud record of \$9500 at Wrattenbullie's 2022 sale.

Despite this success Rod was always striving to breed a better sheep.

Poll Herefords were his other passion, establishing the stud in 1976.

Wrattenbullie was a long-time vendor at the Naracoorte Poll Hereford multi-vendor sale and then the Diamond bull sale. In recent times bulls were being sold on-farm.

Rod considered one of his greatest accomplishments seeing clients keep coming back to buy their genetics.

The stud's highest price was a Poll Hereford bull sold in 2017 for \$21,000 to Alistair and Jayne Day, Allendale stud, Bordertown.

Rod was a valued member of the Naracoorte-Hamilton region Poll Dorset sub branch for decades and had been on the Australian Poll Dorset Association for the past five years.

APDA president Isabele Roberts says Rod will be greatly missed and remembered as a kind, considerate man who gave people his time freely.

"I will miss our conversations, he was always looking at the big picture and seeing how we as a breed can be a big part of the lamb industry long term," she said.

Ms Roberts said he was a great lateral thinker and always took the time to listen to what others had to say before forming a position.

"He erred on the conservative side but that is not a negative, if you are looking to make change it is always important to see what has come before and what has worked."

"But he was always mindful of the breed moving forward for its future."

She says there will be a "great big hole" where Rod had organised events through the Naracoorte-Hamilton group, always keen to get fellow breeders together and educate people about the lamb industry.

Friend and fellow breeder Alan Schinckel held a joint ram sale for 37 years until Leenala's dispersal in 2017 which he said enabled them to compete with other more well-known studs and build a strong clientele.

He said Rod had a very good eye for livestock but was always striving for perfection.

"He was the biggest critic of his own sheep, they were never good enough in his eyes but he certainly bred some very good ones," Mr Schinckel said.

Their first few sales were held at Coonawarra but then moved to the Naracoorte Showgrounds where Wrattenbullie still holds its annual ram sale.

In 2017 both were awarded life membership of the Naracoorte Pastoral & Agricultural Society.

Rod joined the committee in 1984 and was president in the early 2000s steering the society through some financially difficult times.

He also helped improve the facilities in the sheep pavilion, upgrading the grandstands and the pens.

Mr Schinckel also remembers Rod being a driving force behind the first national Poll Dorset conference held in Hamilton, Vic in 2009.

"He could be a bit conservative but on the other hand he came up with some great ideas," he said.

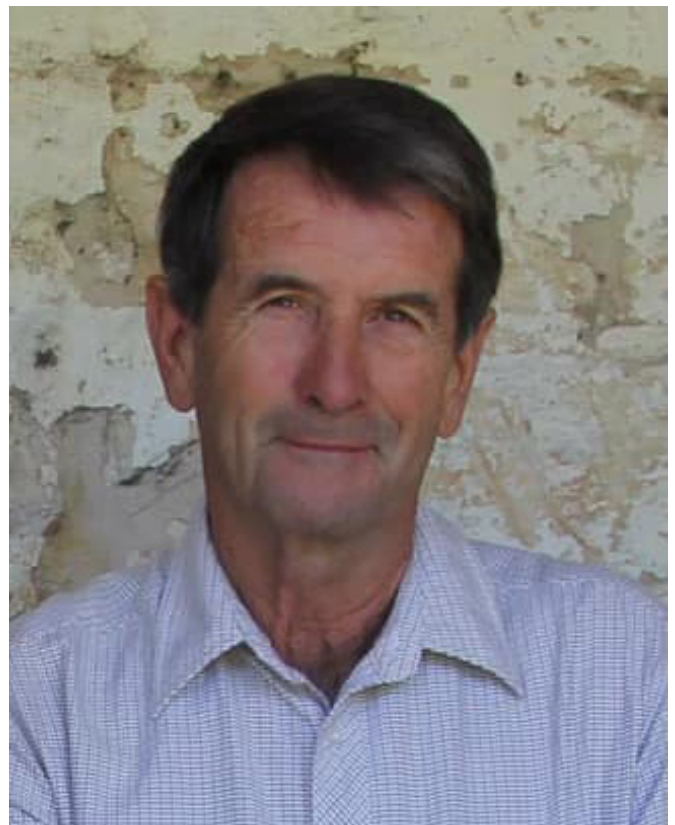
"He was a very straight and honest person and if he said he would do something he would follow it through."

Rod's son Brad said his father loved being out in the paddocks with his sheep and cattle and had a great passion for breeding livestock.

"Every time Mum and Dad went away they would always have to fit in a ram sale, they even went to the Dorset Fair on their honeymoon," he said.

Brad said Rod was also a great judge of livestock, having judged at the Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth Royal Shows as well as Hamilton Sheepvention and the 2022 NSW Dorset Championships at Cowra.

"He was definitely the harshest critic of his own sheep, constantly telling people what he didn't like about the animal," he said. "But in the last few years he really felt like he was getting somewhere and finally selling to some top studs and getting a consistent line up of animals for sale."



A lifetime of Poll Dorset passion for Max

Courtesy of the Douglas family

Max was born in 1939 in Bendigo, Victoria, as one of eight children born to parents, Kenneth and Irene Douglas. As a young boy, Max grew up on the original family property at Woodstock West, known as "View Hill", farming sheep and growing crops, including wheat and oats.

He attended the small local Woodstock school before leaving to work at home alongside his father. From a young age, Max had always helped his father and grandfather Thomas Douglas with the sheep and farm work.

Thomas established a Dorset Horn stud in 1935, which was called "View Hill" at Woodstock West. He was a big man who had lost his right arm in a farming accident, however, continued working on the farm until 1942, before handing it to Kenneth and retiring to live in Kangaroo flat.

Kenneth continued to work the "View Hill" property at Woodstock West, with Max's keen interest in Dorset horns, leading them to develop the stud further. In 1958, Kenneth and Max decided to expand the stud to include the Poll Dorset breed with a purchase of the Ram Timberlea 31/1957 and 33 Dorset Horn Ewes from their View Hill stud.

In 1961, the Woodstock West property was sold to a Douglas cousin and Kenneth and Max purchased a smaller property with irrigation at Eddington. Situated on the Loddon river, about 24 km away. This property was then called View Hills.

The View Hills stud was very successful throughout the 1960s with the 1960 Dorset Horn show team, winning 18 out of a possible 20 championships at shows from Albury to Melbourne. It was an incredible first year of showing for Max and Kenneth, culminating at the Melbourne Royal show where they won the novice Ram and Ewe class, then winning the open classes, before taking out both Ram and Ewe champions. A feat not achieved before or since by a first time exhibitor.

Max met Coral Mooney in Melbourne, and they were married in 1962. During the years at Eddington, Max judged many small country shows, and was well known and respected for his knowledge of the Dorset breed.

On the retirement of Max's father, Kenneth, the View Hills stud was dispersed in 1973. Max and his family moved to Oberon to manage the Karawina Poll Dorset stud, owned by the Dickson family.

On arrival to Oberon, Max, and members of the Dixon family attended the Poll Dorset Stud dispersals of Marleybone and Lindsbury to purchase sheep for the Karawina stud. With Max's expertise and knowledge of breeding, Karawina progressed to be one of Australia's top studs within four years.

In the second year at Karawina, the stud won Champion Ram at Sydney Royal. Max was also nominated and won an award in the local area for farmer of the year, he was judging in Tasmania at the time, so was unable to attend the awards dinner, but was quite honoured, especially as he was still quite young at the time.

In 1977, Max & his family moved to Tamworth and established the Abelene Park Poll Dorset stud.

Max, judged at every Royal show in Australia, including Melbourne royal show three times, while it was the largest Poll Dorset sheep show of the time. Those years being 1974, 1981, and 2000. The Shorn Ram class in 1981, holds the record number of entries in one class at 81 Rams.

He was also excited to win the ballot for 2000 and felt honoured to judge in the millennium year.

The last royal show Max judged was in 2003 at Adelaide, then retired from judging, as he always thought it was good to have younger judges.

Max was proud to be on the inaugural committee of the Australasian Dorset championships in Bendigo since it was formed in 2008, until retiring in 2016.

Max always liked to support this major Poll Dorset exhibition in Bendigo with the best of their show team every year.

Although Max was unable to attend the last few championships, he loved watching the live stream of judging, and was extremely proud when the stud took out Supreme exhibit in 2019. He also took a keen interest in the auction as well and was excited when Abelene Park gained top price and average six times in the last 10 years of exhibiting.

Max had a long involvement with assisting young people with skills at schools and junior sheep judging, as well as helping new studs starting out. The Tocal Ag College, in the Hunter region of NSW regularly visits Abelene Park as part of their annual farm production tour. This has occurred for the past 30 years with up to 40 students coming to have a look at what the stud does. Max always liked to get the young people out and put their hands on the sheep.

Max said it was difficult in the early days to get breeders to share their secrets about preparing and showing sheep. He always talked of when Joe Turnbull, manager of the renowned "Deepfields" Dorset Horn stud took a liking to him, and at Albury show, taught him so much in just a couple of days. This made him realise how important it was to be able to help out others looking to get a start.

Max always commented how he loved breeding Dorset sheep and the enjoyment he got from it. He was always striving to breed the perfect sheep.



Coledale has found a new home

Courtesy of Sue & Wallace Binnie

The Coledale Poll Dorset flock was founded in 1969, by Wallace and John Binnie to breed rams to use in the family prime lamb operation. However, this enterprise soon became all consuming and the challenge to breed better quality sires to produce the best sucker lambs possible.

This then led to attending and exhibiting sheep at the shows both locally and later on at Albury Sheep Show, ASBA shows as well as Melbourne Royal Show during the 1980's and 1990's.

This was a wonderful era as there were so many new studs becoming established and the Poll Dorset Breed quickly became the number one prime lamb sire.

Throughout the following year's the Binnie family were very much involved in the Goulburn Valley Region of the Association and Wallace said that there were so many other young families that were involved around the 1980's. It was a great social outlet through a very challenging time in farming.

It was in the mid 80's that the family partnership was dissolved, and John went on to become a very successful lawyer and Wallace, Sue and our three children continued with the Poll Dorset flock.

After a very low period for the sheep industry during the 1990's, it was decided to hold our first on property production sale at Coledale.

Having sold rams primarily through the registered ram sales around the state as well as at the completion of special sheep

sales, a very loyal client base had built up over many years and this made our first on property sale a great success.

Coledale embraced the performance recording concept of Lambplan from its inception by the MLA, but hasn't always agreed with the emphasis placed on various trait indexes. Wallace has always liked the big open faced rams with a smooth front, good spring of rib and deep hindquarters, and then try to find the best set of indexes to compliment these qualities.

The new science of performance recording is quite time consuming, but without the aid of performance indexes we are not able to fine tune the profit drivers of our industry.

Wallace believes the great majority of our clients buy rams they like the look of and that have the best indexes of the most desirable traits they are looking for.

After 22 on property ram sales, Coledale has remained one of the premium Poll Dorset production sales in Victoria and with the final production sale coming up in September it will be a very sad day for us.

It was a very hard decision to make, to sell the stud but the upside of that is the majority of the ewes have been bought by a young breeder, Xavier Burton whose family property is only about 35kms away from us.

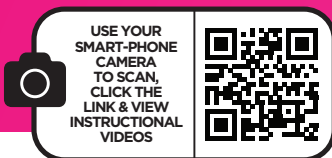
His plan is to continue on with the Coledale prefix and breeding philosophies, and to retain the sale date for his on property annual sale. We wish Xavier every success with his new venture and I'm sure he will do very well.

Even though we are dispersing our flock, we have made so many wonderful friends and acquaintances throughout our 54 years of breeding and being involved with the Poll Dorset Association, we will continue to attend shows, sales, field days etc.

The Poll Dorsets will always be part of our family.



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Central Region Bus Day and 60th Meeting Celebrations

Courtesy of Tania King and Janet MacDonald

The Central Victorian Region celebrated their 60th meeting on Sunday February 5th at the Sebastopol Bowling Club in Ballarat.

The meeting was well attended with 37 members past and present attending the luncheon which was followed by the 60th meeting for the region.

The region's President, Mr. Patrick Flanagan opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and reading the first paragraph from the 1st meeting minutes held on February 27th 1963. The first meeting was called by Mr J Oxley of the famous 'Mossley' stud and the region was delighted to have his son and wife, Robert and Pam Oxley in attendance on the day.

The region was well supported with the Victorian State President, Mr Wallace Binnie and his wife Sue of the 'Coledale' stud.

Mr Binnie was invited to take the chair for the election of office bearers, where he took the opportunity to congratulate the region on organising a wonderful event to showcase the 60th meeting, where it was great to see so many old members return for the day and thanked the region for the invitation and the leadership shown and declared "We are a big sheep family". Elections were held and Mr Patrick Flanagan was re-elected as President, Mr Joshua Poulton as Vice and Mrs. Tania King as Secretary.

At the conclusion of the meeting the President called upon our oldest continued flock in the region, flock number 211, the 'Englewood Park' stud to cut the cake.

Stud principal, Mr Geoff Oliver and two other members, Mr Peter Cain, of the 'Glenore' stud and Mrs Pam Heath of the 'Heathcote' stud also assisted, as their studs were also milestones in our region.

The cake was made and decorated by the Presidents niece depicting a lovely Poll Dorset sheep on green pasture.

All members shared afternoon tea with some region memorabilia on display, including the region's very first minute book.

The Central Region's annual family day was a bus trip to the Werribee Treatment Plant, where our region's president, Patrick Flanagan is the livestock manager.

Patrick guided the twenty two people on the tour which included viewing the dairy heifers, corn crops, historic cattle barn and the site of the Cocoroc village.

We also got to see the settling ponds and the world heritage bird sanctuary.

The members enjoyed a picnic lunch before inspecting Patrick's well advanced Poll Dorset lambs and a demonstration of his crutching cradle.

The day was enjoyed by all who attended and we wish to thank Patrick for his hospitality shown to us all.

The Werribee treatment plant is a world leader in environmentally-friendly sustainable sewage treatment and also comprises 6000 hectares of a large scale cropping enterprise consisting of maize, wheat, barley and canola as well as merino wethers for wool production and an export heifer operation.

The site is declared as an internationally significant wetland and is the second largest wetland in Australia after Kakadu National Park.

The site is also home to the world's rarest bird and frog species.

The treatment plant was added to the Victorian heritage register in 2021, recognising its historical, archeological and technical significance.



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