



THE AUSTRALIAN POLL DORSET JOURNAL

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MAY 2025



The science of prime lambs

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE...



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PRIME LAMB
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CONDITIONING
EWE FLOCKS
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to the first issue of the Poll Dorset Journal for 2025. It has not been an ideal start to the season with many areas now desperate for some rain, while others have received a welcome relief and a good start to autumn. Unfortunately, we cannot predict the seasons, and I send my thoughts to those in need.

The board met in late February where we discussed many things including where Poll Dorsets place themselves in the future lamb industry. With a greater influence of 'other' breeds it is now essential that we make sure our position remains relevant to the commercial lamb breeder, buyers, processors as well as the consumer at the end of the line. Our new promotions officer, Brittany Bolt is working tirelessly on adapting a new modern advertising concept to promote Poll Dorsets going into the future, which will be used for our spring ram sales promotions.

One way the APDA currently promotes the breed is by sponsoring the Inter Collegiate Meat Judging event in Wagga Wagga, NSW which will be held from July 8-12, 2025. This is such an important event to be involved in because it educates and encourages agricultural university students and industry participants into the red meat industry and puts the Poll Dorset breed at the forefront for the next generation of farmers, meat buyers, feedlotters, processors, stock agents and even the big-name supermarkets who will all attend the event. This is one method of securing our future within our own industry.

The Bowan Park Research Flock trial is another way of providing information on Poll Dorset genetics. It is something I have not mentioned previously in any of my reports, but I now have more knowledge and appreciation for what this trial is achieving to highlight and promote our breed in a controlled environment to reach relatively high accuracies in the genetic performance by benchmarking 73 sires from across the country in the past five years. The trial is now in its sixth year but has confirmed that there "is sufficient genetic variation

in the Poll Dorset breed to achieve lambs with high survival and growth rates, good carcase quality and eating quality to match intramuscular fat grids". This trial is the envy of many other breeds, so I want to thank and congratulate the Bowan Park team on their foresight into running this trial.

News from the office is that the APDA have signed on Shearwell Australia again as our major sponsor of Poll Dorsets, and where possible we encourage our members to support the company in any capacity. I, for one, have been using their tags since 2014, both EID and a visual and find them incredibly easy to use from birth and retention. If applied correctly, they are second to none. Shearwell also stock sheep EID equipment, weigh crates and automatic lamb feeder milk machines. They are located in Bendigo, and you can look them up online or contact them directly for orders or with any questions you may have. Zoetis is another one of our major sponsors and I again encourage the use of their many products on the market and I can highly recommend the GleanEry 7 in 1 B12 vaccine. For more information on Zoetis products please go to their website at www2.zoetis.com.au. Neogen is also a major sponsor of Poll Dorsets and we encourage our members to support them also going forward.

The 2026 conference planning is well under way with the date set for February 25-27 and will begin with a meet and greet game of bare foot bowls, so plenty of time for us all to practice. I encourage breeders to attend the three-day event, which is going to be packed full of industry relevant sessions and a breeders' dinner. The event will give breeders an opportunity to socialise in an informal friendly environment. I wish Donna Scott and her conference committee from the Albury -Wagga Wagga region all the best in organising the event. Information on ticket sales will be available soon.

Just a quick reminder, it's flock return time and please make sure your current Brucellosis Certificate is uploaded in the database for you to be able to submit your 2025 return. If you have not received your certificate, can you please contact your vet who took the blood samples so they can follow this up or the relevant department in your state. Also, any rams needing transfers will need to have their DNA results submitted to the office (this can be done online also).

I will close with wishing you all well for your upcoming autumn lambing and for the year ahead.

Tania King
PRESIDENT



THE AUSTRALIAN POLL DORSET JOURNAL

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 30-June 1	NSW State Sheep Show - Dubbo
June TBA	NSW Dorset Championships - Cowra
June 22	Victorian Sheep Show - Ballarat
July 18-20	Australian Sheep & Wool Show - Bendigo
Aug 3-4	Hamilton Sheepvention
Aug 7	Central Western NSW Youth Day
Aug 8-16	Ekka Royal Queensland Show
Aug 30- Sep 7	Royal Adelaide Show
Sep 12-14	Australasian Dorset Championships
Sep 27-Oct 4	Royal Perth Show
Sep 25-Oct 5	Royal Melbourne Show
Oct 9-12	Royal Launceston Show
Oct 23-25	Royal Hobart Show

ACROSS THE PENS

Flock Returns

It's that time of year again – you will have received your paper copy by mail if that is how you like to do your return, or an email with instructions if you are able to do it online.

Please call Keryn, Tegan or me in the office if you need any help in completing your return – (03) 5443 9902.

Late fees do apply if the return is not completed by May 31. And we in the office all hope that you receive some decent rainfall soon.

March board meeting

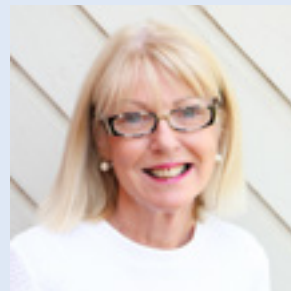
You will see all the news from our meeting held in Bendigo February 27-28 in this issue. It was so good to have all the board here and be able to show off our wonderful city.

2026 Annual Conference

We have a lot to look forward to early next year with the annual conference to be held in Wagga Wagga in February. The region is busy planning a host of speakers, dinners and excursions and we hope to see as many there as possible.

Sale Dates

Please send your sale dates and results as they happen, we will publish them on the website and in the Journal.



COMMERCIAL SEEDSTOCK SPECIALISTS

Introducing IVADENE 217/23

Janmac is proud to introduce Ivadene 217/23.

Secured outright for \$15,000 at the 2024 Benalla Ivadene Sale, this standout sire first caught our eye at the Adelaide Royal with his exceptional combination of figures and phenotype. Boasting raw data of 56 EMD @ 120kg, along with impressive length and depth, he offers immense value to both our stud and the breed.

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Limited semen packages available.



SIRE: MELTON VALE 210526
DAM: IVADENE 210041
SOD: JEWSHARP 190432

TCP	BWT	PWT	PEMD
★ 170.73	0.62	★ 19.85	★ 4.31
PFAT	LMY	IMF	
-0.92	★ 5.64	-0.46	★ TOP 5%

2025 21ST ANNUAL PRODUCTION SALE

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PROMOTIONS REPORT

We had some very stimulating discussions at our board meeting in February. There was a lot of consideration around the future of our breed and how we can effectively promote Poll Dorsets into the future.

The APDA has run a successful and memorable “packs a punch/put a winner in your corner” campaign over the last few years and now we are working on designing and releasing a refreshed campaign this year (keep an eye on your e-newsletters for updates).

It is time to refresh with a more modern and eye-catching design. We have consistently been targeting the key messages of fast growth, profitability, and productivity, and these will always be relevant marketing points to our breed, however, we need to set ourselves above the rest. What is our point of difference? We are now focussing on refreshing our messaging and marketing strategy.

Poll Dorsets are a versatile breed and have been the foundation of many of the emerging composite breeds of today, so we can tap into this and promote the influence we have across the sheep industry. We need to ensure we stay relevant and are viewed as the preferred terminal sires across all production systems.

We would love to hear from you on your ideas and opinions. Please email or call me for further discussion.

We are excited to share that our national Poll Dorset Conference is confirmed for 2026, in Wagga Wagga NSW. Stay tuned for future communications around this event and ticket release later in the year.

I'd also like to put a call out to any avid photographers that are capturing high quality images at various points in the year, in the yards, out in the paddock at lambing, weaning or putting the rams out etc. If you are happy for us to use these in promotional material and social media posts to promote the Poll Dorset breed, I'd love to hear from you! We'd love representation from all over Australia and from a wide range of breeders. And while we love show pictures, we are seeking more on-farm, production-focused images to cater towards commercial enterprises and clients of Poll Dorset rams. The board has a small collection of photos, but we would love some new content, and a wide spread of images to avoid focussing on only a few people. We can only use what we have available to us.

Keep an eye out on social media, as we will be increasing educational posts around genetics, animal health and management. This will be shareable content for your own Facebook pages. In line with the increase in educational posts, we will also be hosting a series of webinars online throughout the year with special guest speakers. We will announce these via social media and email.

If you have anyone in the Poll Dorset community that you think should share their story, or perhaps they are working on something unique in their farming enterprise that needs the spotlight (you can nominate yourself), please contact Fiona Myers at fionarmyers@gmail.com, our wonderful journalist for an article in the APDA journal. We love to celebrate people in our community, and this is a fantastic way to honour that.

Brittany Bolt

PROMOTIONS CHAIR

MARCH BOARD MINUTES

The board meeting of the Australian Poll Dorset Association was held in person and via zoom on Feburary 27-28.

All board members were able to join us in Bendigo with the exception of Laurie Fairclough who, following recent surgery, was able to join us via Zoom.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The following motions were resolved:

That we include PIC numbers in annual returns from now on;

That because of the cost of living squeeze we hold all costs and fees as they currently are;

That any region with only one signatory on an account needs to have a further signatory from an APDA board member or the APDA Secretariat

That we set up a trust fund for any inactive regions funds to be held within the original region name.

PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

This year the promotional spend will be in the vicinity of \$55,000 plus allocation of regional funding.

The meeting voted for the APDA to also have a presence at the ICMJ conference as a workshop supporting and ribbon partner.

MAJOR EVENT FUNDING

The following funding was approved:

Adelaide region – funding for LambEx shared with the Adelaide region on a 50/50 basis.

WA region – sign at saleyards

Victorian State Committee – Live streaming of ADC championships and post show drinks and pizza at Australian Sheep and Wool Show.

CW NSW - funding towards event, held every second year.

Naracoorte Hamilton – Naracoorte Hamilton field days funding

Albury Wagga Wagga – Significant funding to assist with the 2026 annual conference.

REGIONAL ADVERTISING PROPOSALS

Dubbo – \$1000 Advertisement in The Land

WA Region - \$2000

Central Victorian Region - \$2000 advertising

NSW Central West - \$440

Albury Wagga - \$2000 advertising

Wimmera Mallee – \$1000

Goulburn Valley Region - \$1000

Hamilton Naracoorte \$3000 - this represents a new arrangement for regions based on size, i.e. up to \$1000 for regions with up to 1000 rams, between 1-3000 rams \$2000 and over 3000 rams receive \$3000.

MAJOR SHOW APPOINTMENTS

Sheepvention – Paul Day

NSW Dorset Championships – Dane Rowley

Australian Sheep and Wool Show – Charlotte Cain

Sydney – Roger Traves

Canberra – Jeff Sutton

Adelaide – David Pipkorn

Vic Show Ballarat – Elizabeth Wilkinson

FLOCK COMMITTEE

New studs include:

Ballark stud, Morrisons, Victoria; Flock number 43

Kooradale stud, Koorawatha, NSW Flock number 4680

Downerhill stud, Lexton, Victoria; Flock number 4681

We also welcomed new associate members Tamsin Bouchier and Lachie Bailey.

CORRECTION FROM LAST ISSUE

In the last flock committee report it was reported that Armdale Park ownership was transferred when in fact it should only have been Armdale. We apologise to both owners for this error.



TREASURER'S REPORT

No fee increases

The board decided at the March board meeting, in light of the current cost pressures, that there would be no fee increases this year. In part this is from income from our association sponsors, so please consider our sponsors when purchasing: Novios for animal health products, Neogen for DNA testing and Shearwell now that every lamb requires a eID tag.

New financial year

This year we are moving to a new financial year date, starting on May 1. Now all income and expenses, particularly for the Journal and Promotions will fall into the same financial year. In the past these two areas have been over two years. The new financial year will make budgeting much easier and will enable getting the annual financial reporting to members, in the required time, before the AGM. Thank you, to those regions that submitted 'Regional Promotional' grants and special events funding applications for the March board meeting. The invoices can be submitted after May 1.

Annual returns

Annual returns are now open with late fees to be applied on returns received after May 31. Every return is checked by the office. Each year there are number of members who require credits, from miscalculation of fees to a surprising number of members who double pay. For our South Australian members, only Adelaide region members are required to pay an additional ewe levy to their region.

George Carter

TREASURER





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The Genetics of Profitable Lamb Production

A five-year sire evaluation has shown Poll Dorset breeders the breed has potential to produce sires with the genetics to get high eating quality lambs to market sooner and to suit various production systems.

The Bowan Park Poll Dorset Research Flock trial has assessed and benchmarked the production and genetic performance of 73 sires — sires from studs across Australia and with variation from show champions to 1pc Lambplan index rams, that underwent assessment for the survival, growth, carcass weight and dressing percentage, and eating quality of their lambs.

The trial produced 3000 lambs that were marketed in under 19 weeks from 1700 acre property near Cudal in central west New South Wales, owned but run separately by Ridgehaven Poll Dorset Stud.

Only about 20 percent of the sires in the trial came from highly tested populations and the results have indicated potential for faster genetic progress within the breed for high growth good eating quality lamb production.

Presenting results at Gundagai in March, Bowan Park Trial coordinator Isabele Roberts said the trial “is very much an exploration of what we can find rather than this being a finite description of how our breed can perform.”

She said the trial’s lamb carcass results showed that there are Poll Dorset genetics in the industry that will produce lambs that grow fast and have good eating quality – ie. high intramuscular fat – and good eye muscle.

Referring to a table of six example sires, Ms Roberts said there are Poll Dorset sires that have a balance of breeding values that are optimum for lambing ease, maximum for growth and eating quality and eye muscle depth. Ms Roberts said it is hard to get a sire with high ASBV’s for muscle and IMF.

“But over time we should be able to find them,” University of New England’s associate professor of meat science Dr Peter McGilchrist said.

“But we are changing physiology so we’ve got to be patient; we’ve just got to slowly find them and breed from them and multiply them.

“We can do it, they’re just rare because it’s not their natural physiology.”

Ms Roberts said assuming good nutrition and management, the trial showed that there is sufficient genetic variation in the Poll Dorset breed to achieve lambs with a high survival and growth rates, good carcass quality and eating quality to match intramuscular fat grids.

She said finding ‘curve bender’ rams – able to give low-medium birth weight lambs with high growth rates – was a critical part of what breeders do.

“We are actively looking for curve-bending rams that do a different job to what the standard ram may.”

Getting marketable lambs faster

Ms Roberts said days to marketable lamb weight significantly impacts farm production capacity and profitability.

With the goal of a minimum liveweight of 50kg to achieve a 25kg carcass, in the trial’s gestated single/ reared single lamb group, 85pc of the lambs measured over five years achieved 50kg liveweight in 16-19 weeks.

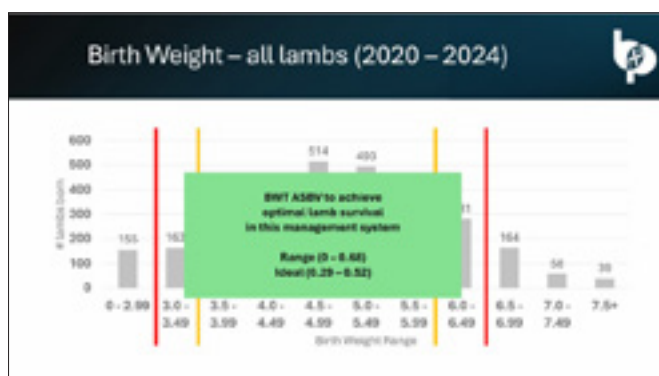
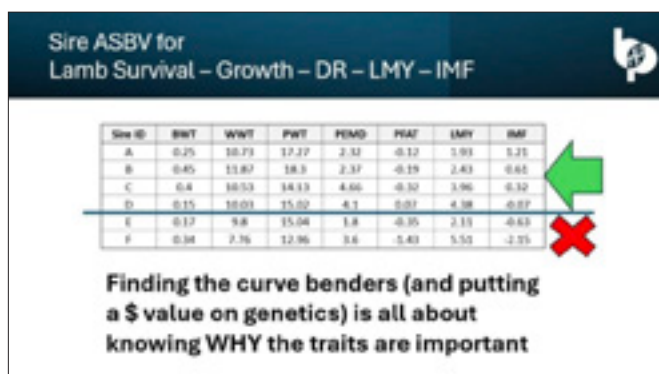
“We had a lamb that could have been sold at 10 weeks of age – he was over 50 kg.

“We had 24 pc of our lambs that could have been sold at 14 weeks over 50kg,” Ms Roberts said.

“We had almost 60pc at 17 weeks and by 19 weeks three quarters of the lambs would be off the farm and gone.

“The trial has reinforced our knowledge of how fast a Poll Dorset lamb can grow. Our winner for average daily weight gain was 521g/day from birth to 19 weeks.”

“Days to marketable weight (or daily weight gain) allows the stocking rate of your farm to actually increase, because the lamb that you are producing – your production unit is gone, and the grass that you grow can be spread over what’s left.”





While recognizing the value of Gundagai Meat Processors IMF lamb grid to the industry and its cooperation in processing trial lambs, Ms Roberts sounded a warning to other lamb processors.

She said the processors had about five years before producers started “talking pretty loudly to make sure that as a lamb industry we are recognized for the quality of the job that we do.”

“Firstly and most importantly, by providing feedback on what we produce and secondly, by paying us for the quality of what we produce.”

She said the meat processing industry, by giving feedback and paying for eating quality, can equip and encourage the industry to make the necessary genetic and production changes.

Ms Roberts said stud breeders need to realise that they can underpin the quality of the lamb to the consumer, and the trial had shown that high growth with the right carcass and eating quality genetics is possible, meaning premium quality lambs can be sold earlier .

Ms Roberts said it has been incredibly rewarding to see that young lambs — 17-19 weeks – can be produced successfully with IMF above 5 per cent “when they are under good management and nutrition.”

“It is really quite possible to do as long as you’ve got the right genetics.

“It’s been incredibly valuable for us to see this on-farm, but it’s very possible, you’ve just got to know where your genetics are to do it.”

Putting Poll Dorsets on the eating quality track

Dr McGilchrist said the trial was putting participating Poll Dorset breeders well down the track to producing the lamb consumers will demand in the future.

He showed a graph comparing the breeding value variation within and between breeds on loin eating quality.

“Poll Dorsets, we’ve got a big variation there, right, so some of us have been selecting hard on growth and yield, on things that make you money now, and others had a focus on other traits that have kept their eating quality higher.

“So if there is any breed with bigger variation it’s probably Poll Dorsets,” he said.

“So we’ve got to go harder and select within and use the information we’ve got to get the right ones out going forward.



“But look at the overlap between all those breeds, it’s huge, there is opportunity whichever breed you use – so I’m certainly not breedist.”

Ms Roberts said Poll Dorset breeders had “the best lamb production breed hands down.”

“I think we have explored a lot of genetics to understand what we’ve got to use for the future.

She said Poll Dorset breeders now knew that they had growth and muscle traits with intramuscular fat “and that’s the future of the lamb industry.”

“So when you know what we’ve got you can either discard what doesn’t work or you can expand what does work.

“We are now in a position to do more and do better and do it much faster than we ever would have been before.

“The lamb industry as it sits right now needs a breed that knows where it is going and I feel like that’s where we are at.”

Dr McGilchrist said variation is valuable. The industry’s Angus benchmarking program is up to its 15 cohort of progeny and has generated more variation in marbling than exists in any other breed in the beef industry, he said.

“And I think that’s what we are probably going to do here in Poll Dorsets.”

He said the Angus program has given animals that suit different production systems and that is the opportunity for the Poll Dorsets.

Dr McGilchrist said last year the Angus breed produced its first marble score 9 animal.

“You can take any trait where you want to go if you’ve got variability.”

Ms Roberts said prime lamb producers need to be able to find rams that suit their production system.

“You have to have variation but you have to know what you’ve got to understand the variation.”

Victorian Poll Dorset breeder Damon Coats said he has had seven rams in the trial and he regards it as “world-leading,” improving his stud’s bottomline and giving it direction to ensure he bred rams that producers wanted.

He said the breed would have been resting on its laurels if the trial had not been initiated and run by Isabele Roberts.

New South Wales breeder Craig Wilson said the trial had brought genetics back to the farm level and he is expecting greater results from the next cohort of trial sires, that includes a bigger variation in highly tested Lambplan measured rams.

Ms Roberts said the trial has also introduced more breeders to objective measurements and ASBVs.

Article courtesy of Terry Sim, Sheep Central.

For those Poll Dorset breeders who were not able to attend, sessions from The Genetics of Profitable Lamb Production were recorded. Please scan the QR code to watch the presentations.



The Bowan Park 2025 Open Day will be held Friday 29th August, on-farm at 236 South Bowan Park Rd, Cudal, NSW. All lambs drafted into sire groups. All on-farm data presented.

The take home messages

For Rebecca Gardiner, there were plenty of take-home messages from the Genetics of Prime Lamb Production at Gundagai, NSW.

Ms Gardiner, who runs the Ambleside Poll Dorset stud at Foxhow, Victoria, it was the chance to hear exactly what had been going on with the Bowan Park research trial and what it could mean for industry.

“The trial demonstrated that we have the technology, data and genetic pool across the Poll Dorset breed to be able to hone in on qualities such as intramuscular fat and eye muscle area to produce a superior eating experience,” Ms Gardiner said.

She said the research confirmed why the Poll Dorset was the premier terminal sire for producers looking to breed a prime lamb with exceptional growth rates.

That same lamb will also secure a premium price whether in the market or delivered straight to the processor, she said.

Ms Gardiner said the emphasis of their stud had always been to produce a high yielding, dressed carcass.

“Dr Peter McGilchrist emphasised that genetics is key to the composition of the carcass and eating quality as a measured trait that deserves to be benchmarked and marketed to the consumer as a superior commodity,” she said.

“The Bowan Park Research has illustrated that through genetic Poll Dorset ram selection, it is possible to consistently produce a high quality carcass with 5 per cent IMF at 26kg carcass weight in four months.”

Ms Gardiner said Gundagai Lamb’s GLQ system’s objective measuring probe, utilised advanced technology and proved that the dynamic retail market for a premium meat, was strong.

“The premium price that Gundagai Lamb are rewarding their producers for a consistent high-calibre product is admirable,” she said.

“It was reaffirming to see that the qualities and genetic traits that Poll Dorsets are renowned for are now being measured, recognised and actively sought after by processors such as Gundagai Lamb as a premium product for consumers not just locally but around the world.”

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Shellal-230036

- Genomics & DNA sire verified
- MLA reference flock & Bowen Park research flock
- Semen Available

TCP	BWT	WWT	PWT	PEMD	PFAT	LMY
156.08	0.61	12.17 TOP 20%	17.29	2.75	-0.92	4.98 TOP 5%

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Conditioning ewes for fertility

Top tips to lift fertility

Post weaning management of adults

- Draft weaned ewes on Body Condition Score (greater than 3.25 score are fat and can afford to lose weight)
- Manage lean to gain weight to BCS 3 at mating.
- Manage fat to lose weight to reach BCS 3 at mating.
- Check progress within one month of mating in a sample of each mob. There's a sweet spot when it comes to body condition score and lambing rates, and it's a case of bigger is not always better.

Dr Gordon Refshauge is a key researcher with the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, focussing on sheep fertility and was one of the speakers at a Local Land Services field day at the Aberdeen Poll Dorset stud near Burrumbuttock, NSW.

He said focussing on body score could pay big dividends in terms of not only lamb survival but fertility.

"With adult ewes, body condition score has a stronger relationship with reproduction, than it does in hoggets," Dr Refshauge said.

"This means managers can focus either weight or BCS in adult ewes but should only focus on weight in lambs and hoggets".

And focussing on body condition score in adult ewes could be done by individually assessing each ewe rather than weighing, though both would allow the ability to manage those ewes for the optimum fertility rate.

"An animal that has a condition score of three at the start of mating will have a higher reproduction rate than an animal that is condition score two, in terms of fertility," he said.

"If you have rain during mating and green feed, they will both improve in their reproduction rates but three scores will still do better than the two scores."

Dr Refshauge said the ideal was to have ewes in a body score condition closer to three, so if there is no rain leading up to joining, they will do better than ewes "by a big margin".

And the body score condition can, of course, be influenced by nutrition.

Short term supplementation, or flushing with safe feed like lupins, can lift fertility rates, Dr Refshauge said.

"Lean ewes will respond to short term supplementation much better than fat ewes," he said.

"If you have already drafted ewes into fat and lean groups at weaning, and you have still got lean ewes two weeks out from mating, you can start feeding lupins.

"The plan is to feed out at least 250g/ewe/day of lupins for two weeks prior to joining and one week after.

"Some studies show effects up to 400 g/ewe/day but my experience says 250 g/ewe/day works well."

Just lupins will flush ewes to boost fertility if pastures are supplying the remainder of the ewes' needs, but if they are losing weight on pastures, supplementing energy requirements will also be needed, so cereal grains may still be required.

In that case, Dr Refshauge said, the normal grain feeding should continue, but just with the addition of lupins two weeks prior to joining and one week after.

"This will result in an increased pregnancy rate and increased twinning rate in those ewes.

"I would not decrease feed intake in ewes within two weeks of mating.

"At that time the ewes want to be maintaining weight or gaining weight – depending on pasture conditions and production goals and supplementary feed resources."

And when it comes to fertility, bigger is not always better.

Dr Refshauge presented some unpublished data which questioned some past recommendations over body weight.

"All the recommendations for a long time have shown a straight-line relationship, where an increased body condition score or liveweight leads to higher fertility, but biology is not a straight-line relationship," he said.

"A straight-line relationship implies that if you get have ewes that weight 200 kg, or 1000 kg - something that does not even exist - that there would be more pregnant animals and the twinning rate goes up too."

The results of his trial didn't find this.

His trial work involved four breeds, across three seasons, with 59 mobs and 29,500 pregnancies.

And what he found was that each breed had a range of limiting returns when it came to weight.

For composites, ewe weights above 80kg saw declines in fertility while for Merinos, there were decreases the heavier the ewes were beyond 65kg liveweight.

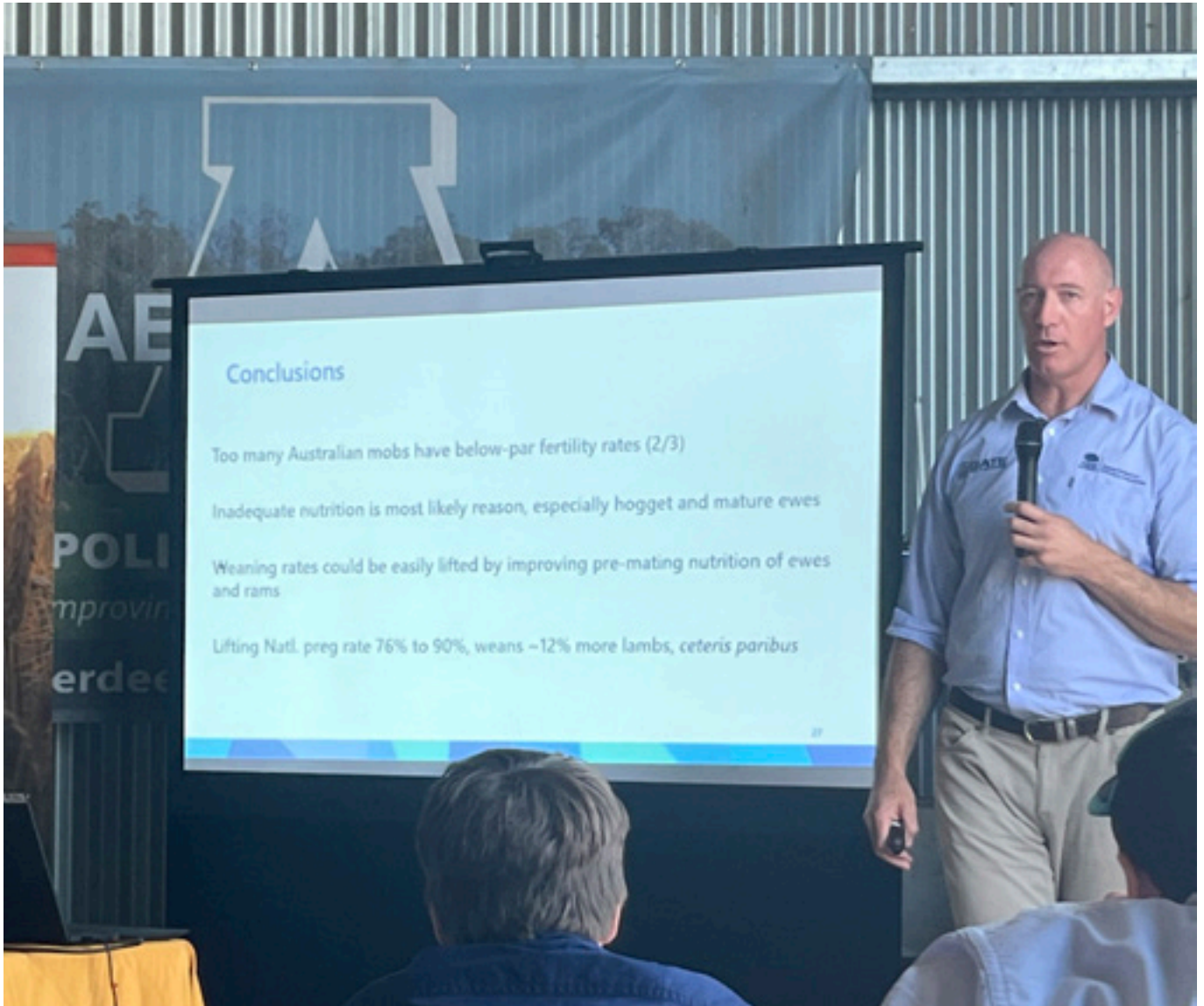
There were also lower twinning rates above a certain weight for each breed.

"We previously thought that if we make our animals heavier, we get more twins and triplets but that rate is not offsetting the reduction in pregnancy rates," Dr Refshauge said.

"Think about this though - with composites, if you can manage ewes at 75kg liveweight, you run more of them than running at 110kg and you will get better twinning rates."

He said his observations were supported by many published articles but the point remains, most ewes are too lean at mating, so for most producers, increasing bodyweight or body condition will still reward them with more pregnant ewes and more lambs born.

Dr Refshauge said by thinking about straight line relationships, instead of curves, the industry was over estimating pregnancy rate or litter size in really lean animals, underestimating our optimum condition animals and over-estimating our fat ones.



“So, there is a goldilocks zone, a sweet spot, in terms of body weight when it comes to fertility and litter size, not too heavy and not too light,” he said.

And with the adoption of electronic identification, there will be the chance for commercial breeders to track this themselves.

“In a few years, all animals will have EID in them so there will be an opportunity to collect this data including pre joining liveweight and pregnancy scanning outcomes and start working out your own weight sensitivity curves or work with consultants to do this,” he said.

Part of the data set will be collected at weaning, where ewe body score condition starts to be managed for the following year.

“At weaning, there will be fat ewes and lean ewes,” Dr Refshauge said.

“Ewes which have not raised lambs will be fatter at weaning so it’s important to reward the lean ewes, feed them and get them back up to condition score three.

“The fat ewes can be run on stubbles or go behind the lean ewes to tidy up pastures in your grazing plan.

“It is important to hold the fat ewes back because those ewes can come into joining at 3.5 score and then if you get green feed, their weights might be too high for optimum fertility.

“It could be that the fat ones won’t get pregnant at all.”

But lean ewes, that potentially reared twins, can come in lean to mating are much more likely to be empty - that’s why they need to be managed to get into their sweet spot.”

In twin bearing ewes have higher pregnancy rates if better managed post weaning.

: This means ewes that were lean last year and had twins, will have a better scanning rate this year if they are managed to improve weight/condition for mating,” he said.

Doing the five for data

Commercial producers could soon be asking studs for their data quality score to gain an indication of the accuracy of information contained in Australian Sheep Breeding Values.

Sheep Genetics Australia developed a data quality score in 2021 and has privately reported this back to stud breeders that are registered with SGA.

That score is the average of the data quality submitted to SGA over the past five years, SGA manager Peta Bradley said.

She said most producers would be familiar that SGA reports a breeding value on an individual animal with an associated accuracy figure.

"That accuracy reflects the quantity of information that has gone in behind that individual animal's breeding value," Ms Bradley said.

That developed further into wanting to provide something that describes the overall recording at a flock level "which is where the data quality score (DQS) comes into play".

"We give a score out of 100 which describes a whole range of different factors we know influence data quality, like depth of pedigree, pedigree recording, accuracy of dates of birth, how many animals go on and get multiple trait measurements throughout their life," she said.

"We then report a score out of 100, and also produce a star rating based on that score."

Twice a year, SGA sends a note out to all five star flocks to congratulate them but all flocks can access that report by SG website.

Ms Bradley said that score, especially if in the five star level, was being used by some studs as promotion, and down the track, the data quality score could be made available more broadly.

"We hope to have an opt-in system, initially, to make that score available on the website for when people view animals from that flock in the future," she said.

"This has been a good thing as it has created interest and conversation around data quality."

"We see in the reports that when people see where they sit, they want to know areas where they can improve and it often leads to other conversations around breeding programs so it's been really good in that."

Ms Bradley said the current calculations on data quality scores meant only 20 per cent of flocks at one time could have the five star rating but this could possibly be reviewed in the future as the gradual shift of improving data quality across all flocks.

As for its use in promotion, Ms Bradley said "it depends where you sit".

"Higher flocks want to promote they have accuracy as it is an investment to record high quality data and time that goes into it," she said.

"Four and five star (data quality) flocks are quite open to promoting it.

"It also links back to the commercial producer perspective, who can see if their seedstock producer was doing a good job but more importantly, are they recording the traits I am interested in selecting for.

"For example, for a Poll Dorset, is the stud recording weights at the times that reflect when I am selling.

"It needs to be a two-way conversation."



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For further detailed instructions and support, members are encouraged to visit the respective websites of their chosen DNA testing service providers.

[illegible]

Registration of Stud Rams

As members of the APDA it is prudent to be aware of the regulations, the animals that can be used for breeding and the capacity to register and transfer sheep that are bred in your flock.

Applying for Ram Registration

When an animal is submitted for registration, the information provided in the application is subject to analysis under regulations set out in the Flock Register for Poll Dorset Sheep in Australia. The implementation of these regulations are set out below.

Guidelines for Ram Registrations for FULL status

Regulation 9 (h) As of 1st November 2020, a registered and transferable ram must have a consecutive traceable pedigree of four generations, with all parentage registered with the APDA.

1. All sires in the application pedigree have FULL APDA registration status with a registration number.
2. All dams in the application pedigree have an APDA stud prefix
3. All four generations of the pedigree are complete where the animal to be registered is noted as Generation 1

Rams with full stud registration status with the APDA may be eligible for stud and/or semen transfer, if they also meet Regulation 11 (k):

Regulation 11 (k) As of 1st July 2023 all registered rams requiring stud or semen transfer must be DNA tested

Guidelines for “In-Flock” Only registration status

Regulation 9 (i) Applications for ram registrations that do not meet regulation (9.h), maybe registered with board approval. These registrations may be subject to a status of ‘In-Flock use only’ and/or ‘Progeny non-transferable’.

1. One or more sires in pedigree have an “In-Flock use only” status
2. Unexplained vacancies on maternal lineage
3. Rams do not meet Full Registration requirements

Rams given this status can only be used in the breeders own flock and are ineligible for APDA stud, semen or natural service transfer into another registered stud under any circumstances.

Guidelines for DNA on Dead or Historic Sires

When using historic sires in your breeding program it is recommended that you supply semen to be DNA tested to one of the APDA recommended laboratories. This will be looked on favourably if you need to register progeny and will make the process of registration seamless. You can also take a DNA sample from a deceased animal using an applicator and a TSU (refer to December 2024 Poll Dorset Journal). The APDA makes registration decisions on individual basis for applications of progeny of deceased or historic sires but the applicant/breeder can also make the process streamlined by DNA testing all their stud rams they intend to retain.

Regulation 35. DNA Protocol: It is recommended that all registered rams be DNA tested for parentage verification and genomic testing.

DNA testing

It is currently a regulation to DNA test rams if you wish to sell your ram/s or semen from a ram into another stud. If you require a semen or stud transfer you will need to take DNA from your ram and submit it to one of the APDA's listed approved DNA laboratories and results of this can then be forwarded to the APDA office.

The APDA do however recommend as per Regulation 35:

Regulation 35. DNA Protocol: It is recommended that all registered rams be DNA tested for parentage verification and genomic testing.

DNA can be taken from an animal by using an applicator and TSUs (Tissue sample units), blood cards or semen samples. TSUs are designed so that each sample has its own vial and cutter which reduces the risk of sample contamination. Each TSU has its own unique ID that can be linked to the animal's ear tag. All region secretaries have been supplied with a TSU gun for your region's use.

Online database searching for animals

Breeders can look up the online searchable database to see a rams registration status and pedigree. The database will show you the full 4 generation pedigree of the ram as well as the registration numbers of the sires within the pedigree, represented by the letter R beside their registration number. To find out the status of these registrations you will need to click on them and this will take you through to that particular rams information.

Further down the page under Ownership/Rights History is a list of any activity for that particular ram.

Using ASBV's to predict progeny performance

A recent Poll Dorset progeny trial for eating quality was conducted, where 15 Poll Dorset rams were artificially inseminated to commercial Merino ewes and the progeny then went on to have eating quality and carcass composition phenotypes measured.

The ASBV's for rams before the trial were compared with the performance of progeny for IMF and SHEARF5 (Figure 1 and 2, respectively). Comparing pre-trial ASBV's and direct progeny performance, rams which had high merit ASBV's for

IMF and SHEARF5 prior to the trial had an average progeny performance which was better than their contemporaries for eating quality traits. Likewise, the rams with low merit pre-trial ASBV's for the likes of IMF and SHEARF5 went on to have progeny which on average performed unfavourably for eating quality traits. Ultimately, it showed that ASBV's of unproven rams have a correlation with progeny performance. It's also important to note that some rams included in the trial had a number of other progeny phenotyped prior for eating quality phenotypes while other rams didn't have any progeny prior.

Figure 1 - ram IMF ASBV's pre-trial compared to progeny performance

Figure 2 - ram SHEARF5 ASBV's pre-trial compared to progeny performance

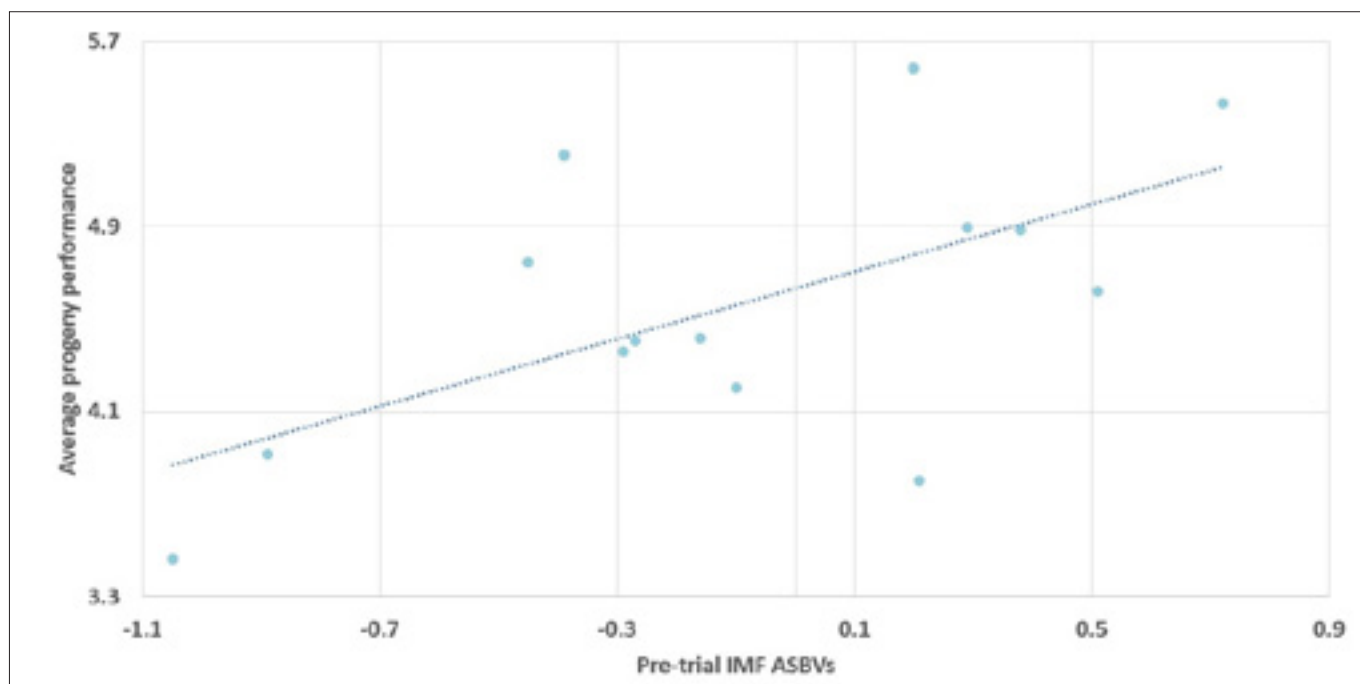


Figure 1

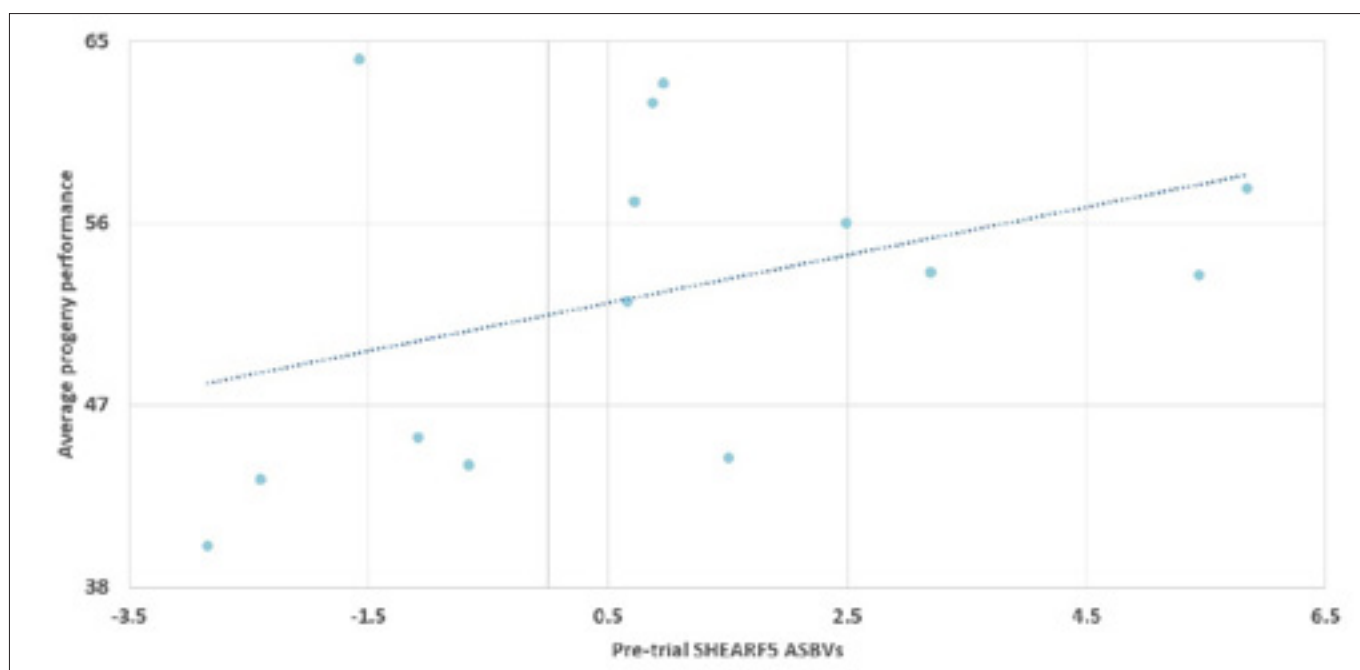


Figure 2

ASBVs predict future progeny performance, hence can be used to make earlier selection decisions to improve your flock's genetics. ASBVs should be used in conjunction with structure/confirmation/type classing when making selection decisions. Using breeding values is a proven way to improve your flocks genetics and therefore breed sheep which can better meet market specifications.

Poll Dorset performance

The Poll Dorset breed is continuing to make genetic gain over time, making almost 20 index points in genetic gain since 2015 for LEQ (Figure 3). On average, the Poll Dorset breed is lower in merit for LEQ compared to the White Suffolk breed and the greater terminal analysis averages. While the Poll Dorset breed has been able to reduce the gap to the greater terminal analysis, the gap between the Poll Dorset and White Suffolk breed averages has continued to grow over time. Using ASBVs when making selection and culling decisions is important to improve both an individual flocks genetic merit, as well as the Poll Dorset breed average genetic merit.

Figure 3 - average LEQ genetic trends for Poll Dorsets, White Suffolks, and the Terminal analyses over time

Data quality

Of the Poll Dorset flocks with at least three years of data since 2020 in Sheep Genetics, three quarters have a data quality score of 60+ (score 4 and 5).

Common areas to improve data quality across Poll Dorset flocks in Sheep Genetics include

- Increase effective progeny
- Submit data earlier
- Record more phenotypes on animals (weights, fat and muscle scans, etc.)
- Increase linkage

Data quality is important as it underpins accurate ASBVs and therefore accurate selection decisions. Flocks that have a higher data quality score make more genetic gain.

Hence, improving data quality is important to improving your flock's genetic merit, and improving the genetics of your commercial clients.

Scan the QR code to organise a time to discuss your data quality with a Sheep Genetics Development Officer

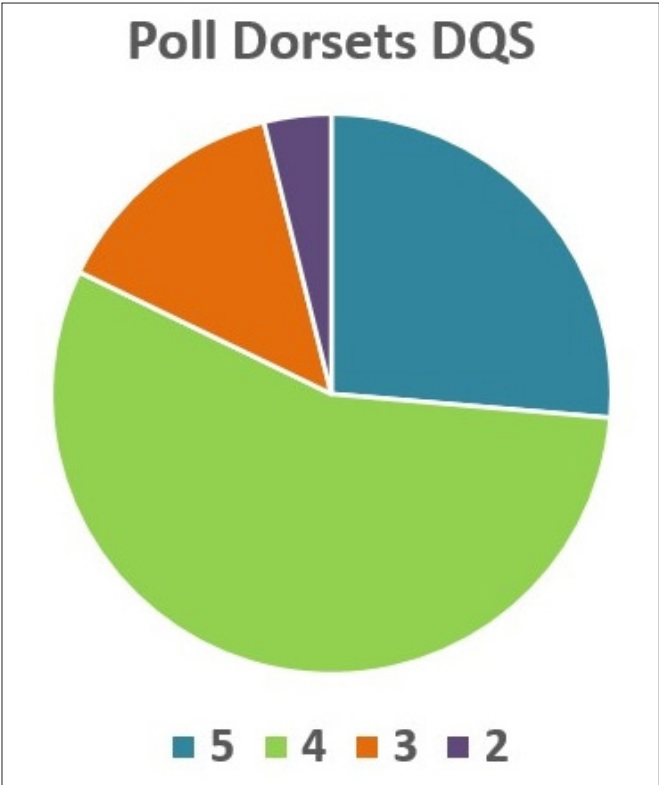


Figure 4

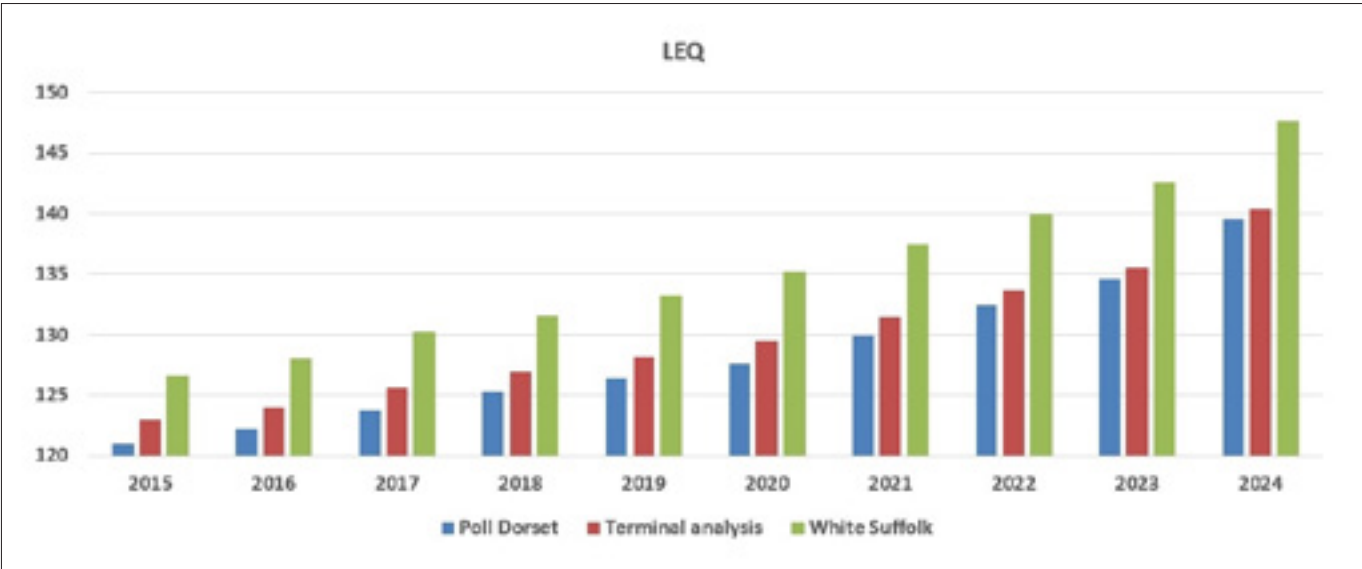


Figure 3

What is Ovine Brucellosis?

Ovine brucellosis (OB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium, *Brucella ovis*, affecting sheep.

It is distinguished by infertility in rams and can significantly affect the reproductive performance of sheep flocks.

Incidences of OB have been reduced with the introduction of the voluntary OB-free accreditation program.

In Victoria two-thirds of registered flocks are OB-free accredited, however OB is still widespread in 15 to 60 percent of untested flocks.

Prevalence of the disease is influenced by location, farm management such as the ability to keep rams in property boundaries, and producer awareness.

How is it spread?

Ovine brucellosis infects primarily rams, however ewes can infect a clean ram. OB is spread:

- ram to ram through sodomy, which is common among young rams
- when a ewe exposes a clean ram to infected semen from a recent, previous mating.

Symptoms

Symptoms of ovine brucellosis include:

- scrotal lesions causing swelling and inflammation
- swelling of the epididymis
- irregularities in the testicles such as shrinking, change in shape and hardening
- lower semen quality, causing subfertility or sterility
- Lower conception rates with an increase in ewes returning to service after 17 days

Be aware that OB can exist in ram flocks without displaying obvious scrotal lesions. Infected rams may possess microscopic lesions in the testes, epididymis and accessory sex glands.

HOW DOES IT IMPACT YOUR FLOCK?

Rams infected with OB generally produce lower quality semen, often resulting in them being sub fertile or sterile.

If more than 10 percent of rams are infected with OB then there is a predicted 30 percent reduction in lamb marking. However, the impact on overall flock fertility depends on the number of infected rams and flock breeding management.

Managing Ovine brucellosis

If infected rams are ignored, reduced fertility and overall production can be repeated year-to-year. Blood test or semen examination by a veterinarian will identify if a ram has the disease.

Rams that have been exposed to infection may incubate the disease for weeks before testing positive. Blood tests should be repeated seven weeks after the initial test.

Best-practice for the prevention and control of OB includes:

- conduct physical scrotal examination when selecting and purchasing rams
- purchase rams and ewes from OB-free accredited breeders, ensuring the accreditation is current
- isolate new stock from the existing flock until you know their OB status
- run rams in small mobs, separating young and old rams
- test rams for OB at least one month before joining
- reduce the potential of infection from stray rams by keeping boundary fences in good order
- avoid running rams with ewes during lambing
- quarantine potentially infected stock
- seek veterinary advice if rams present any abnormalities.

Once a ram has been infected, treatment is considered infeasible as rams generally remain sub-fertile or sterile regardless. It may be necessary to cull rams that display clinical signs or have tested positive to the disease. However, culling of rams with palpable lesions without completing an eradication program can result in high turnover costs and so an effective management and eradication plan is essential.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES:

Take home messages

- An Ovine Brucellosis outbreak in a flock has the potential to cause damaging economic loss through reproductive inefficiencies.
- Be alert to any abnormalities in scrotal appearance and texture, conception rates and abortions in ewes, as well as a lower lamb marking percentage or extended lambing periods.
- Quarantine potentially infected stock and seek veterinary consultation if rams present any abnormalities.

For more information on ovine brucellosis, please go to your relevant state Department of Agriculture or Department of Primary Industries.

Meat and Livestock Australia

www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/animal-health-welfare-and-biosecurity/diseases/infectious/ovine-brucellosis/

Article courtesy of Victorian Farmers Federation.

Rule 31. Ovine Brucellosis

To start or maintain a registered flock with the APDA, all flocks must be part of the relevant Ovine Brucellosis scheme with their appropriate state authorities as of the March 2021 flock return

Woolorama Show results

A GREAT line-up of sheep representing the Poll Dorset breed, saw the second largest number of entries across the breeds, with 75 from six breeders across 11 classes at this year's British and Australasian Sheep Breeds competition at the Wagin Woolorama.

While there was one less stud than the previous year, there were five more entries, making the ring busier and judge Grant Bingham's, Iveston White Suffolk, South Suffolk and UltraWhite studs, Williams, work load more intense.

The display of sheep lined up was a positive show of support for WA's sheep industry, with breeders proving they will continue to support and maintain a sheep breeding industry, no matter the odds.

Although Poll Dorsets were the second breed to enter the ring early in the day, temperatures quickly rose to stifling levels, with the occasional breeze offering welcome relief.

Mr Bingham observed some of the larger classes were going to be difficult to separate and he was thorough in his assessment, by having the individual sheep parade through the prepared races.

He said the entries were all great quality and breeders should be commended on their commitment.

"It was an exceptional line up of the Poll Dorset breed overall today," Mr Bingham said.

"I expected quality and that is exactly what I am seeing today, absolute quality.

"It was fantastic to see so many good quality meat sheep presented."

He said the champion ram and ewe that went head to head vying for the grand champion Poll Dorset title, were both very well put together animals.

"I noticed their structure first," Mr Bingham said.

"They both have plenty of meat on them.

"They are both sheep that the industry needs, not overly big, but big enough, with good conformation, a good shape, carry the meat in the right spots and all those meat attributes that count."

When it was time to decide, Mr Bingham chose the Shirlee Downs ram from the ram under one year born in May class, which had become champion over a Max Whyte and Gail Cremasco, Brimfield Poll Dorset stud, Kendenup, bred ram.



Elders stud stock representative Michael O'Neill (left), judge Grant Bingham, Iveston White Suffolk, South Suffolk and UltraWhite studs, Williams, and Shirlee Downs stud, Quairading, co-principal Chris Squiers, with his grand champion Poll Dorset exhibit, which was also the champion Poll Dorset ram.

AROUND THE SHOWS

Mr Bingham said the Shirlee Downs grand champion Poll Dorset ram was a ram he would buy himself when he chose it as the champion earlier in the day.

"He has a lot of power in him," he said.

"He would be an ideal stud sire as he will breed you more good sires.

"His size and scale gave him an enormous capacity for meat, but he is not overdone."

Shirlee Downs stud co-principal Chris Squiers said the ram was out of their own, Shirlee Downs-bred sire and dam.

The champion ewe decision saw Shirlee Downs once again in the top spot, with reserve champion Poll Dorset ewe awarded to the Shepherd family's Leween Poll Dorset stud, Narrogin.

Mr Bingham said the winning ewe would stand up well against the other breeds in the interbreed competition.

"The champion ewe just packed a little more carcass in her," he said.

"The reserve was probably a little more of a softer type, but they were a magnificent pair of ewes."

Mr Bingham said the Shirlee Downs champion ewe matched very well to the champion ram and this made her ideal to stand up with him in the interbreed competition.

Rounding out the ribbons were the group classes – Shirlee Downs stud took home the winning sashes for the pair of ewes, the group of one ram and two ewes and the group

of two rams and two ewes, while it was the Brimfield stud that won the pair of rams class and the group of three ewes.

Shirlee Downs, Leween and Brimfield were joined by Dongadilling stud, Quairading, Rockalong stud, Wagin, and the WA College of Agriculture – Cunderdin stud as exhibitors.

Article and photos courtesy of Farm Weekly.



Poll Dorset judge Grant Bingham (left), with Leween stud principal, Tim Shepherd, Narrogin, and the reserve champion Poll Dorset ewe.

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Canberra Show

Out of a competitive Poll Dorset contest, fifth-generation sheep breeders and recent stud principals Sam and Maddy Armstrong have claimed both champion ram and champion ewe.

The Armstrongs took on the ownership of the nearly 90-year-old Armdale stud two years ago, from Sam's grandparents, and have been working to make it their own.

Mr Armstrong said this was the first time he had claimed both champions.

The champion ram, Armdale 240098, is an April-drop, which had already claimed the interbreed win at the Gundagai Show from the milk-tooth class.

Judge Brayden Gilmore said the ram caught his eye in an "impressive line up of rams for champion".

He praised the moderate frame.

"I think the industry needs more rams like this," he said.

Reserve champion went to another young ram, this time from the bare-shorn class, shown by Ashcharmoo, Marulan.

Mr Brayden said this ram had a good top line.

Champion ewe, Armdale 240071, also an April-drop and a half-sister to the champion ram, both sired by AP220200.

Mr Brayden said the ewe was "outstanding".

"She's very hard to fault," he said.

"I can't go past this ewe, she will represent the Poll Dorset breed very well in the interbreed."

Reserve champion ewe went to an Armdale ewe.

"I like the depth and I like the twist," Mr Brayden said of the reserve champion.

In selecting a supreme winner, Mr Brayden said the ram and ewe were of a similar type.

His choice went to the ram, saying it would be a good influence on the breed.

"The ram is hard to go past - structure, powerful with a good wool type," he said.

Mr Armstrong said they would be keeping both animals in the stud.

They have already collected semen from the ram and were considering using the ewe in their embryo transfer program.

Mr Armstrong said it was great to have this success, with it coming this year as the stud marked 50 years of on-property sales.

Article courtesy of The Land newspaper.



NZ Breeders bow out with a bang

It is the end of a very long era for well-respected Canterbury Poll Dorset breeders Neville and Dianne Greenwood, of the Adelong stud.

After 55 years of breeding, the couple decided to disperse their ewe flock this year and a hugely successful sale was held on-farm over two days in February.

There was a complete clearance and red-hot bidding both at the sale and through online auction platform BIDR. Ewes sold up to \$1500 and were destined for flocks from Northland to Southland, illustrating the esteem in which the Adelong stud has been held.

In 1970, the Greenwoods' bought nine 2-tooth ewes from T.P. Lowe (father of George), of the Windermere stud. The following year, Neville won a Young Farmers exchange to New South Wales for three months and selected four ewes from Bob Smith's Marylebone stud.

Since then, Neville and Dianne have endeavoured to breed sheep that are tough, have a very good standard of excellence, are structurally sound, true to breed type, with good constitution and performance for growth muscle fat and fertility. Those traits meant they had the ability to shift and thrive in New Zealand and also around the world.

Lambing percentage has virtually always been between 170 and 180 per cent scanning, sometimes more.

Over the five-and-a-half decades of breeding, they made additions by purchasing ewes in small numbers, often one or two but there were three larger purchases - from Walter Sommerville's Somerset stud, Alf Phillips' Benhope stud, and Selwyn Adams' Colinton stud. The Colinton ewes and the Coastlands ram 40-10 from Cliff Deery were a great help with Adelong's foot score breeding programme. The Greenwoods have continued to use DNA testing to identify sires with good foot scores. After initially identifying some ewes with 1-1 foot scores and using them for embryo transfer, they got a nucleus

of 1-1 ewes. After a lot of selection, they had been able to keep sires with very good foot scores. Where able, they have also tested their keeper sires for Intramuscular Fat.

While in recent years, the Greenwoods have only shown at their local show, for many years their sheep held their own in the show ring in New Zealand and their progeny around the world.

Three sons of Adelong 465/01 (Crusader) won Lamb Plan performance classes at the Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth Royal Shows while other rams and ewes have excelled at shows in the UK and South America.

In 2004, Crusader beat all rams from all breeds in a terminal sire evaluation of 1.2 million sheep in a programme called Advanced Central Evaluation.

The Adelong flock has had an influence on the breed around the world, with exports made to Australia, England, Ireland, Canada, Japan, Korea, Brazil, Argentina, Patagonia, Uruguay, Mexico, Chile and China.

Neville and Dianne's passion for Poll Dorsets has been inherited by their grand-daughter Zoe Bain, who has been involved in their farming business, and has her own small stud. Neville also paid tribute to his wife, saying Dianne was one of the best judges of sheep he had seen. She had been involved from the start and meticulously did all the recording.

Article courtesy of Sally Rae, Business and Rural Editor, Otago Daily Times



Retiring Poll Dorset stud breeders Dianne and Neville Greenwood, pictured with their grand-daughter Zoe, who has her own small stud, on their Canterbury farm.



Neville and Dianne Greenwood address the crowd at their ewe dispersal sale, watched by auctioneer Ed Marfell.

Andrew Gillett Wunnamurra Poll Dorsets, Jerilderie, NSW

How long have you been on the board, and why did you join?

Andrew has been a board member since August, 2022, and stepped up because he saw a lack of willingness of others to become part of the board.

Andrew saw there was a casual vacancy on the board, and his nomination was accepted.

Where do you see the future of the Poll Dorset breed and how does it fit with the modern lamb industry?

Poll Dorsets certainly have a future in the prime lamb industry, but how that future will look could change. Andrew said with competition from other breeders, especially shedding sheep due to their perceived ease of management, Poll Dorsets needed to ensure their benefits were well known.

Andrew said there was “no question” about the popularity of the breed and when speaking to everyone from meat buyers to abattoir operators to agents, the message was that Poll Dorsets had higher yields and better quality lambs. But there was a question of the number of rams needed if the move towards shedding sheep continued.

What are some of the changes you have seen which have benefited the breed in the past decade?

Andrew said he was relatively new as a breeder in terms of age so probably not seen some of the changes that other, more experienced breeders had.

But he said the use of data, in terms of Australian Sheep Breeding Values, was a big change he had noticed in the past decade. Studs that, in his words, had been “hell bent” on not taking part in Lambplan or using ASBVs, were now using them and that had been “a major shift”. Andrew said their stud had been involved in Lambplan since the mid 1990s and it was key to the background of the stud.

He also said the number of studs was less than in the past, and studs were getting bigger, but that reflected a broader farming trend.

How does the breed make sure it stays relevant within the industry and how does it make sure that it is the first choice for prime lamb breeders?

The reality is, for the modern prime lamb industry, that lambs will have to grow quicker and turn off heavier at faster rates. Andrew said it would be necessary to produce more kilograms of lamb per hectare, whether that was from running increased lambs per hectare, or increased weights of lambs, or both.

“The push from the government and Meat and Livestock Australia to reduce methane emissions and become carbon neutral - the only way to do this is through productivity,” he said. “I think this is where the Poll Dorset breed has an edge. “They may not produce less methane but if you can produce more meat per hectare, and whether it’s more lambs or heavier lambs, that will be a way of reducing your emissions per kilogram.”

For Andrew, his ideal commercial scenario is a Poll Dorset over a Merino ewe, though he knows the breed can be used over a variety of females.

“We used to have crossbred commercial operation producing second cross lambs,” he said. “But using a modern Poll Dorset over a Riverina-type Merino ewe, the lambs out of those are extremely comparable to those from a traditional second cross lamb and you have the wool turnoff at the other end.

“It is where the modern Poll Dorset has its advantage - that the Merino-cross is so useful from a lamb point of view but also from the wool return from the female.

“And if you can get lambs off without shearing (as suckers), you don’t need to have that expense.”



Key points for 2025

- Flock expected to be 73.2 million
- Lamb slaughter 26.2 million
- Lamb production 629,000 tonnes
- Sheep slaughter 9.8 million

Significant genetic improvements have substantially increased flock productivity. The national sheep flock is expected to decline by 7 per cent in 2025 to 73.2 million. In 2024, the flock peaked at a recent high, but large numbers of older breeding ewes retained from the 2020–22 rebuild finally exited the system, leading to elevated sheep slaughter.

Following record lamb slaughter and production in 2024, slaughter levels are expected to remain historically high. A significant shift towards sheep meat breeds has made the flock more productive. New Zealand and Australia account for more than 80 per cent of global sheep meat exports. However, structural changes continue to impact New Zealand producers, making New Zealand unlikely to sustain current levels. This positions Australian exports to capture new and emerging markets. Over the forecast period, the flock is expected to decline further in 2026 due to increased production and slaughter, assuming the current weather forecasts materialise.

Flock

As of June 30, 2025, the national sheep flock is estimated to decline by 5.9 million (7.4 per cent), reaching 73.2 million.. After reaching its largest size in more than a decade in 2024, the industry witnessed a high increase in mutton turn-off in late 2024, after older breeding ewes had been retained over the rebuild. Dry conditions in western Victoria and southern South Australia further contributed to high mutton supply.

Looking ahead, the flock is expected to remain relatively stable in 2026 and 2027. In 2026, the flock is forecast to ease by 1.8 per cent to 71.9 million and will lift by 3 per cent to 74.1 million by 2027. Despite a smaller breeding base, productivity gains from sheep meat breeds are driving stronger turn-off rates compared to wool-producing breeds.

Slaughter

In 2025, lamb slaughter is forecast to reach 26.2 million, a slight 0.5 per cent decline from 2024. However, this still represents the second-largest slaughter year on record behind 2024. Given the elevated levels of sheep slaughter at the end of 2024, it is expected that lambs not processed last year will be processed in the first months of 2025. Moving ahead, in 2026 slaughter is expected to ease by 3.4 per cent to 25.3 million and rise in 2027 by 0.7 per cent to 25.5 million. Despite slaughter easing, production is expected to remain high due to productivity improvements. Sheep slaughter is forecast to decline by 16.9 per cent to 9.8 million in 2025, following the earlier-than-expected turn-off of older breeding ewes. In 2026 however, sheep slaughter is expected to rebound 2.3 per cent to 10 million, while in 2027 sheep slaughter will rise again by 2.8 per cent to 10.3 million.

Carcass weight

Demographic shifts towards sheep meat breeds will drive productivity gains in the national flock. In 2025, the average lamb carcass weight is expected to remain stable at 24kg, ideal for the domestic market. In 2026, lamb carcass weights are expected to lift by 1.7 per cent to 24.4kg followed by another 1.5 per cent rise to 24.7kg in 2027. Sheep carcass weights are also projected to lift by 1.4 per cent to 25.5kg in 2025. This upward trend is likely to continue, with weights projected to climb 1.7 per cent to 26kg in 2026 and another 1.7 per cent to 26.4kg in 2027.

Production

Lamb production in 2025 is projected to reach 628,648 tonnes. While this represents a slight 0.1 per cent decrease from 2024, production will remain at historically elevated levels. High slaughter rates, rather than increasing carcass weights have sustained strong production, ensuring steady lamb supply throughout the year. In 2026, lamb production is expected to decline by 1.8 per cent to 617,612 tonnes before rebounding to 631,242 tonnes in 2027. Mutton production is forecast to ease by 15.9 per cent to 250,305 tonnes in 2025. In 2026, an upward trend is expected to continue, with production increasing by 4 per cent to 260,326 tonnes in 2026 and a further 4.5 per cent to 272,082 tonnes in 2027.

The evolution of Australian lamb carcass weights

Over the past 20 years, the Australian sheep industry has undergone significant change. Advancements in genetics and productivity have enabled producers to improve weight gain and yield in lamb carcasses. A growing number of producers are adopting containment feeding and shifting towards sheep meat breeds, leading to heavier carcass weights. Some export markets are now demanding larger carcasses, requiring domestic stakeholders to adapt to these changes.

Increase in containment feeding

The National Heavy Lamb Indicator often commands a price premium over the National Trade Lamb Indicator, encouraging producers to find efficient ways to achieve heavier finished weights. Over the past two years, the number of lambs finished on grain has nearly doubled. Grain feeding allows producers to achieve heavier weights, finish lambs in dry conditions and increase turnover due to shorter feeding times.

Shift towards shedding breeds

Historically, Australia's sheep industry focused heavily on wool. However, in recent years, flock composition has shifted towards meat breeds, driving up carcass weights. Shedding breeds are gaining popularity and becoming a key part of the evolving national flock. These sheep are managed differently from traditional breeds and provide an opportunity to boost lamb production. The introduction of shedding genetics has accelerated breeding and improved weight gain compared to Merinos.

Sheep Industry Projections were made in March and used courtesy of Meat and Livestock Australia

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COMMERCIAL FOCUS - COMMERCIAL RESULTS

New face for Neogen to help producers

Members of the Australian Poll Dorset Association can now benefit from the latest addition to the team at Neogen. Already the industry's leading supplier of premium DNA solutions, Neogen has further enhanced its capacity to support sheep breeders with the appointment of Gregory Sawyer as Senior On-Farm Sheep Genomics Specialist – Sales.

Widely regarded as one of Australia's foremost experts in sheep science, Greg brings more than 30 years of experience spanning pastoral management, livestock research, and cutting-edge genomic technologies. In his new role, Greg will work directly with producers and industry stakeholders to translate complex genomic data into actionable on-farm strategies—helping to enhance traits like fertility, growth, and resilience in sheep flocks across diverse environments.

Greg's career is distinguished by his innovative work in reproductive physiology, livestock genomics, and precision livestock management. This appointment marks a significant step forward in strengthening Neogen as the leaders globally in linking advanced genomic science and practical breeding decisions. His deep understanding of animal physiology, reproductive performance, and environmental impacts positions him perfectly to support producers in navigating the future of sheep production.

Currently pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Sydney, Greg is working with the Bowan Park Poll Dorset Research Flock to investigate how real-time data can uncover critical reproductive trends during late gestation and lactation. His research integrates behavioural monitoring and growth metrics to better understand the biology driving reproductive success.

Beyond the lab, Greg brings a strong practical perspective shaped by decades of hands-on experience in wool classing, livestock education, and family-based grazing operations in New South Wales. He also contributes globally as a committee member to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance (LEAP) initiative on livestock enhancements to ecosystem services, helping to shape sustainable livestock practices worldwide.

"I'm excited to join Neogen at such a pivotal time for the livestock industry," Mr Sawyer said.

"As we face increasing environmental and economic pressures, the ability to link genomics with on-farm decision-making will be essential for building more resilient and productive flocks."

With Greg's addition to the team, Neogen reaffirms its commitment to advancing practical genetic solutions that empower producers and drive innovation across the global livestock sector.

You can learn more about the full range of premium genomic solutions available for sheep offered by Neogen at neogenaustralasia.com.au or reach out directly to Greg on 0486 350 068 or gsawyer@neogen.com.





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MEMBERS PHOTO GALLERY



At the Central Victorian Region meeting held in February, three members were awarded with certificates of appreciation for their dedication to the region. Pictured are Central Victorian Region president Josh Poulton presenting awards to Patrick Flanagan, Blauvelt stud, Coimada, and Janet MacDonald, Fairburn Stud, Porcupine Ridge. Ashley Smith was absent.



In the last weekend of March, the Central Victorian Region Poll Dorset Association held their annual family day, with Patrick Flanagan hosting their BBQ lunch and farm tour at "Blauvelt". Many active and retired breeders from the region came together to have a look at Pat's stud rams and ewes, and catch up despite the tough conditions many have found themselves in across Victoria.

ADVERTISING RATES

ADVERTISING RATES

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Half page	\$358	\$448
Quarter page	\$219	\$274
1/8th page	\$162	\$202

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APDA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

The Albury/Wagga Wagga Region is excited to announce the upcoming National Poll Dorset Conference 2026, which will be held in Wagga Wagga.

We would like to invite you to join us for what promises to be a fantastic event!



MEET & GREET

Date: Sunday, 22nd February 2026

Venue: Wagga Wagga RSL Club

Come along to catch up with fellow attendees and enjoy a relaxing game of barefoot bowls in a friendly and informal setting.

CONFERENCE

Dates: Monday, 23rd and Tuesday, 24th February 2026

Venue: The Range, Copland St, East Wagga Wagga

An exciting line-up of interesting topics and guest speakers that we are sure you will find valuable and engaging.

CONFERENCE DINNER

Date: Monday evening, 23rd February 2026

Venue: The Range, Copland St, East Wagga Wagga

Look forward to a wonderful evening together, filled with great food and conversation.

Please save the date, and stay tuned for more details, which will be shared with you closer to the event.



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