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## Dates for the Diary

### **16<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

MerinoLink Conference "Hour of Power"

Applications close

### **1<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

Peter Westblade Scholarship dinner & 2018 recipient announced

### **1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018**

Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge – 2<sup>nd</sup> shearing assessment – Wagga Wagga

### **16<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

MerinoLink Lifetime Project Open Day - Temora

### **20<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

MerinoLink Annual Conference & Dinner

### **21<sup>nd</sup> June 2018**

MerinoLink Conference Field Day



Welcome to the seventh edition of  
**MerinoLink Limited Newsletter.**

Welcome to the summer edition of the MerinoLink newsletter. I thought it would be interesting to look back to the comments I made in our last newsletter regarding the positive state of the merino industry, all I can say is it has continued to improve with a 7.5% increase in the EMI and a 12% increase in Merino lamb price. So once again I can say it is a great time to be involved in Merinos and the outlook is strong for continued good returns. These strong prices explain the latest results from the AWI/MLA sheep meat survey which indicate that 32% of Merino ewe flocks intend to increase their breeding ewe numbers and with the wool price remaining in the top percentile bands, an expected 24% of flocks are intending to increase their wether numbers.

Market trends are driving growers to invest back into their business, having a productive Merino enterprise is still one of the most profitable options available to Australian farmers. Results from National Sire Evaluations provide studs and commercial growers with invaluable data to assist them in making better genetic decisions for their breeding flock. These decisions often come at a cost to the business, however investing in genetics and now the option to invest into genomics provides a new level of possibilities for stud and commercial growers. Increasing the rate of genetic gain and reducing the generation interval will result in financial gains at farm gate level. MerinoLink is continuing to push for more research and development on farm and our involvement in the facilitation and project management of 3 Sire Evaluations including the Merino Lifetime Productivity Project being part funded by AWI is paramount to ensuring relevant information is available to industry and MerinoLink member. More recently MerinoLink submitted a project proposal to the MLA Donor Company and has been approved to conduct a project with MerinoLink members, the aim of this project is to increase the use of genetic and genomic tools. MerinoLink sees this project as a huge opportunity for members and the industry to embrace the latest technology available and lead the charge in the Australian Merino industry.

*Richard Keniry*

MerinoLink Chair

**MerinoLink Limited**

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**MerinoLink Limited is a not for profit organisation that aims to facilitate sheep grower's and service providers link with information, knowledge and research.**

MerinoLink's members are from a wide range of sheep businesses with varying production systems. The Members have been brought together by a common enthusiasm for profitable Merino sheep and a desire to continue to build their businesses, client businesses and the sheep industries profitability.

MerinoLink is committed to assisting our members make better use of past and current research. In addition, MerinoLink aims to build networks and add value to existing and future research and development.

MerinoLink recognise the opportunities to work together to develop research projects for the future improvement of the Australian Sheep industry.

We aim to provide all members with access to industry organisations and facilitate a two-way dissemination of information.

MerinoLink consist of producers and service providers moving our industry and members forward as fast and effectively as possible. This is made possible by MerinoLink's engagement with members and industry, education of members, exploration of research ideas and exchange of the results.

## MerinoLink CONTACTS

[www.merinolink.com.au](http://www.merinolink.com.au)

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**Vice Chair:** Rick Baldwin

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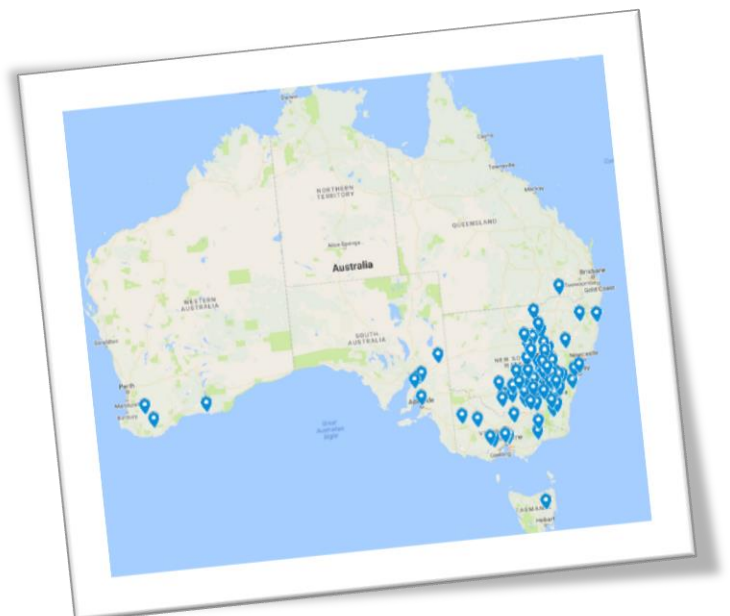
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# Merino Lifetime Productivity Project – MerinoLink Site Update

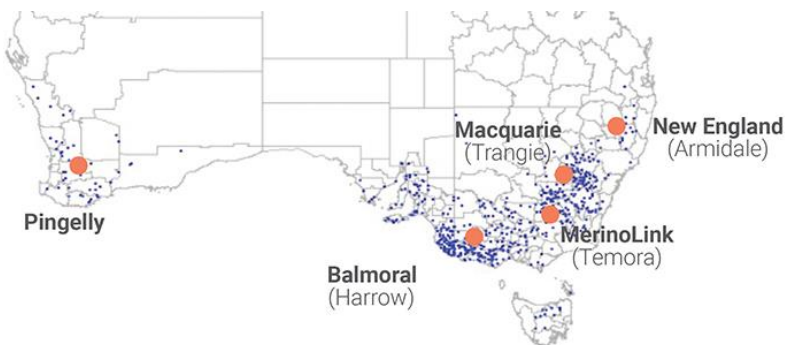


The Merino Lifetime Productivity Project (MLP) is well underway, with five sites across Australia now with progeny on the ground. Balmoral VIC (2015 and 2016 drop); MerinoLink NSW (2016 and 2017 drop); Pingelly WA (2016 and 2017 drops); Macquarie NSW (2017 drop; 2018 drop planned) and New England NSW (2017 drop; 2018 drop planned). The map below shows the location of the five sites. The project will collect visual classing scores, fleece, growth, carcase, fertility and worm resistance data on 5000 ewes annually for 6 years.

The MLP project has been funded by Australian Wool Innovation, participating entrants and sites. Overall there will be 166 sires entered including link sires from diverse breeding philosophies and types. The MLP project runs as a standard Sire Evaluation initially and then will move into the MLP component once the progeny reach 22 months of age. All the F1 ewes will be retained including the culls and classed and objectively assessed annually. The F1 ewes will be joined 4 to 5 times (natural mating). The outcomes of the project aims to answer industry questions such as:

- Does selection based on early age assessment deliver lifetime performance outcomes? We already have some of these answer, but do they hold for all traits, Merino types and environments?
- Are there tradeoffs between selection for carcase traits, wool and fertility? Can we improve what we do in this area for example are there more efficient and cost effective selection options for life time productivity?
- Is there a combination of traits or breeding objective that yield the best lifetime profitability, in different environments?

**Acknowledgements** – MLP is a partnership between Australian Merino Sire Evaluation (AMSEA), Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and five Sire Evaluation sites. This project would not be possible without the support of wool growers through Sire Evaluation entry fees, site committee in-kind contributions and site sponsors. MerinoLink would like to acknowledge the financial and in-kind contributions made by Marty Moses, Moses & Son Woolbroker/ Bluechip Livestock.



AWI Director Wal Merriman inspecting the 2016 Drop MLP Ewes



2016 drop F1 ewes on display at the MLP Spring Field Day – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017



## Merino Lifetime Productivity Project - Yearling Results – 2016 Drop F1 Ewes

The highest performing 2 sires for each trait (i.e. trait leaders – top 10%) are highlighted in grey shading. Each sire is listed for Classer's Grade and the same three indexes at all site evaluations. The index values reported are based on Flock Breeding Values (within flock) measured trait performance with varying emphasis on fleece weight, fibre diameter, body weight, staple strength and worm egg count. **Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association (AMSEA) Indexes are the same as MERINOSELECT Indexes apart from NLW (Number of Lambs Weaned) which is given a zero FBV value in AMSEA calculations.**

Breeders flock, Ram number	No Of Female Progeny <sup>2</sup>	AMSEA Indexes values				Classer's Visual Grade <sup>1</sup>	
		Fibre Production Plus	Merino Production Plus	Dual Purpose Plus	Wool Production Plus	Tops % (dev)	Culls % (dev)
		H <sup>^</sup>	H				
Bella Lana, 130296	28	97	97	115	97	-13	-4
Boyanga, 145112	41	82	80	93	83	-12	-1
Glen Donald, 120014	19	101	100	88	104	15	12
Greendale, 120012	20	121	116	100	108	3	-15
Leahcim Poll, 090918	29	93	100	108	106	12	-9
One Oak No. 2, R56	38	99	100	96	99	20	-4
Pastora Poll, 082893	28	101	94	93	93	-13	-7
Poll Boonoke, 120020	29	102	100	98	102	-4	-5
Pooginook Poll, 140632	26	89	98	102	101	2	0
Roseville Park, 140611	16	105	102	97	97	-17	8
Trigger Vale Poll, 140477	35	89	102	126	107	-6	-7
Wattle Dale, 140754	29	111	109	100	104	11	5
Wurrook, 130149	18	107	102	85	99	-1	27
<b>Average performance</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>

\* Link sire: Sire evaluated to provide links between sire evaluations sites so that the all site results can be combined into a single report, e.g., *Merino Superior Sires*.

<sup>1</sup> Classer's Grade is expressed as the percentage deviation of average Tops% and Culls%

<sup>2</sup> Number of progeny does not include wether progeny measured at post weaning only ewe progeny measured at yearling stages.

<sup>^</sup> W = Weaning (42 to 120 days); P = Post Weaning (120 to 300 days); Y = Yearling (300 to 400 days); H = Hogget (400 to 540 days); A = Adult (540 days and older).

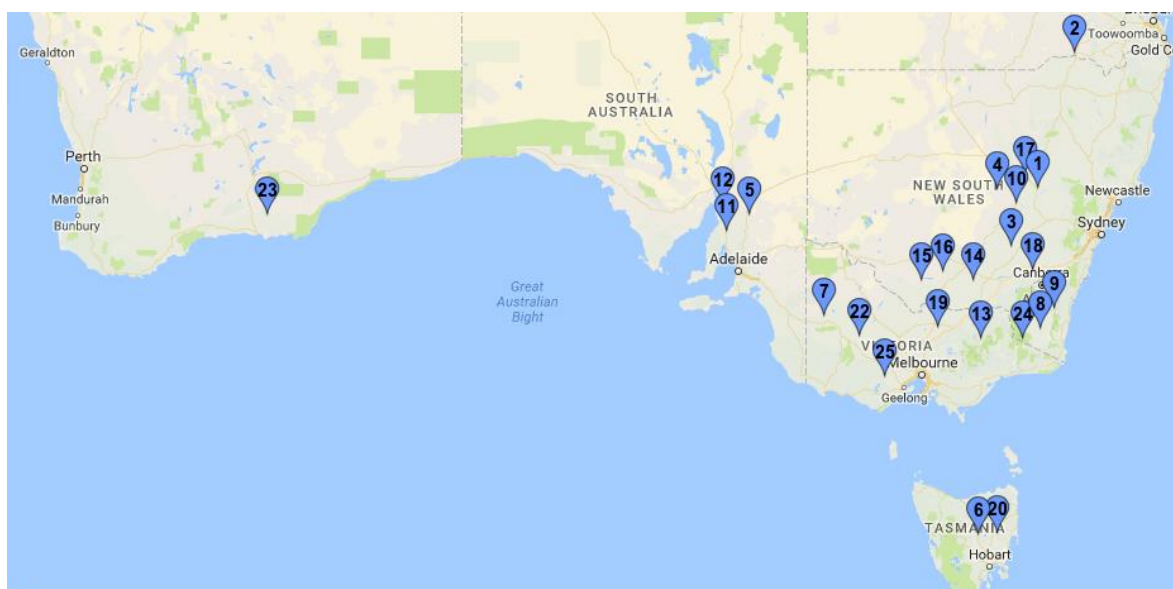


2016 drop F1 ewes on display at the MLP Spring Field Day – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017

### MerinoLink MLP Sire Location Code & Drop Year

Map Code	Sire Name	Drop Year
1	Bella Lana, 130296	2016
2	Boyanga, 145112	2016
3	Bundilla, 140055	2017
4	Centre Plus Poll, 407185	2017
5	Collinsville, 130545 (Apollo)	2017
6	DT Kenilworth, WH13017	2017
7	Glen Donald, 120014	2016
8	Greendale, 120012	2016
9	Greendale, 140141	2017
10	Lachlan, 305	2017
11	Leahcim Poll, 090918	2016 (Link)
12	Leahcim Poll, 132624	2017
13	One Oak No. 2, R56	2016 (Link)

Map Code	Sire Name	Drop Year
14	Pastora Poll, 082893	2016
15	Poll Boonoke, PB2-020	2016
16	Pooginook Poll, 140632	2016
17	Roseville Park, 140611	2016
18	Tallawong, 150280	2017
19	Toland Poll, 151058	2017
20	Trefusis, 150282	2017
21	Trigger Vale Poll, 140477	2016 & 2017 (Link)
22	Wallaloo Park, WP 422	2017
23	Wattle Dale, 140754	2016
24	West Plains Poll (Mercenary), 110004	2017 (Link)
25	Wurrook, Y 149	2016



Location of sires being evaluated at the MerinoLink site – 2016 and 2017 drops



Ben Patrick, 2012 Peter Westblade Scholar – classing the 2016 drop MLP ewes



2017 Drop MLP F1 Progeny – Weaning



## 2018 Peter Westblade Scholarship – Applications are open

**pws**

**Peter Westblade  
Scholarship**

Young people passionate about the sheep and wool industry, and wanting to make a difference, can now apply for the prestigious 2018 Peter Westblade Scholarship.

Now entering its seventh year, the scholarship provides opportunities to experience all aspects of the sheep and wool industry.

Open to young people aged 18 to 30, the scholarship honours the late Peter Westblade, a Lockhart sheep producer passionate about breeding profitable sheep, and a supporter of young people interested in agriculture.



The 2018 recipient will receive mentoring from industry leaders, involvement in the industry's largest commercial genetic trial, practical training, travel and the opportunity to develop wider networks of key industry contacts.

The 2017 scholarship winners Harrison Mulquiny and Rachael Gawne were joint recipients from a national field of applicants.

Harrison Mulquiny, 21, Wooroonook, Vic, is interested in how different Merino bloodlines perform in varying environmental conditions.

Rachael Gawne, 22, has an animal science degree from Charles Sturt University, Wagga, and now works with sheep industry consultant Sally Martin.

Executive officer Georgie McGuinness said the scholarship aimed to deliver hands-on involvement to young people aspiring for a career in the sheep and wool industry, through a 12-month tailored experience.

"It provides hands on education and mentoring for young participants, whilst rubbing shoulders with leaders in various fields of the sheep and wool industry," Mrs McGuinness said.

"This encourages young people into the industry by exposing them to opportunities and career paths." Applications close on December 29 at 5pm, with applicants short-listed mid-January for interviews by an industry panel in February 2018.

The 2018 Peter Westblade Scholarship recipient will be announced at the annual PWS dinner at the Murrumbidgee Turf Club in Wagga Wagga, NSW, on March 1, 2018.



*Photo: Rachael Gawne and Harrison Mulquiny at the MerinoLink Merino Lifetime Productivity Spring Open Day*

For more information visit [www.pwscholarship.com.au](http://www.pwscholarship.com.au)

Or follow us on Facebook

## Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge (PWMMC)

Sally Martin, Sally Martin Consulting Pty Lt. Acknowledgement - Craig Wilson, Craig Wilson & Associates

The Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge (PWMMC) has been running in its current form since 2010. The 2016-2018 PWMMC is the fourth trial of its kind. 2016-2018 PWMMC has seen 50 commercial breeders enter teams from NSW (43), Victoria (4), Tasmania (1) and Western Australia (2). Since the PWMMC inception there has been 210 teams evaluated from 5 states of Australia, Table 1 shows the distribution of teams.

Of the 210 team's 48 percent of entrants have entered more than once. The 2016-2018 intake had 52 percent of teams entered from new entrants. Overall there are 57 bloodlines or ram sources represented and currently there are 22 bloodlines represented by two or more teams. The repeat entrants provide excellent linkage between years and trials and will allow across year analysis in the future that will include both carcase and wool data.

Over the coming newsletters various aspects of the PWMMC will be revisited and reported. This article will focus the net profit per hectare results that have been reported over the last 7 years.

Table 1 - Number of teams represented by states

States	2010-12	2012-14	2014-16	2016-18	Total
NSW	45	50	46	43	184
VIC	4	7	3	4	18
WA	1		1	2	4
SA		2			2
TAS		1		1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>210</b>



### Net profit per hectare – what is the variation over time?

In this article the top and bottom 20% in each trial and analysis year has been compared over time. The team(s) performance has been ranked on Net Profit per Hectare. Based on this ranking the traits of the top and bottom 20% of teams has also been compared.

To generate the Net Profit per Hectare we use the data collected at each shearing and simulate a flock structure where the ratio of fleeces to sheep sold in any year is 2.5 to 1. This is consistent with the flock structure used in the National Merino Bloodline Performance analysis. For example, a flock with 1,000 breeding ewes where wether lambs are shorn before they are sold, there would be approximately 2,000 sheep shorn (adults, hoggets and weaners) and 800 sheep are sold per year (cull for age ewes, cull ewes and all wethers pre-18 months) each year.

To generate the fleece and carcase values on the Wool Challenge wethers within the PWMMC a 5-year rolling average wool and mutton price is used. Table 2 presents the 5-year rolling average micron premiums for the past 7 years. The micron premium is a measure of the relative value of fibre diameter and fleece weight in the wool market. The current wool prices (Table 3) are at an all-time high, if these prices were used the gap between the top and bottom performing teams would widen, there would be a greater spread across trial teams.

Table 2. Micron Premiums - 5 Yr Rolling Average Wool Prices							
	2006/2011	2007/2012	2008/2013	2009/2014	2010/2015	2011/2016	2012/2017
Micron	2011 5yrAve	2012 5yrAve	2013 5yrAve	2014 5yr Ave	2015 5 yr Ave	2016 5 yr Ave	2017 5 yr Ave
16.0	16.3	15.1	14.3	17.6	16.5	13.5	9.7
17.0	9.4	10.4	10.4	10.5	9.8	8.0	4.7
18.0	12.7	14.1	12.6	10.2	10.1	7.2	5.7
19.0	15.6	15.7	11.8	10.8	8.7	6.6	5.0
20.0	4.9	4.1	2.5	2.1	2.0	1.7	1.7
21.0	3.4	3.7	2.9	2.7	2.5	1.9	1.5
22.0	3.2	3.8		2.8	3.0	2.2	1.7



Table 3. Current wool market report – thank you to Moses & Son

MPG North	Percentile	14/12/2017	7/12/2017	Variance	5 Year Average	5 year var	5 year % var
17	100.0%	2,538	2,477	61	1,695	843	49.7%
18	99.8%	2,300	2,273	27	1,625	675	41.6%
19	100.0%	2,086	2,015	71	1,497	589	39.3%
20	100.0%	1,883	1,794	89	1,395	488	35.0%
21	100.0%	1,745	1,669	76	1,356	389	28.7%
22	100.0%	1,642	1,581	61	1,323	319	24.1%
30	54.0%	590	571	19	659	-69	-10.5%
EMI	100.0%	1,760	1,699	61	1,245	515	41.4%

Figure 1 presents the average Net Profit per Hectare for each shearing year and the 4 PWMMC trials. The shearing year average is shown in grey, top 20% of teams in blue and the bottom 20% in orange. Figure 2 shows the percentage difference between the top and bottom teams for each shearing year. In each of the PWMMC trials the wethers all have an even up shearing (to standardise wool length) and two (2) assessment shearings. In each trial there is a new intake of wethers. Over the 7 years there has been a range between 33% and 75% difference in Net Profit per Hectare when comparing the top and bottom 20%. Table 4 presents all the information discussed in this article.

Figure 1. PWMMC Net Profit/Hectare - Over time comparison

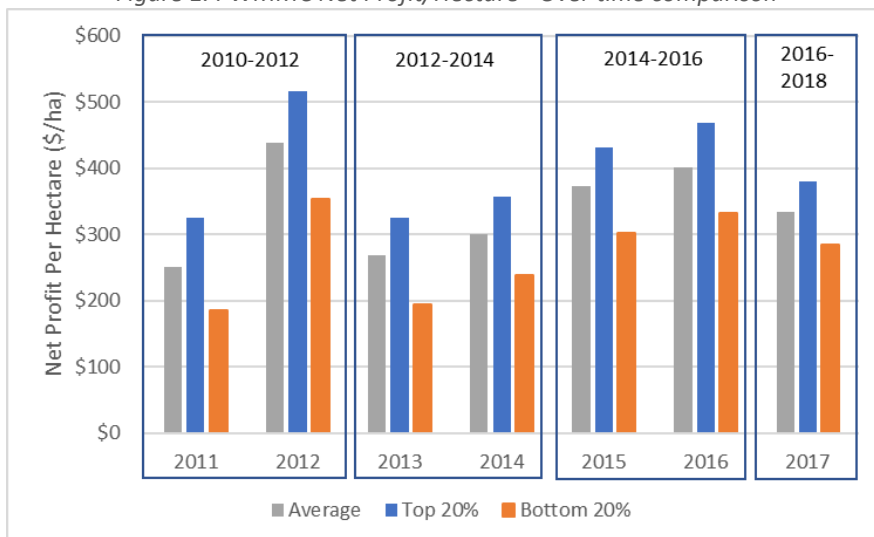
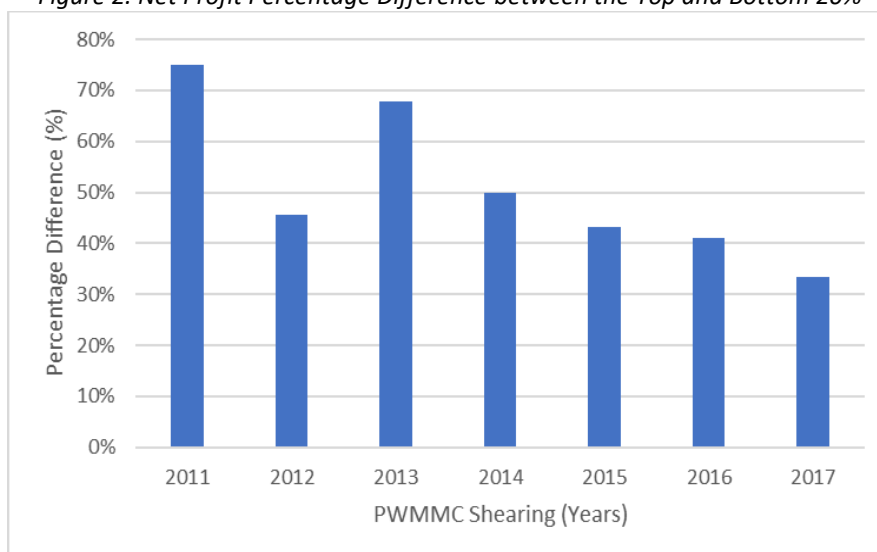


Figure 2. Net Profit Percentage Difference between the Top and Bottom 20%

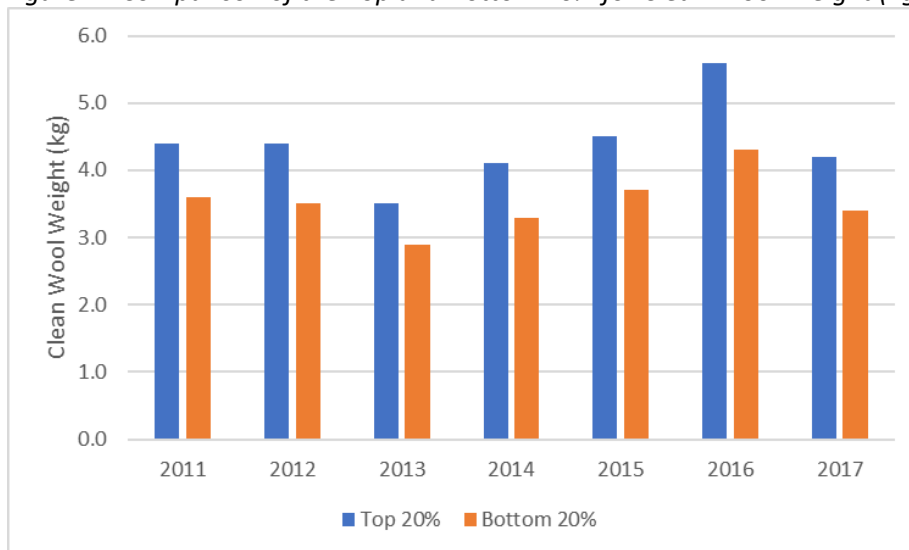


Figures 3, 4 and 5 presents the 3 key traits and the measured differences between the top and bottom 20%. Overall the top 20% of teams are finer, cut more clean wool and are relatively the same body weight, on average 4.6 to -6.6 above or below the bottom 20%, respectively. These trends have been consistent over the 7 years.

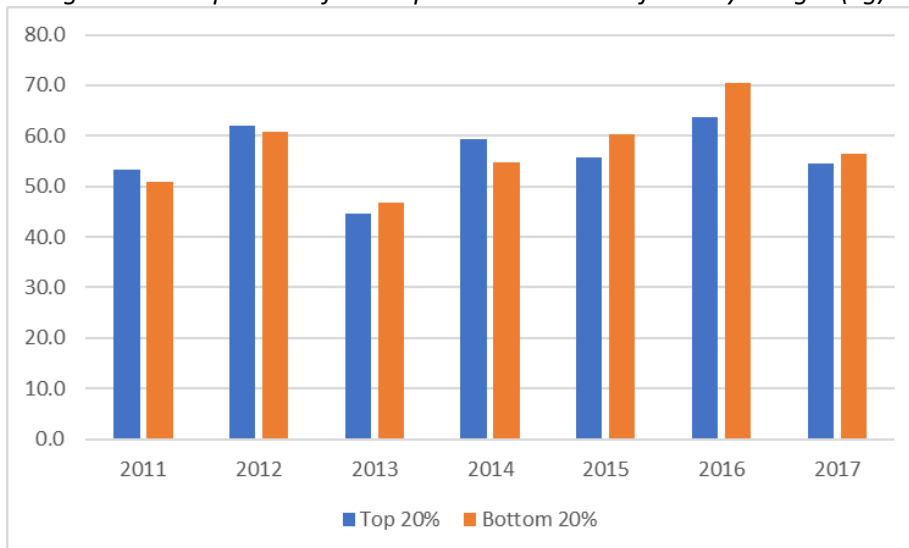
*Figure 3. Comparison of the Top and Bottom 20% for Fibre Diameter (Micron)*



*Figure 4. Comparison of the Top and Bottom 20% for Clean Wool Weight (kg)*



*Figure 5. Comparison of the Top and Bottom 20% for Body Weight (kg)*





<b>Table 4</b>				
<b>2010-2012</b>				
<b>2011 Shearing Results</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Top 20%</b>	<b>Bottom 20%</b>	<b>Difference (T-B)</b>
5 Year Average Price	\$251.01	\$324.48	\$185.42	\$139.06
FD (um)	18.9	18.6	19.8	-1.2
CFW (kg)	3.9	4.4	3.6	0.8
Bwt (kg)	51.6	53.4	51.0	2.4

<b>2012 Shearing Results</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Top 20%</b>	<b>Bottom 20%</b>	<b>Difference (T-B)</b>
5 Year Average Price	\$438.05	\$516.03	\$354.16	\$161.87
FD (um)	18.8	18.5	19.2	-0.7
CFW (kg)	3.9	4.4	3.5	0.9
BWT (kg)	61.6	62.1	60.9	1.2

<b>2012-2014</b>				
<b>2013 Shearing Results</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Top 20%</b>	<b>Bottom 20%</b>	<b>Difference (T-B)</b>
5 Year Average Price	\$269.03	\$325.31	\$193.94	\$131.37
FD (um)	17.5	16.9	18.1	-1.2
CFW (kg)	3.4	3.5	2.9	0.6
Bwt (kg)	46.0	44.7	46.7	-2.0

<b>2014 Shearing Results</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Top 20%</b>	<b>Bottom 20%</b>	<b>Difference (T-B)</b>
5 Year Average Price	\$300.57	\$356.65	\$237.75	\$118.90
FD (um)	18.8	18.8	19.2	-0.4
CFW (kg)	3.8	4.1	3.3	0.8
Bwt (kg)	56.3	59.4	54.8	4.6

<b>2014-2016</b>				
<b>2015 Shearing Results</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Top 20%</b>	<b>Bottom 20%</b>	<b>Difference (T-B)</b>
5 Year Average Price	\$372.66	\$431.55	\$301.22	\$130.33
FD (um)	18.2	18.2	18.7	-0.5
CFW (kg)	4.0	4.5	3.7	0.8
Bwt (kg)	55.8	55.7	60.2	-4.5

<b>2016 Shearing Results</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Top 20%</b>	<b>Bottom 20%</b>	<b>Difference (T-B)</b>
5 Year Average Price	\$400.43	\$469.09	\$332.40	\$136.69
FD (um)	19.3	19.7	19.5	0.2
CFW (kg)	4.9	5.6	4.3	1.3
Bwt (kg)	65.9	63.8	70.4	-6.6

<b>2016-2018</b>				
<b>2017 Shearing Results</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Top 20%</b>	<b>Bottom 20%</b>	<b>Difference (T-B)</b>
5 Year Average Price	\$333.08	\$379.80	\$284.94	\$94.86
FD (um)	17.9	17.7	17.9	-0.2
CFW (kg)	3.8	4.2	3.4	0.8
Bwt (kg)	56.7	54.6	56.4	-1.8

# PWMMC 2018-2020 Nomination Form

Trading Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Wether Bloodline: \_\_\_\_\_ Ewe Bloodline: \_\_\_\_\_

Years on Bloodline: \_\_\_\_\_ Merino Type i.e. Poll, Horn, Dohne, etc \_\_\_\_\_

Approx Average price paid for rams in 2017: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of lambing in 2017 i.e. 15<sup>th</sup> Aug – 30<sup>th</sup> Sep \_\_\_\_\_

Total of all lambs in drop: \_\_\_\_\_ Total ewes mated to lamb in 2017: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Identification Number (PIC) \_\_\_\_\_

**Have the 2017 drop lambs been:-**

Vaccinated with Gudair vaccine Yes No (circle one)

Twice vaccinated with 6 in 1 Yes No (circle one)

I/We hereby nominate a team of thirty (30) wethers in the Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge 2018-2020.

I/We have read the rules and conditions of The Challenge and agree to abide by such rules and conditions.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## NOMINATION FORM

Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge 2018 - 2020



www.craigwilsonandassociates.com.au

Send Nomination Form to: PWMMC 2016-2018, 1 Featherwood Road, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650  
Or contact Craig Wilson for more information. Mobile 0428 250 982  
Email: craigwilsonlivestock@bigpond.com

### Australia's largest evaluation of commercial Merino Genetics

"Our Company runs large-scale sheep stations across NSW. Our involvement in the Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge assists us to quantify the genetic gains we are making".

Michael Field  
Managing Director  
TA Field Estate



### About the Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge

Craig Wilson (pictured above) of Craig Wilson and Associates, Wagga Wagga has collected benchmarking data for the past 13 consecutive years on more than 10,000 sheep run in evaluations at Collingullie, Alectown, Warren, Taralga, Narrandera Temora and Wagga Wagga.

The 2018-2020 Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge (PWMMC) will commence in April, 2018 at Wagga Wagga. The aim of the Merino Challenge is to demonstrate the relative productivity of a merino flock for economically important traits under equivalent conditions.

The PWMMC consists of two components a Meat Challenge and a Wool Challenge.

The information and data analysis produced will show entrants and the wider sheep industry the financial gains that exist through high performance Merino genetics.

Entry to the PWMMC is open to any commercial and stud breeders who are running self-replacing Merino types. A total of 30 wethers are required from each entrant.

Throughout 2018-2020 public events take place that include:

- Meat Challenge Open Day - 2018
- First Evaluation Shearing - 2019
- Annual Dinner 2019 & 2020
- Final Shearing - 2020

Results from the Meat Challenge and Wool Challenge are provided to the entrant in a report book format.

Tabled below is results generated from the PWMMC for two teams that have participated since 2010.

	2011 Net Profit per ha	2012 Net Profit per ha	2013 Net Profit per ha	2014 Net Profit per ha	2015 Net Profit per ha	Average Net Profit per ha
<b>Team A</b>	\$316	\$537	\$321	\$319	\$424	<b>\$384</b>
<b>Team B</b>	\$174	\$321	\$195	\$210	\$270	<b>\$234</b>
<b>\$ Var.</b>	\$142	\$216	\$126	\$109	\$154	<b>\$150</b>
<b>% Var.</b>	55%	60%	59%	60%	64%	<b>60%</b>





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# MerinoLink Conference - 2018

Rachael Gawne, Sally Martin Consulting Pty Ltd

It has been a busy time for MerinoLink since the last newsletter (Issue 6). Since the previous edition we have held our Annual General Meeting, had displays and representatives at the South West Slopes Stud Merino Breeders and Henty Machinery Field days and hosted the MerinoLink MLP Project Spring Field Day at Temora. As well as all of this we have continued to collect data and information on the projects we are currently running. Busy times indeed!

## Annual Conference and Field Day

Our Annual Conference and Field Day organising committee have also been very busy planning the next conference. Dates and locations have now been confirmed for 2018. The **Conference** will again be held at the Mercure Hotel Goulburn on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018**. Your feedback on the venue from last year has been taken on-board and we have negotiated improvements to the function room/centre to make next year's conference even more enjoyable. Following the success of the conference field day in 2017 we have decided to hold another field day in conjunction with the Conference in 2018. The **Field Day** will be held on **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> June** at "Ravenswood", Cavan Station, Yass (home of the 2017 drop Sire Evaluation). More information about the 2018 Conference and Field Day will be distributed over the coming months with tickets going on sale early next year.

## MerinoLink Encouraging the involvement of Young Industry Innovators

As part of the 2018 MerinoLink Conference, one session will be dedicated to showcasing young people within our industry.

The "**Hour of Power**" will be a fast-paced, informative session presented by a range of young researchers, scholars and innovators from across Australia. University students will have the opportunity to present their research projects and findings. Previous Peter Westblade Scholarship scholars will be involved, highlighting the experiences gained through the scholarship and how it has helped them in pursuing their career. Other young people who are having an impact in the industry will also have the opportunity to speak about their experiences and how they are making a difference.

The "**Hour of Power**" is open to young persons aged 18-30 who are Honours, Masters or PhD students undertaking research topics relevant to the Sheep and Wool Industry and/or a passionate young person who has made an impact within the Industry and sees a career within the industry.

### Applications for the Hour of Power are open now!

Further information and application forms for the "**Hour of Power**" can be found on the MerinoLink website; [www.merinolink.com.au](http://www.merinolink.com.au). **Applications close 16<sup>th</sup> February 2018**. Applicants will be shortlisted and contacted by 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018 with further information.





## MerinoLink Board Directors 2017/2018

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At the 2017 AGM 3 of our long-standing Board Directors stood down; Marty Moses, Carol Huggins and Malcolm Peake. MerinoLink would like to thank Marty, Carol and Mal for their contributions to MerinoLink since its inception. We wish them well in their future and look forward to their continued support as active MerinoLink members. In their place we welcomed to the board 2 new Board Directors in Matt Crozier (Ram Breeder) and Lexi Cesnik (Service Provider). The current board profiles are listed below.

### Board Member Profiles



**Rich Keniry** (*MerinoLink Chair*) is a commercial wool breeder currently managing the family business, Kildara Pastoral Company, based in Cumnock NSW. Kildara is 2500 ha grazing property where we run a mixed wool and sheep meat operation with approximately 250ha of grazing cereals each year.

Originally from Sydney, the purchase of the farm in 1998 gave me an opportunity to explore & learn an unknown field, I worked on and off the property for several years until 2005 when I decided to make Agriculture my career. I completed a Bachelor of Agriculture at the University of New England, Armidale and have an Advanced Diploma of Marketing. In 2008, I spent 3 years with Virbac Animal health as their Sheep Product Manager and in 2011 I returned home to the family property with my wife Belinda.

I am extremely passionate about the sheep industry and believe that with the advances in technology and the availability of quality information sheep breeders can access to assist in decision making on farm, the future of the sheep industry is exciting. I believe that commercial breeders should have access to relevant data and research that stud breeders do to help them make informed decisions and **MerinoLink** is a fantastic opportunity for commercial breeders to access this information.



**Rick Baldwin** (*MerinoLink Vice-Chair*) was the founding chair of **MerinoLink** Limited 2012-2014, and is the Co-Principle of Bundilla Merino Stud. Rick has been actively involved in all aspects of production based merino breeding and assessment for the last 20 years.

The **MerinoLink** Group allows merino breeders to network and drive industry issues that the forum believes will have a positive impact on the future profitability of Merino enterprises, and that is why Rick is very excited to be part of the **MerinoLink** Group.



**Craig Wilson** operates a Merino Sheep Genetic Consulting business (Craig Wilson & Associates) reaching across 3 states. Craig assists some of Australia's most progressive and influential stud and commercial Merino businesses. Craig is a commercial woolgrower and also facilitates the Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge. Craig is the current Chair of the Peter Westblade Scholarship Inc.

“My goal in business is to help clients reach maximum levels of genetic gain in their flocks, this progress will ensure their financial sustainability into the future. **MerinoLink** can play an important role in arming the Merino industry with precise and current information to help its members make great decisions in their businesses”.



**Steve Jarvis** After coming home and running the family property at the age of 18, and having the strong influence and friendship of the Late Peter Westblade, Steve has stuck with Merino sheep for 30 odd years. He is a passionate commercial Merino breeder, now developing a Poll Merino stud in partnership with his wife Lydia. They run around 1500 breeding ewes on their 500ha property, Heathfield at Boorowa. Steve knows being in Merinos is a very profitable business, and is continually striving to improve the profit drivers of fleece value and flock fertility within their operation.

Steve has been heavily involved in grass-roots community groups over the years such as Landcare and the Rural Fire Service, and enjoys that point of difference MerinoLink has in the sheep industry. Sharing the passion of Merinos with other like-minded people through MerinoLink is something Steve thoroughly enjoys. He feels the integrity, independence and good will of the membership of MerinoLink will lead to even greater things in the future and is very proud to be a Board member.



**Sally Martin** is passionate about rural communities, agriculture and more specifically the Australian sheep and wool industry. Sally has a vision for a united wool and sheepmeat industry. Unifying these production systems via measurement and reason will provide a clear direction for sheep producers and the industry as a whole.

Sally was awarded the inaugural Australian Wool Industry Medal 2017, recognising exceptional and sustained contribution to the Australian wool industry. Sally was named amongst the [100 Women of Influence](#) in 2013 an initiative of The Westpac Group and the Financial Review and in 2011 was the RIRDC NSW Rural Women's Award Runner-Up. Sally has been using these opportunities to promote **MerinoLink** and the many programs she is involved with.

Sally grew up on a grazing property on the Monaro, NSW, Sally studied Agricultural Science at University of Western Sydney Hawkesbury and completed Post Graduate studies at University of New England and Sydney University . Her career has taken a number of paths, working with NSW DPI to now running her own consultancy business based out of Young NSW that services commercial and stud sheep producers and service providers to the industry.



**Robert Mortimer** – Robert was instrumental with friends in creating the Centre Plus ram breeding group in 1981 and has managed the Centre Plus breeding nucleus for over 35 years.

Centre Plus was part of the Australian Merino Society (AMS) for eight years. The AMS was a 3-tiered group breeding scheme, involving 1,200 commercial farmers across Australia running over 3,000,000 breeding ewes.

Robert was instrumental in causing the first merino across flock genetic evaluation in Australia to happen, going on to become MGS (Merino Genetic Services.) This was followed with involvement with Merino Benchmark, (which began as an alternative to MGS) and the merging of the two databases into MerinoSelect, under Sheep Genetics, with the establishment of a common language for the whole sheep Industry.

Robert is driven by a fascination in, and excitement for research and genetic progress, and its role in the future profitability of the Merino Industry.

Robert believes **MerinoLink** is perfectly placed to help lead the Merino Industry to greater prosperity.





**David Davidson** grew up in the Young district and has been involved with the NSW Farmers and NSW Royal Agricultural Society. David runs a mixed farming operation near Young.



**Matt Crozier:** Matt is the General Manager of Cavan Station and Bogo Merino and Poll Merino Studs based at Yass. Cavan Station operates a large commercial flock of approx. 35,000 merino sheep joining around 15,000 ewes and a self-replacing Angus cattle herd of 1400 breeding cows. Bogo produces productive, commercially focused, balanced merino rams for an array of clients throughout NSW and VIC.

Matt cut his teeth jackerooing at F S Falkiner company properties Boonoke, Wanganella, Zara and Barratta before heading off to study Agriculture and Farm Management at Wagga and Orange Ag colleges. After managing his family grazing operations at Bungendore throughout the 1990's Matt turned his hand to futures trading speculating on interest rate, currency and agricultural commodity futures. After a 5 year stint in the financial markets

Matt returned to the Southern Tablelands to manage various grazing and mixed farming properties for various clients before settling at Cavan 7 years ago.

Matt has been a member of **MerinoLink** for 6 years and is passionate about promoting the merino industry as a profitable and rewarding enterprise and career choice. Matt is a sponsor and advocate of the Peter Westblade Scholarship program and actively assists young people in the development of their careers in the sheep and wool industry.



**Lexi Cesnik:** Lexi grew up on a commercial farm at Tarcutta, NSW on which her family run Merino Sheep. She completed an Undergraduate course in Agriculture at Charles Sturt University in 2014, and also the Post-graduate certificate in Agricultural Consulting through University of New England in 2017.

During her time at university she was a part of the Australian Wool Innovations, National Merino Challenge (AWI NMC) for 2 years. The AWI NMC presented many sides of the Merino industry include new and emerging technologies within the sheep industry, which was the main factor in her choice to pursue a career in the sheep and

wool industry.

In 2015 Lexi was employed by Sally Martin Consulting (Young) and Moses & Son Woolbroking (Temora) as part of the MLA donor Companies Livestock Consulting Internship (facilitated by Meridian Agriculture). Lexi's role within the Livestock Consulting Internship was extremely dynamic and provided many opportunities including a project "Benefits and Barriers to the adoption of Precision Sheep Management". Lexi's passions lie in increasing on-farm efficiencies using Precision Management.

Lexi Joined **MerinoLink** to increase her knowledge and skills and to be surrounded by likeminded people who are passionate about sheep and wool production and increasing the productivity, profitability and sustainability of this amazing industry. Lexi wanted to become a **MerinoLink** board member to help ensure the future of quality independent sheep research and promote the adoption of technologies that are available to stud and commercial producers.

## Changes to MerinoLink Membership Categories

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**Coming into effect as of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018.** MerinoLink will continue to offer 5 membership categories; Ram Breeder, Commercial Breeder, Service Provider, Under 25 years and Corporate. Ram Breeder and Commercial Breeder membership will now be valid for two (2) persons only. Any additional people to the membership will cost \$50/person. The Service Provider and Under 25years Category is valid for individuals only. Larger organisations should see the Corporate Membership Category for other options. MerinoLink relies on membership, sponsorship and project funding to fulfil its objectives. More detailed information on each of the membership categories can be seen below:

### MerinoLink Membership Benefits

#### Membership Benefits – Ram Breeders - \$495 (GST inclusive)

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Ram Breeder membership is valid for two (2) people, additional members cost \$50/person.

- ✓ eNewsletter and Hard Copy Newsletter.
- ✓ Input into the content of the annual MerinoLink Conference.
- ✓ Reduced entry into the annual MerinoLink Conference and Field Day (MerinoLink member rates).
- ✓ First preference and notification in entering sires or clients in MerinoLink performance trials, e.g. wether trials, sire evaluations and on farm demonstrations.
- ✓ Access to the MerinoLink run sire evaluations.
- ✓ Notification of all affiliated MerinoLink performance trial results – summary; directed to full reports; access to information on the members section of the MerinoLink website.
- ✓ Availability of cutting edge breeding technology, for you to trial and assist in its development and validation.
- ✓ Product purchasing power, for example electronic sheep technologies.
- ✓ Two-way communication with industry leaders.
- ✓ Opportunities to have input into research trial development.
- ✓ To have a collective voice on issues that impacts our industry and your business.

#### Membership Benefits – Commercial Breeders - \$195 (GST inclusive) FROM 1<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2018

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Commercial Breeder membership is valid for two (2) people, additional members cost \$50/person.

- ✓ eNewsletter and Hard Copy Newsletter.
- ✓ Input into the content of the annual MerinoLink Conference.
- ✓ Reduced entry into the annual MerinoLink Conference and Field Day (MerinoLink member rates).
- ✓ Notification of all affiliated MerinoLink performance trial results – summary; directed to full reports; access to information on the members section of the MerinoLink website.
- ✓ Product purchasing power, for example electronic tag technologies.
- ✓ Priority preference and notification in entering sires or clients in MerinoLink benchmark, performance trials.
- ✓ Opportunities to have input into research trial development.
- ✓ To have a collective voice on issues that impacts our industry and your business.
- ✓ To be better informed and be more active in the Australian sheep industry.

## Membership Benefits – Service Providers - \$396 (GST inclusive)

The Service Provider membership is for an individual only not an organisation. Please see the Corporate Member category for additional options.

- ✓ eNewsletter and Hard Copy Newsletter.
- ✓ Notification of all affiliated MerinoLink performance trial results – summary; directed to full reports; access to information on the members section of the MerinoLink website.
- ✓ Reduced entry to annual MerinoLink Conference and Field Day (MerinoLink member rates).
- ✓ Notification of sheep technology trial information and opportunities to have input into research trial development and to have a collective voice on issues that impact our industry and your business.

## Membership Benefits – Under 25 years - \$55 (GST inclusive)

Under 25-year membership is for an individual only.

- ✓ eNewsletter and Hard Copy Newsletter.
- ✓ Notification on upcoming events and youth opportunities, for example Peter Westblade Scholarship and Breeding leadership programs.
- ✓ Provide mentoring opportunities and networks.
- ✓ Reduced entry to annual MerinoLink Conference and Field Day (MerinoLink member rates).

## Membership Benefits – Corporate Membership - (GST inclusive)

Corporate Membership options relate to the sponsorship categories outlined in the Prospectus. Please see the Prospectus document for more information including the sponsorship benefits.

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## Ram Sale Price Correlations – are there any messages?

Rachael Gawne and Sally Martin, Sally Martin Consulting Pty Ltd

Many ram breeders have asked if there we are seeing a trend between ram sale price and the data they are providing to commercial breeders at sale time. This year we have looked at a small number of ram breeders to see if we can identify the determinants in ram sale price.

We looked at 7 MerinoLink Ram Breeder member ram sale results. There were 1000 rams sold between the 7 breeders who provide their sale catalogue and price details for the analysis. Both phenotypic and Australian Breeding Values (ASBV's) were analysed to determine the effect they may have on the bidding and purchase prices for Merino Rams.

The ASBV's included Yearling Weight (YWT), Yearling Clean Fleece Weight (YCFW), Yearling Staple Length (YSL), Yearling Eye Muscle Depth (YEMD), Yearling Fat (YFAT) as well as Index Values Fibre Production Plus (FP+), Merino Production Plus (MP+) and Dual Purpose Plus (DP+). Phenotypic data analysed included Weight (kg), Micron, Fibre Diameter Stand Deviation (FDSD) and Fibre Diameter Coefficient of Variation (FDCV) as well as sale order.

Body weights for the rams were not able to be collected for all the studs involved in the analysis. Those studs that did provide ram weights (kg) showed a low to moderate correlation between weight and sale price.

The correlation results, although from a small number of ram breeders, did not show any significant trend for sale price. There was a moderate correlation between sale order and sale price across all the ram sales ranging from 0.42 to 0.63. The traits that had a low to moderate correlation with sale price included YWT, YCFW and YEMD respectively. There was a moderate to low correlation for the DP+ and MP+ indexes.

There are a number of factors that could be influencing what rams are purchased and how much is paid, these include varying commercial and ram breeder breeding objectives, lack of utilisation and understanding of breeding values by the commercial buyers.

Future opportunities will be to increase the numbers of ram breeder sale results and collecting additional information that may be influencing ram sale price such as horn/poll.

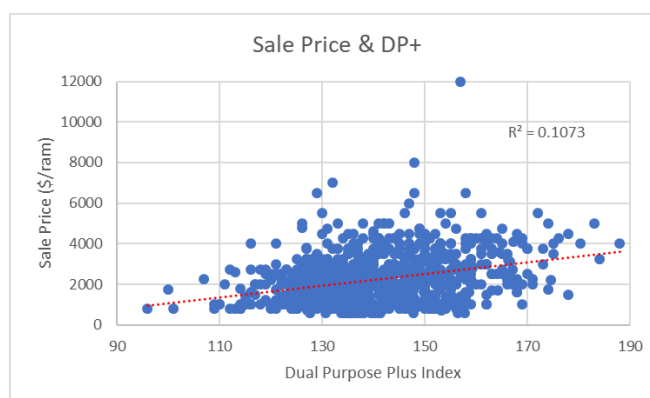


Figure 1: Sale price compared to DP+ Index (0.33) Low correlation

Table 1: Ram Sale Price compared to raw data and ASBVs - Correlations

	Sale Order	Micron	Body Wt	YWT	YFD	YCFW	YSL	YEMD	YFAT	FP+	MP+	DP+
Stud 1	-0.42	-0.22	na	0.35	-0.23	0.17	0.26	0.09	0.07	0.34	0.56	0.46
Stud 2	-0.57	-0.10	0.54	0.57	0.02	0.41	0.13	0.38	0.15	0.22	0.49	0.56
Stud 3	-0.42	0.10	na	0.09	-0.02	0.31	0.21	-0.17	-0.08	0.26	0.33	0.22
Stud 4	-0.47	-0.21	0.46	0.12	-0.03	-0.02	-0.08	0.01	-0.14	0.05	0.05	0.03
Stud 5	-0.63	-0.14	na	0.54	-0.05	0.50	0.38	0.45	0.39	0.06	0.33	0.55
Stud 6	-0.57	-0.25	0.27	0.32	-0.27	0.19	0.14	0.06	0.03	0.39	0.35	0.27
Stud 7	-0.56	0.27	na	0.40	0.26	0.34	0.23	0.18	0.05	-0.10	0.10	0.32
Combined	-0.28	0.04	0.18	0.45	0.13	0.33	0.22	0.24	0.14	0.00	0.16	0.33

Low correlation  
Moderate correlation

## The SmartShepherd System in Practice – Advertorial

*David Rubie, Co-Founder and CEO, SmartShepherd*

Mothering up is the only sure way to keep track of the maternal performance of your animals – a major driver of productivity in any flock. The SmartShepherd system is a new player in the pedigree space and now sits alongside mothering at birth, DNA Parent testing and Pedigree Matchmaker.

While all of these options are extremely attractive, we hope we have come up with an interesting alternative you might like to try.

The SmartShepherd system is based around electronic devices that are worn by ewes and lambs in the paddock as they graze and suckle. As the animals interact normally during the day and night, the system unobtrusively records their interactions and performs the mothering up automatically. In practical terms, it is the fastest method of mothering up a large group of animals, the system requires only 48 hours to return results and the animals do not need to be separated from food or water for it to work.

Having worked closely with livestock software for the last decade, our primary focus is trying to make the system as easy to use as we can. Our aim is to provide something that will work in the middle of nowhere and is as self-contained as we can make it.

Most of the interaction with SmartShepherd is via an App on a hybrid handheld device that combines an Android tablet and an RFID reader which can read all the EID tags currently available in the Australian market (it's ISO 11784/11785 compliant). This device makes the use of the SmartShepherd system easy by combining the functions of a stick reader and a laptop into one handy system.

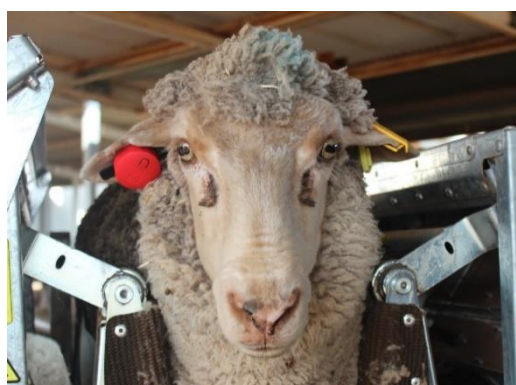
The typical application of SmartShepherd starts by mustering your ewes and lambs into the yards. It doesn't matter what order the animals are processed in.

On the handheld device, create a new session for your new mob and enter the "Assign" screen. By creating a new recording session, you are indicating to us that you have started mothering on a new mob, so old data on the devices can be safely ignored if they have been previously used.

As a lamb or ewe comes through the gate, a SmartShepherd tag is activated, the tag is given a type (Lamb or Ewe), it's data store is cleared and the animals RFID or flock tag is recorded using the SmartShepherd hand held and associated with our SmartShepherd device.

Once confirmation is shown, the animal is simply released and the next lamb or ewe can be tagged. Tagging each animal takes less than 30 seconds and can be done single handedly. On the properties we have used this system to date, we have used a simple dog style collar in various sizes to put the tags on the animals rather than an ear tag – for farmers who would reuse tags in a single season this approach is the most convenient and the animals don't mind the collars.

Once all the animals are tagged, they can simply be let out into their paddock. The tags do not need to be within any network or phone coverage area – they simply interact amongst themselves, allowing us the insight into their







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relationships. The animals do not need to be restricted to any particular area or kept near any centralised recording devices, so any sized lambing paddock is sufficient.

At the end of the evaluation period the animals are mustered again, and the tags removed and deactivated (both activation and deactivation is by a simple button on the device – the sounds are different beeps for both). Removing the tags takes less than 20 seconds and the animals are released. Again, it doesn't matter in which order the animals are processed.

Once the deactivated tags are back at the farmhouse/office, they are then re-activated again one by one and the information is read off them with the SmartShepherd handheld device. The device automatically pulls the data off the device, sends it to SmartShepherd. The tags can then be deactivate and ready for re-use on the next mob. The data will not be wiped until the tag is re-assigned, so if you think you've made a mistake, simply press the button on the tag and read it again. The application on the handheld will tell you if you've already processed that tag.

You do not have to email your results to us or re-key anything into your own software – we will supply a file suitable for import into the major livestock management software systems. The results file will be available on our website for download and/or emailed to you, depending on your preference. Typical processing time is less than an hour after the last tag is read.

## Low Stress Stock Handling Course Review

*Rachael Gawne, Sally Martin Consulting Pty Ltd and Adele Offley, Moses & Son*

Moses & Son along with Arrow Farmquip and Livestock Behaviour systems recently put on a low stress livestock handling course which was open to Moses & Son Clients, MerinoLink members and the public. The workshop was presented by leading livestock handling educator and stockman Boyd Holden (Livestock Behaviour Systems), and was aimed at demonstrating the economic benefits of low stress stock handling with a focus on gaining productivity and flow in the sheep yards.

Boyd covered the fundamentals in livestock handling from explaining what a flight zone is and the point of balance and drive spots for an animal, to highlighting the four rules of moving stock; Position, Pressure, Movement and Communication.

The day was well received by all attendees with Boyd backing up his lessons and rules not only with his previous experiences in Australia and abroad with a wide range of different animals, but also through explaining the science behind why his methods work.

The workshop was a worthwhile experience and people of all ages and experience levels came away learning something new and understanding the principals behind why some methods of stock moving work and others don't.







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