



ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS – September 2018



MerinoLink Chairman's Report

Richard Keniry

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the 2017/18 MerinoLink Chairman's Report.

The past year for the merino industry has been an extremely exciting but challenging period of time in which to farm in eastern Australia, we have experienced record-breaking wool prices which have continued to soar throughout the year and the mutton and lamb prices, once thought was at their peak, have again shocked us all with demand pushing the prices up. These "*perfect times*" to be in the merino industry have only been shadowed by the intense drought that has impacted such a widespread area of eastern Australia. However, it is not all doom and gloom as high prices for meat and wool have made the feeding decisions easier, maintain breeding stock, finish animals for market and continuation of production feeding is a common theme amongst merino breeders and the reason to stay focused on the end goal.

MerinoLink in the past year has been putting in the hard yards with our existing and new projects, and like our members, the hard work often has to be done in advance of the returns as many projects are just in the early stages and as such the results are still to be released. These projects are managed and co-ordinated by our CEO and Project Manager, Sally Martin and I must make special note and thanks to Sal, as her enthusiasm and dedication to the projects is exceptional.

In June of 2018, MerinoLink hosted its annual conference in Goulburn for the second year running and with 180 delegates attending the interest in what MerinoLink has to offer is continuing to grow. A special thanks to the conference organising committee who helped pull the speakers for the day together and to Carmen Thackery, Rachael Gawne and Sally Martin for all their hard work in making sure the conference was a huge success. A standout session of the conference was the "hour of power" which was a new addition to the program, but one which was very well received by the attendees and is in line with the MerinoLink vision to encourage and empower young people in the industry.

I would also like to extend thanks to the team at Cavan Station and Bogo Merinos, as we were very lucky to be able to hold our field day following the conference at Ravenswood, near Yass NSW. The field day gave attendees the opportunity to hear from some great speakers in the shearing shed, see some practical demonstrations on scanning and condition scoring and inspect the 2017 drop progeny from the 16 sires in the Cavan Sire Evaluation. The progeny looked in great condition considering a tough season and compliments must be extended to the Cavan Station team and the MerinoLink team for their hard work with the SE.

A central focus for MerinoLink is a new project which was in concept in late 2017 and now in full swing in 2018. The MerinoLink and UNE DNA Stimulation project which is funded by MLA's Donor company (50%) and participant (50%) and is an exciting opportunity for MerinoLink to work with ram breeders, ram breeder clients and commercial breeders to increase their use of genetic and genomic tools currently available with the aim to double genetic gain in line with MLA's National Livestock Genetic Consortium's strategic direction by 2022.

To be a part of the MerinoLink and UNE DNA stimulation project you must be a member of MerinoLink and these projects highlight the key benefits that MerinoLink can offer its members. Being a part of this project as



a stud or commercial breeder will provide participants with an opportunity to evaluate and benchmark their breeding program and make changes if required for the best results.

The AWI funded – Merino Lifetime productivity project (MLP) which is a joint project with Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association (AMSEA) is still in its early stages and being run at “The Vale” Temora. I would like to extend my special thanks to Marty Moses, Simon Coddington and the staff at Moses and Son for their continued support and effort to make this project a success. This year we are starting to see the first results post the sire evaluation stage with 2016 drop F1 ewes joined as maidens in December 2017. As more reproduction results become available, the project aim of generating a unique database that better understands how to deliver lifetime performance of the Merino will be developed and the results will flow through to our members to help them make more informed decisions.

The MLP project for MerinoLink will run for the next 5 years and we look forward to continue to deliver results that will have industry benefit and more importantly, provide our members with up to date results with the aim to deliver greater genetic gains and assist the to make better informed decisions.

MerinoLink’s “Wether Extension project” which is evaluating the meat and carcass traits of the 2016 drop MLP wethers and the adult wool and weight traits of the 2017 drop MLP and Cavan sire evaluation wethers is ongoing. In October 2017, the 2016 drop MLP wethers were processed at Fletcher International Abattoir and meat and carcass traits recorded. One of the key benefits of this project to industry and MerinoLink members is the link the data provides to the MLP ewes as the brothers of the ewes being evaluated as part of the MLP project. This extra data being provided by the wethers is adding value to the database of the MLP project. In 2018, the 2017 drop MLP wethers and Cavan SE wethers had their first wool and weight traits evaluation and this starts the wool evaluation phase of the project with 3 more years of wool trait data to collect. The aim is to provide members with relevant data that will assist them in making more informed decisions around the profitability of their wool and meat operation.

I believe that MerinoLink is committed to delivering R&D outcomes to its members and our projects to date are a true reflection of the boards desire to shape the future of the merino industry. MerinoLink will continue to work closely with industry peak bodies to align projects with desired industry outcomes and a more profitable merino industry.

I would like to extend my appreciation to all our sponsors who have helped MerinoLink over the past few years, your continued support has been invaluable to our success. I look forward to working with you in the coming years.

Finally, to the MerinoLink board, thank you for your support and efforts over the past year it’s been an exciting 12 months and I look forward to working with you over the next 12 months.



Members of MerinoLink Limited as at 7th September 2017

| Member Category | Numbers (2014) | Numbers (2015) | Numbers (2016) | Numbers (2017) | Numbers (2018) | Percentage % | Location | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|----------|-----|
| Ram Breeder | 24 | 26 | 28 | 46 | 37 | | NSW | 85% |
| Commercial Breeder | 44 | 68 | 73 | 94 | 102 | | VIC | 7% |
| Service Provider | 23 | 28 | 29 | 19 | 17 | | QLD | 2% |
| Sponsor/Supporters | 5 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 9 | | SA | 2% |
| Student/U 25 years | | 12 | 13 | 6 | 9 | | WA | 2% |
| Affiliates | | | | | 14 | | TAS | 1% |
| Total Members | 96 | 143 | 153 | 175 | 188 | | ACT | 2% |
| | | | | | | | | |

MerinoLink Limited Current Board Members as at 7th September 2018

Richard Keniry (Chair)
 Robert Mortimer
 Steve Jarvis
 David Davidson
 Rick Baldwin (Vice Chair)

Craig Wilson
 Matt Crozier
 Lexi Cesnik
 Sally Martin (Chief Executive Officer)

Annual Report Summary – 2017-2018

During 2017/2018 financial year MerinoLink Limited activities have focused on continuing a number of projects including the Merino Lifetime Productivity Project and the 2017 sire evaluation site (Cavan/Ravenswood, Yass). Developing a new project funded on a 50:50 basis with the Meat and Livestock Donor Company (MDC), University of New England and project participants – DNA Stimulation Project. The DNA Stimulation project will run over a 5 year period and focusses on doubling the rate of genetic gain for project participants.



MerinoLink Projects

1. MerinoLink & UNE DNA Stimulation Project

The MerinoLink & University of New England (UNE) UNE DNA Stimulation project is a partnership with UNE, MerinoLink, MLA Donor Company and the project Participants which includes 26 Merino ram breeders and up to 200 commercial Merino breeders.

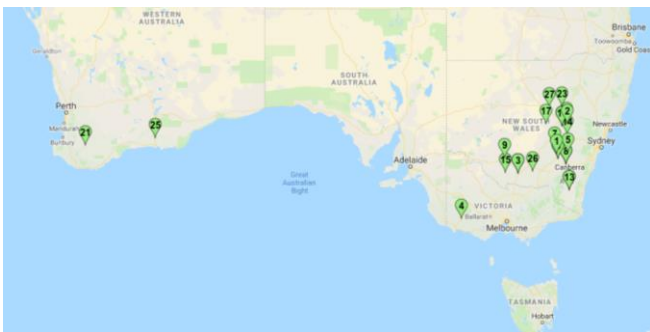
How will this project be different?

The MerinoLink & UNE DNA Stimulation project is not about testing whether genetic tools work or the implementation of single tools in set situations but taking the best tools and knowledge from our world leading researchers and delivering it through service providers and ram breeders to commercial producers and building a supported system to best use the genetic tools in industry. The project will focus on capacity building and working collaboratively at all levels within and across the industry.

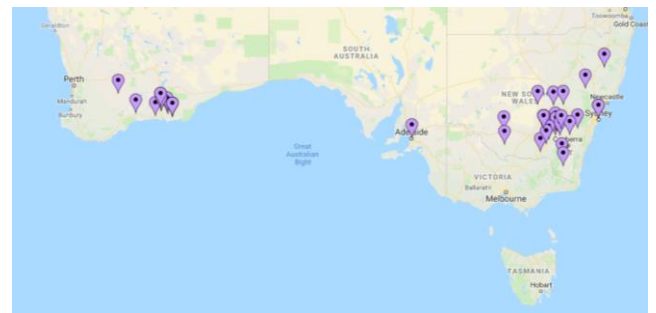
Project Funding

The MerinoLink & UNE DNA Stimulation project is funded on a 50:50 basis with project participants and the MLA Donor Company. The project has been instigated by MerinoLink Limited and is managed by MerinoLink and supported by the University of New England. The project will work with 26 ram breeders and up to 200 commercial breeders across Australia.

Below are the location of the ram breeder participants (green).



Below are the locations of the commercial breeder participants (as at 1st July 2018)



Project Aim

The aim of the MerinoLink & UNE DNA Stimulation project team is to work with a group of seed stock and commercial breeders to increase their use of genetic and genomic tools currently available with the aim to double genetic gain in line with the MLA's National Livestock Genetic Consortium's strategic direction by 2022.

The project also aims to genetically benchmark a cross section of the commercial breeders in Western Australia, NSW and Victoria (however the project is not limited to these states). The project team will work with the commercial breeder participants to explore the use of ASBVs in conjunction with their current ram selection practices and how to understand and interpret the Genomic Flock Profile for the best results.

Process – Ram Breeders – Each ram breeder will have their flocks current position benchmarked using the Sheep Genetic RAMPing-Up and genetic trend reports (if available). The information gained from the initial benchmark will be used to assess the participants current strengths and target opportunities for improvements to achieve and realise their breeding objective. Each ram breeder will have the opportunity



to participate in an annual one on one meeting with the project team and attend an annual workshop. The annual workshop will aim to address key issues identified in the one on one meetings, facilitate greater networking and collaboration amongst ram breeder participants and service providers and identify next step actions for the project and post project.

Process – Commercial Breeders - Conduct a Genomic Flock Profile with up to 200 commercial flocks (initial benchmark) on the 2017 drop ewe lambs/weaners. Each project participant will be expected to attend a workshop to discuss the results and work through options for future ram purchases. The project participant will be able to take the results back to their ram source and work with the ram breeder to address the strengths and weaknesses of the results. A repeat Genomic Flock Profile will be conducted after 4 years (2021) and compared with the initial benchmark results to assess what gains have been achieved. In addition to the Genetic Flock Profile the project will attempt to benchmark other production measurements to assist in monitoring any improvements in productivity. Each participant will have the opportunity to participate in an annual workshop that will focus on understanding and interpreting results, assessing ram team genetic merit, setting targets for the next ram buying season and fine-tuning breeding objectives to maximise production targets.

Project objectives

1. To increase the number of Merino ram breeders submitting full pedigree data to Sheep Genetics by 100% (greater than 95% full pedigree). The impact will be to increase the accuracy of ASBV's and genetic gain.
2. To increase the use of genomic testing by Merino ram breeders to select stud sires. The impact will improve ASBV accuracy and increase selection response.
3. To increase the number of Merino ram breeders that use MateSel to maximise genetic gain.
4. To increase the number of commercial Merino breeder using Flock Profile tests to benchmark their genetic progress and target ram selection by incorporating the information in RamSelect.
5. To explore the use of the Flock Profile test by ram breeders and their clients to better tailor ram selection to client needs and measure changes in genetic merit and changes in breeding programs over time.
6. To facilitate data collection and genomic testing to enhance the existing genomic reference population.
7. To test the concept for ram breeders to carry out genomic testing only, without phenotypic measurement, whilst being supported by an industry run reference flock that they are strategically linked to.
8. To provide an extension process to guide, facilitate and explore optimal use of DNA testing for both parentage and genomic selection, as well as mate selection and explore future opportunities with the project participants.
9. To train and mentor service providers in the application of DNA testing and genomic selection in Merino breeding programs.

2. Merino Lifetime Productivity Project – Host Site



The Merino Lifetime Productivity (MLP) project has been designed to capture lifetime data from diverse enticement, genetics and Merino types that will help us better understand and deliver lifetime performance outcomes for the Australian Merino industry.

The project offers a unique opportunity to answer many industry questions. The MLP project runs on five sites where sire evaluation trial operates for the first two year and then the MLP project continues to measure the performance of ewe progeny over four to five joining and annual shearings.

The ewe progeny will be annually assessed for visual and objective traits.

The MerinoLink site is located at The Vale, Barmedman Road, Temora. The Host property is owned and operated by Marty Moses (Moses & Son) and has been generously offered to MerinoLink to conduct research trial and projects on.

The MerinoLnk site Foundation ewes were sourced from Bluechip Livestock Sire Evaluation progeny, Bundilla, Centre Plus, Pooginook and a Pooginook commercial client. All ewes except the Pooginook client had ASBV's. The ewes were randomly allocated to each sire group for AI. The F1 progeny from this AI program form the basis of the MLP Project. The F1 ewes have been evaluated as per a normal sire evaluation (with some additional visual classing and objective measurement collected) for the first 22 months. Following the Sire Evaluation component of the MLP

Project the F1 ewes will be assessed and measured for wool, carcase and reproduction traits for up to 6 joinings. MerinoLink host an annual MLP field day to show case the project. To date 3 field days have been

held, March and October 2017 and March 2018.

Below is a list of sires participating at the MerinoLink site.

| Joined | Sire Name |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2016 | Bella Lana,130296 |
| 2016 | Boyanga, 145112 |
| 2017 | Bundilla, 140055 |
| 2017 | Centre Plus Poll, 407185 |
| 2017 | Collinsville, 130545 (Apollo) |
| 2017 | DT Kenilworth, WH13017 |
| 2016 | Glen Donald,120014 |
| 2016 | Greendale, 120012 |
| 2017 | Greendale, 140141 |
| 2017 | Lachlan, 305 |
| 2016 - Link | Leahcim Poll, 090918 |
| 2017 | Leahcim Poll, 132624 |
| 2016 - Link | One Oake No. 2 R56 |
| 2016 | Pastora Poll, 082893 |
| 2016 | Poll Boonooke,PB2020 |
| 2016 | Pooginook Poll,140632 |
| 2016 | Roseville Park, 140611 |
| 2017 | Tallawong, 150280 |
| 2017 | Toland Poll, 151058 |
| 2017 | Trefusis, 150282 |
| 2017 - Link | Trigger Vale Poll, 140477 |
| 2016 | Trigger Vale Poll, 140477 |
| 2017 | Wallaloo Park, WP 422 |
| 2016 | Wattledale, 140754 |
| 2017 - Link | West Plains Poll (Mercenary), 110004 |
| 2016 | Wurrook, 130149 |



3. MerinoLink Annual Conference and Field day

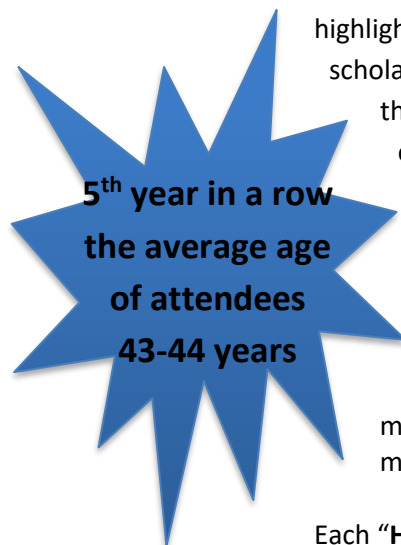
The MerinoLink Annual Conference was held in Goulburn for the second year running and attracted 180 delegates from as far as Western Australia. The conference concluded with a field day at Cavan Station (Ravenswood) Yass where the 2017 drop progeny from the MerinoLink Sire Evaluation were on display. The field day was also well attended with 100 growers and service providers attending. The average age of the MerinoLink Conference and Field day delegates was 44 years, consistent with the previous 4 MerinoLink conferences.

The conference and field day delegates this year encompassed the following demographics of the sheep industry:

- ✓ Commercial producer
- ✓ Seed stock producer
- ✓ Service provider
- ✓ Students / recent graduates
- ✓ Peter Westblade Scholarship recipients – 2014, 2016, 2017 and 2018

The Conference delegates travelled from NSW, ACT, VIC, WA – reflecting similar percentages as 2015, 2016 and 2017.

2018 was the 5th MerinoLink Conference. The conference has been held in Temora (2014), Wagga (2015 & 2016) and Goulburn (2017 & 2018). The conference aims to challenge members and bring the most up to date research and ideas to the forum.



The Hour of Power!

The Hour of Power was a new concept included in the MerinoLink Conference in 2018 and proved to be an enormous success. The “Hour of Power” was a fast-paced, informative session presented by a range of young researchers, scholars and innovators from across Australia. University students had the opportunity to present their research projects and findings directly to members of the sheep industry that their research could benefit. Previous Peter Westblade Scholarship scholars were also invited to highlight the experiences they gained through the scholarship and how it has helped them in pursuing their career. The “Hour of Power” also included other young innovators who are having an impact in the industry who shared their experiences and highlighted how they are making a difference.

Each presenter was allotted a 5 minute time slot in which they had to communicate their message in a succinct yet comprehensive manner.

Each “Hour of Power” speaker and anyone attending under the age of 25 was partnered with a mentor who’s role was to assist in making network connections during the conference.



4. MerinoLink Sire Evaluation

MerinoLink coordinate two Merino **Sire Evaluation** sites in Southern NSW. One near Jugiong NSW and one near Yass NSW, under the auspices of the Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association (AMSEA).

Sires being evaluated at Jugiong in 2014, 2015 and 2016 are from the following ram breeders: *Billandri Poll Merinos (WA); Roseville Park (NSW); Hazeldean (NSW); Weealla Merinos & Poll Merino Stud (NSW); Mumblebone Merinos (NSW); Centre Plus (NSW); Willandra Poll Merino Stud (NSW); Pastora Poll (NSW); Wattledale Merinos (WA); Woodpark Poll (NSW); Greendale (NSW); Pooginook (NSW); Kerin Poll (NSW); GRASS Merinos (NSW).*

The 2017 MerinoLink Sire Evaluation joining will be run at “Ravenswood” part of “Cavan” Station. “Cavan” Station is a historic property located along the Murrumbidgee River in the Southern Tablelands, South of Yass, NSW. MerinoLink joined with the Monaro Farming Systems group to jointly host the sire evaluation and to expand out groups networks. Rams entered in the 2017 sire evaluation include: *Bundilla 140055 (Link); Hazeldean 11.3542 (Link); Centre Plus 407185 (Link); Bogo 500300, Pooginook Poll 125188; Rocklyn Merinos 120182; Woodpark Poll 150106; Centre Plus 307603; Hazeldean 13.4936; GRASS 142000; Adina 124156; Nerstane 150076; Greendale 150018; Boudjah P0005; Centre Plus WA 338205; Hazeldean 204030.*

5. Merino Wether Extension Project -2017 - 2022

The Merino Wether Extension Project will value add to the existing Merino Lifetime Productivity (MLP) Project and Standard Sire Evaluation sites by measuring the post weaning and yearling meat traits of the 2016 MerinoLink MLP F1 wethers and the adult wool and weight traits of the 2017 MerinoLink & Monaro Farming Systems Sire Evaluation (Yass) and the 2017 MLP F1 wethers. A total of 42 progeny groups and 40 Merino sires will be evaluated for additional traits. The three evaluations (mentioned above) have linkage to other Standard Sire Evaluations and the Merino Lifetime Productivity (MLP) project sites.

The Merino Extension Project will assess the wether progeny for meat and wool traits at post weaning, yearling, hogget and adult stages to produce genetic and phenotypic comparisons. The data collected will also be used to generate a farming systems report to highlight the profitability per head and per hectare under different breeding objectives.

| Drop | SIRE NAME |
|------|---------------------------|
| 2016 | Bella Lana, 130296 |
| 2016 | Boyanga, 145112 |
| 2016 | Glen Donald, 120014 |
| 2016 | *Greendale,120012 |
| 2016 | *Leachim Poll 090918 |
| 2016 | *One Oak No. 2 R56 |
| 2016 | Pastora Poll,082893 |
| 2016 | Poll Boonooke, PB2020 |
| 2016 | Pooginook Poll, 140632 |
| 2016 | Roseville Park,140611 |
| 2016 | Trigger Vale Poll, 140477 |
| 2016 | Wattledale,140754 |
| 2016 | Wurrook,130149 |
| 2017 | Bundilla 140055 (MLP) |
| 2017 | Centre Plus Poll, 407185 |

| Drop | SIRE NAME |
|------|----------------------------|
| 2017 | *Collinsville, 130545 |
| 2017 | DT Kenilworth, WH13017 |
| 2017 | Greendale, 140141 |
| 2017 | Lachlan Merinos, 305 |
| 2017 | Leahcim, 132624 |
| 2017 | Tallawong, 150280 |
| 2017 | Toland Poll, 151058 |
| 2017 | Trefusis, 150282 |
| 2017 | *Trigger Vale Poll, 140477 |
| 2017 | Wallaloo Park, WP 422 |
| 2017 | West Plains Poll, 110004 |
| 2017 | Adina, 124156 |
| 2017 | Bogo, 500300 |
| 2017 | Boudjah, P005 |
| 2017 | *Bundilla Poll, 140055 |

| Drop | SIRE NAME |
|------|-------------------------|
| 2017 | Centre Plus WA, 338205 |
| 2017 | Centre Plus, 307603 |
| 2017 | *Centre Plus, 407185 |
| 2017 | GRASS, 142000 |
| 2017 | Greendale, 150018 |
| 2017 | *Hazeldean, 11.3542 |
| 2017 | Hazeldean, 15.3247 |
| 2017 | Hazeldean,13.4936 |
| 2017 | Nerstane, 150076 |
| 2017 | Pooginook Poll, 153420 |
| 2017 | Rocklyn Merinos, 120182 |
| 2017 | Woodpark Poll, 150106 |

* = Link sires across sites and between years

6. Sheep Supplement Trial - completed

MerinoLink Limited and Charles Sturt University (Veterinary Faculty) submitted a joint project to the NSW Sheep Advisory Committee (administering the OJD Levy on behalf of the NSW Government, NSW DPI) to investigate the cost benefit of a number of vitamin, mineral and trace element supplementations for sheep on the market. The project funding is for \$94,000.

Project background: Current anecdotal reports from producers and suppliers indicates regular use of these supplements on sheep farms, however there is little or no recent literature or reports that investigate the effects of these supplements on growth rates and health in sheep in eastern Australia.

Project Objectives

1. Assess the use (quantity & purpose) of vitamin and mineral supplements in NSW sheep enterprises.

2. Determine effects of vitamin and mineral supplementation on weaner growth rates in merino and cross bred flocks in NSW.
3. Determine effects vitamin and/or mineral supplementation on health parameters of merino and cross bred weaners and adult.
4. Determine cost/benefit of vitamin supplementation in sheep enterprises.
5. Disseminate results through sheep groups (i.e. NSW Merino Link) producer conferences/field days; media; newsletters.

The final milestone report was submitted to the NSW Sheep Industry Committee on Friday 8th September 2017. The overall outcome of the project as that there was no difference between the Control (no treatment) and the product treated groups.

7. eID Tag Demonstration and Evaluation - completed

“What electronic tag is the best?” This is a question many sheep producers ask when considering using electronic tags for the first time. MerinoLink with the assistance of Moses & Son has set up a trial to evaluate five (5) different tag options currently on the market. We would like to thank and acknowledge the support from Allflex, Leader Products and Shearwell Australia for both supporting our trial and providing tags.

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8. Group Buying – on going

MerinoLink has continued to negotiate on behalf of members group buying power opportunities. We are able to offer exclusive to MerinoLink members’ discounts of up to 25% on electronic tags and up to 12% on visual tags. MerinoLink is working with three companies – **Moses & Son, Ear Tag Warehouse and**

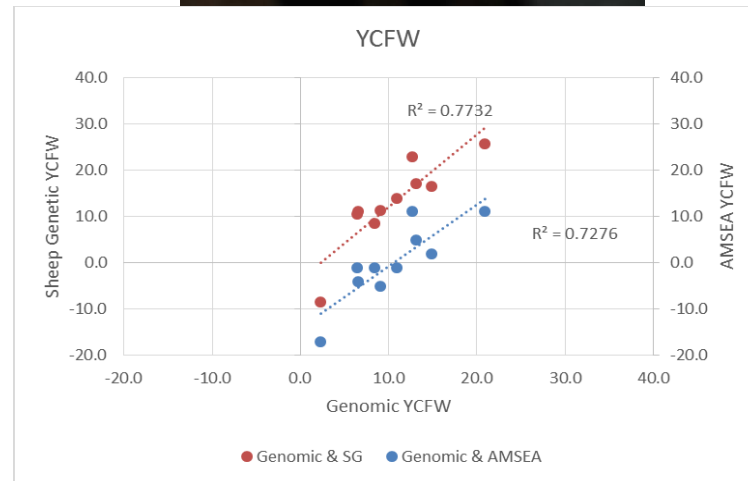
Shearwell. This offer can provide you with significant savings for example if you purchase 1000 electronic tags (NLIS or Non-NLIS) you can save up to \$445.00, this would cover your MerinoLink membership fee.



9. Genomic Demonstration and Validation project - completed

MerinoLink was successful in securing funding from Australian Wool Innovation to demonstrate and validate the commercial use of the Genomics Tools developed by the Sheep CRC in a ram breeding operation. The 2011 drop ewes that have been bred as part of the Bluechip Livestock Sire Evaluations and the 2012 drop rams from the Bluechip Livestock Young Sire Program were used in this demonstration. Findings showed:-

1. DNA parent tests provide excellent pedigree identification; ewe efficiency and syndicate data.
2. Commercial breeder should be confident when purchasing rams using ASBVs to achieve a breeding objective;
3. The overall Ram Team Average remains stable over time.



10. Sheep CRC 2014-2019



MerinoLink supported the Sheep CRC Re-bid Application to extend the program for another 5 years (2014-19). MerinoLink has been involved in a number of the CRC projects and has access to new developments as part of our support agreement.

Project involvement includes the Genomic Flock Profile test, hosting RamSelect workshops, supporting the MerinoLink annual conference by providing speakers and access to current CRC developments.

As the Sheep CRC moves into the wind up phase MerinoLink will continue to look for opportunities to continue our support and participate in future projects and activities.



Communication Report

Newsletter

Three (3) hard copy newsletters have been produced since the last AGM. The newsletters have targeted publishing new information and or promoting key events that MerinoLink is involved with at the time. The publication dates were December 2017; May 2018 and August 2018. Copies of the newsletters are available in the members section of the MerinoLink website.

eNewsletter

MailChimp newsletters have been developed in place of sending bulk emails to members. The eNewsletters are only sent out when information is relevant and timely. We aim not to send them out regularly if there is nothing to report.

- 2 general eNewsletters (Jan and Aug)
- 3 regarding the conference and ticket sales
- 2 with upcoming events (ie SWS, ram sale dates, workshop dates)
- 1 due to be sent out at the end of this week with upcoming ram breeder member events

We have sent out seven eNewsletters since the start of the year covering a range of topics, from general MerinoLink updates and advertisement of Conference ticket sales and information, to notification of upcoming Ram Sale events for our Ram Breeder members. The use of the Mail Chimp program, allows us to create more professional and enticing email adverts for our members, while also allowing us to collect analytics on each individual newsletter.

On average our eNewsletters are opened by 57.2% of recipients, any links contained in the newsletter are clicked on average 12.3%, and we have an extremely low rate of recipients opting to unsubscribe from our emails, 0.14%. The open and click rates for our newsletters are high compared to the agriculture industry averages that the eNewsletter provider has calculated. Industry averages for other Mail Chimp users sit at 18.9% open rate and a 2.5% click rate.

Reports

MerinoLink have produced a number of reports about project and trial results. 2017/2018 the following reports have been published, printed and distributed.

1. 2016 drop MLP 1st Assessment Report
2. 2016 drop MLP 2nd Assessment Report
3. 2017 drop MLP 1st Assessment Report
4. 2016 & 2017 MLP Site Field Day Report

Social Media Report- MerinoLink AGM

Facebook Page

Page Likes, September 2017: 1,028

Page likes, 10th September 2018: 1,194.

Our Facebook page is currently used to advertise and promote upcoming MerinoLink events such as MLP field days, conferences, and our attendance at industry events. It is also used to increase the amount of people viewing any media releases about MerinoLink and its associated events. Since the same time last year, we have increased the audience that are viewing these updates by 166 people (fig 1). A total of 1,194 currently like and are potentially exposed to, the great things that MerinoLink are involved with.

Total Page Likes as of Today: 1,194

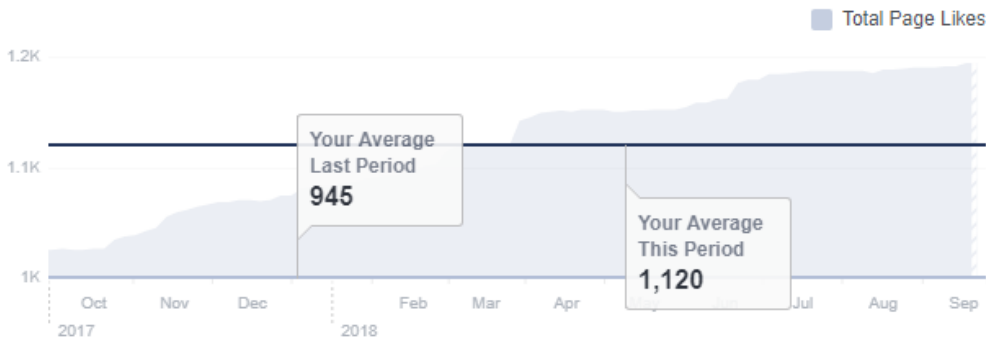


Figure 1: The positive trend in people liking the MerinoLink facebook page from September 2017 to September 10th 2018.

Our Facebook page receives the most interaction surrounding MerinoLink events, and in particular once the event has finished, which is in relation to the posting of photo's taken at our events. This can be seen in fig 2, as demonstrated by the major spike in page views, following our March MLP Field day. We do also receive an increase in views surrounding our MerinoLink Conference, however much of our advertisement directs interested persons to our website rather than our Facebook page.

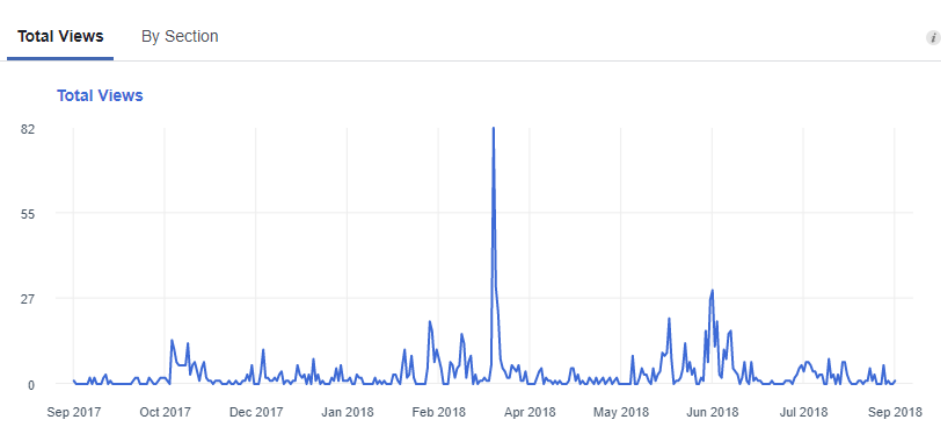


Figure 2: MerinoLink Facebook page views from September 2017 to September 10th 2018

Twitter Account

Total followers September 2017: 664

Total followers 10th September 2018: 896

We have seen an increase of 232 people following our Twitter account since September 2017. The twitter account is linked to our Facebook account and automatically posts and promotes anything we have posted on Facebook. Additional industry information that may be of interest to our followers is also re-tweeted on our Twitter page. Our twitter page gets the most use during the year in association with our Annual Conference and field day.

Figure 3 shows the impressions for the 30-day period of June 2018. Over this period we reached an average of 462 people per day with our tweets. The graph below also shows a major spike in impressions on the day of, and the 2 days



following the Annual Conference and Field Day. On the 20th June we reached our peak impressions for the year, with 6 tweets posted from our account and 5,069 organic impressions. Organic impressions are impressions not associated with a paid advertisement. The tweets posted on Wednesday 20th, also flowed into impression on Thursday 21st with no new tweets posted, but 2,373 organic impressions for the day.

Your Tweets earned **13.9K impressions** over this 30 day period

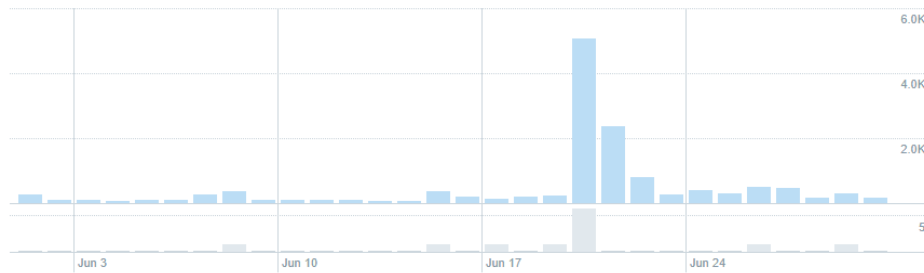


Figure 3: MerinoLink Twitter account impressions for June 2018 in association with the MerinoLink Annual Conference and Field Day

MerinoLink Website

Figure 4 shows the views per month and per year for our MerinoLink website (this includes statistics from when our site was MerinoLink.com). Our peak period for views on the MerinoLink website surrounds the Annual Conference and field day. Although the graph below shows the peak amount of views on our website to have occurred in June 2017, our total number of views for the conference ticket advertisement period of May to June was higher this year than the last year. Our total website visits for the advertisement period for 2018 was 2956 visits compared to 2720 visits in 2017. This was reflected in an increase in ticket sales compared to last year.

Page views are up, on average per month compared to last year. This can be attributed to the increased use of our website as the main navigation point for all our events. Whilst we do use social media to promote MerinoLink events, starting this year, anyone seeking further information was directed to our website.

| Months and Years | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
| 2015 | | | | | | | | 19 | 195 | 192 | 143 | 96 | 645 |
| 2016 | 250 | 788 | 318 | 125 | 185 | 439 | 218 | 162 | 207 | 214 | 226 | 145 | 3,277 |
| 2017 | 235 | 176 | 308 | 222 | 615 | 2,105 | 369 | 343 | 453 | 380 | 269 | 323 | 5,798 |
| 2018 | 410 | 404 | 569 | 274 | 1,158 | 1,798 | 388 | 328 | 159 | | | | 5,488 |

Figure 4: MerinoLink website visits per month and year

There has also been a change this year in relation to the promotion of our Ram Breeders events. Last year we received a number of complaints from members about Ram Breeder sale events coming out individually and either clogging their mailbox or using their allocated data when downloading. To avoid this happening this year, a once-weekly e-newsletter is being distributed to our members, outlining upcoming events, and prompting readers to visit our website to download and view newsletters and sale catalogues that they may be interested in. This means our members are only receiving one email a week and is also directing more people to view our website. This is in line with previous board meeting decisions to find ways to prompt more people to visit our website.



MerinoLink Membership Categories

There are 5 membership categories available. MerinoLink relies on membership, sponsorship and project funding to fulfil its objectives.



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

- Up to 2 people per membership. Additional people \$50.00 per person.
- Bi-Monthly eNewsletter and Quarterly Newsletter (hard copy).
- Input into the content of the annual MerinoLink Conference.
- Reduced entry into the annual MerinoLink Conference.
- 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)

- Up to 2 people per membership. Additional people \$50.00 per person.
- Bi-Monthly eNewsletter and Quarterly Newsletter (hard copy).
- Input into the content of the annual MerinoLink Conference.
- Reduced entry into the annual MerinoLink Conference (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 – Individual Service Provider - \$396 (GST inclusive)

- Bi-Monthly eNewsletter and Quarterly Newsletter (hard copy).
- 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 (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 – Corporate Member - \$Various (GST inclusive)

- Various options are provided under the MerinoLink Prospectus ranging from \$1,000 upwards.
- Bi-Monthly eNewsletter and Quarterly Newsletter (hard copy).
- 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 and/or complementary entry to annual MerinoLink Conference (based on package).
- Notification of sheep technology trial information; opportunities to have input into research trial development; a collective voice on issues that impact our industry and your business.

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

- Bi-Monthly eNewsletter and Quarterly Newsletter (hard copy).
- 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 (MerinoLink member rates).



Project Supporters

MerinoLINK would like to thank our generous sponsors and supporters.

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MerinoLink Board Directors 2017/2018



Rich Keniry (current *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. My father purchased the property in 1998, at this time the business was a mixed sheep, cattle and cropping operation and since 2008 the business has been 100% sheep focused.

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 until 2005 when I finally decided to stay. I studied a Bachelor of Agriculture at the University of New England, Armidale and previously completed a 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 have available to assist in decision making on farm, the future of the sheep industry is exciting.

I believe that with the right focus and dedication to research the future of the wool and sheep meat industry is positive and that is why I became a member of ***MerinoLink***. 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.



Steve Jarvis is a commercial Merino breeder, in partnership with his wife Lydia they run a 500ha property Heathfield at Boorowa purely focusing on Merino sheep production joining 1400 Pastora blood ewes.

Steve believes Merinos are the most profitable operation for their situation and is continually striving to improve the profit drivers of fleece value and flock fertility.

Heathfield is stocked to capacity while maintaining ground cover at all times and Steve believes if his property is to be profitable he must work with nature and not against it. Steve is pleased to be involved with ***MerinoLink*** as a commercial grower and looks forward to helping the board drive ***MerinoLink*** forward.



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.

“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”.



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.



Rick Baldwin - Rick 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.



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.



Robert Mortimer – Robert returned to family farm to spend 8 years in share farmer / cropping system. During this time the NSW Ag Sheepto conducted research extension trials on the property. This work was a light bulb moment for Robert, realising the potential of using measurement to make real genetic change and gain. The formation of the Centre Plus ram breeding group followed with Robert taking on the breeding management role of the group. Centre Plus became part of the Australian Merino Society (AMS) a 3-tiered group breeding scheme involving 1,200 commercial farmers across Australia running over 3,000,000 breeding ewes. The AMS used SID AI on up to 110,000 ewes a year. The 8 years involved with AMS, working with leading geneticist across Australia was an immense learning curve, breaking new genetic ground and it proved the power one can get from working in a group to achieve collective goals.

Computers saw the introduction of BLUP EBV's and by the end of the 80's the group were able to march on adopting new technologies as they became available. This led to Robert being appointed to many industry liaison and advisory committees'. Robert played a key role in driving across flock evaluations to become reality and moving the multiple evaluations to come together under Sheep Genetics.

Robert has been a member of the AAABG (Association for the Advancement of Animal Breeding & Genetics) organisation for over 20 years. In 2009 he was made a Fellow of the AAABG for services to the Sheep Industry. Robert is driven by a fascination in, and excitement for research and genetic change, and its role in the future of the Merino Industry. ***MerinoLink*** is perfectly placed to help lead the Merino Industry to greater prosperity.

Ross is interested in continuing to develop strategies to build close relationships with research organisations, agribusiness partners, financial and farm business associates, processors and marketers of our sheep products will achieve the goals of ***MerinoLink***. These relationships have the potential to lift profitability of the sheep industry enormously.



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 received a position within MLA donor Companies Livestock Consulting Internship Project (facilitated by Meridian Agriculture) as an employee of Sally Martin Consulting (Young) and Moses & Son Woolbroking (Temora). Lexi's Role within the Livestock Consulting Internship was extremely dynamic and flexible. Through the internship Lexi had the opportunity to make meaningful contribution to the sheep and wool industry by running an Industry Supported Project (Vitamin and Supplement trial), as well as a project for the MLA Donor company (benefits and Barriers to the adoption of Precision Sheep Management). Lexi's passions lie in the areas on increasing on farm efficiencies through the use of Precision Management and helping the next generation of industry specialists make it happen.

Lexi Joined **MerinoLink** to increase her knowledge and skills and also 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 wishes to become a **MerinoLink** board member to help ensure the future of quality independent sheep research and also the adoption of technologies that are available to stud and commercial producers.