Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Case Studies

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Optimising breeding objectives for current and future markets

CASE STUDY

Steve Milne, Waratah White Suffolks, Vic

With sheep breeders increasingly adopting targeted breeding tools through Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs), advanced breeding techniques and DNA testing, the challenge for industry is to optimise their use in breeding programs to ensure an individual's business objectives are achieved as well as meeting the needs of future markets.

About Steve Milne

Steve is the principal of Waratah White Suffolk Stud, Branxholme, Vic, which was established in October 1995, and he has a Master's degree in Animal Science (Animal Breeding Management) through Sydney University.

To rapidly improve the genetic composition of the Waratah flock, breeding technologies including embryo transfer and artificial insemination have been extensively used, along with the objective genetic assessment on offer from ASBVs.

"We believe that LAMBPLAN offers the best objective assessment of an animal's genetic merit," Mr Milne said. "Measuring all lambs gives us the most accurate and consistent information from LAMBPLAN."

To assist commercial clients in adopting ASBVs as part of their breeding programs, Mr Milne hosted a RamSelect workshop in 2012.

RamSelect workshops help producers develop skills to accurately and confidently select rams to meet their breeding objectives and improve their sheep enterprise returns.

"Selecting rams is one of the biggest decisions a breeder will make each year as it can have an effect on the flock for many years to come," he said.

"It's important that breeders have confidence in using all of the tools available when selecting genetics to meet their breeding objective and their target markets, be it for wool, meat or dual-purpose."

Take home messages

- Objective measurement tools can help ensure ram selection is aligned to breeding objectives.
- ASBVs are calculated by MERINOSELECT and LAMBPLAN to compare the genetic potential of animals independent of their environment and location.
- The challenge for industry is to develop breeding programs that optimise objective tools and align with market needs.

Further information

The Sheep CRC's RamSelect program provides a hands-on practical approach to using Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) for ram selection so that sheep breeders can maximise genetic gain and increase profit from their wool and meat businesses.

More information on how to optimise breeding programs through the use of ASBVs and genomic breeding values is also available from the Sheep CRC and Sheep Genetics.

- www.sheepcrc.org.au
- www.sheepgenetics.org.au
- www.waratahwhites.com.au