

# Trigger Vale

*meat the market*



## 2006 Newsletter

**A unique combination  
of elite terminal White  
Suffolk and maternal dual  
purpose Bond genetics**

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TriggerVale on-property auction September 1st, 2006

# Welcome

Welcome to our fourth annual Trigger Vale newsletter. We have had great feedback on the previous three and we believe it's the best way we can inform old, new and prospective clients of what we are setting out to achieve at Trigger Vale. 2006 has proven to be another pretty tough Autumn/Winter for most of us. If anything good has come out of this unusually long run of tough years it is that our knowledge and precision with regards to supplement feeding of sheep has certainly increased. Most clients I talk to have a far greater understanding of their sheep's demands and requirements at various stages of their yearly production cycle and are feeding accordingly.

The other positive is the prices for lamb, mutton and surplus ewes has remained relatively strong and the wool market has even risen slightly over the past twelve months.

As annoying and costly as supplementary feeding is, it is some consolation that with these historically high prices there is still a margin for profits to be made.

In our thirst for knowledge about how to make our genetics, hence, our clients sheep enterprises more profitable we spend many days at seminars, workshops, open days, industry days etc and over the past 12 months one theme or comment has been common at all of them. That is "if you are going to the cost and effort of feeding sheep you should feed a productive one."

Productivity is directly related to identifying and selecting for the elite genetics in a flock/breed/industry which will maximize the amount of output ( meat, lambs, wool) from its inputs (grass and grain). This fact confirms to us that the huge amount of resources we are spending on performance testing to identify these superior genetics is clearly the best way we can make our clients enterprises more profitable.

One of the really big positives for our Bond clients running a self replacing flock is that the genetic progress is cumulative over time. Due to the fact that ewes are retained in the flock and bred from for generation after generation I feel we may never fully appreciate the progress being made until we look back in 10 years time and see where we have come from.

I have little doubt that on most mixed sheep/cropping enterprises the area which has the most potential for significant productivity increases are sheep. If you were to ask farmers how their cropping program and techniques have changed over the past 15 years they would be able to give you a very long list. However, ask the same question with regards to their sheep and more often than not you will probably be told "not all that much has changed." This fact provides a great opportunity for mixed farmers because over that same period of time scientists, researchers, progressive stud

breeders and industry (i.e. MLA and AWI) have been investing large amounts of time and capital into improving overall sheep enterprise productivity.

Sheep producers can now step up to the plate and adopt these new technologies and reap the quiet dramatic benefits virtually overnight.

*One of the really big positives for our Bond clients running a self replacing flock is that the genetic progress is cumulative over time.*

We will have sale catalogues available on our web page (<http://bondsheep.org.au/triggervale/default.htm>) about 1 week prior to our auction sale. Please don't hesitate to contact Andrew, Philip or Jim with any questions about the quality genetics and unique breeding system we are providing to clients, or to arrange an obligation free inspection. Our auction sale kicks off our ram selling season with a great selection of top quality rams available at reasonable rates privately. All rams are sold with a guarantee.

We are in the business of maximizing your sheep enterprise returns.

## Meat Yields as a Profit Driver

Over the past few years lamb producers have been in the fortunate position that demand from the growing domestic and export markets has general outstripped lamb supply. The result of this is quiet obvious as prices have reached record levels before stabilizing over the past 12 months.

With limited numbers to select from and orders to fill lamb processors and exporters have often had to simply purchase whatever they could source so factors which drive their profitability have been at times compromised. Ask any processor of lambs what is one of the main factors that impact on their profitability and they will reply Meat Yield.

We believe the current trend of traditional wool producers joining at least a portion (if not all) their flock to Terminal rams will continue as long as we don't witness a major lift in wool prices. This combined with improved genetics, management and finishing systems in specialist prime lamb operations could tip this supply/demand equation the other way.

Even if only a small over supply situation for lamb occurs in Australia the processors will then be in a position to pick and choose which lambs they want and pay accordingly. I can just about give a 100% guarantee that the lambs that they will want will be the higher meat yielding ones.

Viascan is technology that allows processors to simple scan a carcass and quickly measures how much saleable red meat is present, in relation to the whole carcass weight expressed as a percentage. The remaining is low value product such as fat and bone.

The genetic make up of the lamb we start with and then how these genetics are fed are the only two ways in which we as lamb producers can

influence meat yields. Lambs which have heavy carcasses (growth rates) are lean and have thicker muscles will have higher meat yield. These are exactly the traits that Trigger Vale is performance testing for in both our Bonds and White Suffolk's. By understanding and selecting for rams with Estimated Breeding Values that will ensure their progeny will have these desirable traits producers will go along way to ensuring they are in a position to have lambs which processors want to purchase and will pay a premium for.

We sold most of our prime lambs through the Wagga Wagga market this year except one consignment which went to Castricum's over the hooks so we could get some feedback with regards to meat yields. This consignment was about 40% pure Bonds and 60% Bond X White Suffolk lambs and the results indicated below, were that are on the right track.

Key Performance Indicators											
Bouffler Andrew & Phillip "Valera" Lockhart, NSW 2656											
Meat Yield											
Period	Consignments	Lambs	Average Meat Yield	Yield Range							
				<50	50-51	51-52	52-53	53-54	54-55	>55	
<u>Your Lambs</u>	Q1 2006	1	106	55.74%	1%	1%	5%	2%	8%	15%	68%
<u>Southern N.S.W. Regi</u>	Q1 2006			54.10%	5%	5%	8%	11%	15%	18%	38%
	Q4 2005			53.78%	6%	5%	8%	13%	19%	19%	31%
	Q3 2005			53.35%	8%	7%	12%	14%	17%	15%	28%
	Q2 2005			52.82%	12%	10%	14%	16%	16%	13%	21%
	Jan 03-Mar 05			52.58%	10%	10%	16%	20%	19%	14%	11%
	All Consignments			52.83%	10%	9%	14%	18%	18%	14%	17%
<u>All Producers</u>	Q1 2006			53.86%	5%	5%	9%	14%	18%	17%	32%
	Q4 2005			53.79%	6%	5%	9%	13%	17%	17%	32%
	Q3 2005			53.38%	9%	7%	11%	14%	16%	16%	28%
	Q2 2005			52.41%	15%	12%	15%	17%	15%	11%	15%
	Jan 03-Mar 05			52.47%	12%	11%	16%	19%	18%	13%	12%
	All Consignments			52.65%	11%	10%	15%	18%	17%	13%	15%

Our lambs averaged a meat yield of 55.74% which was nearly 2% higher than the plant average over a 3 month period.

# Trigger Vales Bond Stud Breeding Objectives

Trigger Vale's long stated breeding objective is to maximize the rate of genetic gain on the traits that impact directly on our client's profitability. While this objective when read as a single sentence seems relatively straight forward the purpose of this section of our newsletter is to break it down so both old and prospective clients fully understand what this involves and what we are aiming to achieve.

I think it is very important to state clearly from the onset that we are not interested in changing the basic phenotype (what the sheep looks like) of our Bond sheep. There are many factors which impact on the profitability of a sheep enterprise and we believe that the 60 years of breeding that has led to our modern day easy care dual purpose Bond type plays a vital part. For example limited body wrinkle is a deterrent to fly strike and certainly makes it easier to find shearers (a big issue looking forward), a large frame and pelvis results in minimizing lambing trouble and maximizing prices for surplus ewes, relatively clean points stops wool blindness and grass seed problems.

Closely linked to the importance of easy care sheep is structural correctness. It really annoys me that sheep producers who for what ever reason don't choose to move with the times and performance test their genetics, always seem to try and argue that the use of figures as a tool when selecting sheep lead to structural problems. My argument is that if your eye sight is good enough to read figures then you will have no problems assessing the structural correctness of a sheep. Trigger Vale is 100% committed in ensuring that all animals pass very stringent structural assessment. Without this, all the high performance genes in the world will be of no commercial relevance if they can't survive and be passed onto commercial progeny. In summary, if you could look forward 20 years I believe when visually appraising Trigger Vale sheep we will probably see very little difference to what we see now for type. What is incredible exciting for us is what changes we will have made to the genetic performance of these same animals.

Since we started performance testing with Lambplan about 8 years ago and our

understanding of genetics has increased we have become aware that there is a huge variation in genetics within our own flock, breed and even between breeds. The most significant concept to understand we believe, is that the genetic make-up of any animal can be broken down into individual traits and Lambplan performance recording allows us to express these traits as Estimated Breeding Values. The traits, in order of importance that Trigger Vale has identified as the ones which will have the greatest impact on our Bond client's profitability are Growth rates, fertility, fleece weight, eye muscle depth, micron, scrotal circumference and faecal egg count.

It is quite simply unrealistic to believe that any one stud or group of animals will contain the best genetics for all of these traits which have an impact on sheep profitability. It was with this in mind that we decided 3 years ago to investigate performance tested sires from outside our own

stud and breed to achieve a more dramatic rate of genetic gain on individual traits. Trigger Vales aim is to go outside our flock to "grab" the genetics that have been identified as having something of benefit and then introduce them back into our flock. These rams are then benchmarked under our controlled pedigree, performance

tested breeding system to confirm that they have something to offer. If performance testing proves that they have something to offer to our flock, we are convinced with the correct selection and breeding we will be able to introduce the outside genetics into our Bonds without changing the phenotype (how our sheep actually look).

To date we have introduced some Dohne and Finn genetics. The Dohne genetics were introduced with an eye on growth rates and eye muscle depth. It is very important to note here that this is not an endorsement of the Dohne breed for these particular traits as a whole. The fact that the Dohne breed had introduced compulsive performance testing back in South Africa about 30 years ago and that was carried on in Australia meant that we could identify and purchase semen in specific proven stud sires which had high EBVs for these traits. The Finn genetics were introduced with a focus on fertility. The Finn is renowned as one of the most fertile sheep breeds in the world.

*Trigger Vale is 100% committed in ensuring that all animals pass very stringent structural assessment.*

About 8 years ago we sold 15 stud Bond ewes to a Finn breeder from Dubbo who wanted to put some bone and size into his Finns in a trial. He has since formed a flock of Bond Finn X ewes that have been averaging up to 180% lambing. We went to Dubbo to inspect this flock and saw a very handy Bond Finn X ram which we obtained some semen in for our 2005 A I. program.

It is important to note that these experiments with outside genetics are only occurring over a very small number of our stud ewes in any one year.

Lambplan performance testing and visual appraisal will always be used to measure the degree of success achieved. We expect some failures along the way which will be both frustrating and expensive for us financially but the successes will more than compensate. We firmly believe that when you are in the business of selling rams that will directly impact on your client's businesses profitability, you have a responsibility to ensure that you are doing everything possible to improve their bottom line.



*A group of Trigger Vale ewes showing the large, easy care type of sheep we are breeding.*

**An Australian ventriloquist visiting New Zealand, walks into a small village and sees a local sitting on his porch patting his dog.**

He figures he'll have a little fun, so he says to the Kiwi, "G'day, mind if I talk to your dog?"

**Villager:** "The dog doesn't talk, you stupid Aussie."

**Ventriloquist:** "Hello dog, how's it going mate?"

**Dog:** "Doin' all right."

**Kiwi:** (look of extreme shock)

**Ventriloquist:** "Is this villager your owner?" (pointing at the villager)

**Dog:** "Yep"

**Ventriloquist:** "How does he treat you?"

**Dog:** "Real good. He walks me twice a day, feeds me great food and takes me to the lake once a week to play."

**Kiwi:** (look of utter disbelief)

**Ventriloquist:** "Mind if I talk to your horse?"

**Kiwi:** "Uh, the horse doesn't talk either....I think."

**Ventriloquist:** "Hey horse, how's it going?"

**Horse:** "Cool"

**Kiwi:** (absolutely dumbfounded)

**Ventriloquist:** "Is this your owner?" (pointing at the villager)

**Horse:** "Yep"

**Ventriloquist:** "How does he treat you?"

**Horse:** "Pretty good, thanks for asking. He rides me regularly, brushes me down often and keeps me in the barn to protect me from the elements."

**Kiwi:** (total look of amazement)

**Ventriloquist:** "Mind if I talk to your sheep?"

**Kiwi:** (in a panic) "The sheep's a liar."

# Trigger Vale Bond Sire Battery 2006 Drop Lambs

040268							INDEX
PWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	YFD	YGFW	NLW	Carcase +
6.68	7.16	-0.36	-0.96	0.41	12.25	0.027	132

**Micron:** HGT 25 ADULT 25

**Comments:** This ram represents our rewards for all the work we have carried out since we started Lambplan performance recording in 1998 and will give our stud and in turn our clients a big genetic lift. His Sire is 02Y067 who has been our leading sire for the past couple of years. His Pwt value of 6.68kgs is 5.3 higher than our entire 2004 drop average. In simple terms his progeny will be on average be 2.7 kgs heavier than lambs sired by a average ram at 200 days of age.

04W494							INDEX
PWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	YFD	YGFW	NLW	Carcase +
5.61	6.48	-1.18	0.61	-1.85	1.64	0.055	148.86

**Micron:** HGT 21.5 ADULT 23

**Comments:** This F1 ram was clearly the stand out of our first AI program with Dohne genetics. His figures are well balanced in all the traits that we feel have an impact on profitability. When we classed our young rams last year he weighed 105kgs as a hogget with 21 micron wool. He broke his leg in an accident which we fixed with the aid of a Vet just to see it break a second time. We managed to get semen stored away so used him as part of our 2006 AI program. Have since managed to heal the break.

03Q435							INDEX
PWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	YFD	YGFW	NLW	Carcase +
3.13	4.21	-1.21	-1.4	-1.38	10.82	0.01	121

**Micron:** HGT 21.6 ADULT 22.4

**Comments:** Very highly rated stud sire. Breed from our wool family as shown by the negative micron and positive wool cut EBV. Carcase is also very handy as he weighed 23% above the average of the 2003 drop at 12 months of age. Progeny looked very good at lamb marking.

02Y067							INDEX
PWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	YFD	YGFW	NLW	Carcase +
4.77	5.03	-1.1	-2.1	0.16	19.46	.037	120

**Micron:** 22.5 ADULT 22.1

**Comments:** We think this ram is something very special. Visually the best dual purpose ram we have ever seen. Beautiful long bright high yielding, heavy cutting (GFW 123%) fleece. He stands out even in our group of stud rams with a beautiful head and top line with square hindquarters. His performance figures back up his visual attributes giving us a big lift in growth rates, fertility and wool cut. Last year his first sons in our sale averaged \$230 above the Bond average and this year they are of equal quality. Many sons and daughters retained in the stud. Semen going to the Falkland Islands in 2006.

03P042							INDEX
PWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	YFD	YGFW	NLW	Carcase +
-0.96	-0.82	1.18	2.05	1.82	6.73	0	98

**Micron:** 25.2 ADULT 25.5

**Comments:** Sired by 00L024 who has had many progeny retained in the stud and semen exported to the Falkland islands. Dam is one of our highest ranked whom we used in our 2004 embryo program. This ram is a twin and we joined him to our newly formed fertility family this year. Real strength lies in the amount of muscle (Pemd of 2.05 is the highest we have recorded) his progeny showed this when they were scanned.

DOHNE Macquarie 041690							INDEX
BW%	MD mm	FAT mm	GFW	FD	CV%		
13.8	0.6	0	0.1	-0.3	-0.5	?	?

**Comments:** Purchased for the top price of \$3800 at the Macquarie on property sale at Warren. He has one of the highest BW (growth) EBV's for the entire Dohne breed for the 2004 drop of rams. His sire Macquarie 030681 is one of the Dohne's leading sires with nearly 1000 progeny having been performance tested.

DOHNE Macquarie 041792							INDEX
BW%	MD mm	FAT mm	GFW	FD	CV%		
14.6	0.7	0.2	2.2	-0.5	-1.5	?	?

**Comments:** This ram is a half brother to 041690 and is actually a keeper for the Macquarie stud. Used in our 2006 AI program. These genetics are just about as good as the Dohne breed has to offer at a stud level so it will be interesting to see how they performed when benchmarked with our own Bonds.

# Trigger Vale White Suffolk Sire Battery 2006 Lambs

## Mount Ronan 040056

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.4	8.1	13.1	13.7	-1.2	0.6	187

**Comments:** Purchased at the Mount Ronan on property auction sale last year for \$3100. A very long structurally correct ram sired by Waratah 000015. Waratah 15 performed very well in the White Suffolk Association commercial progeny trial in 2004 and has around 1200 progeny in 40 studs Australia wide. This ram has very balanced figures and his progeny should be perfect for clients wishing to target the heavy export market.

## Pendara 043050

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.3	9.1	12.9	14	-0.5	1.8	186

**Comments:** Young ram allocated to us via the Superwhites breeding program. A son of Anden 83 who is currently ranked 5<sup>th</sup> highest sire Australia wide for the breed. Very balanced figures with a ASBV of 1.8 for eye muscle putting him in the top 10% for all terminal rams in Lamplan.

## Depta Grove 030256

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.4	5.9	10.7	11.4	-1.0	-0.9	169.54

**Comments:** Purchased from Depta Grove (Vic) in 2004 for \$2750. This ram is sired by Depta Grove "Prestige" who we have used in past AI programs and has sold sons to a Australian record of \$36,000. This ram has tremendous length and very clean points which are two very sort after White Suffolk characteristics. His first drop of progeny show the same traits and will be for sale this spring.

## Koonawarra 040121

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.3	7.0	12.1	13.6	-0.2	0.3	170

**Comments:** Another young ram allocated to us from the Superwhite breeding program. Very good growth potential with his ASBV's in the top 10% for Australian Terminals.

## Trigger Vale 050449

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.3	9.6	14.6	14.9	-1.2	0.8	197

**Comments:** This ram lamb represents what we are achieving at Trigger Vale with the large capital investment we have made in genetics. Trigger Vale 0449 was sired by Anden 83 as part of our 2005 AI program. Anden 83 is the 5<sup>th</sup> ranked sire in the breed and 0449 is his highest ranked son Australia wide. A carcass + index figure of 197 puts him in the top 1% of all terminal rams born in Australia in 2005. He has been selected by the Superwhites breeding group to be used in their national 2006/07 breeding program. To go along with all the performance figures he is visually the best ram we have bred since we started the stud. He weighed 49kgs at 3 months and 97kgs at 7 months with no supplementary feeding. Progeny look fantastic.

## Sonning 030311

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.3	7.0	10.8	11.4	-1.3	1.6	185

**Comments:** Used in the 2005 AI program to inject muscle into our stud. Very good balanced figures with 1.6 for muscle putting him in the top 10% of all Terminal sires and he should give us a big lift. Joined to high growth lower muscled ewes.

## Trigger Vale 04E729

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.3	6.5	12.8	12.4	-1.2	0.2	181

**Comments:** Sired by Mount Ronan 020038 out of a Sonning ewe and the absolute standout of our 2004 drop from the day it was born. One of the fastest growing lambs we have seen in the past 7 years since we formed the stud. First rams available this spring as we joined him as a ram lamb last year.

## Millswyn 040230

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.1	5.4	9.0	9.9	0.2	1.2	152

**Comments:** The last of our Superwhites allocated rams. Strength is high muscle so joined with fast growing lean low muscle ewes. Progeny showing great White Suffolk type at lamb marking.

## General Bond News

- **Andrew Selected to Sheep Genetics Australia Board:** Last year SGA was launched in Adelaide after a couple of years of very hard work from many different people and third parties. SGA is a jointly funded Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) program which amalgamated various different performance recording databases into one system. SGA is now the largest single sheep genetic database in the world with nearly 2.5 million animals already recorded. It represents possibly the greatest tool Australian Sheep producers have ever possessed to make rapid genetic gains. It was a great honor for Andrew to be selected onto the SGA advisory board and represents a great opportunity to contribute in a specific way to the wider sheep industry as a whole. At the same time I get to be involved with some of the leading sheep geneticists and producers discussing issues right at the industry coalface on a regular basis. Some issues which have already been brought to my attention which we are considering introducing into our Trigger Vales breeding program includes testing for sheep temperament, faecal egg count (worm resistance) and the use of DNA genetic markers as they become available.
- **Falkland Island Update:** We continue to receive updates on how our genetics are performing in the various trials being undertaken in the Falkland Islands. The Falklands have predominately a large Corriedale ewe flock and they have been trialing many breeds including Trigger Vale Bonds to try and improve growth rates and decrease micron. Critta Lee from a property called Port Howard farm is very impressed with how the Bond genetics have performed particularly during the harsh snow covered winter and has only recently ordered another 200 doses from 2 different rams. This is a great testimony to Trigger Vale genetics.
- **Thailand Enquiry:** We have also recently had enquiry from a third party that represents the King of Thailand with regards to the sale for export of a number of Bond ewes and rams. They aim to use them in a very intensive embryo breeding program to build up numbers quickly. This is still early days and would only be a 50% chance of coming to off but its all interesting.
- **Bond X Dohne rams available:** For the second year now we will have a limited selection of Donne X Bond composite rams. We are still yet to be convinced that the Dohne as a breed has a lot to offer our Bonds. We do however, believe that there are a couple of top performance proven Dohne stud sires which may give us a good outcross, a bit of hybrid vigor and an improvement in a couple of targeted traits. Along with our Bond rams these rams do provide a great alternative for Merino breeders who wish to place more weight on carcase characteristics in there flock while still maintaining a quality Merino wool clip.
- **West Wylong Sale:** This year we will be offering 3 Bond, 3 Bond X Dohne and 3 White Suffolk rams at the Landmark West Wylong Multi breed / Multi vendor ram sale. This will be held on Tuesday the 5th September and represents a great opportunity for producers in that part of NSW to purchase some specially selected Trigger Vale rams.

### A plane is on its way to Melbourne when a blonde in economy class gets up and moves to first class.

The flight attendant is watching and asks to see her ticket. She tells the blonde that she paid for economy and that she will have to go and sit in economy.

"I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to Melbourne and I'm staying right here," the blonde piped up.

The flight attendant goes into the cockpit and tells the pilot and co-pilot that there is some blonde bimbo sitting in first class who should be in economy.

The co-pilot goes back to the blonde and tries to explain that because she only paid for economy she is only entitled to an economy seat and she will have to leave first class.

"I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to Melbourne and I'm staying right here," says blondeie.

Exasperated, the co-pilot tells the pilot that it was no use and that he should have police

waithing when they land to arrest this mad blonde who won't listen to reason.

"I'll handle this," says the pilot. I'm married to a blonde and I speak blonde.

He approaches the blonde, and whispers in her ear. She replies "Oh I'm sorry, I had no idea," and gets up and moves back to her seat in economy class.

The flight attendant and the co-pilot are amazed, and asked the pilot what he did to make her move without any fuss.

"I told her first class wasn't going to Melbourne."

# Trigger Vale White Suffolk News

## Trigger Vale bred ram selected for Superwhites team:

- As reported in last year's newsletter Trigger Vale was identified by and asked to join the Superwhites breeding program. This program consists of about 20 leading dedicated White Suffolk breeders who are committed to maximizing genetic progress within their own flock and White Suffolk breed. Every year members nominate what they believe to be their best young ram lambs from which the best 10 are independently selected for the following years AI programs. Every member then gets 15 doses of semen from 2 or 3 of the rams selected to use in their flock. We nominated our best 2005 drop ram lamb (050449) and believe it's a great testimony to how far we have progressed in the breed to have a ram selected in the 2006 Superwhites team at our first attempt. The benefits of this nomination are that Trigger Vale genetics will be benchmarked in some of the oldest and most progressive White Suffolk studs in

Australia. Just how far we have progressed is further illustrated by the fact that 050449 is the second highest ranked ram out of the 10 selected in 2006. Refer photo and detail on this page for further information.

## Focus remains on Commercial producers:

- When you breed a ram of the quality of 050449 it tends to make you evaluate what are your stud's goals. When we started the White Suffolk stud our aim was to provide the very best flock rams for commercial lamb producers and that goal has not changed. When you breed rams like 050449 quite a few people have suggested that we should put him and some of his 2005 drop mates into a ram shed and feed them up and take them to shows and stud sales to chase some big stud ram prices. While the temptation is there to follow this path it doesn't fit in with our stud aims and the role we hope to play in the Australian sheep industry. As a result we honestly believe that this represents a great opportunity for our clients, as our top rams with certain stud sire potential are available at flock ram prices at our on property sale.

## Our rams must pass structural testing:

- I often hear the debate about studs that place a high importance on performance recording and figures lose sight of structural correctness and type. As stated on page 3 of this newsletter my simple answer to this is if your eye sight is good enough to read numbers off a page it certainly going to be good enough to visually assess an animal. We are 100% committed to ensuring that our sheep are structurally sound. The best performance genes in the world are of no relevance if the animal isn't structurally correct and can't survive and reproduce itself.

## Ewe lamb success:

- The last 4 years we have been joining our White Suffolk ewe lambs at around 8 months of age. We generally have obtained conception of around 40% but this year it was closer to 80%. This is a real bonus as our ewe lambs have our best genetics so by lambing as a lamb their male progeny is available a year earlier for our clients and the females go into our breeding program earlier resulting in a even quicker rate of genetic gain.



Trigger Vale 050449. Semen packages available, \$1000 for 30 doses.

BWT	WWT	PWWT	YWT	PFAT	PEMD	Carcase Plus
0.3	9.6	14.6	14.9	-1.2	0.8	197

**Comments:** This ram lamb represents what we are achieving at Trigger Vale with the large capital investment we have made in genetics. Trigger Vale 0449 was sired by Anden 83 as part of our 2005 AI program. Anden 83 is the 5<sup>th</sup> ranked sire in the breed and 0449 is his highest ranked son Australia wide. A carcass + index figure of 197 puts him in the top 1% of all terminal rams born in Australia in 2005. He has been selected by the Superwhites breeding group to be used in their national 2006/07 breeding program. To go along with all the performance figures he is visually the best ram we have bred since we started the stud. He weighed 49kgs at 3 months and 97kgs at 7 months with no supplementary feeding. Progeny look fantastic.

## Using LAMBPLAN to select the right terminal sire ram

*The Following is extracted from a MLA tips and tools publication and written by SGA staff*

The Australian prime lamb industry offers lamb producers a range of market options, from the very light carcase weights suitable for the Middle East through to the heavy export markets dominated by the US market.

Efficient lamb production to suit market needs requires selection of the most appropriate terminal sire ram to suit the breed and type of ewes, the production and finishing system, and the desired carcase specifications.

Terminal sires are used to breed commercial lambs for slaughter so the critical traits to look for when purchasing terminal sires are growth rate, appropriate leanness (fat depth) and muscling. Birth weight and internal parasite resistance are influenced through terminal sire selection.

The key to selecting terminal sires lies in identifying those rams that produce the right balance of birth weight, growth rates carcase characteristics and internal parasite resistance to suit your production system and the requirements of your target market.

Terminal sire breeders can use LAMBPLAN information to provide an estimate of the value of a ram's genes assessed by looking at his performance and the performance of his relatives.

This estimate is called an Australian Sheep Breeding Value (ASBV).

The main challenge commercial ram buyers face when trying to get the right balance of production traits is how to make a valid comparison of rams among the range of flocks within a breed and across the range of terminal sire breeds from which rams are available.

This challenge can be met through the use of LAMBPLAN ASBVs.

ASBVs allow you to evaluate a ram's genetic potential for growth, leanness and muscularity to select the terminal sire most suited to your prime lam production system.

Lamb markets are primarily defined by carcase weight and fat ranges. The ability to produce prime lambs with the appropriate carcase weight and fatness is important for the profitability of both the lamb producer and the processor.

Sire selection is not 'one size fits all'. Producers who are able to more reliably select the right

terminal sire to suit their ewe type, production system and market specifications, can more readily turn off lambs at the appropriate weight and fat score in a shorter time period.

LAMBPLAN ASBVs enable comparison across flocks within a breed and across terminal sire breeds.

### Key traits affecting lamb production

#### Post weaning weight (PWWT)

In general, producers aim to achieve the target weight for their market in the shortest period of time. Numerous industry trials have demonstrated that the progeny of terminal sires with higher ASBVs for weight achieve target weight more quickly.

Producers also benefit from animals with higher genetic potential for growth, as they are generally more efficient converters of feed to body weight.

#### Post weaning fat depth (PFAT)

GR tissue depth is the depth of tissue over the 12th/13th rib, 110mm out from the backbone. A deeper GR measurement indicates fatter carcasses. GR depth is the basis of carcase fat grading in Australia. Over fat lambs are more costly to process at the abattoir.

Presenting lean, but not under-finished, lambs to the abattoir is critical for achieving high lean meat yields. This will become increasingly important as processors look towards value based payment systems such as VIASCAN.

When selecting rams, breeders must consider their ewe type, production system and market requirements to ensure the appropriate level of leanness. For example, lambs bred from Merino ewes are unlikely to carry adequate fat at domestic trade carcase weight if sired by a ram with a highly negative PFAT ASBV.

#### Post weaning eye muscle depth PEMD

Research and industry trials have shown that eye muscle depth is an important contributor to carcase lean meat yield. Rams with more positive eye muscle depth ASBVs will sire lambs with greater muscling and the potential for higher yielding carcasses. Selection of rams with more positive EMD ASBVs will also produce progeny with a higher

proportion of their carcass weight in the more valuable loin and hind quarter of the carcass.

MLA and the Sheep CRC's sheepmeat eating quality research program has identified that lambs with greater EMD are less prone to stress and dark cutting.

#### Other traits of interest

**Birth weight (BWT):** Animals with high growth potential will, on average, have higher birth weight. To manage this, many terminal sire ram breeders weigh lambs at birth. By doing this they can restrict increases in birth weight while selecting for higher growth rate. Birth weight should be optimised; if birth weight is too high lambing difficulties are likely and if too low will lead to reduced lamb survival.

**Faecal egg count (FEC):** Lamb producers in higher worm burden regions are increasingly looking at the genetics they use as part of their long-term worm management strategy. Terminal sire breeders are addressing this by individually sampling lambs to calculate FEC ASBVs.

## Will ASBVs increase your returns

The financial impact of ASBVs can be calculated by using a simple formula based on the fact that half the genes of each parent will be contributed to the progeny.

For example, if two rams have a difference in post weaning weight ASBV of 6kg we expect that their progeny would on average differ in weight by 3kg.

$3\text{kg lwt} \times 46\% \text{ dressing} \times 60 \text{ progeny} \times 4 \text{ years} \times \$3.25/\text{kg} = \$1,076$

Industry progeny testing programs have readily demonstrated variation in returns of this magnitude, and greater, from different terminal sires.

## LAMBPLAN indexes

In addition to ASBVs for individual traits, LAMBPLAN produces market focused indexes. An index is calculated by combining a number of ASBVs based on their relative economic value to rank animals based on that combined criteria.

The two most common terminal sire indexes available are Carcass Plus and Trade \$ Index.

### Carcass Plus

The Carcass Plus index is based on the weight, fat and eye muscle depth ASBVs at post-weaning age (7.5 months) with a relative emphasis of 60% PWWT, 20% PFAT and 20% PEMD.

Carcass Plus rewards lean animals with high growth and above average muscle. Due to rewarding leanness, some high Carcass Plus rams may be too lean for trade lamb production, particularly out of Merino ewes.

### Trade \$ Index

The Trade \$ Index is designed to target production of 22kg carcass weight lambs. It combines post-weaning age ASBVs for growth, fat and eye muscle depth into a \$ index value.

The Trade \$ Index is expressed as dollars/ewe joined/year. In estimating the dollar variation the index assumes a weaning rate of 100% and lamb at \$3.50/kg cwt.

The Trade \$ Index rewards animals with a post-weaning weight (PWWT) of +6 or greater. The greater the PWWT ASBV is above 6, the more points allocated to the index.

Production of trade weight lambs requires appropriate leanness, but excessive leanness is undesirable due to difficulties in finishing lambs at this weight. For this reason the Trade \$ Index optimises the post-weaning fat (PFAT) ASBV at -0.5. The further an animal's PFAT ASBV is from -0.5 the fewer points allocated.

The index also rewards animals with more positive post-weaning eye muscle depth EBVs, which are desirable for carcass conformation and yield. The more positive the PEMD EBV the more points awarded in the index.

## Getting the most from LAMBPLAN

While LAMBPLAN produces indexes to rank rams, it is strongly recommended that ram buyers develop their understanding of LAMBPLAN to enable use of the index as an initial screening tool, then focus on using the individual trait ASBVs for the appropriate balance of growth, leanness and muscle to suit the breed and type of ewes, production and finishing system, and the desired carcass specifications.

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