



Trust

TRIGGER
VALE

Est. 1952

Genetics

2023 Newsletter

Welcome. . . The team at Trigger Vale are very excited as we approach the 2023 ram selling season. It will be great to welcome both new and old clients to our 46th Annual On-Property Sale on Friday 1st September at "Valera" Lockhart.

What's exciting about the 2023 ram selling season for Trigger Vale is the outstanding quality of the rams on offer. We honestly think that this drop of rams will clearly be the best presented by Trigger Vale. While this is easily substantiated due to the significant increase of the key profit driving ASBV's genetic trends, it's the physical attributes that has Andrew so excited. The Merinos have had over 600 mls of rain on them since they were shorn as lambs in November and we couldn't be happier with their feet structure, white and free growing wools, tolerance to fly strike and natural resistance to worms. The catalogue will feature large drafts of sons by proven industry impact Sires Trigger Vale 190039 (sold to Wallaloo Park Vic. for \$15K) and 190760 (sold to Baderloo S.A. for \$25K) along with the first sons of the game changing Trigger Vale 200081.



The two initiatives that came about due to Covid restriction, in Auctions Plus and having a pre-sale open/ inspection day will be in place again for the 2023 sale. Feedback from clients particularly from interstate or with other commitments on our sale day love the flexibility that Auction Plus brings, being able to operate at our sale remotely. With ever-increasing demand for Trigger Vale rams resulting in more rams being lotted each year even clients that lived locally were saying they were having trouble inspecting all the rams on sale day. As a result, we will be penning most of the Merino sale team on our Inspection/ Open day on Wednesday 23rd August. Note that no White Suffolks will be on display. The benefits of holding this day for clients allows

for flexibility and more time to thoroughly select the rams that are best suited to their Breeding Objectives. Andrew and the extended Trigger Vale team are also available all day for clients to utilise and discuss our leading breeding program and the benefits it can bring to our client's sheep enterprises.

Like last year to bring increased value for clients during our inspection day we will also be holding a short 'Hour of Power' information session. This year the theme is focused on some big changes and new technologies that are available to industry. Firstly, at 2 pm we will have Scott Hannaford, the Territory Sales Manager for Coopers Animal Health and Allflex Tags speaking about their game changing oral lice control product. Scott will also have a selection of Allflex electronic tags and associated hardware on display to help producers start to get their head around the soon to be compulsory electronic tag legislation for selling sheep in NSW. Our second Speaker will be the CEO of Sheep Data Management Elise Bowen who will be speaking at an introductory level regarding electronic (EID) tags. The reality is as sheep producers, the legislation is in place, and it will be compulsory to use EID's in all sheep going to sale as part of the NLIS program. This will come at a cost to producers so Elise will touch on how to transition to EID's and some basic on farm data collection that can be done at a commercial level to get some increased productivity and profit from the change.

This year we will be maintaining sale numbers in both breeds at last year's higher levels to cover demand and keep averages at realistic levels. There will be 230 Poll Merino and 100 White Suffolk rams available.

A light luncheon and refreshments will be supplied on both our sale day and inspection day and we look forward to welcoming both old and new clients alike.



Photo: do you see the plane?

www.triggervalesheepstuds.com.au

Andrew Bouffler (02) 6920 7656

Trigger Vale Super Sires

In last year’s newsletter I mentioned we were going to have the first sons of Trigger Vale 190760 and 190039 for sale and how well they had bred and that they had given our breeding program a huge boost with regards to both Genotype and Phenotype. It seemed our clients were of the same opinion as the 190039 sons had the highest auction sale average closely followed by the 190760 sons. Lot 2, an outstanding 760 son topped the sale at \$23,000 which was a new on farm auction record for Trigger Vale. He was purchased by Gunnegaldrie Merino stud at Wellington who are returning clients and was probably the best ram ever offered by Trigger Vale. I used some semen this year, and after looking at his lambs at marking we think he is going to breed on very well. There was another 7 rams sold at auction in 2022 to other Merino studs throughout WA, SA, NSW and Victoria which illustrates to us that our long term breeding philosophy of breeding a true dual purpose Merino with superior maternal characteristic’s is having a significant impact on the broader industry. Our goal has always been to breed large drafts of commercially relevant rams for commercial clients, but it is very satisfying to be getting this wider stud interest.

Furthermore, post-sale we had offers we couldn’t refuse on 190039 and 190760 to go into other programs as proven sires. 190039 was sold to Merino stud “Wallaloo Park” Marnoo, Vic for \$15,000 and 190760 sold to South Australian stud “Badaloo” for \$25,000. The decision to sell both rams was very difficult as they represented the pinnacle of what I have devoted my life to doing. At the end of the day while obviously we are all in business to make money, the Trigger Vale team get great pleasure from our genetics making a difference in our clients breeding programs whether that be at a stud or commercial level. This was highlighted again recently when a Trigger Vale sired ram topped the “Sandlewood” Poll Merino sale in South Australia. We are very excited to see what 190039 and 190760 will achieve in their new homes.

AS the saying goes “when one door closes another one opens” and in this case it looks like it’s taken the form of Trigger Vale 200081. When we sold 39 and 760 the thought did cross my mind about when I would breed the next game changing ram

and as it turned out I didn’t have to wait very long. It was as early as weaning the 2022 drop progeny that we identified that 200081 was breeding exceptionally well and every time we handled the ram and ewe weaners since we realised that we had another industry changing sire in our team. 81’s progeny are very good phenotypically with great structure, carcasses and white free growing wools but it was after we started taking genotypic measurements on the production and welfare traits Trigger Vale are renowned for, that the excitement level really ramped up. As the ASBV’s in Table 1 highlights he is in the top 1% band for Growth and Eye Muscle, top 5% for Yat and Yearling Scrotal Circumference, Top 10% for Breech Wrinkle, Yearling Clean Fleece Weight and Weaning rate and top 20% for Breech cover, Dag, Staple Length and Strength and lastly the top 30% for Worm Resistance.

The amazing thing about 200081 is that he defies the general trade-off rules of breeding. Generally, if an animal is very good in something like growth/carcase or fertility then they tend to be lower in other production traits like wool cut. Sheep that are very high wool cutters generally aren’t strong in the mules free traits like breech wrinkle and cover. It nearly seems to be too good to be true but 200081 can virtually shift all these production and welfare traits in the right direction at the same time. Or in other words he is a game changer! Look out for his first progeny in our auction sale team this year.



Table 1
200081 ASBVs
PINK - Top 5% BLUE - Top 10% Green - Top 20% of Merinoselect

PWT	YWT	YEMD	YFAT	YCFW	YFD	YDCV	YSL	WR	YSC	EBWR	EBCOV	YWEC	DP+
13.05	15.44	3.47	1.42	31.95	0.35	-0.88	15.68	0.26	4.03	-1.07	-0.5	-31.82	216.96



Vale Bob Moncrieff

One of the best things of being involved in the seed stock industry is the relationships you forge with clients. While all initial new client relationships start at a business level it's wonderful that over time, they develop to having a personal and often social element to them. While Mandi and I are always thrilled when we hear of marriages, births and milestone birthdays of clients and their families we are often saddened when we hear of the passing of someone associated with Trigger Vale. This was certainly the case when long term client Bob Moncrieff passed away late last year. Bob and his two sons David and Ian have been purchasing rams at Trigger Vale for many years and other than a year during Covid I have made the yearly trip to West Wyalong to class their ewe weaners and ram team. Bob was an uncomplicated man that loved his family, his farm, the West Wyalong district and last but certainly not least his livestock. Bob while quietly spoken certainly had an eye for a good sheep or cow and if you were lucky enough to be one of these animals and you were born on "Kooralbyn" it was guaranteed that you would be very well looked after. When it came to the type of ewes that he wanted to run they needed to be great structured carcase animals but most of all they had to have long free growing white wools. Bob and his boys were meticulous on sale day and always one of the first to arrive so they could have a very close look at each of the rams. They would only tick the longest whitest wools of the draft and had a sharp eye for perfect structure and good depth and width. I spent the morning recently with Ian and David classing their 2022 drop ewe weaners and the quality of the ewes and consistency of type highlighted the importance of having a clear breeding objective. Bob wanted to fill bales of wool by staple length rather than having heavy wrinkled denser wools and by selecting rams with that focus the Moncrieff's have achieved that goal. Their wool clip regularly achieves greater than 130mls in staple length. I will always remember Bob sidling up to me on sale day in his quiet manner and dropping in that he had received a phone call from his wool agent. The agent would tell Bob he had received enquiries from some of the wool buyers who were wondering when the high yielding extra long Moncrieff wool was coming to market. The satisfaction and joy on Bob's face as he told this story was his reward for his vision as a breeder. He will be sadly missed at the 2023 sale.

Since Trigger Vale was established in 1952 which means over 70 years in the stud industry it's not surprising that many of these strong relationships are becoming generational. With the risk of offending someone whom I don't mention as I bang out this newsletter with a looming deadline, families like the Forbes, Schirmers, Lenehans, Goodens, Smiths, Gullivers, Goldworthy's, Alexanders, McMeekins, Linley's, Kurrles and Porters spring to mind. I am sure there are plenty of other businesses and industries where this occurs, but I personally think both these long term and newer relationships that are a part of our business is why Mandi and I love breeding rams so much.



Client success

I love the saying that "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" and for the true dual purpose and carcase quality of our merino type this is highlighted from February through to May at the Wagga Saleyards. Wagga has become the biggest lamb selling complex in Australia and I would think that its not a long bow to make the call that it's the biggest in the world. There is rarely a week during that period that a Trigger Vale client doesn't top the merino section of the market. On the 4th of May this year clients the McDonnell Bros from Bidgemia did something very special in topping the entire yarding of 42,000 lambs with a draft of Trigger Vale blood wether lambs for \$257.20. What a great testament to their management and our genetics that a pen of merino lambs outpriced all other lamb types. There must have been a few specialist 2nd X and composite lamb producers driving home scratching their heads that day. To illustrate it wasn't a one off, clients John and Josh Schirmer from Lockhart on the 16th Feb were the third highest pen of all lambs sold across the whole market with their Trigger Vale sired poll merino lambs for \$282.20.

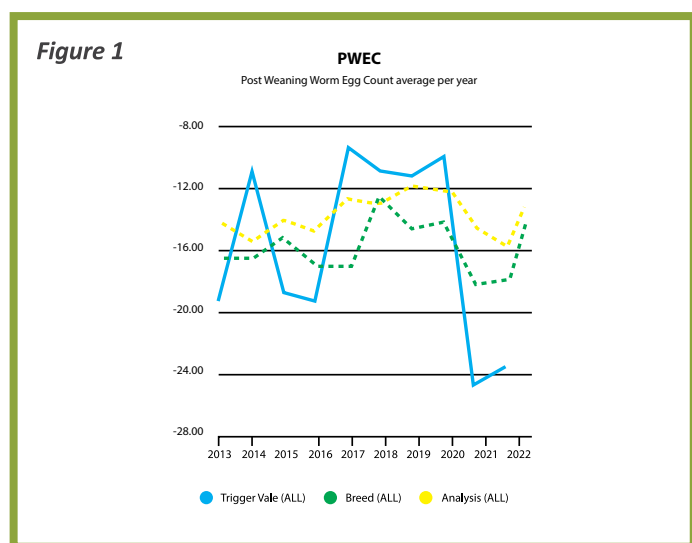


High Rainfall Traits

The recent run of well above average rainfall across the eastern states of Australia has created both opportunities and challenges for Agriculture and sheep producers. The main benefits have been the chance to rebuild flocks, fill water tables and dams, build ground cover and most importantly with improved cash flow invest in infrastructure and farm improvements.

The downside of very wet years is simple logistic operations become difficult, shearing teams get behind, waterlogging effects paddocks and sheep face an increased challenge with regards to worms, wool quality and feet. Always trying to turn a negative into a positive Trigger Vale viewed this as a great opportunity to put our whole flock under pressure in these traits replicating the environment of the higher rainfall zones where we have many clients. We couldn't be happier with how our sheep have stood up to the worm, feet and water stain challenges.

While nobody thinks a high worm burden is a good thing when you want to select for natural worm resistance from individual worm egg counts (WEC) it is necessary. We were able to put the 2020 and 2021 drops in a situation where the average WEC's were greater than 700 eggs per grams. This is the minimum requirement for submission to Sheep Genetic's. Getting ASBV's in WEC generated from actual phenotypic data has been good for our breeding program and we have been able to make big gains in this trait as indicated by our genetic trends in figure 1 (the more negative the better).



Interesting, with the 2023 drop even though we had a lot of summer rain and kept the young rams in the same short pasture paddock for 5 months we couldn't get them wormy enough to test. This is an indication that we are making great progress in this welfare trait. I must have been the only breeder on the eastern seaboard that was disappointed that I couldn't get my sheep wormy. Through this high worm pressure high rainfall period we didn't drench any adult sheep.

Wool quality and water stain are other traits that face increased pressure in wet years, and we couldn't be happier with how the Trigger Vale wools have stood up. We have put significant pressure over the past decade on selecting white wools with no visible swint. Super sires 190760 and 190039 have helped significantly in these areas. The improvement we have made has been expressed by the lack of water stain in our own wool clip and in our client's ewe hoggets flocks that I have classed. There have been many comments made in our site over the Bendigo

Sheep show and Hamilton Sheepvention events regarding how much the Trigger Vale wools have improved with regards to style and nourishment. This is another great example about the power of genetic selection in that if you change the parameters of your breeding objective you will make significant progress in these areas.

Probably the trait that has been talked about the most across industry over this wetter than average extended period is feet, and it hasn't always been positive. Obviously wet years provide the perfect environmental conditions for foot rot, scald, abscess and hoof deformities but it seems these conditions have become more prolific across many flocks and industry. I personally think there are many contributing factors to why this is the case including some basic structural assessment skills being lost as the sheep industry has transitioned from the traditional visual classing to more measured performance based. While I am one of the longest advocate for using ASBV's and quality measured data in breeding I have always stressed that these tools and figures can never be used without a strict structurally correct rule. I will always be thankful to my father Jim and sheep classers like Jim Daley, Ian Marwedel and currently Michael Elmes who regardless of the how good the figures are on a sheep they have insisted that we cull them if they aren't structurally correct. Jim Daley's favourite quote was "It only takes one generation to put poor structured traits into your flock, but it will take you a lifetime to breed them out". Over the past decade ASBV's and figures have proven to be a powerful breeding tools and an excellent way to market and promote stud sheep. Unfortunately, I believe in some cases breeders have attempted to become trait and index industry leaders in a short period of time and as a result structural integrity has sometimes been compromised.

Contributing to the problem, from a commercial level, has been the many changes such as the loss of the jackaroo training bases, a generation move towards a larger focus on cropping, less on farm commercial independent classing and more sons coming home with a higher level of education with developed skills in technology but maybe less in practical breeding. These factors have contributed to the loss of some basic sheep classing skills. Enough about identifying the problem and more about what can we do about addressing it. All the foot related problems mentioned earlier vary in actual cause. Footrot is bacterial, abscess and scald can be environment being caused by wet conditions and moving through highly improved pastures like clover and hoof deformities like excessive toenail growth or unevenness will

Photo: TV220065 cracking carcass & structure



usually have a genetic origin. One thing they all have in common though is in any set of problem causing conditions sheep with poor toenail, hoof, pastern and hock structure will be a lot more prone to falling victim.

NeXtgen Agri lead by Mark Ferguson are leading the world in on farm research in this area and Trigger Vale is fortunate to have a relationship going back to the inception of NeXtgen and decades beforehand with Mark. In NZ where Ferg is based foot rot is the single biggest challenge facing sheep producers. Over the past few years Ferg has coordinated and set up new research trials that put different genetics under extreme footrot challenges and measures the variation in response. The project has been so successful that they have established that footrot genetic resistance is real, heritable and a ASBV has been developed. Within a very short period of a few years the ASBV's has been embraced commercially and is having a significant impact on addressing the problem in NZ. The project also involves scoring feet and leg structure on a 1 to 5 scale (not unlike breech wrinkle for mules free animal). As mentioned before the first defence against all these feet issues mainly expressed under high rainfall conditions is having great feet, pastern and leg structure.

The good news is that NeXtgen has brought the concept and project to Australia and will be running similar trials here. Trigger Vale has always prided ourselves on being early innovators so have already booked in 3 sire teams of 8 rams each to participate in the trial. This is very exciting and timely research, and the data will link our flock to both the Australian and NZ industries. It's interesting to note that a few years ago we sold a stud ram 170929 to Muller station in NZ. They entered 929 in NeXtgen's footrot project, and he was identified in the early work as a trait leader for footrot resistance. He now sits in the top 15% so I'm hopeful that this great result will flow through to the work being carried out in Australia for Trigger Vale genetics.

2022 Merino Auction Summary

Total sold 230 @ \$3250 av.

New record top \$23,000

If remove 6 rams sold for stud duties

224 sold for \$2935 av.

Last 100 averaged \$2150 with 30 making less than \$2000.

MLA and Australian Good Meat Video's

There are thousands of Australian farmers across the country doing great things in the areas of animal welfare and sustainability. For this reason alone, Mandi and I were humbled and honoured when MLA asked us whether we would like to be a part of their "sustainable producer" case study program. We are reasonably well known in the animal welfare field due to over 30 years of work in breeding a Merino with a genetic base that doesn't require mulesing along with maternal traits that greatly enhance lamb survival. However, at the same time we have quietly been working on a farming system which we feel is not only profitable but more environmentally sustainable. The process of answering background questions and then actually filming the video was an enjoyable experience. While all the work we have done in this space has occurred over decades and is still in progress we were incredibly proud of our story. The team from MLA bought all the pieces together.

See our Story at www.youtube.com/watch?v=aim-a9FOn-o and some other snippets are at www.goodmeat.com.au/blog/privilege-to-be-a-land-custodian/



Photo: MLA, OGA and TV crew



MEQ Update

Clients with good memories might remember we did a Lamb meat eating quality (MEQ) trial 5 years ago which was hosted by the Luhr's family at Cavendish in the Western District's of Victoria. The purpose of this Fast track trial which was co-funded by MLA was to have some high, medium and low merit MEQ animals representing some key Trigger Vale and industry blood lines. All animals were conceived using AI and all run at Cavendish in the same commercial conditions before being killed at JBS Bordertown with a team of University of New England meat scientists on hand to take carcase measurements and samples for further lab testing. All the lambs had been DNA tested beforehand and all our normal on farm carcase measurements like growth, fat and muscle depth were taken.

The aim of this project was basically a "proof of concept" trial that showed that DNA profiling was a good way of predicting the MEQ of animals. The only other previous method was to kill the animals and take meat samples back to the lab to test for intramuscular fat (juiciness) and Shear force (tenderness) which is what happened with these trial animals. The obvious problem with this method is you identify the animals with superior MEQ traits but can't utilise that information in our breeding program because they are dead. The overall conclusion was using genomics as a predictor for MEQ traits was a good tool. For the next couple of years Ricky Luhr's and myself have been selecting elite MEQ Merino genetics from within our flock and across industry to breed a family of high merit MEQ Merino's. Other criteria that was not negotiable in this process were they had to be mules free, polled and have quality white wool, all the easy care traits.

Another way to describe this is, could we breed a Wagyu equivalent in the Merino world which still has the dual-purpose maternal characteristics of our current Merino type. At the start of 2022 Ricky and I discussed trying to get co-funding from MLA again to do another breeding program where progeny would be killed to get the hard to collect phenotypic data to add accuracy and validation to the breeding program we had been on. This time however we changed the project design so that only half of the high merit MEQ animals were sent to slaughter and the remaining stayed on farm for future breeding.

The Trigger Vale lambs were slaughtered at Fletcher's International in June with the Meat-Eating quality scientists from UNE on hand to collect samples again. It was a fascinating two days and Fletcher's were very accommodating. Interestingly they have recently started a premium brand based on visual IMF in the loin. What was obvious visually, in our kill lambs was that you could see more IMF in the loin expressed as marbling than the lambs we killed 4 years ago in our first trial which indicates we have made significant progress. The data will be added to the Trigger Vale database in Sheep Genetics and provide great linkage and enhance accuracy to all the Merino's in our breeding program.



**Photo: IMF
expressed in
TV loin.**

Photo: Jamo & Andrew at Fletcher's for MEQ Kill



Conclusions and what does all this mean to Commercial Producers?

1. I have no doubt that we can breed a premium MEQ Merino type but am not convinced it's a great idea. While some of the lambs in our trial were elite for IMF, as a group they struggled in the very wet 2022 conditions with a higher proportion of deaths and poor doing animals when compared to our normal Merino's. Having thought about this for quiet a while it was when I started to think about other breeds and species that I realised there was a common theme. Some of the highest percentage IMF red meat in the world is found in the Wagyu, Friesian dairy cattle and Hampshire Downs breeds. What all these breeds have in common is that they have slow growth rates and are hard to fatten. I have often talked about how single trait selection to extreme levels usually expresses itself in fitness and is not ideal for breeding a productive balanced animal. The Wagyu for instance, generally, must be grain fed for a long period of time to get the combination of weight and marbling. We know it requires a lot more energy and resources to lay down a kilo of fat compared to muscle, and I suspect it might take more energy again to lay down fat in the form of IMF.

2. With Gundagai Lamb leading the processing industry regarding the development of a premium lamb product and offering producers a unique payment grid, we are starting to see what the future in this space might look like. I have heard Will Barton from Gundagai Lamb speak on several occasions and he consistently comments that they are not looking for lambs with extreme IMF of 10% or above. The lamb that Gundagai is paying a premium for has IMF above 5% or in other words it must be better than average but not extreme.

3. When both these above points are considered along with the fundamentals, that the main profit drivers for lamb producers are still weight and yield. I have concluded that we need to ensure our breeding program targets MEQ traits in the top 30% of Merino's as that will ensure our clients lamb should attract any future premiums for quality assured brands. I am confident that this is achievable without any negative correlation or imbalances in the other traits that drive overall sheep enterprise profitability.

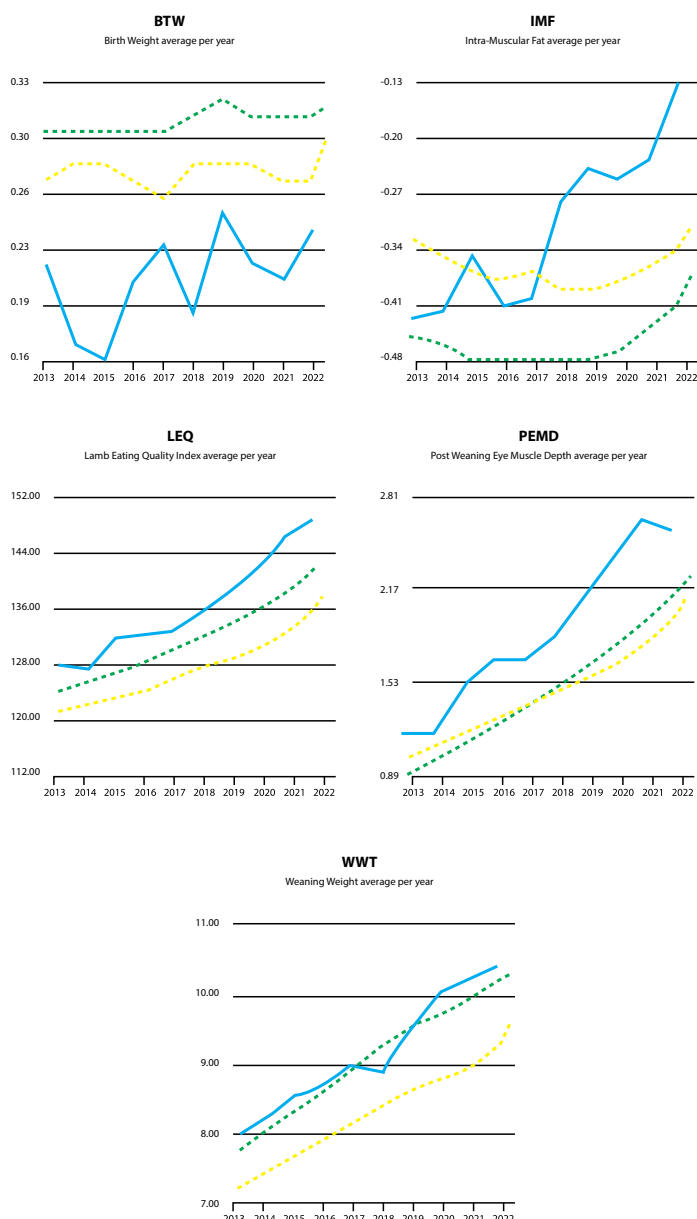
White Suffolk News

As discussed in the MEQ article there are signs that our lamb industry is in the early stages of developing payment systems based on meat-eating quality traits like Intramuscular fat (Juiciness) and Shear Force (tenderness). With so many traits to consider when breeding merino's, it can be difficult to make significant process in all traits at once. Without the complexities of wool and mulesing you have more scope for greater rates of gain in the important terminal traits like growth, meat yield and MEQ. As the genetic graphs show on this page the Trigger Vale trends continue to be well above the White Suffolk breed and broader Terminal industry. If the market continues to mature and evolve and payment systems are developed rewarding higher MEQ carcasses the importance of high impact terminal genetics will be vital. One sire can produce over 100 lambs in a year so as an individual his influence over a draft of lambs is significantly higher than the ewe. We are very comfortable with the progress we have made particularly with the IMF and feel that our clients will be in a good position to capture any future market premiums.

It doesn't matter how good the growth, muscle and MEQ traits are in a lamb if he dies at birth. Lamb losses at birth and in the first 48 hours of life is still the lowest hanging fruit in the sheep industry to drive increased commercial profits. The White Suffolk as a breed is renowned for its low birth weights which has been one of the key factors in making it Australia's number 1 Terminal Sire. Weighing and ear tagging every lamb at birth is paramount to get high quality data to ensure that as we push the key trait of growth the positive correlation with birth weight doesn't indirectly create a problem. We are extremely proud that we continue to break that genetic correlation with our birthweight ASBV's being under industry average yet growth above. However, birthweight is only one component of lamb survival and over the past three White Suffolk lambing's while doing the tagging and weighing we have also been giving each ewe a lambing ease score on a one to five scale. This data when submitted to Sheep Genetic gets used to generate a ASBV for lambing ease on each ewe and on each stud sires based on the lambing performance of his daughters. For commercial producers using birth weight and lambing ease ASBV's in conjunction with each other greatly improves the chances that lambs born contribute to profits by getting to market.

Trigger Vale White Suffolk Genetic Trends:

● Trigger Vale (ALL) ● Breed (ALL) ● Analysis (ALL)



ON A LIGHTER NOTE...



Why do Seagulls fly over the sea?

If they flew over the bay they would be called bagels.

Light travels faster than sound, which is the reason that some people appear bright before you hear them speak.

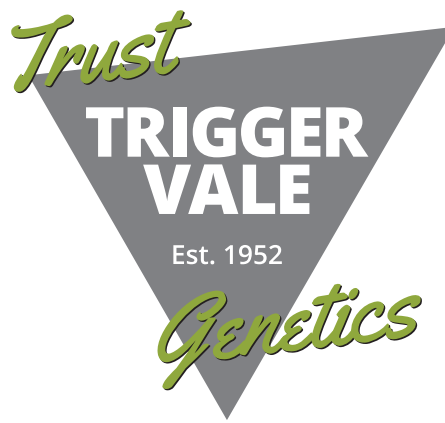
Despite the high cost of living, it remains popular

I just saw a car being driven by a sheep in a swimsuit...

It was a lamb bikini.

A vegan said to me that the people who sell meat are disgusting.

I said people who sell fruit & vegetables are grocer.



Inspection Day

Wednesday 23rd August, 2023 10:00am - 4:00pm

"Hour of Power" Presentation 2:00pm

New Oral Lice Control

Transition and Opportunities of Electronic Tags



46th Annual On-Property Auction

At "Valera" Lockhart on Friday 1st September 2023

Inspections 8:30am onwards

Poll Sale commencing at 12:30pm

230 Poll Merino Rams

6 Stud White Suffolk Rams

94 Specially Selected White Suffolk Rams

Vendors: Andrew & Mandi Bouffler 0427 207 656

Stud Classer: Michael Elmes 0429 847 552

Sheep Genetic Advisor: Mark Ferguson: Nextgen Agri 64 21 496 656

Selling Agents: Tim McMeekin: Elders Ltd Wagga 0427 830 003

Matt Hawker: H. Francis & Co Wagga 0418 861 320

3% rebate to outside agents introducing clients on day of Sale

Luncheon available

Catalogue online two weeks before the Sale



Rabobank



AuctionsPlus

MN1

Gudiar Vacc

Brucellosis

Accredited



www.triggervalesheepstuds.com.au