



Trust

TRIGGER
VALE

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Genetics

2024 Newsletter

EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING

The team at Trigger Vale are very excited as we approach the 2024 ram selling season. It will be great to welcome both old and new clients to our 47th Annual On-Property Auction on Friday 6th September at "Valera" Lockhart.

While we have experienced a very tough autumn and winter in southern NSW, Victoria and much of SA with minimal pasture growth and a lot of supplementary feeding, the feedback from clients throughout these areas has been outstanding. In good seasons sheep can basically eat their way out of trouble but when it is tight Trigger Vale's industry leading growth, fat and muscle genetics really come into play. Basically, the combination of these genetics provides a naturally bigger fuel tank of energy by storing fat and whole-body energy in the good times to use in the tougher times. This has really been seen in TV client's pregnancy scanning and lamb marking percentages. While nobody wants the tough seasonal conditions experienced by many in 2024 the silver lining has highlighted that by investing in genetics that are better suited to these conditions breeders can minimise the impact. After all, if you choose to farm on the driest continent on the planet these low rainfall tough seasons will continue to be a challenge, so it makes sense to build a breeding ewe flock that can cope better in these conditions.

What's exciting about the 2024 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. We couldn't be happier with their structure, white and free growing wools, tolerance to fly strike and natural resistance to worms.



Photo: 2023 Top Price Ram -
Purchased by the McDonnell Family

The catalogue will feature 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 sons of the game changing Trigger Vale 200081. According to Andrew what starts to get very interesting in this year's group of rams is the huge lift in genetic merit as the combination of these sires start to impact our core breeding nucleus.

The two initiatives that came about due to Covid restriction were Auctions Plus and having a pre-sale open/ inspection day and these will be in place again for the 2024 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 the auction 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 the entire Merino sale team on our Inspection/ Open day on Wednesday 28th August. (Note that no White Suffolks will be on display). The benefits of holding this day for clients is to allow 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.

We will also be holding a short 'Hour of Power' information session to increase value for our clients during our inspection day. This year the theme is focused on what we can learn and do better next time from the tough autumn and winter period many farmers have dealt with this year. Firstly, at 2 pm we will have Jason Tromph, who is the founder of Lambs Alive and key developer & educator of Lifetime Ewe Management and Bred Well/ Fed Well programs. Jason will give invaluable insight into the challenges facing the sheep industry and what tools are available to address them – you, your sheep and your farming system. Rob Inglis who is the Senior Livestock Production Specialist for Elders will identify the problems associated with running sheep in a low rainfall year and what tools are in the kit bag to utilise the limited dry matter produced to full advantage.

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. For more information, please call Andrew on 0427 207 656.

www.triggervalesheepstuds.com.au

Andrew Bouffler (02) 6920 7656

Where is the End Game??

Trigger Vale have been using objective measurement in the form of ASBV's for over 25 years, as we were one of the early studs to utilise this wonderful breeding tool. On reflection I would say we spent the first 15 years simply building data quality, pedigree history and gaining an insight into where we stood genetically without really making a lot of gain. One of the reasons for this was in the early years there wasn't a lot of accurate data being supplied by other studs. Most of them weren't even measuring many of the traits that I had a vision for, to modernise the Merino. These were things like the non mulsing traits of breech wrinkle and cover, fat and muscle depth and early in life weaning and post weaning growth. One of the indisputable concepts I have learnt about breeding is the scope for genetic growth is enhanced by the size of the genetic pool you are breeding from. The basic principle of objective measurement is taking data on a group of animals, removing the environmental noise and then look for and select the ones that deviate genetically in a positive way above the average of the group, or in other words look for the genetic outliers. It makes perfect sense then that the larger number of animals in the group you are measuring the higher the probability that you will find more outliers for the trait you are looking for.

So, in summary Trigger Vale in the early days of using ASBV's were looking for outliers in traits that were important to us but to a certain degree we were restricted to our own genetic pool, so the rate of progress was slow.

It doesn't really matter whether it's watching a game of football when suddenly one team gets on a run and starts to dominate or the adage of how big and powerful a little snowball can get as it gains momentum and size rolling down a hill but what is undeniable is once you have momentum it's a hard thing to stop. For the Trigger Vale breeding program momentum really got going in 2011 when Triggervale bred 110511,110839 and 110744. These all had some great numbers in many of traits we had been focusing on and they were most importantly unrelated to each other. It was also around this time that Merinoselect database in Sheep genetics started to grow in both size and accuracy and we were able to look outside our own flock at a far larger gene pool. The result was quiet a dramatic increase in "momentum" for genetic gain as illustrated in some examples of our genetic trends.

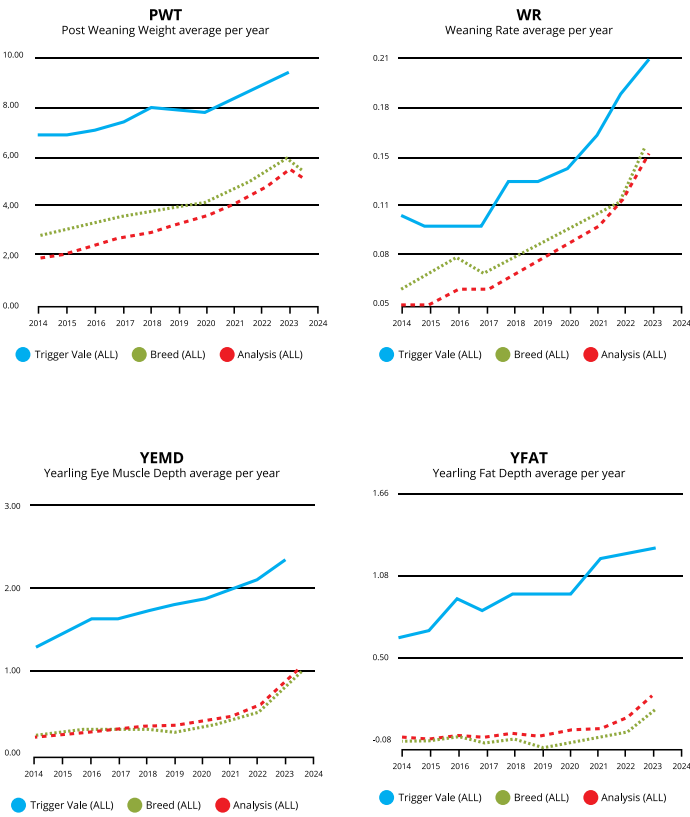
Table 1

Animal No.	PWT	YWT	YEMD	YFAT	YCFW	YFD	YDCV	YSL	WR	YSCR	EBWR	EBCOV	WEC	DAG	SM
230832	10.6	12.4	2.96	1.63	26.5	-0.42	-1.4	16.9	0.28	4.1	-1	-0.83	-60.4	-0.64	170.9
231697	11.9	13.6	3.32	1.43	27.4	0.65	0	19.3	0.37	3.5	-1.2	-0.6	-66.7	-0.7	171.8

PINK - Top 5% BLUE - Top 10% Green - Top 20% of Merinoselect

So, to answer the question that heads this article "where is the end game?" I would have to admit I have no idea, but the unknown is very exciting. This is illustrated by the two most exciting and game changing rams I have bred in 230832 and 231697. (See table 1) If 10 years ago I had been asked about what genetic gain would be possible over the next 30 years I probably would have come up with numbers like these two rams. The fact that they exist now, can be injected into our future breeding program and clients will be able to purchase their progeny in 2026 means we are about 20 years ahead of what I thought.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that having a vision for the future expressed as a clear breeding objective can lead to some amazing rates of genetic gain. The increasing uptake of ASBV's as a breeding tool across the broader Merino industry only adds to the potential and excitement as the pool of animals being evaluated increases the potential to find game changing outliers like Trigger Vale 230832 and 231697 improves. So I failed miserably in answering my opening question but I hope I'm around for another 30 years or so because its going to be one hell of a ride.



Uniqlo Visit

In February this year we had the honour of hosting a delegation of representatives from the huge Japanese fashion company, Uniqlo. This was co-ordinated by Elders, whom Uniqlo had contacted, as they were wanting to start an ethical and high animal welfare brand and wished to visit farms directly to get a better understanding of what is involved at farm level. Uniqlo were also looking to identify potential wool suppliers for their brand who would supply wool directly for a premium price. While language was a problem at times it was a fascinating day to get insight into the mindset and values of such a massive worldwide fashion brand. Interestingly, they weren't really interested in building a premium price brand based around ethics and welfare as the company basic philosophy is "quality at affordable prices". The motivation seemed to be driven by an understanding that their customers were becoming more informed and selective in their mainstream purchasing habits so to stay relevant to them they needed to move Uniqlo products into this space.

It was surprising and disappointing that being RWS accredited or participation in another quality assurance scheme wasn't going to be a prerequisite to becoming a supplier to them. The one absolute not negotiable was that the wool had to be non mulsed which once again highlighted to me that the practice of mulsing if not banned by legislation (think live export), will slowly be phased out simply by lack of available markets.

Despite quiet a significant language barrier we had a wonderful four hour exchange of ideas and gained an insight into what they were seeking with regards to animal health and welfare. What I learnt was while we spoke different languages the magic of a graph is universal and they paid particular attention and took many photos when I showed them our breech wrinkle, breach cover and ewe rearing ability genetic trends (See figures 1-3). They must have liked what that saw and heard during their visit as we later sold 15 bales of fleece wool privately from our 6th month September shearing at a significant premium over market price.

Lachie Brown and Tim McMeekin from Elders need to be congratulated on the work and negotiations put into building this relationship and sale with Uniqlo. While its very early days I am hopeful it could be the start of forming a supply chain relationship with a big end user of wool. One of the greatest challenges I face is how do we extract a premium price for the non mulsed high

animal welfare type of animal we breed at Trigger Vale. This can only be achieved by developing direct relationships with end users and communicating the quality and welfare attributes that Trigger Vale wool and meat products offer. The long-term goal in this space is not only to attract premiums for our wool and meat products but for these to flow through to our clients.

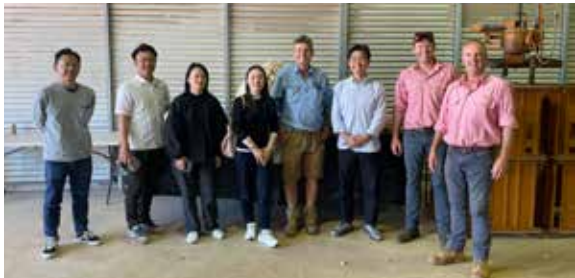


Photo: Representatives from Uniqlo, Elders and Trigger Vale

Josh Price – Willaura, Vic

We started our journey with Triggervale in 2019. Coming from a traditional merino background we were looking for a more versatile and robust animal. After looking at various studs and speaking with Andrew at Sheepvention, we decided to give Triggervale a go and now all of our maternal ewes are sired by Triggervale.

Our business is 70% cropping 30% sheep and part of our rotation includes grazing crops, so when we were looking at changing our breeding we wanted something that would put weight on quickly to then allow us to lock the crops up and take them through to harvest. Our first drop of Triggervale progeny were sold at 11 months old with the weather lambs averaging 4.5kg heavier than our previous bloodline resulting in a 4% increase in yield.

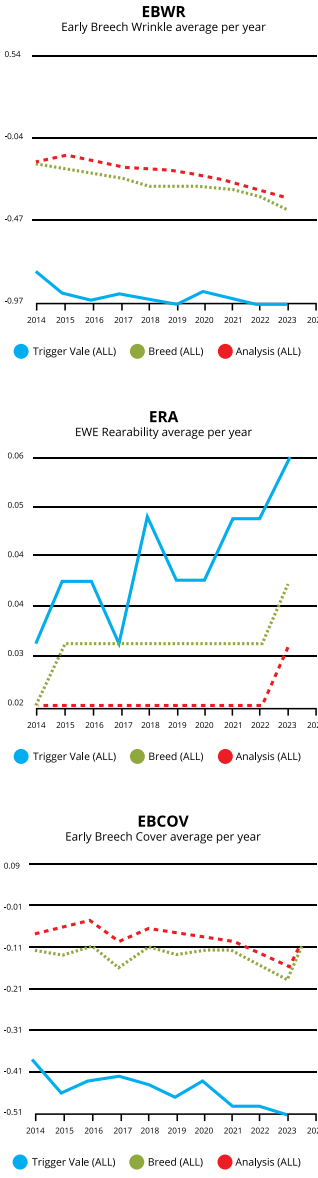
Changing our breeding program has also meant that we no longer mules and we are currently RWS certified. When transitioning our breeding program to Triggervale, bare breech traits and breech wrinkle traits were a strong focus. As a result, we have also seen an increase in fertility rates. In the last two years we have averaged 175% scanning rates and our dry percentages have reduced from 10% to 3%.

The last two seasons have been very wet, and our sheep have held up well especially in the wool. This season has been one of the toughest autumns/early winters we have experienced. During this time, we have seen the Triggervale attributes really shine. They have held their condition and really thrived in tough times.

It's a credit to Andrew, Mandi & team and the amount of time and dedication they have put into breeding such versatile and results driven genetics.



Figures 1-3



THIS IS HUGE!!!

Great outcome at Lambex 24 for the Trigger Vale Breeding Vision

One of the feature components of the world’s biggest sheep industry event, Lambex 2024 in Adelaide, was the lamb competition. It was great to see long term Trigger Vale clients and great friends Ricky and Marni Luhrs be crowned the overall winner in the AMPV Lambex’s Feedlot carcass competition. While all the accolades should go to Ricky and Marni it was incredibly satisfying to see Trigger Vales vision which started over 18 years ago and all the hard work over that time to produce a “true” dual purpose animal come to fruition. One of the major recommendations of my Nuffield report 18 years ago was that for both the historic wool and growing lamb industries to survive and thrive into the future the Merino would have to develop into a much superior Maternal animal that could put quality product into both markets. This result certainly means we have hit the brief for the meat part of that equation.



Photo: Andrew with Ricky & Marni at Lambex

To put the result into perspective the competition had 1500 hundred lambs entered from 30 different producers representing 16 different breeds and breeding philosophies. The majority of the entries were from specialist prime lamb operations who I think would have been left scratching their heads with the result of a 100% merino wether taking the prize. There were two components to the trial being feedlot performance and carcass kill performance under the new MSA (Meat Standards Australia) guidelines. Lambs entered the Thornby feedlot as woolly lambs in December 2023 and had to be in a live weight range of 35-42 kgs. They were then shorn and put on feed for 70 days. At the end of the 70 days the feedlot component of the trial was scored according to fleece value and average weight gain.

The lambs were then killed at the TFI plant at Stawell with all the carcasses put through the Dexa x ray for LMY% (Lean Meat Yield) and then had the Meat-Eating Quality (MEQ) traits of IMF% and Shear Force measured. The carcass was then assessed and valued on

Grid 22 – 30 kg dress weight	= 30%
LMY% > 56%	= 20 %
Fat Score 6mm – 20 mm	= 10%
MSA Index > 59 – 4-star loin	= 40%

All these results were then combined with a weighting of 30% for feedlot performance and 70% carcass performance. The great merit of this trial was the winning team had to perform across the whole supply chain with production performance measured in the feedlot and quality performance measured at the processor.

Anyone that has been listening to me and my breeding philosophy for any period will know I use the word balance a lot and the importance of getting this right. It’s a word that is bandied about a lot in industry and it’s a constant cause of frustration to me about how often it gets used out of context. Ricky’s win is a perfect example of how a balanced Merino should perform. It is reflected by the fact that in all the different sections of the

competition Ricky’s sheep didn’t win any of them outright. What they did do is placed in the top half a dozen teams in all the areas that contributed to the overall winner. For example, some of the teams that won the feedlot average daily weight gain section in the feedlot were poor in fleece value or MEQ.

What was very interesting over the next couple of days of the Lambex conference was the discussion amongst participants on what for many was a very surprising result – a merino team winning. For the specialist lamb producers, it was along the lines of how in the hell did that happen, or the design of the competition must have been flawed - it wasn’t. Meanwhile the people from the Merino industry were all very happily jumping on the bandwagon with the consensus being how great are merino lambs and none of us should ever be put on a discounted merino grid again. That comment needs to be put into perspective. Hopefully some of the readers old enough to remember the old Valvoline ad for motor oil will also remember the ads catch cry of “Oils ain’t Oils”. This is a great analogy for the situation here and can easily be rewritten as “Merino’s ain’t Merino’s”.

Trigger Vale had a vision over 30 years to breed a Maternal Merino that could put a quality product into the lamb industry while still producing a valuable wool clip. We have put a significant weighting in our breeding objective for early growth and extra muscle. Both traits are actually negatively correlated with MEQ traits like IMF so we have had to do a lot of specific work to identify outlier animals that can break this trend. This has been done in conjunction with Ricky as he hosted our first MLA sponsored Fast track lamb MEQ trial in 2019. All the lambs were killed at JBS in Bordertown with the University of New England meat science team in attendance to gather all the meat samples for IMF and Shear Force lab analysis. These hard to measure phenotypic meat traits were then used in conjunction with extensive genomic DNA generated Australian Sheep Breeding Values to fine tune our on-farm breeding programs for the next few years developing an elite MEQ family of sheep. In 2022 MLA matched dollar for dollar our own capital to produce and kill another crop of lambs from each farm. The Trigger Vale bred lambs were killed at Fletcher

International Abattoir in Dubbo and Ricky’s Mooralla bred lambs were killed at JBS Bordertown in 2023 with the help of the UNE meat science team again.

Hopefully the above highlights the vision, focus and capital we have invested into producing the genetics that have now performed so well in the Lambex trial and there is a lot more to the back story that has generated this outcome. The next challenge is how do we leverage these results into getting industry recognition that “Merino’s ain’t Merino’s” and there is a segment of the Merino’s industry that have been specifically bred to put the highest quality lamb into the marketplace and they should be rewarded accordingly rather than being placed on a discounted Merino grid.

This competition was the first one run in Australia that had Meat Standards Australia {MSA} criteria as part of the judging criteria. The role out of MSA throughout the lamb and mutton industry will result in a transformation in how we are paid for our product. Gundagai Lamb has been leading the way in this area and have been paying for quality on a grid based on carcass weight, LMY, IMF and Animal health. A lot of pressure was placed on TFI International and JBS (two of Australia’s largest processors) during Lambex to lift their game and adopt a similar quality-based payment grid and I predict that within 2-3 years it will become mainstream. This will be great outcome for Trigger Vale clients because as Ricky’s result has highlighted - Trigger Vale genetics produce a superior quality lamb product and in the future a quality-based payment system will hopefully be in place to capture their value.

Photo: Taking Samples at JBS Bordertown



Photo: 9% IMF



Finding the green shoots for the Australian sheep industry

By Angus Gidley-Baird, Senior Animal Proteins Analyst Rabobank

The past 12 months have been pretty trying for many of Australia’s sheep producers, but we believe we are through the hollow at the bottom of the market with the future looking more positive.

While there remains some uncertainty about global economic conditions, we believe the demand outlook is more positive than what we have seen in the past two years. But the bigger impact will come from the supply side of the market. Projections for both the wool and sheepmeat markets indicate there will be a contraction in production in 2024/25.

The Australian Wool Production Forecasting Committee forecast in April has the Australian wool clip dropping 5.8 per cent in 2024/25 to 306mkg after a one per cent drop in the 2023/24 season. This will take Australia’s wool production to the lowest volume since 2020/21 and just over four per cent below the ten year average.

The 2024 volume will be another record year for Australian lamb production which has unfortunately coincided with some weak consumer markets. But the Meat and Livestock Australia February projections proposed a five per cent drop in lamb production in 2025 after an increase of four per cent in 2024. Lamb slaughter over the coming months will be a key indicator for the future production volumes. High sheep slaughter volumes since late 2023 (up 16 per cent for the year to date at the end of July) are expected to have reduced the number of breeding ewes. At the same time, poor seasonal conditions through south eastern and south western Australia are expected to have reduced lamb marking rates and will also potentially delay numbers coming to market.

The contraction in supply of both wool and lamb numbers should provide positive support to prices over the coming year. How much positive upside will be a question for the recovery in consumer markets to answer.

Global economic conditions remain weak and there are also concerns about the outcome of the US election. While we don’t expect the outcome to have a direct impact on wool or sheepmeat markets, the indirect impacts on the US economy, the US exchange rate and any geopolitical implications all have the potential to impact wool and sheepmeat trade.

A drop in domestic retail prices appears to have stimulated domestic consumption. Australian lamb retail prices dropped 15 per cent in 2023 and, at 30 June they remain 11 per cent behind 12 months ago. By our calculations the domestic per capita consumption rose four per cent last year and the quarter two volumes in 2024 are 10 per cent higher than the same period in 2023. While retail prices have started to track up again following the rise in lamb prices, the recent wage data is encouraging for domestic lamb consumption.

Meanwhile, export markets are accommodating the growing volumes of Australian lamb. Exports to the Middle East and the

US are at record levels. But volumes to China are down 12 per cent for the first seven months.

While the global economy has some question marks and economic growth looks to be slow, a global market that holds its own will be a good outcome. Consumers who are willing to continue purchasing at current rates should be enough to at least hold prices if we see the projected reductions in Australia’s production of wool and sheepmeat materialise.

To find out more about other Rabobank research, contact your local Rabobank team or subscribe to **RaboResearch Food & Agribusiness Australia & New Zealand** on your podcast app.

Trigger Vale Wool in Italy

The Italian wool market has always been the home for the highest quality wools which are then made into the very top end of world fashion. I was firstly bemused and then rapt when I received this image from a good friend on mine Richard Carn. Bemused because he sent just the photo initially which had no context. Rapt when I found out he was on a Fox and Lillie wool / holiday tour through Europe and spotted this bale of Trigger Vale wool in a combing mill in northern Italy.

It's certainly a small world but great to see that our wools are being used at the pointy end of world textiles.



Trigger Vale and Education

One of the great things we do on our yearly calendar at Trigger Vale is host numerous student visits from Charles Stuart University. We generally host 4-6 groups a year and we love the interaction and discussions that evolve. The visits cover many topics including genetics, breeding philosophy, farming systems, management techniques, risk mitigation, animal welfare and the broader issue of having a social licence to farm. The interaction is great, and I love it when they question or challenge something that I have said and the discussions that follow. With many of the students coming from an urban or city background with little exposure to the many opportunities and challenges of a rural way of life I feel this time spent on farm and talking to a farmer is invaluable for their education and development. Similarly, I am often amazed and even confronted by some of their views and perception of our sheep and cropping industries.

The last few years we have put our money where are mouth is and sponsored the Charles Stuart Uni team in the Australian Intercollegiate Meat Judging (ICMJ) Association competition. The ICMJ is a non-for-profit organisation that aims to expose



Photo: Charles Sturt ICMJ Team at TV

and encourage young, tertiary students into careers within the Australian red meat industries. The organisation annually holds two tertiary competitions:

- (1) ICMJ Northern Conference at Central Queensland University, Rockhampton QLD
- (2) ICMJ Tertiary Conference at Charles Sturt University, Wagga NSW.

These programs provide opportunities for tertiary students to gain knowledge and passion for the meat and livestock industries, whilst also developing young future professionals for a career in agricultural. Trigger Vale always host the Charles Sturt team on farm before the competition and think its invaluable for the students to get an insight into the Seedstock breeding segment of the red meat supply chain as it is the start of the whole process.

A team from Texas were the overall champions this year but a special congratulations needs to go to good family friend Meelie McCrabb who won the individual Commercial Evaluation section.

White Suffolk News

One of the key components to the continual rate of genetic gain we are achieving in our White Suffolks is our participation in the Superwhites Young sire program. I have been Chairman of Superwhites for a number of years and I was delighted when we organised to meet with the Poll Dorset equivalent group, Meat Elite in a joint conference in Albury in February this year.

It was an amazing couple of days networking with some of the very best terminal ram breeders in the country. The team from Sheep Genetics held a three-hour interactive session with the group with in-depth analysis of how we compare as individual breeders within our own group, within the combined group and when compared to the broader terminal industry. This gave an great insight into how Trigger Vale was travelling when compared against the best in industry highlighting our strengths but more importantly identifying some weaknesses that we need to focus on.

Another session involved a presentation by one of Australia's leading sheep geneticists Daniel Brown from AGBU in Armidale. AGBU is the organisation which runs and constantly upgrades the massive computer program that generates Australian Sheep Breeding Values. The talk focused on the ever-increasing role and importance genomics and DNA testing is having on generating higher accuracy ASBV's. While the importance of all the data

we have always collected on farm like date of birth, birth type, birth weights and body weights remain we now have complexed genomic technology to enhance genetic rates of gain.

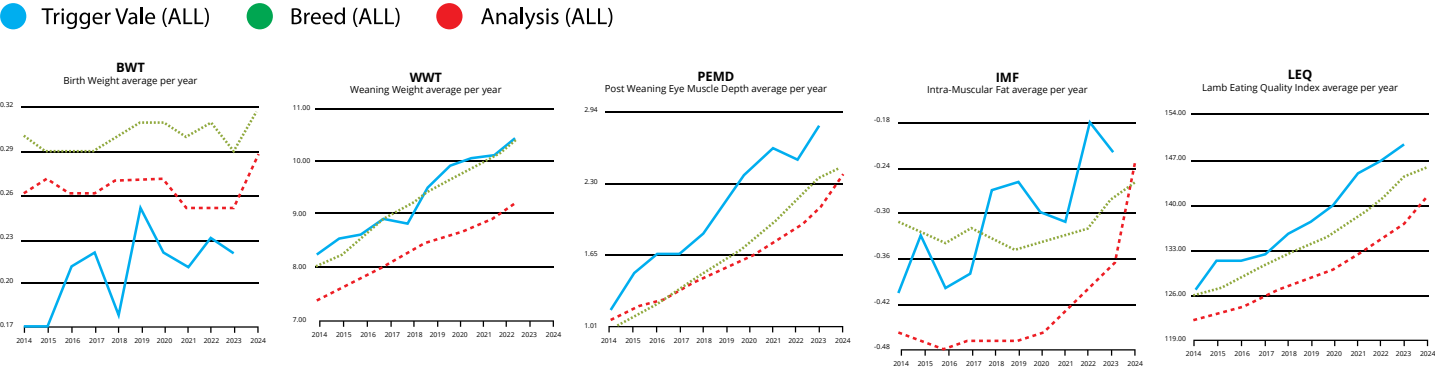
I believe seedstock producers often forget the huge trust and responsibility our clients put in us. Basically, the breeding decisions we make in generating the rams we sell directly impacts on our client's profitability. I take that responsibility very seriously, so the upskilling and learnings gained at this conference will hopefully build on what are already industry leading rams.

While we nominate rams for the Superwhites breeding program each year, given the high genetic merit of the members it is very difficult to have a ram selected in the team. There are 18 studs involved with around 50 rams nominated each year, so we were stoked when Trigger Vale 231147 was selected this year. See his figures in Table 1. Being selected in a Superwhites team means his semen will be allocated in 4-5 other members studs and used in different locations and environment across Australia. This brings great linkage back to our whole White Suffolk flock and greatly improves the accuracy of our ASBV's which is a great outcome.

The 2023 drop rams once again will have the great balance of traits Trigger Vale strives for, moderate birthweight's, above average growth rates with high muscle and MEQ values

TV 231147					PINK - Top 5% Lambplan			
BWT	WWT	PWT	PEMD	PFAT	IMF	SHEARF	TCP	LEQ
0.05	9.52	15.42	4.25	0.58	0.22	-3.15	163.1	167.81

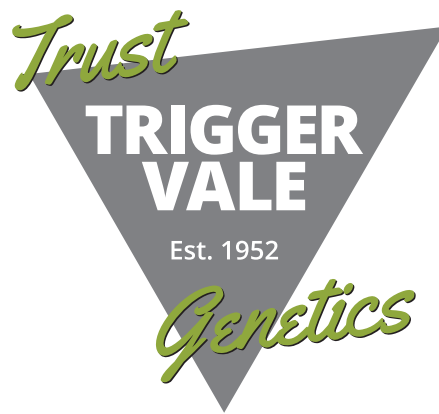
Trigger Vale White Suffolk Genetic Trends:



ON A LIGHTER NOTE

- I spent a lot of time, money and effort childproofing my house... but the kids still get in.
- What is the opposite of a croissant? A happy uncle.
- Why can't a bicycle stand on it's own? It is too tired





Inspection Day

Wednesday 28th August, 2024 10:00am - 4:00pm
"Hour of Power" Presentation 2:00pm
Resilience - You, Your Sheep and Your Farming System
Speakers: Jason Tromphe & Rob Inglis



47th Annual On-Property Auction

At "Valera" Lockhart on Friday 6th September 2024
Inspections 8:30am onwards
Poll Sale commencing at 12:30pm



Rabobank



AuctionsPlus

MN1
Brucellosis
Accredited



230 Poll Merino Rams
6 Stud White Suffolk Rams
94 Specially Selected White Suffolk Rams

Vendors: Andrew & Mandi Bouffler 0427 207 656
Stud Classifier: Michael Elmes 0429 847 552
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

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