Dec 2009

Balmoral Victoria Sire Evaluation Group

Trial News

www.balmoralbreeders.com.au

Summary

- 2010 TRIAL NOW OPEN FOR RAM ENTRIES The registration is on the back page.
- 2009 Progeny Breech Wrinkle and Breech Cover scores p 3.
- Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association News p 4-5
- Managing clipped and unmulsed sheep - article from the Mackinnon Project Newsletter

Our Chairman - Tom Silcock

On behalf of the Committee I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a rewarding New Year.

This will be Tania Rentch's last newsletter and we thank her and David Rendell's support for their involvement.

A very relaxing end of year social day was spent at The Mountain Dam recently with Committee and supporters and their family. It was a great chance thank Tania and Simon for their support. Thanks to all who made the effort to make a great day. Unfortunately we are still looking for a replacement for Tania's position. Please put your thinking caps on.

Marion Gibbins is on the move also. Her & Adrian have bought a home down near Point Lonsdale but Marion has committed to completing all Mokanger data management.

We welcome the new round of trials at Jim Farrans starting with A.I. in early April 2010. You can see from my AMSEA notes, the future National Co-ordination and funding is going through some soul searching, but we are committed to on going trials in our district one way or another. Our aims remain the same; identify rams that will maximise financial returns in a high rainfall area, with high stocking rates.

Both recent drops of progeny on the ground at Mokanger provide some must see results at our next field day in the Autumn.

I thank every one again for their help & support

‘Yiddinga’ Host property 2010-2011

It has been an excellent year for pasture growth, the stock are in good condition going into the summer, unlike last year with the early finish to the season. We have finished our weaning, the lambs are in good condition this year, so should be easier to manage this summer, have been feeding them oats since weaning, even though we imprint feed them on the ewes they still have been slow to get on to grain.

I am planning to mate 8000 ewes next year which will allow plenty of ewes to choose from for the sire evaluation trial, they are in the 18 to 19 micron range if anyone is thinking of entering a ram. Our breeding program has been to reduce micron using a 14% index with 30% weighting for WEC on the Rams selection, while maintaining fleece weight.

We are crutching now and hope to finish by Christmas. Our main shearing is in March so a good time to AI the trial sheep would be between the 6th and 16th of April after our shearing is finished, which fits in with our general lambing.

I hope everyone has an enjoyable Christmas and a happy new year.

Jim Farran

‘Mokanger’ Host property 2008 - 2009

Shane Arnold
“Mokanger”

2008 drop program are currently on paddock cut for silage and are doing very well. 2009 drop were weaned on the 1.12.09 and body weighed on 7.12.09 with a group average of 21.5kg. 2009 drop are now on Lucerne and chicory paddock and receiving some grain and silage. Mokanger has had a very good growing year and look like getting our average rainfall for the first time in many years.

Thank-you to our Sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our sponsors and appreciate their participation.
Please support these businesses.

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Breech Trait Summary – Data NOT corrected for Birth Type or Sex

Sire	No of animals tagged	No of animals assessed	Breech Cover Average	No of animals with each score 1	2	3	4	5	*	Breech Wrinkle Average	No of animals with each score 1	2	3	4	5	*
Connewarran 6042	59	57	2.9	2	10	36	7	2	2	3.1		6	42	8	1	2
Cressbrook 03784	53	51	3.3		5	28	16	2	2	3.0		10	33	6	2	2
GP 706	38	37	2.9	2	11	15	8	1	1	2.4	1	19	17			1
GP 716 OLYMPIC	40	38	2.8	3	10	18	7		2	2.7		15	20	2	1	2
Grindon 50118	50	47	3.8		1	17	21	8	3	3.4		7	19	14	7	3
Kamora Park M10050	21	20	3.2		3	11	6		1	3.0		5	12	2	1	1
Kiaora big Red 58	59	59	2.8	3	15	31	9	1		2.9		14	36	7	2	
Kurra Wirra 268	48	46	3.0	1	10	25	8	2	2	2.9		11	32	1	2	2
Mokanger Blue 8	54	52	3.1	1	9	26	16		2	2.9		10	37	3	2	2
Mokanger Blue 83	40	38	2.9	2	6	23	7		2	2.8		11	23	4		2
Pendarra Red 274	45	43	3.4		5	18	18	2	2	3.0		10	24	7	2	2
The Mt Dam 06NBE018	57	53	3.4		9	18	20	6	4	3.0		14	31	3	5	4
Windarra 040236	32	29	3.2		3	17	8	1	3	3.0		4	21	4		3
Withdrawn	6	6	2.8		1	5				3.7			4		2	
Average	602	576	3.1	14	98	288	151	25	26	3.0	1	136	351	61	27	26

* Animals that were not assessed for breech traits, so have missing score

Your Australian National Merino Sire Evaluation Association Executive Committee

Knox Heggaton	TAS	Chairman	Ben Swain	Executive Officer	
Bill Sandilands	WA	Yardstick	Brett Jones	WA	Badgingarra
Phil Toland	VIC	North East Victoria	Tom Silcock	VIC	Elders Vic.
Jock McLaren	NSW	New England	Graham Peart	NSW	Macquarie
Rick Baldwin	NSW	South West Slopes			
Bill Willis	QLD	Queensland	Rick Keogh	QLD	Longreach
Geoff Lindon	Australian Wool Innovation		Alex Ball	Meat and Livestock Australia	
Andrew Swan	Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit		Allan Casey	Industry & Investment NSW	
Sally Martin	Industry & Investment NSW				

Notes from telephone hook up by Tom Silcock

AWI Funding

Geoff Lindon highlighted that AWI was looking to reduce the contract from the current $170,000 to $50,000. In relation to funding beyond the current contract, Geoff Lindon confirmed that now the levy had been resolved, AWI will be going through a review process to prioritise projects going forward. Geoff Lindon stated that AWI has had discussions with MLA to contribute $50,000 to the current contract to ensure core functions are able to be completed. This would bring the total contract to $100,000. By running down reserves AMSEA could continue.
Geoff Lindon also outlined current discussions in the area of generic market validation and whether sire evaluation will be able to play a key role in market validation. At this stage it is too early to determine whether sire evaluation will be able to play a role in this technology as more work is needed in this area to determine what resources will be required.

Alex Ball confirmed that MLA is offering $50,000 to AMSEA under the current AWI/AMSEA contract for the period to 30 June 2010 to enable activities to continue to operate under current procedures. The conditions of this funding would be:

- That AMSEA continue to provide data for the 2009 drop to Sheep Genetics.
- That AMSEA provide a DNA sample (frozen semen) for all sires in the 2009 drop to MLA (MLA to cover transport costs); and
- That AMSEA not enter into any other DNA/data provision arrangements for current industry sires before 30 June 2010.

Ben Swain confirmed that sites should have semen stored for the 2009 drop.

Alex Ball added that in addition to the funding being offered, MLA would be providing data back to breeders in relation to gene markers as a result of the semen collected which would add further value.

Knox Heggaton asked both Alex Ball and Geoff Lindon what limitations AMSEA had in being involved in future generic validation projects. Alex Ball suggested that the hard, expensive to measure traits such as Number of Lambs Weaned and Staple Strength would be the focus of genomic work and if AMSEA was unable to provide this level of data it would limit the usefulness of the AMSEA data in the future. Alex Ball also saw not providing full pedigree would be seen as a significant limitation.

Geoff Lindon added that the question of how different breeds will be validated and how this will affect AMSEA's role in the process was also unclear.

I asked whether AWI and MLA had an opinion as to whether they will continue to fund AMSEA in the longer term as the Executive needed to be aware of this position in making commercial decisions. Geoff Lindon said in its current form the answer would probably be no but if AMSEA evolves into an organisation that is relevant to the future needs of the industry, this would likely change.

Alex Ball agreed saying that there is public good going forward in relation to the verification of genomic information and to do this, verification resource flocks are needed and AMSEA could evolve into this. In summary, Alex Ball stated that the future structure of AMSEA will need to morph into an organisation that collects full pedigree together with hard and expensive traits to measure.

Ben Swain asked Alex Ball whether link sire funding could be made available for 2010. Alex Ball suggested that this could be possible if MLA were able to have input into link sires to provide linkages with the INF project.

Graham Peart suggested to Geoff Lindon that link sires should not only be funded by MLA, but AWI as well as wool trait R&D was a key part of sire evaluation. Geoff Lindon replied that to do so any proposal would have to add research benefit and not be business as usual.

Allan Casey suggested clarity was needed on what would be required for joinings to make the data useful. Geoff Lindon said this was difficult at this stage as the requirements were still unknown.

There was general consensus that the Pfizer funding proposal was not as beneficial as the MLA offer and less likely to lead to longer term funding partnerships.

It was agreed that AMSEA accept the MLA offer and continue to work with AWI and MLA to gain maximum benefit for AMSEA.

It was agreed that AMSEA seek funding from both AWI and MLA to fund link sires for 2010.

North East Victoria Pilot Evaluating Full Pedigree Effect

Phil Toland summarised the pilot to date. Ben Swain confirmed that work is progressing on resolving whether a change to the requirements is possible if full pedigree and the use of performance tested ewes was implemented.

Andrew Swain said that he could simulate the results to show effect on accuracy, instead of waiting for the actual results to become available.

A field day in early February is proposed to show results of this trial. Full pedigree would reduce the number of ewes needed to be joined.

From The Mackinnon Project Newsletter – September 2009

Managing clipped and unmulesed sheep

John Larsen, Mackinnon Project, University of Melbourne

Some early observations from an AWI-funded trial of clipped and unmulesed lambs, being conducted by the Mackinnon Project, have produced some interesting and challenging results.

Data has been collected on bodyweight, breech soiling and stain at the time of the second summer drench in February, and on the time taken to crutch, weight of crutchings and greasy fleece weights at the first weaner shearing.

The crutching data showed that unmulesed ewe weaners on each farm took an average of 12-18 seconds (30-120%) longer to crutch and had 84-170g (40-140%) more crutchings than the mulesed sheep. Clipped sheep were intermediate between the mulesed and unmulesed groups, taking from 5-7 seconds (10-38%) longer to crutch and having up to 64g (60%) more crutchings than the mulesed sheep.

As expected, breech strike observed to date, sometimes within the claimed period of protection of the IGR products used, has been strongly associated with dag and urine stain.

Design of the study

Three treatment groups ('Mulesed', 'Clipped', 'Not mulesed') have been established in spring 2008-born lambs in 3 self-replacing Merino flocks in Victoria at Nareen (western Vic., Farm 1), Elaine (central Vic., Farm 2) and Woodside (Gippsland, Farm 3). There are around 350 ewe lambs in each group on Farms 1 and 3, and a total of 450 lambs in each group on farm 2.

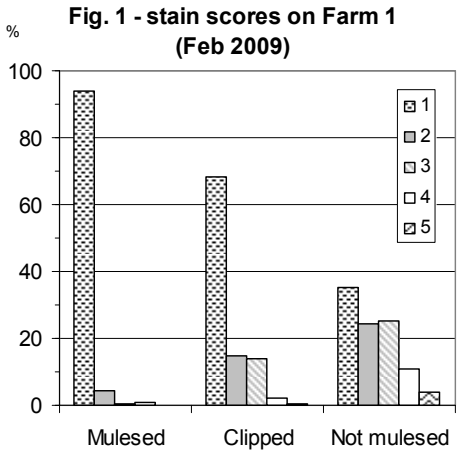
The unmulesed sheep will receive an early season ('strategic') treatment with a long-acting IGR insecticide (CliK™) while the clipped and mulesed groups will only be treated as needed. The first round of early season treatment will occur in spring 2009, and observations on breech strike after this (spring and summer of 2009 and 2010) will provide some critical information from this project.

Some initial results

Bodyweight – The mulesed weaners were from 1-2kg lighter than the unmulesed groups at weaning on 2 of the 3 farms. This has been a consistent observation in a number of studies located in different environments.

Dag – Unmulesed ewe weaners had significantly more dag than both mulesed and clipped ewe weaners on 2 of the 3 farms in February. The average dag scores, on a 0-5 scale, were around 0.5 higher (2.2 vs. 1.6 & 3.1 vs. 2.7). There wasn't much dag on Farm 2, and the average scores were the same between all groups (average 0.8). The proportion of unmulesed weaners with severe dag (a score of 4 or 5) was 14% vs. 8% in mulesed weaners on Farm 1, and 39% vs. 27% on Farm 3.

Stain – Watching the unmulesed weaners leave the yards was a good demonstration of why most producers eventually adopted mulesing in the 1980s. Their average stain score was from 0.5-1.0 higher than mulesed ewe weaners (on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is no stain), with clipped ewes being intermediate between the mulesed and unmulesed groups. The distribution of scores on one farm is shown in Fig 1.



Whilst increased stain will make ewes more susceptible to breech strike, long-term protection can be provided by treating with the insect-growth regulators (IGRs, Clik™ and cyromazine) or ivermectin (Paramax™).

Crutching

On Farm 1, a 'minimal' crutch was performed through a crutching trailer, whereas on Farms 2 and 3 crutching was done over the board with more breech wool removed. For a mulesed ewe weaner with no dag on each of the three farms the average weight of crutchings was 52, 110 and 170 grams, and the average time to crutch was 10.9, 29.1 and 33.5 seconds. The additional time taken to crutch clipped and unmulesed ewe weaners on each Farm is summarised in Table 1. This is an average over all sheep in each treatment group.

The effect of dags on the time to crutch each dag score category on Farm 1 is shown in Fig. 2. Clearly, controlling dags, by selecting against daggy rams and ewes, will be crucial if and when producers stop mulesing. In addition, correct tail length will be an important part of this strategy (see March newsletter).

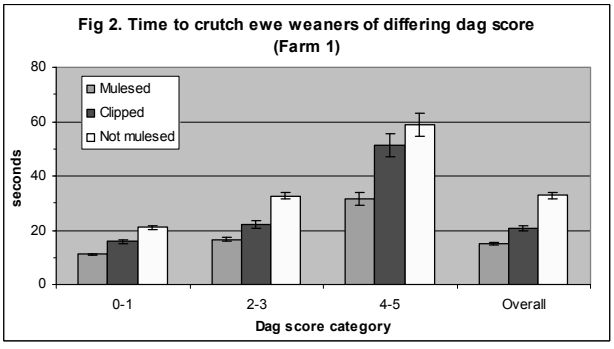


Table 1. Time to crutch ewe weaners that were either clipped or not mulesed, & weight of crutchings, compared with mulesed weaners

Farm	Clipped vs. mulesed		Not mulesed vs. mulesed	
	Time to crutch	Weight of crutchings	Time to crutch	Weight of crutchings
1	+6s (38%)	+38g (38%)	+18s (119%)	+138g (140%)
2	+7s (23%)	+64g (57%)	+12s (40%)	+84g (74%)
3	+5s (10%)	-12g (-3%)	+15s (34%)	+170g (42%)

Breech strike

The observations of most interest will be in spring of 2009 and 2010, when the un-mulesed groups will receive an early season treatment in September or October with dicyclanil (Clik™). The occurrence of breech strike will then be compared between this group and the clipped and mulesed groups, which will only be treated if strike occurs.

All lambs were treated with Clik™ or cyromazine at marking and this kept breech strike to a minimum up to and after weaning. Some sheep were struck within the expected protection period, although most strikes did not progress past the 1st or 2nd larval stages. However, on one farm there was an indication of increased breech strike within the expected protection period, in unmulesed sheep that were very daggy or stained (a dag or stain score of 3 or more).

The groups have been established in the 2009-drop lambs and the observations will be repeated in 2010.

Key points:

Clipped sheep tended to be intermediate between mulesed and un-mulesed weaners in time spent crutching and traits indicating susceptibility to breech strike (dag & stain)

How this translates to protection against breech strike in clipped sheep is not yet clear.

Results from spring of 2009 and 2010 will tell us more.

Ram Registration Form

1. Site Evaluation details for the ram being entered

1a. Location & year being entered Location: ..... Year of drop: .....

1b. Other locations & years the ram has been entered: .....

2. Ram details

2a. Ram's flock and common name: .....

2b. Ram's ear tag or on-farm record number: .....

2c. Ram's year of drop: .....

2d. Ram's 16 digit code: .....

2e. Breed of flock (e.g. Merino or Poll Merino. If other breed give details): .....

2f. Flock Code: .....

2g. Sire of ram (16-digit code): .....

2h. Sire of sire of ram (16-digit code): .....

2i. Is the ram currently alive: ☐ Yes ☐ No

2j. Is semen available for sale: ☐ Yes ☐ No

2k. Has a blood sample been taken for DNA: ☐ Yes ☐ No If No, Why? .....

2l. Ram's wool type: ☐ Ultra/Superfine ☐ Fine/Fine-Medium ☐ Medium/Strong

3. Owner details - Owner and contact for inquiries about the ram, plus owner(s) permission

3a. Owner: .....

3b. Contact: First name: ..... Surname: .....

3c. Address: .....

3d. Town: ..... Postcode : .....

3e. Phone: ..... Mobile: .....

3f. Fax: ..... Email: .....

3g. Does the owner of the ram give permission to enter the ram into this sire evaluation site:

☐ Yes ☐ No Owner signature: ..... Date: .....

3h. Does the owner of the ram give permission to publish the rams results in *Merino Superior Sires*:

☐ Yes ☐ No Owner signature: ..... Date: .....

3i.* Does the owner of the ram give permission to publish the rams results in Sheep Genetics reports:

☐ Yes ☐ No Owner signature: ..... Date: .....

4. Breeder details - only fill in points (4g) to (4i) if the breeders details are the same as the owners details above.

4a. Breeder: .....

4b. Contact: First name: ..... Surname: .....

4c. Address: .....

4d. Town: ..... Postcode : .....

4e. Phone: ..... Mobile: .....

4f. Fax: ..... Email: .....

4g. Does the breeder of the ram give permission to enter the ram into this sire evaluation site:

☐ Yes ☐ No Breeder signature: ..... Date: .....

4h. Does the breeder of the ram give permission to publish the rams results in *Merino Superior Sires* .....

☐ Yes ☐ No Breeder signature: ..... Date: .....

4i.* Does the breeder of the ram give permission to publish the rams results in Sheep Genetics reports:

☐ Yes ☐ No Breeder signature: ..... Date: .....

Note: Sires entered will be included in the AMSEA database and managed by AMSEA.

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5. Signature of entrant

I believe all the above details to be true: ..... Date: .....

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6. Signature of site evaluation committee representative

I have checked all required details are listed: ..... Date: .....

* If you are an existing Sheep Genetics member, your default Sheep Genetics publication settings for your flock code will be used.

Version 2: 1 August, 2009