

# MOUNT RONAN

WHITE SUFFOLKS & MATERNALS

*Specialising in the breeding of elite quality prime rams*



## BACKGROUND TO THE MOUNT RONAN BREEDING PROGRAM



September 2019

ACCREDITED BRUCELLOSIS FREE FLOCK No. OV/AC/044



**A group of Mount Ronan 2019 Spring Sale rams .....  
....world class profit genetics in an athletic package.**

***"The profitability of our producers' prime lamb enterprises is the key to the future of Mount Ronan."***



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# MOUNT RONAN GENETICS.....

## .....DRIVING PROFIT !!!



“After trialling many industry leading ASBV maternals, Mount Ronan rose to the top as a result of many generations focussed on breeding resilience, mothering ability and feed efficiency expressed as performance under high stocking - our principle profit driver.”

*Michael Cameron, “Cherylton Farms” Kojonup WA, 2018*

“My initial concern was that the progeny of the Maternals would not compare with my Poll Dorsets for growth and carcase yield. I have discovered that these rams produce lambs with wonderful growth and high carcase yield, and the rams are a lot more vigorous and athletic than Poll Dorsets.

**223 lambs sired by Mount Ronan Maternals sold end July at Wagga Livestock Exchange for \$287.20 per head.** Estimated live weight 75-76 kg.”

(A later draft of 232 lambs from the same drop sold for more than \$300 per head)

*Owen Blake, “Tandari Pastoral” Harefield NSW, 2018*

Freshly weaned ewe lambs at “Hills Park”, 2017.



“We have been using Mount Ronan genetics for 6 years. This year is really showing us the extreme resilience of the Mount Ronan bloodline.

**The entire mature ewe flock pregnancy scanned at 204.1% this year (with no drug assistance).**

We know these ewes will deliver us excellent lamb survival as they have always done for us before.

The extreme muscling of the lambs give us a sought after carcase at supermarket weights and remarkable yields at export size. Some of the growth rates we have observed in the feedlot have been phenomenal.

Mount Ronan delivers us the complete genetic production package.”

*Andrew Hunter, “Hills Park” Yerong Creek NSW, 2018*

# WELCOME TO MOUNT RONAN.....

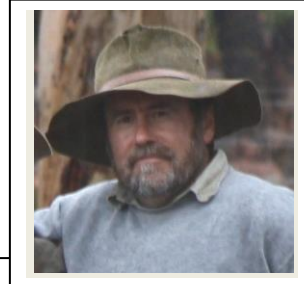
Joanne and I are especially proud of the quality of the rams that we are presenting at auction this year. We are continuing to receive wonderful feedback from producers here in W.A. and also in New South Wales, where conditions have been particularly challenging.

We have been identifying and maximally utilising those outstanding high-production ewes within our breeding program for the last 51 year. Consequently, we are convinced that these rams will uphold the Mount Ronan tradition of resilience, robustness, and outstanding prime lamb production performance.

**For more than half a century, we have been actively searching for tough sheep which produce wonderful results over a long lifetime. We expect these rams to enjoy a long and productive working life.**

We continue to seek feedback on your investments, and are keen to visit you on your farm if possible.

Joanne and I hope that you successfully purchase your ram preferences, and we will follow up with after-sales service as usual. Good luck.



## What is the Mount Ronan breeding program all about?

The Mount Ronan breeding program is aimed “fairly and squarely” at maximising producers’ lamb enterprise profitability. The difference between our breeding program and most others is that we have always placed a much greater breeding emphasis on ewes than rams. I truly believe that the greatest rate of genetic gain is made by a detailed study and observation of female type and performance. This view is supported by investigation into cellular physiology at a mitochondrial level. The mitochondria are the power stations of the living cells.

The identification of those truly-proven elite ewes in our flock which possess outstanding production genes is our focus. **The two most profound ewes we have identified in our program have been MOUNT RONAN 070793 and MOUNT RONAN 130211.** Many grandsons of these ewes appear in this year’s catalogue.

We select sons of these ewes, and others, to spread their genes widely throughout the flock, and we also introduce new genetics via these ewes. If they are artificially inseminated to new-blood rams and the progeny are less than outstanding performers, then we know that those rams are simply not good enough for our purposes.

The use of outside genetics is essential for genetic diversity, and also helps with genetic linkages on Lambplan and greater accuracy of ASBVs.

We used 6 ram lambs in the sire team for the 2019 crop of lambs with consistently good results. We have retained the majority of these rams for the time being while we await ongoing Lambplan feedback.

## Insurance Disclaimer

**Stud Animals are not covered by commercial livestock insurance.**

Insurance risk of stud animals sold at auction transfers to the purchaser at the fall of the hammer, including animals remaining on the vendor’s property.

Purchasers therefore are advised to insure their animals at the completion of the sale.



# MOUNT RONAN GENETICS IN ACTION



Some of Andrew and Jane Hunter's Mount Ronan Maternal bloodline ewes and lambs at marking time. Marking percentage of this mob of ewes was 219%.

"Hills Park", Yerong Creek NSW, 14 September 2018.



Magnificent prime lambs, sired by Mount Ronan White Suffolk rams, and out of Mount Ronan Maternal bloodline ewes.

Tony and Charlotte Fisher, "Eulo Grazing" Kojonup, October 2017.

**Kill results:** 198 lambs (pictured above) sent to V & V Walsh in early October 2017.

Average carcase weight: 22.87kg

Price/kg: \$5.47

Average price/head: \$125+\$5 skins = \$130



## **THIS YEAR'S SALE OFFERING – September 2019**

The 2019 season broke on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, and pasture growth rate was reduced by the colder weather. The sale rams were receiving a trail feed of Milne pellets almost daily up until about the end of June.

From around the beginning of July the rams grew out on pasture only, and have been non-supplemented since then. They have had access to minerals, however, and will receive a few rolls of oaten hay in the last week of September to "firm them up" for the sale.

**We don't buy sheep, or show sheep and all new genetics comes in the form of frozen semen. Mount Ronan is operated as a quarantine property, and as a result, there has never been a positive test for brucellosis. We haven't needed to dip sheep for lice for over 30 years.**

Our flock is accredited Brucellosis Free (OVAC 44) and all rams have received Glanvac B12 3in1, Eryvac, and Scabby Mouth vaccinations. In addition, the rams have been vaccinated for OJD, to satisfy the biosecurity demands of certain clients, which accounts for lumps on some of the rams' necks. Mount Ronan sheep are guaranteed to be free of lice when they leave our property.

### **Improving wool quality**

There are 12 rams included in the Maternal catalogue which possess 50% Merino genetics. They LAMBPLAN scanned extremely well and will develop better ASBV accuracies over time through improving genetic linkage within the Maternal flock.

### **Emphasis on exceptional dam efficiency genetics**

Naturally we have continued our objective of identifying and best utilising those truly outstanding ewes which maximise efficiency and profitability in a commercial prime lamb enterprise.

There are grandsons of elite flush ewes MOUNT RONAN 070793 and MOUNT RONAN 130211 included in the catalogue.

Without a moment's hesitation, we used three ET sons of MOUNT RONAN 070793 for the 2018 lambing, despite the fact that they were not necessarily in the top index bracket in their contemporary group. Being the progeny of an 11 year old ewe and a 10 year old ram, their ASBV's and indices were disadvantaged by the age of their parents. However, the genetic value of their progeny to our breeding program is unparalleled and we expect their ASBV's on LAMBPLAN will increase as they produce more progeny in the database.



The truly extraordinary rising 11 year old White Suffolk flush ewe, Mount Ronan 070793.

This ewe produced 9 marked ET lambs in 2017 by the outstanding, aged, and exceptionally well proven sire Ashmore 080179.

Progeny of her 3 ET sons from this flush are included in this catalogue.

**This ewe is represented by grandsons in LOTS 6, 32, 40, 51, 77, 82, 86, 91, 95, 99, 103, 105, 107, 110, 111, 117, 137, 138, 142, 146, 147, and 152.**

Pictured with her backup lamb in 2018 after the ET program (scanned twins, but one was reabsorbed). The ewe has since died.



Outstanding White Suffolk flush ewe, MOUNT RONAN 130211.

**This flush ewe is represented by grandsons in this catalogue in LOTS 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 39, 40, 42, 43, 47, 50, 53, 57, 58, 61, 62, 67, 68, 70, 79 and 133.**

## **Long history of production genetics**

My concept of the ideal meat sheep has not changed over the last 51 years. The heavily-muscled, fast-growing, medium-legged animal with smooth shoulders, a long deep barrel, width across the loins and area in the hind quarters, has always been the Mount Ronan type. Coupled with this is selection for hardiness and mothering ability .... females which lamb easily and grow lambs quickly..... females which can count to at least three and nourish multiple offspring.

The transition from a breeding program producing specialist terminal/meat genetics to one including specialist maternal/mothering genetics has been a very simple one for Mount Ronan. All those decades of selection for mothering ability, temperament and maternal performance has resulted in terminal ewes which are exceptional maternals as well.

When the dedicated Maternal program was initiated in 2003, we introduced the best available maternal genetics from Australia and New Zealand. We found some outstanding individual sheep, but generally a lot of the introduced stock was weeded out pretty quickly. They simply "lacked grunt", and essentially all of them were deficient mothers compared to our home-bred ewes.

It was the infusion of the hardy, high-performance Mount Ronan White Suffolk genetics which, when incorporated into the foundation stock, had the greatest impact on production. Most Mount Ronan Maternals have at least 50% Mount Ronan White Suffolk genetics in their makeup.

We have selectively introduced New Zealand maternal genetics into our program over more recent years but have found them to be lacking in grunt generally. After a couple of "run throughs" of the White Suffolk flock, they begin to harden up constitutionally.

**The 'grunt gene' remains King at Mount Ronan !!.....  
.....that's the Mount Ronan trademark.**

The type of sheep we are breeding now are the type of sheep we have always produced..... it's just that we are continuing to identify those truly outstanding animals which provide the extra genetic boost in performance with consequent higher levels of profitability per hectare.

Our identification and utilisation of those outstandingly efficient females will continue. We have now developed the measurement tools to enable us to identify them more easily. We will continue to embryo flush the proven elite ewes and concentrate on breeding from their top sons and daughters.

The hardy Mount Ronan White Suffolk genetics powers our Maternal program. These genetics go back directly to the outstanding Suffolk flock I founded in 1969.



2006 drop White Suffolk lambs at Mount Ronan. Muscular, growthy, high-yielding genetics have always been the focus over the decades.

## **Breeding for enhanced worm resistance**

Worm resistance is highly heritable. We have run our flock at Mount Ronan under hard commercial conditions for over 50 years, and we have an exceptionally resilient sheep genotype. Our genetics are performing beyond industry expectations in higher rainfall environments in Western Australia and in the Eastern States.

We are using high worm resistant sires by preference, and have been DNA testing our new young sires for a range of genetic traits, including resistance to worms. The on-farm testing confirms that our sheep are genetically able to perform well in wormy environments.

However, over the next couple of years, information available to producers on worm resistance will be much more readily available in the catalogue.



Group of 2019 sale rams.  
23 September 2019.

# WHITE SUFFOLK PROGRAM STILL TOP SHELF

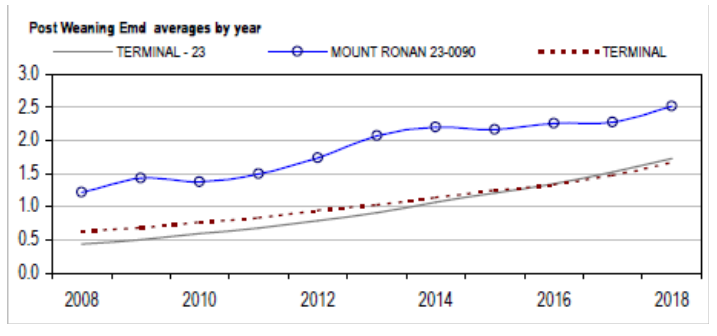
The table below shows the progress of Mount Ronan terminal flock ASBVs in the last decade, compared with the average of all LAMBPLAN (SGA) measured White Suffolk flocks in Australia (Terminal 23).

There is an immense difference between the average muscle ASBV (PEMD) of the Mount Ronan White Suffolk flock and that of the average White Suffolk flock in Australia.

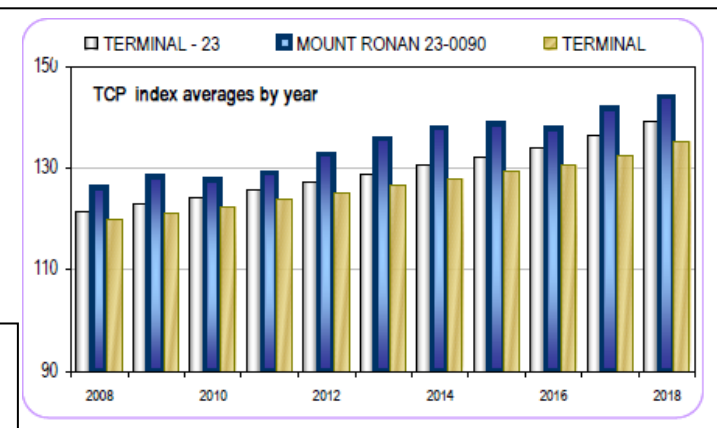
Mount Ronan White Suffolk sheep have always been far more muscular than the average White Suffolk sheep on LAMBPLAN in Australia, and the flock has always possessed higher than average growth-rate genetics.

As a result of these factors, and because Mount Ronan birth weight genetics are around average, lambs sired by Mount Ronan rams are generally born easily and grow muscle mass very quickly. This greatly reduces time-to-slaughter and results in increased carcase yield.

The average PFAT ASBV for the Mount Ronan White Suffolk flock is ideal to cater for matings with Merino or Maternal ewes.



Above: Comparison between the average eye muscle depth of the White Suffolk flock on LAMBPLAN and the average eye muscle depth of the MOUNT RONAN White Suffolk flock on LAMBPLAN.



Above: Comparison of MOUNT RONAN TCP Index with the White Suffolk LAMBPLAN tested breed average.

TERMINAL - 23							
	Bwt	Wwt	Pwwt	Pfat	Pemd	TCP	LEQ
2009	0.28	6.50	10.12	-0.56	0.50	122.9	120.6
2010	0.29	6.87	10.67	-0.58	0.60	124.3	121.5
2011	0.30	7.14	11.12	-0.56	0.68	125.7	122.6
2012	0.31	7.47	11.59	-0.55	0.79	127.1	123.6
2013	0.31	7.82	12.16	-0.54	0.91	128.9	125.1
2014	0.32	8.17	12.69	-0.53	1.07	130.8	126.7
2015	0.31	8.46	13.15	-0.50	1.21	132.2	127.9
2016	0.31	8.77	13.67	-0.47	1.35	134.0	129.5
2017	0.32	9.15	14.29	-0.43	1.52	136.4	131.9
2018	0.33	9.51	14.88	-0.38	1.72	139.0	134.3

MOUNT RONAN 23-0090							
	Bwt	Wwt	Pwwt	Pfat	Pemd	TCP	LEQ
2009	0.22	6.93	10.79	-0.77	1.43	128.2	122.0
2010	0.24	6.98	10.77	-0.72	1.37	127.7	122.3
2011	0.29	7.31	11.29	-0.57	1.50	129.1	124.5
2012	0.22	7.57	11.91	-0.52	1.74	132.7	127.9
2013	0.27	7.72	12.10	-0.39	2.07	135.7	131.6
2014	0.28	8.18	12.72	-0.42	2.21	138.0	134.0
2015	0.33	8.80	13.38	-0.43	2.17	138.7	134.4
2016	0.26	8.59	13.36	-0.24	2.26	137.9	133.8
2017	0.33	9.28	14.31	-0.23	2.28	141.8	138.3
2018	0.30	9.33	14.54	-0.21	2.52	144.0	140.3

Using the power of Mount Ronan genetics will put more money in your wallet ...

**The accuracies of the ASBVs are extremely high because Mount Ronan has measured more sheep on LAMBPLAN than most other stud flocks in Australia.....and**

**The ASBV's of the Mount Ronan White Suffolk flock are impressive compared to the average ASBVs of all the White Suffolk flocks that are recorded on LAMBPLAN, particularly because the ASBV lines are so well balanced.**

	BWT	WWT	PWWT	PFAT	PEMD	TCP	LEQ
Mount Ronan average	0.30	9.33	14.54	-0.21	2.52	144.0	140.3
White Suffolk average	0.33	9.51	14.88	-0.38	1.72	139.0	134.3



# **SO WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR MATERNALS AND OUR WHITE SUFFOLK SHEEP?**

The breeding objectives for our White Suffolks and Maternals are heading in the same direction really. The two "types" of sheep we are producing are becoming pretty interchangeable and that is a great advantage for us as well as for our producers. We have significantly increased the diversity of the gene pool, improved type stabilisation and created significant linkages between the Terminal and Maternal datasets on Lambplan. This will improve ASBV accuracies over time.

Perhaps the main differences between the two breeding programs at the moment is that we are concentrating on muscling up the Maternals and adding more 'grunt' genes, plus a bit more fat and a bit more fertility. We have been shifting our focus towards higher early growth over the last few years in both programs and we have also raised genetic fat levels in the White Suffolk flock to complement the 100-day growth focus.

**Whether the ewe lambs are from Mount Ronan White Suffolk or Mount Ronan Maternal rams, they are ideally suited for use in a self-replacing lamb breeding flock.....so start collecting them immediately!!!**

Our recent, critical innovation, as I mentioned before, is the identification of the most genetically efficient ewes in both flocks and our greatest genetic gains will result from better use of these outstanding sheep.



## **NEW LAMBPLAN INDICES**

For our White Suffolk catalogue we are listing the new **Terminal Carcase Production (TCP)** and **Eating Quality (EQ)** index for each ram.

The **TCP** index is for a prime lamb production system where terminal sires are joined to ewes of a Merino/maternal breed or cross. The TCP index focuses on increasing weight and muscle while reducing carcase fat.

These are changes which contribute to higher lean meat yield. TCP also has emphasis on modest improvements in eating quality.

Typical trait changes for the TCP index include:

- increasing post weaning weight
- increasing carcase eye muscle depth
- decreasing carcase fat depth
- increasing dressing percentage
- increasing lean meat yield
- slightly improving eating quality.

Sheep with better eating quality will have higher ASBVs for intramuscular fat (more marbling) and lower ASBVs for shear force (better tenderness).

The **EQ** index is for a prime lamb operation where terminal sires are joined to ewes of a Merino/maternal breed or cross, and where producers are interested in improving the eating quality of their lambs to a greater degree than is possible with the TCP index. Because of the added emphasis on eating quality, there is less emphasis on growth and carcase traits, although they will still improve.

Typical trait changes for the EQ index include:

- increasing post weaning weight
- increasing eye muscle depth
- maintaining/small reduction in carcase fat
- increasing dressing percentage
- increasing lean meat yield
- large improvement in eating quality.

Sheep with better eating quality will have higher ASBVs for intramuscular fat (more marbling) and lower ASBVs for shear force (better tenderness).

### **INTRAMUSCULAR FAT (IMF) ASBV**

This is a measure of the chemical fat percentage in the loin muscle of a lamb and is often referred to as marbling. IMF has been shown to have a significant impact on the flavour, juiciness, tenderness and overall likeability of lamb.

Rams with more positive Intramuscular Fat (IMF) ASBVs produce progeny with higher levels of intramuscular fat.

### **SHEAR FORCE FIVE DAYS (SHRF5) ASBV**

Shear force is a measure of the force or energy required to cut through the loin muscle of lamb after 5 days of ageing. The ASBV is reported in deviations of kilograms of force.

Rams with more negative SHRF5 ASBVs produce lambs with more tender meat.

For our Maternal catalogue, we prefer the **Maternal Carcase Plus** index (**MCP+**), as we believe it will generate a more profitable self-replacing lamb production system for producers. The **MCP+** index rewards a capped adult weight, increased early growth rate, increased eye muscle depth, better worm resistance and improving fertility. It only slightly rewards increasing clean fleece weight.

When selecting rams for breeding programs, buyers need to pay special attention to the ASBV's in order to choose the most appropriate ram for their individual enterprise. Indices are simply a guide for selection.

### **ADULT WEIGHT (AWT) ASBV**

This year we are including the adult weight ASBV (AWT) in the catalogue, because we have been weighing our sheep at 12 months of age for a few years now. We are selecting against sheep which have a high adult weight ASBV.

We do not want to breed sheep which have a genetically large adult size as these types of sheep require much more feed and are much less efficient from a profitability perspective.

### **NUMBER of LAMBS WEANED (NLW) ASBV**

This ASBV is expressed as a percentage. (NLW%) Rams with a more positive NLW% ASBV will generally sire daughters that wean a higher percentage of lambs. The accuracy of NLW% is not as high as other traits at this stage, and heritability is low, so producers should still use it as a guide only.

## **LAMBPLAN'S TRAIT LEADERS**

Many of our sale rams are trait leaders. In other words, they are in the top 10% of the LAMBPLAN database for growth, leanness, muscling, or a combination of these traits. They are in the top 10% of all the rams of all breeds measured in the LAMBPLAN program in 2018 in Australia and New Zealand.

**Trait leaders are noted in the comments for each ram and boxes are shaded to make them more visible.**

## DAM MOTHERING SCORE

When the ewes are lambing at Mount Ronan, we birth weigh the lambs, tag them and record their pedigree information. Any positive or negative observations are recorded, and each ewe is given a mothering score.

This score is derived from a combination of characteristics. Lamb awareness, especially with multiples, quietness, and lack of concern for human intervention help derive the score.

All ewes are scored the same way, and the White Suffolk and Maternal ewes are run together in the same flocks. Consequently the mothering scores for dams of White Suffolk rams can be directly compared with those for Maternal rams..... unlike all the ASBVs.

An **MS10** ewe will stand next to you when you weigh and tag the lambs. She may sniff you and the lambs and even take time out to nip a bit of pasture while she waits for you to finish weighing and tagging the lambs. She is quite relaxed, but totally aware of the lambs at the same time.

An **MS9** ewe is pretty relaxed about the whole procedure, but only approaches to a distance of about one to three metres. She is completely aware of the lambs and returns immediately after you back away.

An **MS8** ewe walks back and forwards, or stands more than three metres away. She returns immediately when you back away, and is totally lamb aware during the whole procedure.

An **MS7** ewe may circle five to fifteen metres away from you, and is less lamb aware. She may go looking for her lambs near another ewe, but will return immediately once she has "regained her bearings". She will re-mother the lambs immediately.

**MS7** is the lowest scoring ewe we consider keeping in our flock, though she will perform extremely well in all commercial prime lamb operations. We don't find many ewes with score seven characteristics any more, even in the ewe lamb flock.

**Note:** If ewes have freshly lambed, they will tend to score higher because they are in a more protective mode. As time after lambing increases they will score lower, as they realise that the lambs are ready to move away with them from the birth site.

Each year a ewe's score may change slightly depending on circumstances.

**But generally, an outstanding mother is always an outstanding mother.**



An **MS10** ewe at lamb tagging time, 2013.  
This ewe produced natural triplets in 2014.

One-year-old ewe lambs with twin newborns at Mount Ronan. World class mothering genetics in action.  
(26 August 2014)



## MATING EWE LAMBS

Historically, our White Suffolk and Maternal rams have demonstrated easy birthing in ewe lamb flocks. However, we have provided recommendations in the catalogue for the White Suffolk rams because some introduced genetics may not be ideal for mating with ewe lambs.

We believe that virtually all of the Maternal rams are suitable for mating with ewe lambs. However, we have also provided recommendations for them in case producers have reservations about the size and lambing ability of their ewe lambs.

**Note: White Suffolk and Maternal birthweight ASBVs cannot be directly compared.**

# **DAM EFFICIENCY INDEX**

**We have observed an improvement in ewe efficiency within the flock over the last couple of years and attribute it to the continued identification of those ewes with outstanding commercial performance, and the maximal utilisation of their sons in the breeding program.**

We are working to generate individual standard reference weights (SRWs) for our ewes, which is an estimate of their live weight at condition score 3. We aim to use SRW in the calculation of ewe efficiency, rather than joining weight, to remove the penalty towards ewes that are heavier because they are in better condition at joining.

At this stage, we do not have an accurate SRW for every ewe in our flock. Therefore, the ewe efficiency indices reported in the catalogue are based on the ewes' joining weights.

However, this year, the ewe efficiency indices reported are not only for the 2019 lambing, but an average of all lambings from 2013-2019. This provides a much stronger indication of the ewes' lifetime performances, and better identification of the elite ewes.

The ewe efficiency index reported in this catalogue is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{average kg lamb weaned at 100 days}}{\text{average ewe joining weight}}$$

A part of the Ewe Efficiency Index can be attributed to the performance of the sire, as the lamb's growth etc are a combination of the sire and the dam. However, in the future we expect to be able to isolate the genetics of ewe efficiency in the same way that any other attribute is assessed via the LAMBPLAN program.

## **SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT THIS RATING:**

- Triplet-bearing ewes will score higher if they have the ability to raise all their lambs and grow them well in the first 100 days after lambing
- Twin bearers can wean 100% of their mating weight in 100 days if they are very efficient performers
- Single bearers will usually be unable to produce 100% of their own mating weight of lamb in 100 days. To do so would be a truly amazing performance
- Spring lambers often score lower because they have a shorter period on green feed. Despite lambing later, however, some ewe lambs may have a very high efficiency because of their immature body weight at the time of mating. Old ewes are also penalised because their production efficiency reduces with age.
- We are searching for ewes with a genetically reduced mating weight that have the ability to pump out maximum kilograms in the first 100 days after lambing. We are establishing the "sweet spot" for ideal mating weight genetics. This ongoing research in the Mount Ronan breeding program will deliver us valuable SRW (Standard Reference Weight) information
- **Our ewe efficiency research will eventually result in the provision of a very accurate Ewe Efficiency Index which will enable professional lamb producers to really focus on the selection of outstanding profit-maximising genetics**



Two photos of a ewe lamb at Mount Ronan, with her twin offspring.  
23 September 2019



# **NEW INITIATIVES IN 2019**

## **FLEECE MEASUREMENT and INCLUSION OF SELECTED MERINO GENETICS**

We are continuing to wool test our Maternal sheep, employing the services of The Micron Man, and for the 2018 drop we selectively mated 60 ewes to two, highly accurate, wool and carcase sires.

Four years of wool testing of our Maternal sheep has demonstrated that they are up to 4 microns finer than most other composite maternal types. We wish to maintain this advantage, and because of the muscularity and resilience of our sheep genotype, we have selectively mated the above Maternal ewes by artificial insemination to two specially selected Merino sires which have been well evaluated on MerinoSelect (LAMBPLAN for Merinos).

There are 12 rams included in the Maternal catalogue this year which possess 50% Merino genetics. They LAMBPLAN scanned extremely well and will develop better ASBV accuracies over time through improving genetic linkage within our Maternal flock and between others.

We have been very impressed with the quality of the first generation offspring. Two of these young rams were chosen to mate selected Maternal ewes for the 2019 lambing and the early results are very positive. Some of the resulting ram lambs will be offered at our Summer Sale at the end of January 2020.

The MCP+ index caters for wool attributes, so the incorporation of Merino genetics into part of the Maternal flock will not have a detrimental effect on data quality relating to carcase characteristics and we are confident that we can maintain the commercial prime lamb performance of the young sheep we are offering.

The price advantage achieved by restricting fibre micron is obvious, especially in times of higher wool prices.

Our main emphasis, however, continues to be on the provision of high, early-growth genetics for maximum prime lamb profitability. Modern Mount Ronan White Suffolk and Maternal sheep are the result of selection for constitutional strength, muscling, lambing ease, mothering ability, and high-profit lamb production over the past 51 years.

## **MURDOCH UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROJECT**

Mount Ronan is involved in a project which is investigating embryo loss in young ewes and ewe lambs between the time of pregnancy scanning and lamb birth.

The research team have been regularly collecting blood samples and measuring body weight, condition score and pregnancy status. Dead lambs have been collected for autopsy, and full pedigrees, birth weights etc have been recorded.

Mount Ronan contributed 203 ewe lambs to the project, which also involved other breeding flocks around Australia. The Murdoch project will be continued for the next 3 years.



Murdoch research team in action.



### **Please note:**

Mount Ronan stipulates that all rams which are to be registered and transferred into stud flocks will require a total payment of \$2500 (excluding GST).

If rams are purchased at the auction for less than \$2500 and the buyer wishes to have the rams transferred and registered for stud use, then the purchaser will be required to make up the difference between the purchased price and \$2500 (plus GST) before the transfer and registration can take place.



## Understanding LAMBPLAN ASBVs

Rams with lower ASBVs for birth weight (BWT) produce lambs with lower birth weight. Both low (lamb survival) and high (lambing difficulties) birth weights should be avoided.

Rams with more positive ASBVs for post weaning weight (PWT) produce lambs that grow quicker and reach target weights in a shorter time. This ram will produce lambs that are, on average, 3kg heavier at post weaning age (7.5 months) than a ram with an ASBV of 0.

Worm egg count (WEC) ASBVs estimate an animal's genetic potential for worm burdens. Lower WEC ASBVs are desirable. This ram will, on average, sire progeny that will have 5% fewer eggs/gram than a ram with an ASBV of 0.

Trait	BWT (kg)	WWT (kg)	PWT (kg)	PFAT (mm)	PEMD (mm)	WEC (%)	INDEX
ASBV	0.3	4	6.0	-1.5	1.0	-10	150
Acc	43	63	71	59	69	37	

Rams with a more positive ASBV for weaning weight (WWT) will, on average, produce lambs that grow quicker to weaning. This ram will produce lambs that are 2kg heavier than a ram with a 0 ASBV for WWT.

Rams with a more negative ASBV for post weaning fat (PFAT) will produce lambs that are leaner, at the same weight. This ram will produce lambs that are, on average, 0.75mm leaner at the GR site when compared to a ram with a FAT ASBV of 0.

Rams with more positive ASBVs for post weaning eye muscle depth (PEMD) produce lambs that have more muscle, independent of weight, and a higher lean meat yield. This ram will produce lambs that have, on average, a 0.5mm deeper eye muscle than a ram with a 0 EMD ASBV.

An index is a guide to the value of a ram for a particular market. Rams with higher indexes will produce lambs that are more suited to that particular market target. It is important to understand what market the index applies to before using an index.

• An ASBV of 0 is the average of the 1990 drop.

• Note: A useful rule of thumb for converting ram ASBVs into lamb production differences is to simply halve the ASBV (as rams contribute half the genetics of the lamb).

• Accuracy - published as a percentage, is a reflection of the amount of effective information that is available to calculate the ASBV. All ASBVs are now published with accuracies. The higher the percentage, the closer the ASBV is to the true breeding value of the animal. Breeding values without accuracies are Flock Breeding Values (FBVs) and can only be compared within the flock.

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