

*Trust*

**TRIGGER  
VALE**

Est. 1952

*Genetics*

## 2022 Newsletter

**Welcome** . . . The team at Trigger Vale are very excited as we approach the 2022 ram selling season. With Covid restrictions and protocols currently all in the past it will be great to welcome both new and old clients to our 45th Annual On-Property Sale on Friday 2nd September. While Covid has obviously had a lot of negatives in our lives there has been some positive's going forward with regards to our ram sale. The two initiatives, using Auctions Plus and having a ram sale team open/ inspection day, were introduced so we could operate our sale with Covid restrictions will remain moving forward. Feedback from clients particularly from interstate or with another commitment 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 the entire Merino sale team and a selection of the White Suffolks at our Inspection/ Open day on Wednesday 24th August. 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 could bring to their own enterprises.

To bring increased value for clients on the day we will also be holding a short hour of informative presentations. This year the theme is focused on the very important subject of the future of mulesing and how to progress to a genetic mules free merino. It's my view it's only a matter of "when" not "if" mulesing will be banned as a practice to combat breech fly strike. I have recently heard that the Animal Justice Party is preparing to resubmit legislation into the NSW Parliament to ban mulesing by 2030. It's fantastic that leading sheep geneticist and founder of NeXtgen Mark Ferguson will be speaking about the genetic path and benefits of a mules free Merino. A representative from Elders will be talking about the substantial premiums which can be obtained for mules free wool through market assurance schemes like RWS and Andrew will speak briefly about Trigger Vales 20-year journey to becoming a leading industry seedstock source of Merino mules free genetics.

What's exciting about the 2022 ram selling season for Trigger Vale are the quality of the rams themselves. 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 700 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 first sons of Trigger Vale Sires 190034,190039 and game changer 190760 will be available this year.

Tom Weich from South Australia has joined the Trigger Vale team this year. Tom has spent the past few years working at well known South Australian stud " Greenfields" and its envisaged that his role at Trigger Vale will develop into a senior operational manager role. Tom has a great eye for a good sheep and we encourage clients to meet him at our inspection or auction day.

This year we will be increasing auction sale numbers in both breeds to cover demand and keep averages at realistic levels. There will be 230 Poll merino and 100 White Suffolk available.

A light luncheon and refreshments will be supplied on both our sale day and inspection day.

Mandi and I hope all readers are having a great season as we navigate our way through high input and volatile commodity prices in 2022 and look forward to catching up in person soon.



[www.triggervalesheepstuds.com.au](http://www.triggervalesheepstuds.com.au)

Andrew Bouffler (02) 6920 7656

# A 8-year Breeding Cycle?

Twenty-five years ago, when I decided that for the Merino to survive and prosper economically, she needed to evolve into a more Maternal multipurpose animal it was very difficult to find animals that had the traits I was seeking other than for wool. Fortunately, the sheep type I inherited from my father was a plain bodied polled meat focused type so when I went searching for traits such as growth, fat, muscle and breech wrinkle I measured and found more of these traits in house than in the broader industry. Very few other studs were even scanning for fat and muscle depth so it certainly wasn't like today when you get on the sheep genetics website and bring up a big list of options.

As a result, our genetic gain in these traits was relatively slow as we had to measure our flock and find the naturally occurring outliers and breed from them. For over a decade we made incremental progress in these important traits, but it wasn't until our 2011 drop of lambs that things started to get really exciting. That year we bred three game changing sires that were unrelated, strong in these newer traits we were chasing and had their own individual strengths. TV 110744 had a great carcass, quality wool and was extreme for fertility. TV 110511 had high fat and muscle that expressed themselves with a cracking carcass and TV 110839 had good fat and muscle but with a soft handling quality wool. The fact that they were unrelated, all had significantly higher growth, fat and muscle than we had had before, and all brought individual traits that we were seeking resulted in a significant increase in the rate of genetic gain as we targeted our unique breeding objective.

Over the next decade due largely to those three rams and some strategic selection of some outside industry genetics (particularly Moojepin in WA) we really started to identify and select for these non-wool specific traits and started to make very strong genetic gains. While we have bred many excellent sires that have had massive impact at Trigger Vale and the broader Merino industry since 2011, I don't think we have ever had three in the one year that have had such an influence as the three in 2011. UNTIL 2019!!

It's probably only a coincidence but eight years later nearly a decade on we have bred TV0039, TV0760 and TV0034. It's interesting that while a decade later they are all obviously far superior sheep than the 2011, like in 2011 they are all particularly strong in their own area. TV0034 is an unbelievable early maturing deep carcass animal. While the word "balanced" is often thrown around industry without much thought to what it means TV0039 is in my view perfectly balanced across a dozen traits. TV 0760 is the best wool ram that we have bred with extreme fat and muscle which to my way of thinking puts to bed the old adage that you can't have them both.

Not only are we extremely excited that we are bringing their first progeny to clients this year, but I think these three rams will give us a springboard not unlike 2011 to power on in maximising genetic gain in the key profit driving traits well into the next decade.



190760 Sire Group of 2021 Drop Rams



190039 Sire Group of 2021 Drop Rams

	PWT	YWT	YEMD	YFAT	YCFW	YFD	YDCV	YSL	WR	YSC	EBWR	EBCOV	YWEC	DP+
190034	7.6	9	3	2.6	16.9	0.7	-1.4	11.8	0.13	3	-1.2	-0.3	-51.7	172.3

	PWT	YWT	YEMD	YFAT	YCFW	YFD	YDCV	YSL	WR	YSC	EBWR	EBCOV	YWEC	DP+
190039	7.5	8.4	2.1	1.9	23.8	0.6	-1.8	16.34	0.2	3.1	-1.04	-0.4	-38	184.8

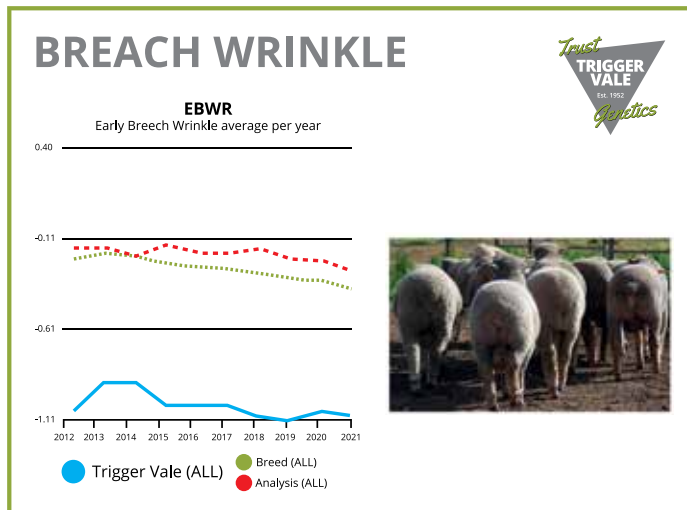
	PWT	YWT	YEMD	YFAT	YCFW	YFD	YDCV	YSL	WR	YSC	EBWR	EBCOV	YWEC	DP+
190760	4.6	7	3.5	2	18.5	-0.5	-1	16.9	2.1	2.2	-1.1	-0.7	-34.9	193.3

# The Freight Train is Coming be Prepared

For many years now I have been saying that it's a matter of "when" rather than "if" mulesing will be banned in Australia. While we haven't mulesed at Trigger Vale for over 12 years and have successfully bred a plain breeched and bodied Merino I am not pro to an immediate ban on mulesing. There are still many merino phenotypes that require mulesing and if done in conjunction with appropriate pain relief it will lead to better lifetime welfare for the animals than if they were forced to be left unmulesed. However, it is my fear that common sense and actual animal welfare outcomes won't be considered by the politicians when the final decision is made. Recent reports indicate that in the NSW parliament the Animal Justice Party is preparing another bill to ban mulesing. They only failed by a few votes two years ago from passing the legislation and with the addition of a phase out clause and more lobbying of the major parties I will be surprised if it doesn't become law. The recent change of the Federal Government to Labour, who are so closely aligned to the Greens and Teals greatly increases the likelihood of a ban Nationally. My mail regarding the NSW legislation is the phase out clause will be a ban by 2030. If this is correct, then Merino breeders in NSW have 8 years or less than 2 generations to breed an animal with minimal breech wrinkle to be prepared.

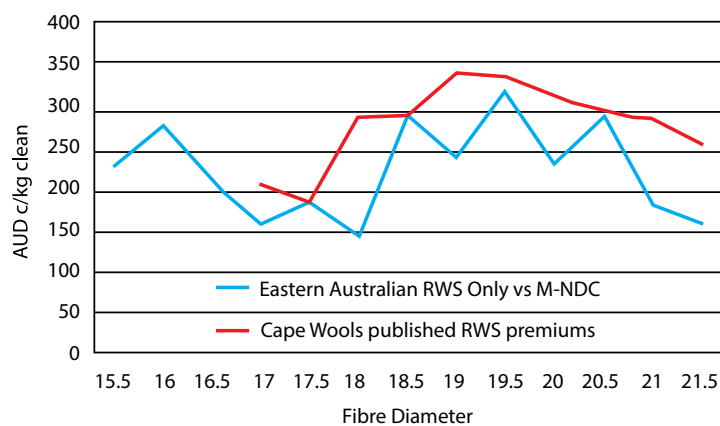
While Trigger Vale are industry leaders in many carcase and welfare traits, its in the most important of Breech wrinkle where we really shine. *See genetic trend graph 1.* In my opinion there are three components for a genetically modified mules free animal, Breech wrinkle, Breech cover and Dag score of which wrinkle is the most significant. Our 2021 whole of drop ASBV's averages for the rams available for sale this year has breech wrinkle in the top 5%, Breech cover in the top 10% and dag score in the top 20%. It's important to note that these figures are an average of the entire 2021 drop and are being compared with all measured merino in the Sheep Genetics data base. My rule of thumb is if you want to change any trait quickly then select for animals in the top 20% for that trait. I hope this clearly illustrates that if you want to position your Merino Flock to be prepared for a ban of mulesing then Trigger Vale is a great option to get you there quickly and it won't matter if you buy the most expensive ram in the sale or the last private sale ram that goes down our driveway. Quite simply these mules free genetic traits are fundamental to our Merino's DNA.

Graph 1



Graph 2

## Season to date RWS premiums



## Responsible Wool Standards (RWS)

Having not mulesed for over 12 years meant that we have been able to take advantage of a premium in the wool market for our wool. Over the journey with complexed confused market signals, it has been difficult to analyse how much this premium has been. In January we went through the process of becoming accredited through Elders to the market assurance program known as Responsible Wool Standards (RWS). While this was quite an involved process Rex Bennett and Tim McMeekin from Elders walked us through it and we got there

in the end. The level of compliance might not be suitable to all wool growers, but we have sold two wool clips since and the premiums for RWS mulesed free wool were very attractive. 300c per kg clean the first time and 250c/kg the second. Andrew Woods who is a leading wool market analyst spoke at the Merinolink conference in June about premiums in the wool market for mules-free market assurance program wools and he had observed similar numbers.

Refer Graph 2.

## Setting clear breeding objectives

In my view breeding sheep requires a clear breeding objective and a vision for not just only what the current economic and social conditions are but what they might look like in the future. It is easy to be distracted by short term price signals like micron premiums or spiking lamb prices. While these economic principles are certainly important and need to be considered when setting your breeding objective to make long term targeted genetic gain its important to have a vision of the type of sheep you are targeting and select the appropriate genetics. There is no one right answer to this question and some breeders may choose a superfine high value wool clip while other's targets a more multi-purpose easy care flock.

Recently I came across a news article that was written in 2007 after I completed my Nuffield Scholarship studies. It made for interesting reading as it highlights that 15 years ago I had a clear breeding objective to develop a merino type that would be relevant for future economic parameters and consumer ethical demands. Fast forward to todays environment and I will give myself a small pat on the back (nobody else will) as the 2021 rams for sale this year have a combination of production, easy care and welfare traits that give clients the options required to target their own individual breeding requirements.

*See article below from 2007.*

### Wool industry meats market demand

Story by Trevor Dawson

Rising interest in dual purpose sheep resulting from high returns for prime lambs and historically low returns from wool has led a Riverina farmer to travel the world in search of a profitable farming balance that ensued good supplies to both valuable markets.

As a 2006 Nuffield Scholar the Lockhart sheep breeder observed profitable farming systems in South Africa, Argentina, Chile, USA, Mexico, Brazil, New Zealand, and the Falkland Islands. "Success of the lamb industry has been at the expense of wool production, "Trigger Vale Poll and White Suffolk Stud Principal, Andrew Bouffler said.

He was concerned that the prime lamb markets may suffer serious supply issues in both domestic and export markets if wool prices increased, resulting in a shift in joining from terminal sires to merino rams.

"With sheep numbers so low I believe that part of the answer is to breed a dual-purpose animal which can supply quality product into both markets and also supply replacement ewes to grow our national flock."

According to Mr Bouffler over 150 years of heavy selection pressure for wool cut per head has certainly come at a cost. "It comes to a point of diminishing return," he said.

"High selection pressure on one production trait can lead to a decrease in total enterprise profitability due to the declined animal fitness, hardiness and ability to adapt and survive seasonal changes."

"It doesn't matter what breed of sheep you have, there are always good and bad, but without performance testing you can't move ahead quickly."

The genetic diversity of the Australia's sheep flock is so large Mr Bouffler said that performance testing using MerinoSelect and Lambplan would allow animals with the desirable wool production and fitness traits (mules free, polled, growth, fertile and feed efficient) to be identified.

Observing the harsh production environment of the Falkland Islands where a 60 per cent lambing rate was considered exceptional confirmed Mr Bouffler's thoughts that selecting heavily for particular traits at the cost of fitness had a negative impact on the animal's ability to survive in a changing environment.

Mr Bouffler was convinced that performance testing and the future of DNA markers meant there were no boundaries to the gains possible in breeding a true dual-purpose ewe which could supply quality product to both wool and lamb markets. "I'm pretty excited about doing my own trial work in the Trigger Vale breeding program with a more rounded outlook," he said.

The goal going forward is to breed an easy-care merino that is polled, mules free, worm resistant with improved fertility. They will have quality medium micron wools cutting at least the Australian average and to produce a much superior carcass. This will include both high lean meat yields and superior meat-eating qualities," he said

A comprehensive report about Mr Bouffler's tour would be listed on the Nuffield Australia website after 2007 or he can be contacted beforehand on 0427207656.



# Trigger Vale Client Testimonials

My Father, Colin and I farm West of Rutherglen in the North East of Victoria.

Traditionally my father and Grandfather were running first cross ewes crossed to Poll Dorset rams for prime lambs.

When I moved back to the farm, we made changes to our farming system and thought that we needed to start retaining our own ewes to keep genetics that performed under our conditions. Initially we purchased rams without data or ASBV's, they were very good structurally. Our growth was far from desirable with the data-less genetics and the breeds that made up our composite had become very seasonal. This led to lots of questions and the need to re-adjust our strategy.

When we decided to hit reset, we were initially thinking of developing a composite that was  $\frac{3}{4}$  Poll Merino,  $\frac{1}{4}$  White Suffolk. We looked at the Merino, to try get rid of as much seasonality as possible and the White Suffolk for carcass attributes. The first place I looked was on Sheep Genetics. Studs with growth were a dime a dozen in the Merino database. However, once I put in parameters around BWT, Fat, EMD, WEC, EBWR, EBCOV, LDAG, LS, ERA Trigger Vale's Polls floated to the top and the large volume of rams at the top of the list meant we were confident that we would be able to select from a large number of rams rather than trying to find a few outliers.

Fortunately Trigger Vale also provided a one stop shop with their White Suffolks.

What I liked about the Trigger Vale White Suffolks was their relationship between birth weight and growth.

To get ahead in our breeding system we managed to source some Trigger Vale Poll Merino ewes with Trigger Vale White Suffolk lambs at foot from a Trigger Vale client. The ewes had lambed down as ewe lambs, then reconceived as hoggets. They had come from an area that suffered low rainfall and were at the bottom of their body reserves. As soon as we put feed in front of them their genetic background shone through and they regained their body condition rapidly even with lambs at foot. After witnessing this and the plain body of these ewes, that looked identical to our old first cross and composite ewes we realised we could run a Merino ewe flock that will emulate the first cross but with a profitable fleece on her back. We have now settled on a 100% Poll Merino ewe flock with as many going to the White Suffolk for first cross fat lambs and the necessary number going to Poll Merino for ewe replacements.

For us the wool is the free lunch. We don't have a large focus on fleece weight coming from our background, but we have slowly put more emphasis on style of wools, particularly with long staple and good fibre/crimp alignment. This style of wool has been steered toward after observing the ewes handle 463mm of rain from start of November 2021 until the end of March 2022. The

Trigger Vale Ewes suffered no fly strike or colour in the wool yet our composites, first cross and another run of non-Trigger Vale Poll Merino ewes with poor fibre alignment were relentlessly struck by flies and horrible colour in their wools by the end of summer. This may not be new news to some but staggering to watch on our end.

Along with the wool pressures of such a wet summer the worm pressure was high. We purchased some Trigger Vale clients Poll Merino wethers to capitalise on our summer forage cover crop program. Barber's Poll were in large numbers. Running the lambs over the scales to drench it was amazing to see Trigger Vale lambs ADG from 0 grams to +120 grams, where our old blood lines were ADG 0 grams to -150 grams. We also commonly observe the Trigger Vale Poll Merino progeny match the White Suffolks for their ADG, the only difference being the actual weight with the White Suffolks usually being a larger animal.

Our 2022 drop lambs have been sired by an entire ram team of Trigger Vale Poll Merino and White Suffolks. All ewes joined to the Merino scanned 160% ewes to the ram with a survival rate of 91%. Whilst ewes to the White Suffolks scanned 142% ewes to the ram with a survival rate of 89%, with a total flock survival of 85%.

With the abundance of summer feed available from our summer cover crop program our ewes have never gone into lambing in fatter condition. Despite their condition, all rams used this year were purchased with a range for birth, it was staggering to not lay a hand on a single ewe for dystocia and only one visible lamb death due to dystocia, where the ewe still managed to birth unassisted.

Since first contacting Andrew and Mandi and discussing the direction, we wanted to head, the type of sheep we wanted to develop, their willingness to answer any of my questions and discuss results and observations has allowed for a simple transition. All of our observations may be old news for Andrew and Mandi and long-term Trigger Vale clients but for us to watch the sheep perform on our farm has been nothing short of exciting.

Tom & Colin Briggs  
Testimonial  
(Rutherglen, Victoria)



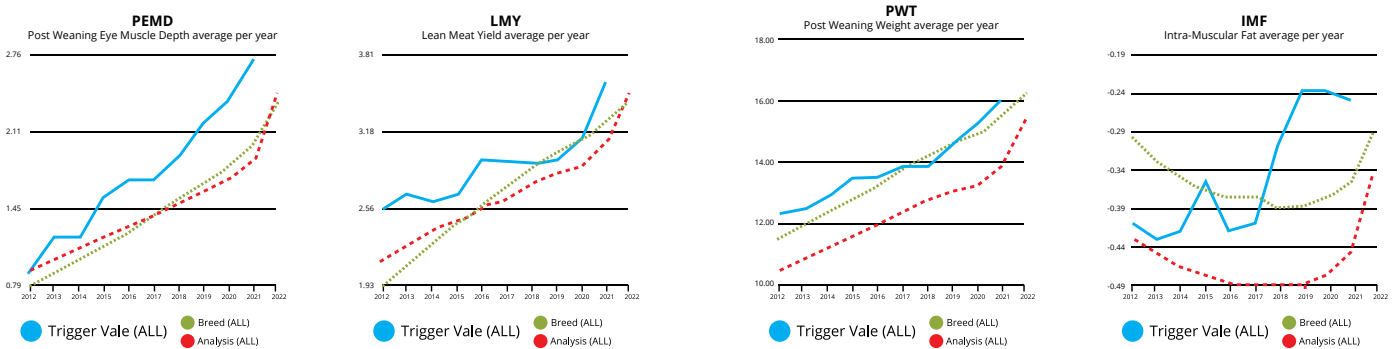
# White Suffolk News

Last year in the White Suffolk section of the newsletter I wrote that after a decade of searching for the tools for industry to measure Meat Eating Quality traits like Intramuscular fat (juiciness) and Shear Force (tenderness) that MLA in conjunction with the processors were getting close to having success. The problem has been that the test results must be obtained at the processing chain speed as whole kill efficiency is lost if it takes too long. Well, I have proven to be correct with Gundagai abattoir now measuring IMF on every carcass. I heard Will Barton from Gundagai Lamb speak at the Merinolink conference in June and he spoke at length about what their new payment grid for lamb will look like and it was Carcass weight by Lean Meat Yield (LMY) with a flat 50 cent/kg premium for all lambs with a IMF greater than 5%. Currently the Australian average for IMF sits at about 4% compared to our major competitor New Zealand who sits at 1.8%. The other very interesting thing he said was that the DEXA technology used for measuring LMY would, hopefully, in

time also be able to break the carcass down into 3 sections. This means that on top of LMY they would be able to identify the percentage of meat yield in each individual section of the carcass and would formulate another grid and pay a further premium on carcasses that have higher yields in the more valuable cuts like the loin.

In summary the carcass characteristics that will demand a premium on these future grids will have weight, higher LMY's, high proportion of LMY in the higher value cuts with IMF levels above 5%. Like our Merino program we take great pride at Trigger Vale that we stay well informed of industry developments and likely trends and put breeding objectives in place for our White Suffolks that will ensure our clients are well positioned to profit into the future. The genetic trends below highlight that once again we have done this very successfully as we are above the national terminal average for all these traits.

## Trigger Vale White Suffolk Genetic Trends:



We are very excited to have the first sons of Trigger Vale 191124 available for sale this year. As a young ram he was selected in the Superwhites national young sire evaluation program in 2020 due to his great balance of traits. The sons not only have great structure and White Suffolk type, but they also bring to the table great ASBV's particular in the traits highlighted in the article above. TV 191124's credentials have been further enhanced as he has had a son 211456, which we used as a ram lamb this year selected in the Superwhite 2022 team. Onwards and upwards.

	BWT	WWT	PWT	PEMD	PFAT	SHF	IMF	LMY	LEQ
191124	0.2	10.6	16.1	4	-0.16	-1.6	-0.02	4.3	171.9

	BWT	WWT	PWT	PEMD	PFAT	SHF	IMF	LMY	LEQ
211456	0.28	11.4	17.5	3.8	-0.03	-0.9	0.12	4.5	170.4

On the negative side of things, the bad luck that effected White Suffolk sales last year has carried on to the 2021 drop and incredibly again in 2022. That bad luck being an extraordinary run of ewe lambs being born compared to ram lambs. While the break down often varies by a few percent either way from year to year we have had numbers close to 65% ewe lambs being born for three consecutive years now. The result is that rams for sale will be tight again this year with limited private sales post auction. For all existing White Suffolk clients, it would be appreciated if you let us know of your requirements as we certainly want to satisfy your needs first.

# Oils ain't Oils

Anyone older than around 35 would clearly remember the Castrol GTX ads from the 1980's with the catch cry "Oils ain't Oils". The premise of these ads was that while there are many car engine oils on the market, they are not all the same quality. Over the past 20 odd years with the increase of industry awareness and uptake of Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV's) in breeding programs I have often thought about them in the context of this old ad about oil. Or in other words ASBV's ain't ASBV's!

Historically, Sheep Genetics have generated ASBV's from varying degrees of data quality being provided by seed stock operators. Due to a huge variation in the quality of the data being supplied by studs the corresponding level of the quality and accuracy of the ASBV's being generated and hence their actual repeatability has also varied considerably. For example, for over 20 years at Trigger Vale we have always collected full pedigree, date of birth, birth type and rear type on our lambs before we start on measuring the production traits like growth and fleece weights. I believe that early life data is the building blocks that form the foundation that all later data is built off. How can the variation in a group of lambs weaning rates be

expressed accurately as the result of their genetic makeup if the different birth dates and rear types aren't known? If two lambs both weigh 35 kgs at weaning and one is 3 weeks younger and born and raised a twin, then all other things being equal that's the one I want in my future breeding program.

Sheep Genetics who manage the biggest sheep database in the world and are the company involved in generating Australia's ASBV's has recently gone through the biggest overhaul and update of its systems since it started. One of the outcomes of the massive update is that they have introduced reporting based around the data quality being supplied to them from studs. This is a great initiative and something I have been requesting for years as it now gives a clear picture to commercial producers in the actual quality of the ASBV's being reported by studs in their marketing and catalogues.

After decades of weighing and tagging our White Suffolks at birth and capturing our Merino's date of birth and birth and rear types to ensure full pedigree's it didn't come as a surprise that in both breeds, we were assigned 5 Star data quality. A great reward for the thousands of man hours we have dedicated to our breeding programs and fantastic for clients that they can target their breeding programs objectives with the confidence that the Trigger Vale genetics will deliver.



Trigger Vale White Suffolk Data Quality



Trigger Vale Poll Merino Data Quality

## ON A LIGHTER NOTE . . .

I told my wife she should embrace her mistakes...

She gave me a hug

I go fired from my job because I kept asking my customers whether they would prefer "Smoking" or "Non-Smoking".

Apparently, the correct terms are "Cremation" or "Burial".

Someone just called me sneezed and then hung up.

I am sick and tired of these cold calls.

Farming is saying... "but after this week things will slow down a bit", over and over until you die.

Someone just called me sneezed and then hung up.

I am sick and tired of these cold calls.

My wife asked me

"is it just me or is the cat getting fat?"

Apparently, "no it's just you"

wasn't the right answer.

Police confirmed that the man who fell

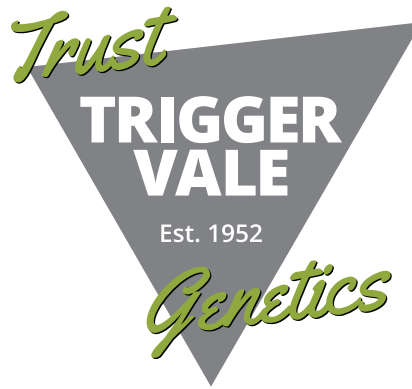
from the 15th floor of the nightclub...

was not a bouncer.



I'm done with alcohol. Look at this parrot I bought last night





## Inspection Day

24th August, 2022 10am-4pm



# 45th Annual On-Property Auction

At "Valera" Lockhart on Friday 2nd September 2022  
Inspections 8.30am onwards, Poll Sale commencing at 12.30pm



**220 Poll Merino Rams**  
**6 Stud White Suffolk Rams**  
**94 Specially Selected White Suffolk Rams**

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**Accredited**

**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

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