

LAMBPLAN – Sheep Genetics - is a major part of our White Suffolk enterprise. It then assists us in selecting the right sires for our commercial lamb enterprise.

(ASBVs = Australian Sheep Breeding Values)

Since the make up of the ewe flock in Australia has changed over the past few years and many merino ewes are now being joined with terminal sires, Lambplan has brought in some new & practical ASBVs for improving lamb survival.

- Lambing Ease (LE)
- Gestation Length (GL)

'Lambing ease scored and gestation length are heritable traits, ASBVs for these could lead to improved lamb survival. Based on the genetic correlations with production traits, selection for growth, fat and muscle without consideration of lambing ease could lead to a decline in lamb survival.'

We have been recording these traits for the past three years.

One of our rams **Spring Valley 192-05** is a **proven low birth weight sire** and is also in the **top 1%** of all Terminal Sires (this includes sires from breeds such as Poll Dorset, Suffolk, Texel, Southdown) for **LE (Lambing Ease)**. He is also in the **top 5% for eye muscle** and has a positive fat but is still above average for growth. This makes him **ideally suited to the merino ewe**. We will have **sons by him** in our on-property sale Nov 25th 2010.

NEW RESEARCH in the Prime Lamb Industry

'Many traits and ASBVs for Australian sheep breeds may soon be enhanced by predictions from DNA samples taken from young animals. This technology offers potential benefits by reducing generation intervals and assisting the selection of rams for difficult to measure traits. Early results from analysis of Sheep CRC Information Nucleus (see brochures attached), Sheep Genomics and Sheep Genetics data shows much promise.'

'The Sheep CRC is partnering with Sheep Genetics and MLA to pilot the use of 50k SNP genotyping to predict a range of breeding values (ASBVs) for Australian rams.' **Spring Valley** will have three rams involved and this will make us amongst the first Australian sheep breeders to use DNA data in our ram breeding operation.

Omega 3, Zinc, Iron Shearforce (tenderness) Intramuscular fat (juiciness/flavour) Colour (shelf life)
are just a few of the 50,000 traits that will be measured.

Whilst this new research may all seem "out there". It just goes to show how quickly the Lamb industry is changing, especially as it tries to expand its market share over other meats.

Basically, as a stud breeder and breeder of flock rams, it is our duty to keep up with the latest research and be fully informed. Trends change and we must be ready to act a year in advance with our sire selections etc. For many of our flock rams buyers it will be enough to know that we are doing this but if you are interested in knowing research results visit the Sheep CRC site.