



NEWSLETTER WINTER 2023

50 YEARS OF GRASS MERINOS PERFORMANCE BREEDING

It was the night of 22 October 1973 when the Merino breeders of the Gulargambone District got together to complain about low sheep prices and rising costs in their business. It was an unusually cool evening but then again, global warming hadn't been invented yet.

What came out of that meeting was a commitment from 10 breeders and an advisor to form a group breeding scheme. A scheme to breed rams from the top young ewes pooled from the 35,000 ewes owned by the members. A commitment to always use the most modern technology and research in doing so. 50 years later we at GRASS Merinos continue to breed the very best performance rams with a commitment to modern technology and research.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Well, who turned off the tap? What an amazing shift in the season. When it stopped raining it was a blessed relief. The sheep were happier, the flies and worms had eased off and everything seemed right in the world. But the dry weather continued... When the feed cart came out for the first time it brought back some very vivid and difficult memories. Maybe all a little too soon.

Sunnyside has been lucky to receive some well-timed falls over the past couple of months which has allowed us to grow some winter feed. The sheep have really responded to this. The mild weather has been a perfect time for lambing. Despite the difficult season the GRASS breeding ewes still managed to wean 114.1% of lambs to ewes joined and cut 6.2kg of wool that tested at an average of 19.1 micron.

As spring approaches, we turn our attention to our sale season. We have completed all but one or two of our measurements on the 2022 drop of Rams and we are excited by what we have to offer this year. We are very much looking forward to seeing everyone at the GRASS field day and presenting the sale rams on 4 and 5 October.



NEW MERINO INDUSTRY INDEXES

At GRASS we are really excited to see the new MERINOSELECT indexes being released. The 5 new Research MERINOSELECT Indexes are now available on the Sheep Genetics search site, these include:

- Fine Wool
- Wool Production
- Sustainable Merino
- Sustainable Merino (High Rainfall)
- Maternal + Lamb

These indexes will be initially released as research indexes and run alongside the existing Merino indexes for the next 12 months. The development of the indexes started in 2021 with a round of industry consultation. A second round of surveying the industry was undertaken in late 2022. To ensure that the current and future needs of industry were met there has also been a lot of work done to redevelop the software used to calculate indexes as well as adjusting the genetic parameters that go into creating the indexes. The new indexes also have updated price and production data as well as the inclusion of new traits including wrinkle, the reproduction component traits and condition score.

The current GRASS index is based on existing Merino Production Plus (MP+) index but also includes an economic value for reducing wrinkle. The MP+ index was based on self-replacing Merino flock where income is a combination of wool and surplus sheep sales. There was a focus on increasing fleece weight and reducing fibre diameter, increasing or maintaining staple strength and selling surplus animals as yearlings. The current GRASS index is similar to the new Sustainable Merino (SM), or Wool Production (WP) research indexes.

As can be seen below the level of emphasis on wool vs lamb production varies between the two i.e Sustainable Merino being more focused on Lamb Production. Each of the indexes have a focus on reducing wrinkle and a balanced response to reproduction through emphasis on the component traits.

New production models used to create the new MERINOSELECT industry research Indexes

Trait	Maternal + Lamb	Sustainable Merino	Sustainable Merino - HR	Wool Production	Fine Wool
Clean fleece weight	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●
Fibre diameter	●	●	●	●●	●●●
Lamb growth	●●●	●●	●●	●	●
Carcase composition	●●	●	●		
Adult weight	-●	-●	-●		
Worm egg count			●●		●
Reproduction	●●●	●●	●●	●	●
Breec wrinkle	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●
Dag			●●		
Condition score	●●	●	●	●	●

More Wool

More Lambs

More Profit

GRASS MERINOS DOMINATE THE NEW INDUSTRY INDEXES

As you are aware at GRASS we are constantly looking for the next scientific innovation. We are also very proud of our position in the industry. Innovation such as including breech wrinkle in our custom index has allowed us to lead the industry in continuing to increase production but also reduce wrinkle. The fact that the industry indexes now include breech wrinkle is testament to continued efforts.

This has also allowed us to compare ourselves to the wider Merino industry. In the recent changes at Sheep Genetics the GRASS Merinos flock has remained at the top. The animals that have really shined in the new indexes are those that have continued to improve their Clean Fleece Weight and Reproduction as well as reduce wrinkle.

If you rank all the 2022 drop rams in Australia on the new industry indexes The GRASS rams perform incredibly well.

On the Wool Production index GRASS has 17 of the top 20 young rams in Australia including the first ranked ram.

On the Sustainable Merino Index GRASS has 14 of the top 20 young rams in Australia Including the first ranked ram.

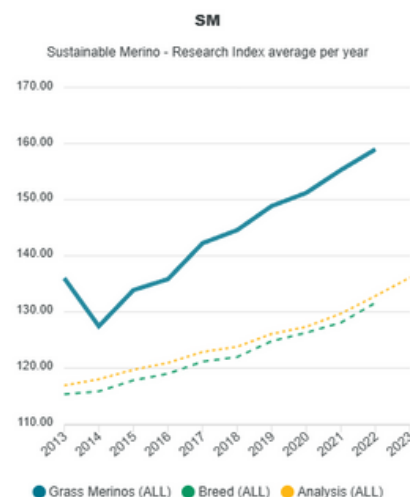
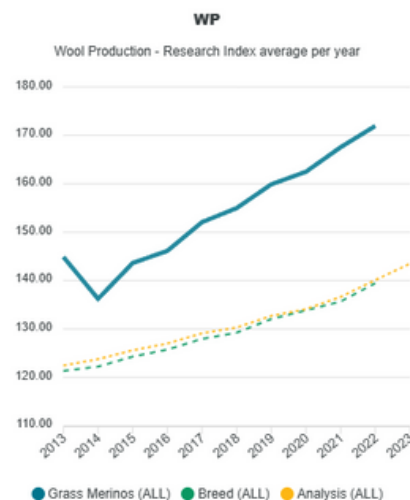
(21/7/23 MERINOSELECT Analysis)

In fact, GRASS has performed very well in all the new indexes.

The Average of the GRASS Merino flock is in the top 5% of for all of the new Industry indexes

That means when you purchase any GRASS Merinos ram with any Breeding Objective in mind you are buying the very top of Industry Genetics. These are incredible numbers so please don't take our word for it. Check out the Sheep Genetics search site at

<https://search.sheepgenetics.org.au/search/dashboard>



MANDATORY EID TAGS INTRODUCTION IN 2025

There has been quite a bit of talk about the roll-out of mandatory EIDs in all NSW sheep. At present any animal born after 1 January 2025 must be tagged with an EID. Then by 1 January 2027 all animals to leave a property must be tagged with an EID.

\$38 million has been announced in a joint State-Federal funding plan to help the industry transition to mandatory EID. Producers will be able to apply for an infrastructure rebate from 3 October 2023. At GRASS we feel that this will be an excellent chance for producers to use their EIDs to objectively measure their commercial flock. Please contact us if you would like to make this happen.

FIVE STARS FOR GRASS MERINOS



In 2021, after a lot hard work Sheep Genetics introduced a Data Quality Score (DQS) report for each stud that had been submitting data to Sheep Genetics for at least 3 years. Breeders now have the ability to access their own (DQS) reports. These reports look at a range of metrics and combine these to give your flock a score, as well as providing information on where your flock sits relative to the analysis, and recommendations on opportunities to improve.

There are four key components that contribute to the DQS.

- Amount of data – Number of animals and traits recorded also what proportion of the drop are recorded
- Completeness and accuracy of records – Including pedigree, birth dates, performance traits and fixed effects information which makes the data more accurate
- Data Structure – looking at how well a flock is linked across years at that site, as well as to other flocks,
- Timeliness – of Submission of Pedigree and performance traits

The beauty of the DQS is that it provides transparency for ram buyers about the quality of data used to calculate ASBVs. It gives commercial breeders a way of knowing which Stud breeders collect high quality data. While ASBV accuracies are available for individual rams, a DQS provides an indication of the overall quality of the flock's data and allows direct comparison across flocks.

Sheep Genetics would like to recognise
Grass Merinos (503884)
for their 5 star data quality score

On average, flocks with a 5 star data quality score have higher index accuracies and greater rates of genetic gain

Sheep Genetics data quality score reflects

- the amount of data,
- completeness and accuracy of records,
- data structure, and
- timeliness of submission

21st February analysis MERINOSELECT & DOHNE

Sheep GENETICS

mla
MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

MERINOSELECT
ASBV

GRASS Merinos has been awarded a five star data quality score since the inception of the DQS report. As the certificate says 'On average, flocks with a 5 star data quality score have higher index accuracies and greater rates of genetic gain. At GRASS we feel that this score is an indication of our commitment to good quality data collection. It is something we have been doing for 50 years. As a GRASS buyer you can now be confident that you are not only buying Industry leading genetics but five star data quality to boot.

More Wool

Less Wrinkle

GRASS MERINOS 2023 FIELD DAY

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

In order to celebrate 50 years of GRASS Merinos we are holding a Field Day at the Armatree Hotel on **Thursday 31 August 2023 commencing at 10.00am**. The day will be held to celebrate 50 years of genetic innovation and the people who have made it happen.

There will be a broad range of Industry Speakers at the day including John Roberts, the CEO of Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) on the future of the Merino Industry.

RSVP by 24 August 2023 to JB and Alison Tancred at www.grassmerino.com.au or on 0427 470 708 or themaze@activ8.net.au

2023 ELITE RAM SALE

GRASS Merinos will again be offering 15 Elite rams for sale in 2023. This sale has been very successful in recent years, having sold out shortly after they come on for sale. In previous years these rams have been in the top 5% of the industry for the MP+ and DP+ indexes and many were in the top 1% of the industry for various ASBVs.

The rams will be available for inspection at the 2023 Field Day and will be for sale for \$3,500.00 shortly afterwards.

IN WITH THE NEW YARDS

The members of GRASS Merinos are currently making a huge investment in the future of the Stud at the current location 'Sunnyside' Armatree. For the past 6 months we have been working with StockPro livestock handling to create a personalised set of sheep yards tailored to our needs.

The fact that we make and take many different measurements and scores of our sheep means that our yards need to be designed with this in mind. We have designed the yards to maximise efficiency, profitability and safety. The yards will be predominantly under cover with two specific bugles for sheep handling equipment and an inspection race for ram sales. With the increased scarcity of labour we all need to find ways to increase efficiency and enjoyment for yard work. These new yards will do this for us at GRASS. We are really excited about this addition and believe that it will be a game changer for us.





2023 GRASS MERINO Ram Sale

The 2023 GRASS Ram sale will once again be done by appointment. We have been receiving quite a lot of enquiries already so make sure you book in early for 2023.

The days for you to come to Select and Collect your rams are:

Wednesday 4 & Thursday 5 October

Premium Selection

GRASS Merinos offers a premium selection service. Once a buyer has selected the grade from which they wish to purchase, GRASS will select a number of rams within that grade based on the buyer's breeding objective. The buyer can then choose from within that selected group. This ensures that the buyer gets to view and choose from rams that meet their particular breeding objective.

There will be a 20% premium for this service.

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