



NEWSLETTER WINTER 2025

GRASS GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION

Recently GRASS Merinos attended the Gilgandra High School lamb marking. GRASS Merinos has been working closely with the students at the Gilgandra High School over the last seven years. This close connection has allowed the students to gain a greater insight into learning about the science behind breeding merinos.

We have been privileged to work with the senior school agricultural students. In 2018 GRASS donated 20 top performing ewes to the school agricultural department and have continued to donate a GRASS ram each year to help with the breeding program that has been put in place by the students. Since the program started GRASS has been guiding the students through the process of lamb marking and teaching them about the importance of collecting data and DNA. The students have, most importantly, learnt how to use this valuable information to produce profitable and sustainable merinos. Sharing our knowledge with the younger generation has helped give the students a small insight into the importance that the merino industry plays in their lives.

It has been wonderful to watch and follow the many students from Gilgandra High school head into the agriculture sector for their careers. Many of these students are working in Agriculture around the Gilgandra area and in the wider industry. This partnership wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the initiative of previous GRASS managers Greg and Di Peart. They have kindly donated their land close to Gilgandra town and school to allow the students to run their GRASS flock. GRASS has thoroughly enjoyed this project and are looking forward to continuing working alongside this bunch of young enthusiastic people in the future.



GRASS GENETICS MAKE THE MOST OF RECORD-BREAKING SHEEP PRICES

It's been very exciting watching the lamb and mutton markets go through the roof over the last few months. Saleyard and over the hook sales for both lamb and mutton are at record high prices. The high lamb and mutton prices are being driven by an expectation of a tight lamb supply during the second half of 2025, into 2026. The drier conditions across southern NSW and Victoria have certainly caused tight supply. These conditions have reduced breeding ewe populations over 2024 and 2025.

We're proud that the breeding decisions GRASS has made over the past 50 years have positioned our growers to take full advantage of these exceptional markets.

By consistently focusing on the profit driver traits merinos can offer, we've bred sheep of outstanding value, ensuring our clients remain ahead of the curve when it matters most. To capitalise on these markets, a merino producer needs to focus on the following two traits:

- Early Growth
- High Reproduction

At GRASS when you are selecting your rams the two most important ASBV's to help you achieve early growth and higher reproduction are:

- Yearling Weight (YWT)
- Weaning Rate (WR)

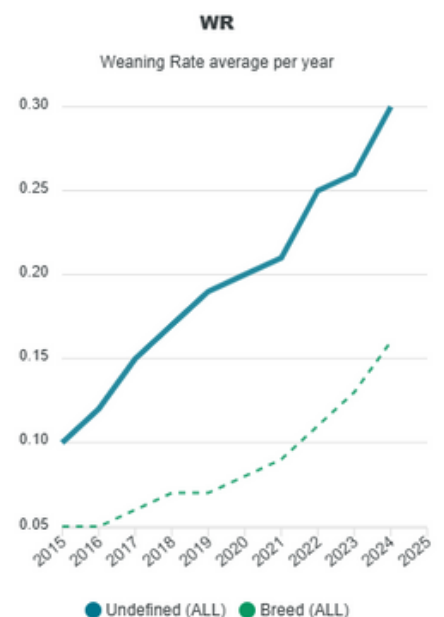
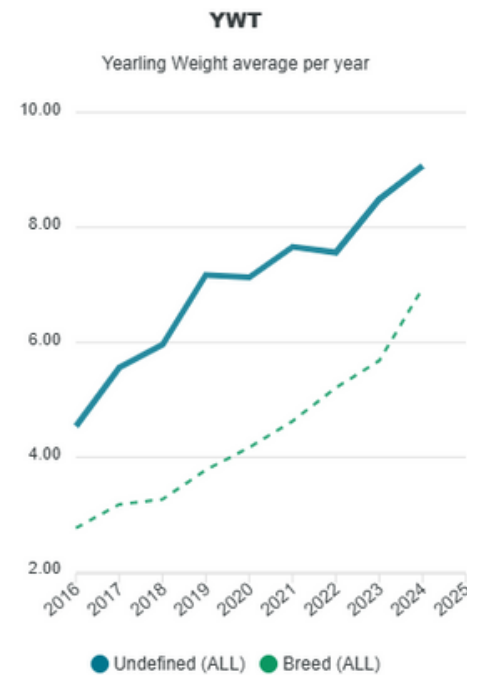
As you can see from the graphs GRASS is well above industry average for these two profit driving traits.

GRASS IS 31% HIGHER THAN INDUSTRY FOR YEARLING WEIGHT

GRASS IS 94% HIGHER THAN INDUSTRY FOR WEANING RATE

Early growth is very important as it is aiming to get your lambs off your farm quicker. It also is about allowing your lambs to grow quicker and hit heavier weights before they cut their teeth.

High Reproduction gives producers higher lambing percentages which result in more sales in the lamb, mutton and re-stocker markets. At GRASS we don't chase and change breeding objectives based on marketing trends but instead we always keep the whole merino in mind. So when markets kick it allows our clients to be able to take advantage.



GRASS ATTENDS FIRST EVER CLASSIFLY WORKSHOP

Several of the GRASS Merinos directors had the pleasure of attending the first AWI ClassiFly workshop held in NSW. This inaugural event brought together passionate woolgrowers and industry leaders to share strategies and innovations in breeding sheep with increased resistance to flystrike.

GRASS's commitment to ongoing education and to supporting initiatives that ensure the long-term sustainability and profitability of the merino industry is something that we pride ourselves on.



The ClassiFly workshop is designed for woolgrowers who want to learn about breeding sheep that are resistant to flystrike, regardless of climate or management conditions.

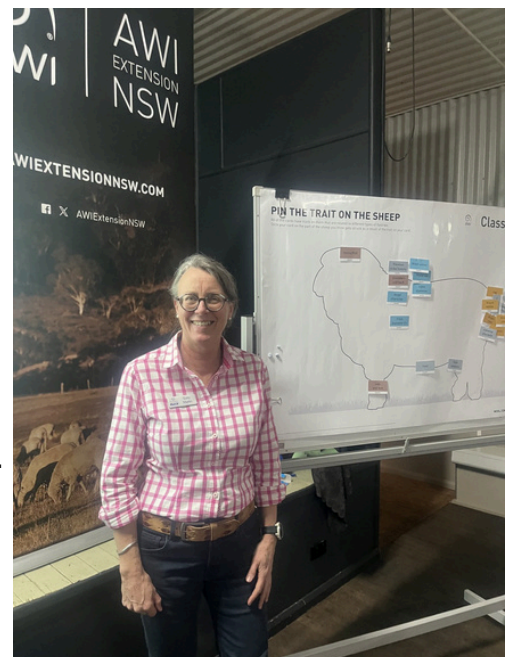
The one-day workshop aims to provide woolgrowers with information and techniques related to classing and selection strategies for flystrike resistance. Enhancing a sheep's natural resistance to flystrike through breeding can decrease the occurrence of flystrike in both mulesed and non-mulesed sheep, and may lead to reduced requirements for labour, chemical use, mulesing, and crutching.

Reducing the more labour-intensive and expensive methods of flystrike prevention will increase overall productivity and the welfare of the sheep over their lifetime.

Growers participate in practical activities to help them to develop a written breeding objective tailored to their property. This breeding objective is used to guide breeding and classing decisions with respect to traits related to animal welfare, profitability, and productivity.

The participants on the day were also taken through several practical techniques to increase flystrike resistance such as scoring breech wrinkle, breech cover, fleece rot, dag and colour. The day was run by sheep consultant, Sally Martin of SheepMetrix. Sally did an outstanding job facilitating the day and passing on her widespread knowledge. You can find Sally and her team at www.sheepmetrix.com.au

If you would like to know more contact www.wool.com/flystrike



Sally Martin facilitating the AWI ClassiFLY workshop

GRASS GETTING THE MOST OUT OF OUR UDDERS

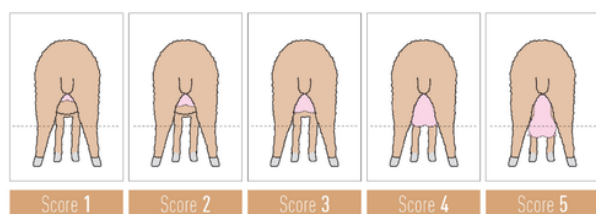
Udders have been an important part of any sheep breeding program for over 100 years. Mastitis, cut teats from shearing, blocked teats, udder lumps and bottled teats are all problems that breeders have culled for over the years. At GRASS we have been assessing udders for many years. The process of looking for 'Lambled and Losed' ewes is also a great time to look at udders.

For the past three years we have been udder scoring to help increase and improve lamb survival. We have worked with Erin Smith from the University of New England to learn about and develop our udder scoring. We score for Teat Size, Teat Placement and Udder Depth. These three measurements have shown to have a strong correlation to lamb survival. Udder scoring in sheep is a remarkably straightforward and cost-effective strategy for any breeding enterprise focused on maximising lamb survival and boosting overall reproductivity. By consistently assessing udder health and structure at key times producers can identify and remove ewes with poor or faulty udders, such as those with mastitis, damaged teats, or other defects that compromise milk production.

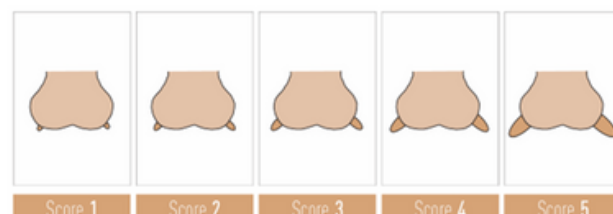
At GRASS we have seen quick improvements in the results of our lambing ewes as you are removing any ewes that don't have any structurally sound udders. Healthy udders allow ewes to be better mums and better mums help increase weaning percentages. The scores we give are now in the latest Visual Scoring guide. This booklet can be found at www.wool.com/vss-2024

This process is also helping us to retain ewes with healthy udders. Examples of the scoring system we use is below:

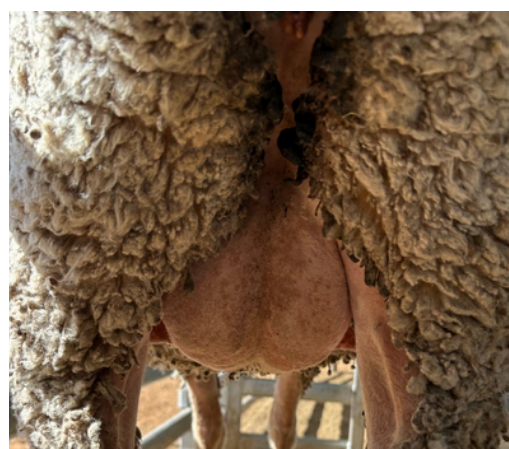
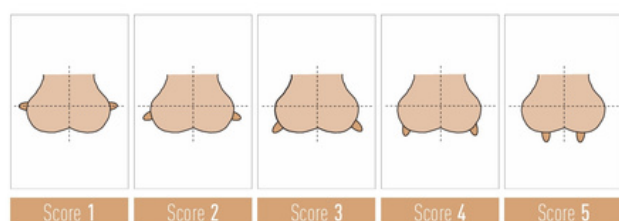
Udder Depth



Teat Size



Teat Placement



Regular udder scoring not only reduces the risk of lamb losses due to inadequate nutrition but also enables sheep breeders to build a flock with strong maternal traits over time. This tool empowers producers to make informed culling and retention decisions, leading to a more productive and resilient flock.

AWI FLYSTRIKE ASBV PROJECT

GRASS has been actively aiming to reduce flystrike in its progeny for over 50 years. As you would be aware GRASS was the first stud in Australia to add breech wrinkle to our custom index in 2018. It has been wonderful to see that breech wrinkle has now been added to all the industry indexes.

In recent years GRASS has been involved in a program to create ASBVs for flystrike. We have been collecting data on every animal that gets struck and where they get struck. This information along with the animal's genomics are being analysed to create flystrike ASBVs. The idea of an ASBV to directly select animals on flystrike susceptibility is very exciting. These ASBVs will be vital in helping producers help select animals in the fight against flystrike.

Flystrike is highly correlated with fleece rot and breech wrinkle, both traits that GRASS has been focused on since our conception. By homing in on these genetic factors over the years, GRASS has sought to breed animals with naturally higher resistance to flystrike, aiming to protect flock health and enhance overall productivity. A Flystrike ASBV will be a very important addition to the fight against flystrike in merinos.



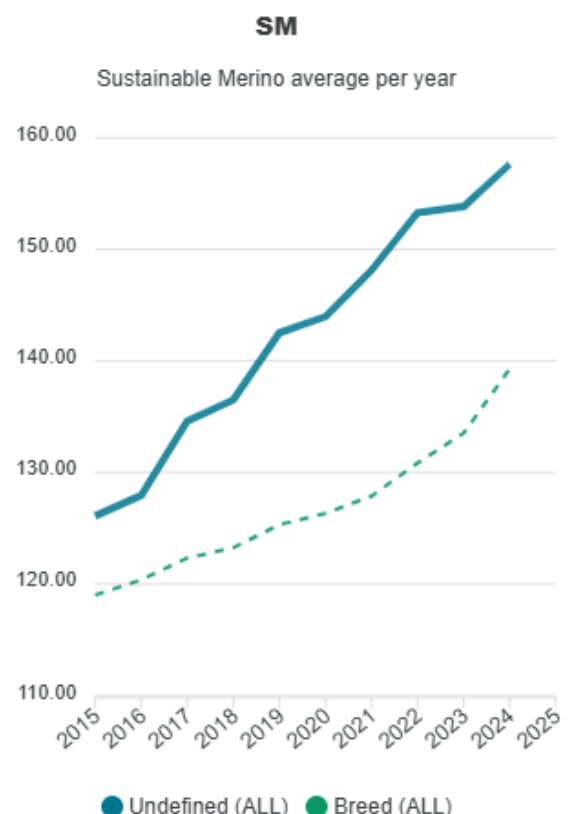
GRASS DOMINATES THE SUSTAINABLE MERINO INDEX

As you probably already know we are a strong believer of ASBVs and Indexes. The current Sheep Genetics Indexes are the best we have seen so far. The index we particularly like is the Sustainable Merino (SM) Index.

The Sustainable Merino index shows the most profitable sheep based on a production system where the income from sheepmeat production, and the wool clip are reasonably balanced. It has a strong focus on increasing fleece weight, growth and lean meat yield, and reproduction, whilst maintaining staple strength and fibre diameter. It also focuses on reducing worm egg count, dag and wrinkle.

As you can see GRASS Merinos is dominating the industry for the SM index. Our flock average, which is 157.9 is in the top 10% of the industry on the SM index. This means that any ram you purchase from GRASS will have a profitable impact on your production system.

Now don't worry if you think that the SM index is not your thing. We also do pretty well on the Wool Production, The Fine Wool and the Merino Lamb indexes.



TWO YOUNG SIRES TO WATCH

At GRASS we are constantly looking for the next leading Sire in the Industry. Currently **GRASS 20-2064** is the leading Sire in Australia on the SM and WP Indexes. A ram that has done a lot of good at GRASS. It is time however, to start looking for the next leading Sire.

GRASS 23-2126 is an incredible young sire that we used for the first time in 2025. His ASBVs are off the charts but still very well balanced. We are also incredibly happy with his confirmation and wool quality. When we weighed the 2025 drop of lambs at weaning his progeny weighed 2.1kg heavier than the drop average. A very impressive feat.



ANIMAL ID	YCFW	YFD	YWT	YEMD	YFAT	WR	EBWR	POLL	↓ SM
GRASS MERINOS-232126	26.91	-1.56	16.38	0.64	0.35	0.40	-1.28	PP	174.91
	ACC. 74	ACC. 85	ACC. 75	ACC. 71	ACC. 70	ACC. 62	ACC. 70		ACC. 62

GRASS 23-2069 is a young sire used in 2025 and one that we are very excited about. His balance for all the profit driving traits is something that we really liked about him. Together with his wool quality and excellent welfare traits makes him the whole package. He has sired 112 lambs in our 2025 drop. which is something we are very please about



ANIMAL ID	YWT	YCFW	YFD	YEMD	YFAT	EBWR	POLL	WR	↓ SM
GRASS MERINOS-232069	8.00	35.58	-1.44	0.10	-0.32	-0.52	PP	0.29	171.14
	ACC. 75	ACC. 74	ACC. 85	ACC. 71	ACC. 69	ACC. 69		ACC. 58	ACC. 59

There is semen available for both **23-2069** and **23-2126** if you are interested. GRASS also has several other semen sires that can be found on our Sheep Genetics catalogue at <https://search.sheepgenetics.org.au/catalogue/semen/11434?db=5&user=0>

2025 GRASS MERINO Ram Sale

The 2025 GRASS Ram sale will once again be done by appointment.

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

Monday 29th & Tuesday 30th September

RAM SALE GRADES

Elite Rams \$3,500

Reserve Rams \$1,800

Special Rams \$1,300

Flock Rams \$800



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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