



NEWSLETTER WINTER 2020

Manager's Report

The last six months at GRASS Merinos have been unbelievable. Fair to say it has been vastly different to the first two years of our management. Throughout the drought we went to great lengths to keep the ewes in reasonable condition. We would regularly condition score the ewes and match their feed accordingly.

2020 has been a very different scenario. Although it has come with some challenges it has been very enjoyable to see the sheep and the farm perform to their true potential. It is not an understatement to say that 500mm for the four months from mid January to mid May was life changing. The pasture growth we have seen is awesome. The clover and medic first germinated in February and has been growing ever since. There has been a 40 year history of planting medics and clovers on Sunnyside and this season that effort really showed. Although we are probably fairly understocked it is nice to see the growth and give the paddocks some rest and ground cover. The rain has also allowed us to plant 100ha of Spartacus clearfield barley which is presently looking very healthy.



Pregnancy Scanning and condition score

We all know the strong positive correlation between conception % and condition score. At GRASS we highly recommend commercial flocks taking stock of the condition score of their ewes at weaning to either lift the whole mob before the next joining or separate the mob into thins and fats and lift the condition score of the thins to raise the average of the whole mob.

2020 Joining	
Condition Score	Conception %
2.75	98%
3	135%
3.25	136%
3.5	153%
3.75	152%

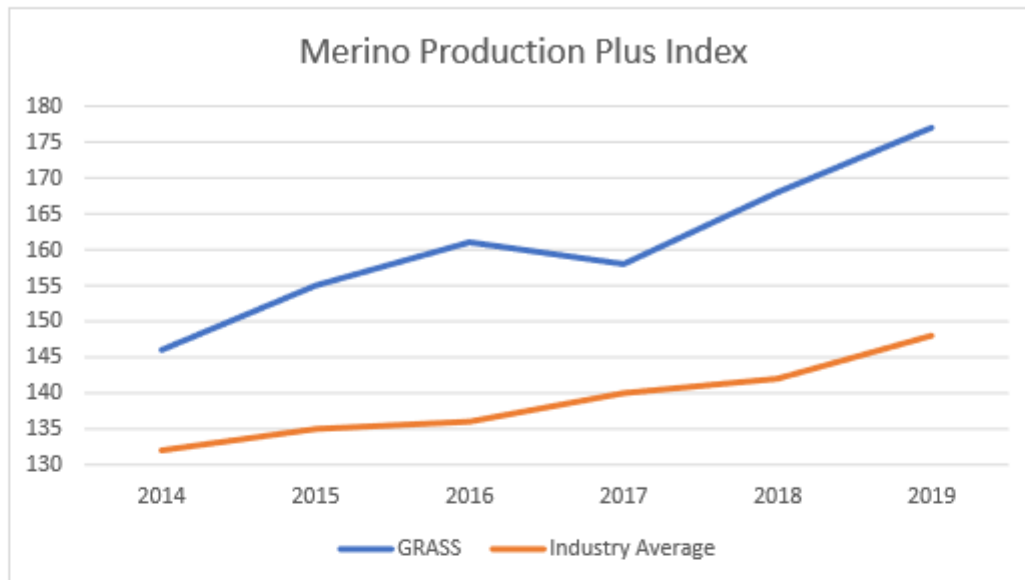
At GRASS we condition score and weigh every ewe two weeks prior to Joining. The main reason for this is to develop a Condition Score ASBV. The benefit of this is that it is very informative to look at the joining results for each condition score. The above table is looking at the conception rate for the ewes with each condition score. If a rise in one condition score can mean a rise of up to 55% of foetuses in a good year it is easy to argue that a little extra feed and management could be very financially beneficial.



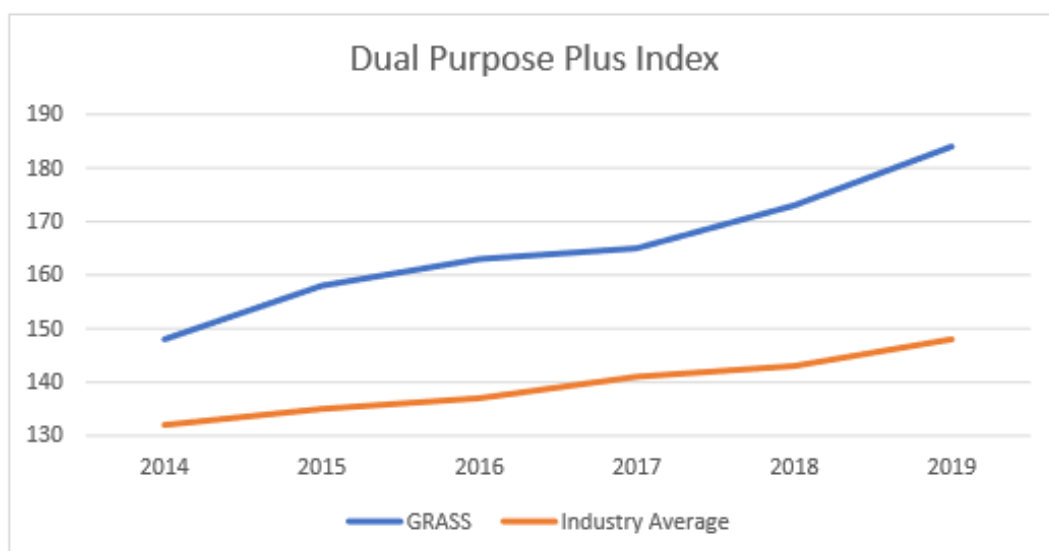
GRASS MERINOS LEADING THE WAY IN GENETICS

At GRASS Merinos we are always looking to improve the way we breed sheep. The best way to look at our genetic trend is by comparing ourselves to the wider industry on the industry Indexes.

At present the Industry average for the Merino Production Plus index (MP+) is 148. A sheep in the top 5% of the industry has an MP+ index of 174. The GRASS Merinos 2019 drop average for the MP + is 177. **Our flock Average is in the top 5% of the industry.**



The Industry average for the Dual Purpose Plus index (DP+) is 148. A sheep in the top 5% of the industry has an DP+ index of 178. The GRASS Merinos 2019 drop average for the DP + is 184. **Once again our flock average is in the top 5% of the industry.**



More Wool

More Lambs

More Profit

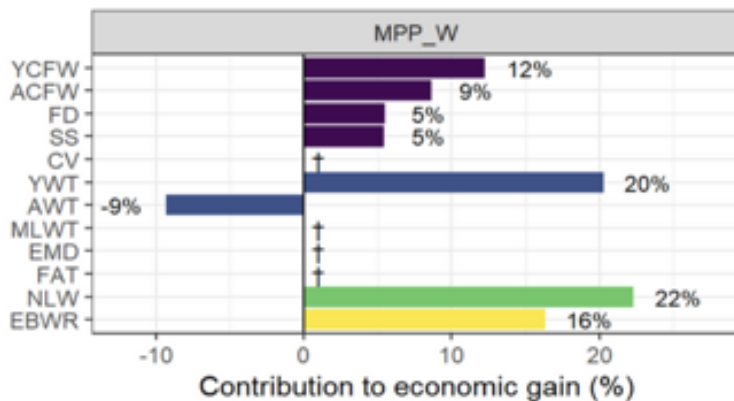
THE NEW GRASS BREECH WRINKLE INDEX

As you have probably heard GRASS Merinos has developed a custom index to continue to increase our Clean Fleece Weight, Growth Rate and Fertility while reducing our Breech Wrinkle. For many years GRASS Merinos has reduced the wrinkle on our sheep. We have also been constantly aware of the fact that Mulesing is a serious welfare concern that needs to be addressed. The issue that the industry faces is that drastically reducing breech wrinkle could also reduce Clean Fleece Weight.

In 2018, with the help of Sheep Genetics and the Australian Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU) we set about developing an Index that would rank our rams based on high Clean Fleece Weight and Fertility but also on low Wrinkle. We wanted to be able to be in a position to cease Mulesing without reducing our annual gains in Fleece weight, growth rate and Fertility. With a huge input from our Genetic advisor, Allan Casey we were able to come up with an index that is the first in Australia to incorporate the Early Breech Wrinkle ASBV.

We have scored wrinkle in the GRASS flock for many years. This year we have performed a Yearling Breech Wrinkle score and we were incredibly happy with the results. Of our 2019 drop our average Marking Breech Wrinkle Score was 2.21 and our Yearling Breech Wrinkle Score was 2.38. Although we are only a couple of years into this process, we feel that we are already on the path to breeding a highly productive, wrinkle free sheep.

The GRASS Breech Wrinkle Index



Wool Growth Meat Repro Easy care

Predicted Responses over 10 Years (selection emphasis =85%)

YWT (kg)	3.7	YCFW (%)	6.4
AWT (kg)	3.2	ACFW (%)	3.4
EMD (mm)	0.2*	FD	-0.2
FAT (MM)	0.1*	SS (Nktex)	1.2
NLW (%)	6.3	EBWR (score)	-0.5

This photo is of one of our lambs with a marking breech wrinkle score of 2



More Wool

Less Wrinkle



2020 Ram Sale & Ram Soundness Check

The 2020 GRASS Ram sale will once again be done by appointment. 2019 was a complete sellout so make sure you book in early for 2020.

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

Tuesday 6 October 2020 & Wednesday 7 October 2020

If any GRASS client would like us to come onto your farm and assist with a Soundness Check of your rams prior to this coming season, please let us know. We would be only too happy to help. For those clients who are interstate please contact us as soon as possible so we can arrange any travel permits that may be needed.

We live in a time of Corona
Don't move to Milan or Verona
Better by far
To stay in Gular
And practise being a loner.

JB and Alison Tancred
GRASS Merinos
Sunnyside
Armatree
NSW 2827

M 0427 470 708
E themaze@activ8.net.au
@jbtancred grassmerinos
 grassmerinos

www.grassmerino.com.au