

The Mountain Dam

Merino Stud

SEPTEMBER 2016

RAM SALE

FRIDAY 4th
NOVEMBER

10.00 am
Inspection

1.00 pm
Helmsman
Sale Commences

Enquiries welcome
Call Tom Silcock
0419 228 239

It is a pleasure to communicate at a very positive time to be farming. I hope a return to normal seasonal conditions, combined with strong markets has put a smile on many faces.

We are proud to be witnessing our sires ranking amongst the industry best, as demonstrated in the enclosed list of our current semen sires. The highlights indicate rams that are top performers for these traits in the Sheep Genetics ASBVs (nationally).

At the top of the list is RE17. His progeny was on display at the Elders Balmoral Sire Evaluation Field Day in March. This five year old sire delivers strongly across many important traits and he was also on display in the Genstock tent at Sheepveton (Pictured left, straight from the paddock in his 'working clothes'.) He has already sired over 250 progeny at The Mountain Dam and will have RG sons in this year's sale.



Our impressive young 15/BUA15 is not on the semen sire list yet, as we are evaluating his yearly data. As a ram lamb at weaning, this ram was 4 kg heavier than any other lamb and ranked 150% compared to the average weaning weight. We also now know this ram is well below average for micron, has super quality wool, and also has a high CFW, SS and SL. He boasts impressive lambs on the ground via an AI program and he carries the Berulla fertility genetics.

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NEW IN 2016

- The 2016 team of sale rams will again include a strong line-up of poll rams, with horns trimmed off others.
- Sires of syndicate bred sale rams have been identified utilising DNA.
- We have now formally applied to register a Poll stud, with polls now dominating our annual joining. A few top horn sires are still used as we continue to pursue the best genetics, using either our own or sourcing genetics nationally. We are pleased to witness all of our key selection traits showing continual improvement.

WHAT'S TOM BEEN UP TO

- It was a privilege to be asked to judge the fine wool section of Sheepvention again this year.
- I also look forward to delivering an overview of the merino industry on the 1st of September at this year's Grasslands Conference. These activities provide great opportunities to learn and share experiences.
- I continue in my national and local leadership roles for Sire Evaluation, which provides opportunities to advance the genetics of The Mountain Dam

WHAT MAKES THE MOUNTAIN DAM GENETICS DIFFERENT?

While many studs focus on presenting their sale rams in pristine condition, our sale date falls after robust, meaningful data collection that includes worm resistance testing. This process and the requirement to run the rams in one group does handicap our sale rams short term growth rates, however importantly, it provides us and our clients the confidence to identify the best performers that have a natural ability to thrive.

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Raw data contributes to breeding values which assist in providing a guarantee for ram clients. You can always pick a top animal in a show ring or a sale shed, however you do not have a guarantee of traits such as fertility. Breeding values provide an insight into genetic potential, using data from individual animals, with that of its siblings. Tracking this pedigree is a critical tool for our breeding program.

INDEXES

I personally am not a big fan of indexes. They are a handy tool, though can be misleading, as they are a compromise of a group of selection traits. I am involved in the industry debate, reviewing the suitability of these national indexes. We are finding no two breeders share the exact same aims and as a result, their desired makeup of an index varies.

WHAT WE KNOW WILL WORK FOR YOU

We know that if you focus on our within flock breeding values for your most important aims, these will provide a clear indication of a rams genetic potency. Our data includes the hard to obtain worm resistance – so important for some, along with Fat and Muscle scanning that are only obtained from measurement. When you combine these with the ram's raw data (what he actually measured), ASBV's (how he ranks nationally) and combine that with how he looks, we arm clients with a robust set of data to make selections.

OUR SELECTION SYSTEM WORKS

Clients and good friends Rosey and Michael Leeming moved their ram selection focus to prioritise fertility, while maintaining a focus on cut, micron and quality, with conformation. Combined with good management, including meeting nutritional requirements, they reported a scanned conception rate of 164% in their mixed age ewes.

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REGULAR REMINDERS

- **Keep your ewe weaners growing**

While focusing on this year's lambing - Between now and summer is your cheapest and best opportunity to put weight on and grow out your weaners. This will maximise their lifetime performance. Remember they need to be at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of their mature body weight and improving at joining time.

- **Don't forget your rams**

Vaccinate them again and while their feet are soft, it is a great opportunity to trim them back into great shape. If they need horns cut off, do them now before the weather warms up. Carefully check their testicles and teeth. It won't be long before your rams will need fly protection on their heads. Remember any fly strike or infection makes even the most expensive rams infertile!

- **It is not too early to start to plan your weaning paddocks**

Ensure they will be seed free. Grass seeds always badly compromise lamb growth rates. Start planning now to maximize your lamb growth rates from weaning and ensure they will have seed free quality grazing. This is best achieved by boxing mobs together post lambing and get some rotations happening, so you can eat off paddocks to improve pasture quality.

With best wishes,

Tom

Please see enclosed: Sires at The Mountain Dam ASBVs

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