

How to make it easy to buy rams to take your team forward!

As ram buyers every year you have to make the decision about which rams to buy to take your ram team forward.

So how do you ensure that you are buying rams this year that are better than those you have at home?

One of the easiest and simplest ways is to track the ram team that you put out for each joining. The best way to do this is to note the ID of the ram, his tag colour and the digits on his tag.

By knowing the IDs of the ram team you put out for joining you can look up the Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) of the team and monitor this over time. For example, if the average BLX index of the rams that you put out for the 2019 joining was 119, then come sale time, you will be looking to purchase rams that will take you forward. So, look for rams that have an index of 120 or greater. You can monitor your ram team averages over time for key traits that might be in your breeding objective or the BLX index. Key traits that you may wish to monitor could be Post-Weaning Weight (PWT), Post-Weaning Eye Muscle (PEMD) or Number of Lambs Weaned (NLW).

It is up to us, at New Armatree, to ensure that we are making genetic progress to ensure that the rams

that we offer at our sale every year are better than the previous year. This assists our ram buyers to buy rams with a higher genetic merit, hence taking their ram team average forward year on year. We also have to do this whilst ensuring that the rams on offer each year are structurally sound.

There are two easy ways that you can monitor your ram teams.

The first is by creating a RamSelect account (www.ramselect.com.au). This account is \$25 per year and all you have to provide is the IDs of the ram – it looks up the ASBVs for you and creates graphs of the genetic averages of your ram team.

The second option is that if you are interested please contact the team at New Armatree and we can do this for you – all you will need to do is provide an updated list of the rams that you currently have on farm, so that we can produce the average of this ram team for you before the sale. This will then allow you to use the averages to select new rams to add to your team that will take you forward.

If you have more questions about ram team tracking or what we can do for you at New Armatree please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Diverging Breeding Objectives: the show-ring vs reality

As touched on in the article *Breeding for resilience in dry times* at New Armatree we have a focus on breeding productive sheep, 'fit for purpose', in a commercial environment.

Part of this includes putting pressure on breeding a moderate framed sheep with a capped adult body weight. The BLX index also penalises animals with a high adult weight with the aim being to maintain it at current levels.

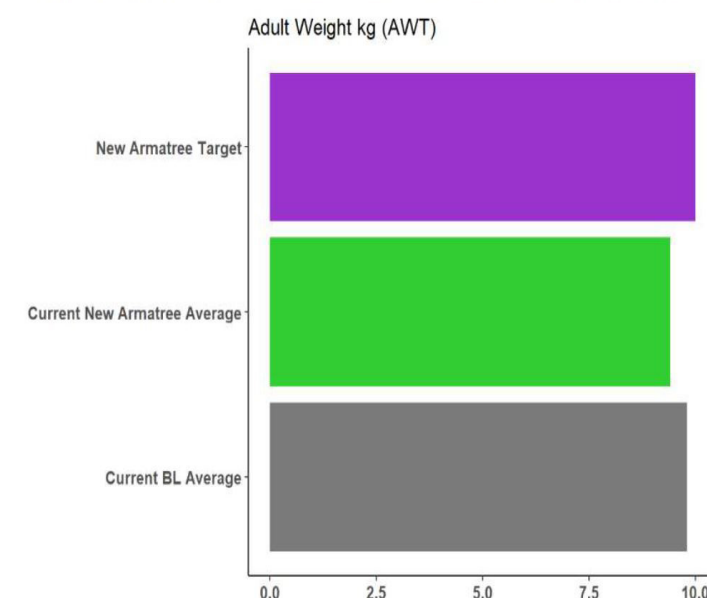
There are many advantages of breeding sheep with moderate adult weight, mainly being reduced feed costs (particularly important in current conditions) and easier handling.

Unfortunately, not all of industry have taken this approach to sheep breeding and are blinded by the show ring perceptions. This was recently highlighted in a social media post from another Border Leicester breeder that read, "Shearing the Border Rams. We need to breed them bigger for the show ring, the problem being someone has to shear them!"

It was disappointing to see how some in the industry are still focused on the commercial irrelevance of the show ring. However, this post reminds us that we are doing the right thing by including adult weight in our

breeding objective. See our breeding objective below for adult weight (please be aware that we are above breed average for growth and reproduction while maintaining adult weight).

Adult Weight Breeding Objective: to maintain adult weight and to not exceed an ASBV of 10kg



The Genetic Advantage



NEWSLETTER January 2020

Welcome to the January 2020 newsletter.

To say 2019 was a trying time would be an understatement, I won't dwell on the past but look forward to what 2020 will bring.

We remain committed to producing rams that are 'fit for purpose'. What is the meaning of 'fit for purpose'? Craig and I believe that our rams must be structurally sound and carry genetics (ASBVs) above breed average. Genetics that are **balanced** and meet our breeding objectives are what we are striving to achieve. Our breeding objectives have been outlined in previous editions of our newsletters. These newsletters are archived on our web site newarmatree.com.au.

Our Breeding Objectives revolve around a balance of ASBVs resulting in a sheep that carries muscle and fat, one where adult body weight is limited and not too extreme; a sheep that is strong in regard to post weaning weight, but maintains meat eating quality and yield within the carcass. In addition, a ewe that gets in lamb and can successfully rear those lambs year on year. Not much to ask!

In this newsletter we will deep dive into Adult Body Weight (Awt) and New Armatree's breeding objective to see how this space is changing and becoming an important trait to consider for us the stud/seedstock breeder and how that will carry over to you, the ram buyer and commercial producer.

We will also introduce our ram team to be used for our 2020 joining (see page 3).

The 2019-drop of ram lambs has hit all our growth targets to date despite the challenging season and will be available for sale on 10th September 2020.

First-cross ewe prices continue to break records around the country. To date, good genetics hasn't cost additional dollars even though the benefits are enormous to the producer. I am not sure how long this scenario will continue for as slowly but surely more interest is shown in sheep with known genetic measurement.

We wish you all the best for the coming 12 months and hope that the rainfalls and that the sheep prices stay high!

Jenny Bradley

SAVE THE DATE

12th ON PROPERTY RAM SALE
Thursday, 10th September 2020

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Breeding for resilience in dry times

The ram selection decisions that you make can influence how easy it is to manage your 1st cross progeny in dry times. Selecting for carcass traits such as Post-Weaning Eye Muscle Depth (PEMD) and Fat (PFAT) make it easier to get animals up to condition and maintain condition, which is particularly important under the current conditions.

Looking at raw data for these traits does not give you an indication of the genetic potential of an animal for muscle and fat because the bigger animals generally have more muscle. By using ASBVs for PEMD and PFAT, which are based on data collected on the animals using an ultrasound scan, this information, unlike the raw data

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that is often displayed at shows and at some sales, is adjusted for body weight and also takes into account the environment that animal was raised in (e.g. birth type, date of birth). This means that the ASBV for these traits tells you about the genetics the animal has that will be passed on to its progeny.

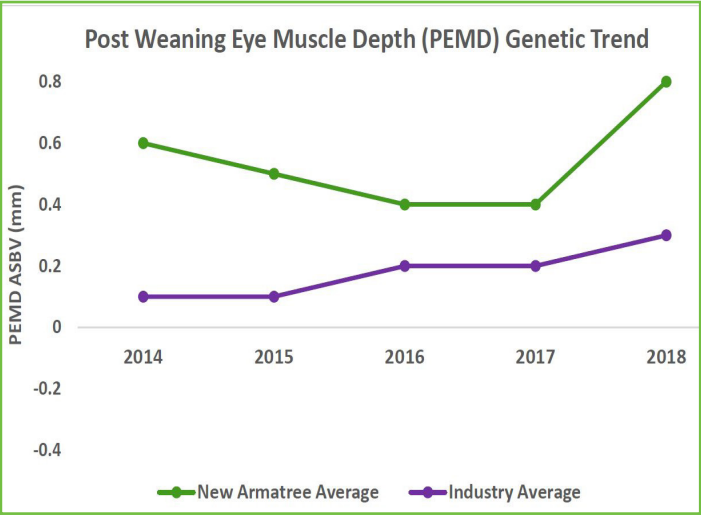
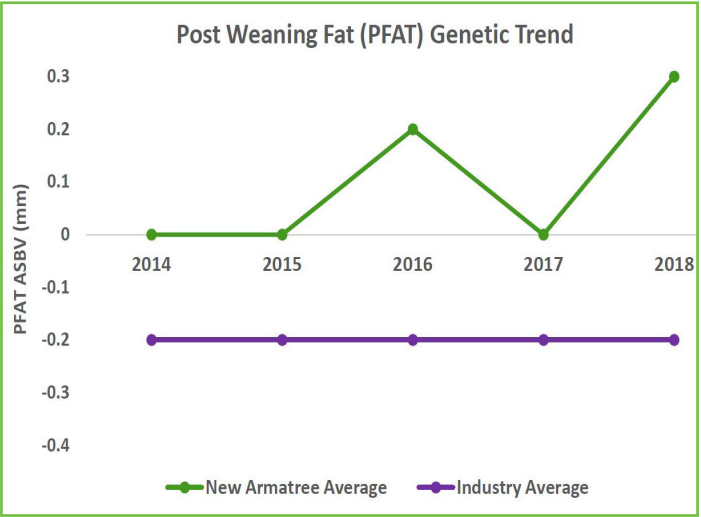
We have had a focus on breeding for these traits for a number of years and are well above industry average for both these traits as shown in the following graphs.

At New Armatree we also see the benefit of selecting for PEMD and PFAT in our stud ewes. As pictured, the mixed age stud ewes have been running in a stubble paddock with no grain on the ground and have been fed 300g/head/day. These ewes have had this ration since late October 2019 and are averaging a CS >3.5. We are currently reducing the ration to get the ideal CS on these ewes prior to joining.

It is important to remember that whilst selecting



for PFAT and PEMD in your ram buying decisions it pays to balance this with other traits of importance such as Birth Weight (BWT) and Number of Lambs Weaned (NLW).



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SuperBorder\$

Every two or three years, the SuperBorder group runs a Genetic Improvement Program (GIP).

The program involves selecting 4 high performance rams from studs within the group for use via Artificial Insemination programs across most SuperBorder studs.

Each participating stud is allocated semen from two of the four rams. These selections are made by Sheep Genetics to help achieve maximum genetic gain and across flock linkages which helps improve ASBV accuracies for all studs involved.

This year we have had one of our young rams selected to take part in the program. Ram 18-0116 will be used in 5 other SuperBorder flocks as well as the MLA Resource Flock and a couple of other Border Leicester studs in South Australia and Victoria. We are pretty pleased to have had this guy selected as he is currently in the top 5% of the breed based on his BLX index. He will have progeny in this year’s sale as he was joined to 45 ewes as a lamb last year.



New Armatree 2020 Sire Team

We are really pleased with the team of sires we have selected for the 2020 joining. The sires selected have a balance of traits and, as a team, they come close to, or exceed, our breeding objectives. Please note we have included the Breed Average at the bottom of the table, this average is of all other measured Border Leicesters on Lambplan.

The team is a young team with an average age of 2.2 years for the New Armatree bred sires, we generally try to use a young team as the younger sires should be genetically superior to the older rams.

We normally join in the last week of February with the rams out on the first of April, so a joining of approximately 5 weeks. A tight joining is advantageous in the collection of quality data.

The ram team will also be balanced and allocated ewes according to MateSel, the sheep ‘Tinder’ dating program that Craig will run prior to joining. See our past newsletters on our website for more information on the MateSel Program.

We are conducting a small AI program in 2020, the reasoning behind this program is outlined in the SuperBorder\$ article (page 2). Pictured is Tag 18-0184.



New Armatree Potential Sire Team 2020

Tag No.	Sire	Bwt	Mwwt	Wwt	Pwt	Awt	Pemd	Pfat	NLW	BLX
16-0093	15-0023	0.0	-0.4	5.2	8.9	13.2	2.1	1.6	17	134.1
18-0020	16-0324	0.3	0.2	7.4	11.1	13.5	0.3	0.1	13	129.5
18-0116	16-0093	0.6	0.9	8.0	12.2	12.5	1.1	-0.2	20	147.2
18-0160	16-0083	0.2	0.0	4.7	7.4	9.5	1.4	1.1	10	125.1
18-0184	15-0070	0.5	-0.2	7.1	10.8	12.8	0.8	-0.5	19	139.8
19-0012	18-0017	0.3	1.0	8.7	13.1	15.0	0.8	0.2	21	147.5
17-0404 (Ross)	Jackson 15-0060	0.24	0.4	4	6.7	9.4	0.5	-0.1	6	117.8
AI Wombooto 15-0021	Johnos 11-0083	0.35	0.3	5.9	9	10.8	1.1	0.1	19	140
AI Kegra 18-0060	Kegra 16-0058	0.4	1.3	8.8	12.9	15.1	0.3	-0.3	10	135.2
Team Average		0.3	0.4	6.6	10.2	12.4	0.9	0.2	15.0	135.1
Target BO		0.3	0.7		8.5	10	1	0.4	14	127.5
Breed Average		0.3	0.6	4.7	7.1	9.8	0.2	-0.2	7	117.2