



ASHMORE
WHITE SUFFOLKS
Genetics that Perform

NEWSLETTER

May 2015

2015 - A year full of BIG changes!

The first major change is that Troy has returned home to the farm full time. For the last decade or so, Troy has worked in variety of corporate roles managing research programs in the sheep, wool, grape and wine industries, most recently as the research manager for Jacobs Creek. Troy has been back on the farm since the start of April and appears to be loving every minute of it despite the complete absence of free wine!

The second major change is that we are in the process of putting electronic tags in all our sheep. This is not a new technology but we are excited to be implementing this.

All 2015 drop lambs will get an electronic tag at birth and all adult sheep on the farm will have an e-tag put in as well. This will allow us to improve the speed and accuracy of data collection and improve our animal handling efficiency, as being a stud we handle our sheep a LOT!

To complement the electronic tags and ensure we get the full benefit of this system another major change is that we have invested in an all in one auto drafter and pneumatic sheep handler made by the fencing and livestock yard company Clipex.

The main benefits are making sheep husbandry jobs faster, easier and reducing the amount of labour required to do many jobs. Examples follow:

- Automatically capturing weights and linking to tag number as the sheep run through at over 600 sheep per hour
- Finding say 10 rams out of a mob of 200 for a client who selected them based on our catalogue. This will take one pass

through the auto draft instead of taking literally hours to find the 10 selected rams.

- Drafting sheep becomes a 1 person job as the auto-drafter drafts the sheep based on weight, tag or some other status linked to tag in our database.
- Crutching using the tilt function in the pneumatic handler has to be easier than tipping 500 ewes x 100kg the old way! That's 50 ton of sheep!

We have also moved over to a new data recording program called "Breed Elite", which enhances our ability to record and report on Breeding Values – it will even work on an iphone. This is not something you, as a client will necessarily see, but for our sheep, who have upwards of 20 different traits recorded for every single animal, and with our numbers slowly increasing each year, it is imperative we maintain our accuracy and improve our ability to handle large amounts of data.

We plan to hold a field day later this year to demonstrate how systems like this work and what is relevant for the commercial sector – stay tuned for this!



The new sheep handler allows multiple jobs (e.g. crutch, vaccinate, drench, weigh) to be done easily in one quick pass reducing stress on the sheep and the operator

Carcase Feedback Trial

This year we thought that it would be a valuable learning exercise to track a run of our 2014 drop cull ewe lambs through an abattoir to monitor things like dressing percentage on individual lambs and GR tissue depth compared to the palpated fat score you get on the feedback sheet. This data can also be submitted to LAMBPLAN to provide more information on carcass traits.

During April we conducted an RFID hook tracking trial at Thomas Foods International (TFI) on 100 of our stud cull lambs. TFI had never done this before and had to source 100 carcass hooks with electronic capability as well as electronic readers to read the hooks at line speed.

All our sheep had electronic tags and using our portable e-tag reader we linked the data in the abattoir to the data on the live animal. Troy, Nette and Brian went to the works on the day of the trial to assist with data collection and ensure it ran to plan. If you have never been through a works it is certainly an eye opener!

What did we learn?

- Collecting data at line speed (1 animal every 10 seconds) is not as simple as it seems!
- The identity and order of each animal is easily lost as different parts of the carcass get cut off or the order of the carcasses changes during the slaughter process.

White Suffolks gearing up for branded lamb

The Australian White Suffolk Association is investigating a nationally branded lamb product to sell onto the domestic and international market. If successful this will represent a significant opportunity for commercial producers of Australian White Suffolk Lambs.

You have a chance to be part of the bigger picture!

Filling out the details via the internet link provided will allow the Association to scope the numbers, seasonal details, specifications and areas where White

- Carcass weight is recorded after trimming, so if you send in lambs and their dressed weights come back lower than expected, some of the lambs may have been trimmed for lesions caused by seeds, vaccination or pleurisy for example.

- There is a very weak correlation between manually palpated fat score (what you may get paid on) and GR tissue depth (what the customer sees). We believe the industry needs to continue to work towards an objective, reliable measure of fatness that works at line speed.



Nette with Adelaide Uni Student Jess, measuring GR tissue depth. Who knew hair nets and lab coats were back in fashion?!

Suffolk cross lambs are produced. This information will be treated confidentially and be only used for the coordination of this exciting program.

<http://www.whitesuffolk.com/pages/commercial-register.php>



Be sure to mark **Monday 28th of September** on your calendar, the date of our **Annual Ram Sale – 150 rams will be offered this year**. All the very best for the coming season.

www.ashmorewhitesuffolks.com