

95/V02



Producer Research Support

Corriedale breeders move to entrench LAMBPLAN gains

Australian Corriedale Association



The project

The Australian Corriedale Association is encouraging its members to record the performance of their sheep on LAMBPLAN by the year 2000, as a result of their Producer Research Support Project.

According to the association's Future Directions Committee chairman Peter Munro, those who have taken up the challenge and are performance recording on LAMBPLAN are making very positive genetic gains.

"I am sure others will be drawn into performance recording as they see the gains made by breeders," Mr Munro said.

The project identified current genetic improvements and initiatives being undertaken by individual breeders. The breeders also made an evaluation of options such as Central Progeny and Performance Testing schemes, CT Scanning, Gene/Breed Importation etc. Their work program included an evaluation of LAMBPLAN for paternal and maternal recording and determination of a costing for workable options and development of an approach to genetic improvement, which will meet breeders' needs and budgets.

The project also assessed breed average performance levels for all traits contributing to income and cost, and compared performance with key competitors.

Objectives

1. Identify breeding objectives and the options available currently to meet these objectives;
2. Assess the current and potential measurement and recording structures within the breed to identify what information is available and what needs to be obtained; and
3. Identify the means to standardise.

What was done

The ewe production trial

At the ewe production trial five ewe hoggets were entered and run together and joined.

At the time of shearing, weighing and scanning a field day was held to show how the trial was running. This proved to be a valuable showcase for the Corriedale breed. Body weight, fleece weight and pregnancy rates were recorded.

The trial concluded at the Melbourne Sheep Show where the sheep with the best figures were rewarded, and judged for soundness etc. Unfortunately the trial was abandoned after two years due to concerns about Ovine Johnes Disease.

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Contact details

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Key points

- Corriedale lambs can equal other breeds for growth and carcase when put into the correct weight ranges.
- The number of Corriedales recorded on LAMBPLAN rose to 31,678 at the project's end.
- Corriedale breeders are working toward new marketing programs for performance measured sheep to ensure their future.

Producer Research Support

MLA Producer Research Support offers support funding of up to \$15,000 over three years for groups of producers keen to be active in on-farm research and demonstration trials.

These activities include:

- Producer Initiated Research and Development
- More Beef from Pastures demonstration trials
- Prime Time Wean More Lambs demonstration trials
- Sustainable and productive grazing grants.

Contact Stephen Feighan - MLA Project Manager, Producer Delivery and Adoption.

Tel (02) 9463 9245 or
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The Maternal Sire Progeny Test

The association made sure that Corriedale sheep were represented in the Maternal Sire Progeny Test being run by the departments of agriculture in Victoria and NSW. New classes have been developed for un-housed rams with LAMBPLAN data.

New classes for un-housed rams

Hamilton's SheepVention has run a class for the past two years, for three un-housed rams, with across-flock LAMBPLAN data being the main criteria for judging. At the 1999 Melbourne Sheep Show a class for un-housed rams over 1.5 years and under 2.5 years was judged on the basis of 60 points for across-flock data and 40 points for breed type and structure. These classes are designed to stimulate interest from stud and commercial breeders alike.

National prime lamb carcase competition

The Corriedale Association organised the National Prime Lamb carcase competition to run in conjunction with the lamb carcase competition at Hamilton's Beef Expo. The competition was for pure Corriedale lambs and Corriedale cross lambs. The lambs were run together on a lupin stubble for 10 weeks. Breeders had to nominate the weight classes their lambs were to be entered in, the day of slaughter.

What happened?

The number of Corriedales recorded on LAMBPLAN in May 1996 was 11,884. This had risen to 31,678 animals at the close of the project. Breeders were also working towards having higher Corriedale weaning percentages than competitor breeds.

"As times goes by the LAMBPLAN figures will lead us to the genetics within the breed that will accelerate the gains that will achieve this goal," Mr Munro said.

He said the numbers recorded on LAMBPLAN would also identify the genetics to enable the establishment of a young sire reference scheme, which would further accelerate gains within the Corriedale. The notes from the project's workshops - distributed to all stud breeders - are a good reference document that will stimulate renewed interest in performance recording.

"This Producer Research Support project has seen the Future Directions Committee and the Corriedale Association organise competitions and field days to stimulate interest in performance recording for both stud and commercial breeders."



MLA also recommends **Sheep Genetics Australia**

Sheep Genetics Australia (SGA) is the national genetic evaluation service for the Australian sheep industry. It is built around the world's most comprehensive sheep genetics database, and will deliver genetic information on a fee-for-service basis.

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Discussion

While the Association ran a Corriedale competition, the lambs were also entered in the open competition.

"It proved that Corriedale lambs can match it with other breeds when put into the correct weight ranges and provided there is good publicity for the breed, as well as a training platform for the 10 breeders who entered," Mr Munro said.

The Corriedale Association has also established an appendix to the Flock Register. Draft regulations have been circulated for 18 months.

While concentrating on promoting genetic improvement for the Corriedale, and having identified the priorities in that area, the Future Directions Committee saw the need to spend some time with breeders to show them how to sell their sheep more effectively, as well as developing a strategy for marketing Corriedale sheep and produce.

"The seminar held in July 1996 was well attended with breeders from four states attending. They were able to listen to and work with well know editors and marketers, who showed us how to write press releases and develop eye catching advertisements," Mr Munro said.

The marketing strategy to take the Corriedale breed into the future was completed in December 1997.

Mr Munro said it was hoped marketing opportunities for breeders or groups of breeders for wool, lamb, store and prime stock through alliances could be developed.