

BREEDPLAN and Sheep Genetics Governance –Technical and Advisory Committees

Terms of Reference (TOR) – October 2019

Together, University of New England (UNE), NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSWDPI) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) (all three organisations together known as the ‘Owners’) have had a long research partnership spanning over 35 years, which has developed the BREEDPLAN and OVIS Analytical Software responsible for the Australian genetic evaluation systems applied to cattle, goats and sheep under BREEDPLAN and Sheep Genetics.

The current project “L.GEN.1704 - Advanced genetic evaluation tools and systems enabling faster and more valuable genetic gain in the red meat industries”, continues to enhance the genetic evaluation tools and systems used in both BREEDPLAN and Sheep Genetics. The project focuses on work to more fully utilise genomic information, develop improved methods of handling high frequency longitudinal data, allow inclusion of new traits, facilitate storage and utilisation of R&D data, facilitate diagnosis of performance recording issues and the effectiveness of breeding program implementation, and deliver high-level training and mentoring in diagnosis of and recommendations for breeding programs. Providing the basis for faster rates of genetic progress in beef and sheep, and underpinning planned integrated technology transfer activities.

To ensure that the further development of these national genetic evaluation systems continues to meet the needs of the industry, the Owners are implementing the following additions and/or modifications to the current governance structures;

- A new BREEDPLAN Executive Committee
- A combined BREEDPLAN & Sheep Genetics Technical
- A new BREEDPLAN Advisory Committee

The current Sheep Genetics Executive and Sheep Genetics Advisory Committees stay the same.

BREEDPLAN Executive Committee

The BREEDPLAN Executive Committee represents each of the Owners and the Licensee. The primary role of the Executive Committee is to;

- consider recommendations regarding developments and modifications to the Analytical Software from the Technical and Advisory Committees, along with the feasibility of implementation and viability of those suggested developments and modifications
- make recommendations to the Owners regarding the prioritisation and resourcing of further developments and modifications to the Analytical Software; and
- oversee the coordination and implementation of that modification or development.

BREEDPLAN & Sheep Genetics Technical Committee

1. Purpose

The role of the BREEDPLAN & Sheep Genetics Technical Committee (Technical Committee) is it to provide technical oversight of the research and development of the genetic evaluation systems. Providing peer review and advice of the R&D conducted under L.GEN.1704 as well as guidance on both current and future R&D from a technical perspective.

2. Objectives

The Technical Committee will:

- review and prioritise items on the proposed AGBU workplan for L.GEN.1704;
- identify and prioritise new opportunities arising from industry feedback and from similar research elsewhere (both in beef, sheep and in other species, locally and overseas) that are considered relevant to achieving the objectives of project L.GEN.1704, considering, amongst other criteria, likely industry return on investment;
- respond to feedback and guidance from the Executive Committee in relation to projects and priorities;
- provide technical guidance and review progress in each approved item against project KPIs, key priorities and performance measures set out in the L.GEN.1704 Work Plan agreed to by the Executive Committee;
- provide technical guidance and review of the implementation of new methods and tools into the BREEDPLAN and Sheep Genetics evaluations.

3. Terms of reference

MLA and the Executive Committee recognise that the field of technical specialists who may join the Technical Committee is limited and, as such, may be engaged in work within their employer's organisation that may align or be considered by the Technical Committee. In forming recommendations to the Executive, members of the Technical Committee must focus on outcomes that provide the most benefit to the industry, even if this may at times conflict with their employer's goals or personal positions.

Convened and Administered by MLA, it is anticipated that the Technical Committee will:

- Meet at least three times per year and more frequently if required.
- Technically review feasibility of all requests from Owners, licensee/s and Industry for updating the Analytical software.
- Reporting to the MLA as administrator, the Technical Committee will consider suggested modifications from Industry and Breed Societies, channelled via the Executive, then make recommendations to MLA (and the Executive Committee) on feasibility and extent of work required to implement.
- The role of the Technical Committee will be to review maintenance objectives, recommend implementation pathways, timing requirements and assess the technical feasibility and prioritisation of suggested modifications/upgrades to the BREEDPLAN and OVIS Analytical Software. Then provide recommendations of the preceding to MLA.
- Review and make recommendations on cattle and sheep genetic information from National Livestock Genetics Consortium (NLGC) investment and other sources which could compliment or improve the BREEDPLAN and OVIS Analytical Software and industry objectives.
- fulfil any other function requested by the Executive Committee.

4. Technical Committee structure

The Technical Committee will comprise of an independent chairperson nominated by the Executive Committee, one representative from MLA, and one representative from each of the genetic evaluation licensees. Its remaining membership will consist of 5 Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU) representatives, 5 external technical representatives and 2 breeder representatives (1 sheep and 1 beef industry) selected on a skills basis and appointed by the Executive Committee.

There is no set tenure for members.

The Technical Committee, with agreement from the Executive Committee, may invite others as observers to provide information or advice on specific issues. This may include members of the BREEDPLAN and Sheep Genetics Advisory Committees or NLGC Taskforce.

5. Meetings

The Technical Committee must meet at least 3 times each year and more frequently as required. The meeting may be in person or via teleconference.

The quorum of the Committee will be a representative from MLA and licensees, at least 50% of the AGBU representatives and selected representatives, and either the Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson.

When formulating advice to MLA, the Technical Committee will ensure that the views of all members will be sought and respected on the matters under review; and that where decisions are taken, they will be made by majority. MLA is responsible for final approval of milestones and payments.

Each Member shall bear the costs and expenses associated with the attendance at meetings of the Technical Committee, with the exception of the independent chairperson who may be paid a sitting fee commensurate with their skills and experience and the breeder representatives who may be paid in accordance with MLA sitting fee policy.

The Technical Committee may make recommendations to the Executive Committee for scientists working on associated genetics projects to be invited to attend and participate in meetings of the Technical Committee as required.

The process for reporting and managing 'conflicts of interest' will be emphasised at meetings. Any declarations are required to be reported in Minutes.

6. Access to information and advice

The Technical Committee may obtain information on request through staff of MLA as it considers necessary for the performance of its role and responsibilities.

7. Reporting

The work of the Technical Committee is advisory to MLA and the Executive Committee and all media enquiries received by Technical Committee members should be conveyed to the Executive Committee and MLA's Media Manager or General Manager, Producer Consultation & Adoption in person or by telephone. Non-urgent media enquiries can be notified by email.

8. Technical Committee longevity

The Technical Committee is being established on a trial basis. After a 12 month period the Technical Committee will undergo a review to assess whether its continuation is justified.

9. Secretariat / Administration

MLA will provide secretarial support for the Technical Committee.

Agenda and briefing papers will be despatched at least seven days prior to meetings and minutes will be circulated within two weeks of a meeting. All substantive agenda items for each meeting must be accompanied by written papers. Progress reports from AGBU staff will be provided in a format to be decided by the Technical Committee Members.

A minimum of three meetings will be held per annum. The Committee may meet in person or via teleconference.

With MLA inviting participation in this Committee, costs other than member attendance costs will be met by MLA.

10. Review

MLA and the Executive Committee may review these TORs from time to time to keep them up to date and consistent with the Technical Committee's role and advice that may be provided by the Technical Committee.

BREEDPLAN Advisory Committee

1. Purpose

The BREEDPLAN Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) is the forum for Industry representatives to provide program oversight and feedback on major policy decisions to MLA and the Executive in relation to the BREEDPLAN genetic evaluation system. The Advisory Committee's role is to provide advice in the form of recommendations.

2. Objectives

The Advisory Committee will;

- Proactively communicate and represent the views and requirements of BREEDPLAN clients, potential clients and the wider beef industry to MLA and the Executive Committee,
- Ensure that the BREEDPLAN Operational Plan meets the needs of industry.
- Review annual operational performance and consider the need for additional services.
- Respond to feedback and guidance from the Executive Committee in relation to projects and priorities.
- Provide guidance and representation of industry receptiveness to implementation of new methods and tools into the BREEDPLAN genetic evaluation (ie. New traits and software upgrades).

3. Terms of reference

In forming recommendations to the Executive Committee, members of the Advisory Committee must focus on outcomes that provide the most benefit to the industry, even if this may at times conflict with their employer's goals or personal positions.

Specifically, the Advisory Committee is required to undertake the following activities:

- Proactively communicate and represent the views and requirements of BREEDPLAN clients, potential clients and the wider beef industry in relation to the operations and future development needs of BREEDPLAN, through
 - interaction and communication with the MLA, AGBU and Agricultural Business Research Institute (ABRI) team members; and
 - seeking industry feedback or solutions to Committee agenda items and strategic challenges.
- Periodically review the implementation of the BREEDPLAN Business and Operational Plans with specific attention to the following items;
 - key performance indicators for BREEDPLAN;
 - relevance of BREEDPLAN products and services offered to clients;
 - future products and services of BREEDPLAN with specific attention to the development and incorporation of new features and services, including the incorporation of new traits and indexes, into the BREEDPLAN service;
 - technical performance of BREEDPLAN including implementation and continual review of the technical strategy, based on the advice of appropriate technical specialists, to ensure that BREEDPLAN service retains the confidence of industry;
 - review of quality assurance requirements of data that enter BREEDPLAN;
 - and

- marketing and extension strategies for BREEDPLAN.
- Respond to feedback and guidance from the Executive Committee in relation to projects and priorities;

4. Advisory Committee structure

The Advisory Committee will comprise of;

- an independent chairperson nominated by the Executive Committee,
- six actively breeding beef producers and industry representatives from a diverse industry base appointed by the Executive Committee on a skills basis,
- four breed association representatives appointed by the Executive Committee on a skills basis.

It is expected Advisory Committee members will be appointed for a minimum period of 3 years and a maximum of 6 years. The timing of any replacement or appointment will be at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

Up to two representatives from each of MLA and the licensee/s will attend Advisory Committee meetings with observer status to provide technical and operational guidance. Additional observers may be invited for specific purposes.

5. Meetings

The Advisory Committee must meet at least 3 times each year and more frequently as required. The meeting may be in person or via teleconference.

The quorum of the Committee will be an MLA and licensee/s representative, at least 50% of the producer and breed society representatives and either the Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson.

When formulating advice to MLA and the Executive, the Advisory Committee will ensure that the views of all members will be sought and respected on the matters under review; and that where decisions are taken, they will be made by majority. MLA is responsible for final approval of milestones and payments.

The process for reporting and managing 'conflicts of interest' will be emphasised at meetings. Any declarations are required to be reported in Minutes.

6. Access to information and advice

The Advisory Committee may obtain information on request through staff of MLA as it considers necessary for the performance of its role and responsibilities.

7. Reporting

The work of the Advisory Committee is advisory to MLA and the Executive and all media enquiries received by Advisory Committee members should be conveyed to the Executive and MLA's Media Manager or General Manager, Producer Consultation & Adoption in person or by telephone. Non-urgent media enquiries can be notified by email.

8. Advisory Committee longevity

The Advisory Committee is being established on a trial basis. After a 12-month period the Advisory Committee will undergo a review to assess whether its continuation is justified.

9. Secretariat / Administration

Licensee/s will provide secretarial support for the Advisory Committee.

Agenda and briefing papers will be despatched at least seven days prior to meetings and minutes will be circulated within two weeks of a meeting. All substantive agenda items for each meeting must be accompanied by written papers.

A minimum of three meetings will be held per annum. The Committee may meet in person or via teleconference.

With MLA inviting participation in this Committee, all reasonable travel and accommodation costs will be met by MLA.

10. Review

MLA and the Executive may review these TORs from time to time to keep them up to date and consistent with the Advisory Committee's role and advice that may be provided by the Advisory Committee.