



SIL Newsletter

MEAT & WOOL NZ

Genetics

Issue 9

Summer 2009

Welcome to this newsletter for SIL breeders and others in the sheep industry.

Farmers face many pressures at present. Given the global credit crisis, the least we can hope for is more favourable lending rates to help you but we also need good prices for lamb and wool to maximise the returns from these!

Some people argue strongly that the tough times are when it is more critical to maximize the gains you can make from ram purchases. A major goal for SIL in the next year is to increase understanding of SIL figures to help ram buyers to get the rams best suited to them of those on offer. We need to demystify the language and provide tools to help lift genetic gain.

Our top breeders are making excellent genetic gains. There will be a presentation on this at the New Zealand Society of Animal Production (NZSAP) conference in June at Lincoln University. And SIL is developing tools to give us more options when searching for top genetics, defined on your own terms.

The NZSAP conference in June provides a great opportunity to bring experts together to talk about issues we face in sheep breeding. SIL is putting on a practical workshop immediately after a conference session focused on SIL, for breeders and other interested parties. This will be of great value to anyone interested in sheep genetics.

Currently, SIL is developing a measurement protocol for the evaluation of ewe "stayability". We are also reviewing the Growth and Meat indexes so watch future newsletters for details.

Remember, if you have a question about SIL, leave a phone message (0800-silhelp) or drop us a line by email (silhelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz) and we will get back to you.

I hope this season brings all our SIL breeders better farming conditions – in meteorological, financial, production and animal health terms. Good luck.

Mark Young

In this newsletter we will cover:

- SIL focus at Animal Production conference, 25 June 2009
- "10 for 10 breeder workshop" update
- Ewe stayability update
- AgResearch Study - Ewe efficiency
- SAST - SIL-ACE Search Tool
- Goal trait group registration and blank DPOs

- SIL-enotes: Quick tip emails for Breeders
- Overall vs. Production indexes
- Quick Reminder: Brucellosis

Contact SIL

Phone: 0800 silhelp (0800 745 435)

Email: silhelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz

Website: www.sil.co.nz

SIL focus at Animal Production conference, 25 June 2009

SIL is the focus of a 2 hour contract session at the New Zealand Society of Animal Production conference at Lincoln University this year. Titled '10 years of SIL' this will cover various topics (see below). The full NZSAP conference runs from 24-26 June 2009 with Thursday 25 June the SIL focused day.

To capitalise on having experts and industry people in one place, SIL will run a "satellite" workshop for SIL breeders and ram buyers immediately after the contract session. The workshop is designed for SIL breeders and other interested people and will consist of presentations by various experts. It is also an opportunity for you to come and discuss key issues facing the sheep breeding industry.

We invite you to attend both the Contract and the Satellite Sessions on Thursday 25 June 2009.

Both sessions are of value to SIL breeders.

What's on the programme?

SIL contract: 1030-1230h - The programme includes topics on "rates of genetic gain in the NZ sheep industry", "increasing access to genetic information for sheep farmers", "developments in the meat industry" plus "how new DNA tests may impact on the industry". The contract session is part of the NZSAP conference programme, with a number of experts presenting.

SIL workshop: 1330-1630h - The programme comprises a number of presentations from experts involved with SIL, and some specific SIL presentations. It will include more applied topics and SIL will preview some new developments.

Contact us by telephone (0800-silhelp) or email (silhelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz) to register interest or if you want more information. We will send out official details of the programme and registration forms shortly.

Mark Young

10 for 10 Breeder Workshop update

In our last SIL newsletter we made an offer to run breeder workshops based on questions you as breeders wanted explained. These workshops were dependent upon the response we got from you, and unfortunately the response was not sufficient enough for us to develop and run the workshops.

We did however get some very good questions from the people that did reply to us and we thank them for their questions. We have taken the ideas from these questions and are incorporating them into our FAQs (frequently asked questions) and Tips section on our website. If you would like any more questions answered in this format please contact us.

The 10 for 10 workshop offer is still available to any group whom would like a workshop, but it would be a one off and not part of a national workshop series.

Georgie Walker

Ewe stayability update

In our previous SIL newsletter we mentioned that we are looking at introducing a new goal trait group for Stayability (or ewe longevity) – the length of time a ewe stays in the breeding flock and the reasons she leaves it. We have gathered information from various sources and thank breeders we received feedback & information from.

We are now analyzing the information gathered, and plan to release a practical, on-farm protocol to collect stayability data later this year. Basically, codes for reasons ewes leave the flock such as dying or being culled (and maybe why they don't make it into the flock).

Stayability is a complicated trait since there can be many reasons why a ewe "leaves" the flock. We will not be in a position to do a genetic evaluation of these data for some time, but it will be to your advantage to begin collecting data now so that you build up a bank of data.

Georgie Walker

AgResearch Study – Ewe efficiency

Grant Shackell from AgResearch is beginning a study on ewe efficiency and would like to work with some SIL breeders. We have included his questionnaire and a prepaid return envelope if you would like to take part in his study.

SAST - SIL-ACE Search Tool

SIL is developing a tool to search through the large SIL-ACE evaluation and report on animals that meet specific selection criteria. This heralds a new step forward in the use of SIL-ACE information and empowers breeders and buyers by providing them with a means to search through large volumes of data to find animals that suit their breeding objectives. The user will define balance in the traits and animals matching these criteria will be reported back.

This tool will be used over the internet and any user can search through the latest SIL-ACE evaluation and print out results of their search.

SIL plans to premier the first version of this tool at the SIL workshop held during the NZSAP conference at Lincoln University, on Thursday 25 June 2009. Information on how to use the tool will be available on the SIL website.

What this means for SIL-ACE participating breeders

Currently, breeders participating in the SIL-ACE and MWNZ CPT evaluations have agreed that SIL can make available to the public, information on their better animals based on SIL-type indexes. For the SIL-ACE Search Tool (SAST) to be effective, it needs to be able to search through and report on ALL animals. This means animals that are not your best, but which suit another breeder's or a buyer's needs, can be found quickly and easily.

SIL intends changing the arrangement we have with these breeders so that the SAST can search through and report on all animals in the SIL-ACE evaluation.

You do not have to do anything now.

SIL will send a letter to all participating flock owners giving them the option to opt-out of SIL-ACE if they do not agree to the SAST being able to report on any animal from their flock. SIL is confident that breeders have far more to gain than to lose with this change.

Haven't we seen this all before?

Yes! the beef industry has a tool called Internet Solutions that allows such searches. For those of you familiar with that tool, the SAST will be easy to pick up.

Watch out for more information on the SAST development in upcoming newsletters and on the SIL website.

Mark Young

Goal trait group registration and blank DPOs

Late in 2008 the goal trait registration (GTReg) system was enabled on the SIL system. GTReg currently applies to three goal trait groups:

- Resistance to Internal Parasites (WormFec)
- Resilience to Internal Parasites
- Tolerance to Facial Eczema (RamGuard)

Why?

The reason registration has been implemented is so that SIL can produce robust genetic valuations for these traits where it is critical to follow strict measurement protocols. Often these involve specific quality control steps in the processing of samples collected on farm or close supervision of the testing environment. Data collected by non-accredited methods can bias SIL genetic evaluations. AgResearch is the service provider for each of these three goal trait groups which provide a special focus in the Health area. SIL licenses the genetic evaluation method for these traits from the 3rd party service provider.

In summary:

- Flocks must be registered with a 3rd party service provider for SIL to perform genetic evaluations of specific goal trait groups.
- For within flock reports, BVs and indexes will not be reported for traits a flock is not registered for. Indexes containing registered BVs will be blank for non-registered flocks.
- For across-flock reports, this restriction is relaxed in some situations where animals from unregistered flocks have relatives in registered flocks.
- SIL recommends modifying reports by taking using Production indexes instead of Overall indexes (e.g. DPP vs. DPO) and adding sub-indexes for the registered traits in situations where some flocks are registered for these traits but others are not (see article on Overall vs. Production indexes).

Mark Young & Georgie Walker

SIL-eNotes: Quick tip emails for Breeders

Hopefully many of you will have received a SIL-eNote in your email inbox and know what these are about – if you haven't, please read on!

SIL-eNotes have been created to give you some quick tips and reminders on how to get the best out of performance recording and genetic evaluations with SIL. They will be timed with what is happening on the farm (slightly tricky between North and South Island but we will do our best!). We aim to make the emails short and to the point. As with everything we can be contacted for further information on each topic.

For you as a SIL breeder to receive the SIL-eNotes, we are legally required to have a request from you in order to add you to the SIL-eNote address list for the future. You will be able to easily stop these at a later date if you no longer want to receive them.

Hopefully those that received the February 09 SIL-eNote email, and want to continue to do so, have replied and asked to be added to our address list. **If you don't reply we will not send you any more SIL-eNotes.** You can register for the e-Notes at anytime.

If you have not already received the February 09 SIL-eNote by email, we have either got an incorrect email address or no email address for you on the main SIL database. You can contact your bureau to update or add your email address on the main SIL system.

If you want to receive SIL eNotes by email, please send an email message to silhelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz with the words "Subscribe eNote" and one of your SIL flock numbers or SIL owner code in the subject line. Simple as that!

SIL-eNotes will be posted on our SIL website, where they

will stay indefinitely. If you do not have access to email or the internet, your bureau may be able to post you hard copy as an additional service for a small charge.

See the yellow attachment in this newsletter of the SIL-eNote February 2009: Important Mating Tips. *Please note:* Future SIL-eNotes will be not always be published in this format.

Georgie Walker

Overall vs. Production indexes

Some of you may wonder why some breeders use a DPO while others use a DPP. These are both "combined trait" indexes that characterize overall genetic merit across a number of different traits. "Overall" indexes (ending in the letter "O") draw together genetic information for all traits in a genetic evaluation that are relevant for that sheep type. "Production" indexes (ending in the letter "P") are the same except they do NOT include Health traits (e.g. WormFEC, Dag score, Resilience, or Facial eczema).

So if a genetic evaluation considers Growth, Meat, Wool and Reproduction, then the DPO and the DPP will be identical, combining information from all 4 goal trait groups (sub-indexes) evaluated. In contrast, a DPO is not the same as a DPP if the traits evaluated are Growth, Wool, Reproduction and WormFEC (resistance to internal parasites). The DPO will use information from all four trait groups but the DPP will not include information from WormFEC traits.

Mark Young

Quick Reminder: Brucellosis

Sire rams should be tested annually for Brucellosis, and rams sold or bought should be from brucellosis accredited flocks. Rams infected with Brucellosis can have reduced fertility, be completely infertile, cause abortion in ewes or produce small weak lambs. Infected rams can spread the disease with direct contact with others or via ewes.

Contact your SIL bureau:	Bureau:	Contact:	Phone:
	The New Zealand Animal Breeding Trust	Clare Callow / Barbara Beckett	06 354-9119 / 04 526-8497
	FlockLinc	Chris Logan	03 325-3838 (extn 8620)
	Geneplan	Alan Warren	03 688-1131
	Genetic Gains	Julia Aspinall	03 216-3455
	Livestock Administration & Account Services	Joanne Pinfold / Christine Ramsay	06 323-4156
	NZ Performance Sheep Breeders	Murray Meads / Linda Shailer	06 323-4484
	NZ Performance Recording Services Ltd	Ken Moore	03 338-8078
	NZ Sheepbreeders Association	Lyndsay Gough	03 358-9412