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SHEEP



## **Sheep Breeders' Roadshow update**

The B+LNZ Genetics team – including Chairman Chris Kelly and other board members – were on the road this month, catching up with breeders as part of the Sheep Breeders' Roadshow.

There were updates on key topics covered during the Sheep Breeder Forum: Single Step, Meat Module, Wool Module, nProve, Genotyping and Progeny Tests.

More than 90 breeders attended across the four locations and there was a lot of good discussion. As a result of roadshow feedback, the newly-introduced Meat Module is being re-adjusted. See story below.

Thanks to all the breeders who came out and got involved.

[Video: Sheep Breeders' Roadshow 24 October Livestream](#)



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## Single Step and the new Meat Module

The new Meat Module is now set up in SIL with Single Step.

Following feedback during this month's Sheep Breeders' Roadshow, we are making some changes to how the Meat Module feeds into the Growth and Meat sub-indexes.

### Background

The Meat Module was updated to reflect that today's lamb carcasses are now heavier, with proportionally more lean tissue and less fat than a 1988 carcass, which provided the carcass information used to develop the first module in 1995. This revised module draws on ultrasound, CT scanning and meat processor data to provide more accurate Carcass Weight predictions.

The new Meat Module was launched on 28 September and saw Carcass Weight have a relatively big impact on Growth, and a relatively small impact on Meat.

### Roadshow feedback

Breeders told us the impacts on Growth and Meat did not feel intuitive and we have taken that on board. As a consequence, Carcass Weight predictions based on Liveweight measures will continue to feed into the Growth sub-index. While Carcass Weight predictions based on meat measures (ultrasound, CT scanning and processor data) will feed into the Meat sub-index.

### More information to come

The next issue of Good Acid will contain more information on the Meat Module and the changes made, post Roadshow. We are also putting together a video that will address questions people may have around the details of the module.

In the meantime, if you have a query, please email [SilHelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz](mailto:SilHelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz)

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## The new Single Step NZGE: What's the latest?

The new Single Step NZGE and the old NZGE evaluations will run in parallel until the end of 2018.

Single Step NZGE (with the new Meat Module) is running every week, while the old NZGE (with the old Meat Module) is running fortnightly.

The old NZGE run schedule is:

- 9 November
- 23 November
- 7 December
- 21 December

Expect NZGE results to be available on SIL by Tuesday mornings. This is one day later than previously, to allow for any unforeseen eventualities. If the evaluation run is less time intensive than anticipated, we will release results as soon as they are available. The release time will be reviewed later in the year and any further changes circulated.

### **Genotype inclusion**

Single Step NZGE currently includes genotypes from Maternal flocks only. Terminal breeders will still use the Single Step genetic evaluation which includes the new Meat Module, however, this will not include genomic information. Inclusion of Terminal flock Sire genotypes is being worked on and may result in running a separate Terminal Sire evaluation.

### **eBVs vs gBVs**

Because Single Step integrates phenotypes (measured traits) with genomic information, it does not report eBVs - only gBVs. This is a significant and exciting milestone for New Zealand's sheep flock.



### **Docking time at WRIG**

It was docking time last month at B+LNZ Genetics' Wairarapa Romney Improvement Group (WRIG) site near Masterton.

WRIG's George Williams says there is plenty of feed under foot and he's expecting good lamb growth right up to weaning this month.

B+LNZ Genetics National Sheep Genetics Manager Dr Annie O'Connell is looking forward to seeing parentage results in coming weeks. "It will be interesting to see which sires have the most surviving lambs under these commercial conditions and which have the heavier lambs. "We have the predictions from breeding values and now it's time to see how that pans out under truly commercial conditions. Will we see genetics by environment interactions? How big are the effects?"

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## Video: The impact of CT data

In this 20-minute video, Dr Neville Jopson (AbacusBio) discusses the impact of CT data on across-flock evaluations.

The video has been produced in response to breeder questions around the impact of CT data on NZTW values. Specifically, breeders have observed:

- Flock averages appearing to increase, even if only small numbers of animals have been CT scanned, and
- Individual ram index values increasing by extreme amounts.

[Watch video now](#)

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## Two Sheep Progeny Test properties phase out

We say good bye to two Sheep Progeny Test sites this spring – the Poukawa Hub site in Hawke's Bay and the Next Generation site Onslow View in Central Otago.

### Onslow View

Onslow View's addition to the test in 2013 marked a significant change in the 15-year-old progeny test's history. It was the first time a new property had been added to the original line up of three lowland properties, and it was the first time rams had been tested on a hill country site.

The 3100ha dryland property is owned by EGL Pastoral Group. Onslow View sits above Millers Flat and runs up into tussock country on the skyline. It runs 10,000 breeding ewes (finishing the lambs), 350 breeding cows and 1000 finishing cattle.

The specific purpose of the Onslow View site was to measure if there was a genetic vs environment (GxE) impact on rams' rankings, moving them from an easy lowland environment, to a commercial hill country environment. The final lambing was in 2016 and the female progeny are still being measured for reproductive traits. Results will be out early next year.

### Poukawa

Poukawa is also wrapping up this season, with last of the test lambs born back in 2015. The final reproductive information is being gathered this spring.

The decision to phase out of Poukawa was driven partly by budget and partly by the property's very early mating, which made it difficult for South Island rams to participate.

NB: The Hub site Ashley Dene in Canterbury was phased out in 2016 with animals joining to the Woodlands' flock which has also been moved to AgResearch's Invermay site.

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## Introducing Ram4Ram

Ram4Ram compares the difference in profit two rams will deliver over their lifetimes, based on their NZMW and NZTW indexes.

It is a great tool to use with your commercial clients to highlight the true value of superior rams.

For example, the better ram may be \$200 more expensive. Ram4Ram crunches the numbers - based on your client's production goals - and tells them how many more dollars that ram will make them.

[Launch Ram4Ram calculator](#)

## Genotyping options

A reminder that you're no longer restricted to genotyping with Zoetis, only. The exclusive license expired 1 Oct, 2018. B+LNZ Genetics is lab agnostic and accepts genotypes from both Zoetis and GenomNZ.

BEEF



## B+LNZ Genetics' new look beef programme

The original B+LNZ Genetics Beef Progeny Test is in its fifth year and some significant changes are being made.

### Test categories

The Dairy Beef Progeny Test has been incorporated into the Beef Test – rather than standing alone – and is being run on Landcorp's Renown Farm near Taupo. So, now the single Beef Progeny Test is split into three categories:

- Maternal
- Terminal and
- Dairy Beef

B+LNZ Genetics General Manager Graham Alder says the Terminal and Dairy Beef categories are now open to all breeds. "Over all three categories, this year's sire intake involves 52 sires, 11 breeds and more than 3200 cows.

### **Hub sites**

Taking a leaf out of the successful B+LNZ Genetics Sheep Progeny Test, the beef test has moved to a Hub and Next Generation model.

The hub farms are: Whangara Farms, Tautane, Rangitaiki, Mendip Hills Stations and Renown Farm. Caberfeidh Station is no longer inseminating cows, but is still involved in the test, as we follow the remaining four cohorts of progeny.

### **Next Generation commercial herds**

Graham says that, after five years, the test is ready to leave home and head out into the wider world. To that end, B+LNZ Genetics is beginning to work with and develop the next generation of top farmer breeders to create a new source of genetic data for industry use.

### **Why the changes?**

The introduction of commercial herds provides new sources of genetic data for wider industry to draw on, says Graham. "It also provides an opportunity to demonstrate the power of genetic tools now available, and an extension platform for other farmers".

"Meanwhile, the hubs provide an elite reference resource for investigating and developing new and novel traits, as well as genomic and phenotypic data collection and connectivity between sires."

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## **Fine tuning heifer mating**

This 'Birth to first pregnancy' guide is only two pages long, yet contains a wealth of information. The priority is to get heifers in calf EARLY. Also watch the Heifer Mating Carpool Karaoke video (filmed for the Virtual Beef Breeder Forum 2018, featuring B+LNZ Genetics' Max Tweedie and AbacusBio's Dr Jason Archer), which is full of great information.

[Download 'Birth to first pregnancy' guide](#)

[Watch Heifer Mating Carpool Karaoke](#)



## **Virtual Beef Breeder Forum 2018: How did it go?**

The forum attracted 205 registrations, which translated into 131 attendees – a 64% attendance. (We were told to expect 20-30% at a free event.) The 5 "live" sessions attracted 50-80 views each, over the two nights of the forum. The 12 on demand sessions attracted low numbers of views via the conference platform, but got much higher views, when moved onto YouTube and promoted via Facebook.

### **Most popular presentations**

- Beef Progeny Test: A frank conversation with the men at the coalface (BPT managers' panel) – 264 views
- EQ hit rates: From Dunce to Dux (James van Bohemen, Rangitaiki Station) – 158 views
- Genomics is here: Get with the programme? (Bull breeders Jono Reed and Bryan Bendall) – 157 views
- Crossbred bulls: Are they the future? (Matthew Cleveland and Bill Cornell, ABS Global) – 140 views

*[NB : Total views across both the conference platform and YouTube, as at 24 October.]*

You can still watch any of the forum presentations via YouTube at

[www.whatsfordinner2028.co.nz](http://www.whatsfordinner2028.co.nz)

### **Will we attempt a virtual forum again?**

The feedback was positive – from both attendees and presenters – and we will likely consider a similar style of event in a couple of years. It wasn't less expensive than hosting an event alongside Beef Expo, but the noteworthy advantages were (a) that anyone could attend, regardless of their geographical location in New Zealand and (b) we were able to draw on some very good international speakers.

EVENT



## **B+LNZ Genetics First to Market Field Day**

**Tuesday 20 November**

**Horizon Farming's Maraetotara Farm**

**1262 Maraetotara Road, Havelock North**

*[NB We had the incorrect date in the previous Good Acid.]*

10.30am - 12pm: Breeder meeting

1pm - 4.30pm: Commercial farmer field day

If you are in or near Hawke's Bay, come along to this field day for the Terminal Sire Progeny Test at Maraetotara Farm.

You will see lambs born this spring from sires originating from 17 different breeding operations. They will be processed through Progressive Meats' grading system and measured for eating quality and yield.

This Next Generation progeny test project is supported by our partners Progressive Meats Ltd, Horizon Farming and FMG.

**Register now**

[Breeder meeting](#)

## [Commercial farmer field day](#)

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The team (from left): General Manager Graham Alder, IT Programme Manager David Campbell, Lead Scientist Dr Michael Lee, Science Manager Eleanor Linscott, Genetic Evaluation Technical Manager Sharon McIntyre, Sheep Genetics Manager Dr Annie O'Connell, Beef Genetics Manager Max Tweedie, Genetic Systems Analyst Jacqui Edwards and Office Administrator Pam Schofield.

[More information about team](#)

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