

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5, AUGUST 2022

With the consistent wet weather continuing this year, we have faced some challenging feed conditions for sheep with too much lush growth and little dry matter to balance it. Many of our mobs are on grazing canola or wheat crops and we have made use of grain on hand and mineral supplements, particularly for our lambing ewes, to help keep their digestive system and feet happy, with no issues to date.



The wet weather has unfortunately also delayed several operations, including our main shearing in 2021, data collection and the construction of our new shearing shed.



Despite the delays due to wet weather, COVID and a shortage of builders, our new shearing shed is now progressing. It will be great to have the shed and covered yards up, particularly for use during wet years like this, to make data collection easier and more timely to meet data quality expectations.

New Website

Earlier this year Rocklyn developed a new website, with thanks to Carley Alchin. The new website is more modern and compatible with newer devices as well as being easier to maintain so we hope you like it too! Our web address remains the same: rocklynmerinostud.com.au

Ram Breeders Workshop

The four-year UNE/MerinoLink DNA Stimulation Project concluded in June this year. Ralph attended the final ram breeders workshop in Wagga Wagga in March and presented a case study of Rocklyn's involvement and genetic progress throughout the project.

The workshop gave an overview of the achievements of the project and provided updates on several advancements including the redevelopment of the Sheep Genetics database; the new Weaning Rate value; Ramping Up Genetic Gain (RUGG) Reports; and Data Quality Score Reports. We discuss some of these new tools on page 4 of this newsletter.

This has been a great project to be involved with and Rocklyn has certainly made some genetics gains through this project and the use of DNA and 50K Genomic testing.

Australian Sheep and Wool Show

In July, Ralph was pleased to attend the 2022 Australian Sheep and Wool Show in Bendigo to be able to set down some prospective AI sires for next year's joining program.

RAM SALE

THURSDAY 22ND
SEPTEMBER 2022

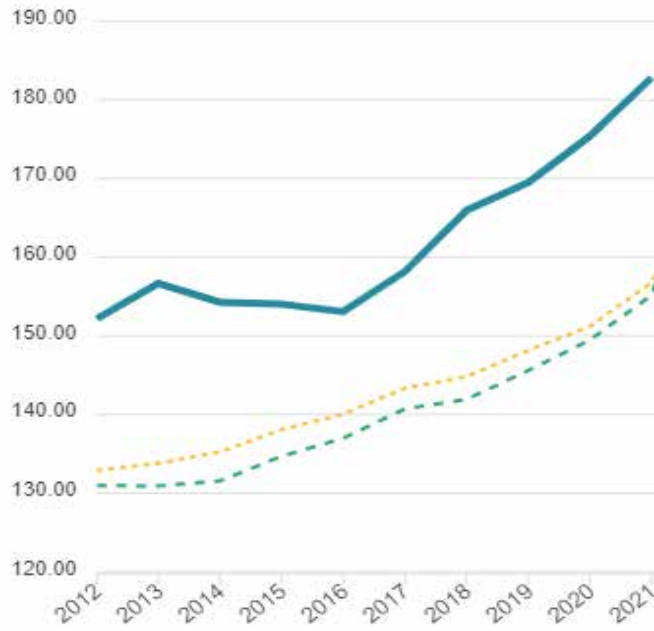
Rocklyn Merino Stud Genetic Progress

Rocklyn continues to make genetic progress across the major traits with our August 2022 Genetic Progress Report from SheepMetric indicating that we are still well ahead of the average. Below are some graphs showing Rocklyn's Whole of Flock position for various traits as well as our improvement over time, which has really begun to accelerate with the use of genomic testing over the past four years.

Rocklyn is the blue line, with the Merino average in green ● Rocklyn (ALL) ● Breed (ALL) ● Analysis (ALL)

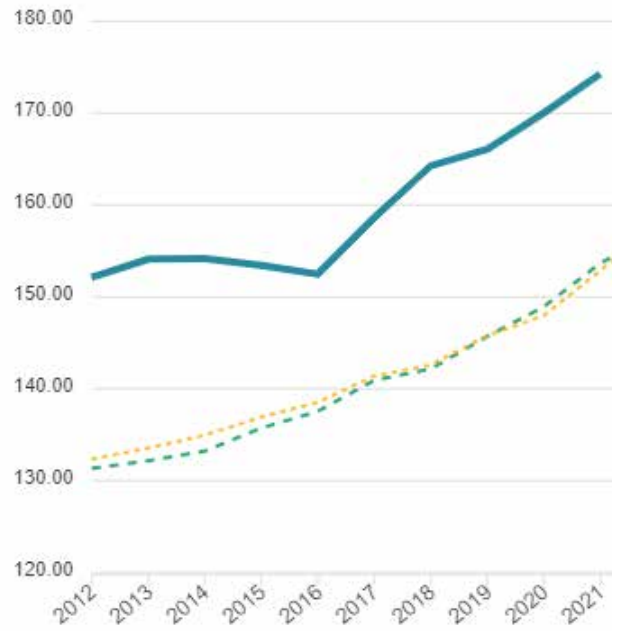
DP+

Figure 1. Dual Purpose Production Plus average per year



MP+

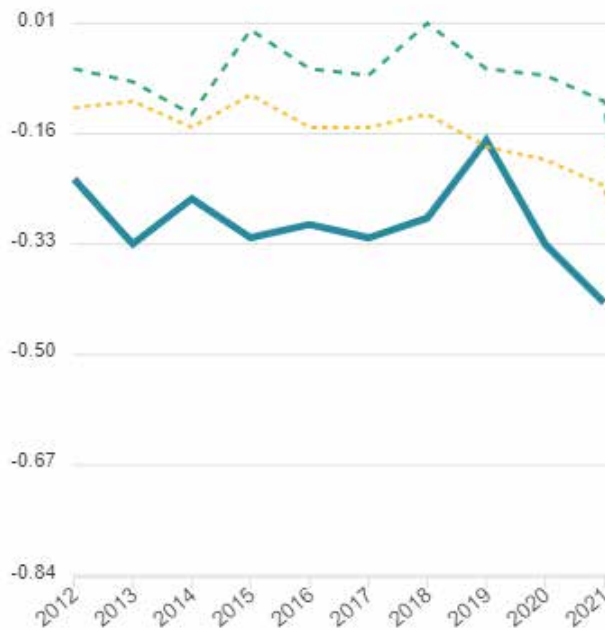
Figure 2. Merino Production Plus average per year



Rocklyn continues to produce sheep suitable for both wool and meat production with high averages in both the DP+ Index (Figure 1) and MP+ Index (Figure 2) across the whole flock.

EBWR

Figure 3. Early Breech Wrinkle average per year



YCFW

Figure 4. Yearling Clean Fleece Weight average per year

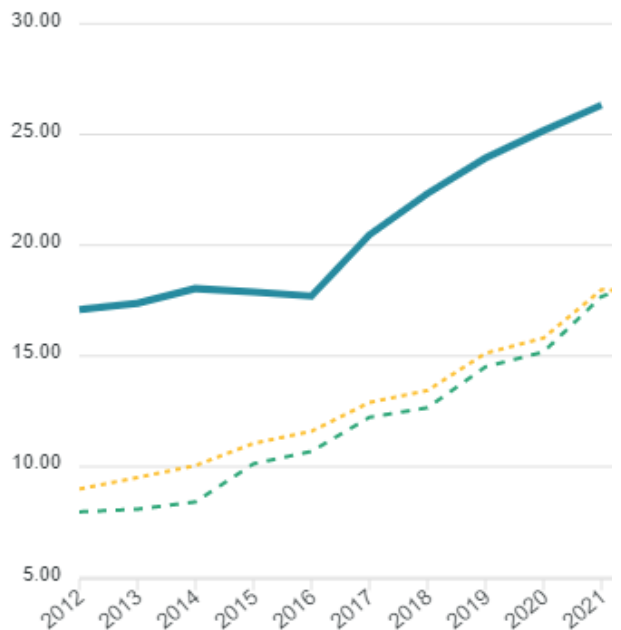


Figure 3 shows that Rocklyn has been working hard to reduce the breech wrinkle to allow for non-mulesing; however, this has not compromised fleece weights through loss of surface area, as some may expect, evidenced by our continually improving YCFW (Figure 4).

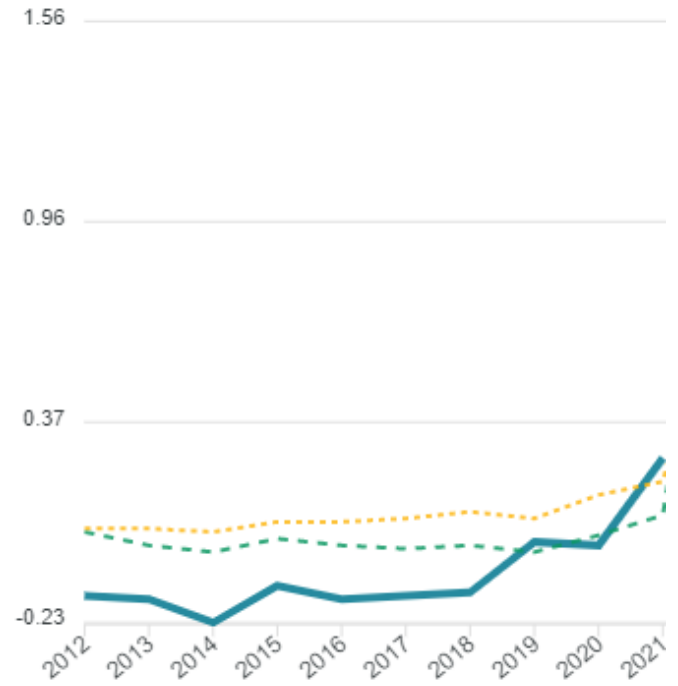
YEMD

Figure 5. Yearling Eye Muscle Depth average per year



YFAT

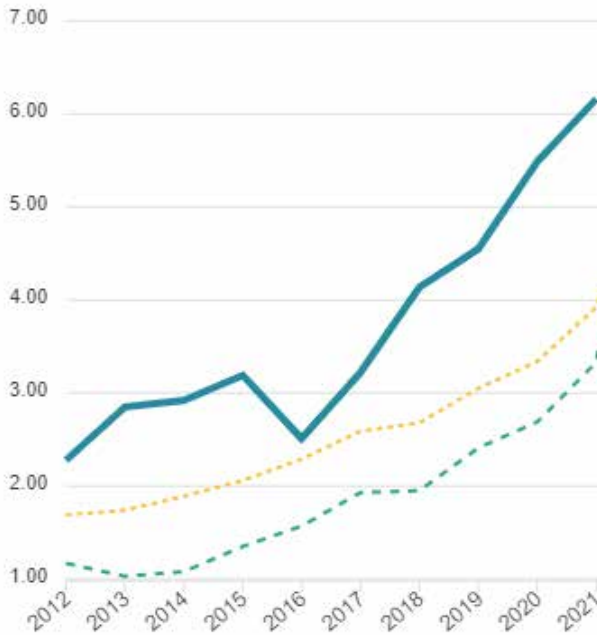
Figure 6. Yearling Fat Depth average per year



Rocklyn has made significant improvements to the meat characteristics of our sheep in recent years as shown by marked increases in YEMD (Figure 5) and YFAT (Figure 6).

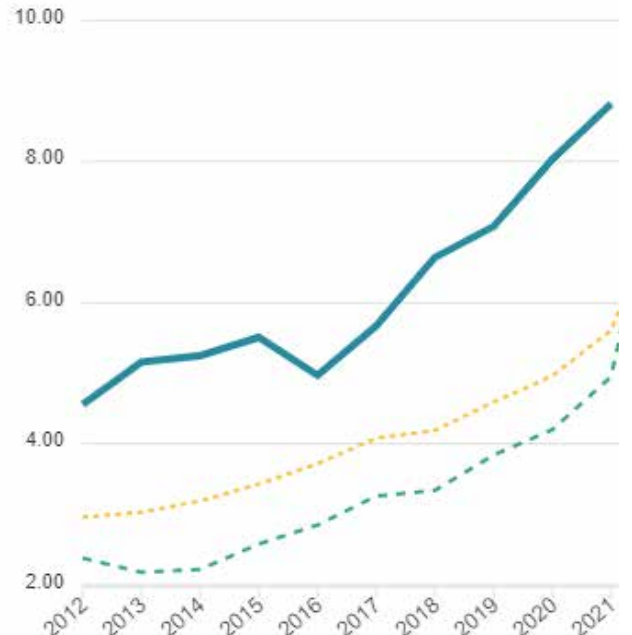
PWT

Figure 7. Post Weaning Weight average per year



YWT

Figure 8. Yearling Weight average per year



Rocklyn has always performed well in the body weights, with good early growth rates, and continues to advance in this area with high ASBV averages across the flock for PWT (Figure 7) and YWT (Figure 8).



Sheep Genetics analysis enhancements

In May this year, Sheep Genetics introduced a number of key enhancements to their the analysis. These enhancements will allow for more accurate decisions through improved analysis and calculation of breeding values; and ensure the long-term efficiencies of evaluations. A couple of the improvements are discussed below.

Weaning Rate ASBV

New reproduction traits have been developed to assist ram breeders in making targeted genetic gain based on the different drivers of reproduction. The new component traits include conception (CON), litter size (LS) and ewe rearing ability (ERA). This segregation has also allowed for the incorporation of genomic information to inform the traits.

These individual traits have now also been combined into a single reproduction trait, Weaning Rate (WR), to assist commercial producers in making straight-forward selection decisions, and for inclusion in selection indexes. Weaning Rate will replace the previous trait titled Number of Lambs Weaned (NLW).

What is 'Weaning Rate' (WR)?

Weaning rate is defined as the number of lambs weaned per ewe joined, and is expressed in the units of 'lambs', similar to the component traits. As an example, consider two rams, one with a WR ASBV of 0, and the other with a WR of 0.2. As rams make up half the genetic merit of their progeny, the ram with a WR of 0.2 will have daughters who on average wean 0.1 more lambs per ewe joined, than the daughters of a ram with a WR of 0.

Data Quality Score Reports

Data is the cornerstone of Sheep Genetics' evaluations. Optimising data quality is vital to enhance the reliability of ASBVs, make accurate selection decisions and maximise genetic gains. A Data Quality Score (DQS) will now be routinely reported back to breeders by Sheep Genetics as part of the 2022 enhancements.

The DQS is made up of measures of data quality, quantity and timeliness and is displayed as a single combined score for the flock, evaluating data from the last 5 years. The score is provided both as a value out of 100, where the higher the value, the better the data quality as well as a star rating to reflect the range that the score fits.

The DQS is different from the accuracy values reported with ASBVs. Accuracy is mainly capturing the quantity of data that contributes to a breeding value, rather than how well that data has been captured.

RAMping Up Genetic Gain reports

Sheep Genetics clients can now access a RAMping Up Genetic Gain (RUGG) report. These reports give feedback about how to improve your breeding program design and data quality.

ROCKLYN RAM SALE TEAM SHAPING UP

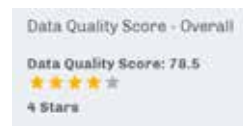
Ralph has been busy lately, working through the figures for the 2021-drop hogget rams to select this year's on-property sale team.

Rocklyn has recently made the decision to move it's sale until later in September to better align with data collection points as well as other farm operations and allow greater lead time following the South West Slopes Merino Breeders Field Day.

The 2022 On-property Ram Sale will be held on Thursday 22 September. Following the success of last year's sale and to meet increased client demand, we have also increased the number of rams that will be on offer at the on-property sale to eighty.

This year's sale team are looking good, with some great figures to back them up. Our confidence in the ASBV figures for our rams continues to grow particularly with the new Data Quality Score (DQS). Rocklyn's DQS is 78.5, which means our star rating is 4 out of 5 stars.

With improvements to the timeliness of data collection and quality control during collection, Rocklyn expects that its DQS will only improve.



Rams used to sire this year's sale team included a battery of Rocklyn poll sires plus two Rocklyn horned sires with parentage going back to Woodyarrup 120175. Outside sires used in the AI program included Poll Boonoke 160612 whose progeny were well sort after at last year's sale. Other sires with rams in the sale include Centre Plus 707350, Wallaloo Park 172070 and 172032, Anderson 160729 and two Ridgway Advance rams.



Of particular note this year has been the improvements in Eye Muscle Depth of the sale rams that will be offered on Thurs 22nd September.

The 2022 Ram Sale Team


Here's how the figures for the 2022 Rocklyn Merino Stud On-property Ram Sale Team of 80 hogget rams are currently looking. Please note that these figures are subject to change prior to the sale with last minute inclusions/exclusions expected to ensure we only offer the highest quality rams!

Measured performance data averages for the 2022 Rocklyn sale rams

Measured trait	Micron	SD	CV	CF
2022 Rocklyn Sale Team	18.8	3.0	16.1	99.42

ASBV averages for the 2022 Rocklyn sale rams vs. Australian averages

ASBV Trait	YCFW	YFD	YSL	YSS	EBWR	PWT	YWT	YFAT	YEMD	WR	MP+	DP+
2022 Rocklyn Sale Team	27.32	-0.77	10.06	1.38	-0.44	6.74	9.43	0.18	0.77	0.07	177	186
Australian Average	16.66	-0.99	8.15	0.68	-0.21	3.81	5.47	0.2	0.58	0.07	152	157

 Top 10%  Top 20%

Source: Sheep Genetics 7 August 2022



Some of the eighty 2021-drop hogget Merino rams that will be offered at the 2022 Rocklyn Merino Stud on-property sale.

Rocklyn to display at SWS Stud Merino Breeders Field Day

Rocklyn Merino Stud will again participate as a member breeder at the South West Slopes Stud Merino Breeders Field Day, to be held at Harden Showground on Tuesday 30 August 2022. Ralph will have a selection of sale and reserve rams on display so make sure you call in to have a chat with him about the Rocklyn rams and which sires may best meet your breeding objectives.

SWS STUD MERINO BREEDERS

2022 FIELD DAY

Tuesday 30th August 2022

10am at Harden Showground, East Street Harden NSW



Rocklyn Merino Stud...Over eighty years of adaptive breeding

EXCELLENT RESULT FOR 2021 ON-PROPERTY RAM SALE

It was a near perfect day for the 2021 Rocklyn Merino Stud On-Property Ram Sale on Thursday 9th September, with a sunny, calm day topping off terrific seasonal conditions near Greenethorpe, where the Stud is situated.



Attendees assess Rocklyn's sale rams at the 2021 on-property sale.

Seventy July/August 2020 Drop Merino Rams were offered in the sale, which attracted 22 registered buyers. This included 6 new buyers as well as some dedicated return buyers, which set the scene for some competitive bidding resulting in a full clearance at an average price of \$3,225.

The sale was conducted by Elders Young with Aaron Seaman doing the auctioneering. The line-up of mainly poll rams featured many rams with high dual-purpose characteristics. The average DP+ index was in the top 10% as was the YWT and YCFW, showing a great balance between wool and meat traits alongside being plain bodied and having high fertility.



Auctioneer, Aaron Seaman (Elders), at the 2021 Rocklyn Ram Sale.

The top price ram sold for \$6,000 to Trevor Knight, bidding on behalf of HB & VJ Knight and Son from Grenfell. The ram, which was lot 10 in the sale was sired by one of Rocklyn's own, Rocklyn Poll 180215, has excellent dual-purpose qualities and is a trait leader (top 5 %) for YCFW. With figures such as FD 17.9, SD 2.8, CF 99.7 and ASBVs of 33 for YCFW, 9.1 YWT and -0.63 EBWR and a DP+ index of 177, the Knights certainly chose well.

The Knights, who are long-term return buyers, picked up five new rams altogether for an average price of \$5,200.



Ralph Diprose, Aaron Seaman and Trevor Knight with the top ram.

The second top-price of \$5,750 was reached three times. HB & VJ Knight and Son from Grenfell purchased one of these rams, lot 14, which was sired by Poll Boonoke 160612. Another great dual-purpose ram with terrific wool figures including FD 17.5, SD 2.8, CF 99.75, a YWT of 9.4, YEMD 1.3, and DP+ 181.

The other two second-top price rams sold to long-term buyers, TH Cooper and Co. of Caragabal. The first of these two rams was lot 20, an Anderson Poll weighing 101kg that has outstanding dual purpose figures, in the top 1% for DP+ (208) and MP+ (201) and the top 5% for YCFW (35.0) and YWT (12.2). The second ram was lot 25, a horned ram sired by Rocklyn 180149, again with fantastic qualities, with figures of FD 18.4, SD 2.6, CF 99.75 and in the top 1% for YCFW (42.0), top 5% for MP+ (191) and top 10% for DP+ (183).

Volume buyers on the day included TH Cooper and Co. of Caragabal who purchased 11 rams for an average price of \$4,523; McKellar Pastoral Co of Grenfell who took home 12 rams for an average of \$2,688; and GH and A Robertson from Old Junee who averaged \$1,688 for their pick of 8 new sires. Return buyers from Springfield, Grenfell, added another 4 Rocklyn sires to their flock for an average of \$4,625. New buyers, Iandra Pastoral from Greenethorpe, were also pleased with the quality of the rams, purchasing 3 rams for an average of \$5,250.

"This is certainly a good result for Rocklyn and is a reflection of the high-quality rams on offer here today and the work that Ralph puts in to them" commented Aaron Seaman of Elders, who has been the auctioneer for the past nine on-property ram sales at Rocklyn.

Stud Principal, Ralph Diprose said he was extremely pleased with the sale

"It has been one of our best on-property sales to date" Ralph said.

"I thank the buyers and underbidders for attending the sale and wish all our buyers every success with the rams they have purchased. I welcome feedback on the rams to continually improve the genetics to meet client needs" he added.

Rocklyn clients produce top Caragabal Flock

Source: Article from *The Land*, 24 February 2022, written by Edwina Watson

Long term Rocklyn Merino Stud clients Trevor and Stephen Cooper of T.H. Cooper and Co. took out first place at the 2022 Caragabal Merino Ewe Competition. Edwina Watson from *The Land* reported on the day and below is a snippet of her article, which includes some great comments from the judges on the Rocklyn-blood ewes the Coopers produced.

Ten sheep producers from the Caragabal region opened their gates last Friday for the 15th annual Caragabal Merino Ewe Competition. Richard Chalker of Lach River Merinos, Darbys Falls, returned to judge for a second year and was joined by Nutrien stud stock specialist Stephen Chalmers, Wagga Wagga, to assess the entrants.

First place was awarded to Trevor and Stephen Cooper of TH Cooper and Co, "Myall Park", Caragabal with their Rocklyn-blood ewes. Annual entrants in the competition and last year's second place-getters, the Coopers displayed 770 spring 2020-drop ewes shorn earlier this month [February], that were classed out at 30 per cent.

"If you put a pen of these in a surplus sheep sale they'd be well sought-after," Mr Chalmers said. "They look like good, fertile and productive sheep. They've got good mature heads, they stand up well and they've got a good skin on them. The big tall ewe up front knows that she's good, she's got stretch, she's good on her feet, she's got a beautiful tip and skin."

"I'd love to see them in full wool. They'd be an outstanding flock to look at," Mr Chalker said. "If you grab them on the side they're soft and supple. They're not overdone, it's not a tight skin or a hard skin. They're structurally good and their top lines are really good. They have a good, soft muzzle with a bit of wrinkle around the nose." Mr Chalker said the ewes were "Set up for life. They'll handle a dry time, they'll twin lamb. Anyone would be proud to own these," he said.

In wheatbelt country he said they would be "good weed killers too. Over the years the people with Merino sheep in the cropping industry have been feeding the grain they've been stripping but now they're doing it the other way. I think there would be a lot of people wishing they had a few more Merino sheep," Mr Chalker said.

On Rocklyn bloodlines for 13 years, Ralph Diprose of Rocklyn Merino Stud, Greenethorpe, classes the Cooper's flock that measures an average of 18.48 in the micron with an average wool cut of 7.6 kilograms in the adult ewes. Last year the Coopers joined 2400 ewes to Merino rams with a 105 per cent lambing rate in July/August.



Stephen and Trevor Cooper with their winning flock of 770 maiden Merino ewes for the 2022 Caragabal Merino Ewe Competition. Photo: Rebecca Maslin.

Success with early mating

On 1 April 2021, Rocklyn joined 150 ewe lambs (2020 Drop, 8-9 months of age), with an average weight of 54kg.

Rocklyn has mated ewe lambs in the past but not routinely. In the past, ewes were selected mainly on body weight and a visual assessment. For the 2021 joining, the 150 ewe lambs were selected on a visual assessment along with any measured data plus the genotypic data available, similar to as older ewes are classed but without as much measured data.

We had a conception rate of 80%, and the weaning percentage was 84%. Of the ewes that lambed, 90% were back in stud group for MateSel allocation this year so it would seem that there was little wastage as most of the ewes still met the same classing criteria again.

Male progeny of these ewes have had such good early growth rates that some of them have been selected for our 2022 Ram Sale Team as they are on par with many of the rams born up to 2 months before them in July 2021.

With the success of this mating, Rocklyn has joined 180 ewe lambs this year - a month earlier on 1 March - with an average body weight of 54kg and a DP+ of 183. The benefits of shortening the generation interval is evident and will enable us to get more ewes with higher ASBVs into the system and to class out more of the older ewes or ewes with lower ASBVs sooner.



With earlier matings, Rocklyn can shorten the generation interval and class out older ewes more readily for greater genetic gain.

RAM SALE

THURSDAY 22ND

SEPTEMBER 2022



Rocklyn's annual on-property ram sale will be held a little later in the year than usual on Thursday 22nd September 2022 at 'Elon' 343 Barker's Rd Greenethorpe.

- Eighty Poll Merino and Merino rams by leading sires will be offered at the sale.
- Inspections are welcome from 10:00am on the day, with the sale to commence at 1:00pm.
- Buyers will need to register with Elders on the day, before the sale commences.
- The sale is held under shelter, with morning tea and lunch provided.
- The sale catalogue will be available for download from our website rocklynmerinostud.com.au in early September

The majority of sale rams are polls and have been paddock run (unhoused), with only a small portion shedded.

Surplus, graded rams will also be available through private on-farm sales following the on-property sale.

Contact Ralph if you would like help to customise your ram selections to meet your breeding objectives or to discuss ways to improve your flock.



Rocklyn will offer ASBV trait-leading rams by leading sires at the 2022 on-property ram sale on Thursday 22nd September.



2022 RAM SALE SNEAK PEEK!



We look forward to seeing you at the sale!

CONTACTS

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