

## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 6, AUGUST 2023

Perhaps the most exciting news this year has been the completion of the new shearing shed! Completed in April 2023, the shed was ready just in time for our Autumn lamb shearing. You can read more about the features of the shed on page two of this newsletter. A big thanks to Jason McGaw's building team, sub-contractors for Central Steel Build, and everyone who helped make this much longed-for shed happen.



Our shearing team were very pleased with the new shed and it will certainly improve shearing operations in terms of work-flow, efficiency and quality assurance as well as safety and comfort for both the shearing team and the sheep.

The under cover yards associated with the shearing shed were also completed in July 2023 by Stockpro and have been another great addition, improving the working environment when classing and conducting other sheep handling operations.



### Australian Sheep and Wool Show

In July, Ralph was pleased to attend the 2023 Australian Sheep and Wool Show in Bendigo again. It is always a worthwhile trip to view prospective AI sires for Rocklyn's joining program and be immersed in different facets of the industry for several days, visiting trade stalls, checking out innovative products and talking to the many exhibitors and visitors.

# RAM SALE

THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup>  
SEPTEMBER 2023

# ROCKLYN ADOPTS INNOVATIVE SHED DESIGN

Rocklyn's new shearing shed is based on the 'Arrow Park' shed design developed by shearing contractor and wool grower Hilton Barrett, and Australian Wool Innovation. The design aimed to address worker safety and animal welfare concerns while also achieving improved shed efficiency and wool quality.

The design was developed following extensive industry consultation and reviews of existing working sheds as well as multiple trials. A few years ago, Ralph visited the 'Arrow Park' shearing shed to view the design and was very impressed with it so decided to adopt the design, with a few refinements.

Rocklyn's shed features:

- a large, open wool room with high weight-bearing plywood flooring
- a 6-stand, flat cypress pine board for improved safety, welfare, efficiency and quality assurance

- sloped, front fill catching pens with lower doors



- straight drag to workstation and chute to reduce impact and strain on shearers



- non-directional plastic flooring for drainage, minimal light penetration and ease of sheep movement

- increased height underneath for easy access to count out pens
- truck access



- pen space for up to 350 up top
- under cover sheep storage for up to 800 sheep



- under cover external yards with additional capacity of up to 800 sheep



- large windows that encourage air flow
- well lit work area
- toilets and kitchen amenities
- wide ramps and stairs with safety features



- many more features to improve shearing and wool handling operations

While yet to be tested at our main shearing in November, the shearing of the lambs in April went smoothly and Ralph was happy with how it went.

## Sheep eID Field Day

The new shearing shed got a workout of a different kind in May when we hosted the Central West Local Land Services Sheep eID Field Day.

After hearing from a range of speakers including DPI, Sally Martin from SheepMetrix, Mark Mortimer from Centre Plus and producers using eID, the 70 attendees came out to Rocklyn Merino Stud to check out various trade stalls, live demonstrations of sheep handling equipment and of course, the new shearing shed!

Thanks to Central West Local Land Services for organising the day, those who helped out and all who came along.



# Supporting youth in the sheep and wool industry

For the first shearing in our new shearing shed in April 2023, Rocklyn hosted an AWI trainer along with twenty local high-school students who were learning about shearing operations. The students gained first-hand experience in sheep and wool handling, working as a team, quality assurance, shearing and shed operations. This was a positive experience that we hope will encourage more of the younger generation to pursue careers in the industry.

## Peter Westblade Scholarship

This year, Rocklyn Merino Stud is a sponsor of the Peter Westblade Scholarship, which helps young people to kick-start their careers in the sheep and wool industry through mentoring, creating opportunities and building networks and promoting practical skills through hands-on experience.

The Scholarship honours the late Peter Westblade - a true visionary, passionate about breeding profitable sheep and a strong supporter of young people interested in agriculture.

Rocklyn is proud to be part of this initiative and has donated a ram voucher to the value of \$2,000 as part of the Peter Westblade Scholarship Fundraiser, which can be used at our upcoming sale on Thursday 21 September.

## 2023 Fundraiser

The Peter Westblade annual fundraiser will take place from 9am Tuesday 29 - Thursday 31 August and will see both semen and ram vouchers from some of Australia's leading Studs auctioned off through Auctions Plus. All proceeds go towards supporting the next generation of industry professionals.

Head to [www.pwscholarship.com.au/](http://www.pwscholarship.com.au/) for more information about this very worthwhile cause.



# NEW SELECTION INDEXES

On 20-21 June, Ralph attended the SheepMetrix Ram Breeder Workshop in Wagga Wagga. Despite the DNA Stimulation Project having now officially wrapped up, this group of breeders has decided to continue to meet to discuss genetic improvement and data quality.

The workshop provided updates from Sheep Genetics on new Selection Indexes along with other information on selecting for different traits and improving data quality.

There have been a lot of changes to the Sheep Genetics database this year with updates to genetic parameters and standard means for traits; partitioning of genomic and pedigree information; SNPs used in genetic evaluations; a review and updates of pre-adjustments for fixed effects where necessary; and review and updates to standard carcase traits.

Five new MERINOSELECT Indexes have also been released to better reflect the diversity of industry breeding objectives and current farm production systems. The new Indexes have initially been released as research indexes and will run parallel with the existing Merino indexes for 12 months. In 2024 they will replace the current Indexes.

The 5 new Research MERINOSELECT Indexes include:

- Maternal + Lamb
- Sustainable Merino
- Sustainable Merino (High Rainfall)
- Wool Production
- Fine Wool

Below is a table summarising the indexes and their corresponding traits:

**Table 1: New MERINOSELECT Indexes**

Trait	Maternal + Lamb	Sustainable Merino	Sustainable Merino - HR	Wool Production	Fine Wool
Clean fleece weight	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●
Fibre diameter	●	●	●	●●	●●●
Lamb growth	●●●	●●	●●	●	●
Carcase composition	●●	●	●		
Adult weight	●	●	●		
Worm egg count			●●		●
Reproduction	●●●	●●	●●	●	●
Breech wrinkle	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●
Dag			●●		
Condition score	●●	●	●	●	●

Indexes summarise a combination of selected production traits into a single number to assist with selection decisions.

Current MP+ users are likely to lean towards the Wool Production (WP), Sustainable Merino (SM) or Sustainable Merino High Rainfall (SMHR) Indexes.

Current DP+ users are likely to lean towards Sustainable Merino (SM) or Maternal Lamb (ML) Indexes.

For more information visit [www.sheepgenetics.org.au](http://www.sheepgenetics.org.au)

# The 2023 Ram Sale Team

The 2023 Rocklyn Merino Stud On-property Ram Sale Team of 100 hogget rams are shaping up nicely. 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 2023 Rocklyn sale rams

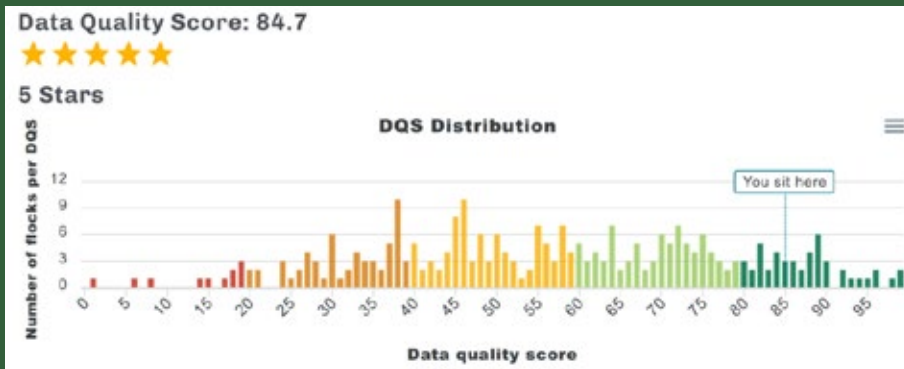
Measured trait	Micron	SD	CV	CF
2023 Rocklyn Sale Team	19.7	3.1	15.8	99.2

## ASBV averages for the 2023 Rocklyn sale rams vs. Australian averages

ASBV Trait	YCFW	YFD	YSL	YSS	EBWR	PWT	YWT	YFAT	YEMD	WR	MP+	DP+
2023 Rocklyn Sale Team	25.2	-1.1	11.7	1.1	-0.4	6.7	9.1	-0.2	0.6	0.1	172	178
Australian Average	17.5	-1.0	9.2	0.6	-0.3	4.9	6.6	0.2	0.8	0.1	155	162

Top 20%

Source: Sheep Genetics 7 August 2023



Rocklyn has achieved a 5-star rating when it comes to data quality. Consistency of data submission, data collection procedures and stud experience has all contributed to this. As a result, buyers can have confidence in the ASBV figures and Selection Indexes and use them more effectively to select rams.

## 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 29 August 2023. 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.



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

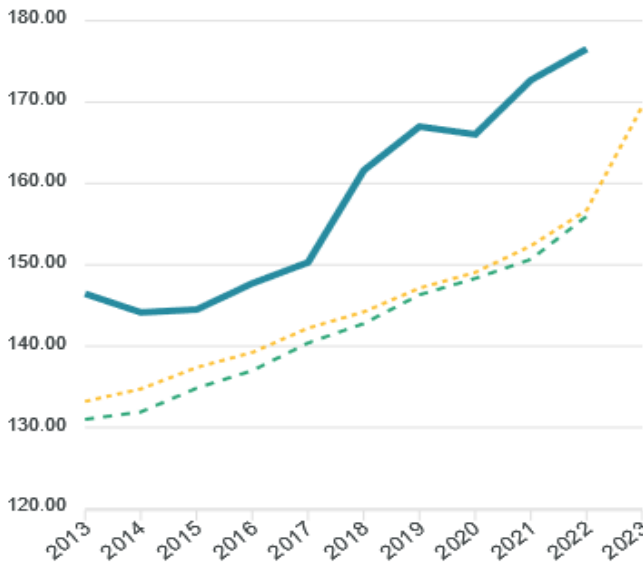
# Rocklyn Merino Stud Genetic Progress

Rocklyn continues to make genetic progress across the major traits with our August 2023 Genetic Data Report from SheepMetricx indicating that we are still well ahead of the average. Below are some graphs showing Rocklyn's enhancements of various traits over time.

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

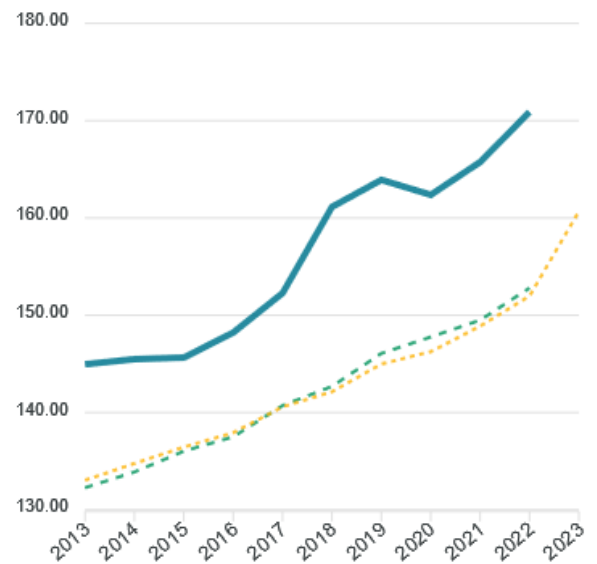
**DP+**

Figure 1. Dual Purpose Production Plus average per year



**MP+**

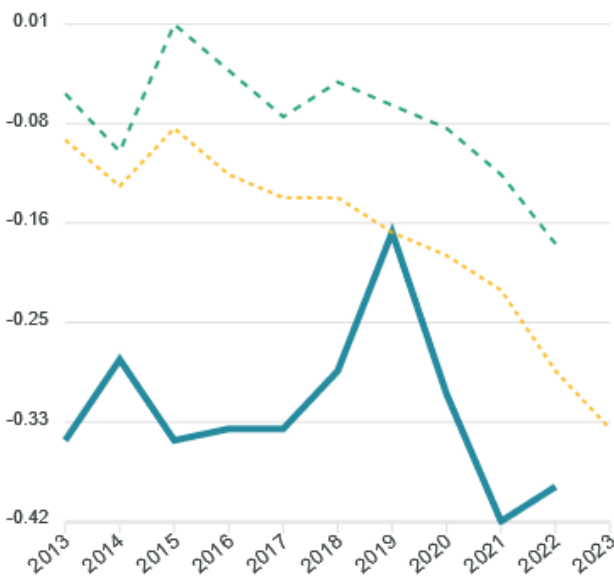
Figure 2. Merino Production Plus average per year



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



In moving to non-mulesing and reducing breech wrinkle (Figures 3), Rocklyn has not compromised fleece weights, which continue to improve (Figure 4).

# Bookham Wether Trial

Long-term clients, T.H. Cooper & Co are currently participating in the 2022-2026 Bookham Wether Trial. The Coopers entered ten 2021 drop wethers into the trial last year. At the beginning of the trial, their randomly drafted team of ten had the second highest average body weights of all wethers entered at 53.4kg. This is evidence of our good early growth rates carrying through to progeny.

Earlier this year, Ralph accompanied the Coopers to the host property near Bookham to witness the shearing of the wethers. Despite some very trying flood conditions, the ten wethers were holding up well and were still, on average, one of the heavier teams.

T.H. Cooper & Co.'s wether lambs had the highest average Greasy Fleece Weight at 4.67kg and third highest average Clean Fleece Weight at 3.29kg.

It is always rewarding to hear of client's success in events such as these and it is great feedback to know that our sheep are staying true to form. Participation in events such as this is also important to evaluate how our progeny are stacking up against other studs and flocks.

Rocklyn regularly participates in sire evaluations to assist with benchmarking. We currently have rams entered in both the 2021 and 2022 MerinoLink Sire Evaluations at Bathurst. Reports for these are yet to be released.

**PWT**

Figure 5. Post Weaning Weight average per year



**YWT**

Figure 6. 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 5) and YWT (Figure 6).



Shearing of T.H. Cooper & Co.'s wethers involved in the 2022-2026 Bookham Wether Trial.

# RAM SALE

## THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup>

### SEPTEMBER 2023



Rocklyn's annual on-property ram sale will be held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023 at 'Elon' 343 Barker's Rd Greenethorpe.

This year sees a change in sale agents with Australian Wool Network and Kevin Miller, Whitty, Lennon & Co. assisting with the sale.

In 2023 our ram sale numbers have increased to cater for the increasing number and demand of buyers.

#### SALE INFORMATION:

- 100 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 the selling agent 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](http://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.



We look forward to seeing you at the sale!

## 2023 SALE RAM PREVIEW



## CONTACTS

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