



Border\$ across Border\$

Summer 2010



A word from the chairman

The 2009 ram selling season produced solid ram sale results for members.

While the current outlook for 2010 ram sales looks encouraging. Strong prices for lamb, mutton and First cross ewes look great against variable cropping returns, a lack lustre wool market and sluggish cattle prices.

A major focus of this newsletter is the continual improvement of SuperBorder\$ data quality so that SuperBorder\$ flocks ASBVs are being driven by their data not by correlations. Ensuring that SuperBorder\$ remains a genetically superior product.

SuperBorder\$ must be focused on producing SuperBorder\$ rams that produce More lambs, More meat, More profit.

Thank you to Allan, Christine and Jane for their efforts at the Elmore Field Days promoting SuperBorder\$.

I look forward to seeing everyone at Wagga in June. Don't forget to ask other Border breeders to join us.

Conference

Planning for the 12th conference "Wagga 2010", by John, Wes and Graeme to be held 23rd to 25th June 2010 at Country Comfort Motel Wagga. This year the conference program is focussed on "getting basics right".

The conference starts early on Wednesday 23rd with a day bus trip, to exotic destinations of Ganmain, Aria Park, Temora and finishing at the Junee Liquorice Factory. Unfortunately the "Igloo Express" is unavailable,

Thursday, will start at Wagga saleyards, then followed by several Lambplan sessions. Followed by a Pedigree Wizard session with a similar format to Moama in 2008 which will cater for all levels from Julie's "kindergarten" to John's advanced class.

Friday the 25th June SuperBorder\$ AGM.

Key message from Albany 2009

The Albany 2009 conference focussed on looking at the "Maternal competition". The key take home messages were that fertility and optimising mature ewe weights are vital to maximising lamb profits.

That's what the competition's marketing is focusing on but can they deliver?

SuperBorder\$ have always marketed a genetically superior product.

So remember to collect mature ewe weights at mating and record any dry ewes, through fictitious dry lambs at pregnancy scanning and/or the end of lambing

What data should be collected this year to maximise index accuracy?

Premating

1. **Mature ewe wt** → weight of the mature ewes aged up to five years, prior to mating

Birth

2. **Birth weight** and date of birth
3. **Pedigree** – Sire and Dam (preferable for all dams to have sire pedigree)
4. **Sex** 1= male 2= female
5. **Birth type** 1= single, 2 = twin, 3= triplet
6. **DAB lambs** - record any dead lambs not tagged by creating a lamb id 02****2009DAB001 (**** = your flock number)
7. **Conception method** and the conception date for lambs bred by 2= ET, 3= AI, 6= Hand service.
8. **Lamb ease** – the data is only used if the lamb has a birth wt taken and if there is variation
 - 1 = Unassisted
 - 2 = Some assist
 - 3 = Hard assist
 - 4 = Abnormal presentation → breech, tangled lambs
 - 5 = Other – lambing process resulted in the ewe's death.
9. **Drys** - record any dry ewe. Create a record fictitious dry lamb id in your lambing records as follows 02****2009DRY001 (**** = your flock number) and include sire and dam
 - recording of dries is required for direct repro linkage
 - these dry lambs stay in the same management group as the other lambs resulting from that joining group

Weaning

10. **Weaning wt** and weaning date (maximum 4 months from day 1 of lambing)
11. **Rear status** of all lambs
12. Record any physical defects pig jaws, one or no testicles

Early Post weaning or Post weaning stages

- are the preferred scanning time
13. **Weight** and date
 14. **Scanning** of muscle and fat
 15. **Scrotal circumference** for rams
→ helps determine maturity pattern
- Optional → worm egg counts

Yearling

- Optional → Live weight and date
→ helps determine maturity pattern
- Optional → Wool weight
→ Remember to record the date and body weight with wool weights

Lamb Ease

We now have a new trait Lamb Ease being reported by SGA. This is a further piece of information to consider in our future breeding programs.

Lamb ease trait is a combination of records of birth wt, lamb ease, and gestation length. Gestation length is calculated using the conception method data that includes the date of AI, and any ewes that were hand mated.

It is good to see \$SuperBorder\$ flocks beginning to record lamb ease data.

However, some members have scored any assisted lambs but the rest are recorded as Lamb ease =0 hence the OVIS thinks all lambs were assisted. This needs to be addressed ASAP and it would be good to start with your 2009 lambs.

R & D Index

At the 2009 Albany conference, it was decided to develop a \$SuperBorder\$ index in conjunction with LAMBPLAN. This is no longer be the case as LAMBPLAN have advised us that they are not able to assist us to create an index that is only available to \$SuperBorder\$ members.

Data

The perception should be that a ram that has been given a \$SuperBorder\$ tag is of greater value than a ram that doesn't. This only can become reality if quality data is collected by us all. We rely on each other to add strength to our data through linkage.

\$SuperBorder\$ data is made up from members flocks plus 5 dispersed flocks. Of the active flocks, it is important that they have best practice data for improved breeding decisions.

Direct Repro

If your flock is linked for direct repro (fertility), then the flock's data actual drives the nlw ASBV, not the model.

To get direct repro linkage it requires the recording of dry ewes, DAB lambs, rear type data plus pedigree linkage to data base. These variations in observations are used to develop the breeding values.

\$SuperBorder\$ Data Recording

The minimum expectation of a \$SuperBorder\$ member is to record

- Joining weight of ewes
- Full pedigree
- Date of Birth
- Birth weight
- Weaning weight (before 16 weeks of age)
- Scan more than 50% of ram lambs weaned
- Scan more than 50% of ewe lambs weaned
- Fleece weights are now optional

Data must be in the 15th August run the breeding values quoted when marketing \$SuperBorder\$ rams is to be from that LAMBPLAN run.

Rob Banks has had a look at members data from previous years reporting that the animals in flocks of breeders who achieved Gold status had higher accuracy figures than those who achieved Silver status. Those who achieved Silver status had higher accuracy figures than those who achieved Bronze. Breeders with no data quality grade had significantly lower accuracy on their animals.

Lower accuracy means that the animal will have greater deviation + or – of the breeding values produced by LAMBPLAN.

To quote Rob:

“Higher accuracy means:
More reliability for the buyer
More opportunity for genetic progress for the breeder
Both are ultimately good for the lamb industry, but I think the more important thing is the somewhat intangible internal discipline for \$SuperBorder\$..... that will deliver benefits to them, their clients, and the industry ... somewhat like

“We are \$SuperBorder\$, and we stand behind our product”.

The name \$SuperBorder\$ has achieved a high level of recognition and acceptance of branding a quality product and we must live up to expectations.

\$SuperBorder\$ 1st cross breeders and purchasers have become an integral part of the \$SuperBorder\$ success and they have to be supported by \$SuperBorder\$ members. This support can only be provided through a commitment to quality data collection and recording.

Elmore Field Days

Last year the Elmore Field Days committee embarked upon a comparison of 5 different maternal ewes for lamb production. The 5 types are \$SuperBorder\$ Merino cross, Loddon Valley Merino, Dohne, Samm and CentrePlus Merino. Each flock of 42 ewes was sourced from 3 breeders and all ewes were mated to the same White Suffolk rams. The comparison will run for another 3 years.

The ewes were landed at the Field Days site early in the year and were joined at 8 months of age (March). The marking percentage achieved from this mating was:

- 105% for the \$SuperBorder\$ Merino cross,
- 44% for the Merinos,
- 83% for the Dohne,
- 74% for the SAMMs.
- 52% for the CentrePlus however these ewes were 70 days younger than the others,



Elmore Field Days 2009 - \$SuperBorder\$ first cross ewelambs with their lambs sired by White Suffolk rams

The ewes were shorn during the field days and cut 4 to 5kg for the 9 months. The FD ranged from 18 micron for the CentrePlus to 29 micron for the \$SuperBorder\$ Merino cross. The lambs were too young to evaluate at this stage.

\$SuperBorder\$ took up the opportunity of a offer of a promotional stand at the field days. Allan Wilson was approached to come out of retirement to assist the group to promote the group on a fee for service basis. With Christine Wilson and Jane Court providing some support to Allan.

\$SuperBorder\$ produced an information sheet to provide prime lamb producers with information about how to achieve successful ewe lamb joinings. This was done to optimise the positive results from the Elmore trial so far which has shown a significant advantage for the \$SuperBorder\$ 1st cross ewe lambs to get in lamb as lambs.

The comparison has created great interest amongst sheep producers and there was a constant flow of visitors through the shed to view the shearing of the trail ewes.

About a third of people had some knowledge of \$SuperBorder\$ beforehand. The western district of Victoria (Ballarat) and Yarrowonga represent knowledge gaps, whilst Bendigo, Euroa and Deniliquin breeders were more likely to know about \$SuperBorder\$ and the yellow sale cards.

The trial is attracting a wide range of sheep breeders, from straight Merino to prime lamb breeders, and they are following the results with interest.

We can expect an increasing number of visitors over the next 3 years and a good uptake of the key messages.