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Letter for The Land - ASBV RIP Rubbish

ASBV (Australian Sheep Breeding Values) are alive and well. A quick look at the ASBV download page shows there are 930 stud flocks using LAMBPLAN & MERINOSELECT.

ASBV's remove the environment (feed etc.) effects for each trait that you see when looking at an animal. This becomes a much more accurate assessment of the performance of the progeny for that trait. By measuring the progeny each year and comparing them with the progeny of link rams used from year to year or flock to flock the genetic progress of that trait can be measured. This information is part of the mix the stud breeder uses to make their final breeding decisions.

In defence of breeders not using ASBV's they may well be using some measurement to help make breeding decisions, and consequently have some fairly productive sheep. However, at this point we must ask how can, a commercial producer, know how productive they really are for each trait?

MLA & AWI set up the world class Sheep Genetics and this program has become the envy of many around the world. It has set a common language and system across the Industry to avoid confusion and duplication.

Sheep Genetics the masthead for LAMBPLAN & MERINOSELECT was set up to drive the industry forward by the whole industry using genetics to produce more profitable sheep, not for the benefit of every stud breeder. Commercial Breeders comparing ASBV's across flocks and years can make accurate decisions about where to source the most profitable genetics for their breeding program. It also allows stud breeders to identify animals that may help their stud.

Studs using ASBV's pay a fee on every animal to cover the operational cost of producing the ASBV's. MLA and AWI funding goes to research that keep's on improving the accuracy and value of genetic predictions. The Genomics Program creating breeding values for Tenderness and Intramuscular Fat, etc, is an example.

The ASBV debate quotes people who like to select their rams by looking at them. I call this Guessing. Every year our breeding program progeny tests about 25 rams. Every second year we test some outside rams. One year we did some guessing and tested the supreme winner at the Dubbo National Ram show. His progeny now sit among the bottom 10% of the MERINOSELECT database showing us how important it is not to guess.

AWI Shareholders currently have a choice of voting for Board members who believe in Science and genetic progress or those that believe in supporting those that like guessing.

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