

Merino Matters



SELECTING RAMS FOR PROFIT

WA stud breeders have developed a type of Merino, which is well suited to local conditions, through careful selection of the best genetics available. The modern WA type offers commercial producers the best of both worlds - a balance between a highly valuable carcase and fleece.

Following is a basic guide to assist commercial breeders with their ram selections.

Producers should set medium to long term goals for their Merino flock and purchase from a stud whose breeding objectives can fulfil these goals.

Select rams that are suited to or can adapt to the environment in which they will be run.

Select rams that will complement your current flock or correct any problems your flock may have.

Stand back and assess the overall make and shape of the animals first.

Look for size and constitution (the ability to do well), strong open head and muzzle, good spring of rib, wide leg spacing etc.

Be aware of faults that will affect progeny's performance or the ram's ability to serve ewes successfully. Examples include: faulty testicles, bad feet, poor topline or shoulders.

Aim for a free-growing, long-stapled, bright, white fleece with adequate nourishment to protect the fibre in your environment with wool length to carry well down to points and belly.

The fleece quality should be as even as possible over the entire animal, check from shoulder to rump.

Measurements supplied by studs can vary from basic body and fleece weights to those studs using Sheep Genetics ASBVs. This is a choice made by each individual stud according to their own flock and business structure.

Ensure that you are given the date and age of sampling for wool measurements as a test taken in April will be very different to one taken in August. (Compare apples to apples.)

Keep your ram flock young (aim for 1.5 to 4.5 years at mating). This keeps your flock closer to the improvements your stud is making.

For more assistance, contact your stud breeder.

Acknowledgement: Merino SA



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