

MERINO LIFETIME PRODUCTIVITY PROJECT UPDATE

FAST FACTS

- The AWI-funded Merino Lifetime Productivity (MLP) project is a \$5 million, 10-year collaborative partnership between AWI, the Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association, nominating stud Merino breeders and site hosts around Australia. The project aims to increase the understanding of the genetic capacity for the Merino ewe to deliver high quality wool, lambs and meat throughout its life.
- The MLP project now operates at five sites across Australia. The sites operate as standard sire evaluation sites at the conclusion of which, the project continues with ongoing measurement and visual classing of all ewe progeny throughout their lives including four to five joinings and annual shearings.

NEW SITES

The MLP project has recently welcomed two new sites increasing the number of active sites to five. Three original sites, Harrow in western Victoria ('Elders Balmoral'), Temora in the Riverina of NSW ('MerinoLink'), Pingelly in the Great Southern region of WA ('Pingelly'), are now supplemented by sites at Armidale in the New England region of NSW ('New England'), and the most recently established site located at Trangie in the Central West region of NSW ('Macquarie').

The Macquarie site committee has teamed up with NSW DPI's Trangie Agricultural Research Centre and the New England site committee is partnering with CSIRO's Chiswick research facility to deliver the new sites.

Setting itself apart from the other four sites, and in addition to the standard trial design, the Macquarie site aims to explore possible interactions between ewe type and sires. Ewes have been sourced from commercial clients of two NSW based studs,

Centre Plus and Towalba, and will be evenly allocated to each sire.

The New England site will run traditional superfine/fine ewes sourced from the ewe base of the CSIRO Chiswick station. New England adds a critical summer rainfall site and as such offers a chance for the project to explore a unique set of environmental conditions throughout life in a traditional fine wool growing region.

The addition of the two new sites will see a total of 166 sires and approximately 5000 F1 ewe progeny evaluated for life across the five sites.

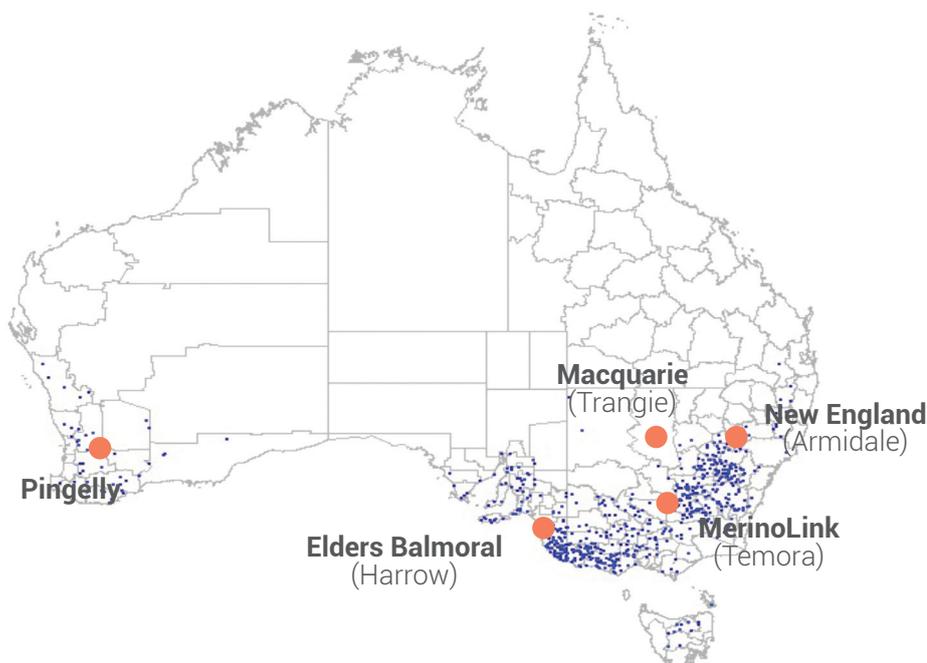
SIRE NOMINATIONS

In a strong industry show of support for the MLP project, more than 100 sire nominations were received for the 59 positions available for the next round of joining at the Macquarie, Pingelly, MerinoLink and New England sites.

The project team is working with the site committees, project executive and industry steering committees to finalise the joining lists at each site. A strong set of sire selection principles will guide the selection and those that miss out this year are encouraged to consider involvement in the next round of joinings. The project team look forward to advising the industry of the final joining list as soon as the selection process is completed.

The selection principles underpinning sire choice for each site requires sires to be industry representative (horn/poll, different types, different breeding philosophies). In addition, sires are sought with high and low performance for traits, a balance of young and old sires and also rams that have had significant impact in the industry through on farm sales, semen sales or in show winning success.

A diverse list of sires involved will enable the project to fully explore all the characteristics that impact on lifetime productivity and help strengthen existing selection approaches to better achieve improved lifetime productivity and profitability.





Merino Lifetime Productivity Project

GET TO KNOW THE SITES

SITE	RAINFALL (MM)	EWE BASE	NUMBER OF SIRES JOINED OR JOINING	SITE CHAIR (SITE MANAGER)
Elders Balmoral	470 winter rainfall	17.2um, fine wool base, selecting for growth, fertility and wool cut	24 sires 2015 & 2016	Tom Silcock M: 0419 882 239 (also Manager)
MerinoLink	500 slight winter dominant	18um, previous sire evaluation progeny, and studs with ASBVs	13 sires 2016 & 2017	Richard Keniry M: 0427 878 541 (Sally Martin M: 0400 782 477)
Pingelly	440 winter rainfall	19.5um, meaty Merino ewes	15 sires 2016 & 2017	Brett Jones M: 0428 323 012 (Bron Clarke M: 0418 957 293)
New England	700+ summer dominant	17um, traditional ultra-fine flock	15 sires 2017 & 2018	Duncan Lance M: 0447 297 135 (Jen Smith Ph: 02 6776 1381)
Macquarie	500 evenly distributed	Even split of Centre Plus Poll Merino and Towalba Merino bloodlines	16 sires Dec 2016 & 2017	Matthew Coddington M: 0428 635 386 (Sue Hatcher Ph: 02 6391 3861)

KEEP UP TO DATE

The MLP project website is kept up to date with project activity and will undergo a face lift within the next 12 months. Make sure you bookmark www.wool.com/MLP to keep up to date with the latest in MLP developments.

The first drop of progeny, the Elders Balmoral 2015 drop, have recently had their results updated and can be accessed via the MLP website. The ewes were extensively classed and measured at post weaning age and were first reported in June this year. This data has now been updated with carcase measurements and a worm egg count and a full fleece

Elders Balmoral 2016 Field Day



assessment on their brothers at yearling age. The yearling assessment of the 2015 drop wethers was funded separately by AWI to enable repeat fleece measurements on siblings at post weaning and yearling age stages. This data will help to strengthen the accuracy of post weaning ASBV estimates in the national genetic evaluation program MERINOSELECT.

The MLP project would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of the site hosts, the committees, project sire entrants, industry steering group and the wide range of individuals and organisations working to help the MLP achieve such important outcomes for the Australian sheep and wool industry.

Elders Balmoral 2015 F1 Ewe (at 7 months old)



MLP FIELD DAYS

The MLP site field days will be held in conjunction with standard sire evaluation field days over the coming years. These field days are a chance to view the progeny from sires entered and to network with other sheep breeding enthusiasts.

Come along next year and look at the first and second drop of progeny at Elders Balmoral, and the first drops at MerinoLink and Pingelly.

ELDERS BALMORAL

Friday 24 March (Harrow, Vic)

PINGELLY

Tuesday 4 April (Pingelly, WA)

MERINOLINK

Early March or early April

– check the MLP website for details

MORE INFORMATION
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