

Merino Lifetime Productivity Project Newsletter No.8

2020 Pingelly Field Day & MerinoLink Inspection Day

In late October both the Pingelly and MerinoLink MLP sites were open with their MLP ewes on public display. Pingelly was able to host a full MLP Field Day while MerinoLink hosted an Inspection Day.

Pingelly's Field Day saw an eager crowd attend the site which is managed by Murdoch University and located at the University of Western Australia's 'Ridgefield' Farm. The day commenced with a dedicated ASBV workshop and followed with industry and research presentations along with penside introductions. Attendee feedback noted the day as a great success.

Pingelly's 2016 and 2017 drop ewes were displayed with 11 months' wool growth. MerinoLink's ewes were displayed with 12 months' wool growth and were shorn the following week. A webinar and results are available at merinosuperiorsires.com.au/merinolink2020mlp.

MerinoLink's low-key event operated under the current COVID guidelines for corporate events in NSW with attendee numbers well restricted. Attendees at MerinoLink's Temora site, hosted by Moses and Son, were able to get up-close with the MLP ewes but not so the people. This precluded any presentations or grouping of attendees. The MerinoLink site is looking forward to hosting a full MLP Field Day in 2021.



An aerial view of Pingelly's 2020 Field Day, October 2020.
Image credit: Jarryd Krog, Murdoch University

MLP quick facts

- The Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) funded MLP project is a \$8m (plus \$5m from partners), 10-year partnership between AWI, the Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association (AMSEA), nominating stud Merino breeders and site hosts.
- The MLP project runs at five sites where sire evaluation trials operate for the first two years and then continue tracking performance of ewe progeny as they proceed through four to five joinings and annual shearings.
- Balmoral, VIC** Host: Tuloona Pastoral
Committee: Balmoral Breeders Association
- Pingelly, WA** Host: Murdoch University / UWA
Committee: Federation of Performance Sheep Breeders (WA Branch)
- MerinoLink, Temora NSW** Host: Moses & Son
Committee: MerinoLink Inc.
- Macquarie, Trangie NSW** Host: NSW DPI
Committee: Macquarie Sire Evaluation Association
- New England, NSW** Host: CSIRO
Committee: New England Merino Sire Evaluation Association
- A full suite of assessments will be undertaken during the MLP project including visual trait scoring, classer gradings, the objective assessment of a range of key traits and index evaluations.
- A unique and extensive dataset will result and be used to enhance existing Merino breeding and selection strategies, for both ram sellers and buyers, to deliver greater lifetime productivity and woolgrower returns.



The appropriately spaced out MerinoLink 2020 Inspection Day, October 2020. *Image credit: Emma Grabham, AMSEA*

Early 2021 Events

POSTPONED - Balmoral's Final MLP Field Day

The final Balmoral MLP field day, originally scheduled for February 25 and 26 2021, is postponed until early 2022.

It is hoped that the limitations will then be lighter and a full public field day can be hosted with sheep inspections and accompanying presentations. The Balmoral 2015 and 2016 drop ewes will have a lifetime of results available so this 2022 event is an exciting prospect.

TO BE CONFIRMED - Macquarie MLP Field Day

Macquarie's 2021 Field Day* is currently scheduled for early in March with a full day of sheep displays (of both the 2017 and 2018 drops) at NSW DPI's Trangie Agricultural Research Centre. Details will be confirmed shortly.

**Both events are subject to change depending on the COVID restrictions at the time.*

MLP data indicator

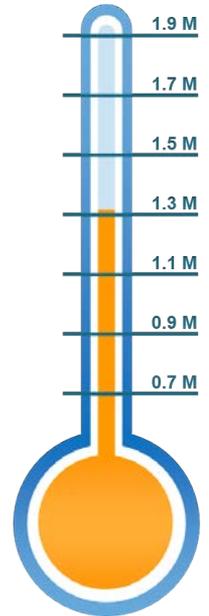
Project Update

At the end of 2021 the MLP project had collected 1,312,276 data points across the five sites.

These data points include wool, carcass and reproduction assessments.

This is 72% of the projected total for the project which is currently estimated as 1,971,555 data records.

These data points will form a dataset to be used to enhance Merino breeding and selection strategies, improving lifetime productivity and woolgrower profitability.





Balmoral Breeders
FIELD DAY 2021



Postponed until 2022



February 25
BBQ Info Session
Jigsaw Farms, Hensley Park

February 26
Sheep Display
Tuloona Pastoral, Harrow



February 25 & 26 2021
facebook.com/balmoralbreeders



MACQUARIE
Sire Evaluation Association Inc
FIELD DAY 2021





NSW | Department of Primary Industries
government

eartags.com.au



Trangie Agricultural Research Centre March 2021
facebook.com/macquariesireevaluation

Around the sites

Balmoral

The season at Harrow continues to be exceptionally good with the ewes in great condition.

The F2 lambs were weaned on November 24 with an overall weaning percentage of 113%. The 2015 drop ewes averaged 64.6kg and 3.6 CS and the 2016 drop 61.3kg and 3.5 CS.

Classing and fleece measurements will be completed by February with the final site joining scheduled for March.



Imprint feeding of Balmoral's 2020 F2 lambs with their MLP F1 mothers, November 2020. Dark rib line is vegetable oil residue from EMD/FAT scanning. **Image credit: Sean Harvey, Tuloona Pastoral**

Pingelly

The site continues to receive patchy rainfall, although the site achieved adequate pasture growth before drying off.

A well-attended field day was held onsite on October 22. Classing and midside sampling followed in late November with shearing completed in early December.

Ewes will be fat and muscle scanned prior to being joined for the second last time in late January / early February 2021.



Pen-side at Pingelly's 2020 Field Day, October 2020. **Image credit: Bob Garnant, Countryman**

MerinoLink

Summer conditions have settled in at the site with a good bulk of feed available from the spring break.

An inspection day held on October 20 displayed both the 2016 and 2017 drops of MLP ewes just prior to shearing. Latest results and a *Beyond the Report* webinar available at merinosuperiorsires.com.au/merinolink2020mlp.

Ewes will be fat and muscle scanned pre-joining on December 21. Rams have been inspected by Tim Gole as part of the Ram Mating Success MLP Add-On project.



2017 drop MLP ewes at the recent MerinoLink 2020 MLP Inspection Day, October 2020. **Image credit: Emma Graham, AMSEA**

Macquarie

The feed has dried off under the summer conditions.

The 2017 and 2018 drops of ewes had their pre-joining weight, carcass scan and condition score taken on December 9. The 2017 drop averaged 73.4kg and 3.8 CS, while the 2018 drop averaged 65.7kg and 3.7 CS.

The ram pre-joining inspection took place on December 9, with rams scheduled to go out on December 21.

A field day is scheduled for early March 2021. Details TBC.



Macquarie 2017 drop ewes, October 2020. **Image credit: Kathryn Egerton-Warburton, NSW DPI**

New England

Seasonal conditions in the New England continue to be vastly improved from the previous year.

Weaning took place in December. The 2017 drop ewes achieved a 122% weaning rate and the maiden 2018 drop 97%. At weaning the 2017 drop ewes averaged 56.8kg and the 2018 drop ewes averaged 52.1kg, with both drops averaging 3.0 CS.

Profile Series: Meet the MLP Site Managers

Lexi Cesnik - MerinoLink, Temora NSW

Lexi is the Site Manager for the MerinoLink MLP site which is hosted by Moses and Son, located just north of Temora in New South Wales.

Lexi brings a suite of impressive skills to the MLP team. As the newest member of the team, Lexi's fresh approach, infectious enthusiasm and energy is greatly appreciated.

Where has your career path taken you?

Lexi completed a B.AgSc at Charles Sturt University and followed this up with postgraduate studies in Ag Consulting at the University of New England. She received an MLA Livestock Consulting Internship with Sally Martin Consulting and Moses and Son Wool Broking, and has continued on with Moses and Son as a wool and livestock specialist. Lexi's roles have included managing the 2017 CSU/MerinoLink Nutrition trial and sitting on the MerinoLink Board.

What's a highlight of your role as MerinoLink's Site Manager?

Staying sane through the drought! Keeping up with the many teams involved in this project; Moses and Son, Bluechip, MerinoLink, AMSEA and AWI - there are many logos but these networks and the across-the-site network are a great support and highlight.

How would you describe your site and its ewe base?

The MerinoLink site at Temora is a typical Riverina property bordering the Riverina, Central West and South West Slopes regions.

The ewe base was sourced from five flocks, allocated evenly across all sires. These flocks included commercial Pooginook blood ewes, Bundilla stud ewes, Centre Plus stud ewes, Pooginook stud ewes and ewes from the previous Bluechip sire evaluation program.

Where are MerinoLink's ewes up to in their lifetime?

The 2016 born F1 ewes have now lambed for the third time, they have five fleece measurements and have been visually classed five times. The 2017 ewes are just one year behind.

What makes the MerinoLink site unique?

We are solely focused on the MLP at the Temora site so there are no other priorities. This is a private site run for the purpose of undertaking independent industry-focused Merino projects. It showcases the potential of this Riverina location for sheep production rather than just cropping.

Geoff Lindon (AWI), Lexi Cesnik and Jack Mann (Moses & Son) at the recent MerinoLink inspection day with three 2017 drop daughters from one of the highest cutting MLP sires (Adult Clean Fleece Weight ASBV of +45 and an Breech Wrinkle ASBV of -0.1).



Lexi with her favourite MLP ewe.

What is MerinoLink's particular MLP interest?

Identifying and ensuring that the traits we collect and measure on young sheep are those most strongly correlated to the lifetime profitability of the whole flock.

What's the most important activity of the year at Temora?

DNA sampling the F2 progeny at lamb tagging. Reproduction performance is just so important!

What's the most interesting activity of the year?

I love functional scoring the ewes at weaning. Especially the udder scores. Conformation impacts can be massive.

From Lexi:

'Functional scoring at weaning time gives a great understanding of the impacts of a ewe's conformation on her lambs.'

And the biggest challenge?

Coordinating people - all those logos take some handling!

Lexi's top tips for collecting quality data:

The 5 P's; Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance (at the point of collection). And SLOW DOWN; take the time to be accurate. Easier to do when we have the luxury of this not being a mob of 1500 commercial ewes.



Further information

Download MLP Reports from www.merinosuperiorsires.com.au/mlp-project-reports

Feel free to contact the Site Managers, Project or AMSEA staff who are listed in reports for assistance with interpreting reported results.

Subscribe to the MLP quarterly newsletter at <https://go.wool.com/mlp-subscription>

Contact MLP Project Manager Anne Ramsay on 0400 368 448



The Merino Lifetime Productivity Project is being undertaken in partnership between the Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association Incorporated (AMSEA) and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI). AMSEA and AWI would like to acknowledge those entities who also contribute funding, namely Woolgrowers through sire evaluation entry fees, site hosts, site committee in-kind contributions, and sponsors of AMSEA. A special acknowledgement is also made to the Australian Government who supports research, development and marketing of Australian wool.

www.wool.com/MLP