

## 'HORSEPOWER' OF RAMS

Would you buy a tractor without knowing its horsepower?

**Did you know that you can find out the "horsepower" of rams before you buy them?**

Every farmer we know would closely examine the detailed specifications of a possible range of tractor choices. They would then be compared for performance.



Each of these tractors are blue, and have black tyres, but they are suited for different purposes. The small loader may be good for hobby farming in confined places, while the large tractor at rear centre is more suitable for planting crops, and other tillage operations requiring greater power.

In this next case, the example is more extreme, but all the tractors are the same brand and colour.

Buying a ram without the benefit of access to Australian Sheep Breeding Values, ASBV's, is like not knowing

the power difference between the two red tractors on the left of the photo. Who would pay the same amount for vastly different power capabilities? They are both red with black tyres. It is the difference in horsepower that values them differently. Specifications must be meaningful and reliable.



Rams are a major investment in the future genetics of your flock, they have ongoing influence over generations. Their productive capability is rated in their ASBV's, which are Estimated Breeding Values.

For instance, to be only given body weights of rams without knowing details of birth date, whether it was from a maiden ewe, or of multiple birth and raised to weaning as a multiple, renders any information on body weight totally useless. Even fibre diameter measurements are significantly affected by birth type, and therefore, if unknown, can distort the comparison between rams.

Data presented to clients at the time of sale is not always representative of how a ram will pass on its genetics to his progeny. Many environmental factors influence weight and fibre diameter, so ASBV's bring a clearer indicator of true genetic capability.

The benefit of knowing both parents and when a lamb was born gives greater accuracy and predictability to ASBV's.

As members of the Australian Dohne Breeders Association, we are required to record pedigree, along with birth date and type, and measure all animals in a management group in such a way as the best 'do-ers' are identified. The final measurements are taken as yearlings or hoggets and include both carcase and wool traits. These records are processed by Sheep Genetics Australia and are the basis on which ASBV's are built.

ASBV's are the sheep equivalent of a specification brochure for a tractor, and they deserve equal consideration when making an investment. ASBV's for all Dohne sheep in Australia are freely available on the Sheep Genetics Australia website. You can tailor your searches in a vast number of ways.

If you require help to become confident to find your way around the web page, please contact us and we will empower you to make your own searches.