

SHEEP COMPENDIUM

Blue tag is key to purebred genetics

AUSTRALIAN WHITE SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION
ADVERTISER CONTENT

THE Australian White Sheep Breeders Association (AWSBA) stands strong on its focus of excellence and commitment to the purity and quality of the Australian White Sheep breed.

The AWSBA ensures that producers have access to pure genetics that give surety and repeatability of breeding outcomes. At the heart of this lies the AWSBA blue tag, a symbol of purity and genetic excellence.

The AWSBA was founded in 2011 with a clear vision: to develop and maintain a breed-wide uniformity and type.

This objective was crucial for establishing the Australian White Sheep as a reliable and consistent breed, capable of meeting the high standards of commercial sheep production.

The founders emphasised the importance of a tightly bred, pure animal that was bred on old-fashioned visual assessment, ensuring breed uniformity and repeatable type.

In 2019, Glenn Lambert from Warrumbungle Australian White Stud identified the need for a simple identification system for registered AWSBA studs to brand and market their flock rams.

The blue tag program was developed to address the issue of commercially bred rams of mixed genetics being marketed as Australian Whites.

These mixed genetics rams, while visually appealing, lack the genetic stability to produce consistent offspring.

The AWSBA's blue tag represents more than just a visual marker; it is a testament to the rigorous standards and meticulous selection processes that underpin the Australian White Sheep breeding program. Introduced to provide assurance to buyers of commercial flock rams, the blue tag signifies that the ram possesses genuine Australian White genetics from registered AWSBA studs.

To assist entry of new stud members early



Dedication to genetic excellence will ensure the long-term success of the Australian White Sheep breed. Picture supplied

on, a short duration upgrade registry was utilised but this had strict controls, allowing only upgrades from Poll Dorset and Texel ewes. These breeds were chosen because they are known for their tight genetic consistency.

The AWSBA board and membership have always wanted tight controls over the introduction of new genetics to preserve the breed's integrity. This commitment to purity was further demonstrated in 2017 when the upgrade register was closed.

The AWSBA's commitment to maintaining purebred genetics is crucial for several reasons.

Purebred animals provide the uniformity and predictability that commercial producers need for consistent breeding outcomes. Hybrid vigour, which many breeders seek, cannot be achieved without purebred parents. Selling a hybrid ram to producers with crossbred ewes will not result in hybrid vigour for the client, as the hybrid vigour has already been exhausted in the creation of the ram.

This emphasis on purebred genetics ensures that each ram purchased is an investment in the future of the flock. A

self-replacing flock requires a strong genetic foundation, and every ram introduced into the flock influences its long-term stability and productivity. The AWSBA's focus on purebred genetics provides breeders with the confidence that their investment will yield predictable and repeatable results.

The AWSBA's dedication to breed purity extends beyond visual assessments and strict breeding controls. The association has implemented a sire DNA registry as part of its long-term commitment to future breed purity. This registry ensures that the genetic integrity of the breed is maintained and provides a robust framework for tracking and verifying the lineage of breeding animals.

The sire DNA registry is a long-term project that reflects the board's and breeders' commitment to preserving the breed's integrity and promoting its long-term sustainability. By establishing a DNA-based tracking system, the AWSBA can provide even greater assurance to breeders and commercial producers about the genetic purity of their livestock.

The AWSBA's focus on building a quality ewe base is another critical aspect of its breeding program. During the breed's

development, ewes showing high off-season fertility were targeted through extensive embryo transfer-driven selection processes. This ensured that non-seasonal breeding became a strong genetic characteristic of the breed, allowing for greater management flexibility and increased profitability for commercial producers.

The strength of the AWSBA blue tag flock ram comes from its genetically stable, shedding hair type that does not require shearing. These rams are noted for their superior carcase shape and size, and their ability to finish on pasture, making them the ultimate low-maintenance sheep breed. When purchasing ewes in-lamb, commercial producers are encouraged to look for those bred to rams with the blue AWSBA flock ram tag, ensuring they are investing in genuine Australian White genetics.

The AWSBA is committed to purebred genetics, stringent breeding controls, and innovative initiatives like the blue tag and sire DNA registry. By maintaining a tightly bred, genetically consistent population, the AWSBA provides breeders and commercial producers with the assurance of predictable and repeatable breeding outcomes.

LOOK FOR THE BLUE TAG

GENUINE AUSTRALIAN WHITE FLOCK RAMS



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