

## PERFORMANCE RECORDING SCHEMES FOR MEAT SHEEP

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There is an urgent need for adequate performance recording services for sheep breeders in Australia. These services can assist ram breeders and ram buyers by providing:

- objective production data to assist the breeder in his selections and/or purchases
- adjustment for known environmental effects to provide more accurate estimated breeding values
- uniformity in output to assist in understanding, interpretation and application of results
- a facility for recording and handling breeding records and production data.

The production traits of importance which need to be accommodated in a performance recording scheme for meat sheep include:

- growth to various ages from weaning to about 15 months;
- ewe reproduction which needs to be cumulated over years;
- other traits and comments, eg. greasy fleece weight, fat depth.

A national performance recording scheme for meat sheep needs to be operated and managed by a central organisation. Strong technical resource backup for the scheme needs to be provided to ensure the genetic soundness of procedures being undertaken as well as to update these procedures from time to time.

There must be close co-operation and involvement of state departmental advisory services if the scheme is to be successfully implemented and operate effectively. Advantage must be taken of recent advances in the technology of electronic transfer of data. This will reduce costs, data errors and turnaround time which are all critical to successful adoption by the breeder. The developing computer network systems of the various Departments of Agriculture should be used to facilitate this and also provide a focus for advisory programs associated with the scheme.

Day to day operational and computer costs would be met by participating breeders. Costs associated with technical backup, educational and advisory programs would largely be met by State Departments and possibly industry funds.