



Flock Status Rating for Facial Eczema Tolerance

Georgie Walker & Mark Young, SIL
22 May 2009; Updated Dec 2009

RamGuard Status Rating

Flocks are assigned a RamGuard flock status rating based on the dose rate they test at. The dose rate is affected by the number of years the flock has been testing and the degree to which the sheep tested each year react. RamGuard scientists determine the dose rates that flocks use each year and produce status ratings for flocks based on the table below.

The dose rate a flock is tested at is not used in the SIL genetic evaluation of Facial Eczema tolerance. So GGT21 breeding values may be similar for sheep tested different dose rates. Using the flock status rating along with the estimates of genetic merit for individual animals (GGT21BV or DPX index) provides the means to rate animals for FE tolerance.

When animals have similar values for GGT21BV or DPX, those from a flock with a higher status rating are likely to be more tolerant to FE.

Dose rate and resultant flock status rating table:

Dose rate mg/kg LW	Flock Status Rating
<0.20	*
0.20-0.29	**
0.30-0.49	***
0.50-0.59	****
>.60	*****

This RamGuard rating for each flock will be updated annually.

Finding rams that are FE tolerant

If you want to purchase rams to kick-start FE tolerance in your ewe flock, you need to purchase from ram sellers who are actively selecting to improve FE tolerance using the RamGuard system. You can then do one or both of two things.

1. Target flocks that are highly rated for FE tolerance (more stars = more tolerant) and which are also genetically rating their rams for the other traits that are important to you. Remember that while a high status rating is good for FE, it is only part of the genetic package you are purchasing.
2. Once you have selected a flock, make sure the rams you buy are highly rated for FE tolerance (higher DPX index or lower GGT21 BV) along with good merit in other traits of importance to you.

Need more information?

If you have any queries about the ideas and terms in this document, please send them by email to silhelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz or telephone 0800-silhelp (0800-745-435)

About Sheep Improvement Ltd (SIL)

Sheep Improvement Ltd (SIL) is the national performance recording and genetic evaluation system, and is part of Meat & Wool New Zealand. It is funded by fees from breeder's using the system and from levy money.