

ALL LAMBS SHOULD BE RECORDED - DEAD OR ALIVE!

Here are some quick tips and reminders on what you can do with lambing results to maximise data quality for all goal trait groups especially Reproduction and Survival.

- A) Record ALL LAMBS born with an ID number or parentage identification
- B) Record all dead and cull lambs with an appropriate fate code (BFATE)
- C) Record all lambs from “follow/tail up” sires
- D) Record all lambs born to hogget ewes
- E) Record ewes earmarked for culling with the appropriate ‘longevity’ code
- F) Survival is now in SIL-ACE and data is being audited for inclusion in analyses

Same tips as for pregnancy scanning:

- G) If you want to use pregnancy scanning results in your genetic evaluation of Reproduction tell your bureau
- H) If you want to use pregnancy scanning results to help fill in blanks in your lambing string records tell your bureau
- I) If you are using the DNA based Shepherd method for parentage identification (from Pfizer Animal Genetics), pregnancy scanning results must be recorded on SIL

More details about these quick tips and reminders are given below:

A) Record ALL LAMBS born with an ID number or parentage identification

Why?

- Reproduction BVs will be more accurate
 - Reproduction is a lowly heritable trait so the more accurate are your lambing records, the more accurate the BV predictions for each sire family will be
 - Some families may have less accurate figures for genetic merit if some lambs born are not known – (Survival will account for whether they lived or not)
- Survival will be more accurate

If some lambs born dead are not recorded, some families may have inaccurate survival BVs

- The more complete are the lamb death records, the better the chances will be of identifying families with genetically higher survival
- Survival is now included in SIL-ACE where it is being audited for data quality. High survival rate data (>90%) is not used in the SIL-ACE evaluation)

B) Record all dead & cull lambs with an appropriate fate code (BFATE)

Why?

- Ewes and their sire families are credited with the correct number of lambs born
- Families with high survival rates can only be clearly identified by comparison with families with poor survival rates – we need to know about all lamb deaths to get the best comparisons for this

C) Record all lambs from “follow/tail up” sires

Why?

- The more lambing records that are recorded the more accurate the BVs will be
- Lambs from “follow/tail up” sires still help with reproduction records for their dam’s family and maternal survival genes

D) Record all lambs born to hogget ewes

Why?

- Hogget lambing results can be used to produce hogget reproduction breeding values – for Hogget NLB (litter size) and Hogget Fertility (mated and got pregnant)
- Hogget Lambing results can also be included in the Reproduction (adult ewe) calculations. These can provide more accurate predictions of NLB BV earlier, for sires when first used
- If a hogget ewe has produced lambs as a hogget SIL can correct for any effects this may have on future liveweights etc. NB: SIL will soon introduce older ewe LWs to its prediction of the adult ewe weight (EWT) BV

E) Record ewes earmarked for culling with the appropriate ‘longevity’ code

Why?

- SIL has recently introduced the longevity goal trait group to record why a ewe has left the breeding flock

- In the future, SIL will use this data to look at the genetics of ewe longevity. Many breeders have said SIL should be looking at this important component of flock efficiency
- For more information, read the technical note “Ewe Longevity” on the SIL website

F) Survival is now in SIL-ACE and data is being audited for inclusion in analyses

Why?

- Lamb survival is now included in SIL-ACE (as of August 2009), however many flock-year datasets do not meet auditing criteria for inclusion in this analysis
- Incomplete survival data *i.e.* survival in a flock is close to 100%, usually means deaths have probably not been fully recorded so the genetic evaluation will be compromised
- To cope with this, SIL excludes blocks of Survival data from the SIL-ACE analysis where lamb survival in a flock-year is >90%
- Three successive years of “good” data are recommended for meaningful SIL-ACE lamb survival genetic results
- SIL acknowledges that it is not always possible to have 100% complete data, particularly in more extensive farming conditions. However, it is often more right than wrong to assume all animals without a weaning weight are dead. Your bureau can fate off as dead all animals without a weaning weight. If they appear again later, they can be readily “resurrected” to being alive on SIL. The minority of missing animals that reappear will likely have little effect on SUR BVs of their relatives. But the majority that do not reappear will have a greater effect on SUR BVs

Tips from previous enote that are relevant for eNote 4

G) If you want to use pregnancy scanning results in your genetic evaluation for Reproduction tell your bureau

- Pregnancy Scan results can be used to provide information when lambing results are missing or have not been collected
- If you wish to use your pregnancy scan data make sure you tell your bureau before they run your next genetic evaluation
- Across Flock groups should have a group rule for their genetic evaluations that defines whether, and how, pregnancy scanning data is used
 - If the rule is to use pregnancy scanning date and some flocks do not pregnancy scan, the rule is still useful for the evaluation

H) If you want to use pregnancy scanning results to help fill in some blanks in your lambing string records tell your bureau

- For various reasons some ewes may not have lambs assigned to them at birth and have a missing value indicated by a “.” (full stop) or “zero” in their lambing string. By using their pregnancy scanning (PS) results to fill in such blanks your ewes receive more complete lambing strings, and NLB BVs will be more accurately estimated
- There are 3 options to use for ‘lambing strings’
 - NLB records only used – from lambs assigned to dams from pedigree (based on tagging)
 - NLB records are used as the first choice with PS results used when there is no NLB record against that ewe that year, *i.e.* PS data fills in for missing data
 - PS results are used as first choice with NLB records based on pedigree used when there is no PS record for a ewe, *i.e.* NLB tagging records fill in for missing data
 - Let your bureau know if you wish to use the 2nd or 3rd options above

I) If you are using the DNA based Shepherd method for parentage identification (from Pfizer Animal Genetics), pregnancy scanning results must be recorded on SIL

- The Shepherd method uses pregnancy scan results and DNA (blood samples) from lambs, ewes and rams to assign parentage to lambs
- Lamb survival is calculated from pregnancy scan litter size and the number of lambs a ewe has at weaning

Upcoming SIL eNote topics

- Weaning Weights, • Ram and ewe selection, • Ewe longevity – why a ewe leaves the breeding flock

Notice board

- SIL newsletters can be received by email, email silhelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz to sign up
- Past SIL eNotes can be found on the SIL website under Technical Information

Contact details & further information

SIL eNotes are designed to give you quick tips and reminders on how to get the best out of performance recording and genetic evaluations with SIL. For further information or if you have any questions refer to our SIL website or contact our SIL helpline.

Website: www.sil.co.nz, **Ph:** SILhelp – 0800 silhelp (0800 745 435), **Email:** silhelp@sheepimprovement.co.nz

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