

HILL PADUA POLLS NEWSLETTER

August 2024



I cannot imagine a better lifestyle than being a farmer, the connection with the land and the animals that rely on you as much as you rely on them, is something only a farmer understands, but it does come with plenty of challenges. Every Farmer knows that we need to make the most in the high performing years because we know that often tough times are around the corner and even when we prepare as much as we can for those tough times, they still hurt in many ways.

At Hill Padua Polls, the same as many of our clients and friends, we have just gone through one of the toughest seasons in history, where low rainfall, and bad government strategies which lead to markets dropping to ridiculous levels, created a perfect storm making last season one to forget...

Understanding every Farmer that has suffered the last 18 months, we just hope everyone is getting above average rainfall, and a chance to turn things around, and we are hoping everyone can see green hope regardless the decisions made going through the rough period. To all who need to reach out and sometimes don't have someone to share their stories, just remember that we are always one call away, and always happy to talk farming.



Hill Padua Polls this season: the importance of efficient lambs.

At Hill Padua Polls we were also hit with the bad season, where we harvested very poor crops, had very low stubbles and pastures that didn't have a chance to build up with the short rainfall in 2023.

With that situation adding very low prices was a bigger challenge, we still had an excellent lambing of 123.1% (lambs marked to ewes mated). With high number of animals on the farm and very low grass production, turned into a very expensive year to run lambs through the feedlot and getting very little for them.

Once the June born lambs were weaned off, it was a race to get the wether lambs off farm, as well as the lower quality ewe lambs. We managed to get the first load of 500 lambs 5th of December, with an average weight of 50kg, second load of 570 lambs 20th of January with an average weight of 55kg and the very last of the lambs and the ewe lambs were sent off mid-March 370 lambs with an average weight of 58kg.

It was a bit of a relief to have the feedlot empty and keep the leftover feed for our heavily pregnant ewes in a year where we knew that a challenging lambing was coming ahead.

The high genetic FAT and EMD content of our animals combined with excellent growth give us always the option of running our lambs in very low maintenance mode or pushing them a bit and having them off the farm quickly, into the meat market. Animals with the wrong genetics just cannot provide such versatility.

Hill Padua genetics provide under right management, 1.2 – 1.3 lambs per ewe, and those lambs have the potential of hitting the ground running and perform as very efficient meat machines.



High Performance Ewes:

Our ewes have excellent performance potential, and a season like the one we just had is proof of that.

The benefit of having a ewe with high FAT and EMD is like having hay in the shed, they can store or save necessary fat to maintain condition in very tough situations, giving our clients the potential of maintain performance regardless of what the season brings. This doesn't mean they don't need to eat; this just means that they are very efficient at converting feed into reserves of energy. A more efficient animal, in a good season allows you to have higher stocking rates and in tight seasons they will maintain performance or at least perform better than others.

High pregnancy rates, combined with high mother ability are some of the strengths of our ewes and lambs, let's not forget that higher genetic FAT is also highly related to lamb survival.

Mating was done late December and January on poor stubbles but fresh harvested so still was good quality for a few weeks. After that it was a very long, hot and tough summer, for our ewes, and for us.

Pregnancy scanning was as always done by Bec Martin who is doing an excellent job scanning and recording every animal pregnancy and separating the early to the late pregnant animals. This was a year where I didn't know what to expect, to be honest I knew our ewes were holding to body condition but going through a tough time. We couldn't do the protein flushing we do every year to increase ovulation rates, we just didn't harvest enough lupins and couldn't afford to buy feed for this purpose.

We had an excellent result which can only be described with one word when I think of what our ewes have achieved in such a bad season, RESILIENCE.

Scanning results showed 4404 fetuses available on 2668 ewes mated. We had 132 ewes scanned empty, most empty ones were in stud ewes because of single sires. The conception rate was 96% and the pregnancy rate was 165%. The comment about this year pregnancy is that we scanned 135 ewes pregnant with triplets. Which is a record for us, that is over 5% of the total number of ewes pregnant with 3 lambs.

Lambing was done in very bad conditions, no feed in the pastures, so, supplementary feeding all the way through. Pretty much the situation was just like having them in a confinement lambing, just had the smallest mobs possible to avoid mis mothering but they were 100% of the time near where the hay and water was. Every pasture paddock had ewes, and we ended up with 22 small mobs from 68 to 220 ewes the biggest mob, not counting the 135-triplet pregnant drafted into 8 little mobs. Making 30 lambing mobs on the farm.

By the end of June Lambing was done, and we started lamb marking first week of July. Again, didn't know what to expect in a season like this. We had once again our ewes performing at a high level against all odds.

Stud Ewes marked a total of 1841 Lambs out of 1421 ewes mated, for a Lambing of 129.5% to ewes mated. The triplets out of the Stud ewes had a fetus survival of 219%, which is the highest we ever had on triplets.

The commercial ewes did a great job themselves marking 1554 lambs of 1247 ewes mated, for a lambing of 125.1% to ewes mated. Triplets on them did a survival of 157%

Overall Results: 3395 Lambs marked out of 2668 ewes mated, for a final overall result of 127.3% to ewes mated.

Described on the table below there is a description the last 4 years lambing percentages where we can appreciate the excellent fertility and mother ability of our ewes through different seasons, showing a consistent performance to achieve an average of 125.2% for the last 4 seasons.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	AVERAGE 4 YEARS
NUMBER OF EWES MATED	2909	2827	2791	2667	2798
PREGNANT EWES	2808	2722	2628	2536	2673
NUMBER OF LAMBS MARKED	3533	3653	3436	3395	3504
LAMBING % TO EWES MATED	121.5	129.2	123.1	127.3	125.2
LAMBING % TO PREGNANT EWES	125.8	134.2	130.7	133.8	131.1

High FAT and EMD levels:

FAT and EMD are very important in our environment, I must say are important for every environment, but in WA where summer is always long, high levels of FAT and EMD are essential.

When we talk about FAT, we talk about efficiency. Ewes with high FAT will recover from raising their lambs a lot faster than an ewe with low FAT, making an efficient recovery to be able to repeat high pregnancy rates year after year. Also, high FAT ewes are excellent at holding condition, and survival on lambs is higher when they hold high genetic FAT.

Also, positive FAT is related to excellent eating quality traits, such as IMF Intramuscular Fat, Shear Force (tenderness of meat), and Dressing Yields, which add value to our type of lambs making us an excellent option for today and future markets.

We believe in the right interconnection of traits, where extreme High Growth lambs that have low FAT and EMD traits aren't efficient lambs, just takes too much feed to finish them. We rather a more balanced line, with good Growth but also with a high FAT and EMD, this give us options for different seasons. In a year where prices are

improving like this one, it makes sense for our lambs just to continue on a steady growth, and when we are happy with the price, we will push them and finish them, as they'll be always nearly ready.

For this season, we decided that we need an income per lamb to be close to \$200. We expect to have most of our lambs ready with 60kg by January – March and we are expecting prices to be north of \$7/kilo. 60kg lamb at 46% yield= 28kg carcass at \$7.20= \$200 per lamb. We believe this year the longer we wait the better the prices will be, so steady growth, no rush.

In seasons like the last one, where we didn't have the feed and prices were very poor, our very efficient lambs were off the farm at 6 and 7 months old early December and early January and we felt a big relief when the lambs were off the farm. Efficient lambs = more options.

On the breeding strategy we are always on a correcting breeding basis, where we try to level traits between two animals (ewe and ram), a low-Fat ewe should take a high Fat Ram. Admitting that we consider FAT our favorite trait, very often we find ourselves cheating, and when we come across a high FAT ewe it is very tempting to go with the high FAT Ram, and I believe that is the way we keep finding the extreme performers.

At Hill Padua we have been measuring and breeding for superior FAT and EMD for over 14 years now, making our data very reliable when it comes to these traits.

Genetic Trends:

With our Data Submitted to Sheep Genetics for 15 years we have the chance to follow and understand the improvements, developments, and the direction of our breeding for each individual ASBV trait.

In the next tables is the Genetic Trends of our animals (each year drop, Rams and Ewes) compared to the averages for Merinos in Australia for the main traits we normally use.

Improved Wool: Has been the focus on the last 4 years, aiming to increase wool cut and reduce micron to add value to our fleece, without losing the good fertility, growth and carcass that identify our bloodline.

4 years after this our wool cut went up, micron keeps slowly going down, and the quality and whiteness of our wool is just excellent.

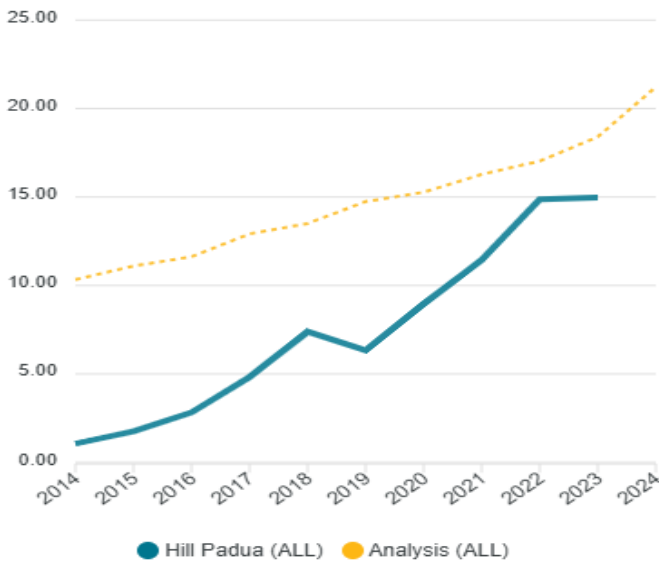
Sires like 210719 and 211050 have been really important for us on chasing that next level style of wool.

On the right is 210719 wool as a yearling ram.



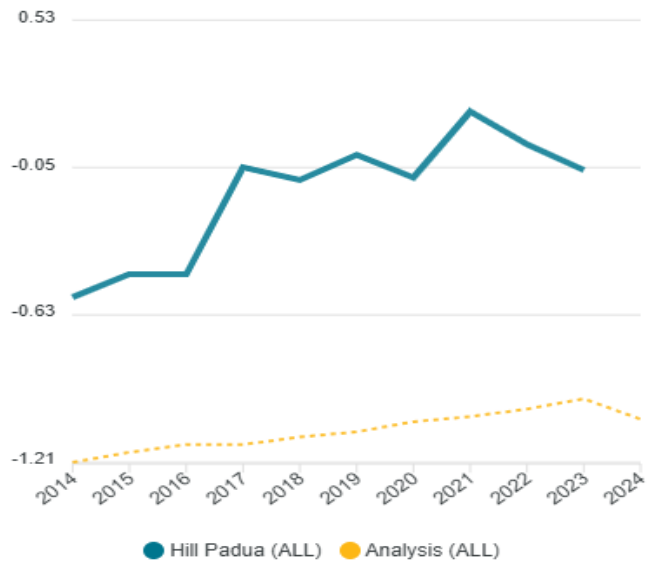
YCFW

Yearling Clean Fleece Weight average per year



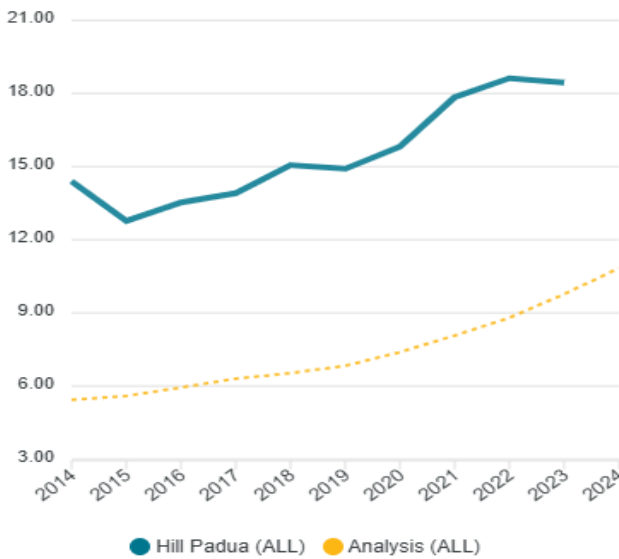
YFD

Yearling Fibre Diameter average per year



YSL

Yearling Staple Length average per year



Nowadays we are coming across animals with higher density, and slightly shorter Staple Length in some of them, which fits those clients that want to stay on a 12-month shearing, while also having plenty of selection for those who prefer shearing every 6 months.

The cost of shearing has pushed some of our clients to 12 months shearing and it is understandable.

It costs us 2.5 kilos of fleece to pay for shearing under current prices, but for us the condition boost and the management approach of a 6-month shearing is still the best way to go.

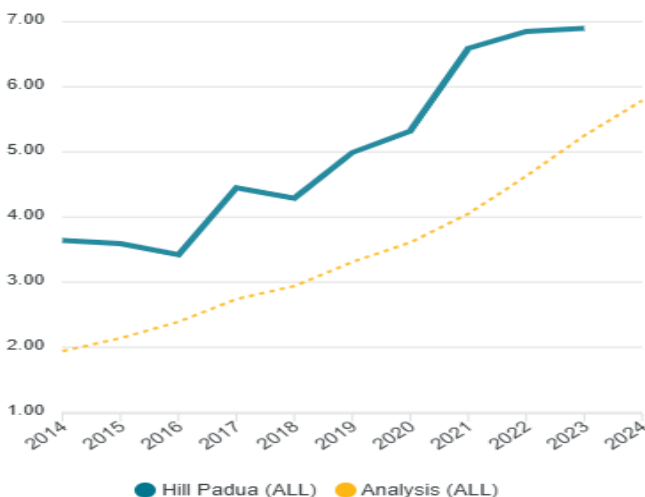
We can see in the genetic trends for wool that our fleece is still closing the gap with the industry, while micron is slowly heading down and Staple Length is showing a slight down

trend line.

Growth: Maintaining good early growth is important for our lamb performance, even when the main focus has been wool, we are making sure that we keep a decent gap above industry with our growth traits.

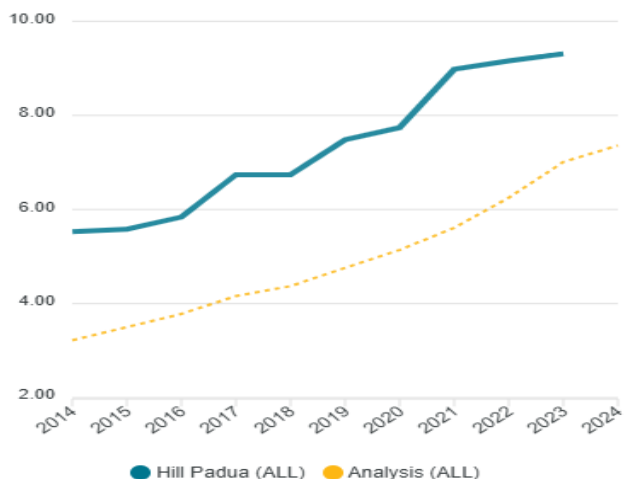
PWT

Post Weaning Weight average per year



YWT

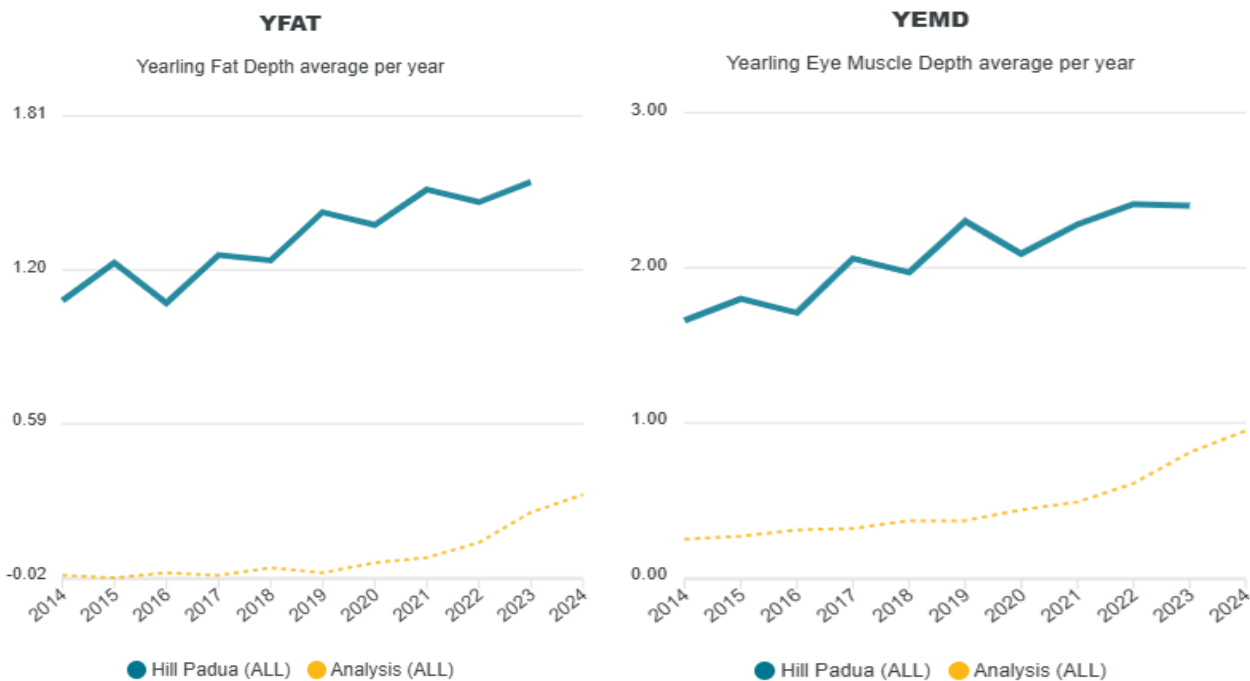
Yearling Weight average per year



Carcass, Fat + Emd: On that chase for the most efficient animal, an animal that will have high value moving forward, we understand the massive role of these two traits, and while working hard on all the main production traits, our focus is always on improving these two. For our environment these are the only traits that will guarantee that our sheep will maintain high performance regardless of what the season brings. The gap is big for our animals compared to the industry. And we still believe that it is early days to find out how far this trait can be pushed.

Merinos, with their old traditional line, had very low levels of Carcass traits, hence a very poor fertility and maternal ability and a very poor meat producing animal.

As merinos are changing in a very promising way, I have a strong belief that we are still far away from reaching the levels where these two Carcass traits are impacting negatively the other traits. We just need to find the right animals that can keep pushing all together to maintain the positive evolution of the Merino Breed into the future markets.



At Hill Padua, we are maintaining a very significant gap ahead of the industry. It is great to see the yellow line moving up, giving us the certainty that the whole industry is understanding more about the importance of these traits.

HP clients with excellent performance at LambEx Lamb competition:

Karradale Trading, Newman Family, Varley, WA. We wanted to extend our congratulations to the Newman family on their great result. Representing HP bloodlines in the biggest national lamb competition.

Craig and Anna Lisa have been very loyal clients to Hill Padua, they are excellent on the way they approach their sheep operation and always have had a very clear breeding objective. They have been selecting Rams based on their ASBVs, and also doing Genetic Flock profiles to ensure the right selection.

This year they decided to secure a spot for their lambs at LambEx Feedlot Carcass Competition and became part of one of the biggest trials for Lamb performance in the country.

1500 lambs from 30 exhibitors and 16 different breeds. The trial consisted of measuring the performance of the lambs transferred to market value, where meat and wool was considered.

Karradale Trading had an excellent result becoming the 5th overall line of lambs, and 2nd best wool clip. This is a huge result, considering some of the most productive lines of lamb in the country were measured alongside them. 1st and 4th overall belonged to the same producer and 2nd and 3rd also belonged to same producer, so it is fair to say that Karradale were the 3rd best producers on the trial.

Craig and Anna-Lisa entered the competition to obtain carcass quality feedback and get an idea of where their commercial flock were positioned in profitability when compared to cross breeds, as ideally, they want to keep a very simplistic mixed enterprise system on farm.

“It is clear that our Merinos can get the outcomes we are looking for, which was great to find out” Anna -Lisa said.

“It was a great result, we knew our lambs yield really well consistently over the hooks but didn’t expect to perform so highly overall” Craig said.

Other information about the trial:

1st Overall: Ricky Luhrs, Moralla (Trigger Vale Genetics). Merino x Merino.

2nd Overall: Barooka Trading (Glendemar Genetics) Merino x Hampshire Down.

3rd Overall: Barooka Trading (Glendemar Genetics) Merino x Merino.

4th Overall: Ricky Luhrs, Moralla (Trigger Vale Genetics). Merino x Merino.

5th Overall and 2nd best wool clip: Karradale Trading (Hill Padua Genetics). Merino x Merino.

We also wanted to congratulate Moralla, and Barooka Trading for their great result. When we look at their sheep and their bloodline, we understand that we all have similar breeding objectives, with efficient animals loaded with high carcass traits, and when we talk to each other, we talk about our type of merinos.

Personally, I believe that these results are clear evidence that the merinos we are breeding are the best choice for today and the future. Not only within Merinos but also within all breeds. A Modern Merino, that can perform as good or better than any crossbred for meat production while adding great value with the wool.

Sheep breeding has its joys:



It was middle of lambing at Mernowie Poll Merinos in South Australia, when they found this ewe giving birth to 4 lambs, a while after that there was 5, and just to make it a record and something we have never seen in the past she made it with her lamb number 6. Just something that brought a lot of Joy for Ian and David Rowett.

The ewe was inseminated with a Hill Padua sire HP210273, while this has nothing to do with the ram. But still a good story to tell and definitely the type of story to be remembered for a long time. The ewe managed to feed and save 5 of them, which is a great effort by that excellent mum.

2024 RAM SALE Monday 16th September.



Our Annual On-Property Ram Sale will be on Monday 16th of September at Hill Padua Polls, 792 Strutton Road, Three Springs, WA. The sale will be interfaced by AuctionsPlus.

This year we will be offering 132 Rams on Auction.

After breeding a total of 809 rams, we quickly reduced the number on structure to 550 which were fully measured.

The line of rams for this year is excellent, very good shapes, good structure and very white wools. This year we have had 230 millimetres of rain in 75 days for June, July and August, and followed by plenty of cloudy days have given the opportunity to test our wool on a higher rainfall environment. We are happy with how the wool looks, spotless, super white, very soft.

As always, Rams will be delivered to all WA buyers. We will also offer a Freight Rebate where we will be covering half of the cost of transport per Ram for Eastern State buyers. We had a quote by Dick Smith Transport on route Muchea - Ceduna - Pt Augusta - Dubbo. For more information, please contact Fred 0427541707.

We understand this has been a tough year for the sheep industry, but we can see that conditions are turning around very quickly. In years like this it's even more important to have the right genetics producing at high efficiency.

This year ram sale will be offering a very balanced line of rams with excellent ASBVs averages. YCFW is sitting very close to the industry average. YSL is sitting in the Top10%, PWT is very close to sit on Top20% and YWT sitting in the Top20%, while YFAT is well into Top10% and YEMD well into Top20%

	YCFW	YFD	YSL	PWT	YWT	YFAT	YEMD
SALE TEAM AVERAGE	18.0	-0.1	19.9	7.9	10.4	1.7	2.5
AUSTRALIAN AVERAGE	18.79	-1	10.02	5.82	7.58	0.28	0.96

Everyone will be welcome, as Anthony always says, "just come and have a look".

A look back at HP Journey by David Groves.

David became the Livestock Manager in 2008 and has a great understanding of all the challenges HP went through from the beginning, to what it is today. David retired from his position in 2019 but since then he has been involved with all the decisions regarding breeding and selection, having an excellent eye for correct animals.

“After coming from a traditional merino background with a few years’ experience working for an AMS ram breeder. It was an introduction to breeding a true Dual-Purpose Merino sheep with classer Ken Duxson.

We started measuring body weight, Fat and Muscle, as well as micron and wool weights, and submitting the data to Sheep Genetics to obtain our first ASBVs. It soon became apparent that Hill Padua were already ahead of the game as far as meat traits and reproduction for the Merino breed. Lambing percentages since 2008 were always well in excess of 100%.

In the last 5 years under the management of Fred, emphasis has been placed on increasing wool cut without affecting fertility, meat quality or the free growing nature of the fleece. Sire selection over the last few years has shown an excellent increase, but like every sheep breeder we are still looking for the Holy Grail.

There are groups within the HP Bloodlines that have some of the best YFat and YEmd in Sheep Genetics, while producing plenty of wool with moderate micron.

With influences from outside (weather, politics, processers), confidence in the sheep industries is low, but I believe with the reducing number of breeding ewes in the state flock, it is a good time to keep your sheep to benefit from resurgence of meat and wool markets hopefully in the near future.

I wish all clients a good and prosperous season and encourage them to follow the Hill Padua policy of breeding a real Dual Purpose Merino” David Groves.