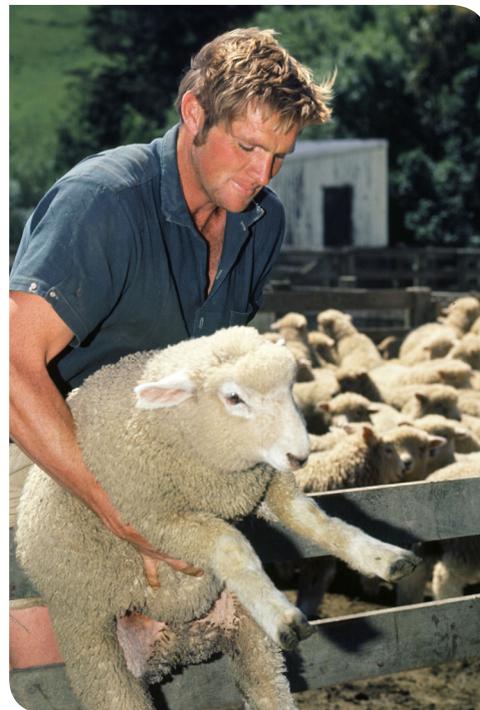# Explaining your genetic plan to your farming team

Use this sheet to discuss your genetic plan with your staff.

What's a genetic plan?

It's like a road map that helps us know what direction we want to take to improve the genetics (and therefore the performance) of our flock.

Why do we need one?

- Improving the genetics of our flock is a long term strategy to improve the productivity of our ewes and grow our farm profits.
- If we keep changing our breeding goals all the time, we won't see positive results.
- It's a bit like compound interest at the bank – the longer you leave your savings in the bank the more the benefits add up.

How did we decide what to have in our plan?

1. We benchmarked our flock's performance against other farms of a similar type and land class.
2. We thought about the things that are particular to our farm that would influence our breeding goals (like the fact that our focus is on finishing lambs, compared with others who are store lamb producers because of the class of country they're on).
3. We have picked the 3 areas that can make the biggest difference to our flock performance. As we've discussed before, these are (for example):
   - Lamb survival
   - Weaning weight
   - Shoulder meat yield
4. Finally we worked out how many rams we would need and what traits these rams need to have to improve our performance in these areas.
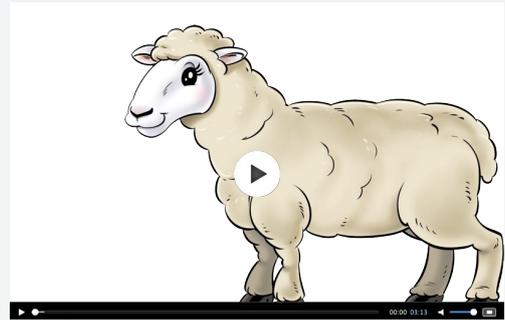
So what rams are we buying?

This year we need x terminal and/or x dual purpose sire rams.

And what's the difference between a terminal and a dual purpose sire?

- *Terminal sires* are bred for their ability to pass on good traits to the lambs they produce – these lambs will be sent to market.
- *Dual purpose sires* are bred for their ability to pass on good traits to the ewe lambs they produce – so some of these lambs will be kept as replacement ewes.

You might even like to show your team the short video from the module that explains this difference

Dual purpose or terminal sire?

So what next?

- We look for breeders that have focused on selecting rams for the traits we're interested in. We'll compare the rates of genetic gain on those traits from different breeders' flocks, and pick the breeder that is doing the best.

  For example, if we look at the flock comparison data for three breeders who focus on the three traits we're targeting, who could provide us with Dual Purpose sires, we see:

Traits (SIL eBV code)	Breeder A	Breeder B	Breeder C
Lamb survival (SUR)	+0.029	+0.045	+0.040
Lamb weaning weight (WWT)	+4.43	+5.15	+5.74
Shoulder meat yield (SHLY)	+0.097	+0.131	+0.140

  Breeder C would be the best choice for us. Breeders B & C have better results across all three traits than Breeder A. And while Breeder B tops the list (just) on Lamb Survival, Breeder C's flock is clearly better when it comes to Lamb Weaning Weight and Shoulder Meat Yield.

- Then we'll choose the best team of rams we can afford from that breeder to cover our flock.
- We'll monitor our flock's performance on these traits over time, to check we're seeing the changes we're after.

How long is it going to be before we see results then?

Probably about 4-5 years.

It takes time for the genes we're after to filter through our flock.