A SIL Web Note

2016 B+LNZ Sheep Industry Awards

General method used to derive results for genetics categories

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The B+LNZ Sheep Industry Awards have four genetics categories that are made to the flocks that bred the individual sires with the highest rating on the relevant SIL index.

The Genetics Awards were made in four categories using results from the SIL-ACE evaluation and the new industry standard indexes, **NZ Terminal Worth** and **NZ Maternal Worth**. The awards recognise outstanding merit for overall index and for particular 'focus' trait indexes. While not all farming situations or trait combinations are specifically catered for, these categories are relevant to a major part of the NZ sheep industry.

Award categories for 2016

B+LNZ Genetics have introduced **industry standard** indexes for NZ Maternal (Dual Purpose) Worth and NZ Terminal (Terminal Sire) Worth since the 2015 awards. These new indexes are used for the 2016 Awards.

In 2016 the first two awards are for overall merit in the two major sheep types used in NZ. The third and fourth awards feature **Lamb Survival** for each of these sheep types. SIL has introduced a revised and more robust evaluation for this trait so we are confident that the data identify superior genetic merit for this critically important trait.

In previous years there were 10 categories of genetic awards for this event. Organisers have consulted with industry and decided it is better to place the focus on the two main awards (1 & 2 below) and each year have one, possibly more, trait(s) featured alongside those. The feature trait(s) will change each year.

Genetic Gold Awards

1. NZ Terminal Worth – Lamb Survival, Lamb Growth, Meat Yield
2. NZ Maternal Worth – Reproduction, Lamb Survival, Lamb Growth+Adult Size, Meat Yield, Wool
3. Terminal Trait Leader for Lamb Survival
4. Maternal Trait Leader for Lamb Survival

Categories 1 and 2 are the NZ Standard indexes introduced by B+LNZ Genetics, containing the core traits that define these key sheep types. The awards go to the flocks that bred the rams highest rated for the feature trait sub-index that also meet criteria for merit and accuracy in all component traits. This ensures that winning animals have high genetic merit with high accuracy for each component trait.

NB: *some of the above awards may include sponsors names in lists of published results*.

B+LNZ Genetics is the entity that provides SIL services to the industry including the SIL-ACE evaluation. More information on B+LNZ Genetics can be found on their website: **B+LNZ Genetics**

Detailed selection criteria for awards

Finalists are chosen as those flocks with the top-rated individual rams for a SIL index category. Three different flocks are chosen per category, with the top-rated ram determining the winning flock.

To be chosen for a particular category, rams (sires) had to have the highest rating for an index appropriate to the category after meeting all of the following criteria:

1. Rate highly for the core index and well for each component trait (SIL sub-indexes)
2. Have a minimum accuracy for the relevant core index for their sheep type (TS or DP) and each component trait (SIL sub-index)
3. Be born in flocks of the appropriate sheep type e.g. Dual Purpose (DP) or Terminal Sire (TS)
4. Be born in flocks actively performance recording on SIL
5. Their birth flock has performance data related to all relevant index component goal traits recorded on SIL for the last three relevant birth cohorts
6. Be from flocks connected to the main SIL-ACE group of flocks for all index component traits
7. Be from a different flock to that of the other two finalists i.e. not 2 or 3 finalists from one flock.
8. Have sire and dam identified on SIL
9. Have progeny born in SIL-ACE flocks in the last three years.

These constraints may be relaxed slightly for award categories where smaller pools of animals were available to select from because a 'feature' trait is less widely recorded.

These criteria were reviewed and endorsed by independent experts in 2016.

End note

Few sheep are highly rated for all traits. So the more traits there are in an index, the harder it is to be highly rated for all components. There is a lot of truth in the saying: "*There's no such thing as a perfect sheep".*

This is the challenge that ram breeders and ram buyers deal with every year. When you find rams that are above average for a large number of traits, they are really worth buying!