

RamCompare ram nomination selection protocol 2017 – 2019

Having been awarded a three year extension RamCompare will continue to source semen for artificial insemination and buy rams for natural mating for the UK commercial progeny test. Ram nominations will be open January – March 2018 and in 2019.

Background

Pedigree breeders have the opportunity to receive valuable information on their sires' progeny by nominating rams and semen for use in the RamCompare project.

Animals which are involved in the project now have new estimated breeding values (EBVs) available covering carcass weight, fat and conformation. These EBVs can be used when marketing these rams.

In taking part, breeders will receive feedback on the performance of their rams for commercially relevant traits. RamCompare is the UK's first commercial progeny test, using data from throughout the supply chain to inform genetic evaluations. It aims to enable the UK sheep industry to drive genetic improvement forward through the inclusion of commercial data in genetic evaluations.

Nominations

Semen - for breeders who want to nominate semen, there is a minimum requirement of 30 doses for use via artificial insemination (AI). With the introduction of a unit at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) in Northern Ireland, the project team is also looking for Suffolk or Texel semen eligible for export. For semen with EU export status, 40 doses per ram is required.

Rams - for natural service sires, fit and fertile rams are required, with preference given to rams that are shearlings or older.

Selection criteria

Rams from performance recorded terminal sire breeds are of interest including; Texel, Suffolk, Charollais, Meatlinc, Hampshire Down, Beltex, Blue Texel, Blue de Maine, Polled Dorset and Southdown.

RamCompare is seeking rams and semen that meet the following criteria:

- Good EBVs for traits of economic interest
- Good history of performance records of the ram and its progeny (eg ultrasound scan, computed tomography (CT) data)
- Shearling in autumn 2018 or older
- Good and known health status and be from a Maedi Visna-accredited flock
- Come from a flock with good genetic linkage to other flocks
- Provide genetic diversity to the rams that have already been used in the RamCompare project
- Part of a Signet-recorded flock

Nominations are now open and close on 5 March 2018. More information on requirements, including the nomination forms, can be found at www.ramcompare.co.uk. Alternatively, contact Bridget.Lloyd@ahdb.org.uk.

Nominations can be made online using the following links:

Semen nominations: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Semenform

Ram nominations: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Ramform

Reaching a decision

The final decision relating to the procurement of rams and semen will be made by an AHDB Breeding Specialist.

Ram breeders will be contacted individually to confirm procurement, giving details of destination farm in the case of ram purchases. All breeders will be informed once decisions have been made. Details of all rams on trial are listed on our website www.ramcompare.com

Financial structure

The financial structure supporting this pilot project aims to test its financial sustainability. The prices for the procurement of rams and semen are set with this in mind. Payment structure is included in the nomination forms.

Results

The preliminary results of the project are available on www.ramcompare.com and will be updated in May 2018 with the final results of phase I. Each year the results will be updated with sires featuring in the top 25 EBV lists.