

Description of Changes

Updated Visual Sheep Scores

Version 3 - 2019

This document outlines the changes in the new version of the Visual Sheep Scores (VSS) booklet and includes changes to existing scores as well as details of the inclusion of new traits for which scores have been established.

Changes are detailed in boxed sections and wording changes are provided in *italics*. Traits which have not been listed have not been changed from the previous VSS version.

This document lists the traits/changes in the same order that they are presented in the new version of VSS.

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1.1. The Scoring System

Page 4

- Insertion of paragraph into “Using Visual Sheep Scores” section noting the option to use half scores. *For traits in which low levels of variation exist, **half scores** may be given in order to increase the level of variation recorded within the flock. This may assist some breeders to more easily differentiate between animals.*

1.2. New Sections

Four new sections are included:

Pigmentation Scores.

Following the Wool Quality Scores and including:

- Fibre pigmentation (FPIG)
- No-fibre pigmentation (SPIG)
- Recessive black (BLK)
- Random Spot (SPOT)

Lambing Scores.

Following Breech Scores and including:

- Maternal behaviour (MB)
- Lambing ease (LE)

Cover and Wrinkle Scores.

Following Conformation Scores and including:

- Face cover (FACE)
- Body wrinkle (BDWR)
- Neck wrinkle (NKWR)

Classing Scores.

Following Lambing Scores and including:

- Classer’s Visual Grade (GRADE)
- Overall Selection Grade (SGRADE)

1.3. Wool Quality Scores

Wool colour (COL) - Pages 8-9

- Update to the 'How to score' section to clarify scoring of colour.

How to score: Open the fleece at a minimum of **three sites** – side of shoulder, mid-side and hip. The highest score across the sites is recorded. Colour does not need to be present along the entire length of the staple to be recorded. Colour that results from fleece rot should not be scored as wool colour.

Wool character (CHAR) - Pages 10-11

- Update to the 'Definition' section to provide a better explanation.

Wool character describes the definition of crimp, both in terms of evenness and depth.

- Update to the 'How to score' section to bring into line with the 'Definition' section.

How to score: Open the fleece cleanly at a minimum of **three sites** along the middle of the side of the sheep from shoulder to hip. Evaluate the evenness and depth of the crimp along the length of the staples and across all staples at the site. The highest score across the sites is recorded. It should be noted that wool character is not an assessment of crimp frequency (quality count).

- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to bring into line with the 'Definition' and 'How to score' sections.

Rule of thumb: A sheep with Score 1 has very even and very deep crimp along the entire length of the staples observed at the opening. A Score 5 sheep has 'flat' wool due uneven crimp or crimp lacking depth.

- Update to the description of scores to bring into line with the 'Definition', 'How to score' and 'Rule of thumb' sections.

Score 1: Very even and very deep crimp.

Score 2: Even and deep crimp.

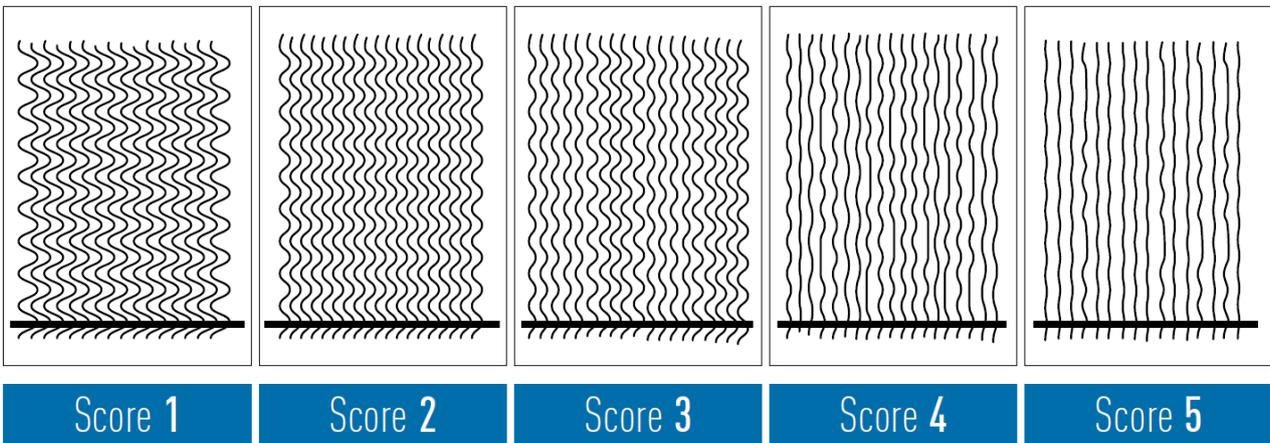
Score 3: Crimp is lacking evenness and depth.

Score 4: Crimp is severely lacking evenness and depth and the staple starts to look 'flat'.

Score 5: No crimp evenness or depth and as a result looks 'flat'.

- Update to the diagrams of scores to represent description of scores.

WOOL CHARACTER (CHAR)



Description of Changes

Dust penetration (DUST) - Pages 12-13

VSS now incorporates the issue that when scoring rams over 6 months, their dust penetration scores can become highly confounded by some rams being ridden. To score the trait along the backline as described in the Visual Sheep Scores can be very misleading as not all rams are being ridden to the same degree.

- Update to the 'How to score' section to make reference to rams.

How to score: *Open the fleece at a minimum of **three sites** along the full length of the backline. The highest score across the sites is recorded as the score. When scoring **rams**, it may be necessary to score along the middle of the side of the sheep from shoulder to hip, to avoid scores being confounded by rams who have been ridden.*

Staple structure (SSTRC) - Pages 16-17

- Update to the 'Definition' section to better reflect the meaning of the trait.

Staple structure describes the arrangement of fibre bundles comprising each staple, in particular the average diameter of the staples observed at an opening.

- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to bring into line with the description of scores.

Rule of thumb: *A sheep with Score 1 has extremely fine fibres bundles (<6mm), whereas a Score 5 sheep has extremely large bundles of fibres (>30mm) which in general makes the staples 'blocky' in appearance.*

1.4. Pigmentation Scores – NEW SECTION

Fibre pigmentation (FPIG) - Page 20

- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to correct editorial mistake.

If the body, ears, legs and eyelashes have no pigmentation (Score 1), but if 41-70% of the fibres on the back of neck are pigmented, then Score 4 is the overall score recorded for the trait.

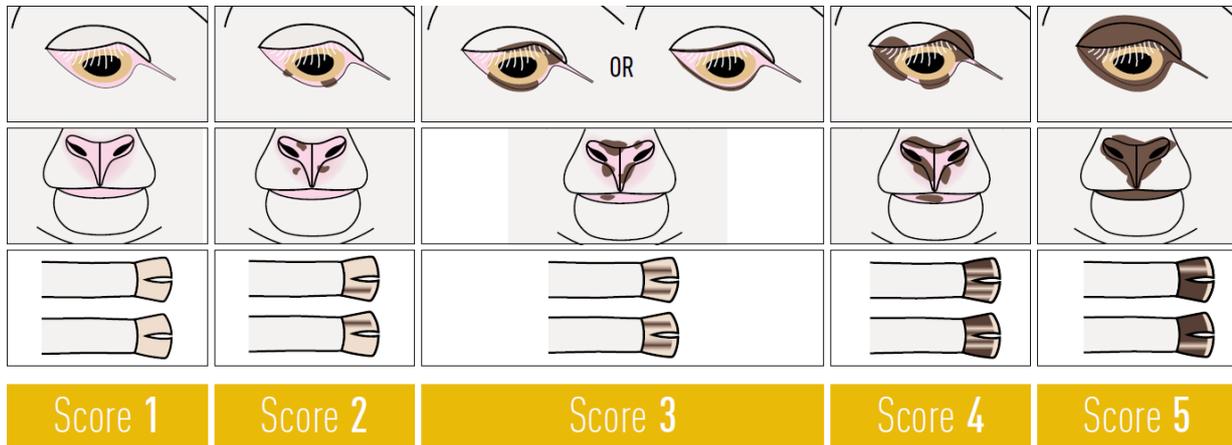
Non-fibre pigmentation (SPIG) - Pages 21-23

- Update to the 'Definition' section to include smudges.

Non-fibre pigmentation refers to the percentage of pigmentation on the areas of the sheep, in particular the bare skin of the nose, lips, eyelids, inside ears, udder, anus area and hooves. Pigmented skin and hooves are normally brown-tan or black-grey in colour and can be solid or smudged.

- Update to the diagram of Score 3 so as an alternative, additional diagram is provided of an eye with a thin line of pigmentation.

NON-FIBRE PIGMENTATION (SPIG)



Note: Score 5 diagrams shows 100% pigmented area of all bare skin sites. Score 5 does not need to be 100% pigmented.

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Recessive black (BLK) - Pages 24-25

- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to include reference to both face and body.

Rule of thumb: *If a sheep has relatively symmetrical markings on both sides of the face or body then it is going to be one of the recessive black patterns (Score 5) of 'straight self-colour black', 'spotted self-colour', 'badgerface' or 'reverse badgerface'. Note: If the face or body is completely white or has a random pattern on one side of the face or body (i.e. non-symmetrical), the sheep should be scored as random spot.*

Random Spot (SPOT) - Pages 26-27

- Update to the 'Definition' section to include reference to wool growing areas.

Random spot (Australian piebald) refers to the presence of a distinct patch of pigmented fibres anywhere in the wool growing area on the face or body, ranging from small to large in size. Pigmented fibres are normally black-grey or brown in colour. Importantly, random spot is scored separately from recessive black and fibre pigmentation.

- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to include reference to wool growing areas.

Rule of thumb: *A random pattern is characterised as a rounded, pigmented wool or hair spot; usually only one or, if more than one, not symmetrically positioned (i.e. distributed unevenly to one side of the face or body in the wool growing area).*

Description of Changes

1.5. Conformation Scores

Page 29

- Inconsistencies removed between Producer and Researcher versions on page 29 (Using Confirmation Scores) in the description of how jaw, legs/feet and shoulder/back are scored.

Jaw (JAW) - Pages 30-31

The Commercial version of the Jaw trait has been replaced with the Research version. The Research version depicts Score 1 as most undershot (INWARD), Score 5 as most overshot (OUTWARD), with Score 3 being the ideal.

- Replacement of the Commercial version of Jaw (JAW) with the Research version of Jaw (JAWR).

Jaw (JAWR)

Age: Over 4 months

When: Anytime

Definition: Jaw refers to the soundness of jaw structure, in particular the alignment of the lower jaw and its teeth relation to the top jaw and its pad that the lower jaw teeth bite onto.

How to score: A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

Rule of thumb: The upper and lower jaws of a Score 3 sheep line up squarely at the teeth i.e. teeth rest 'on the pad', whereas a Score 1 sheep has a heavily 'undershot' jaw and a Score 5 sheep has a heavily 'overshot' jaw.

Score 1: Heavily 'undershot' jaw. Lower jaw is significantly shorter than the upper jaw and as a result the teeth are well behind the pad, i.e. at yearling age greater than 3mm behind the edge of the pad at the centre of the jaw.

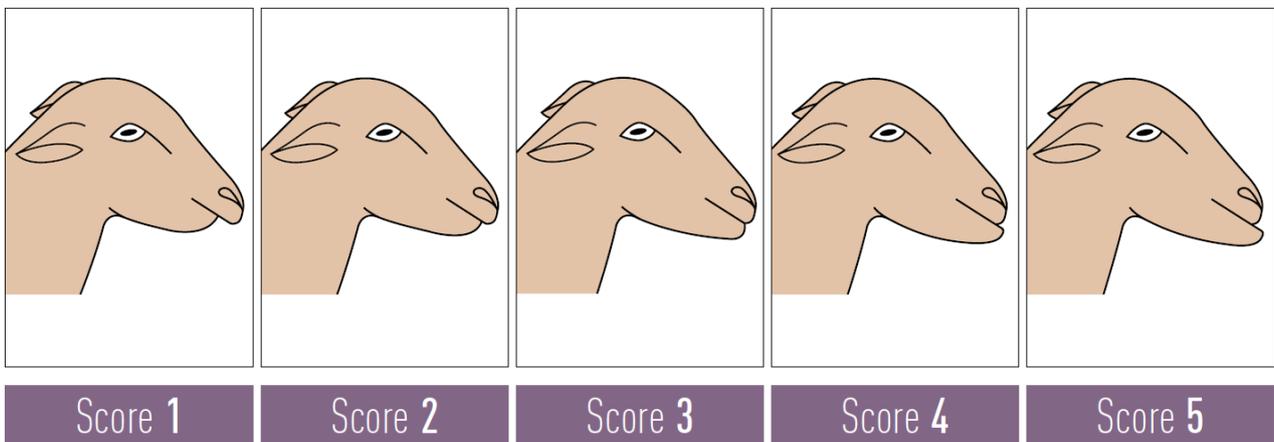
Score 2: Jaw is marginally 'undershot'. Lower jaw is slightly shorter than the upper jaw and as a result the teeth are slightly behind the pad, i.e. at yearling age 1 to 3mm behind the edge of the pad at the centre of the jaw.

Score 3: Upper and lower jaws line up squarely at the teeth, i.e. teeth rest 'on the pad'.

Score 4: Jaw is marginally 'overshot'. Lower jaw is slightly longer than the upper jaw and as a result the teeth are slightly in front of the pad, i.e. at yearling age 1 to 3mm in front of the edge of the pad at the centre of the jaw.

Score 5: Heavily 'overshot' jaw. Lower jaw is significantly longer than the upper jaw and as a result the teeth are well in front of the pad, i.e. at yearling age greater than 3mm in front of the edge of the pad at the centre of the jaw.

JAW (JAWR)



Description of Changes

Legs/Feet (LEGS) - Pages 32-33

- Update to the 'Definition' section to include reference to the Research component traits, and that the assessment of the back legs structure should be undertaken as the sheep is walking away.

Legs/Feet is a combined trait. It refers to the overall soundness of the front and back leg and feet structure, in particular the orientation of the legs/feet and angulation of the hocks and pasterns in relation to the feet. The back leg structure should be scored as the sheep is walking away from the assessor.

Additional information is available in the Research version of the Visual Sheep Scores that contains scores for the component traits that make up legs/feet.

Shoulder/Back(BACK) - Pages 34-35

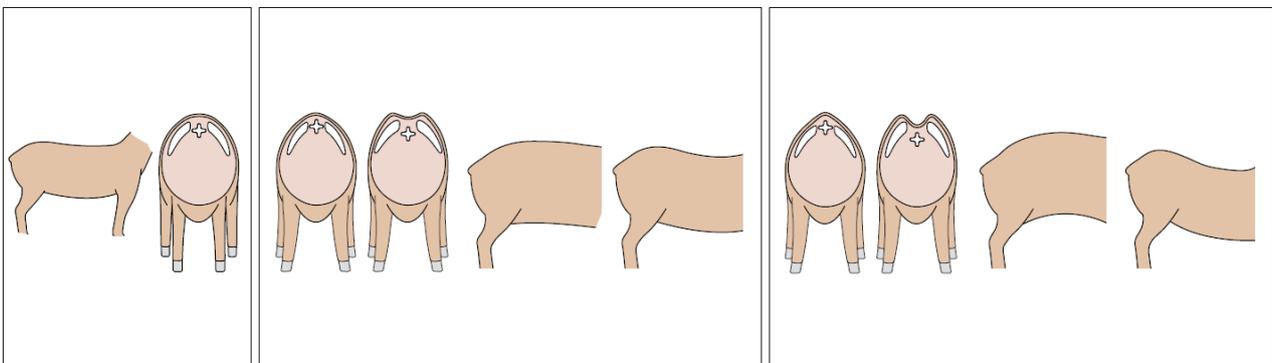
- Update to the 'Definition' section to include reference to the Research component traits.

A combined trait, shoulder/back refers to the soundness of the shoulder blades and their positioning in relation to the neck and spine.

Additional information is available in the Research version of the Visual Sheep Scores that contains scores for the component traits that make up shoulder/back.

- Update to the diagrams to include the full body of the sheep so as the junction of the shoulder and back is included. In addition to the transverse image of the shoulder that is also shown.

SHOULDER/BACK (BACK)



Score 1

Score 3

Score 5

Description of Changes

Teeth – *NEW TRAIT* - Page 36-37

In order to achieve such variation in teeth eruption scores, sheep need to be monitored closely from an age of approximately 12 months. Monitoring could be achieved by scoring a sample of sheep at regular intervals in order to assess the variation. This would be similar to monitoring for WEC sampling or condition scoring.

Potentially, multiple assessments may be required in order to capture the appropriate timing for when variation in the age that teeth erupted was at its maximum.

- Inclusion of a Teeth eruption trait in the Conformation Scores section as follows:

Teeth eruption (TE)

Age: From 12 months.

When: When at least 50% of the group are a Score 2 or more. Regular monitoring of a sample of the group may be required in order to determine the appropriate time.

Definition: Teeth eruption refers to the timing of the loss of lambs teeth and eruption of permanent teeth.

How to score: A single score of 1,2,3,4 or 5.

Rule of Thumb: A sheep with Score 1 has only lambs teeth showing. A Score 5 sheep has both permanent teeth fully showing.

Score 1: Only lambs teeth showing.

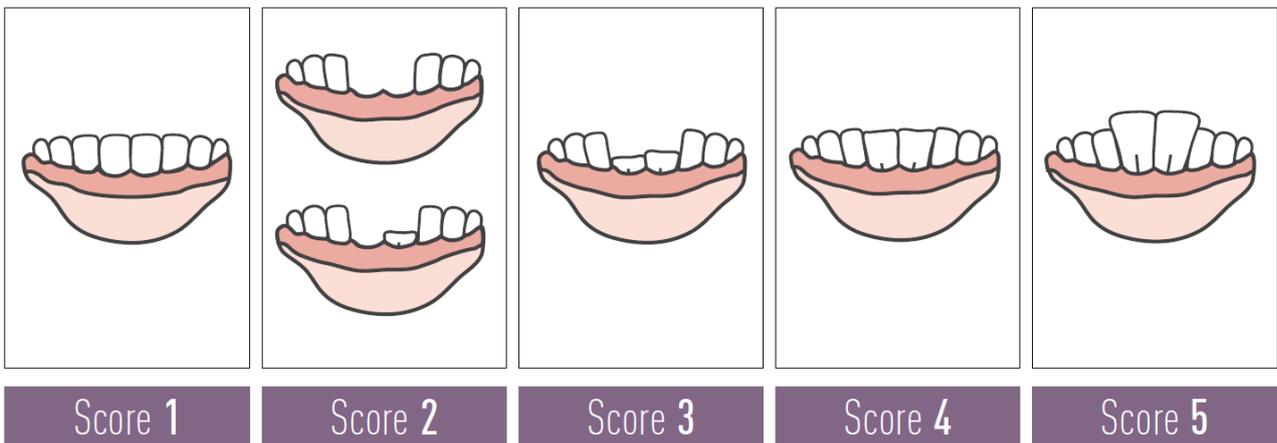
Score 2: Lambs teeth missing or one of either of the permanent teeth starting to show.

Score 3: Both permanent teeth slightly showing.

Score 4: Both permanent teeth half showing.

Score 5: Both permanent teeth fully showing.

TEETH ERUPTION (TE)



Description of Changes

Horn (HORN) – NEW TRAIT - Pages 38-39

- Inclusion of a Horn trait in the Conformation Scores section of the Commercial and Research versions as follows:

Horn (HORN)

Age: Over 4 months

When: Anytime.

Definition: Horn refers to the expression of horn length. Horn length can vary from no horns, small scurs, medium horns and a full set of horns. Whilst horn can be scored on ewes, it is most commonly a ram score.

How to score: A single score of 1,2,3,4 or 5.

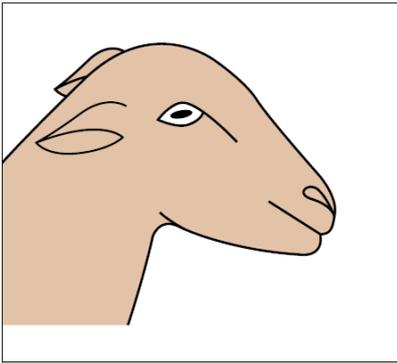
Rule of Thumb: A sheep with Score 1 is a Poll animal with an indentation in the skull. A score 5 sheep has a full set of symmetrical horns.

Score 1: POLL - A detectable indentation in the bone of the skull at the horn site.

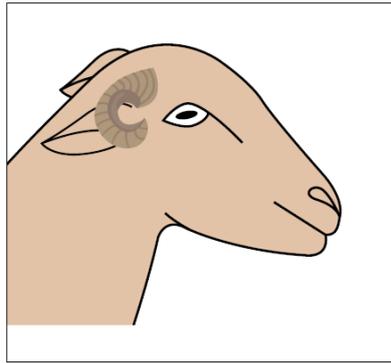
Score 3: SCUR - Small growth at the horn site 10mm or more in height.

Score 5: HORN – Full grown symmetrical horns firmly attached to skull.

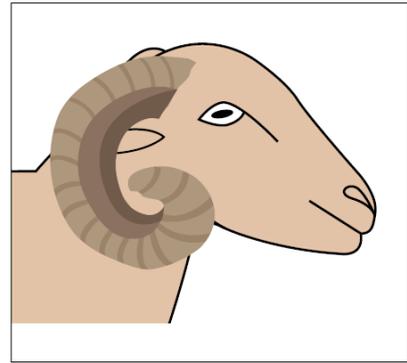
HORN (HORN)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

Description of Changes

1.6. Cover and Wrinkle Scores – NEW SECTION

Face Cover (FACE) - Pages 42-43

- Moved face cover from Conformation section.

Body Wrinkle (BDWR) - Page 44-45

- Moved body wrinkle from Conformation section.
- Update to the 'Definition' section to add a note that states body wrinkle and neck wrinkle are highly correlated and, depending on the flock, only one trait may need scoring.

Body wrinkle refers to the degree and quantity of wrinkle on the body.

Note: Body wrinkle and neck wrinkle are highly correlated traits. Depending on the flock, only one trait may need scoring.

Neck Wrinkle (NKWR) – Research Version for inclusion in Commercial Version - Pages 46-47

- Included neck wrinkle into the Commercial version and,
- Moved neck wrinkle to a new section called Cover and Wrinkle Scores.
- Update to the Research 'Definition' section to add a note that states neck wrinkle and body wrinkle are highly correlated and, depending on the flock, only one trait may need scoring.

Neck wrinkle refers to the degree and quantity of wrinkle on the neck and apron region.

Note: Neck wrinkle and body wrinkle are highly correlated traits. Depending on the flock, only one trait may need scoring.

1.7. Breech Scores

Breech Cover - Lambs (BCOV) - Pages 50-51

- Update to the 'Definition' section to include reference to the width of the bare area being more important than the depth, and to remove reference to females often having a larger area of bare skin.

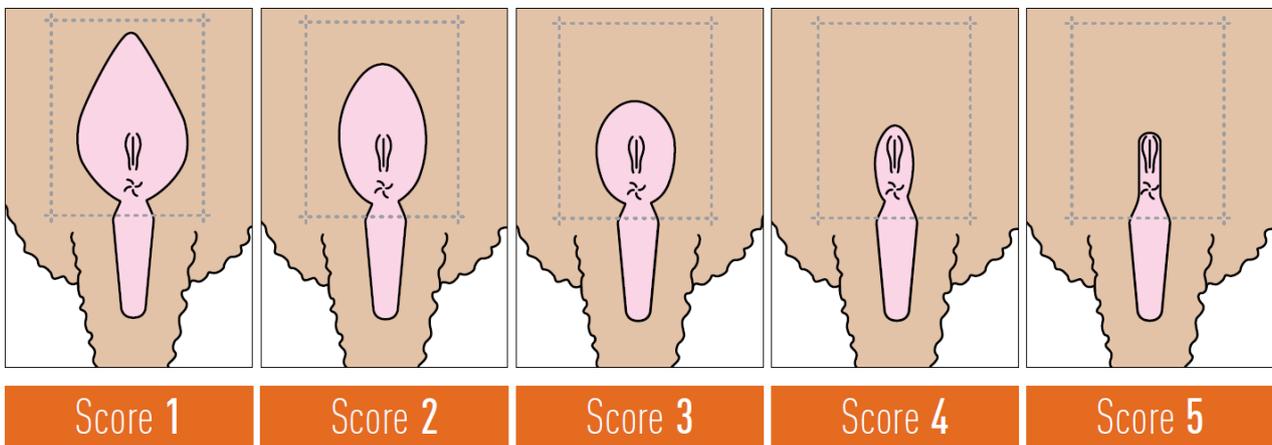
Breech cover score refers to the amount of natural bare skin around the perineum and breech area, in particular, the depth and width of bare skin below and surrounding the vulva or anus. It is important to consider the width and depth of the bare skin in combination when scoring breech cover. However width is considered more important than depth. Some animals have short 'fluffy' fibres growing on the bare skin at certain times of the year. This should be scored as bare skin. Males and females will also appear differently. All animals should be scored as they are observed and not adjusted for sex.

- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to include reference to the width of the bare area being more important than the depth and to correct previous error.

Rule of thumb: A Score 1 sheep has natural bare area that extends outwards around the anus and vulva, and right down to the bottom of the breech area (the channel). A sheep with Score 5 has complete (most) wool cover i.e. no natural bare area at all. If a sheep has deep natural bare area that extends to the bottom on the breech area (Score 1), but is a very narrow natural bare area, then the overall score should be adjusted back by 1 i.e. The overall score would be Score 2 as the width of the bare area is more important than the depth.

- Update to the diagrams to vary the size of the bare strips down the tail to be in line with the bare area of the breech area and to make the channel more pointed.

BREECH COVER – LAMBS (BCOV)



Description of Changes

Breech cover (BCOV) - Pages 52-53

- Update to the 'Definition' section to include reference to the width of the bare area being more important than the depth and to remove reference to females often having a larger area of bare skin.

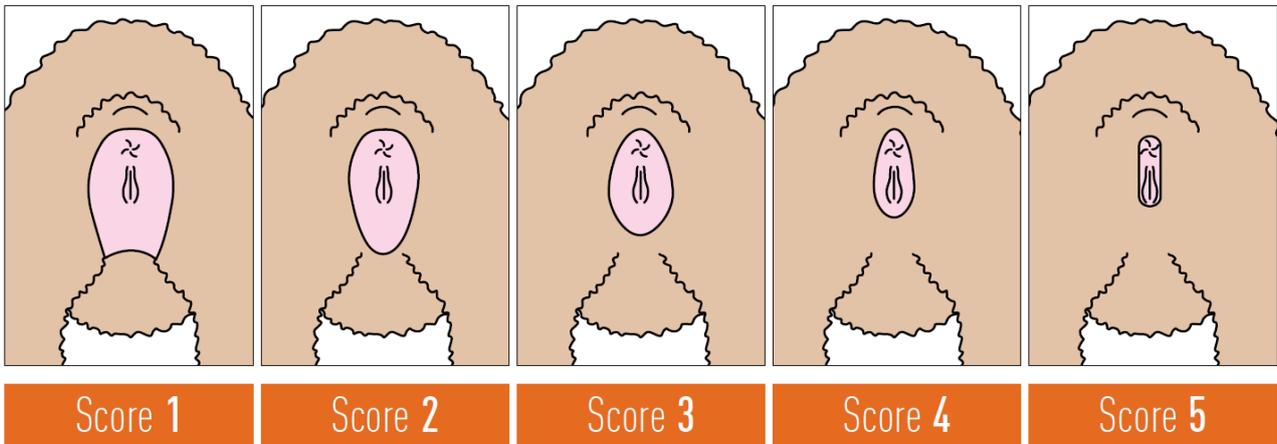
Breech cover score refers to the amount of natural bare skin around the perineum and breech area, in particular, the depth and width of bare skin below and surrounding the vulva or anus. It is important to consider the width and depth of the bare skin in combination when scoring breech cover. However width is considered more important than depth. Some animals have short 'fluffy' fibres growing on the bare skin at certain times of the year. This should be scored as bare skin. Males and females will also appear differently. All animals should be scored as they are observed and not adjusted for sex.

- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to include reference to the width of the bare area being more important than the depth and to correct previous error.

Rule of thumb: A Score 1 sheep has natural bare area that extends outwards around the anus and vulva, and right down to the bottom of the breech area (the channel). A sheep with Score 5 has complete (most) wool cover i.e. no natural bare area at all. If a sheep has deep natural bare area that extends to the bottom on the breech area (Score 1), but is a very narrow natural bare area, then the overall score should be adjusted back by 1 i.e. The overall score would be Score 2 as the width of the bare area is more important than the depth.

- Update to the diagram of Score 1 to depict a less square (rounder) shape to the bare area.

BREECH COVER (BCOV)



Description of Changes

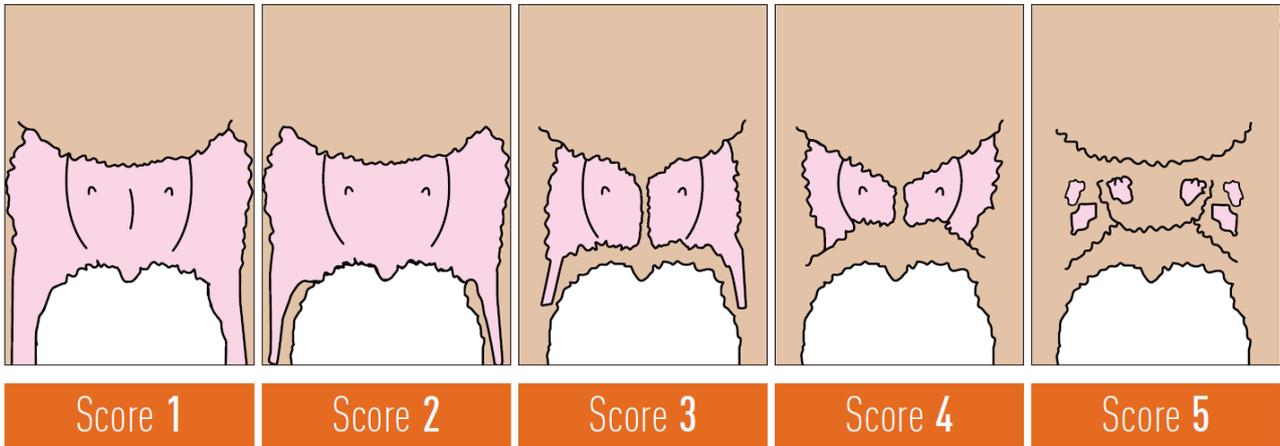
Crutch Cover (CCOV) - Pages 54-55

- Update to the 'Definition' section to remove reference to females often having a larger area of bare skin.

Crutch cover score refers to the amount of natural bare skin from which wool would normally be removed by the first blow during crutching, in particular, the pubic area, groin and inside back legs. Males and females will also appear differently. All animals should be scored as they are observed and not adjusted for sex.

- Update to the diagrams of scores to better match reality.

CRUTCH COVER (CCOV)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

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Score 1: Make barer right down the leg. No wool should be showing on inside of leg.

Score 2: Extend bare area down leg as per the current Score 1.

Score 3: Extend bare area down the leg a little more. Between current Score 2 and 3.

Score 4: No change.

Score 5: No change.

Description of Changes

Breech Wrinkle - Lambs (BRWR) - Pages 56-57

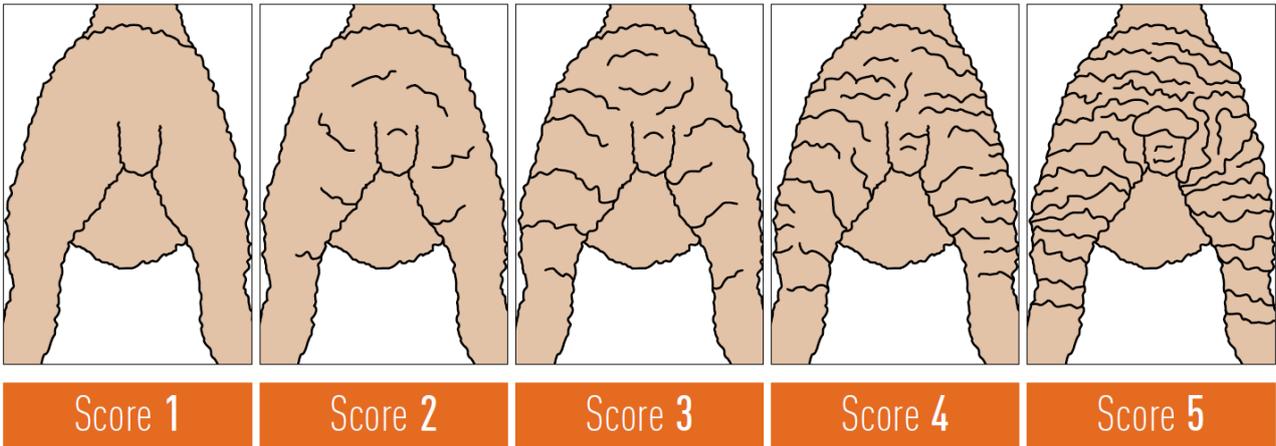
- Update to the 'When' section to clarify where the scoring can be undertaken.

When: lamb marking, either standing or in the cradle. When scored in the cradle the below diagrams can be used upside down. It should be noted that when scored in the cradled, lambs may appear less wrinkly than if the lamb is standing.

Breech Wrinkle (BRWR) - Pages 58-59

- Update to the diagrams of scores to show distinction between Score 1 and 2 in relation to level of wrinkle on the tail.

BREECH WRINKLE (BRWR)



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Score 1: No change.

Score 2: Add small wrinkle on the tail, as per Score 3.

Score 3: No change.

Score 4: No change.

Score 5: No change.

Description of Changes

Dag (DAG) - Pages 60-61

- Update to the 'Note' in the 'Definition' section to reference the entire group needing to be mulesed and highlight the need to record mulesing status.

*Note: Visual scores on mulesed sheep can be submitted to Sheep Genetics as long as the entire group is mulesed and no selective mulesing is undertaken. **It is essential to record the mulesing status of the sheep when scores are taken.***

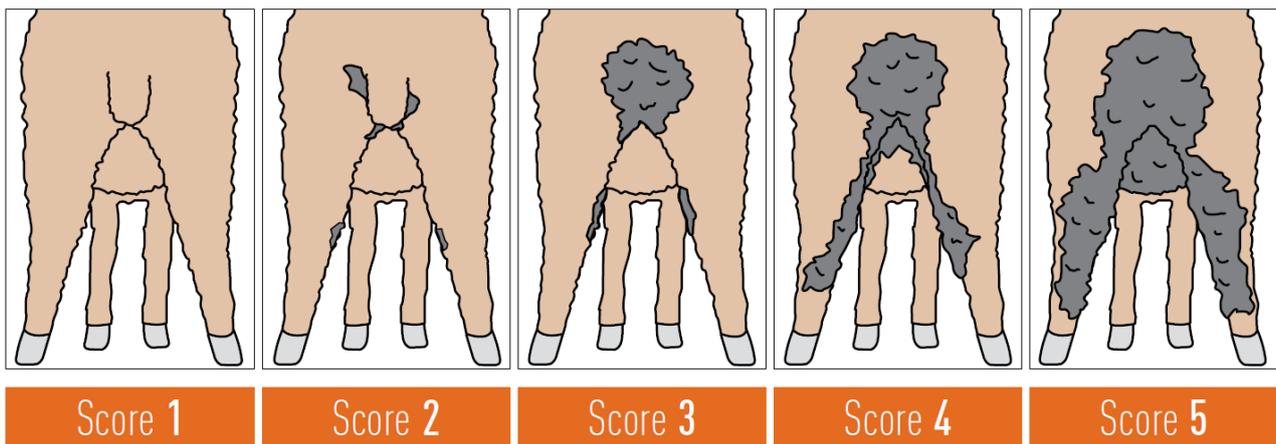
- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to draw user's attention to the possibility that in mulesed sheep the distribution of dag can be different

Rule of thumb: A sheep with Score 1 has no dags. A Score 5 sheep has extensive dags not only remaining in the breech area, but extending right down the hind legs to the pasterns.

It should be noted that mulesed sheep may present with no dag in the breech area, but dag on the hind legs. In this case, the sheep should be scored in relation to the dag on the hind legs.

- Update to the diagram of Score 3 to better match the coverage of dag.

DAG (DAG)



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61

Score 1: No change.

Score 2: No change.

Score 3: Dag should not extend between the breech and hock.

Score 4: No change.

Score 5: No change.

Urine (URINE) - Pages 62-63

- Update to the 'Note' in the 'Definition' section to reference the entire group needing to be mulesed and highlight the need to record mulesing status..

*Note: Visual scores on mulesed sheep can be submitted to Sheep Genetics as long as the entire group is mulesed and no selective mulesing is undertaken. **It is essential to record the mulesing status of the sheep when scores are taken.***

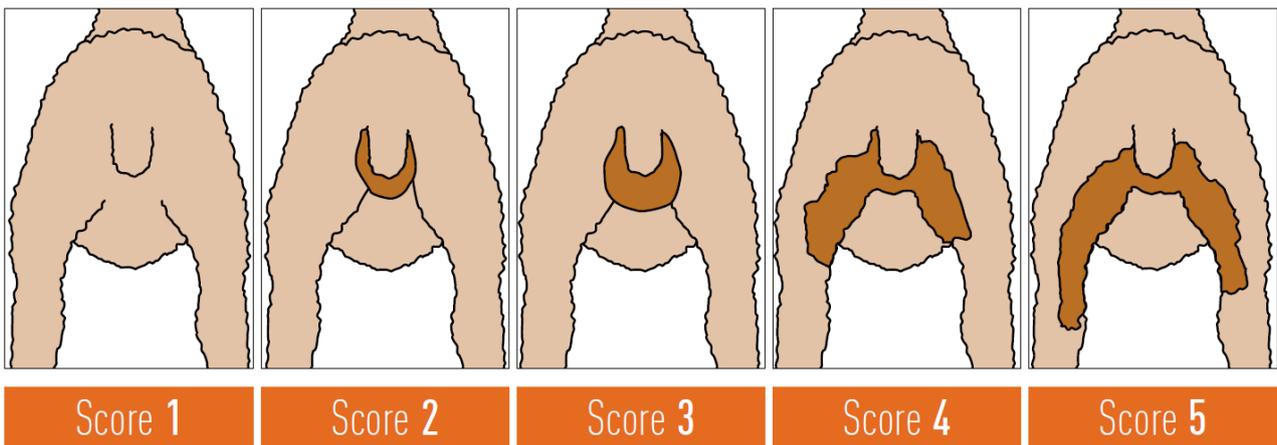
- Update to the 'Rule of thumb' section to draw user's attention to the possibility that in mulesed sheep the distribution of dag can be different

Rule of thumb: A ewe with Score 1 has no urine stain. A Score 5 ewe has extensive urine stain in the breech area and extending down the hind legs. If a ewe has urine stain extending further down one leg than the other, than the leg with the greater extent of urine stain is scored.

It should be noted that mulesed sheep may present with no urine stain in the breech area, but urine stain on the hind legs. In this case, the sheep should be scored in relation to the urine stain on the hind legs.

- Update to the diagram of Score 2 and 3 to better match the shape of the urine stain.

URINE STAIN (URINE)



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Score 1: No change.

Score 2: Urine stain should be in the shape of a small tear drop.

Score 3: Urine stain should be in the shape of a large tear drop.

Score 4: No change.

Score 5: No change.

1.8. Lambing Scores – *NEW SECTION*

Maternal Behaviour (MB) – *NEW TRAIT - Pages 66*

- Inclusion of a Maternal behaviour trait in the Reproduction Scores section of the Commercial and Research versions as follows:

Maternal behaviour (MB)

Age: Over 12 months.

Sex: Ewe

When: Within 24 hours post lambing.

Definition: Maternal behaviour refers to the ewe's behaviour towards its lamb(s). It can be scored through assessing the distance a ewe travels from the lamb when the lamb(s) is handled by operators.

How to score: A single score of 1,2,3,4 or 5.

Rule of Thumb: A ewe with Score 1 shows excellent maternal behaviour and stays close to the lamb(s). A ewe with Score 5 shows poor maternal behaviour and little interest in the lamb(s). Where a ewe has multiple lambs and preferential treatment is being given to a particular lamb, a score should be given for each lamb, with the highest score attributed to the ewe.

Score 1: Ewe stays close to the lamb(s) and operator.

Score 2: Ewe stays within 10 metres of the lamb(s) and operator.

Score 3: Ewe stays within 30 metres of the lamb(s) and operator.

Score 4: Ewe runs away but readily returned when operator moves away.

Score 5: Ewe runs away and is difficult to get to return to the lamb(s) or the lamb(s) is abandoned.

Lambing Ease (LE) – *NEW TRAIT - Pages 67*

- Inclusion of a Lambing ease trait in the Reproduction Scores section of the Commercial and Research versions as follows:

Lambing ease (LE)

Age: Over 12 months.

Sex: Ewe

When: At the time of birth or within 24 hours post lambing.

Definition: Lambing ease refers to the level of difficulty a ewe has during the lambing process.

How to score: A single score of 1,2,3,4 or 5.

Rule of Thumb: A ewe with Score 1 gives birth unassisted without difficulty. A ewe with Score 5 requires veterinary assistance or dies during birth. If a ewe gives birth without assistance when the operator is not present, a Score 1 can be recorded, even though the birth was not observed. A score 2 can be recorded for ewes when the birth is not observed but there are clear indications, such as a swollen head, that the ewe has experienced a difficult birth.

Score 1: No operator intervention is required to assist birth.

Score 2: Slight operator intervention is required to assist birth, however ewe would have more than likely gave birth to a live lamb herself, or the ewe has given birth without intervention but there are clear indications that the ewe has experienced a difficult birth, such as the lamb having a swollen head.

Score 3: Significant operator intervention is required to assist birth where the ewe would have more than likely not given birth to a live lamb herself.

Score 4: Malpresentation

Score 5: Veterinary assistance is required or the ewe dies.

Description of Changes

1.9. Classing Scores – NEW SECTION

The following changes were made:

1. That the trait Classer's Grade as detailed in the Visual Sheep Scores be changed to Overall Selection Grade, and that;
2. A new trait referred to as Classer's Visual Grade be included in the Visual Sheep Scores.

The distinction between the two classing scores is that Classer's Visual Grade is done with no measured information available (as previously the case in AMSEA classing) and the Overall Selection Grade is done using a combination of visual and measured data, as previously described in the Visual Sheep Scores and referred to as Classer's Grade.

Classer's Visual Grade would be carried out on young sheep with no measured performance and Overall Selection Grade would be carried out at a second or subsequent assessment when early stage measured data is available.

Classer's grade (GRADE) - Pages 70-71

- Changed the current Classer's grade trait to Overall selection grade (SGRADE).
- For both Overall selection grade and Classer's visual grade, the terms sale sheep are included along with cull in the 'Rule of thumb' and 'Description' sections.
- Update to the 'How to score' section to better describe the use of measured information.

How to score: The sheep should be assessed in a classing race or box that allows good access and ability to clearly observe each sheep as an individual.

Measured information such as individual trait information or index needs to be presented to the classer to enable them to make an overall assessment.

- Insertion of a new trait called **Classer's visual grade (GRADE)**.

Classer's visual grade (GRADE)

Age: Over 6 months.

When: Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months wool growth.

Definition: Classer's Visual Grade describes the standard of the sheep for visual performance relative to the flock's breeding objective.

How to score: The sheep should be assessed in a classing race or box that allows good access and ability to clearly observe each sheep as an individual.

Rule of thumb: A sheep with Score 1 is a TOP and is in the top 10-30% of the group. A Score 5 sheep is a CULL (or sale sheep) and is in the bottom 10-30% of the group.

Score 1: TOP Sheep is in the top 10-30% of the sheep in the group.

Score 3: FLOCK Sheep is in the middle 40-80% of the sheep in the group.

Score 5: CULL (SALE) Sheep is in the bottom 10-30% of the sheep in the group.