

Age of teeth eruption varies between sires

Serina Hancock, Bronwyn Clarke and Andrew Thompson

Differences were observed in the age of teeth eruption between sire groups for wethers born in 2016 and 2017 as part of the Merino Lifetime Productivity (MLP) project.

Teeth eruption was classed according to the descriptions outlined in the table below. Previously animals with Score 1 have been classified as lamb and animals with score 2 to 5 were classified as hogget. The new system of lamb classification allows for the eruption of permanent incisors without either incisor being in wear. Therefore, animals scored 1 to 4 will be classified as a lamb.

Classification of scores for teeth eruption.

Score	Description
1	Only lambs teeth showing
2	Lambs teeth missing or one of the permanent teeth emerging
3	Both permanent teeth showing slightly
4	Both permanent teeth half up
5	Both permanent teeth fully up



Classing of teeth eruption for wethers commenced at 10-11 months of age and was recorded monthly until 19 months of age.

There were significant differences in the pattern of teeth eruption between sire groups. At 12 months of age there was no evidence of teeth eruption, at 15 months eruption was evident in at least 50% of wethers and by 17-19 months all wethers had reached hogget classification.

The average age of hogget classification varied by up to 2 months between sire groups regardless of the system of classification. Hogget classification was reached over two months for some sires but over 6 months for other sires. The new proposed system extended the average age that wethers were classified as a lamb by about one month for the 2016 drop but only by half a month for the 2017 drop. The birth type or rear type of individual animals had no influence on the average age at teeth eruption

- **There was significant differences between some sires in the average age of hogget classification defined by teeth eruption scores. There was also variation within sires in the age of hogget classification.**
- **Variability between sires in age of hogget classification has implications for flexibility of management and optimising live weight, wool cut and time of sale**
- **The new teeth eruption system delays hogget classification by 1 month**

For more information: contact Serina Hancock: s.hancock@murdoch.edu.au