

Quick guide

How to shop for a high-performing sire



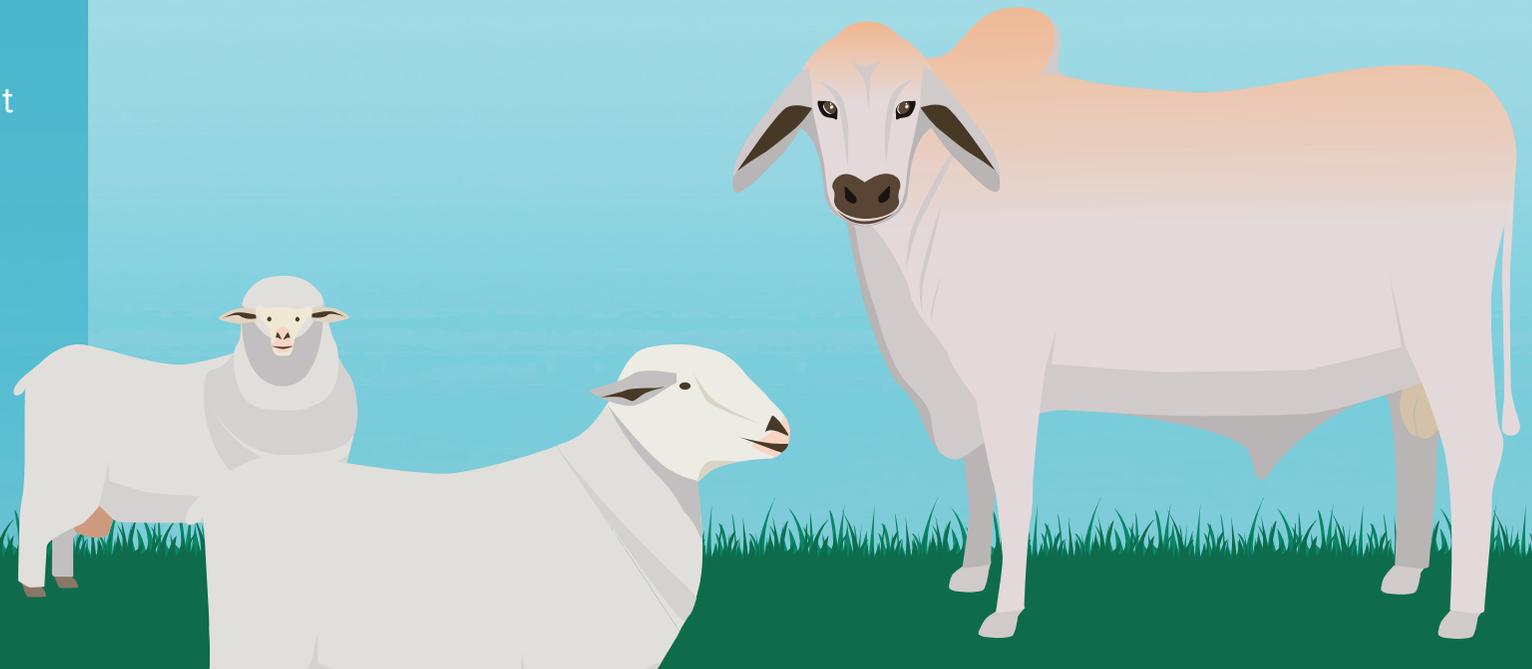
Welcome



Disclaimer – MLA makes no representation as to the accuracy of any information or advice contained in this document and excludes all liability, whether in contract, tort (including negligence or breach of statutory duty) or otherwise as a result of reliance by any person on such information or advice.

Released November 2019.

There's no doubt that a high-performing sire must be structurally sound, have good temperament and be reproductively fit.



But what you can't see about that sire is just as important.

Looking under his hood helps you build up a fuller picture of all the traits that he can pass on to his progeny – traits like fertility, carcass weight and eating quality.

This guide provides an easy reference for when it's time to pick your next high-performing sire – factoring in what you can and can't see.

It'll provide you with a handy list of what to do before, at and after the sire sale.

There's no doubt that the right sire will deliver for you and your future herd or flock. This guide will help you prepare carefully, choose wisely and care for this profit-maker once you get him home.



Michael Crowley

General Manager –
Producer Consultation
and Adoption

Before the sale

The majority of work for shopping for a high-performing sire starts well before sale day.

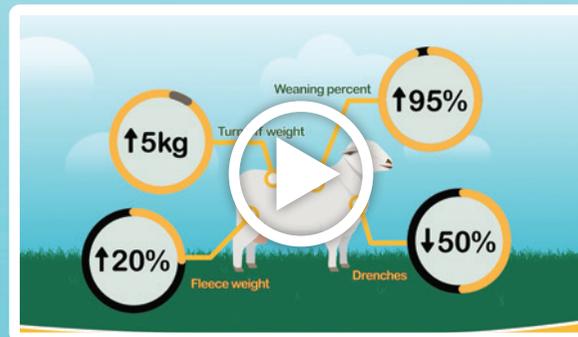
1. Identify or reassess your breeding objective.

A breeding objective describes what you're trying to achieve with your herd or flock.

A high-performing sire is one who'll help you meet your breeding objective, so make sure you know what your objective is.



Resources: Watch the 'How do I set a breeding objective?' videos at genetics.mla.com.au



2. Identify the relevant selection index that aligns with your breeding objective.

Selection indexes assist in accurately selecting the sires that align to your breeding objective and your production system. Once you know your breeding objective, work out what selection index closely aligns to it and your production system.



Resources: Watch the
'What is an index?'
videos at genetics.mla.com.au

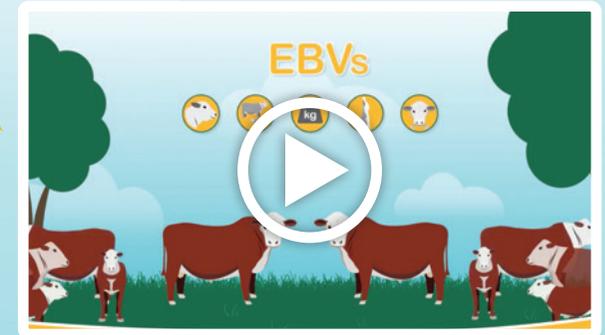
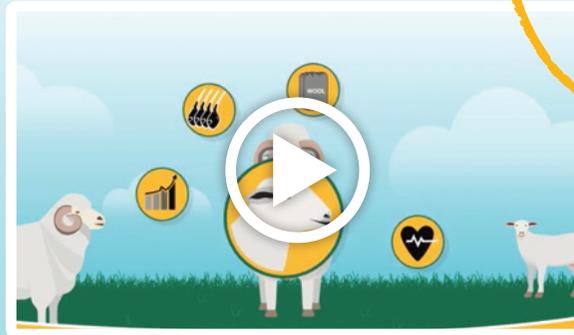


3. Identify the relevant breeding values that align with your breeding objective.

Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) and Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) assist in accurately selecting the sires that align to your breeding objective and your production system. There are many traits to choose from, so your breeding objective will help you shortlist the traits of importance.



Resources: Watch the 'What is a breeding value?' videos at genetics.mla.com.au



4. Search the printed sale catalogues and online BREEDPLAN and Sheep Genetics databases to find sires that match your desired indexes and breeding values.

You can use the databases and catalogues to help you filter out the animals that don't meet your objectives and find the potential high-performing sires to purchase.

If your stud reports breeding values, you should be able to find the information in their printed sale catalogue.



**Resources: Watch the
'How do I find sires?'
videos at genetics.mla.com.au**

For sheep, you can also find indexes and breeding values by searching the online Sheep Genetics database or RamSelect. For cattle, you can search the online BREEDPLAN databases, which can also be accessed through the breed society websites.

These online databases give you the ability to search animals within a catalogue or across all animals in the database. The search results allow you to compare and sort animals for their indexes and the EBV or ASBV traits you're interested in.

5. Contact the stud to gain more information about the sires and the stud's breeding program.

If you've identified some sires you're interested in at a particular stud, it's best to contact the stud directly to gain a clearer insight into their breeding objectives, the traits they're recording, sire and dam history, joining periods and other management, including vaccination history and whether they meet your biosecurity requirements.

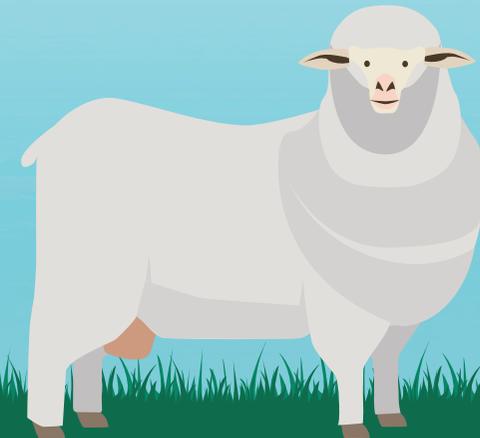
For bulls, you can also ask whether sale bulls have a BULLCHECK certificate available.



6. Develop a primary list of potential sires to purchase from the sale.

Choose your top sires that meet your breeding objective.

Use the relevant index first to rank and narrow down the available sires in priority order, then use the breeding values identified in your breeding objective to create a shortlist of sires to view on sale day.



7. Develop a secondary list of potential sires.

Always have a second-tier group, in case the sires on your primary shortlist aren't structurally sound or sell above your budgeted price. This is especially important if you're looking for more than one sire.

8. Decide on your budget.

Sale day may be competitive so decide how much you would like to spend when you're at home, away from the sale and pressure of other bidders.

A high-performing sire will provide greater productivity to your herd so it is important to decide what that is worth. A dollar index indicates the net profit per female joined.



Doing your homework now and objectively selecting sires by their breeding values and indexes means you can focus on the sires' physical characteristics on sale day.



At the sale

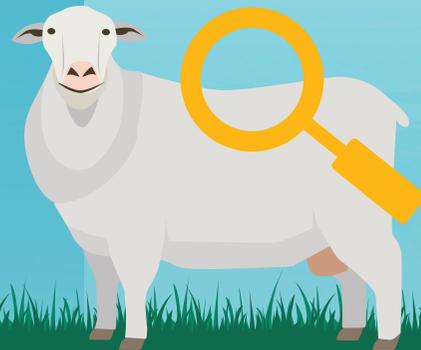
With the majority of hard work already done, your mission on sale day is to visually assess just the sires on your shortlists and then bid, with your budget in mind, on those that make the cut.

1. Visually appraise your shortlisted sires.

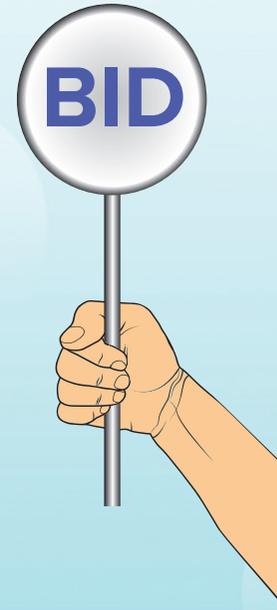
The basics have not changed. On sale day, cross off sires on your shortlist that don't meet your structural and temperament assessments or that are not reproductively fit.

2. Evaluate the remaining sires on your list and make a purchasing plan.

Sales can occur quickly and being well prepared prevents rushed decisions, especially when the sires on your list are not lotted in your desired order.

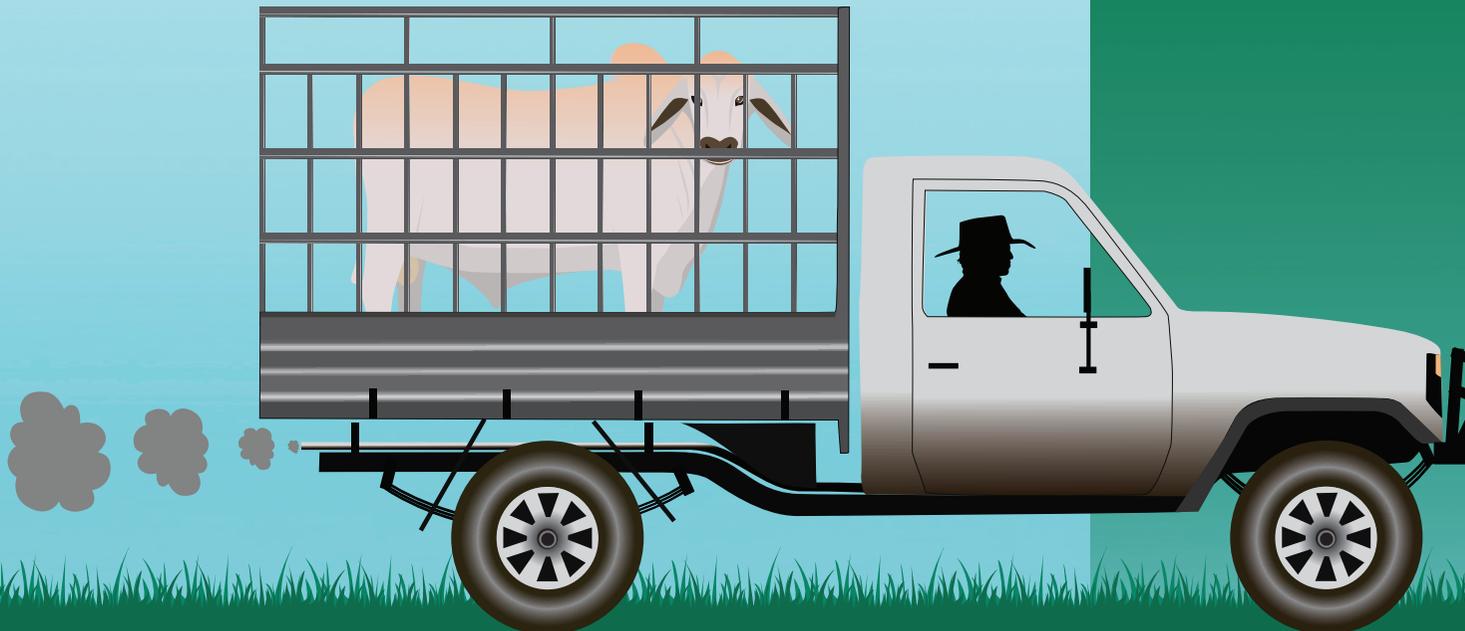


3. Bid on sires on your shortlist that meet your physical assessments and your budget.



Sale day is all about focusing on your shortlisted sires and checking they meet your structural and temperament assessments and your budget.

With your budget in mind (see step 8 in 'Before the sale'), you can feel confident in bidding on sires that make your cut.



After the sale

Once you've purchased your high-performing sire, you want to make sure he stays in optimal condition.

1. Treat your sire according to your own biosecurity plan.

Practicing sound biosecurity is important for your farm and for the health and fitness of your new high-performing sire. Straight off the truck, treat him according to your own biosecurity plan, which should include an effective quarantine drench.



2. Record the sire's tag number and appropriate animal movement records.

For your own records, document at minimum his tag number provided by the stud and appropriate animal movement records. This will help you when it comes time to evaluating your sires and identifying the traits you need for the future.



3. Allow six to eight weeks for your new sire to de-stress before joining and check on him frequently in these first few weeks.

To help settle him in, give him his own space and at least one mate to run around with. Avoid shearing, crutching, and excessive handling during this period. Check on him frequently in these first few weeks, keeping a watchful eye on his behaviour, nutrition, health and condition.



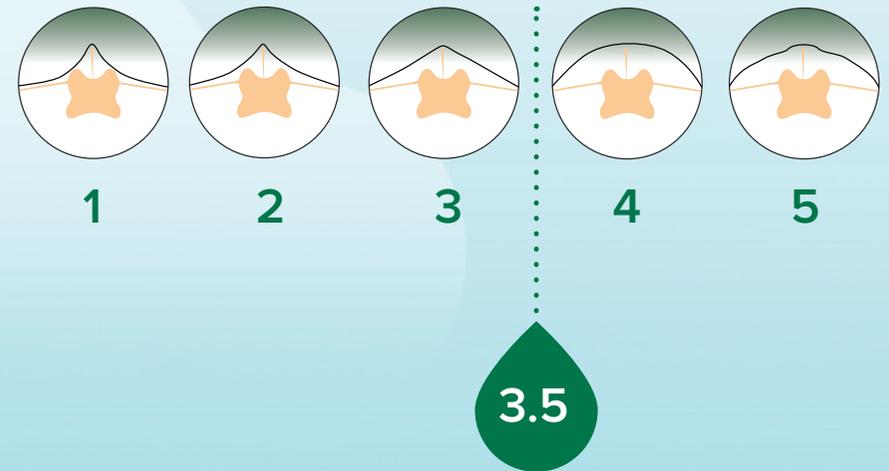
4. Feed a high-protein diet prior to joining to ensure he is condition 3.5 at joining.

Providing the adequate diet prior to joining and ensuring good condition will enhance your sire's reproductive performance. Make sure he's at a condition score of 3.5 at the point of joining.

5. Confirm your sire is working once joining commences by watching him service in the paddock.

Pulling out a sire that is not performing early gives the opportunity to find a replacement sire in the joining period.

Body condition score

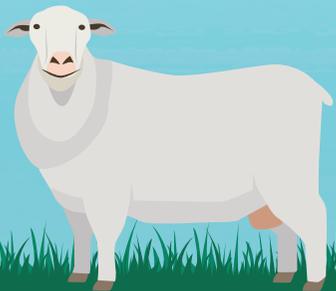


6. Conduct annual animal health treatments on your sires. For your bull team, also remember to carry out an annual BULLCHECK prior to joining.

Sires can be injured or break down between use. A sire's health and fitness is important to deliver good genetics to the herd or flock each year. To ensure reproductive performance, conduct annual animal health treatments and, for bulls, conduct a BULLCHECK, including morphology on your whole bull team prior to joining.

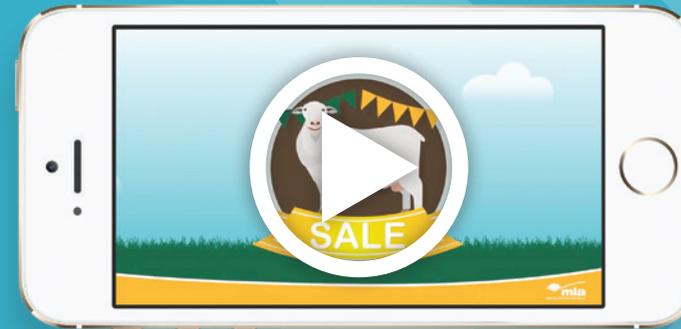


The right sire will deliver for you and your future herd or flock, so prepare carefully, choose wisely and care for this profit-maker once you get him home.



How to shop for a high-performing sire

MLA's new genetics hub contains resources – including a step-by-step video – on how to shop for a high-performing bull and ram.



genetics.mla.com.au

