

Genetic management

Southdown breeders are fortunate to have tools that assist in breeding decisions. DNA tests for spider and Harry Lamb are now available from commercial labs. ASBA members can have the test performed at Gene Check for \$11. (Put their address here.)

Both are recessive gene's, their impact is only important when they lineup with another recessive mate. The lambs with matching recessive gene's are significantly defective. Lambs with one recessive gene look normal but have the potential of passing that trait on.

Knowing the DNA of the sheep in your flock is the first and most important step to genetic management. Using only clean rams will prevent the birth of any defective lambs. You should personally have your ram tested so that any innocent errors made by the seller can be caught. The seller or the lab can have made a mistake. Better to learn of the problem prior to breeding than finding it out in the following year when you're disappointed in the DNA of your lamb crop. You can give yourself 100% protection from expanding the problem in your flock by using a clean ram.

Next, test all new sheep that are brought into your flock. Knowledge is the key to successful genetic management. If your lambs are sold to a terminal market and your ram is clean, it may not be necessary to test the ewes you flock. But, if you're selling breeding stock to breeders, the buyers will want to know the DNA information. After determining that ram and ewe are clean, their offspring will no longer need to be tested. Knowing your carrier ewes and testing their offspring allow you to gain value from their production for the rest of her life. There clean offspring can be retained or sold to other breeders. Several years of genetic management will result in a clean flock.

Get to know the DNA of your flock and use it to manage the genetic makeup of your lamb crop.