

# **Dohne Merino in Uruguay: recent development and Breeders Association's view**

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# Introduction to Uruguay



- **A small country**

- 176.000 square kilometers (Australia ~ 40 times Uruguay)
- 3,4 million people (Australia ~ 7 times Uruguay)

- **Open economy and agribusiness oriented.**

- 70% of exports are based on agribusiness
- No minerals, gas and oil
- 95% of territory is productive and covered by agricultural activities
  - 80% cattle and sheep
  - 10% crops
  - 10% forestry

- **Wool was the main export product until early 1990's.**

- In 2015 wool and wool products accounted for 3% of total exports, while sheep meat represented less than 1%.
- Current sheep stock: 7 million (peak of 26 million in 1990's).
  - 60% Corriedale
  - 20% Merino
  - 10% Polwarth
  - 10% Romney, Merilin, Dohne and meat breads.



# Promoting Merino Dohne in Uruguay: how to foster the breed?



## Three conditions for a breed to grow in Uruguay

1. A good ewe
2. A strong breeders association
3. Breeders with a passion for sheep

# Dohne Merino as a competitive business for farmers



## Three conditions for a breed to grow in Uruguay

### 1. A good ewe

- Competitive compared to other breeds
- Competitive compared to other business (cattle, crops, forestry, dairy) and complementary with growing activities (rotations with crops)
- Profitable
- Diversification of revenue source
- Prolific
- Adapted to environment
- Good and affordable animal health.





## Three conditions for a breed to grow in Uruguay

1. A good ewe

### 2. A strong breeders association

- Uruguay has a long lasting tradition of Breeders Associations: Corriedale, Merino and Polwarth have worked very hard together for more than 80 years and their traditions are very strong.
- Dohne Merino Breeders Association is a Brand new initiative:
  - Founded in June 2013
  - 25 members
  - Working in two areas:
    - a. Genetic improvement
    - b. Promotion of the breed

# Genetic improvement and quality control of Dohne Merino in Uruguay



- **Quality control for commercial sales of rams and ewes**
  - Tattoos as guarantee for buyers, carried out by independent technicians from SUL.
    - RD: 7/8 Dohne blood
    - MO (sheep improvement program): 31/32 Dohne blood.
  - Promoting the sale of animals with objective production information
    - Flock testing
    - Genetic evaluations
- **Genetics and production research – together with INIA, SUL and University**
  - Research on crossing (Corriedale and Merino)
    - Production of valuable cuts of meat.
    - Effect on increase of growth rate.
    - Effect on fiber diameter
    - Effect on fleece weight.
  - Research on pure flock:
    - Integrated to genetic evaluation.
    - Analyze efficiency of conversion.
- **Apply for admission to Global Genetic Evaluation Program (ASBVs).**
  - Not compulsory for Uruguayan breeders.
- **Commercial performance**
  - 2016: sales of rams as large as Merino's (second breed in Uruguay).
  - 5% to 10% of the flock are being crossed with Dohne Merino.



# Promoting Dohne Merino in Uruguay



## Aim

- show the breed
- promote its qualities
- show competitive advantages with respect to other breeds
- promote the importance of integrated systems.

## Target audience:

- Farmers
- Wool and meat industry.
- The press.
- Young people.

## Activities

- Open annual tours visiting farms with Dohne production, all around the country, in different conditions, integrated into different productive systems.
- Organize and hold a public sale of rams with the participation of the studs who are interested.
- Sheep Olympic Games: support and sponsoring for young students, in order to learn efficient handling skills in working with sheep
- 2016: allow participation and competition in shows:
  - Promotion of the breed.
  - Education in the use of objective information and visual appreciation.



# Breeders with passion



## Three conditions for a breed to grow in Uruguay

1. A good ewe
  2. A strong breeders association
  3. **Breeders with passion for sheep**
- Farmers who can be leaders in innovation
  - Farmers who know about sheep
  - Farmers with passion
  - Young people committed to our future



## Uruguay Dohne Merino Annual Conference - 2013





# A final proposal: to create a permanent international committee



**Creation of a permanent international committee of the breed, with a representative of each country's Association.**

## **Main Objectives:**

- Exchange new information of the breed in each country, such as:
  - Research of production systems.
  - Commercial conditions: ram sales.
  - Stocks in each country.
- Inform about promotion activities at each different Association in order to learn from each other.
- Exchange ideas about strategic orientation of the breed:
  - genetic improvement programs
  - objectives of selection in each country.

# Thank you!

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