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**New rams and farms sought as RamCompare Phase III funding announced**

Improving efficiency and reducing costs are both key drivers for any business. But for sheep breeders involved with the RamCompare project, investing in a ram with the right genetic merit for their system has proved to tick both boxes. After the initial five years of research, funding has now been confirmed to allow the third phase of the project to get underway later this year.

RamCompare is the national progeny test for terminal sire breeds, funded by the levy boards AHDB, HCC, QMS; supported by Agrisearch in Northern Ireland and working with partners across the food chain.

Over the past five years the project has clearly demonstrated the commercial value of using high genetic merit, performance recorded rams and created a series of new breeding values derived from abattoir data – to help highlight the most profitable sires.

The project has shown how commercial farmers can improve the efficiency and reduce the cost of lamb production through the selection of superior rams, while providing breeders with important information to enhance their breeding policies and increase rates of genetic gain.

To date, over 280 rams from 11 different breeds have been progeny tested. Data has been collected from over 26,000 lambs in one of the largest trials of its kind. With the launch of Phase III, we are looking to widen the reach of the project, testing more rams and moving to the position where the inclusion of abattoir data in genetic evaluations becomes routine.

Signet Breeding Manager Samuel Boon said: “The initial five-year project has been hugely successful in highlighting the financial and physical impact that high genetic merit rams have on lamb performance, with the latest results due to be released to industry on 20th May. The next phase provides some fantastic opportunities for farmers to get more directly involved.”

**RamCompare is seeking ram nominations**

Each year nominated rams are selected from a range of terminal sire breeds and used on commercial farms across the UK. Their progeny is monitored from birth through to slaughter with the data collected being fed back to Signet for use within breeding evaluations. The project aims to test 65-70 each year. Nominations are now open for rams and semen to be used in the 2021 mating season.

The project is looking for rams from a range of terminal sire breeds and is primarily looking for individuals with EBVs in top 20% of the breed. The natural service sires should be shearlings or older and have a known, high health status. Nominations of fit and fertile, older stock rams are extremely welcome.

The full criteria and online nomination process can be accessed via the Signet website [www.signetdata.com](http://www.signetdata.com). Nominations close on 14th May.

**New farms sought to join the project**

At least three new farms are being sought to join the project this autumn, providing a fantastic opportunity for commercial producers with an interest in data collection to get involved.

As well as gaining unique access to one of the UK’s leading sheep projects, the farms will receive a payment for the data provided, the provision of a team of recorded rams for natural mating and funding to cover artificial insemination on a proportion of the flock.

Flocks joining RamCompare face a strict selection criteria. They must provide at least 350 uniformly bred ewes to be mated to rams nominated by the project. They must allocate ewes to single sire mating groups and finish lambs in an identical manner. The farmers must be experienced EID users and supply an abattoir that reports kill data for individual lambs. The health status of the flock is also important.

**The launch of bolt-on projects**

This year there is also funding available to support the analysis of data for farms that wish to “bolt-on” to the work undertaken within RamCompare. In this scenario the farms provide the rams to be tested, rather than the project and a payment is made for the data collected. Support for AI can be provided if required.

This approach may suit farmers that already have a high genetic merit team of performance recorded rams or wish to work with a group of ram breeders to test rams on their behalf.

**When do I need to get involved?**

New farms will join the project ahead of the 2021 mating season.

The application process is now open and will close on 16th April 2021. Interested parties should head to the Signet website for more information and an application form or contact Bridget Lloyd, via email [bridget.lloyd@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:bridget.lloyd@ahdb.org.uk), with further questions.

More information about these opportunities can be found on the Signet website [www.signetdata.com](http://www.signetdata.com)

**END**

**Footnotes**

* Information about ram nominations can be found here <https://www.signetdata.com/news/posts/2021/march/ramcompare-nominations-are-open/>
* Information for commercial farms wishing to join the project and application forms can be found here <https://www.signetdata.com/news/posts/2021/march/ramcompare-recruiting-new-flocks-as-phase-iii-announced/>
* Information about the RamCompare project can be found at [www.ramcompare.com](http://www.ramcompare.com)

This work is led by Samuel Boon and Bridget Lloyd. For further information please contact the AHDB Beef & Lamb marketing communications team [BeefLamb.Comms@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:BeefLamb.Comms@ahdb.org.uk)

This project has been made possible by project partners and supporters:

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