final report

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Sheep Genetics database interface upgrade working group support

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Executive summary

This project covers the support provided by Luke Stephen, Technical Specialist Sheep Breeding for the NSW Department of Primary Industries to the Sheep Genetics Database interface upgrade project.

The project engaged commercial and seedstock producers to interact with website designers from Tigerspike across NSW and Victoria. In addition, subject matter expertise was provided as required and the final report for L.GEN.0001 was reviewed and edited.

In engaging with producers there was significant learnings around:
-The desire to see summaries about the studs presenting their information on Sheep Genetics, included in this a summary of the breeding objective and overview of traits recorded and genetic gain by the stud of interest
-The reliance on using physical sale catalogues despite more information being available online

In reviewing and engaging with a commercial software designer it was highlighted the need for balancing the informal nature of the business operations with the formal requirements of RDCs such as Meat & Livestock Australia. The draft final report required some significant reworks to match the requirements of the funding body.

Table of contents

1 Background

This project covers the support provided by Luke Stephen, Technical Specialist Sheep Breeding for the NSW Department of Primary Industries to the Sheep Genetics Database interface upgrade project (L.GEN.0001)

The project engaged commercial and seedstock producers to interact with website designers from Tigerspike across NSW and Victoria. In addition to this subject matter expertise was provided as required.

The aim of project L.GEN.0001 was to lift the adoption of Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) through a more intuitive user experience online. To date this has been delivered by Sheep Genetics through their website www.sheepgenetics.org.au.

2 Project objectives

The objectives of the project were as follows:

- Attend all project meetings where the MLA working group were required
- Support the contracted service provider in relation to technical genetics advice via phone, email and face to face meetings.
- Organise the attendees for the user testing workshop to be held in Armidale. (attendance not required).
- Review the work completed in L.GEN.0001 for each milestone prior to milestone submission with the MLA working group

3 Results

3.1 Meetings attended

The following meetings were attended as part of the engagement:

1. Business and Risk Workshop
2. Technical workshop
3. User interview strategy
4. Archetype Workshop
5. 1:1 interview with Tigerspike design team
6. Discovery playback session
7. Ideation playback session

Active participation in the meetings above was delivered. Some meetings were VC conferencing others were attended face to face in Sydney to participate in the workshop style of delivery. The contributions to these meetings are not captured independently however the meeting outcomes can be found in the final report for L.GEN.0001.

3.2 Project work completed

In addition to attending the project meetings, there was a considerable amount of work based around the organising of seedstock and commercial producers to attend the focus groups at Wagga Wagga, Hamilton and Narrogin. The proposed Armidale workshop that was referenced in the contract was cancelled due to the lack of perceived value relevant to what had previously been discussed and delivered.

All three focus groups had the required amount of producers confirm their attendance. In addition to this the project involved attending the Hamilton focus group as no representatives of MLA were able to attend.

Hours worked on the project across the life of the project totalled 100 hours.

3.3 Technical support provided

Support and advice was provided at all project meetings attended to the project staff at Tigerspike.

A significant proportion of advice provided was on the learnings from the discovery and framing development of Ramselect.com.au and processes followed. This provided good insights that shaped discussions around engagement with users, balance between technical rigour and user friendliness, the reception of users to online tools and the challenges and opportunities identified during tool development.

Other areas of advice included:

- Differences in users personas
- Buyer behaviour
- Database layout

3.4 Final report revision of L.GEN.0001

As part of the project the final report for L.GEN.0001 was reviewed for MLA after submission by Tigerspike. Feedback was provided particularly around correct labelling of report images and tables to suit funding body requirements of final reports and ensuring the technology industry language was adequately explained and defined.

4 Discussion

4.1 Learnings

4.1.1 Use of sale catalogues by Commercial producers

Through the process of engaging users to attend the design workshops and attending the Hamilton workshop there has been a lot learnt around the use of the website. The major learning from the commercial producers that were spoken to was they use the information provided by the seedstock breeder. There appeared to be little use of the major sale catalogue feature by the commercial producers engaged. Most rely on the information that is provided be it by a physical sale catalogue or an excel spreadsheet. In discussion with these users this was not due to any education reason outside of what was provided meets their needs. These users had a decent knowledge base of the subject matter, however choose to use the formats that they are familiar with. This included using subsets of information compared to using the default or full range of ASBVs and indexes available on the Sheep Genetics website.

4.1.2 Flock overview

Through the workshop attended at Hamilton both commercial and seedstock producers expressed a desire to see a flock summary presented to them. At present users of the website are provided with a list of animals, there is no way to see if a flock has a similar breeding objective to the flock of the user.

Some of these requests included:

1. Flock overview (Name, Location)
2. Environmental aspects (avg rainfall)
3. Breeding objective (Short blurb provided by the breeders)
4. Traits measured (populated from databases)

This feedback has been built into some of the test cases with positive reviews to date.

4.1.3 ASBV Language

The project sought to change the way ASBVs were presented to be easier for the end user to understand. Through out the project it was evident that the end users were very diverse and one simple language would not necessarily lead to better adoption outcomes. The solution design reflects this with three visual options being available for the end user compared to the one, more customisation options and on-boarding of education becoming a key component of the website.

This illustrates the importance of engaging the end user in process as just changing the language and expecting adoption would not have lead to the desired outcomes.

5 Conclusions

The project was delivered to scope and time with prioritisation around what can be delivered as a minimal viable product in LGEN0001. Subject matter expertise was provided regularly through project the meetings to ensure that the design team understood the users that they were designing the product for and to maintain technical quality of the information provided through the Sheep Genetics search interface

The learnings that have come from the user interviews by Tigerspike are providing valuable feedback to the design team about future features. The updated interface will lead to a greater use of the website through a better user experience.

6 Recommendation

6.1 Design and Build project phase

As the project moves into the design and build phase it will be important for the project team to ensure users are engaged to continually test and refine the key components of the new search facility. This will maintain the high level of engagement and contribution from users experienced in the first phase of the project.