

Big horns clash with longevity in sheep

Alpha Red 78 — a ram with horns like elephant tusks — sired 95 lambs before he died at the ripe (for a ram) old age of nine. A gene with a role in horn growth explains his fertility and his longevity, finds a study of sheep on a remote Scottish isle.

Ample horns are a ram's ticket to reproductive success. During the breeding season, males fight for access to females, and those with the largest horns win. But if big horns are a sexual asset, the genes underlying the trait should have become ubiquitous, says Susan Johnston, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Edinburgh, UK, who led the research. Yet some male sheep have short horns or none at all.

Read the full, original story here: [Big horns clash with longevity in sheep](#)