

The Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Association

Looking Ahead



2015 - Edition No 34



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Spring Looking Ahead Magazine

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Front Cover - Bluefaced Leicester ewe and lambs
owned by Elfyn Owen, Cernyw flock

Chairman's Message

Diversity is our breed's strength.

Welcome to "The Year of The Sheep" (Chinese New Year)!

Hopefully this is a good omen, as last year China imported 13,000 tonnes of British lamb, and hopefully this year will see an increase, sadly partly due to the draught in Australia and New Zealand as lamb numbers are down.



Carl Stephenson

The female sales got the year off to a good start at Hawes and Carlisle, with many ewes and hogs going to start new flocks.

The Bluefaced Leicester is the sire of the unprecedented commercial ewe "The Mule", which is the greatest producer of prime lambs from grass. Mules are bred from a variety of hill ewes, which go on to breed fast growing, profitable fat lambs throughout the four countries of the United Kingdom and Eire.

Diversity is our breed's strength – this statement has never been more true than now. We must continue to lead in supplying what the market demands, particularly regarding conformation, prolificacy and high quality wool.

When I took on the Chairman's job, I did so with some trepidation, but I have really enjoyed the role, and the opportunity to meet so many fellow sheep enthusiasts. At this point, I must say a very huge thank you to Helen and Rachael in the office who do such a professional job. I would also like to thank the Trustees, Regional Chairmen and Council Members who give up their time to attend meetings to ensure the Association continues to be up to speed with current issues and is moving forwards.

I close by wishing members of the Association, (and those yet to see the light) a good lambing with fine weather, plenty of grass and most importantly a happy and healthy year.

Just remember "The future's bright, the future's a BLUEFACED LEICESTER!"



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News From The Office

From Helen Carr-Smith, Association Secretary

2015 Subscriptions and Members Details

The annual subscription for the Association still remains at £25.00. If you have not paid your membership you still have time to do so, but remember non paid up members are automatically excluded from our mailing list. If you would like to set up a standing order to make sure your payment is received on time, then please contact us for an application form. If you move house and/or your contact details change, please notify the office as soon as you can so that we can keep our database up to date.

2014 Flock Book

Thank you to all members who have sent in their registration forms for inclusion in the 2014 flock book which you should have all now received. If you have not yet returned your 2014 registration form to the office then please do so, as you will not be able to order Association tags for 2015 until the form is received. If you have lost your 2014 form and require another copy then please contact the office.

Grassroots Online Database

Members have free access to the online database system grassroots, and can be found at www.blueleicester.co.uk. Members can check their flock details, and by using their personal password they can 'manage' their flock on-line – the following tasks can be done by members: - lamb registrations, deleting dead animals, and notifying the database of transfers off your own holding. Personal details can also be amended. Animal details cannot be amended – the office

will have to be notified of any changes required. Any additional stock purchased will also have to be notified to the office to be added to your flock records. If you have forgotten your password please contact the office and we will be happy to send you a reminder.

Ear Tags

Members will be supplied with a pair of ear tags again this year. There is no change in the cost of the lamb registration fee, and remains at £7.00 + VAT. This charge covers the cost of your pair of tags and registration/administration fee. The tags are made up of a yellow EID button tag, and a purple visual button tag, and both will be marked with your UK flock mark and sequential number together with your Bluefaced Leicester number and sequential number. The letter this year is 'H'. If you need to order replacement ear tags from the office, please remember we require the following: Bluefaced Leicester side of the tag details; UK flock number with individual number; your CPH number. If it is a bought in animal and not your own breeding we require proof of purchase – either by supplying the tag you need replacing or an Auctioneers invoice (this will be returned to you once the order is placed). If all of this information can be supplied at the time of ordering then it will allow us to improve the service.

E-mail Register

An e-mail register is to be created for any member who wishes to receive information from Association Council Meetings and National AGMs. The details provided will be regarding decisions made from these meetings, and the e-mails will be sent once the minutes are approved. If you wish to join the list, please e-mail your name, flock number and prefix.

Twitter

If you have not already signed up, you can do so at any time by visiting our website www.blueleicester.co.uk and follow the links to Twitter and join in the conversation.

Gift Aid

This is of no cost to members, and provides a very useful financial input into the Association funds.

If you have not already signed up, or would like more information, please contact the office for an application form.

Finally...

Wishing everyone a successful lambing and look forward to catching up with you all around the summer shows.



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Stay Strong Stu

Stu Ridley is a 25 year old farmer from Northumberland whose life is centered on rugby, farming, family and friends. The youngest of three rugby-playing brothers, he grew up in West Northumberland where he attended Haydon Bridge High School. Stu now farms in partnership with his parents Melvin and Celia and brothers Kevin and Stephen.

Stu is an exceptional 'personality' and his attitude in the face of a life-threatening illness is testimony to his drive and determination, backed up by a very positive approach to people and life!

The Illness

In January, Stu was planning a trip to Thailand with three other Tynedale boys. A few days before he was due to leave, Stu went into town for a few beers. As the night progressed, he began to feel unwell and left early (which is very unlike him).

After the usual tests in hospital, it was found that he has a brain tumour. The tumour is in a position where doctors are unable to operate. Further tests were done and Stu posted this on his Facebook page on the 19th February:

"More bad news I'm afraid folks, the results of the biopsy have shown a particularly aggressive type of tumour which has spread to a couple of other spots as well as a bit on the surface of the brain! I start radiotherapy, then chemotherapy in the next couple of weeks to try and slow it down. However, it isn't curable at the moment, and I've been given roughly six months, but everyone is different and I'm far from beaten yet! Thanks again for all the support that's been given. It's been unbelievable, and really does mean the world to myself and my family! Sorry to drop this on you people, but people need to know what's happening! Hope to see you all soon and take care, much love x" (Source; Stu Ridley, Facebook, 19th February)

#StayStrongStu - Aims and Targets

The aim of this appeal is jointly to raise awareness of brain tumours and to empower our communities to help fight such an illness – whilst also providing practical support to Stu.



Stu Ridley



In order to achieve this we have set certain targets:

- **Raise £50,000.**
- **Recruit 15,000 followers on the StayStrongStu Facebook group.**
- **Spread the #StayStrongStu message by photographing the shirts in a minimum of 100 different countries.**
- **Unite Communities together and celebrate this through a fundraising rugby game and social event attracting 2,000 people.**
- **Sell 1,000 #StayStrongStu T-shirts.**

For more information about Stu's fight, or to support him with a donation/purchase a T-shirt - see the #staystrongstu Facebook page or visit the website www.staystrongstu.co.uk



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<p>CARLISLE</p> <p>Friday 9th October 2015 Autumn show and sale of registered rams and females</p> <p>Monday 19th October 2015 Sale for all classes of rams and females</p> <p>Monday 18th January 2016 Show and Sale of in-lamb registered females</p>	<p>KIRKBY STEPHEN</p> <p>Saturday 3rd October 2015 Show and Sale of rams and females</p> <p>LAZONBY</p> <p>Saturday 10th October 2015 Show and Sale of rams and females</p>
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For all other up to date sales and information visit our website - harrisonandhetherington.co.uk

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President's Message

It has been a privilege and a great pleasure to serve as the Association President this year.

Ann and I really enjoyed attending the AGM in Carlisle last May when my year in office began. As we were the best part of 400 miles from home, we decided to spend a couple of days in the area. A day in the Lake District was followed by one visiting the Dales where preparations were being made for the upcoming Tour de France cycle race, and what a great advertisement that was for the area and its people.

Although not farming in a traditional Bluefaced Leicester stronghold, due to the geographical location on Exmoor North Devon, I have been a member of the Association for over 30 years, and a founder member and Chairman of the South West England area club. I have witnessed many changes in that time in turnover of Secretaries, breeders and in breed development.

We know that there are two distinctive types of Bluefaced Leicester sheep being bred now, brought about by market forces. Many breeds of pedigree sheep and cattle have developed and changed in character over the years to meet modern farming demands, and our breed is no exception. We have seen the two types shown, and sold together successfully in recent years, and any calls to do otherwise should be resisted. Only a united Association will create the right conditions moving forward.

We had a great looking stand at the NSA event held in the summer at Malvern. This is the premier sheep event of the year, and congratulations to Helen and those who brought the sheep for all their efforts in producing such an informative and high quality display.

I also witnessed a great turnout of sheep at the Royal Welsh Show, both in the lines and on the stand. These events certainly promote our sheep to the widest audience. Congratulations to everyone who contributed.

As South West England BWMB member, I would like to highlight the exceptional quality of the fleece that our breed has. It is the finest of our British Wools at around 26 micron, and the vast majority of the clip is spun into yarn for knitwear. The recent February sale saw the 4000 kg forward sell at 588p per kilo. This compares with the very best other fine and medium types to around 250p per kg. Just illustrating what a fantastic natural fibre our breed of sheep produce.

As I write this in late February, our main lambing season is almost upon us. When you read this, hopefully there will be many healthy Bluefaced Leicester lambs on the ground (hopefully not in the ground)?

We saw a big increase of lamb registrations last year, but the key to a good trade this year will be as always - quality! Fortunately, all our Mule type ewes seem to have recovered in popularity which should stand us in good stead going forward.

I have to apologise, because of the travelling involved, I have been unable to attend Council meetings, so I would like to show my appreciation to our Chairman and Council for their excellent work over the last year in carrying out their duties. I also acknowledge the day to day administration of the Association affairs which is the responsibility of Helen with great support from Rachael. On behalf of the membership, many thanks to you both and well done.



Brian Dallyn



Dates For Your Diary

May

- 13-15 Balmoral Show
- 19 NSA Welsh Sheep - Glanmeheli & Drefor Farms, Kerry, Newtown, Powys

June

- 3 NSA North Sheep - Millstone Moor, Cockermouth
- 9 NSA Highland Sheep - Fearn Farm, Ross-Shire
- 16 NSA Sheep South West - Higher Nichols Nymet, North Tawton
- 18-21 Royal Highland Show
- 20 Irish Premier Sheep Event - Athenry, Co. Galway



Bluefaced Leicesters -

Breeding Sheep Without Compromise

Another spring has come and gone again, just part of the constant cycle that dictates the sheep farmer's year and life. The changing seasons is the constant certainty we live and work with dictating the changing tasks and jobs we have throughout the year. Unfortunately, more and more the outside world encroaches and controls our farms and businesses, supermarket profits, global recession, and this year the restructuring of agricultural subsidies which will have a massive effect on the industry. As with all change, there will be winners and losers, but the overall effect will be a tightening up of the industry, and as subsidies diminish only the most efficient will survive.

At our latest publicity meeting it was decided that we must intensely focus on the promotion of the efficiency and profitability of the Mule. The

stands at shows and events this year will have a more commercial feel, less pictures of prize winning sheep, more pictures of commercial, hard working ewes in their working clothes in the field doing the job! We must clearly promote that Bluefaced Leicesters and their progeny the Mule are commercially driven to see off the constant threat from emerging breeds trying to break into our market.

The trump card our breed has is the stratified sheep system; this way of sheep farming, almost unique to the UK, has taken a bit of a battering in recent years from breeds promoting closed flock breeds and management systems. The closed flock system may make it easier to control potential disease outbreaks, but this comes with enormous compromises. When a ewe from a closed management system has a pair of mixed sex lambs, the ewe lamb needs to carry the next generation of specialised maternal genetics, while her brother has been bred to be the finished prime lamb, the product specifically bred for the supermarket shelf. A ewe breeding twin lambs with such a vast difference in their end purposes cannot be done, and there must always be a compromise. The stratified system breeds the sheep specifically for the job they have to do, the Mule breeder concentrates on breeding a ewe that will produce and



A Mule and her lambs

rear lambs efficiently and specifically bred to suit the environment they will work and spend the rest of their life in. The business of producing the prime lamb is left to the Mule user who selects the best purpose bred terminal sire for the market they are selling into, and uses him on his tailor-made Mule. This system is without compromise - sheep bred to do their own job, managed by farmers focusing on their own particular end product.

Two big dates for the diary this year with Bluefaced Leicester interests are Welsh Sheep and North Sheep. Welsh Sheep will take place at Glanmeheli and Drefor Farms, Kerry, near Newtown by kind permission of Geraint and Morton Powell on Tuesday 19th May. The Powells are both Welsh Mule breeders and users. North Sheep this year is being held at Millstone Moor Farm, Cockermouth, on Wednesday June 3 by kind permission of Neil Marston, noted breeder of the Highberries Flocks of Bluefaced Leicesters and North of England Mules. Other NSA events we are taking stands to this year are Highland Sheep at Fearn Farm, Tain, Ross-Shire, on Tuesday 9th June, and Sheep South West on Tuesday 16th June at Higher Nichols Nymet, Nichols Nymet, North Tawton.

Dates For Your Diary

July

6	NSA NI Region – Ballymena Mart
14-16	Great Yorkshire Show
20-23	Royal Welsh Show
25	Penrith Progeny Show
25	Co Antrim Progeny Show

August

15	Scottish Progeny Show - this year will be held at Peebles Show
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Article by Helen Carr-Smith.
Photos by Helen Carr-Smith
and John Eveson.

Piel View Bluefaced Leicesters

Nestled between the idyllic surroundings of the Walney Channel, and the Irish Sea, you will find Walney Island home of the Thomason family, namely Scott, Claire and Isaac and the Piel View flock of Bluefaced Leicesters.

The farm has some fantastic views looking out to the Irish Sea to the West, and on a really clear day you can see to the Isle of Man. To the opposite side, you can see the remains of Piel Castle which sits on the South Eastern point of Piel Island where the flock gets its name from.

The Thomason's run their flock of Bluefaced Leicesters within 170 acres of the family farm run with Claire's brother David. Together they farm a herd of pedigree beef shorthorn cattle, a small flock of Cheviot ewes which run with the Bluefaced Leicester rams, and a flock of 150 Mule ewes which run with Suffolk, Beltex and Texel rams. The commercial lambs are marketed through their local livestock mart at Ulverston throughout July and August.



Scott, Isaac, Claire and a 2015 born lamb sired by Myfyrian F9

One of the main parts of the farm is the Seaview riding school which is celebrating 25 years this year. Claire oversees the running of the riding school which is both a riding school for the disabled and a pony club centre. To run along side the riding centre Scott and Claire took

the decision 13 years ago to take a trip to Harrison & Hetherington at Carlisle and made the purchase of their first Bluefaced Leicesters. They selected two females from the Carry House flock of R D Archer & Son, and a Bowder tup from J Barrett, and from these selections became the birth of the Piel View flock. In 2004 Scott and Claire purchased what was to become one of the most influential sires used within the flock, Barlaes T003 bred by R J McTurk, and bought from Raymond Harding. His progeny became the foundation ewes for the future success of the flock. The flock now has 20 females with a strict selection policy in place to ensure the

BLACKFACE SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION



**Northern Ireland
National Show
on Monday 31st August 2015
in the Alexander Hall, Belfast**

**For further information
on the breed contact:-
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high quality of the flock is upheld, with the option there to breed their own replacement females. When selecting stock rams Scott is looking for style, correctness and conformation. Due to the extreme weather conditions faced due to the location of the farm sitting directly at sea level the flock has adapted and has grown to be extremely hardy. All sheep are serviced naturally and lambing is between the months of March and April. Lambing figures for this year are at 212%. This year's crop of lambs have been sired by a homebred ram Piel View F009, and Myfyrian F009 which is owned in partnership with Graham Dixon, Alwinton. Scott and Claire sell mainly ram lambs each year at the NSA Wales and Border Ram Sale at Builth Wells, Longtown and Harrison & Hetherington sale at Carlisle. In 2014 the flock produced the highest priced female at the Builth Wells sale, and she was a homebred gimmer sired by Hazelwood Z1, and was sold for 950 gns to Graham Dixon, Alwinton.

One of the biggest events for the whole family is showing their flock of Bluefaced Leicesters at shows throughout the summer season. This all started back in 2007 when Scott took a phone call from Arthur Yeats who was looking for people to compete at the Progeny Show in the North West region which was held within Penrith Show. This started the ball rolling as far as the family were concerned, and they have gone on to enjoy many successes in the show ring achieving Breed Champion at the Westmorland County Show in 2013 with a homebred ewe 3935/E16, and Overall Reserve Breed Champion at the Great Yorkshire Show

in 2013 with a homebred ram lamb sired by Hazelwood Z1 out of a homebred ewe. But by far the family's greatest show achievement to date came at the 2014 Penrith Show where the family won just about all the major awards - Overall Breed Champion - this was with a shearling gimmer which was by Hazelwood Z1, and out of a ewe sired by Middle Dukesfield W6; Reserve Overall Champion - a ram lamb sired by Kildalloig F17, and out of a ewe sired by Barlaes T3. The family also took the reserve male championship with a ram bought at Carlisle in partnership with Graham Dixon, Alwinton which was bred by M & J Roberts, Myfyrian.

In the progeny section the family were awarded the overall championship in the Bluefaced Leicester group section with their group of three gimmer shearlings by the same sire, Hazelwood Z1 which was purchased privately from Robert Neill, Rossiebank.

Isaac is an integral part of the family business in his own right having been a great help to Mum and Dad since the age of four helping to prepare and show the flock both for the show and sale ring. Isaac now ten years old has also developed a love of riding ponies, and has been successful on a number of occasions bringing home the championship ribbons. As for the future, the goals of the whole family are to maintain the quality of the stock, which has already been achieved by one of the smaller but highly regarded flocks within the Association.



Breed Champion - Penrith Progeny Show 2014



Res. Male Champion - Penrith Progeny Show 2014

The Hall's

Enthusiasm for Bluefaced Leicesters

Successfully running a farming business, whilst carrying out a full time job outwith it, takes a certain level of devotion that both father and son, Douglas and Derek Hall must possess. And there's no doubt that their shared passion for the Bluefaced Leicester breed has helped maintain that enthusiasm.

It's 36 years since their Firth flock was established, with the purchase of a ewe hogg at the Way To Wooler dispersal in 1979, and the two remain confident that they picked the right breed to be in.

"With the rise in popularity of the Mule ewe, we could see a strong future for the Bluefaced Leicester and we've not been disappointed. It's been a great

breed to be involved in and although the type of sheep we breed has changed over the years, the demand has always been there – that has never faltered," explained Derek, who by week-day is a Director of Business Banking for RBS.

But there's no chance of this banker spending his free time golfing or holidaying. Instead, evenings, weekends and holidays are spent running the family's 1000-strong sheep flock, spread over 400-acres between the nearby units of Lilyburn, Upper Firth and Auchindinny Mains, at Penicuik in Midlothian.

Derek farms with his father Douglas, who officially retired from his non-farming career 22 years ago – working for the Department of Agriculture, in charge of seed potatoes. In fact, his worthwhile contributions to the potato industry were recognised in 1993, when he received an OBE for his services.

At home, however, it's the Bluefaced Leicesters take centre stage, with the main focus of the year being the Kelso Ram Sales, where the family's shearing pen regularly sits at the top end of the average table. Last year's batch of 24 sold to £6000 and levelled out at £1434.

"Kelso is our bread and butter and always has been – we'll have been selling there for 30 years this year. We've built up a strong customer base and we breed a particular type to suit our buyers. If they're happy with a tup and how it performs, then they'll come back and buy another from us, so it is vital that we are consistent in what we produce," explained Derek.

The Halls' sheep enterprise consists of a fairly large flock of 70 pure Bluefaced Leicester ewes; plus 550 Mule ewes; 420 Blackface females and a few pure Suffolks. Replacement Blackies are bought in, with 120 ewe lambs needed each year (for the past few years, these have come from the Campbells at Glenrath). They are all put to the Bluefaced Leicester, with 120-130 Mule ewe lambs kept for breeding.



Derek & Douglas Hall

"We buy high muscle index Suffolk tups to put to our few pure Suffolk ewes, and we then use the resultant home-bred tups on our 550 Mules. We prefer the Suffolk mainly for their fast growth rates – the lambs are all sold fat to Woodhead Bros, mostly off grass, with last year's lot averaging over 20 kgs deadweight," said Derek.

Mule wedders are also sold through Woodhead, from the end of June to November, almost all off grass. Aiming for 20 kgs deadweight, they normally achieve grades of R3L or U. Meanwhile, those Mule ewe lambs not kept as replacements, are sold at St Boswells and Stirling, with the top pen of 50 reaching £150.

Along with any bought-in tups, the best of the home-bred Bluefaced Leicester tup lambs are used on the Blackie flock before being sold the following year. The Halls have their own recording system of the Mule lambs, conceived by Douglas, which allows them to keep track of how well each tup has bred.

"We tag the Mule lambs to identify which tup they are off and each one is assessed and given a score of 1-10 (10 being best) for coat and colour. From that, we can work out an average score for each tup, and we can use that information when it comes to selling them at Kelso. We also take pictures of Mule lambs off the tups that we're selling, and have them on display in the pen," explained Douglas.

"We've found it makes a massive difference to the buyers and gives them the confidence in what they are buying. We want to give them as much assurance as possible that the tup will breed the type of Mule lambs that they are looking to produce – we don't want them to have any surprises. If you have that trust with the buyers, there's more chance of them coming back and buying from you again," he added.

It was this quest to produce top quality Mule lambs that instigated a change in breeding policy within the Firth flock, back in the mid-1990s – from traditional Blues, to the crossing type.



Some Firth Bluefaced Leicesters

"We won the Royal Highland in 1995 with a shearling ram, which went on to make £4600 that year at Kelso, and we sold a lamb the same day for £4200. Although we were delighted with that success, the Mule lambs off our tups at that time were just not good enough. After that, we made a conscious decision to go down the crossing type route, which at that time was almost unheard of in Scotland," said Derek.

"We knew that Nunsleugh were breeding that type of Blues and were producing really good Mule lambs off them, so we went there and bought two tups in two consecutive years – one being Nunsleugh N25, which turned out an excellent breeder," he added.

Other prominent purchases followed, including the £17,000 Bull & Cave ram, which broke the breed record at the time, and was shared with Midlock and Nunsleugh. In 2004, Derek judged at Abington Show and put champion a 'crossing' type ram lamb by the Bull & Cave sire from Midlock, which raised a few eyebrows at the time and led to the tup being named Midlock Controversy. However, he backed up his decision by later buying a half share of the lamb – a smart decision, as he went on to be one of the most sought after bloodlines in the breed. "By using the crossing type tups, we noticed a difference straight away in the Mule lambs – they were far more saleable. We also found that the Blues themselves were much easier to work with; hardier, and they'd live longer. Controversy died as a nine-year-old, while N25 had to be put down aged eight, with arthritis," said Derek.

Another tup worthy of a mention was B4 Tanhouse Farm, shared with Midlock and Nunsleugh and bought for £12,000. Three years ago, again in conjunction with Midlock and Nunsleugh, the Halls bought E1 Hewgill for £11,000. He is the sire of their strong lot of 20 tup hogs destined for Kelso later this year. Showing more recent promise are last year's purchases, a Nunsleugh tup bought for £3600 at Hawes with Midlock, and a Midlock tup bought for £6000 and shared with Hamildean and Nunsleugh.

"When we're buying a tup, we're looking for one that will produce us saleable shearlings for Kelso and also breed good Mule lambs, so they have to be structurally sound, with a good coat and mouth. If we get a lamb that we think will sell well at Hawes, then that's a bonus," said Derek.

Firth tups have been selling at Hawes for just three years, but they've settled in quickly – in 2013, they received the top average at the sale, with the pen of E1 Hewgill sons levelling out at more than £5000, and peaking at £11,000. Hawes is also the venue where they buy most of their stock tups, and because they are often shared two or three ways, the Halls AI all their Blue ewes. This also ensures a tight lambing period of the first week in March, which suits Derek for taking time off his work. Derek and Diane's two sons Andrew (who also works for RBS) and

David, who is studying at University, are on hand during holidays to help out too, and a worthwhile addition to the lambing team in recent years has been Alex Steadman, who takes on night duties.

"The Blues are all outwintered until they start lambing and then they're put back out as soon as there's enough grass. We try to avoid feeding them too much forage pre-lambing though, to help prevent prolapse. "I suppose there's a particular knack to managing Blues because they are so prone to multiple births – they've got to have enough feeding to keep the lambs big enough to survive, but you don't want to over-feed them or that causes more problems. We scan at 220%, which is probably fairly low for a Blue flock, but we make sure they don't get too many hormones before AI-ing, to try and avoid quads," said Douglas. Around 20 lambs and 30 shearlings are sold each year at the main sales – Kelso, Hawes, Stirling and Carlisle, and the Halls occasionally squeeze in some showing over the summer too. Locally, they support Peebles' strong classes of BFLs, and nationally, they've picked up the champion ticket at the Highland Show twice. But they keep their sheep system as simple as possible, to fit in with their working lives, and they are certain that the Bluefaced Leicester has an important part to play in today's sheep industry.

"The majority of Blue breeders are out and out sheep men, running a small pedigree flock alongside big commercial sheep flocks, and that ensures that the breed remains true to its commercial values – we have to keep breeding what the commercial man wants," said Derek. "Fewer people want to farm sheep now, so it's about keeping it simple and effective, and for that, you can't beat the Mule ewe – she has plenty milk and will give you two good lambs that you can get away early. Nothing else looks or performs like a Mule," he added.



Douglas and Derek with some 2015 born lambs



Tanhouse Farm's

Success Story

Another lambing is nearly over, and the Thomas family now look to how they can promote this year's crop of Bluefaced Leicesters and Mule lambs.

For one breeder, for the last 19 years, who has displayed and promoted the Welsh Mule breed. The Thomas family from Tanhouse have been breeding Welsh Mules since 1977 with the first sales in 1978 at Welshpool, but this wasn't their first experience with Mules, as before then, John senior with Mr Hadley, the farm manager for the Earl of Plymouth at Ludlow, Shropshire made their journey to Lazonby North Of England Mule Sale.

The journey proved successful with the purchase of 20 Mules from the Alston Moor area, and even now they can recall the coloured wool tied in the shoulder as the first pen was purchased for £48 apiece. A sum of money which for many years refused to share with locals eager to see what the breed could bring to the Welsh hills. The sheep performed well and didn't disappoint - almost as good as their Welsh Mules. At that time £48 was when the best fat lambs were £16 each, and the best cull ewes £12 each.

Tanhouse Farm is 550 acres, three quarters of which is above 1100 ft, and rising to 1550 ft carrying 1350 ewes and 50 Limousin x Belgian Blue suckler cows. The farm has been in the family since 1822 making it six generations.

In 1976 with opportunity of purchasing land next door, the decision to breed the North Country Mule equivalent at Tanhouse started with



Richard, John, Jonathan and James

the same mixture as the North Country Mule which had been tried and tested before. They had the hill ewe (Beulah Speckled), and all that what was required was a Bluefaced Leicester ram.

It was only a matter of time that Hawes Auction Mart was the place to buy crossing Blues, and so the epic journey of three generations - grandfather, father and Richard was made. Hawes was the centre, and with a catalogue of marked names from previous purchases, business was resumed with the first point of call.

The Fairburn's Marriforth Bluefaced Leicesters had always done well for the Thomas' in the past. This particular year when looking around the pens and hearing "this is the tup for you" and "the best of breeding",



F3 Lawson



Beulah Speckled ewe with her Welsh Mule lambs sired by F3 Lawson



Jonathan, James, Nia and Eva Thomas with three ram lambs sired by F3 Lawson



a photograph of a pen of Mules stood out with a 'white' to catch anybody's eye keen to improve their Mules. The pen belonged to the Ellis family of Ilkley Moor. It didn't take long before two like minded people became acquainted, and from that point the purchase of J22 Ilkley Moor started. A ram in its first year at Tanhouse produced Mule lambs which went on to win the pairs competition at the Royal Welsh Show.

So instrumental was this ram producing Blues for themselves, females were then purchased at Ilkley Moor with an aim to keeping the bloodline going. So strong was the genetics of that line, in 2003 it was decided to return to Hawes as a seller for the first time selling to £5,800 to Mr Snaith, Clennell flock. Another ram which has proved himself at Tanhouse was A3 Old Hemley sired by Y1 Midlock from the Abberley family of Brecon. A ram with style and show presence, with sons B4 Tanhouse Farm and C2 featuring heavily within the breed.

The Thomas family feel very grateful, particularly Richard's father the late David Ellis, a true gentleman of the breed who always made time to give advice to a young breeder, and recommend valid points of the breed with words of wisdom - "It doesn't matter where the breed goes in fashion, never lose sight of the white hair on the Mule" - which is still true today.

So the next time a prospective young buyer comes into your pen of ram lambs, take a leaf out of the late David Ellis' book and share your knowledge and encouragement that was given to Richard because you never know that person could be a future Vice Chairman!



J36 Rural Auction Centre 015395 66200

Lancaster Auction Mart 01524 63308

J36 Show & Sale of Bluefaced Leicester Sheep

Registered & Unregistered Rams & Females

Evening Sale Friday 18th September 2015

J36 Sale of Bluefaced Leicester Females

Comprising of In-lamb Ewes, Shearlings & Gimmer Hoggs

Saturday 23rd January 2016

J36 Show & Sale of Swaledale Sheep

Comprising of Ewes, Gimmer Shearlings & Gimmer Lambs

Friday 25th September 2015

Lancaster Auction Mart and J36 Rural Auction Centre offer for sale Mule Ewes, Gimmer Shearlings and Gimmer Lambs from the Lakeland Hills, Yorkshire Dales and The Trough of Bowland, including consignments of Sheep from members of the North of England Mule Sheep Breeders Association

Sale of all classes of Breeding Sheep are held throughout the Autumn

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Ian Atkinson, Auctioneer on 07766 521472

Richard Gardiner, Fieldsman on 07713 787510



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NSA North Sheep 2015


Hosted this year by Neil & Sally Marston, Highberries flock

One of the sheep industries major events is taking place on the 3rd of June in West Cumbria, at Millstone Moor, near Cockermouth, Cumbria. Cumbria is a natural place to hold such an event, with sheep dominating the area from the wild Lake District mountains, with the iconic Herdwick grazing on the seemingly bare slopes, to huge flocks of Mule ewes grazing the fertile Eden Valley, the sheep industry forms the backbone of the agricultural industry in the region. Who can fail to be impressed by the swathes of Mule gimmer lambs at the annual Lazonby sales, in the "Harvest of the Hills" or the Kirkby Stephen Swaledale sales, which saw the first sheep in the UK to make six figures a few years back.

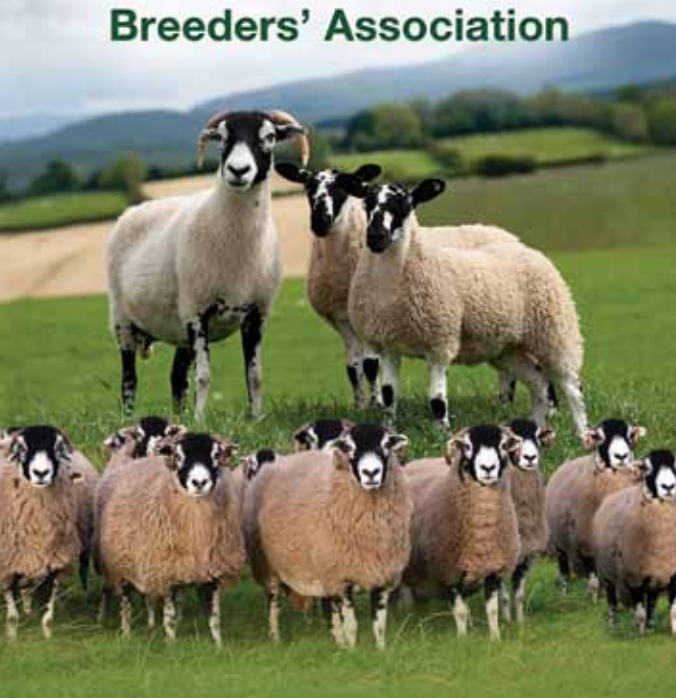


Neil and Sally Marston

Neil Marston, the host of the NSA North Sheep event is familiar to many people within the industry, noted for producing outstanding Mule gimmer lambs, which have taken prizes by the hatful all over the North of England and Bluefaced Leicester sheep, with his bloodlines behind a lot of the major flocks over the past few years. He has farmed at Millstone Moor since 2008, when they moved from Highberries Farm near Carlisle, with his wife Sally and parents Raymond and Frances. "Highberries was more suited to dairy" said Neil, where as I wanted to specialise in high quality sheep production, and had to have the farm suitable for this. Millstone Moor was on the market at the time, and was an ideal opportunity to go for." In 2008 when he took on the farm it ran to 350 acres, which over the last few years has been extended by a further 450 acres, including a recent addition of 150 acres of hill land, mainly for his Swaledale flock, which he has just started over the last couple of years. It is all go on the farm in preparation for the event which is expected to attract more than 7000 visitors, and it's not difficult to feel the buzz in the air already for what should be a cracking day. The farm enjoys great views deep into the heart of the Western Lake District hills, and from the top of the farm looks over the Solway onto the hills of South West Scotland. Around 2000 ewes are lambed annually, comprising of 1000 Swaledale ewes, of which 850 are crossed with the Bluefaced Leicester and around 150 run pure. 600 Mules are run with the Dutch Texel tup, and around 250 of this cross are lambed to the beltex tup, to produce some top quality fat lambs. There is a pedigree flock of Bluefaced Leicesters and Beltex run on the farm too, consisting of a combined total of around 100 ewes. It is clear to see from this that Neil and Sally have plenty of work on their hands, and they are more than ably helped by 22 year old Jack Cartmel, who joined the team at the outset as a 15 year old. He works there three days a week, five days during lambing, and is a reliable member of the team, developing into a good shepherd in his own right.



The Swaledale Sheep Breeders' Association



For Further Information - Please Contact:
John Stephenson - 01833 650516
jstephenson@swaledale-sheep.com
www.swaledale-sheep.com

At the core of the farm business are the Swaledale and Bluefaced Leicester sheep, which Neil classes as one flock. "The way I see it, Swaledales and the Leicesters need each other, so I try and place as much emphasis on quality as I can in both breeds" This is reflected when buying draft ewes to breed the Mules, looking for top quality ewes with reach and good skins, and the same when buying in new stock rams for the Leicester flock. They all combine to produce the Mule gimmers which form the main sales for the farm, with some 800 Mule gimmers sold through the local Cockermouth Auction Mart and privately annually. The Mules from Millstone have gained an excellent reputation over the years, winning major trophies at the Royal Highland, Penrith and Eastgate shows. Last year his Mule gimmers averaged £114.38 for 598 sold through Cockermouth. At the end of the day Neil insists, it's not just about producing bonny Mules. "The bottom line is, they have to be profitable. Yes, it is a lot of work, but there is potential for more profit than just breeding a fat lamb" he comments. The in lamb ewes are brought in before lambing and are fed on a mixed diet of silage, molasses and a Carrs Billington Blend. Sheep are scanned at around 200% for the Mules and 185% for the Swaledales and the Texel X flock at a very healthy 170% pre lambing.

One of Neil's main passions is the breeding of his Leicester tups, and his bloodlines are very much sought after, especially the influential Hundith Z4 bloodlines, which are prevalent throughout the crossing world. In 2012 they decided to take the slightly unusual step of selling all their

pedigree stock at the local auction mart in Cockermouth, run by Mitchells. It was a brave move which paid off, and has seen buyers from all over the Mule breeding world descend on Cockermouth each September, with females and rams selling for £8000, which have gone on and bred good stock for the purchasers. Obviously it's not just gimmers that are sold, Neil finishes around 75% of his wethers on grass, aiming for around 21 kgs dead weight for his Mule wethers, selling to St Merron, meeting the locally sourced Cumbria Finest spec, which adds a 10p/kg premium on the lambs. His Beltex sired lambs are finished at around 38-40 kgs. He finds these lambs are very easy to fatten and are great feed convertors. He initially went down the Dutch Texel line, but now finds that the Beltex sire meets his requirements more.

Alongside the sheep, Neil runs a suckler herd of 70 cattle, with 40 pure Limousin and 40 British Blue X cattle, which are run with the Limousin bull. Sally also runs her own freelance equine business, so there is always plenty for them to be getting on with most days, even more so now that North Sheep is coming to town....once lambing gets out of the way, it will be down to the team to get the farm ship shape and up to Julie Sedgwick's standard, which as many of you know, is a high set bar!!



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NSA Welsh Sheep 2015

Hosted this year by the Powell Family, Glanmeheli and Drefor Farms

It to rt:
Anabel &
Geraint Powell,
Mrs Ann
Powell,
Morton &
Mandy Powell



NSA Welsh Sheep 2015 will be staged on Tuesday 19th May at the Glanmeheli and Drefor Farms in Kerry, near Newtown, Powys. Two very different farming systems run by two brothers rising from 600 feet above sea level to 1400 feet will be open to visitors. The event will showcase some of the best that the lovely old county of Montgomeryshire has to offer, with views from the top extending almost from Shrewsbury to Snowdon. The location is easily accessible from across Wales and beyond and offers something for everyone. A farm tour will take in the two adjoining holdings.

NSA Welsh Sheep will be based at Glanmeheli Farm, Kerry, bought by the brothers' parents, David and Ann Powell, in 1974. The family moved from Llwngrwyllim Farm, Rhayader, where the oldest brother Howell still farms.

Glanmeheli is farmed by the youngest brother, Geraint, with his wife Anabel, 19 year old son Lloyd and daughters, Rosie 21 and 16 year old Billie-Jo.

They added a free range egg production unit to the traditional beef and sheep unit in 2009, four years after switching to organic farming, and are currently working on the installation of an anaerobic digester to produce electricity.

The Powell family have been keen showmen and are enthusiastic livestock farmers. Geraint is a sheep man at heart and is full of praise for the role of the Welsh Mule in modern Welsh sheep production. They run a Welsh flock, producing White Mules for replacements, and a pedigree Beulah flock for producing Brown Mule replacements and Beulah replacements, as well as a few Beulah tups. The Brown Mules go to Suffolks, and the white Mules go to Charolais and Texel tups, to produce finished lambs which are sold to Waitrose and at Welshpool Livestock Market. The Mules produce everything the market wants and are good mothers, producing lots of lambs with easy lambing and very good milk.

They have recently made a change from Limousin X suckler cows, and started purchasing and breeding Saler cows, due to their outstanding



Whitefaced Welsh Mules



maternal abilities, ease of calving and large natural frame for high growth rates, and the cattle are finished mainly on home-grown cereals.

The event also takes in Drefor, farmed by Morton and his wife, Mandy, with teenage daughters Megan and Mary and son, David. The farm was purchased in 1996 and extends to 900 acres, 700 owned and with some rented ground just over the border in England.

Producing fine quality livestock is what the family does well, running 800 Welsh Mules, 400 Beulahs and 400 Welsh Mountain ewes. There are also 200 hogs to lamb each year, with the lambing season beginning on March 1st, with the Welsh Mules, followed by the Beulah and Welsh Mountain two weeks later, then the hogs in early April.

The 2,200 finished lambs are sold live and deadweight, in Welshpool and to Waitrose, at 42 kgs live, 19 kgs deadweight from early June. They also sell 350 Welsh Mule ewe lambs in Welshpool each year, and keep another 200 as replacements.

The lambing is all indoors, with the new lambs fed a little creep, before turning out on to grass and later turnips grown for Glastir.

The farm also carries 120 suckler cows, including Limousins x Belgian Blues and Limousins, with the stores sold in Bishops Castle at 8 – 12 months.

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13th October (Yearlings & ewe lambs)

RUTHIN

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12th September (Yearlings & ewe lambs)

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Gimmer Hogs

Top Carlisle Female Sale



G49 Kirkby Redgate - 4800 gns



G41 Penhill - 4800 gns

A packed ringside at Carlisle saw a cracking trade for a very full catalogue of some of the top genetics in the breed, and despite not hitting the high notes of last year's sale, the averages remained very healthy indeed, with many breeders from all over the country looking to bring in fresh bloodlines into their flocks.

Two gimmer hogs attracted the top price of the day. The first was from Tom Willoughby's Penhill flock based in Redmire, Wensleydale. This classy, modern type of sheep was by the £5000 E29 Midlock, which has powered the flock up the breed rankings this past couple of years, and out of a ewe by that perennial favourite, Z4 Hundith, to which Tom had taken a ewe by S1 Lunedsale too several years ago. She has been a great breeder, breeding F6 Penhill which has done well at Messrs Skidmore and Collingwood's flocks latterly, so she was full of proven genetics. The hammer dropped at 4800 gns, with Julie Lee, Frosterly, Co. Durham taking her home. The Penhill flock also took a bid of 3000 gns for another gimmer hogg by another Midlock tup, and out of a ewe by B4 Hundith, selling to Crow Hall Farms, Northumberland, completing a great day for Tom and family.

The second lamb to make 4800 gns came from the Kirkby Redgate flock, based near Kirkby Stephen run by Richard Hutchinson with his 4th prize hogg. It is by the D17 Hewgill, which is shared with Paul Brown, Oak House and out of a ewe by W1 Keer, who has already been breeding well, breeding the Reserve Champion at Hawes in 2013 which sold to Messrs James, Todhills, Carlisle for £7000. Richard Harker, Grayrigg Hall was the final bidder.

The day's Champion, judged by the father and son team of Melvin and Kevin Ridley, Shitlington, Hexham was a powerful, modern lamb from the Hewgill flock, completing a double for them after winning at

Hawes over the weekend, with another hogg of the same breeding, by E47 Hewgill and out of a Z14 ewe. Their hogg attracted much interest, and the bidding was fast and furious for the lamb. It eventually was felled in a joint sale to Ben Wight, Midlock and Neil Barclay, Insch for 4400 gns.

Midlock had a sizeable entry of gimmer shearlings again, and their pen again attracted much attention, as buyers queued up to purchase some of these popular bloodlines. Their pen topper was also the days reserve champion. Full of homebred breeding, by E25 Midlock and out of a ewe by Z35 Midlock she was carrying triplets to G3 Midlock G-Mac, a tup Midlock retained for their own use by E1 Hewgill and out of a C2 Hewgill sired ewe. J K Hunter, Wedderburn, Huntly was the final bidder, forking out 4000 gns. Other notable Midlock prices saw a bid of 3000 gns for a C2 sired Hewgill gimmer carrying triplets to E1 Hewgill, selling to Lee Beacom, Lakeview, Fivemiletown in Northern Ireland. Midlock ended with 18 gimmers making four figures, making another good day at the office for them.

As at Hawes the first sheep into the ring set the trade. This time it was the Smearsett flock from M/s Booth, Austwick. This ewe by W2 Lunesdale and out of a ewe by the old T1 Lunesdale was carrying triplets to V33 Lunesdale. She was bought in a joint deal by John Mason, Oddacres, Skipton and Ellis Brothers, Ilkley for 3500 gns. It was a case of buying genetics he knew for the Oddacres flock, as they have already used a tup successfully out of this ewe's mothers, and were pleased to get some more of these good bloodlines into their flock.

Jimmy Bell, Cottage, had a good day too at the sale, selling his best hogg for 3300 gns. It is a hogg full of great breeding, being sired by F21 Cottage, the full brother to the £14,000 tup he sold to Marriforth and ½ sister to last year's Highland show champion. She has been shown



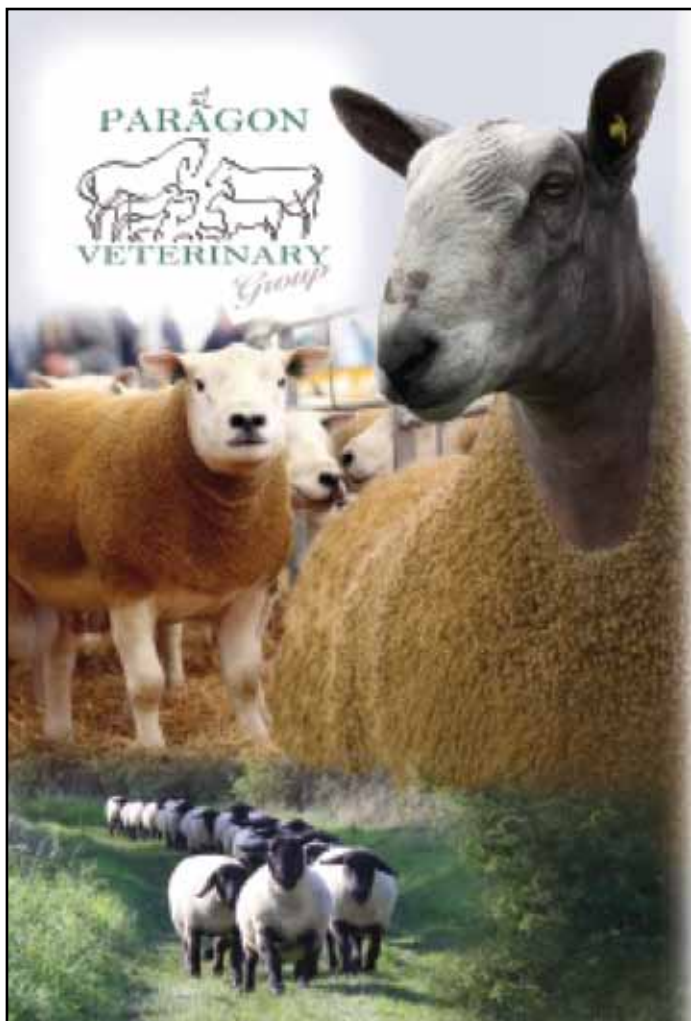
Wayne Hutchinson
2015

G68 Hewgill
Overall Champion
4400 gns

successfully, taking 1st at Peebles and 2nd at the Highland. Crow Hall Farms, Hexham, were splashing the cash for this great lamb. Trade was strong throughout the day, with most sheep finding new homes, with buyers looking for strong powerful sheep.

55 Gimmers: £1193.00, 62 Ewe Lambs: £978.87
35 Ewes: £886.50, Overall: £1035.08

Auctioneers - Harrison & Hetherington



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Hewgill Female Sells For £5,000



G70 Hewgill - Top Price - £5000



Smearsett G43 - £3200

Despite it being a cold winters day, trade at the annual Bluefaced Leicester in-lamb sale remained buoyant, and a packed ringside bore testament to the demand for the UK's premier crossing breed, with buyers from all over the UK in attendance.

Topping a brisk trade was a gimmer hogg from the noted Hewgill flock, run by the Lord brothers, Stainmore, near Kirkby Stephen. This smart, stylish lamb is the full sister to E47 Hewgill which has been siring the flock's show lambs for the last couple of years. A spell of frantic bidding eventually saw auctioneer, Raymond Lund, drop the hammer at £5000, selling to Richard Hutchinson from the Kirkby Redgate flock. The Lords also took the day's champion with a gimmer hogg by the E47 Hewgill, out of a ewe by Z14 Hewgill, which sold to Paul Brown, Oak House for £3000.

It was a good day at the office for the Booth team from the Smearsett flock, Austwick, as they presented a selection of the finest. They enjoyed a great trade last autumn with their Mule gimmers, and there was plenty of anticipation pre sale at Hawes, and they didn't disappoint. They topped at £3400 for a ewe by D15 Smearsett out of a ewe by V33 Lunesdale and carrying triplets to the D17 Hewgill, which is behind many of the show sheep and top pen lambs from the flock. They also secured a bid of £3200 for a D17 Smearsett hogg out of a Z4 Hundith ewe, selling to David Hill, White Walls. They also took the reserve championship with a ewe by A6 Smearsett in-lamb to V33 Lunesdale, which sold for £2000 to Ashley Caton.

Paul Fairburn enjoyed a great days trade, with two powerful gimmer hogs. One by the £12,000 E1 Smearsett out of a ewe by C1 Tanhouse Farm took third prize in the pre sale show, and sold for £2800. Its pen mate also did well. This one by the £14,000 F19 Cottage out of a ewe by Z8 Thirwall, which has done so well for the flock, sold for £2600.

They both were bought by the same buyers, over the water into Northern Ireland to the Glenane and Glenshane flocks of M/s McKeegan and M/s McKenna. The first sheep into the ring set the days trade as Paul Brown, Oak House, Ravenstonedale sold a stylish gimmer hogg, with similar bloodlines as the tup he sold two years ago for £10,000. By the D7 Hewgill, which has made a massive impact on the Oak House flock over the past few years and out of a ewe by the well noted W1 Keer. It sold for £2400 to Midlock.

Trade was brisk throughout and the sale saw 68 sheep forward, nine more than last year, but the average was back a bit to £930 for the sale, still a very healthy figure.

Show Results - Judge - Mr Andrew Campbell

Gimmer Hogs-1-& Champ. M/s Lord (Lot 160) £3000 to I & P Brown, Ravenstonedale, 2-I & P Brown (Lot 101) £2400 to J Wight & Son, Biggar, 3-E Fairburn & Sons (Lot 162) £2800 to N McKenna, Co. Derry
Ewes & Gimmer Shearlings - 1-& Res. Champ. W A & A Booth (Lot 137) £2000 to A Caton, Bell Busk, 2-J Wight & Son (Lot 115) £600 to A Ramsden, Hawes, 3-C Wood (Lot 148) £1100 to G B & G E Luck, Bowes

Leading Prices:

Gimmer Hogs - M/s Lord, £5000, £3000. W A & A Booth, £3200, £600 x 2. E Fairburn & Sons, £2800, £2600. I & P Brown, £2400, £300. J J & E Lawson, £1400, £1000, £500, £400. R J D Wilson, £1300, £700, £350. S Allan & Sons, £1050. W & C W Dent, £1000. A Caton, £700, £500. A Campbell, £600. W M Hutchinson & Son, £550. Breck House Ent, £500. J Bell, £450. A J Mason, £400. W C Porter & Son, £350. L J & D A Cousin, £300.

Gimmer Shearlings - M/s Lord, £1500. C Wood, £1100. J Wight & Sons, £1000, £800, £700 x 2, £600, £500. J C & N Throup, £650. I & P



**G71 Hewgill
Overall Champion
£3000**

Brown, £600. W A & A Booth, £600. J Bell, £600. R & P E Hargreaves, £500 x 3.

Ewes - W A & A Booth, £3400, £2000. R & P E Hargreaves, £1500, £500. C Wood, £1100 x 2, £700. W & C W Dent, £700, £500. W M Hutchinson & Son, £550.

Forward 68 Sheep - Overall average £930. Gimmer Hoggs to £5000 : Av £980. Gimmer Shearlings to £1500 : Av £680. Ewes to £3400 : Av £1137.

Auctioneer - Hawes Auction Mart.

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Photo taken by
Eilidh MacPherson

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Judging 8am. Sale 9am.

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Monday 5th October


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British Wool Marketing Board Update

Written by Gareth W Jones, Producer Communications Manager

As we enter another year the British Wool Marketing Board (BWMB) are encouraged by the continuing strong demand and are hopeful this will continue for the remainder of the selling season.

In terms of production, the increase last year was not as great as originally anticipated due to some sheep losses and the very dry spring. This resulted in less grease being in the fleeces and therefore, the weight being down. However, this is not all bad news as the prices are determined by clean weight so the loss in actual weight should be compensated by a rise in price.

In general, apart from China, all the other major wool producing countries are, if not static, experiencing a fall in the size of their clips.

The supply factors are not positive but with the global economy improving, we have seen a very consistent pattern of price and clearances over the last 18 months for British Wool.



One important service the Board provides to all producers is we grade your wool – we grade wool in order to add value to your product. Every fleece is individually graded as every fleece is unique in terms of quality and characteristics. The wool is graded by type rather than breed with the Bluefaced Leicester wool falling into the 'Lustre' category.

The wool produced by the Bluefaced Leicester is very lustrous and silky to handle with an average fleece weight of 1 – 2 kgs. The staple length would be variable measuring between 8 – 15cm and a micron range of 26 – 26.5. The micron measures the fineness of the fibre and is vital information for the buyers when identifying the wool they require. The main uses for the Bluefaced Leicester wool would be, yarns for knitwear, hand knitting and in blends for fine cloth.

The Campaign for Wool is now in its 5th year and continues to raise awareness of wool as a versatile, quality fabric for both the fashion and furnishing industries.


During last year's 'Wool Week' held in October 2014, a number of high profile events took place to continue to engage with the consumer on the benefits of

wool as well as woollen products. This included an interiors collection exhibited at Southwark Cathedral in London with a broad range of fabrics, flooring, furnishings and lifestyle items including craft and creative pieces gathered together to show the story of wool interiors. I wish you all a successful year and to those exhibiting, we look forward to seeing many of you at the shows and competitions during the year.




British Wool Marketing Board


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The British Wool Marketing Board works with over 40,000 sheep farmers collecting, grading and selling their wool at auction.

Wool made in Britain, used in thousands of products worldwide... and loved by millions.

You can find out more about British wool and the work of the British Wool Marketing Board at:
Web: britishwool.org.uk Telephone: 01274 688 666



News From Your Bluefaced Leicester Regions

North East

As the month of February draws to a close, it is time for me to write my second regional report for the North East. It's a reality check of how quickly time flies as it only seems a short time since I wrote my report for the Autumn Review.

As lambing slowly starts around the hills of Weardale, I am reminded of what an important and busy time of year it is in the farming calendar, and for the farming community. As we eagerly anticipate a successful lambing season, I know our hopes for the coming agricultural shows and autumn sales start to be realised.

Hawes held the first registered sale of Bluefaced Leicesters of the year. The day started with the pre-show overall champion going to G71 from the Hewgill flock; the Hewgill flock also took the top price of the day with a gimmer hogg finally selling for £5,000 to Kirkby Redgate.

On the whole, the sale at Hawes had a very strong trade throughout with 68 sheep to be sold. There was an average selling price of £930 for all sold through the ring on the day. The averages for specific categories were gimmer hogs at £980; gimmer shearlings at £680 and ewes at £1,137.

We now look forward to the next sale at Hexham in September. All that's left for me to say is all the best with lambing, and I hope all of your lambs have good strong colours. Good luck to all of you that may be showing at the many agricultural shows held throughout the region over the forthcoming months. It promises to be another great year, and I look forward to seeing you at these events.

Oliver Scown - North East Chairman

North West

Well lambing is nearly upon us and the weather is not letting off. I am writing this report on a wet and very windy evening, glad to be sat by the fire! The nights are starting to lighten and grass does seem

to be greening up, thankfully the right side of Christmas. We have had a good summer and mild winter with the ground holding firm until mid December, then it became very wet. Due to the longer, drier back end period we've had, there doesn't seem to be the same fluke problem in the region which has caused devastation throughout sheep flocks in previous years. With the good summer our forage stocks are still healthy and will definitely see us through.

The Bluefaced Leicester stand was very well attended during the day at Agri-Expo in November. The day was a great success and there seemed plenty of interest in the sheep on display. Our thanks must go to everyone who organised the stand beforehand and throughout the day. The sheep on display were very well presented and a credit to our breed, again with thanks to Philip Dawson of Kentmere Hall and Alan Clark of Mosser Mains.

The annual female sale was held at Carlisle in January. The sale was very well attended, with a ringside full of prospective buyers, with the days trade somewhat reflecting this. The two top prices came from gimmer hogs. Firstly at 4,800 gns were Penhill with G41 and secondly was Kirkby Redgate with G49, both with sought after genetics. Hewgill had another good day winning Champion with G68, this gimmer hogg went on to make 4,400 gns. Well done All!

Keeping it short and brief, I would like to wish everyone a successful lambing and look forward to seeing everybody on the show circuit during 2015. I would also like to wish our North West Chairwoman, Ann Little, a speedy recovery after her recent injury. Get well Soon Ann.

Scott Thomason, North West Vice Chairman

Wales

The sun is shining and the grass is starting to grow here, and the weather has been fairly kind to us throughout lambing. I hope everyone's had a good lambing, and are all pleased with last year's purchases and bred their best bunch of blues.

I would like to thank everyone who attended our social evening back in December, and I would like to invite everyone to our AGM on the 10th May at the Royal Oak, Welshpool at 4pm. On Tuesday 19th May, we will be having a stand at Welsh Sheep 2015 – please call by and see us. Judging at the RWAS will again be on Tuesday 21st July followed by refreshments at the BFL stand – All welcome. We would like to hold a farm walk this year, if you have any suggestions or ideas please contact myself.

I would like to wish everyone a great showing season with plenty of red tickets and a prosperous autumn. **Michael James, Wales Chairman**

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Images by John Eveson and Wayne Hutchinson

Northern Ireland

Our female sale was held on Monday 26th January in Ballymena Market, and attracted a marked increase in entries, but a downturn in trade from 2014.

Show Champion was a hogg from the Orraview flock of Seamus Lavery, and reserve was a ewe lamb from the J & D flock of John Harkin, and we would like to

extend our thanks to Robert Loughridge for judging. Top price was the first prize aged ewe shown by Alistair Christie, the Fields flock selling for 760 gns. Other leading prices were: William Adams, Holmview, 360 gns, and 300 gns. Robert Mulligan Bague, 300 gns.

Our summer shows start with the Balmoral Show in May where we will have our stand in the NSA pavilion. We look forward to welcoming our own members and friends, and also our visitors from across the Irish Sea!

In July we will again be exhibiting at the NSA event at Ballymena Market. I will finish by wishing you all good health for 2015, and a trouble free lambing.

Richard Graham - Northern Ireland Chairman

Scotland

As I write my second report as Scottish chairman, I take time to reflect on how quickly my first year as Scottish chairman is rapidly coming to its end. The last year as Scottish chairman has been a very eventful year, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support.

At the inlamb sale at Carlisle in January, there was a great turn out of sheep with Scottish breeders again leaving their marks in the sale ring. Reserve champion on the day went to the Wight family of the Midlock flock with an inlamb gimmer that sold for 4000 gns, with another from the same home selling for 3000 gns. Later in the day Jimmy Bell of the Cottage Flock sold a ewe hogg for 3300 gns.

Dates to look forward to in the coming year :

June 9th - we will be attending the NSA Highland sheep event at Fearn Farm, Tain.

June 18th - 21st - the Highland show starts with Bluefaced Leicesters being judged the following morning on the 19th.

August 15th - the Scottish progeny show will be held this year at Peebles Show. Peebles Show is a very well supported livestock show, and I look forward to seeing a great turnout of Bluefaced Leicesters on this day.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a good lambing, and I look forward to meeting lots of members at the above events across the summer months.

Stephen Crozier - Scottish Chairman

Lawrie & Symington Limited Lanark Agricultural Centre



Dates For 2015

Kelso Ram Sales

Friday 11th September

Rams & Females Of All Classes

Wednesday 30th September

Wednesday 14th October

Thursday 5th November

For further details please contact

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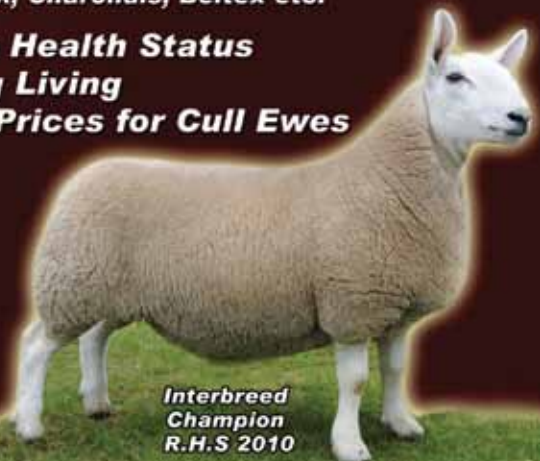


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Thank everyone who has purchased their stock past and present, and wish you all a great spring & summer.



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