

The Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Association

Looking Ahead



*Wayne Hutchinson
2016*





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Welcome

To the 2016 edition of the
Spring Looking Ahead Magazine

Chairman's Message

Reflecting On The Past Year And Looking To The Future



Richard Thomas

March is here so we will not have long to wait for some lighter evenings and the onset of Spring. The met office seem to have adopted the American way of naming storms, with plenty arriving on our shores throughout the Winter. At this point I must thank Ann Little and family and Tristan Davidson for their emergency flood rescue mission in helping Helen and Rachael evacuate the office. It's nice to have running water in the premises, but not when it's over a metre high!!

I am now coming to the end of my term as Chairman, and sitting down to take the time to reflect on the past year and look forward to the future, and what an extraordinary year it's been with other breeds having a job to hold their own. We saw the breed record smashed at the Autumn sales with a stylish ram lamb from Richard Hutchinson, Kirkby Redgate selling for £34,000 – if that wasn't enough the January sales proved to be just as successful, even with larger entries at Hawes and Carlisle. It didn't stop the flock masters up and down the country from purchasing bloodlines to add and improve their flocks.

In my last report I mentioned the market place is full of opportunities. This year we noticed the "creative breeders" seizing that opening by selling embryos/recipients – this was not welcomed by all, but the depth of breeding offered by these members are the cream of their crop – proven with past sale and show history to their C.V's and it was encouraging to see the sale price reflected on the sheep forward. (I even got a bit carried away myself at Carlisle with the purchase of Midlock's first prize in-lamb yearling ewe, and even now after she has lambed it looks like money well spent!!)

Before the journey home with my new purchase, as your Chairman, I attended the Performance Recording meeting after the sale with guest speaker Sam Boon. With the talk of the sale and combining the meeting on the same day to help those around the country to attend, I was disappointed with the turnout of members who expressed an interest, but while I was there I was more concerned when Sam was unaware of the Bluefaced Leicester crossing type as it seems most of the Performance Recording has been done by mainly traditional flocks. When approached on this issue, with only 17 flocks taking the funding available, the question was asked how can crossing flocks start to look to improve their figures with no recording history. Sam's reply was either the breed look at starting "new figures" for crossing flocks who are interested which compare your own breeding from scratch, with the possibility of introducing figures for Mule colouring as a trait. What was mentioned - "figure jumping" which is by using a ram with high performance figures you can spring board your own flock's history quicker! With these options in mind, I loaded my new purchase together with the thought of replacing almost 40 years of breeding against a performance figure!! I am fully aware the breed needs to satisfy the ever changing market, but greater emphasis should be on maternal as opposed to terminal attributes. If you want to take the breed forward we should all be looking at Genomics. This is what gives a breed its own identity. Scientists have recently looked at all breeds to find their own genetic make up – this selection can accelerate the rate of improvement within a breed. The breed stands alone from all other breeds which makes the attributes of the Mule ewe so outstanding. The boffins call it "A Blue Print" I call it a "Bluefaced Leicester Print".

Before I conclude I would like to thank Helen and Rachael for running the office and promoting the breed, and to all those that make it a great organisation. All that's left is to wish all the members with their new crop of lambs around them the very best for the 2016.

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**Front Cover - 2016 Carlisle Female Sale Champion
& Top Priced - H102 Kirkby Redgate - 11,000 gns
(main photo)**

**Bottom four (l to r) -
2016 Carlisle Female Sale -
H110 Kirkby Redgate - 4200 gns
2016 Hawes Female Sale Champion -
H25 Smearsett - £4300
2016 Hawes Top Priced Female Sale -
H70 Hewgill - £5600
2016 Carlisle Female Sale -
D47 Highberries - 4200 gns**



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News From The Office

From Helen Carr-Smith, Association Secretary

So it all started with Abigail and finished (hopefully) with Imogen - I of course mean the horrendous storms that hit the UK and Ireland over the Autumn and Winter months. It was Desmond that caused the most significant damage to the Association office in Carlisle when it was flooded on the 5th December which forced us to vacate to alternative premises for three months. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who helped with clearing out the flood damaged furniture and stock from the office, and to all who helped move us into our temporary offices at Harrison and Hetherington while the offices were refurbished. As I write this office news piece, it is with the good news that we are now able to move back to our offices in Warwick Road. Hopefully we will have everything back up and running again, and not working out of boxes and storage units.

2016 Subscriptions / Members Details

The Annual Subscription for the Association remains at £25.00. If you have not paid your membership, you still have time to do so, but please be aware 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, please contact the office 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 as up to date as possible.

Office News Page

I now have an office news page on the website. This page will be a place where not only the office will put relevant information for members regarding National and regional events, a gallery page will also be created so members can send in photographs from local

shows and events. If you would like any regional events advertised on the Secretary's office news page, or any photographs from local shows and events please e-mail through the details to info@blueleicester.co.uk.

2015 Flock Book

The 2015 flock book was signed off for printing on Thursday 25th February and should be with you hopefully by the middle of April. Thank you to all members who sent in their completed forms on time for inclusion in the 2015 edition. If you have not yet returned your 2015 registration form to the office then please do so, as you will not be able to order Association tags for 2016 until the form is received. If you have lost your 2015 form and require another copy, then please contact the office.

2016 Ear Tags

Members will be supplied again this year with a pair of ear tags. The price of the tags has been held at £7.00 per pair + VAT. This charge covers the cost of your pair of tags and your registration/administration fee. The tags are made up of a yellow electronic button tag and this year the visual tag is a white button tag. Both tags are marked with your UK flock mark and individual number, together with your Bluefaced Leicester pedigree number and individual number. The Association letter this year is 'J'.

Replacement Tags

If you need to order replacement Bluefaced Leicester ear tags this must be done through the Association office and not direct from the tag company. The following details are required:

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 supply of the original tag you are replacing or an Auctioneers invoice (this will be returned to you once the order is placed). If all this information can be supplied at the time of ordering then it will allow us to improve the service to you the members.

Grassroots Online Database

Members have free access to the online database system – Grassroots. This can be found through a link on the website www.blueleicester.co.uk and access is through a unique passcode individual to each member. Once you have gained access to the site you can 'manage' your flock on line.

The following tasks can be done by members:

- Lamb registrations
- Transfer sheep off your holding which have either been sold, or have died.

The following tasks can not be done by members:

- Animal details cannot be amended.
- Any additional stock purchased cannot be added to your flock.

For any of these tasks to be done, you will need to contact the office with the details to be added/corrected and the office will make the changes for you. If you have forgotten your Grassroots password, please contact the office and we will be happy to send you a reminder.

E-mail Register

An e-mail register has been created for any member who wishes to receive relevant information from Association Council Meetings and National Annual General Meetings.

The details provided in the e-mail will be regarding decisions made from these meetings.

The e-mails will be sent to members once the minutes are approved. If you wish to join the list, please forward an e-mail to the office with your name, flock number and prefix.

Gift Aid

This is of no additional cost to members, and provides a very useful financial input into the Association funds. If you have not already signed up to Gift Aid or would like more information, please contact the office for an application form.

Twitter/Facebook

Find us on Facebook and on twitter @ Bluefaced.

Finally....

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



WELSH MULES 2016 OFFICIAL SALES



WELSHPOOL

(01938) 553438

7th September (Yearlings)

8th September (Ewe lambs)

6th October (Yearlings & ewe lambs)

BUILTH WELLS

(01982) 553614

9th September (Yearlings & ewe lambs)

11th October (Yearlings & ewe lambs)

RUTHIN

(01824) 702025 & (01745) 583260

10th September (Yearlings & ewe lambs)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Welsh Mules Tel: 01970 636688 • Field Officer Tel: 07768 816919 • www.welshmules.co.uk



President's Message

Phil Davies



I am writing this at the beginning of March, anticipating the start of lambing in two weeks time. I am not going to talk about the weather or politics. Being President gave me the chance to visit all parts of the UK, meeting old friends and new. What remains in my mind is the enthusiasm that breeders have for their sheep, whether at shows, sales and especially progeny shows.

My year started with a visit to North Sheep, a tremendously well supported event with well thought out stands from many breeds and Mule Associations. The well presented Blue stand was busy all day, and it gave me the chance to talk to Mule breeders on the way they thought Leicesters were progressing as a breed (which I will refer to later).

Royal Welsh, Royal Highland and Great Yorkshire followed quite quickly. The stock and stockmanship at these were quite staggering, with exceptional quality all the way down the lines. The regional Progeny shows were supported well by high quality Mules and Leicesters.

Optimism preceded the Autumn sales, but prices were higher than anticipated, with trade carrying on to the January female sales. It was quite obvious that the better types were the easiest to sell.

Being in a financially strong position, some breeders, including myself, think that a review and revamp of the Association should be undertaken especially looking to the future.

As breeders we must remember that Bluefaced Leicesters are only used for crossing to produce the "Mule", and therefore it is important that we listen to what Mule breeders want. As previously referred to, this year I had the chance to talk to these Mule Breeders. It became obvious very quickly that there were three main concerns - teeth, black wool (especially down the neck) and more worrying the Leicester was losing some of its milking abilities. The implications of this could be serious, with many breeds and breeding companies actively selecting for this trait.

We must look seriously and be sensible about "genomics" as it is proving to be extremely successful all over the world. We must not be left behind to manage our own "decline". Of course it is up to our Trustees to lead us into the future with the help and ideas of all members.

On a personal note, the use of Performance Recorded Bluefaced Leicesters continues to give me a tremendous trade from both returning and new customers. The only criticism we get is from breeders who have never tried Performance Recording, or from breeders who have and found their sheep do not come up to expectations. Flocks recording are slowly increasing with continued support financially from the Association. I hope all of you have an easy lambing with not too many sleepless nights.



Dates For Your Diary

May

11-13 Balmoral Show

June

1 NSA Scot Sheep – Blythbank Farm, Peebleshire
23-26 Royal Highland Show

July

12-14 Great Yorkshire Show
18-21 Royal Welsh Show
23 Penrith Progeny Show
23 Co Antrim Progeny Show
27 NSA Sheep Event, Sheep Counties, Malvern

August

13 Scottish Progeny Show - Peebles Show

For more diary dates - please visit our website:
www.blueleicester.co.uk



Lawrie & Symington Limited Lanark Agricultural Centre



Dates For 2016

Kelso Ram Sales

Friday 9th September

Rams & Females Of All Classes

Wednesday 28th September

Wednesday 12th October

Thursday 3rd November

For further details please contact

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Website - www.lawrieandsymington.com



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Annual Show & Sale For Registered

Bluefaced Leicester Rams, Ram Lambs & Females

(Under the auspices of the Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders Assoc.)

TUESDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Principal Prize Show & Sale Of Mainly

"North Of England" Mule Ewe Lambs

TUESDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Second Sale Of Mainly "North Of England" Mule Ewe Lambs

WEDNESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2016

Annual Show & Sale Of Non-Registered

Bluefaced Leicester Rams, Ram Lambs & Females

Longtown Mart, Townfoot, Longtown, Cumbria CA6 5LY

Tel (01228) 791215-791300 / Website: www.longtownmart.co.uk

Email: info@cdauctionmarts.co.uk

DUMFRIES MART

FRIDAY 26TH AUGUST 2016

Nithsdale Show & Sale Of Scotch Mule Ewe Lambs & Gimmers

FRIDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Sale Of Bluefaced Leicester Rams (Non MV Accredited)

Dumfries Mart, Huntington Road, Dumfries DG1 1NF

Tel (01387) 279795 / Website: www.dumfriesmart.co.uk

Email: dumfries@cdauctionmarts.co.uk

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Photo taken by
Eilidh MacPherson

Scotch Mule Association Contact George Allan - Tel: 01292 591821 / 07840 537811

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The Bluefaced Leicester In Southern Ireland



SOIBFL club members at the 2012 Pedigree Sale in Ballinrobe with John Townson, judge of the day. Pictured are left to right: David Murphy - Chairperson, Kieran McGrath - Secretary, Tom Staunton - Treasurer, John Morahan and Paul Sammon - Committee Members.

The hill sheep sector plays an important role in the economic health of rural communities here in Ireland. However, low margins coupled with reduced support payments and diminishing market for hill lambs continue to impact on the sector. We in the South of Ireland Bluefaced Leicester Club see the development of Mule sheep in Ireland as an important means to improve incomes in these hill communities.

The introduction of the breed to Southern Ireland occurred in or about 1980, with the assistance of Government funding towards the purchase and import of shearling rams from the Kelso sale for hill sheep farmers, and the setting up of Mule groups in a number of areas in the country. At the time Bluefaced Leicester Sheep were primarily crossed on to local hill breeds which in the main included Perth type Blackface and Mayo Blackface. The resultant offspring were found to be quite adequate mothers and thereby the link between the hill sheep sector and the lowland sheep sector was forged. Over the years, the more resilient Mule Groups survived and developed the market for Mule Sheep. Foremost in this regard were those in the Mayo Group and Connemara Group. Mules at these centres meet continued demand and premium prices. A number of other Mule outlets have developed in recent years. The introduction of Lanark and in some cases Swaledale ewes have benefited the production of quality Mules, and indeed the male Mule offspring are also finding increased favour in our meat plants and local butchers.

The progression of Bluefaced Leicester flocks in Southern Ireland up until the formation of the South of Ireland Bluefaced Leicester Club

was individualistic as there was no recognised sale centre for sellers or those seeking to purchase Bluefaced Leicester Sheep. As such, breeders bred and marketed their sheep locally or through the medium of newspaper advertisements. The ease of advertising in the web age we now have was not readily accessible back then. Likewise the showing of Bluefaced Leicester Sheep at national shows or indeed local shows was again undertaken by individuals and whilst from the early years of the breed here in Southern Ireland this has been conducted to some success, the ability to impact significantly on a breed's potential was limited, therefore the increase in popularity of the breed here continued to be centered around Mule producing counties, and the more forward thinking of hill farmers in other counties.

In 2008 a sale of Bluefaced Leicesters was organised at Ballinrobe Mart, Co. Mayo by Jane King, [now deceased] born in Scotland and then living in Co. Kildare. Janes' Furryhill Bluefaced Leicester flock is the oldest registered flock in Southern Ireland. The sale was a success and proceeded on an informal basis for a number of years. However, a core of breeders recognised the need to formalise the breed in Southern Ireland as well as the potential in the continuance of the sale in Ballinrobe. On the 30th June 2012, the South of Ireland Bluefaced Leicester Club was formed following the participation of a number of breeders at the Athenry Sheep Event in Co. Galway. Chairing the meeting, now recognised as a milestone in the breed's progression here, was Clark Lamont. The advice and assistance offered by Clark to the SOIBFL Club from that day to now remains significant and beneficial to the club's development as well as its progression and growing importance in the Irish sheep sector.



Mule Champion pen at Mayo Mule Group Premier Sale exhibited by John Morahan.

Also pictured is Hugh Henry - judge.

In the summer of 2012 there were 14 registered Bluefaced Leicester breeders in Southern Ireland. There are presently 35 registered breeders here. The significant increase in registered Bluefaced Leicester flocks here is a direct result of the formation of the SOIBFL Club which in turn has seen the progression of the pedigree sale in Ballinrobe, both in the quality of sheep brought forward for sale as well as the prices received. These new breeders invigorate the breed and aid in its spread over many geographical regions of the country. Moreover the development of additional Mule sale centres and the overall approval of Mule Sheep in the country are largely attributed to the work of the SOIBFL Club in conjunction with the Mule groups, and most significantly the standard of Bluefaced Leicester Sheep bred here in Southern Ireland.

SOIBFL Club members have attended many shows in the country since the club's formation. In 2014 alongside the Mayo Mule Group, the SOIBFL Club participated in a stand-alone promotional event of Bluefaced Leicester and Mule Sheep at the racecourse in Ballinrobe, an event that saw national coverage in the Irish Farmers Journal. Looking ahead to

Sunday 14th August 2016, the club will attend and show Bluefaced Leicester Sheep and their Mule counterparts at the Tullamore Show in Co. Offaly - the premier Agriculture event in Southern Ireland. It will prove an excellent opportunity to show case the breed alongside other breeds in advance of the annual Ballinrobe sale the following month.

The SOIBFL Club has a primary objective of promoting agriculture and its continuance in the hill and lowland sheep sectors of Southern Ireland. Mindful of the objectives of the Association itself, the Club intends to encourage the breeding of Bluefaced Leicester Sheep and ultimately that of its crossbred offspring, the Mule, with a common goal to improve the viability of the Irish sheep industry.

The SOIBFL Club wish to greatly acknowledge the continuous and significant assistance that the Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Association have given them in the help and support of its Trustees, financial aid, and for having an article in this magazine on the progression of Bluefaced Leicester Sheep in Southern Ireland.



Bluefaced Leicesters being judged by Richard Thomas at last year's Ballinrobe sale.

Article by Helen Carr-Smith.
Photos by Robert Smith and
Wayne Hutchinson.

Carry House Bluefaced Leicesters



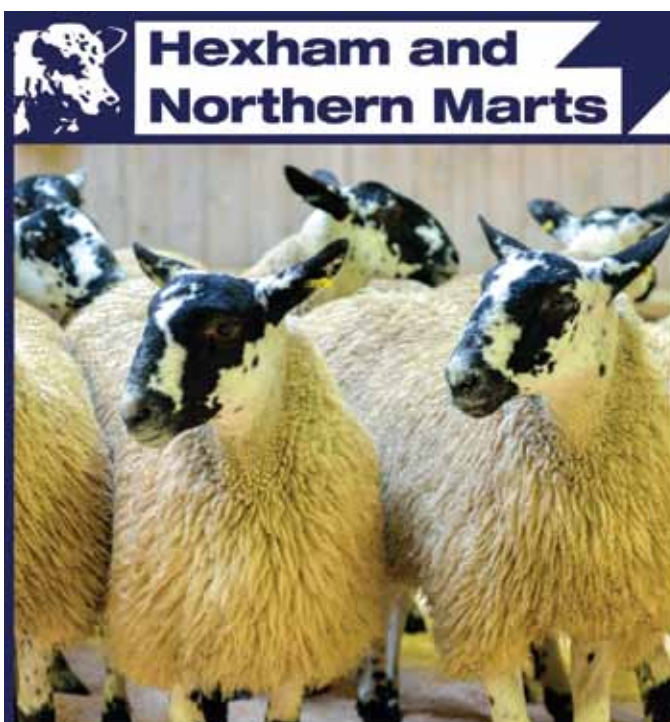
Martyn, Robin and Ben

Father and son team of Robin and Martyn Archer run the Carry House flock of Bluefaced Leicesters nestled in the idyllic countryside of the North Tyne in the county of Northumberland, ably assisted by Martyn's wife Lesley, son Ben and daughter Lucy. The Archer family are recognised for producing quality sheep within the Bluefaced Leicester breed for the past five decades when the flock was first established

by Robin back in 1964, and was one of the first flocks listed in the Association flock books with a membership number of 281.

In 2015 at the Hawes Association sale, Martyn and the family achieved a new breed record for an average price of £7,108 for twelve ram lambs sold, and in addition to this they sold a lamb which equalled the previous breed record price for a ram lamb of £23,000. Other top prices from the Carry House flock were £15,000 and £10,000. These ram lambs were sired by G34 Midlock, G1 Highberries Highlander, Z4 Hundith and F1 Oakhouse. Martyn commented "never in my wildest dreams did I think my lambs would achieve these prices – it's a once in a lifetime achievement".

Martyn has just finished his term of office as Chairman of the North of England Mule Sheep Association, another breed which the family have had a long association with over the years. The family have had tremendous success showing both Bluefaced Leicesters and Mule ewe lambs throughout the North of England last summer at local and county shows winning numerous prizes along the way. Martyn feels supporting the local and county shows is a great way



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**Champion Mule Progeny Group shown with their sire -
Highberries Highlander - Penrith Show 2015**



**Below:
Martyn pictured
with the Ridley
Family and the
Stuart Ridley
Memorial Trophy**

to show case the year's crop of lambs and is a great shop window for future buyers to see what will be on offer at the Autumn sales from the Carry House flock.

Some of Martyn's best moments came in 2015. In July Martyn was asked to judge the Bluefaced Leicester classes at the prestigious Royal Welsh Show, then a few days later Martyn took his show team to the Penrith Show where Martyn was delighted to come away with the overall champion in the Mule progeny group section with three Mule ewe lambs (ex Blackface) shown with their sire 3425/G1 Highberries Highlander (owned in partnership with Neil Marston, Highberries flock). The Carry House flock also took the top honours at the Scottish Region Progeny Show last year held within Peebles Show again taking the overall championship in the Mule group section with another group of three Mule ewe lambs (ex Blackface), but this time shown with their sire 1538/G34 Midlock (owned in partnership with Andy & Caroline Hunter from the Steel flock). On the 4th September Martyn was extremely proud to be the inaugural winner of the Stuart Ridley Memorial Trophy for the best run of 100 Mule Ewe Lambs at Hexham & Northern Marts opening sale for ewe lambs. Carry House sold 175 lambs that day to an average of £124. The Ridley family are good friends and near neighbours to the Archer family.

The Carry House flock have also been recognised within the Bluefaced Leicesters for their success in the sale ring at the 2015 Association sales. They were awarded the Greenop Trophy which is presented to the vendor of six lambs or more sold to the highest average, and the Helme Trophy which is for the sire of the year given to the vendor of three ram lambs by the same sire sold to the highest average.

The hope for the future is to keep producing both Bluefaced Leicesters and Mule ewe lambs to



the impressive high standards achieved over the past five decades, and keep the name of Carry House synonymous with quality and powerful sheep for years to come.



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**Annual noted shows and sales of
2000 BLUEFACED LEICESTER SHEEP**

<p>CARLISLE</p> <p>Friday 7th October 2016 Autumn show and sale of registered rams and females</p> <p>Monday 17th October 2016 Sale for all classes of rams and females</p> <p>Monday 23rd January 2017 Show and Sale of in-lamb registered females</p>	<p>KIRKBY STEPHEN</p> <p>Saturday 1st October 2016 Show and Sale of rams and females</p> <p>LAZONBY</p> <p>Saturday 8th October 2016 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

01228 406200
harrisonandhetherington.co.uk
Borderway Mart, Carlisle CA1 2RS



A Great Future For The Mendick Flock



John and Hamish

The Dykes family have been farming at South Slipperfield Farm in the Pentland Hills since 1956. South Slipperfield is an upland hill farm of around 1000 acres in the North West corner of the Scottish Borders. It rises from 750ft to 1500ft at the summit of the Mendick Hill where the name of their Bluefaced Leicester flock prefix comes from. Working the farm is Hamish, his wife Susie and father John. Hamish and

Susie's two children Rosie and Murdo are keen to help, especially at lambing time.

Up until around 1990 Border Leicester rams were used as the crossing sire of their choice on the farm to produce Greyface ewes. "A change was made to Bluefaced Leicester rams at that time as the demand for Mules increased when the Border Leicester seemed to lose a lot of its commercial attributes as a crossing ram" commented John.



Some Mendick Bluefaced Leicester rams

In 1993 the Mendick flock was established, and seven registered Bluefaced Leicester ewes were purchased from George Irving at Mount Benger as the foundation for their new flock. No more females have been brought into this closed flock since, but new bloodlines are being used with the purchases of new stock rams. The first lambs were registered with the Association in 1994, sired by Thornley and Mill House rams. The main driving force behind the flock then, as it is now, is to produce rams for their own use. They quickly realised though that they were able to get the use of the ram lambs



**Mendick
Bluefaced
Leicester ewes
with their 2016
lambs**



in their first year and sell them on as tried and proven shearlings the following year. The Mendick flock started selling shearlings at Kelso in 1996, and they have increased from selling two rams in their initial year to an annual consignment of twelve. Over nearly twenty years selling tups at Kelso, they have gained a formidable reputation for selling quality commercially driven tups. Their average prices have steadily increased over the year, but more importantly the family take great satisfaction in the large number of repeat purchasers they have. The vast majority of the rams they have sold over the last three years have gone to repeat customers and several have gone to pedigree flocks.

The Mendick flock continue to concentrate on breeding traditional type Bluefaced Leicesters, John said "traditional rams are what our customers are looking for, and more importantly the Mule ewe lambs which we keep for our own replacements are doing a good job for us" he added "By focusing on the commercial attributes of our breed - fertility, conformation, coat, mobility and mouths, we can compete with the other breeds doing the same job any day."

Their 2016 crop of lambs are sired by an old Red Cottage D3 tup that has done particularly well in the flock. Two lambs bought in Carlisle last October - Piel View H2 and Long Mynd H3 have done very well so far with some promising looking offspring.

The sheep enterprise at South Slipperfield stretches far beyond their Mendick flock of 30 pedigree Bluefaced Leicester ewes. Around 950 ewes and 150 hogs have been lambed this spring. They run 320 Blackface ewes, 350 home bred Scottish Mules and 250 Texel cross ewes which are bred from their Scottish Mules. The 150 ewe hogs are all Texel cross out of the Mule ewes, and lamb at the same time as the ewes. 100 Scottish Mules hogs and 20 Bluefaced Leicester ewe hogs are also reared on the farm, but are not tupped. All of the lambs are finished on the farm with



the surplus ewe lambs that are not required for replacements sold for breeding.


South Slipperfield also carries 80 suckler cows which includes the 50 cow Mendick herd of pedigree Simmental cows. The herd has been fully performance recorded since its foundation in 1987 with all cows on the farm Spring calving. A few bulls are sold each year either at home or at Stirling bull sales, and the best price they have achieved so far was 10,500 gns in 2014. As with the Mendick Bluefaced Leicester flock, the Mendick Simmentals is a closed herd with no females being bought for many years.

South Slipperfield is a well managed, traditional family run upland farm, but run with an eye on the future. Always keen to evolve to what suits the farm and works best for the family.



**BLACKFACE
SHEEP
BREEDERS'
ASSOCIATION**


**For further information
on the breed contact:-
Aileen McFadzean
TEL: 07768 820405**


Images by
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The Hanging Wells Flock Is A Family Affair



Above:

Middle lamb is a full brother to the H3 tup, which Iain sold for £3,200 to the Riddleys of Shitlington, near Hexham. Left and right are full brother and sister by the F5 Penhill tup.

Left: Bluefaced Leicester and lamb.

Hanging Wells is a name that is synonymous with the Bluefaced Leicester and one which readers will also remember as the venue for North Sheep back in 2007. The business is run on a large-scale, with the Bluefaced Leicester a key element of the breeding programme.

Hanging Wells, in Eastgate in County Durham, is the home farm, but the Skidmore farming business spans all elements of the sheep stratification system, with a hill farm, an upland farm, a marginal farm and a lowland holding. Together, these make up more than 5,000 acres of land.

The sheep flocks within the system include 1,300 pedigree Swaledale ewes, 2,600 Swaledales which go to the Bluefaced Leicester and 800-1,000 Mule hogs, which are put to either a Beltex or a Texel, explains Iain Craig, whose wife, Julie, is the third generation of Skidmores at Hanging Wells. A further 600 Mules are kept at the lowland farm and a "couple of thousand" store lambs are bought in each year, to help with cash flow. The farm also supports a large herd of suckler cows, whose calves are mainly sold as stores.

On the pedigree Bluefaced Leicester side, the 'Hanging Wells' flock comprises of 40 ewes, which are shown locally over the summer. North Sheep, which can attract upwards of 10,000 visitors, is such an important shop window for the Skidmores that they always rent a trade space dedicated to their stock alone.

The official sales at Carlisle also provide an opportunity to showcase the quality of the sheep and a recent proud moment came last year, when H1 Hanging Wells won the ram lamb class and went on to take the overall championship at the Carlisle show and sale. Sired by a Midlock tup and out of a ewe by C5 Shafthill, he went under the hammer for £3,000, selling to Sandy Ainslie of Cockburnspath in Berwickshire.

"The H1 lamb was by our £6,000 E28 Midlock tup, which we bought jointly with John and Mandy Smith-Jackson," says Iain. "We had a good day at that particular event, averaging £1,545 for the 11 tup lambs that were forward. It was actually a good year altogether, because we sold 50 of our best ewe lambs at Hexham, to average £126; the rest sold privately, averaging £93."

Another useful stock tup is the £3,400 F5 Penhill, which was bred by Tom Willoughby of Leyburn. It was purchased in 2013, in partnership with Robert Collingwood of Stanhope. However in general, very few Bluefaced Leicesters are bought in and no purchases have been made for the past three years.

It was inevitable that the Bluefaced Leicester would be an enduring favourite at Hanging Wells, because Bill Skidmore is a founder member of the breed Association. As it has developed over the years, the business has come down firmly on the side of the modern, black and white crossing type.



Behind the Wall - left to right - Robert and Ridley Craig. In front of the Wall - left to right - Iain and Julie Craig and John Skidmore.

"The modern type is more popular with buyers and therefore that is our preferred choice," says Iain. "Our goal is to select Bluefaced Leicesters with good skins, correct mouths, plenty of bone and that are black and white in colour. Other farmers take account of EBVs, but we do not use them as a selection tool, as we prefer to judge individuals by eye."

Making an upland farm pay is not easy, he comments, and using the Bluefaced Leicester on the Swaledale offers the best opportunity for an upland farmer to make a profit.

"The Mule stands head and shoulders above all other types of sheep, in terms of its positive traits," comments Iain. "Fashions in breeds and crossbreeds have come and gone, but people tend to return to the Mule, as it really is impossible to beat."

"Mule gimmers are sought-after in the marketplace, usually making decent money and unlike some other breeds, they can breed in their first year. They are also durable and will produce and look after two or even three, good lambs every season for several years in succession."

"As we have such large flocks, triplets are left on the Swaledales and the Mules, as long as we feel they are capable of rearing them. Adopters are only used as a last resort and we keep the number of pet lambs to a minimum. Just as importantly, Mules make good mothers and will usually follow their lambs into a trailer without any fuss."

The stratified system in operation at the farms means that lambing takes place in blocks, with the Mules on the lowland farm starting in March and the Swaledales following on in April. Only the purebred Swaledales are lambed outside and indoor-lambing ewes are normally turned out on the same day, weather permitting.

The policy is to wean the Mule lambs in the second week in August, with creep feed limited to the triplet groups, in which the ewes also receive supplementary feeding. Drawing begins in September and continues through the Autumn, with some of the later-born lambs housed, and finished on a home-grown, whole cereal mix.

"We have been selling all of our finishing lambs on the deadweight system for many years, mainly because it saves time," says Iain. "The aim is for about 45 kgs liveweight, in order to reach 21 kgs deadweight. For simplicity, they leave the farm in batches of 400-500, with the Mules mostly achieving R grades and the majority of the Mule cross Beltex or Texel falling into the E, U and R specifications."

The income from breeding stock sales is also vital and some 2,000 Mule gimmers are sold privately off the farm every year. These generally go to repeat customers and a percentage of this year's crop has already been promised to these regulars.



2016 born Mule lambs.

It is highly unlikely that the Mule will be replaced by an alternative breed at Hanging Wells at any point in the future and that also means that the Bluefaced Leicester will remain a firm fixture. Iain sums up the family's devotion to the Mule in one short phrase: "Put simply, it does what it says on the tin."

Family Business

For those among us who are less familiar with the family behind Hanging Wells, an introduction will doubtless be needed. Vera and Maurice William (known to everyone as Bill) Skidmore are the most senior members, with their sons, John and Maurice having followed them into the business.

The third generation working on the farm comprises Maurice's sons, Malcolm and Andrew, as well as John's son, Ian. Meanwhile, John's daughter Julie Craig and her husband Iain are also involved and they have two young sons: Ridley and Robert. The farm employs only one full-time member of staff, Stephen Wilkinson, who turned up to lend a hand for one afternoon more than 20 years ago and has been at the farm ever since.

LAMBING PERCENTAGES (SCANNED)

Swaledales	190%- 213%
Mule ewes	210%
Mule hogs	136%

(In total 600 triplets have been scanned across the flocks and 450-500 of these ewes will rear them successfully.)

The National Young Stars Competition

**Rebecca
Armstrong,
Daniel Gower and
Katie Williams**



Thanks to the Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Association for kindly sponsoring our team of three, we were able to go to the National Young Stars Competition held at the Three Counties showground over two days on the 22nd and 23rd March. Our Team "Here comes the blues" was made up of three people - myself - Rebecca Armstrong 23, Katie Williams 20 and Daniel Gower 16. We had not been to the show previously, so were not 100% sure what to expect. There were teams from all over and with a wide range of breeds from Mashams, Blue Texels, Rylands and there is always a Jacob.

As part of the competition we had to make a stand of promotional material about ourselves, the sheep and the breed which we were taking. We organised prior to the show the material which we would put on our stand.

On the first day of the competition we put the stand together which we had made ourselves. We had got boards painted, then we wrote our own information to go on the stand. Soon on arrival we realised that we had underestimated the professionalism of many of the other teams, in having professionally made stands and material to go on them. This made our stand seem a little homemade, but despite this we felt that we had done a good job and if you didn't look at the other stands first, ours looked like we had put a lot of effort and time into it which we had.

After we had put the stand together, the first part of the competition was stockjudging fat lambs. This was a slight challenge for our team as none of us had done stockjudging before. We were faced with six

fat lambs. As a team we took out the two which we felt were the poorest on the day and then put the rest in order. It was then up to me to give reasons, so we came up with some together. It was the blind leading the blind, but we came up with some. Once all the teams had given their reasons, the judge gave his order and reasons. After this we felt that we had done reasonably well, with only getting two of the lambs the wrong way round and giving similar reasons to the judge. For all three of us this was a challenge, but we felt that we done well considering. Once the stockjudging was complete, we filled in a multiple choice questionnaire about the sheep industry. We managed to do well in this with only getting a few questions wrong. This then concluded the first day.

On the second day we started at nine dressing two ewe hogs from my Dad's flock (Lay's). We were given three hours to dress the two sheep to be ready to be shown. Considering there were three of us, even if there was only one person, this is an extremely long time to dress the two sheep. Many of the other teams had terminal and lowland breeds which require much more dressing. We started by taking lots of straw and hay out of the fleeces, and we then dressed the hogs one at a time trying to do the job as slowly as possible, but at the same time making ourselves look as busy as possible to try and ensure that we didn't finish too soon before the other teams. While we were dressing the hogs the clipper would stop working and then start again, but this helped waste a bit of time. Once we had dressed the hogs they were then washed and put back in the pen. This then left us with half an hour to tidy up. Once the time was up the sheep had to be left to rest before they went into the ring to be shown and for us to have our interview.



The team working with their sheep

Katie and Daniel showed the hoggs. We were told to show the sheep how the breed is shown, so we had expected to take them into the ring and let them go and catch them later, but we were then told we had to show them the same as the other breeds with a halter on. This was fun as the two hoggs had never been on a halter before. They were walking quite well until one hogg saw a massive pile of straw and decided to jump into it on the way to the ring. We then frantically tried to remove as much straw off as possible. Once in the ring they stood really well. The judges then came and felt the hoggs to ensure that Katie and Daniel had control over them, and there were no mishaps. As the sheep were being shown one member from each team was interviewed, and that job fell to me. I was asked about the breed, and I told them a little history about it and what the Bluefaced Leicester is used for. This concluded the competition.

We went into the main ring to find out the results of the competition over the two days. We didn't get placed in the top three, but we were highly commended. Although we didn't win, all three of us truly enjoyed ourselves, and learned new things - stockjudging).

We are looking forward to hopefully being able to have the same

opportunity next year and do it all again, with maybe having a slightly better stand which looks more professional. Next year the competition is in August 23-24.

Finally we would like to thank the breed Association for sponsoring us and enabling us to enter.



The team showing their sheep



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Kirkby Redgate

Top Carlisle Female Sale



Wayne Hutchinson
2016
Champion
H102 Kirkby Redgate - 11,000 gns



Wayne Hutchinson
2016
D47 Highberries - 4,200 gns

A bumper catalogue of sheep drew a packed ringside at what is becoming the place to sell female Bluefaced Leicesters. Buyers from all over the country descended on to the mart and there was standing room only around the ring from the first lot to the last. With a total of 274 sheep entered, many people wondered if a glut of entries might result in a steady trade, but their fears were soon washed away as the bidding flowed freely, making easy work for the auctioneering team at Borderway. Topping the day's trade was a cracking gimmer hogg from the Kirkby Redgate flock. It is an embryo lamb by the £6500 G1 Hewgill, which has done well in the flock siring the champion Mules, and out of the flock's top breeding ewe by D17 Hewgill. She caught the eye of the judge, Matthew Emmott, early in the day with her style and power, and he placed her as the Overall Champion. Plenty of others agreed with his judgement and the bidding was very strong, with the hammer dropping at a new breed record for a female of 11,000 gns, selling to C Davies, Redditch of Brood Ltd, who are putting together a real mouth-watering flock of top bloodlines. Redgate also saw another ewe lamb out of the same ewe by D17, but by the G17 Marriforth, the same way bred as the record breaker they sold for £34,000 last Autumn. This sold for 4200 gns to Martyn Archer from the Carry House flock, Northumberland. Martyn also dipped into his pocket later, shelling out 2800 gns for the pen leader from the Smearsett flock which is the full sister to the £12,000 tup they sold to Marriforth. The Redgate pen averaged well, finishing at £3433 for eight sheep.

Neil Marston from the Highberries flock enjoyed a good day at the office as he sold several in-lamb sheep. The Highberries prefix has been synonymous with top quality breeding for a while now and interest in the pen was high. His pen topper, a ewe, is the full sister to the flock's stock ram, C18 Highberries, out of a ewe by the legendary Y1 Midlock which Neil took to M/s Ellis, Ilkley Moor flock and got her tupped with his homebred Y22 and carrying twins to G1 Highberries Highlander. It sold for 4200 gns to M/s Shennan, Girvan. Another ewe he offered was a full sister to F14 Highberries which has sired lambs up to £8000 in the past, and out of the same ewe as his first, by the Y1 Midlock, but by C12 Highberries, one of his best breeding tups, by

Z4 Hundith. She is carrying three lambs to the G1 Highlander. David and Val Hill, Whitewalls, Asby were the final bidders, paying 3200 gns for her.

Once again the Hewgill flock were in amongst the money and prizes, taking third and fourth places in the gimmer hogg classes. It was their fourth prize lamb which cashed in the best, selling for 3200 gns. This powerfully made daughter of the homebred G49 Hewgill and out of a ewe by B41 Hewgill sold into N. Ireland to L Beacom, Co. Fermanagh. The third prize from the same pen, again out of a ewe by the B41 Hewgill, but this time sired by the £8000 G23 Marriforth sold for 2000 gns to J Campbell, Milton of Buchannan.

Another familiar name was in amongst the money as Midlock sold their annual consignment, with a top of 3200 gns for a gimmer shearling by the E1 Bull & Cave. She was carrying three lambs to the E1 Hewgill, which has sired some tremendous sheep, including a £12,000 lamb last year. Final bidder for this strong gimmer was D McCrystal, Maghera. The run of gimmers on offer created a great deal of interest with the Midlock bloodlines - some of the most influential in the breed at the moment, and buyers were looking to try and grab some of the breeding on offer, and prices reflected this too. They had two other gimmers hit 3000 gns, the first sold to M/s Hall, Keilder. G147 Midlock, by F1 Low Tipalt, had been shown successfully as a lamb, and out of one of the flock's best breeding ewes, carrying twins to G2 Marriforth. The next at 3000 gns was the first prize gimmer shearling, again by the F1 Low Tipalt, and out of a ewe by the W25 Midlock Controversy. She is the full sister to one of the best Mule breeding shearlings sold by Midlock last year and carrying three lambs to a homebred tup, H50 Midlock, a son of E1 Hewgill, which they retained. Forking out the readies was Richard Thomas from the Tanhouse Farm flock, who liked the ewe, but also having seen the tup lamb that she was in-lamb to, at Peebles Show, was more than happy to buy into a new bloodline. Midlock enjoyed a bumper trade throughout and averaged £1796 for 19 sheep sold.

The Reserve Champion of the day came from noted Welsh breeder, Mike and Ella James, from the Duhonw flock, based in Builth Wells. This late



**H110
Kirkby Redgate
4,200 gns**



H68 Hewgill - 4th Prize - 3,200 gns



G129 Midlock - 3,200 gns

April born lamb is a real sweet example of the breed, oozing style and quality. She caught the eye of the judge who saw enough in her to make her his own, bidding off strong opposition to take her home for 2700 gns. She is by F1 Parkgatestone and the maternal sister to F1 Duhonw Golden Balls, which is proving a great sire for this flock.

There were a couple of embryos on offer at the sale, a first for the breed. They certainly attracted plenty of attention, and the top price was from the Highberries flock, when he offered a ewe carrying two embryos from his show ewe by D24 Highberries which was never beaten whilst out showing and sired by C24 Highberries, the sire of Highlander. Some strong bidding ensued to get this highly rated pregnancy. J Lee, Stockley Burn Farm was the last bidder standing, paying 4000 gns. Another embryo implant on offer also attracted a lot of interest, with a ewe from Smearsett carrying twins by the noted B13 Black Tag, which has done so well for the flock, and out of a ewe by the Z4 Hundith. This was a chance to get some top notch genetics from some of the breed's most proven breeding. She was sold for 3800 gns to N Marston, Highberries.

Averages: 23 Ewes : £1219.37 (plus £332.87), 85 Ewe Lambs : £1060.01 (plus £81.14), 80 Gimmers : £971.64 (minus £221.36).

188 Overall : £1071.05 (plus £35.97). Auctioneer - Harrison & Hetherington



F48 Highberries - 3,200 gns

Hewgill Female Sells For £5,600



H70 Hewgill - £5,600



Champion - H25 Smearsett - £4,300

A total of 57 Bluefaced Leicester females were forward at Hawes which saw a buoyant trade, with trade up a very impressive £187 on the year, and giving some much needed New Year cheer to flock masters, many still waiting for the new single farm payments.

The highlight of the day was once again provided by the Hewgill flock, with a really smart gimmer hogg by the £8000 G23 Marriforth out of the full sister to E1 Hewgill sold to Midlock for £11,000, by the homebred B41 Hewgill, which has done well for the flock over the past few years, both in the Mules and the purebred flock. The eventual buyer was Alison Bastion of the Rowandale flock, shelling out £5600 for this powerful lamb. Its stable mate, H72 Hewgill was strongly bid too. The same way bred, this one's grandmother was full sister to the Z14 Hewgill, and sold for £2400 to M McKenna, Co. Derry.

The Champion of the day and out of a very strong class was from the Smearsett flock from Robin Booth. This gimmer hogg was by the G2 Mere oak which they bought at Hawes two years ago for a snip at £1600, and is proving to be a very shrewd buy. She is out of a well-bred ewe, full sister to the E1 Smearsett sold to M/s Fairburn for £12,000 a couple of years ago, by the D15 Smearsett, and full of Lunesdale breeding. The buyer was C Davies Ltd from Redditch, who are starting a new flock, and looking for some of the best bloodlines available. They forked out £4300 to secure the Champion. The Smearsett flock also took the first prize in the gimmer shearling section, with a gimmer by the D15 Smearsett out of a ewe by V33 Lunesdale, carrying a single

to G11 Smearsett Ted and sold for £2000 to W M & J E Shuttleworth, Barbon. Another of their gimmer shearlings, again by D17 Smearsett, out of a ewe by Z4 Hundith, carrying triplets to G23 Smearsett sold for £2500 to C Pye, Abbeystead, Emmets flock.

Carole Wood had a good day, taking a top price of £1900 for a gimmer shearling by X1 Kirkby Redgate out of an old ewe by V33 Lunesdale, and in-lamb to D15 Smearsett selling over to M/s Wallace.

Travelling all the way down from Lanarkshire for Allan Wight, Midlock, proved a worthwhile trip, selling three gimmer shearlings, all carrying a single lamb. All three sold for £1800, setting a canny average for the pen.

The Reserve Champion of the day was the second prize gimmer lamb, brought out by George Shields from the up and coming Skeughdale flock, based near Ravenstonedale, near Kirkby Stephen. This modern, stylish lamb was the last consignment of the day. By the homebred G18 Skeughdale, and out of a good breeding ewe by A3 Hewgill, the same way bred as the £14,000 tup lamb they sold last Autumn. The buyer for this was A Murray & Son, Northumberland.

Show Results -

Judged by Mr Steve Hallam, Egton Bridge

Gimmer Hogs - 1-& **Champion** - W A & A Booth (Lot 142) £4300 to C Davis, Redditch, 2-& **Reserve Champion** G & H R Shields (Lot 168) £1600 to A Murray & Sons, Northumberland, 3-J H Pedley (Lot 105) £1100 to R Montgomerie, Kilmarnock



H71 Hewgill - £2,400

Ewes & Gimmer Shearlings - 1-W A & A Booth (Lot 137) £2000 to W M & J E Shuttleworth, Barbon, 2-J Wight & Son (Lot 154) £1800 to J G Pears, Sheffield, 3-M/s Lawson (Lot 104) n/s

Leading Prices:

Gimmer Hogs - M/s Lord, £5600, £2400, £1000. W A & A Booth, £4300, £2200, £700 x 2. G & HR Shields, £1600, £600. Breck House Enterprises Ltd., £1600. J & K Metcalf & Son, £1250, £500. J H Pedley, £1100. J Bell, £1000. P L & J Dawson, £900, £500, £350. R & P E Hargreaves, £700, £500, £450. W & D Lawson & Son, £500. C T & J E Willoughby, £450.

Gimmer Shearlings - W A & A Booth, £2500, £2200, £2000. C Wood, £1900, £700, £650, £350, J Wight & Sons, £1800, £1800, £1800. P L & J Dawson, £800 x 2. R & P E Hargreaves, £800, £300. Breck House Enterprises Ltd, £800. C T & J E Willoughby, £650.

Ewes - W A & A Booth, £700.

Forward 57 Sheep - Overall average £1117 (up £187 on 2015).

Gimmer Hogs to £5600 : Av. £1107. Gimmer Shearlings to £2500 : Av. £1118. Ewes to £700.

Auctioneer - Hawes Auction Mart



Reserve & 2nd Gimmer Hogg - H44 Skeughdale - £1,600



H21 Breck House - £1,600

In-vitro Embryo Production (IVP) In Sheep



An ET Lamb

IVP in farm animals is a relatively new technique for commercial producers in the UK. Conversely, it is a widely used method of producing cattle embryos in the rest of the world, where in some countries it is gradually replacing the traditional MOET (multiple ovulation and embryo transfer) programmes.

At AB Europe, we are in the process of commissioning the first commercial IVP (in-vitro fertilisation) laboratory in the UK for sheep. We are using proven New Zealand and Australian technology developed by ABS (NZ) Ltd. Following on from extensive training in New Zealand and the successful development of our cattle IVP procedures, we hope to bring out our new sheep IVP service over the coming breeding season.

What is IVP?

IVP is the process of creating embryos from oocytes (unfertilised eggs) which will have been fertilised by semen in a petri dish by IVF. These embryos will have been produced in-vitro in the laboratory, rather than in-vivo in the sheep which occurs during natural service, AI or MOET breeding.

What will the process entail?

You will identify selected donor sheep in the same way that you do for your commercial MOET/flushing programmes.

In the first instance, these donors will enter the Edinburgh centre, but in the near future we will ensure the procedure is available across the whole of the UK. On-centre, the donor ewes will be prepared, then their unfertilised eggs (oocytes) harvested laparoscopically directly from the donor's ovaries. The technique used in the procedure will be similar to AI; a laparoscope and cannula inserted through the body wall into the abdomen. The uterus and ovaries will be identified, and surgical forceps used to stabilise the ovaries. Once the ovaries are secured, needle will be passed into the numerous follicles (a fluid-filled structure containing a single oocyte) on the surface of the ovary to aspirate (suck out) the oocyte. The oocytes will be collected into a pot containing specialised fluid, which will be returned to the laboratory where they will be matured (IVM) and fertilised (IVF) in the "test tube". As each oocyte may be fertilised individually, semen from single or multiple sires may be used per collection; this is done using frozen semen. The fertilised oocytes (embryos) produced will be specially cultured in an incubator for 6 days. After this point, the resulting viable embryos may be transferred fresh into recipients, or undergo vitrification (a special type of freeze) followed by subsequent transfer.

What are the advantages compared to MOET?

- Collection can occur repeatedly and safely every 7-10 days.
- Potential to produce more offspring from genetically valuable animals, accelerating the rate of genetic improvement.
- There is no requirement for repeated surgery on the donor ewes.

- There is reduced dependence on the process of superovulation; the preparation procedure is quick and simple.
- Sheep that have had reduced reproductive success previously (e.g. poor superovulation) may be suitable for IVP.
- Genetic recovery from slaughtered animals is possible.
- Multiple sires can be used per collection.
- One pellet of semen can be used for more sheep.
- Potential to collect from early pregnant ewes.

What results will I expect to achieve?

As this is a cutting edge procedure in sheep in the UK, we don't have the history of results that we would need to give an accurate figure. We will only offer a commercial service following multiple successful trials using slaughterhouse-derived material. It is vital that the process for the service is strictly tried and tested before applying it to sheep, but we hope to bring it to you as soon as possible. Results from the cattle side have been very promising, with on average eight oocytes collected per session, resulting in three transferrable/freezable embryos from these.

What are the costs involved?

Due to the new technique and the time involved to develop the procedure, the costs will be slightly more expensive initially. However, as demand grows we would hope to decrease this.

Do we think this is the future?

We do not envisage that IVP in sheep will replace the traditional MOET in the ewe. Initially, we do not expect to harvest as many embryos per collection compared to MOET, but we can do more collections in a given period of time, as the programme to prepare the ewes is shorter.

What about sexed semen?

Pre-selection of the sex of the offspring through the use of sex-sorted sperm has obvious great potential as a tool for breeding management in the BFL breed.

Sperm can be sorted into sex using a process known as flow cytometry. The sorting method is based upon the difference in DNA content between sperm carrying the X or Y chromosome. The sorting process is approximately 70-80% accurate. The sorting process does compromise sperm viability, due to the requirement for specific handling procedures both before and after sorting. Additionally, the relatively low numbers of available sorted sperm in semen reduces its viability even further.

Although commonplace in the cattle industry sexed semen in sheep cannot be done currently within the UK, but accuracy where it has been used is around 90%.

British Wool

Marketing Board Update

Written by Gareth W Jones, Producer Communications Manager

As we enter another year and shearing season the British Wool Marketing Board (BWMB) continues to be active at every stage of the wool supply chain and is the only central marketing board still in operation in the UK, making it a truly unique organisation in the agricultural sector.

The BWMB operates depots across the UK, collecting wool and grading it according to type and quality before selling it on producers' behalf at regular auctions to wool merchants and end users across the globe.

From shearer training to the Campaign for Wool, BWMB is active at every level through its work in helping improve the quality of fleeces being delivered to depots and the demand for British wool. Producers wanting to maximise the value of their fleeces should ensure they deliver them to BWMB depots in the best possible condition and that starts with clean and efficient shearing.

The Campaign for Wool (CfW), now in its 7th year, continues to raise awareness of wool as a versatile, quality fabric for carpet, fashion and interiors. 2015's 'Wool Week' took place in early October, with a number of events taking place to continue to engage with the consumer on the benefits of wool as well as woollen products.

An exciting new event aimed at showcasing the versatility and adaptability of wool as a flooring material will take place in London this year.

Targeted exclusively as a trade show, the event will demonstrate to retailers and trade representatives the many ways in which wool can form part of a flooring solution with a series of inspirational wool showcase installations. It is intended to create a really vibrant and stylish showcase that empowers the story of wool for the floor.

In terms of social media, the BWMB continues to develop this important area and has active Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram accounts - regular updates and information is available through all these accounts. We welcome any active followers:



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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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Shearing training Haulage Regional Depots



Grading Auction Exhibitions



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News From Your Bluefaced Leicester Regions

North East

As we head towards Spring, I know this time of year, whilst busy, is a favourite for many as we await the outcome of our hard work, and wonder what we may have to sell at the Autumn sales. It brings a sense of hope and eagerness to see lambs in the fields once again. As a child, I would love to watch lambs play, and watching my new baby daughter squeal with delight on seeing lambs for the first time this weekend reminded me of the great highs that working with livestock can bring.

We started the New Year off at Hawes with the first Bluefaced Leicester in-lamb sale of the year. The numbers of sheep for sale were slightly down on the previous year (57 to sell), but it didn't stop very strong demand for some of the best females available to buy. The day started with a pre-show of gimmer hoggs with the first prize going to W A & A Booth. This hogg also went on to become champion on the day and sold for £4,300. Second prize went to G & H R Shields which was awarded reserve champion and sold for £1,600.

The day had a very good average selling price of £930 for all sold through the ring on the day, which was up £187 on the previous year. The top prices and averages for specific categories were:

- Gimmer hoggs at £5,600 with an average of £1,107
- Gimmer shearlings at £2,500 with an average of £1,118
- Ewes at £700

We now look forward to the next sale at Hexham in September.

As this is my last report as North East Chairman, I would like to thank the new acquaintances this role has afforded me the opportunity to meet - it has been a pleasure, and of course many thanks must go to all of you that have provided support in varying ways.

All that's left for me to say is all the best with lambing and good luck to all of you that may be showing at the many agricultural shows held throughout the region over the forthcoming months.

Oliver Scown - Chairman

Wales

Lambing is coming to an end, and we are all patiently waiting for the sun to shine to trigger some grass growth. Hopefully everyone has had a good lambing, and are pleased with last year's purchases with some good lambs on the ground.

It seems a long time since the Welsh Region had a get together, so please save the date - 22nd May for our AGM. Letters will be out shortly with more information. Judging at the Royal Welsh Show will again be on Tuesday 19th July followed by refreshments at the Bluefaced Leicester stand - everybody is very welcome. The NSA Sheep event at Malvern is also taking place and is on the 27th July. Please if anyone has any ideas for activities that they would like to do, or anything that they would like to be discussed at Council please get in contact.

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

Northern Ireland

Our year kicked off with our female sale in Ballymena Market. The judge, Eoin Loughran, found his Champion a gimmer lamb, in the Mullaghwee pen of Michelle Wright. William Adams, Holmview was Reserve Champion with his gimmer lamb and she sold at 350 gns. Top price went to the McCormick Brothers with their class winning gimmer hoggett selling for 600 gns.

Up next will be Balmoral Show when we will again have our club stand on show in the N.S.A Pavillion. We look forward to meeting our friends, old and new at the Maze.

I would like to welcome our incoming Chairman, Hugh Henry to his new role and wish him every success.

Sadly this is my last report, and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our club during the last four years.

Finally, I wish you all good health and a trouble free lambing in 2016.

Richard Graham - Chairman

Scotland

With lambing time nearly upon us, it's that time of year to write my second report for the Looking Ahead magazine! The last two years as Chairman of the Scottish region have flown by, and has been a great experience. I have especially enjoyed meeting members old and new at the several different events that the Association have attended over the past two years.

Dates to look forward to in the coming year are - June 1st - we will be attending the NSA Scotsheep at Blythbank Farm, West Linton. Then on the 23rd of June, the Highland show starts with Bluefaced Leicesters being judged the following morning on the 24th. The Scottish Progeny Show will be held this year at Peebles Show on the 13th of August. The progeny show was a great success at Peebles last year, and I am looking forward to seeing a great turnout of Bluefaced Leicesters this year again.

The Scottish Region AGM was mentioned in the farming press, and I would like to take this opportunity to bring it to the Scottish members attention that the person that wrote the letter is not a member of the Association, and was not present at the Scottish Region AGM. There was a discussion on performance recording that five members took part in, and also the matter of selling embryos at the in-lamb sales were discussed. I don't know how the person in question obtained their information from the meeting, but it was factually incorrect.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has supported me over the last two years as your Chairman. At the AGM in February I handed the reins over to Kate Smith of Low Arkland flock. Kate has been breeding Bluefaced Leicesters for several years now and is very passionate about the breed. Good luck to everyone with the forthcoming lambing, and I look forward to seeing lots of Scottish members at events over the summer months.

Stephen Crozier - Chairman

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Monday & Tuesday 12th & 13th September
The Great Annual Two Day Show & Sale of 30,000 Mule Gimmer Lambs on behalf of the North of England Mule Sheep Association. Judging 8am. Sale 9am each day.

Monday 26th September

Second Sale of 12,000 Mule, Masham & Cont. X Gimmer Lambs & Shearlings.
Judging 8am. Sale 9am.

Thursday 29th September

Annual Prize Show & Sale of 1,000 Registered Bluefaced Leicester Rams & Females for the Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Association. Judging 7.15am. Sale 9am.

Monday 3rd October

The Great Annual Special Sale of 5,000 Registered and Unregistered Uncrossed Swaledale Ewes and Gimmer Shearlings. Sale 10am.

For further information contact - R J Lund 015396 20895 or 07974 126397 and M Scott 01833 622240



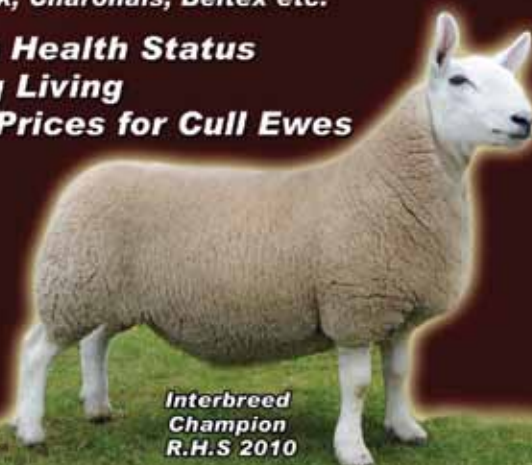
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2015

£34,000 - 640/H1 (Sire: G17 Marriforth)

Champion and Top/Breed Record Price at Hawes 2015 -
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Champion & Record price Female at Carlisle 2016
Kirkby Redgate 640/H102, sired by 980/G1 -
11,000gns to Clare Davies, Redditch of Brood Ltd.



4,200gns at Carlisle 2016 - Kirkby Redgate
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2015 Mule gimmer lamb by 980/G1. He sired the
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