

Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Association

Looking Ahead

Magazine - Spring 2008 - Edition No. 21

Inside -
**NEW Female
Breed Record**



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Spring 2008

Association News



Double Tagging

This year we are treading where we have never gone before – The Association will continue to offer a single UK tag ID on the reverse of your BFL management tag, but you will need to buy your own second ‘match-up’ tag. The office will do its best to manage the anticipated match-up problems, but please **DO** read the Tag Ordering Information accompanying your Tag Order Form. (Copies available on the website).

Registration Documents

These will again be sent out to members on receipt of their 2008 Tag Orders.

Association Database

All members should by now have received a password to manage their Flock and we have been encouraged by the number of members making use of this facility. This years lambs will be added, by the office staff, to the database as the Registration Documents come in to the office, and the information will then be the basis for the 2008 Flock Book.

The Database is available, via the website, to any person who wants to know the pedigree of an animal, or its breeder.

Full pedigrees will take time to build up, but the Database is a tool which will be even more useful in years to come, with the possibility of using the data for Sale Catalogues etc.

Shows 2008

Council decided not to take a stand at The Royal Show this year but instead have booked a stand at the Great Yorkshire Show; due to changes at the Royal Highland Show, the Association will have a conventional stand again with livestock. Our presence at the Royal Welsh will go ahead as normal (Blue Tongue permitting) but hopefully without the rain!

New Animal Transport Laws

As you are probably aware that from 5th January 2008 legislation states that all those connected with transportation of livestock, horses or poultry by road (only) over 65 km must hold a valid “Certificate of Competence”. This is another Government initiative led by EU directives. The British Wool Marketing Training have now established an Global On Line Assessment centre and as such are able to offer the necessary assessments for the above qualification.

They are offering their registered wool producers a discounted rate of £47 per test. With their offices throughout the United Kingdom, they are offering our Association members this competitive rate.

Commercial Scrapie Genotyping Offer

Innovis are continuing to offer the Scrapie Genotyping service regardless of what happens to the NSP. They are offering you, as an Association member, the opportunity to sign up to an agreement that will mean Association members will get a discount on genotyping for smaller sized batches.

An application card has been enclosed with your magazine for you to be eligible for the discount.

Association Contacts -

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Front page -

2006 Penrith Progeny Show

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I Have Enjoyed My Time As Chairman

I am now nine months into my Chairmanship. I have enjoyed my time to date with many miles travelled, hundreds of phone calls, three tele-conferences, three times to Ireland, as many times to Wales and many more places travelled to support members for what I look back on as six months of turmoil up to December.

Breeding stock, store and fat lambs brought prices well below what they should have been, with many Bluefaced Leicester tups not getting sold.

January 5th 2008 began a different year, and a different trend. First the Ewanston flock dispersal sale on behalf of Robin and Elizabeth Thomson - the flock average for their ewe flock of 22 averaging £1,020.

Hawes sale on the 19th January was in conjunction with the Swaledale inlamb ewe sale. Champion of the day was from M/s Booth, Feiser flock, and the top price of £4,400 was from M/s Lord, Hewgill.

Next, the Carlisle sale on the 21st January, saw a very good trade for in-lamb females with a new female breed record of £5,500 from M/s Scott, Thirlwall, Carlisle. Let us hope the trend continues.

My first day out as Chairman was at the Highland Show where the classes of Blues were well supported, with David Cruikshank, of the Nithsdale flock as the judge. Champion of the show was a ewe from Robin and Elizabeth Thomson of the Ewanston flock. This was the last time Robin would be showing at the Highland - you could say he was hanging his stick up.

Next, on to the Royal Show at Stoneleigh, where it rained hard, with conditions so bad the show was cut short. Some classes ended being judged on the roads and hard standing of the showfield.

The Fotheringham family of the Craighall flock travelled all the way from Perth in Scotland to take the Championship with a shearing tup, showing for the first time at the Royal. Congratulations - was well worth it!

Then, on to the Yorkshire Show, when Glen Shapiro of the Hazelwood flock won the Championship with a sheep shown there for the first time as a ewe.



Sid Ivinson

supported. Dennis Lumley of the Nookton flock had the task of judging, and gave the championship to the Roberts family of the Myfyrian flock. Myrfyn is a great supporter of the Royal Welsh Show.

Now I would like to thank the Council Of Management, members, auction companies, Jean and Rachael in the office for all your work helping to re-organise the 2007 sales. It all came together in the end.

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The Breed Will Continue To Fly Ahead

Would it be a good idea for the Association to hire a private plane for the President during his term of office? I have calculated that I have travelled just over 2,000 miles visiting the various shows and events – from Welsh Sheep to North Sheep, the Royal Highland, Royal, Great Yorkshire and Royal Welsh Shows respectively. Don't get me wrong!! I'm not complaining - on the contrary it is an honour and a privilege to fulfil this role, and the sheep I have seen are a credit to the Association's members.

It has been a fantastic year - I shall rephrase that – It was a fantastic year up to July, but as you are all aware once again the farming industry was in a state of turmoil. Feeling slightly down hearted, I welcomed one of the highlights of the Bluefaced Leicesters's calendar for me - which is attending an Open Day.

I have marvelled and learnt so much by visiting farms across the United Kingdom, and seeing flocks in their natural home environment. Every farm has its own special character and compounded with good stockmanship, I believe the Leicester is a highly adaptable animal, thriving in such diverse climates and environments. No wonder the Mule is the most popular breeding ewe in the country.

On a glorious sunny day in August I visited Cwmliliw Farm, in Brecon where we were all welcomed by David and Steven Abberley, Old Hemley Flock, and admired an excellent show of sheep.

Unfortunately, due to restrictions, the Northern Region Open Day had to be cancelled. And I found myself recalling with fond memories, the welcome we received at Rose Hill in 2006, by a founder member, the late Bill Wearmouth – who contributed so much to the Association.



Elfyn Owen

Sales were thrown into disarray also; but I did welcome the experience of a trip to Hexham to judge the pre-sale show, in October. And, just for a moment, it felt as though we were 'back to normality'! The preparation and hard work by exhibitors and vendors was commendable. Such a shame the prices did not reflect this.

In November, we welcomed our Chairman, Sid Ivinson and his wife Muriel, to join us in our annual Christmas Dinner. It was a pleasure to have their company and we enjoyed Sid's after dinner speech! Although, we are not as fit as the members up North, and drawing the raffle was as energetic as it got!!

But my wife and I were lucky enough to attend the social dinner dance at Hexham in early February, where we thoroughly enjoyed the most hospitable evening. It was a brilliant chance to unwind, before lambing time!! And reading the prices of the in-lamb sale in the Farmer's Guardian certainly put a spring in my step!! Let's hope it's a sign of better things to come. Wishing you all the best of health and happiness for the rest of the year - and a special thanks to Jean and Rachael for keeping this President on track. **I'm sure, that the Bluefaced Leicester will continue to fly ahead - even without a plane!!!**



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A Family Dedicated



(L to R): Matt, Etta, Matt, Elaine and James



Cassington Shona - Champion R.H.S. '06

It was back in the mists of time when the first Bluefaced Leicester tup appeared at Cassington Farm, set on a hill top over looking Ayr. In the 1950's Matt Drummond's grandfather travelled all the way to Hexham to buy a tup to use on his Blackie ewes. So happy with the resulting progeny he travelled back down again a couple of years later to purchase another and crossed it with some Border Leicester's too, which caused quite a stir at the local Ayr market, and some high prices too! In the late 50's, a ewe was bought from Jimmy Cruikshank at Castle Douglas before he moved to Laidlawsteel, Galashiels. This ewe was the foundation of the Cassington flock, with most of the ewes they have today going back to her. Matt's grandfather gave him and this brother Connell each a lamb to set their flock up and they have never looked back since.

Nowadays the Cassington flock run by the Drummond family is one of the noted flocks within the breed and have the rosettes to prove this, including the coveted Highland Blue Ribbon which they won with Cassington Shona in 2006. In partnership with Matt's father and mother, Matt and Etta, they run around 45 Bluefaced Leicester ewes on their 600 acre unit alongside 110 Ayrshire dairy cows and youngstock as well as a flock of 40 Blackie ewes and 180 Mule ewes which are run with the Texel sire. They also buy in around 400 Mule ewe lambs every year, selling them the following back end as gimmers, at Castle Douglas and Ayr markets.

Showing started in earnest around the early 90's with Cassington Irene who won numerous shows and gave them the showing bug. The tups that have lifted the flock to this higher level were Blackpark Braveheart from Clark Lamont followed Knockairdie Rob Roy and Blue Diamond from Robin Bell. These sires have been very consistent, and are behind the best bloodlines on the farm, including the

Highland show champion, who, incidentally is out of a ewe that won over 20 championships herself, which goes to show that quality breeds quality, and is still on the farm now at nearly 10 years old and scanned in-lamb with a pair.

Stock tups and retained tup lambs are tried on the Blackie ewes at home and on loan to test their crossing potential as this is where the heart of the Leicester breed really is, as an unrivalled crossing sire. The tups are sold at the Association sale in Castle Douglas, with their top so far of £2,200 for a shearing which sold to David Cruikshank, Nithsdale flock and Robin Bell, Knockairdie. They have commercial buyers that have been purchasing their tups for over 40 years and a strong, consistent demand for their tups has seen them level out at between £7-800 over the last few years, a very useful return indeed.

Since 2001, the Cassington flock have sold more than 200 females at Carlisle and privately. Many have found homes in Ireland and as far north as Aberdeen and south as Devon.

When looking for new stock an emphasis is placed on the carcass, legs and outlook of the tup, as Matt believes these are fundamental to the breed "They must have that carcass and be able to walk correctly and get their heads up well" says Matt. One of their latest additions is Broomhills Crazy Frog who has all these. His progeny are crossing extremely well as well as producing the goods in the pure lines too, the ideal combination in Matt's view. Other tups used this year is a homebred lamb by Broomhills Crazy Frog out of a full sister of the ewe that won the Highland Show in 2006, and a two shear tup purchased last year, bred by Hannah Stenton, of the Thornton-Le-Dale flock. Lambing was halfway at the time of writing and the results were pleasing Matt so far.

To The Breed



Knockairdie Blue Diamond

The Drummond family are big supporters of Association events travelling down every year to the Progeny show at Penrith, quite a round trip I can assure you, not to be taken lightly! As well as showing, Matt and Elaine between them have organised and updated the Association's website over the last 3 years, which is ever growing in popularity with nearly 50,000 visits, keeping all informed on shows and sales. They also organise and ship out the promotional goods for the Association, and would be very happy for you all to keep buying the goods



Tup hogg used this year by the Broomhills sire

as it will give them some rooms back in their house! And if you are reading this (I hope you still are!!) you have them to thank for putting this magazine together as well...

....A family truly dedicated to the breed in every way!!



A tup lamb born this year the by Thornton-Le-Dale sire

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The Highberrie's



Neil Marston



Hundith tup lamb brought privately last year

Neil Marston farms alongside his parents Raymond & Frances Marston and his wife Rachael. Neil caught the Bluefaced Leicester bug when he got his first ewe when he was 17 from Jack Lawson of the Hundith flock. Whilst contract clipping around the area he saw some great sheep and tried to buy or blag sheep by doing some free clipping or other work, thus this laid down the foundations for a successful crossing flock.

All this was taken away however when the flock was culled in 2001 during the FMD outbreak, just as he was really getting going. Determined to get going again Neil bought 7 or 8 ewes from the noted Snab Green flock of William Huddleston, which provided a great foundation for the future of the renewed Highberries flock.

Highberries near Scaleby, Carlisle runs to around 400 acres within a ring fence, as well as taking extra summer grazing too. They currently run a flock of around 400 Swaledales which are crossed with the Bluefaced Leicester, around 25 Dutch Texels and 25 Bluefaced Leicester ewes, the majority of which are sired by T001 and T004 Highberries, which run alongside the farms 240 milking cows. They also grow wheat and maize wholecrop for the dairy cattle rations.

Neil's enthusiasm for the Mule and Leicester's is infectious, and it is great to see the progress of the flock. Last year at Carlisle, whilst most flocks were enduring a torrid time with a dowley trade Neil bucked the trend at Carlisle, where he sells his mule gimmers, topping the trade with £180 for his top pen and £98 for his second, and ending with an average of £52.74 for 245 gimmers sold at the sale. The real

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star was the performance of a Snab tup which Neil had bought from William Huddleston when he had gone to buy a dog...he came back with both a dog and a tup...and what a purchase! The tup has done fairly well too, with the majority of the top two pens being sired by the Snab X1. He also sired the flocks top priced lamb last back end, which sold for 2200 gns at Carlisle, where Neil sells all his Leicester ram lamb's and shearling's.

His other stock tup for 2008 is V003 Kentmere which he shares with P Dawson. He is a good crossing ram, also having proved his sons are equally as good too. Always on the look out for fresh bloodlines to continue the forward momentum, of trying to improve his, stock Neil purchased ram lambs in 2007 from Hundith, Anses Hill, Emmets and Gragareth, the latter two also being shared with P Dawson of the Kentmere flock.

Lambing is from late March onwards, and they make use of AI as a viable management system tool, using a tup to his full potential and also knowing exactly when lambing will start, and finish. This year Michelle Hamilton of Ovibreed AI'd 130 ewes to the Snab tup and 50 to other rams, with a 90% hold rate, and a total scanned lambing percentage of around 207%.

One aspect that Neil believes is vitally important is the carcass of the Leicester which helps to finish the mule wethers off. "You have to have a sheep with a good carcass. Getting a good sharp colour is an added bonus, but if you lose that and have no conformation, you are left with nothing" says Neil, who has sold most of his wether lambs off

Flock Story



A group of Bluefaced Leicester rams



A group of 2007 lambs sired by Snab 830/X001

this year through Dunbai, where he has averaged around £44 before Christmas, with his first draw of lambs sold at Longtown on the 12th of July for £50.60, showing that the Leicester as well as an excellent crossing sire can also provide quick and easy finishing lamb too, the ideal combination.

Neil and Rachael are also big supporters of the progeny show at Penrith, which they see as an opportunity to see how their lambs compare to others and it is an early season shop window for potential buyers. They have had some great success there, taking the champion sheep over the last 2 years.

Neil sees the future as fairly secure, but believes that there could be less demand for second class Mule ewes in future years as more land is put to the plough to meet global wheat demands, but the Mule ewe has what it takes, as an easy care sheep, with excellent mothering and milking abilities to rear two lambs quickly and easily with a low level of labour, when labour is becoming increasingly hard to find. In a smaller market it will pay attention to the shape and confirmation of the breed to help it move forwards successfully to an even brighter future.

By Wayne Hutchinson



A Swaledale ewe and new born lamb this year

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Sire Reference Scheme Update

2007 was a difficult year for sheep farming as a whole and more so for the pedigree breeders, and it also affected the Sire Reference Scheme group in more ways than one. To start off due to the Foot and Mouth restrictions, we were unable to have our Annual Reference Scheme ram picking day, so we had to visit various flocks within the group individually to view rams that were on offer to the group. Although not the preferred way, it was the only option open to us at the time. The group ended up choosing a ram lamb from the Grugoer flock no 2188/Z1 out of last year's Sire Reference Ram from the Llwygy flock 1706/X1 and a home bred ewe 2188/W23 sired by a Border Esk ram 2808/V6. The chosen ram lamb was out of the top 10% of the groups recorded ram lambs with an index of 179.

Unfortunately when the first flock of ewes were ready to be inseminated, the semen from the ram lamb was of poor quality due to some virus or other, which meant that all of us had to go back to the drawing board as to what rams we would use for our inseminations. Most of us used some frozen semen, and the rest were inseminated with the highest index rams that we had on our own farms. The good news is that the ram lamb 2188/Z1 was later mated with four ewe lambs, and they are all in-lamb to him. We look forward to the outcome.



The scanning results of the inseminated ewes has not been very good this year, especially the ones inseminated with the frozen semen, which is something we need to look at and improve. I was interested to hear that there are 24 breeders interested in the sheep recording scheme, and we as a group would be willing to help with information from our experience in any way we can. Anyone interested in our Sire Reference Scheme or an Associate member using semen from the reference sire that we have available please contact Maldwyn Davies for further information on 01745 870292, mobile 07721 892752.

60,000 WELSH MULES 2008 SALES



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The Benefits Of The New Long Wool Index For BFL Breeders

The sheep industry is facing unprecedented challenges at the present time, with the removal of headage payments, the introduction of the single farm payment and declining margins. Everyone within the industry therefore needs to make sure that they avail themselves of all of the opportunities for technical and economic improvement just to survive.

For many years the Mule has held a dominant position within the lowland sector of the UK sheep industry, but Bluefaced Leicester and Mule breeders cannot afford to be complacent. The demise of the Hereford and Angus breeds of cattle, and more recently the Suffolk sheep, from their once dominant positions should be a stark reminder of what happens when breeders ignore what is important in commercial production. The Mule is now facing competition from a number of other dam breeds which could challenge its dominance. For example, the Inverdale fecundity gene has now been introgressed into the Texel breed, and Inverdale-Texel rams are now being used to cross onto hill ewes to produce a halfbred ewe with similar reproductive potential to the Mule but with the improved carcass quality attributes of the Texel.

So what can Bluefaced Leicester breeders do to face this increasing competition? Widespread use of the new selection index from the recently completed Longwool Project is paramount. David Raine, in his autumn 2007 article, provided a useful background to the project, and this article is designed to highlight some of its important features and identify what breeders need to do to implement it.

As breeders we do not need to understand the full details of how the selection index was constructed, but we do need to know what it is designed to do and why. Essentially, the index is designed to:

- Improve carcass quality of the Mule wether lamb, the Mule ewe and its terminal sire-x progeny;
- Achieve good growth rates with little or no further increase in Mule ewe size;
- Maintain litter size of Mule ewes and improve lamb survival;
- Improve Mule ewe longevity.

The most telling finding from the economic analyses undertaken within the project was just how important improving Mule ewe longevity was. While improving lean content within the carcass was economically the second most important trait, this needed to be achieved without any increase in the size of the Mule ewe and therefore her terminal sire-x lambs. Litter size of Mule ewes was shown to be at or near its economic optimum, and therefore further increases in litter size (more triplet lambs) were not desired.

Of course, what we have to remember is that to improve these attributes of the Mule ewe we have to record performance and practice selection in the purebred Bluefaced Leicester sheep and rely on fact that these improved attributes will be passed down to the Mule sheep. The results of the Longwool Project show that they will.



Professor Will Haresign

To deliver these benefits, the things that we need to measure in Bluefaced Leicester sheep are:

- The detailed pedigree (sire and dam) of all sheep within the flock;
- The pre-mating live-weight of all shearing ewes entering the flock (and mature flock ewes if possible);
- Litter size born (including all lambs born dead);
- All lamb deaths, especially over the first 2 weeks after lambing when the majority of losses occur;
- The 8-week weight of all lambs in the flock, including black ones (this will also provide a further check on lamb losses);
- Live-weight and ultrasound measures of fat and muscle depth (standard Signet service) at approximately 21 weeks of age;
- An annual pre-mating inventory of all ewes still in the flock, those entering the flock (i.e. new shearings or purchased ewes) and all 'removals' due to death, culling or sale.

This may look a daunting task but, given the size of most flocks involved, the reality is much less than the perception – it just involves keeping a few additional records.

Our estimates are that, after 10 years of selection using this new index, the added value, allowing for the cost of recording, will be between £10m and £15m for the UK sheep industry. Approximately 20% of this will accrue to the Mule breeder through the sale of better carcass quality wether lambs, with the remaining 80% accruing to the lowland producer through the purchase of Mule ewes with improved performance. Of course, if breeders are able to charge a premium for their 'improved' Mule ewe replacements then they will be able to retain a greater proportion of the total benefits.

Science has provided breeders with a tailor-made index designed to improve the overall genetic merit of the Bluefaced Leicester breed and its Mule progeny. The inclusion of ewe longevity within the index provides Bluefaced Leicester and Mule breeders with a 'unique selling point' and, used widely, the index provides the breed with an opportunity to protect market share in the face of the developing competition. It is now up to breeders to take advantage of such opportunities by implement use of the index to effect the improvements possible.

Please contact either the Society or Signet if you are interested in becoming involved.

Thirlwall Castle

Sell Female

Breed Record

Ewe

Once again breeders were out in force to witness a cracking sale, braving lashing rain and snowstorms to check out some great sheep and hope to snaffle up a bargain as some of the breeds noted established flock dispersed as well as a production sale alongside the annual female sale.

Topping the day's trade was a 2 shear ewe from R & M Scott, Thirlwall Castle who were holding virtual flock dispersal, retaining 2 ewes to breed a tup from for their own use. The ewe, carrying twins, is a proven breeder, with one of her sons selling for 3600 gns last autumn in Carlisle. She is by the Hewgill R8 that they bought in 2000, and noted breeder Alan Barnes, Cowden, had to dig deep to land her, with the gavel falling after some frantic bidding, out muscling a determined Northern Irish syndicate, for a new breed record for a female of 5500 gns.

Alan also took home the day's second top lot, also from the Thirlwall flock when he forked out 3200 gns for a 2003 born ewe by the N7 Rayson Hall. Again the ewe is a proven breeder, as she is the dam to one of the Scotts best getting crossing tup, X10, which has been breeding very consistently over the last couple of years, and in this sale there was a gimmer out of her made 2200 gns. The Scott's finished the day with a tremendous average of £844.42 for 38 sheep sold.

Once again there was a Scottish presence at the sale with a 19 lot consignment from Biggar breeders, J Wight & Sons. Their topper was a daughter of the £17,000 Bull & Cave, carrying triplets to the noted sire, Midlock Controversy. The ewe is a full sister to a tup Midlock sold at Hawes last backend for £2000. She was knocked down to Phillip and Sheila Sutcliffe, Horton In Ribblesdale for 2600 gns. Midlock had two daughters of Controversy sell, one selling for 2000 gns the other 1800 gns. Both travelled back on the same load, with G & G Jackson & Sons, Blubberhouses the successful bidders. The Midlock consignment averaged £1163.29 for the 19 sold.

The reserve champion in the show, judged by Nicky Robinson, Cocklaw, was from the Hewgill flock of M/s Lords. Their reserve was a gimmer lamb which is full sister to one they sold at Hawes last October for £5400. Ashley Caton, Otterburn Lodge was the buyer of the cracking, stylish lamb, paying 2600 gns. This lamb was sired by the V45 Hewgill and out of M8 Hewgill sired ewe.



Breed Recorder Holder From Thirlwall Castle

Champion of the day went to J & G Lawrie, Prestwick who were selling the ewe portion of the Brieryside flock. The ewe, by 5500 gns S1 Brieryside and in lamb to the 2400 gns X2 Longmynd, sold to J W Davidson, Brampton for 650 gns.

Averages

6 Ewes £439.25, 4 Gimmers £438.38, 9 Lambs £765.33

Thirlwall Flock	38 head £844.42
Midlock Flock	19 head £1,163.29
Coombecrag Flock	27 head £549.11
Brieryside Flock	36 head £159.83



**Champion
Female From Brieryside**

Hawes

Female Sale

Peaks At £4,400

A packed ringside at Hawes for the annual female sale suggested a renewed optimism for the sheep industry, after the doldrums of last back end. Although there was only a small entry, the quality was there, and so was the enthusiasm of breeders to try and buy into some top bloodlines. Averages were down quite a bit on the year, as expected, but the auctioneers were pleased with the clearance rate, with most lots finding a new home.

The highlight of the sale was the reserve champion from M/s Lord, Hewgill. Their classy gimmer hogg broke the breed record for a gimmer lamb as the bidding raced up to £4400, finally getting knocked down to Phillip and Sheila Sutcliffe, who are acquiring a reputation for buying some top notch sheep, and should be selling their first tups next back end.

The breeding behind the lamb was nearly inevitably the V45 Hewgill, which has provided the Lords with some great sheep over the last couple of years, indeed they picked up 2 breed awards for lambs sired at last years sales, all by him. On the mothers side, there is another great bloodline, sired by the R1 Lunesdale, the gimmer hoggs mother is a full sister to the Keer W1 £10,000 ram that Kirkby Redgate have been using so successfully.

The champion of the day, Smearsett Z23, came from last years runners up, W A & A Booth, Feizor with a gimmer hogg. The judge, Gavin White from Horton in Ribblesdale was drawn to this lamb for its sheer size, mobility and class combined with a great carcase. The bloodlines on both sides are Lunesdale lines, sired by a privately bought V33 Lunesdale, which was out of the full sister to Lunesdale P36, and out of a ewe by T1 Lunesdale which the Booths sold as an old tup for £9000 a couple of years since. Jack Lawson was the successful bidder, forking out £1000 to clinch the deal.

The Kirkby Redgate consignment usually has something to offer and this year again was no exception, with their pen leader, 4th prize gimmer hogg fetching £1000. By the noted Keer W1, the lambs grandmother is the flocks top breeder, selling over £30,000 worth of sons. Taking these good bloodlines home was R J Tiplady, Powis House.

Show Results :

Ewes and Gimmer Shearlings - 1. Proctors Farms Ltd £320 to Bainbridge Bros, 2. J Caton £320 to J Morrison, 3. A J Mason £320 to Mrs S Sutcliffe

Gimmer Hoggs 1. and Overall Champion - W A & A Booth £1000 to M/s Lawson, 2. **Reserve Champion** M/s Lord £4400 to Mrs S Sutcliffe, 3. M/s Lord £950 to G & H R Shields

Forward 34 Sheep Overall average £485. '07 - 667. Gimmer Hoggs to £4400 Av £760. Gimmer Shearlings to £800 Av £433. Ewes to £400 Av £215.



Reserve Champion and top price female



Champion female from M/s Booth



Female sold for £1000 from W M Hutchinson

Ewanston Bows Out In Style

JUST SHORT of 50 extremely dedicated years of Bluefaced Leicester breeding came to an end at Castle Douglas, last weekend, when Robin Thomson dispersed his renowned Ewanston flock from Ewanston, Dalry.

As one of the best pedigree flocks of Bluefaced Leicesters in the country, Robin boasted that enviable talent of not only being able to breed and bring out some of the best Blues in Scotland, but also show winning, highly sought after Scotch Mule ewe lambs.

Always a cheery face, Robin regularly scooped the top accolades at the Highland Show and went on to secure several of the lead prices for his Blue tups and Scotch Mule ewe lambs at Castle Douglas. But, we've not seen the last of our Robin — he's retiring to become a 'social advisor' in the local inns and taverns at such events!

Not surprisingly, despite the horrendous sheep trade experienced over the past six months and the wintery weather, breeders, old and new, were out in force to acquire some of the breed's esteemed bloodlines. Consequently, no fewer than 13 lots sold at four-figure prices with the adult portion selling to average over £1000 per head.

Top price at £3000 came for a one-crop show ewe by the V3 Brieryside tup bought at Castle Douglas for £5200. This classy female which stood second in her class at the Highland in 2005 and champion at Glenkens as a gimmer, is out of a home-bred ewe and sold Northern Ireland breeders, Seamus and Moira Laverty who run 35 ewes in their Orraview flock from Coolkeeran Road, Armoy, Ballymena.

She changed hands carrying three to the home-bred Y18 Ewanston shearling, a son of a £2000 V7 Thirlwall ram, that last year produced several top Mule ewe lambs, and later sold for £1200 to Duncan MacNiven, Craigfarg, Perth.

Earlier in the day, the Laverty's kicked the sale off to a flying start buying the first lot in the ring at £1500. This was a five-crop show ewe carrying three to the same Ewanston ram. A daughter of a P14 Elite Walton tup purchased for £1500, she boasts several top wins to her name having stood champion female at the Highland in 2002 and later taking the breeding honours at Stewartry and reserve title at Dumfries Show. She has also bred sons to £3200.

Daughters of an £1800 Boatrig V1 which was originally Shafthill-
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£3000 TOPPER
was second prize
ewe lamb at the
RHAS in 2005

bred, also proved popular selling at £2500 and £2300. Dearest was lot 13, which proved to be anything but unlucky having already bred rams to £1000. This two-crop ewe again out of a home-bred female changed hands carrying a single to a Z1 Macqueston to Alister Christie an agricultural merchant from Ballymoney, Co Antrim, NI, who also owns the 18-ewe Fields flock.

Another top breeder which bred last year's £1700 shearling ram at Castle Douglas, then made £2300 in a two way split to Douglas and Derek Hall, Lilyburn, Penicuik and Allan Wight, Midlock, Crawford. This two-crop ewe also sold in lamb to the same Macqueston ram. Described by many as 'the star of the show,' the 2007 Highland Show champion, a two-crop ewe by a P1 £3200 Ewanston tup, was also in the money, making £2000 to relatively new breeder, Heddwyn Hughes who owns 1000 Welsh Mountain ewes and also runs the Garth Blue flock numbering just 10 females. One of the best bred females forward, this classy big ewe is a half sister to a £4800 tup sold to Lowes Fell, and changed hands expecting triplets to the Y18 Ewanston ram. The five hour plus journey from Campbeltown to Castle Douglas, proved fruitful for Mrs Mary Turner too, when she bought two lots for her Killdalloig flock of 25 pedigree Blues managed by John McLachlan. She first went to £1500 for a two-crop ewe by the V3 Brieryside ram that stood second in her class at the Highland as a ewe lamb and as a gimmer. The service sire was again the Y18 Ewanston tup. Later, Mrs Turner forked out £820 for her daughter, a ewe hogg by a Y3 Cairn Smiddy tup, that stood third at the 2007 Highland Show.

Top price amongst the ewe hoggs was a £1000 call for a daughter of the £1700 Ewanston shearling ram sold last year at Castle Douglas. She was purchased by John Maxwell who owns the Boatrig flock at Aulgirth, buying a late Christmas present for his wife, Rosemary.

Other Leading Prices - Ewes and gimmers — £1100 — By a V3 Brieryside, to G Loughrey, Temain Road, Limavady, Co Londonderry, NI; by a V7 Thirlwall, to M Workman, Deerpark Road, Kilwaughter, Larne, NI. £1000 — By a P1 Ewanston, to M Workman, Larne, NI; by a V3 Brieryside to M Workman, NI; by the V3 Brieryside to A Christie, NI. **Ewe hoggs** — £900 — By an X16 Clennel, to M and C Drummond, Cassington, Maybole. **Auctioneers: Wallets Marts**

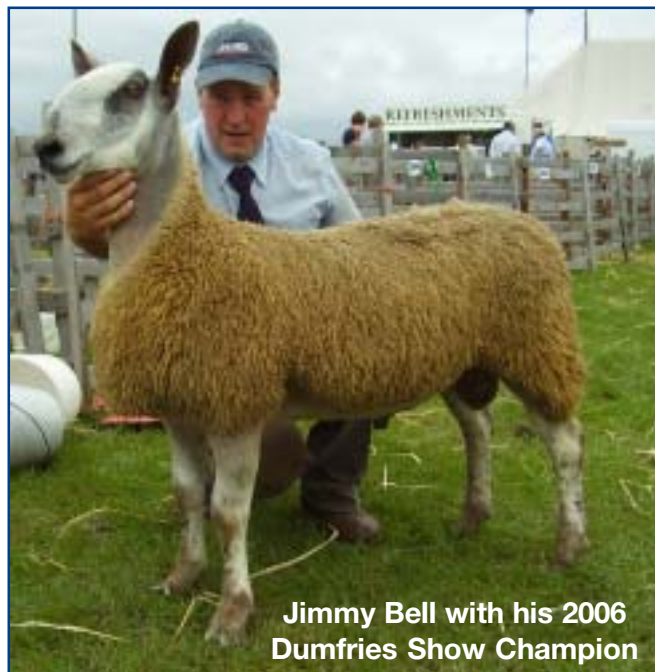
Cottage Flock Sees Increased Growth Rates

Jimmy Bell, Cottage flock started breeding Bluefaced Leicesters around ten years ago. He now has 24 ewes which are kept at Whelphill Farm, Crawford where he is employed.

He has used Natural Stockcare products on his Bluefaced Leicester flock for the last 2 years. He uses Grow A Drop Plus on his lambs and says "I have seen increased growth rates in my lambs with Grow A Drop Plus for the past 2 years".

Another product from the range is Twin Plus, which Jimmy's ewes receive twice a year pre-tupping and pre-lambing. Jimmy says "it helps maintain their condition before and after they lamb".

Above is a picture of a homebred tup lamb "Cottage Cockyboy" at Dumfries Show in 2006 where he was placed champion. He was then sold privately for £5,000 to Neil Laing, Garscube flock and M/s Minto, Bank Farm flock and a third was retained by Jimmy.



Jimmy Bell with his 2006 Dumfries Show Champion

These products are now being used on the Blackface ewes for crossing on Tintoside Farm and are producing very good results.

Jimmy purchases his products from Tom Stevenson who is always at the end of the phone to give advice.



3 Riversdale Court, Newburn Haugh Industrial Estate
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Let's Hope This Is A Better Year

I am writing this report whilst being flat out lambing, we have never known our sheep lamb so fast and with the weather being so poor we are struggling to turn them out so we have them tucked away in every nook and cranny we can find.

I farm at West Cocklaw in partnership with my Father Matt, Mother Delores and Wife Kath, also helped by our two children Amy 13 and Nicky 10. On the farm we have dairy, sheep and a small amount of arable ground. I have worked on the farm since I left school. When I was younger we used to go out and show our dairy cows which was great fun but we stopped when the trend turned to more extreme Holstein cows as we still preferred the Friesian type. We then with the help of our dear friend Potter decided to try our hand at showing our sheep instead this has also given us a great amount of pleasure and has made us many good friends. I think that Leicester breeding is in my blood as I have diaries belonging to my Grandfather showing his Leicester breeding, and my father was a founder member of the Association and a committee member for many years before he stepped down.

I have been North East Chairman for three years and National Vice Chairman for nine months I must admit I never thought of taking up this kind of position in the Association but found it a great honour to be nominated and although I am not a natural speaker I have tried to do the job to the best of my ability. Over the past nine months we really have had some highs and lows, the year started well with some lovely lambing weather followed by a very successful North Sheep at Hanging Wells, at this point the future really did look bright but then it started to rain and didn't stop ruining many of our crops and then devastating news came that Foot & Mouth had returned to UK, we were given a glimpse of hope when it appeared to be cleared up quickly but then it reappeared just before sale time wrecking the whole job, Blue Tongue also entered the UK, I must admit that my phone has been glowing at times it has been used so much. On a high note, in November I travelled to Romania with Sid and Jean, it was an eye opener and a great experience which I shall never forget.

Over the last year I have worked with Sid and I have the utmost respect for him, he has been National Chairman during a very difficult year and I think he has done a really good job.



Nicky Robinson

I hope you all have had a successful lambing and we hope this year is better for all of us than last. I am nervously looking forward to this year although the Blue Tongue situation worries me I am thinking positive and hoping to see you all at shows and sales this year. Good Luck and all the very best.



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email info@hexhammart.co.uk

Calendar Competition

All entries must be placed with the office
by 31st August 2008.

This year's prizes are -

first - £25, second - £15 and third - £10

Publicity Update

As you know we are always trying to think of new ways to get our message across and promote the breed. Of late I have noticed that the website is doing very well at spreading the word over the last 12 months we have had 22,000 hits on the site with 8,000 of those during sale time. With sale time being very difficult last year members were given the chance to advertise their flocks on the site which proved very popular and we will be continuing to offer this service again this year. We have also added a Mule page with web links to their various societies. The website also has up-to-date news on shows and sales around the regions and Northern Ireland. If you've ever thought why is there no report on a certain show/sale it is because we have not had the information sent in to us. So please keep your photos and results coming in to us and we will do the best we can. There is even news and show results from America which is quite interesting as the breed seems to have quite a bit following out there. Our range of promotional items has increased and you can now shop on line if you like. There will be some new items available this summer. There are still books on the history of the Bluefaced Leicester breed available to purchase. They are available to buy from the website or the Association office at £10 including postage and packing. So purchase now or miss out forever.

We would like to thank all sponsors and advertisers for their support over the last year. This is very much appreciated by the Association.

We would also like to see more promotion in the farming press, so we have been looking into some ideas which we can put forward hopefully to get the Bluefaced Leicester in print more.

Once again the Association will be out and about with the stand. We will be kicking off with what should be a super day at Scot Sheep, followed by the Royal Highland Show (with live sheep on the stand



Photo by Richard Miller

again), The Royal Welsh Show, and for the first time ever The Great Yorkshire Show, as well as the progeny shows. So please look us up if you are at any of these

If you want the calendar to continue then please can you all get snapping and take some fab Bluefaced Leicester pictures. Hope to see you all out and about this summer.

Remember to visit your Association

Website -

www.blueleicester.co.uk

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If any members would like to advertise in the next Bluefaced Leicester Magazine, please let Jean know at the office. Rates of adverts on request.

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Indagra 2007



L to R: Sid, Jean, Christina and Nicky



A group of Romanian farmers in the pavilion



Mike Adams, co-ordinator for the event presenting me with a diploma for the stand



L to R: Sid, the president of the sheep industry and Cristina on the stand where the skins for hats had been cured



Bluefaced Leicesters on exhibition stand

Last November myself as Chairman, Nicky Robinson, Vice-Chairman and Secretary Jean Gibbon travelled to Romania to the Indagra 2007 Romexpo, Bucharest from the 7th to 11th November, representing the Bluefaced Leicester Association.

Romania is a country in South Eastern Europe, bordered with the Ukraine, to the north and east, Bulgaria, to the south, Hungary, west, and Moldova to the east, with a coast line between Bulgaria and Ukraine to the Black Sea. It is very fertile land in the south and during the 1930's it was known as the bread basket of Europe for the growing of cereal crops.

Romania joined the European Union on the 1st January 2007 and is a country interested in Western Agriculture and livestock. The Association Stand at the event was within the British Pavilion along with nine other Sheep Associations, and about the same representation of cattle. There were Bluefaced Leicesters, Texels and Suffolks all looking in good condition. High interest was expressed in the Bluefaced Leicesters. We gave out over 1000 information leaflets (translated into Romanian) and talked to potential buyers via Cristina, our interpreter – so it was a fruitful four days.

The Romanian sheep industry is very much milk, wool and meat. They have a breed called Turcana very much our Swaledale or Blackie, a horned ewe with strong coats. They take the lambs off the ewe at about 15 kg and milk the ewe by hand, this milk goes for cheese,



Turcana sheep same as our Swaledale

being a big part of the sheep industry. Nicky and I along with Cristina were invited to the Romanian Pavilion by the President of the sheep industry for the Southern Region to give an interview on Romanian Radio. We had a meal then were shown the breeds of sheep which looked very good on show, some were goat like, a very old breed of Turcana. These graze on the high mountains in summer months. Tigau was a breed that they use for milk and the male lambs were slaughtered at 2 to 4 days old. They use the skins to make hats, which sell for around 70 to 100 euros for these big like top hats, and are said to a good source of income.

We were taken to see the skins processed and how it all worked. The Romanians are hopeful of getting British sheep to Romania with financial support from the Government. Bluefaced Leicesters can be a great asset to Romanian sheep farmers. They were positive about the breeds ability to walk long distances for summer grazing and they had no doubt about their ability to stand cold winters and hot summers.

Sheep are herded in numbers of about 300 to 400 per shepherd and are looked after twenty four hours a day by the shepherd, who always travels with the flock. I would like to congratulate the Meat and Livestock Commission for the success of having British livestock on show and express thanks to the Romanian Agricultural Minister and farmers for their interest shown. Thanks must also go to the Project Manager, Mike Adams for getting the British representatives to the Indagra Exhibition in Romania and supporting British agriculture. Let's hope this has opened the doors for British livestock in the future.



Jean and Sally Dixon from Swalex



A Tigaie sheep

2008 Spring Regional News

Northern Ireland

Chairman: Seamus O'Kane, 61 Slane Road, Carnlough, Ballymena, Co Antrim Tel: 028 28885911

As I write this report it is a typical spring morning wet, windy, cold, with the threat of snow making going out in the morning a little harder. Nature drives you on as there may be a little one not suckled, lambed in the worst place in the whole field, or mummy not overly caring, but these are the things that keep us on our toes. No doubt this will happen and things will look better when the sun is shining and the grass is growing. I myself am looking forward to the summer as we as a region are going on tour to a few venues to promote our Bluefaced Leicester breed. We all know it's getting tougher to sell rams, ewe numbers are down, other breeds boast easy care (not looking at them - this never worked at our house but we may be wrong). Feed costs and fertilizer costs have gone through the roof causing farmers to have a look more closely at viability of keeping numbers.

All these things will contribute to possibly less demand for rams from all breeds, so we find a real need to push the Bluefaced Leicester where and whenever we can. As our members are probably aware we in Northern Ireland had a reasonably good sales year in 2007. A lot came on the back of the mainland's bad fortune with Foot and Mouth and the new thing (Blue Tongue). Our thoughts have been with you all and I hope this incoming year will be more sympathetic to the farmers needs but as you know this is out of our hands. Let's be optimistic and look forward to this year. Farmers are renowned for taking it on the chin and bouncing back.

This year we will again be having our flock competition which was a great success. Pictured below were the winners of the large flock, A & J Minnis, Mossvale. Let's hope this years competition will be as good as last year.

I will finish off by wishing you all a good lambing and a happy Easter. Here in the North East we had our in lamb ewe sale at Hawes on



The Mossvale Winning Flock

North East

Chairman: Nicky Robinson, West Cocklaw, Humshaugh, Hexham, Northumberland Tel: 01434 681362

19th January, the Overall Champion from W A & A Booth selling for £1000 to M/s Lawson and the Reserve Champion from M/s Lord selling for £4400 to Mrs Sutcliffe. On the whole a good sale with 34 sheep forward averaging £485.

Then on the 2nd February 154 people turned up for our dinner dance, a really good night was had by all, However, I must admit the day before when the snow was falling heavily I was quaking in my boots, but we weren't letting a bit of snow stop us from letting our hair down one final time before lambing and it all turned out OK.

Here's hoping that this year turns out to be better than last.

North West

Chairman: John Townson, Brook House Farm, Whalley, Clitheroe, Lancs Tel: 01254 824672

I find it hard to believe that the lambing season is upon us. In our case it started on the 29th February, with the first batch of Mule ewes. As I write there is snow on the ground, but we have 5 sets of twins and 3 sets of triplets, all alive and uniform. It can't last - Bluefaced Leicesters next. A good start to lambing certainly gives a certain feel good factor and we can dismiss last Autumn as a bad dream. Fatstock prices are back to a reasonable average and markets in general seem to be active for all classes of livestock.

The recovery was no more evident than the Bluefaced Leicester female sale at Carlisle, in January with a very good average and new record of £5,500 for an in lamb ewe from the Thirlwall flock. Congratulations!

The North West Open Day in 2008 is a carry over from last year, on Sunday 3rd August, and will be hosted by John Stott, Laund Farm,

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Show/Sale Reports,
Sale Catalogues
Association/Regional News
& much, much more ...

Chipping, where the Bluefaced Leicesters are run in conjunction with the Swales, and feature a flock of 300 milk sheep. I also look forward to seeing you at Brookhouse Farm, Whalley, where a diversification on the farm has been to develop a purpose built Country Store and horse livery yard.

The Annual General Meeting will be held in early May, at Eden Hall Hotel, everyone will be informed nearer the time.

I wish everyone a prolific lambing and hope that the elements will look upon us all favourably.

Wales & South

Chairman: Dewi Jones, Plas Pigot, Llansannan, Denbigh, Clwyd Tel: 01745 870246

We had our Autumn Meeting and Christmas Dinner at the Raven Inn in Welshpool and the main items discussed were that Merfyn Roberts, Kevin Davies, Michael James, Robin Waite and Maldwyn Davies were all re elected for Council and we also welcomed Tudor Harris as Vice Chairman of the region.

We are lucky to have a new secretary Sue Davies who has kindly agreed to take on the work and also thanks to Jane Martin for her work in the past. After the meal Sid Ivinson entertained us with an interesting talk.

This year the Progeny Show will be held at Welshpool on the 7th of

August with classes for Leicesters and Mules and all members are welcomed.

We will hold our Open Day and AGM on Sunday the 24th of August by kind permission of Robin Waite at Oak Farm, Marton, Myddle, Shrewsbury.

Scotland

Chairman: Neil Laing, Tinto View House, Pettinain, Lanark, Lanarkshire Tel: 01555 870075

I am writing this in the midst of an unwelcome but all too familiar snowstorm that seems to be a feature of lambing in Lanarkshire. However the March of a new year means that the snow never lies for long but does succeed in reversing the grass growing.

I visited the South west of Scotland this week with work and was pleased to see plenty of grass in fields that had not been grazed and daffodils in full bloom. A sign perhaps that we in Lanarkshire might soon see Spring in the not too distant future.

Lambing at home is almost complete now and I have to say that it has been a pleasure to lamb the pures this year compared to my other white faced pedigree sheep. I think this is due to change of type of tup used on my ewes over the last few years. The lambs have pith about them and want to suck quickly after birth and very few need little more than gentle persuasion that the teat is not up at the top of the leg!! Orf is not much of a problem in these lambs either and I now don't need to scratch any of my blues against this disease. My Texels,



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Monday & Tuesday September 15th & 16th

The Great Annual Two Day Show & Sale of 32,000 Mule Gimmer Lambs on behalf of the North of England Mule Sheep Association. Judging 8 am. Sale 9 am each day.

Monday September 22nd

Annual Prize Show & Sale of 450 Registered Crossing Bluefaced Leicester rams on behalf of the Wales & Border Counties Breeders Club at Buih Wells Auction Mart, Powys in conjunction with Brightwells. Judging 9 am. Sale 10.30 am

Thursday October 2nd

Annual Prize Show & Sale of 950 Registered Bluefaced Leicester Rams & Females for the Bluefaced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Association. Judging 7.30 am. Sale 9 am.

Monday October 6th

Great Annual Special Sale of 5,000 Registered & Unregistered Uncrossed Swaledale Ewes and Gimmer Shearlings. Judging 8.30 am. Sale 10 am

Enquiries - R J Lund - Tel: 01969 667207 or 0797 4126397

Regional News

however, took it really badly and did manage to spread it to one of my ewes teats before they got removed to another shed, and then the Texel ewes got mastitis or stopped milking. Who said they were easy to keep !!!!

This is my last regional report as I stepped down as Chairman at our AGM in January. I have really enjoyed my 2 years in the hot seat and have met many great people during this time. I hope the membership in Scotland think I have served them well.

I didn't think that I would be dealing with another Foot & Mouth outbreak during my term. Perhaps my professional contacts came in handy after all when we were all in limbo during the movement restrictions and gave us an inside track into the mind of the government officials.



Organising a Scotsheep and several other show stands takes a fair bit of time and it would not have been possible without the help of all those members who kindly provided stock for the events. Without them the stands would not have been as good advertising for the breed as they were. I have been involved in promotion of the Cheviot Mule and know that the association is keen to keep this going, particularly as this year's Scotsheep is in the heart of Cheviot country.

I was succeeded in the chair by Jim Bell and I know that the region is in the hands of someone who is as passionate about the breed as I am and will bring a fresh drive and ideas to promoting the breed wherever it needs it.

Hopefully I will see as many new friends at the shows this year - Bluetongue permitting

Would You Like A Website

If any member would like a website, the Association are offering you a chance to have your own mini website. This would be part of the Association website and have its own link through the breeders page.

If you would like any further information please contact: elaine@cassington.com or 0797 6122508



2008 SALE DATES

Annual noted shows and sales of
2500 BLUEFACED LEICESTER SHEEP

Friday 10th October 2008 (Carlisle)
Autumn show and sale of registered rams and females

Monday 27th October 2008 (Carlisle)
Sale for all classes of rams and females

Monday 19th January 2009 (Carlisle)
Sale of in-lamb registered females

Saturday 4th October 2008 (Kirkby Stephen)
Show and sale of rams and females

Saturday 11th October 2008 (Lazonby)
Show and sale of rams and females



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2008 Association Events Not To Be Missed



▶ **Penrith Progeny Show**
again held at Penrith Show on 26th July
closing date for entries is 10th July

▶ **Wales & South West Progeny Show**
to be held on 7th August, at Welshpool Mart
closing date for entries is 10th July

▶ **Ireland Progeny Show**
again held at Antrim Show on ?
closing date for entries is ?

Association Crystal Glasses presented to all first prize winners. Rosettes to 4th place in each class.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Please note that Entry Schedules for Penrith and Welsh Progeny Shows will be sent out from the Office to recent exhibitors. Extra forms can be downloaded from the website, or obtained from the Association office. Closing dates must be adhered to. **For the Progeny Show at Antrim Show, please contact the Antrim Show Secretary direct - Linda Davies - Tel: 028 90 849466**

Junior Handling Classes At All Progeny Shows

Entries taken on the day

Ram Classification

Will take place at all three progeny shows - entries will be accepted on the day.

2008 Diary Dates

4th June

Scot Sheep, Hawick

19th - 22nd June

Royal Highland Show

3rd - 6th July

Royal Show

8th - 10th July

Great Yorkshire

21st - 24th July

Royal Welsh Show

30th July

N.S.A. Sheep Event, Malvern

3rd August

North West Region Open Day,
hosted by John Stott, Laund
Farm, Chipping and John
Townson, Brook House, Whalley

24th August

Welsh Region Open Day, hosted
by Robin Waite, Oak Farm,
Shrewsbury

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