

Ryeland Fbs

Incorporating Coloured Ryeland News

Spring 2015



Ryeland Lamb 2015

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From The Editor

Well first of all may I say a HAPPY NEW YEAR to you all. I hope you all enjoyed the Winter Newsletter, and found it fun and informative.

Now to say Welcome to the new look newsletter, after a lot of research and proposals to council, we came up with this new design, The reason being we felt it

was time to bring this unique offering as a society up to date, it based on many different societies yearly newsletter, we are lucky enough to have one every quarter.

In this newsletter we bring you a vast array of articles, From genetic updates, to a piece on the biggest sheep show in the UK. You will see that we have a few more changes in this newsletter, we have decided to make more of a feature of the Vets Articles making it an 'Issue' type article, Also we have decided to make more of a feature of the Coloured Ryeland News, with their own front cover making it the same as the overall newsletter.

Please can I ask for your continued support in providing us with information for the newsletter to make it informative and exactly what you want to read. If there is anyone out there who would like to answer a few questions about themselves and provide some photos for a member's profile, please send me an email and I shall forward you the template questions.

Once again Thank You

Jack Williams, Editor

Regional Clubs - Feedback

Council approached the existing independent Groups, Hereford Ryeland Group, Northern Ryeland Group and the recently formed Scottish Ryeland Group at an early stage to explore with them the idea of introducing regional clubs under the umbrella of the Society. To seek contributions as to how this might operate and to establish if they wished to participate. Meetings were held involving members from Council and representatives from each of the 3rd party groups. Feedback varied, the Hereford Group unanimously decided by member vote to disband subject to agreement of detailed arrangements and form a new club within the framework of the Society. The NRG was initially open to the idea and made a number of suggestions which featured in the proposals circulated to all members of the RFBS. The Scottish Group had no interest in becoming involved in any regional club that was organised within the arrangements of the RFBS.

During October a discussion document approved by Council that reflected the contributions of the NRG and HRG was circulated to all members of the RFBS. Contributions were invited and suggestions received were varied, members in areas of the Country that did not benefit from member clubs were enthusiastic. The HRG confirmed their commitment via a second member vote, the SRG reaffirmed their opposition and the NRG organised a ballot of its members. The NRG formally reported to Council by e-mail that its members were asked "if they supported the NRG staying as an independent group or not". They reported that the members who responded to

the question, (approximately 30) 84% said yes to the Group remaining independent and 16 % said no.

At the January 2015 Council meeting Council reviewed all contributions received and concluded that there was no clear consensus and consequently decided that additional member consultation should be carried out by questionnaire. The results would be handed to the new Council in April to determine the next steps.

The results from the questionnaire were significant, 164 members, 77% of those that voted, supporting the introduction of regional clubs by the Society. This result provides the new Council with clear direction, from its members, that they wish to progress. It is important however that Council takes the time to investigate how it would be possible for 100% of the members to support the introduction of regional clubs. Thanks to all members that took the time to respond to the questionnaire.

The Society is I believe at a cross road, it has arrived here because the Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland has become so popular. The Society has I believe a choice, it can change to limit its activities to the registration of pedigrees and the custodianship of the breed standards, having no involvement with other member benefits, shows, sales, social events and the like, or it can evolve and modify its arrangements to accommodate its success, but that will require members to be open minded, accept democratically determined change and proactively contribute to the process and progression of the Society.

Wishing you all the very best.
John Donovan., Chairman (retired)

Fleece & Yarn

There are two great 'Wool' events coming along soon:

Wonderwool Wales coincides with our RFBS AGM at the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells on Saturday 25th April (wonderwoolwales.co.uk). So you can take the opportunity to visit the wool festival in the morning and come to the AGM in the afternoon!

The other event is of course **Woolfest**, at Cockermonth livestock market on Friday 26th & Saturday 27th June (Woolfest.co.uk). We will have our usual Ryeland stand there, amongst the other livestock stands. Please do call by and say 'hello'. If you are visiting for the first time, you will be amazed at the variety and breadth of things 'wool related' that there are there to see and buy, including slivers (rovings) of RFBS Coloured Ryeland fleece for those of you who are hand spinners.

If you can't make it to Woolfest, you can order at any time from me (£3 per 100g + p&p).

Tony Moore

Passing on the Baton.

Sadly, my term in office as President of the Society, comes to an end at the AGM this April, at Buith Wells. And I must 'pin' the President's badge on my successor, Stephen Higgs. Stephen has been a member of the Society for many, many years, and a dear friend. But you will not get rid of me just yet, I will hold the office of vice President until April 2016 [never thought I would be saying that!]

I have enjoyed meeting lots of new members. My only regret was not being able to travel to Buith Wells in the summer, to the Royal Welsh Show. I tried very hard to make arrangements to go, but we were unable to get the car near enough to the sheep pens, and the suggestion that I had a motorised chair, did not go down too well with me!

I did enjoy The National Show held at The Royal Three Counties, The Great Yorkshire Show, Stafford County, Cheshire County, Burwarton, Ashbourne, and the Show and Sale, at which I had the honour of presenting the trophies, with Stephen. We noticed that there was not a trophy for the winner of the shearling ram class, so Stephen has donated a very beautiful cup, and hopefully, I will help him give the trophies out at the 2015 Show and Sale, and be very proud to be part of the day. I took lots of lovely, memorable photos, of a beautiful summer show season, at all the shows we attended.

It is now the beginning of February, and I am sitting writing this, in front of a big log fire, and we are snowed in.

I do hope we have an enjoyable AGM. We have a great programme for you all, and that lots of you will make the journey to mid Wales, it will be a good day, meeting lots of friends, old and new.

This Spring newsletter should be with you all before the AGM, it is usually ready for March, so, see you all at our AGM .

Carole.

[Roston Ryelands on facebook for those who still do not know me – always there, for a chat, and help if I can]

Royal Welsh Show.

The Royal Welsh Agricultural Society was formed in 1904 with its first show The Royal Welsh being held in Aberystwyth in 1904 with an overall 442 livestock entries. It then proceeded to travel around Wales hosted annually at different showgrounds, until it found its permanent home at Llanellwedd in Buith Wells, where the show has resided since 1963.

The first show in Llanelwedd had visitor numbers of 42,427, the show regularly now has over 200,000+ visitors with the record being broken in 2013 with 241,781. The RWAS show is now classed as one of the biggest and best shows in the UK, and one of the biggest sheep shows in Europe with over 3000+ sheep entries per year.

The Show also attracts many Ryelands with numbers often in excess of 100+, and has a full selection of classes;

- Ram, Two Shear Or Over
- Ram, Shearling
- Ram Lamb
- Ewe, Two Shear Or Over that has reared lambs in
- Ewe, Shearling
- Ewe Lamb.
- Ernest G Stevens Memorial Trophy and RWAS Special Rosette - For the Best Ewe Lamb RWAS Group Rosettes
- Harry Tunnicliffe Perpetual Challenge Cup And RWAS Group Rosettes - For The Best Group Comprising Ram, Ewe And Lamb Bred By The Exhibitor.
- Oscar Plant Perpetual Trophy and RWAS Championship Rosette – For the Best Male Exhibit
- Ben Davies Perpetual Cup and RWAS Championship Rosette - For the Best Female Exhibit.
- Memorial Trophy And RWAS Championship Rosette – For the overall Champion Exhibit.

The Society is also very good to us as a breed, by placing our classes in Ring 1 which is on the main public highway through the show, giving the breed the best possible footfall, which often results in the ringsides being full of onlookers, “what a great way to promote the breed”.

The show runs from the Monday to the Thursday often in the third week of July, with sheep being allowed in from the previous Saturday. You may say that’s a long time for a show, but with great facilities for exhibitor and exhibits, the time soon goes by. A lot of shows normally close down when the public leave but just like a farming event, the atmosphere continues throughout the whole week, with lots to do when the gates close. I know a lot of exhibitors treat this as a holiday where they can take their sheep with them, what more do you need?

So a bit about the past winners of the Ryeland Classes;

2000 - R & A Howells – Shearling Ram - Mansel Whiskey

2001 - No Show due to Foot & Mouth

2002 - R & A Howells – 2Sh Ram - Mansel Xtra Special

2003 - R & A Howells – 2Sh Ram - Mansel Xtra Special
2004 - G & A Bishop – 2Sh Ram - Catherton A.T.B
2005 - R & A Howells – 2Sh Ram - Mansel Ally
2006 - R & A Howells – Shearling Ram - Mansel Falcon
2007 - R & A Howells – 2Sh Ram - Ashford Farmer (Bred by RJ Webb)
2008 - R & A Howells – Shearling Ewe - Mansel J4
2009 - A & EC Parry – 2Sh Ram - Bryn Caffo Jack
2010 - D Lewis – Shearling Ram - Arberth Loverboy
2011 - D Lewis – 2Sh Ram - Arberth Loverboy
2012 - D Lewis – 3Sh Ram - Arberth Loverboy
2013 - AJ Robinson – Shearling Ewe - Hawthorns S3
2014 - D Lewis – Shearling Ram - Arberth Tugby

Ryelands also fair well when it comes to the interbreed championships with many successes, in 2004 J & S Donovan of Dolwen Ryelands won the Overall Interbreed Group of three, in 2008 R & A Howell of Mansel Ryelands also won the Overall Interbreed Group of Three, in 2010 David Lewis of Arberth Ryelands won the Interbreed Pairs, In 2011 David Lewis of Arberth Ryelands also managed to take home the Reserve Lowland Champion, So you can see Ryelands stand a very good chance against other breeds in the Overall Competitions.

Coloured Ryelands also now have their own classes at the RWAS, they consist of;

- Ram, Shearling or over
- Ram Lamb
- Ewe, Shearling or over
- Ewe Lamb
- Best group comprising 1 male, 1 ewe, 1 ewe lamb
- Best Male Exhibit
- Best Female Exhibit
- Champion Coloured Ryeland.

They secured these classes in 2010, until then they had to compete in the Any other Pure Breed of Sheep Class, You often see more than 25 Coloured Ryelands at the RWAS with entries off 44 in 2104 breaking any other entry numbers in previous years.

So a bit about the past winners of the Coloured Ryeland Classes;

2010 – J Shaw – Shearling Ewe or Over – Malt Kiln
2011 - S R & K L Bradbury – Shearling Ewe or Over – Bradvale
2012 – J & S Donovan – Ram Lamb – Dolwen Stardust
2013 - R J & A L Webb – Shearling Ewe or Over – Teme S56
2014 – A J McVicar – Shearling Ram or Over – Mansel Pharaoh (Bred by R & A Howell)

Livestock Schedules normally are sent out around the beginning of April, so why not take part in one of the biggest shows in the Country and Europe.

Jack Williams

Genetic Update - Leicester Longwool Sheep

The Genetic Sub Committee was approached by the Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders Association during 2014 as members of their Council had become aware of the successful coat colour genetics research that had been carried out by the Ryeland Flock Book Society and Cardiff University.

Leicester Longwool sheep are typically white fleeced but carry a recessive coloured gene and occasionally produce coloured sheep in the same way as the Ryeland. There has been some concern expressed by breeders of Leicester Longwool sheep over the perceived decline of white sheep and they wondered if the work carried out on Ryeland sheep might provide a mechanism for those breeders who wish to breed only white fleeced Leicester Longwool sheep to identify such animals.

After several discussions between the Leicester Sheep Breeders Association (LLSBA), the RFBS and University it was agreed that the methodology developed to distinguish heterozygous colour carriers from homozygous non colour carrier Ryeland sheep would be used to assist the LLSBA investigate colour genetics within Leicester Longwool sheep.

Subsequently the genetics officer of the LLSNA identified 12 sheep from 4 different flocks and blood samples were taken and sent to Cardiff University for analysis. These samples were put through the same process as that used for the Ryeland testing but unfortunately the results were not as clear. It appears that the genetic source of the occurrence of coloured sheep in the Leicester Longwools is not identical with that of Ryeland sheep. The case of the Leicester Longwool appears to be much more complicated than that of the Ryeland. The fleece colour can vary from very dark all over, through the various shades of grey and brown to those with black heads and legs and white fleeces.

The Council of the Leicester Longwool Breeders Association have recently provided approval for second stage testing involving the test developed for the Ryeland combined with another genetic test suggested by Professor Bruford at Cardiff University. They are at present identifying suitable animals for blood sampling and testing and we will keep you updated as to their progress.

The Leicester Longwool Breeders Association are very grateful to Ryeland Flock Book Society for the assistance provided and we wish them well with their continued research.

John Donovan

Members Views Wanted

Member Views Urgently Wanted !!!

Since 2008 the membership numbers of the RFBS have grown significantly from circa 250 to over 600. The “make up” and knowledge of the membership in terms of commercial sheep breeding and basic sheep husbandry has changed with this influx of new members. It is evident that new members need quite a bit of “hands on” assistance and Council is therefore seeking ways to provide this support.

Regional Committees have already been proposed and are currently under discussion. Council is circulating a questionnaire on this and we hope that all members will return it to the office, it is in the format of a self-addressed and pre stamped post card to make it as easy as possible for members to complete and return.

Another idea that has emerged is the potential for an Induction Document, primarily aimed at new members. This document could provide, for example, a simple navigation tool to help new members understand matters such as how RFBS is organised (i.e. its Council, Committees, shows and sales etc), how shows and sales work, how registration arrangements operate and potentially provide some very basic starter advice about sheep husbandry.

However rather than assume this would be a worthwhile idea it is better to ask for the views of members on both the idea for, and the content of, an Induction Document. Peter Davies (Dalton Springfield Ryelands on Anglesey) has volunteered to collate views. He has asked that you either contact him for more information or drop him an email with your thoughts and views about the idea and very importantly about what the content of such a document should be by the 20th April 2015. The aim is to produce material, based on the views of members, which will improve the induction of new members, and can be used as a reference document thereafter.

Peter can be contacted by email at p.davies163@btinternet.com or by telephone on 01248431192.

RFBS Annual General Meeting 2015

To be held on Saturday 25th April in the International Pavillion at the Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys.

In addition to the official business there will be a buffet lunch, followed by informative presentations from Phil Stocker, Chief Executive of the National Sheep Association and Prof Bruford from Cardiff University.

Please let the office know if you plan to attend - a idea of numbers would be helpful for catering purposes.

Great Yorkshire Show Fleece Trophies.



I am delighted to donate two trophies in the form of salvers as illustrated. These are to be awarded annually for:

- The best Ryeland Fleece
- The best Coloured Ryeland Fleece

The trophies are to be managed by the Northern Ryeland Group.

The class description for the Ryeland is clear, but over the past few years there has been some confusion about the Coloured Ryeland Fleece class. This will be further clarified by the Great Yorkshire Show authorities, prior to entering.

Judging normally takes place early on the Tuesday morning,

I hope that the trophies will encourage you to enter a fleece(s). I wish you all the best in your fleece preparation. Lots of entries please!!

Kind Regards

Stephen Higgs (Hardgate Ryelands)

(President Elect, Ryeland Flock Book Society)

New Members.

New Members - 18.10.14 - 17.01.15

Ryelands

01939 - Carla Mitchell, Grassknop Farm, Skelton, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 9TP

01940 - Sandra Sephton, Three Stones, Whitehouse Lane, Litton, Bath, BA3 4PS.

01941 - Sally Yearp, Aston House, Main Road, Shurdington, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL51 4XT

01942 - Abigail & Matt Webber, Lovedere Farm, Goathurst, Bridgewater, Somerset, TA5 2DD

01943 - Jenny Fozzard, School House, East Moors Road, Helmsley, North Yorks, YO62 5HJ.

01944 - Mr & Mrs Turnbull, Keepers Cottage, Troup, Camrie, Aberdeenshire, AB45 3JN

01945 - Julie Ellis, Pashley Green Farm, North Lane, Cawthorne, Barnsley, S75 4AQ

01946 - Ms Deborah Hammond, Middle Farm, Newton Lane, Newton, Rugeley, Staffs, WA15 3PA

01947 - James Leman, Spring Common, Stanwell Lane, Great Bourton, Banbury, Oxon, OX17 1QS

01948 - Debbie Hutchinson, Park Lodge, Litmarsh, Marden, Hereford, HR1 3EZ.

01949 - Natasha Godsell, Ivy Cottage, St Leonards Avenue, Osgodby, North Yorks, YO8 5HE

01950 - Miss Pauline Jones, Derlwyn Fach, Llangeitho, Tregaron, Ceredigion, SY25 6QU

01951 - Diane & Michael Bailey, Trewennen Tryger, St Teath, Cornwall, PL30 3LB.

Coloured Ryelands

513C - Deirdre Squire, 12 Springhill, Upper Cam, Dursley, Gloucestershire, GL11 5PF

514C - Carla Candler, Fryston Grange, Fryston Common, Monk Fryston, North Yorks, LS25 5EP

515C - Gail Dodd, Woodlands Cottage, Whitchurch Road, Spurstow, Cheshire, CW6 9RU

516C - Ferdinand Newall, Orleton Manor, Orleton, nr Ludlow, Herefordshire, SY8 4HR

517C - Molly Hole, Wern Panna House, Llangwm, Usk, Monmouthshire, NP15 1HA

518C - Dorothy Hill, Hanwell House, Swainshill, Hereford, HR4 7QB.

519C - Edward Duncan, Nether Oldwhat, New Deer, Turiff, Aberdeenshire, AB53 6UJ.

520C - Miss JA Hodgson, Wyville Farm, Slingsby, York, YO62 4AP.

521C - Ms Deborah Hammond, Middle Farm, Newton Lane, Newton, Rugeley, Staffs, WA15 3PA

522C - James Leman, Spring Common, Stanwell Lane, Great Bourton, Banbury, Oxon, OX17 1QS

523C - Dianne Goodwin Thomas, White House Farm, Llanvihangel - Ystern-Llewrn, Monmouth, ,

Membership Terminated

01827 & 435C - Mr Phillip Onions, Keer Falls Forest Farm, Arkholme, Carnforth,

Genetics Testing Update

This article summarises the outcome from the Masters in Research (MRes) Project undertaken at Cardiff University in 2013, the major findings from the first year of members genetic testing during 2014 and updates to the testing protocol being implemented in 2015.

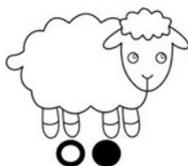
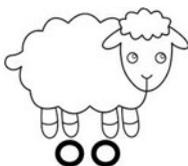
Coloured Ryelands: A Recap

The agouti signalling protein (ASIP) gene is responsible for controlling the coat colour in ryeland sheep. A variant of a specific gene is called an allele. In the ryeland breed there are two variations of this ASIP gene, the dominant allele associated with white fleece and a recessive allele associated with colour fleece. Alleles occur in pairs, one being inherited from the sire and one from the dam. When a gene contains two copies of the same allele it is denoted homozygous, when the alleles differ it is denoted heterozygous. In the ryeland there are three genetic types for this gene.

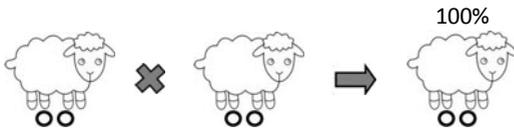
Homozygous Ryeland

Heterozygous Ryeland

Homozygous Coloured Ryeland

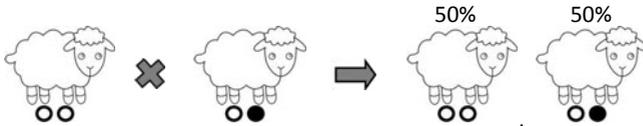


The heterozygous ryeland is white fleeced because the white allele is dominant and expressed. However, the heterozygous ryeland can pass either the dominant “white” allele or the recessive “coloured” allele to its offspring. The table demonstrates all the variations on the ASIP gene with the mating of two ryelands. The percentages detailed are an indication of the statistically likely progenies. These are expected probabilities but deviations from these numbers are expected to be observed. The unlikely occurrence of a genetic mutation affecting coat colour is excluded from the article.



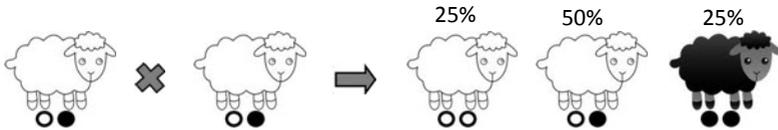
Mating of two homozygous rylands

100%
Results in 100% homozygous rylands. It is impossible for progeny to be coloured rylands or to carry the recessive 'coloured' allele



Mating of a homozygous ryland and heterozygous ryland

50% 50%
Progeny will be either homozygous rylands or heterozygous rylands. It is impossible for this mating to result in a coloured ryland, however it is possible for the offspring to carry the recessive "coloured" allele



Mating of two heterozygous rylands

25% 50% 25%
Progeny will be homozygous rylands, heterozygous rylands or coloured ryland. This is where the expression of the recessive 'coloured' allele results in accidental coloured rylands

Mating involving Coloured Rylands



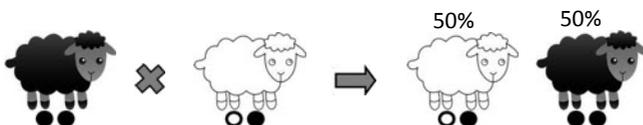
Mating of two coloured rylands - homozygous for the recessive 'coloured' allele

100%
Results in 100% coloured rylands. It is impossible for progeny to carry the dominant "white" allele and therefore be white fleeced



Mating of a coloured ryland and homozygous ryland

100%
Progeny will be 100% heterozygous rylands, these offspring will have the potential to produce coloured rylands, this mating is producing with certainty white fleeced rylands being carriers of the recessive 'coloured' allele



Mating of a coloured ryland and heterozygous ryland

50% 50%
Progeny will be heterozygous rylands or coloured rylands

Cardiff University MRes Project

Members at the 2008 AGM set up a Genetics Sub Committee with the objective to investigate “DNA profiling” in line with stated objects of the RFBS Articles of Association to keep abreast of modern and scientific developments in breeding of sheep.

In January 2013 an MRes Research Project was undertaken at Cardiff University department of bioscience under the direction of Professor Bruford. The study aim was to identify the genetic basis of coat colour within the ryeland breed and to explore genetic variation within the national flock. The study was completed in August 2013 and identified that the ASIP gene was responsible for coat colour in ryeland Sheep. Significantly a genetic test was established which identifies the presence of the recessive ‘coloured’ allele and therefore distinguishes between a homozygous ryeland and heterozygous ryeland by DNA analysis alone.

The Genetics Sub Committee carried out a study, in parallel with the Cardiff University Masters Project, which investigated the genetic diversity within the national flock using 30 years of registration data. This analysis influenced the animals selected for sampling ensuring DNA samples were taken from all the prolific and distinct lines within the national flock. This ensured that the findings from the MRes Research Project would be consistent throughout the ryeland breed. The analysis completed by the Genetics Sub Committee also concluded that virtually all ryelands born today have a coloured carrier in their 4 generation pedigree, indicating that it is virtually impossible to breed for homozygous ryelands by pedigree analysis alone. A full report on this study can be found in the 2013 flock book.

Introducing the Test

The Genetics Sub Committee worked closely with Professor Bruford and his team at Cardiff University and carried out member consultation to establish a testing protocol for the introduction and use of the genetic test as a tool available to members of the Ryeland Flock Book Society. This tool allows members to identify, through genetic testing, whether a white fleeced ryeland is homozygous or heterozygous to the dominant ‘white’ allele, and therefore establish if it is possible for that animal to produce coloured ryelands. The testing protocol addressed members’ views and concerns along with incorporating advice from Cardiff University. A copy of the testing protocol can be found in the 2014 flock book.

The work completed at Cardiff University, the genetic diversity analysis and the introduction of the test as a tool available to members has been completed at a very modest cost to the society of £700.

What we have found since the development of the test

Homozygous white ryelands were successfully identified during the development of the test. Members who made sheep available for the trials provided blood samples, breed characteristics details, progeny and sibling records along with opinions to whether they believed the animal to be homozygous white or a carrier of the recessive

‘coloured’ allele. This information has helped with the interpretation of the results and enabled an investigation into whether breed character or outward appearance of the animal, is associated with being a carrier of the recessive ‘coloured’ allele. Some of the significant findings are as follows:

- Examples of homozygous white ryelands have been identified, some from parentage that previously sired coloured offspring. This is consistent with the inheritance patterns as outlined in the series of diagrams above.
- Most significant are examples from twins with one sibling being homozygous white and the other coloured. This demonstrates with certainty that breeding together heterozygous ryelands can produce homozygous white offspring.
- Examples of ryelands having never produced coloured offspring over several mating’s have been identified by the test to be carriers of the recessive ‘coloured’ allele (heterozygous). An unexpected and interesting result to the breeder. All heterozygous ryeland sheep will pass on this recessive ‘coloured’ allele to a significant percentage of their offspring.
- Examples of ryelands having characteristics associated by many experienced members with the recessive ‘coloured’ allele including dark ear colour have been proven on testing to be homozygous white.
- Homozygous white genetics has been discovered where the breeder expected the animal to be a carrier for the recessive ‘coloured’ allele.
- Black spots have been found to be present on both homozygous white and heterozygous ryelands indicating that the presence of black spots is likely to be the result of a birth mark and / or associated with another gene.

The test was made available to members for testing lambs born in 2014 onwards. It is very encouraging that every member who used the test in 2014 discovered homozygous white genetics in their flock. A condition for the use of the test was that a simple questionnaire was completed for each animal tested, capturing the key characteristics of that animal and help generate a database of information.

There were concerns raised during member consultation that the recessive ‘coloured’ allele may be linked to some of the desirable breed characteristics, most notably dark skin around the eyes, dark nose and ears. On analysing the information that has been collated throughout the initial development of the test and the first year of members testing there seems to be no strong correlations between carriers of the recessive ‘coloured’ allele and the various characteristics within the breed. This suggests, at this point, that the agouti signalling protein (ASIP) gene is not associated with other visual breed characteristics. There is however a need to be cautious because the sample size is still relatively small but our knowledge will grow as the test population evolves. Most significantly these findings demonstrate how difficult or impossible it is to identify homozygous white genetics using breeding records, pedigrees and visual inspection

alone. Using this test introduces certainty and enables breeders to make informed decisions in the context of white genetics.

Homozygous Ryelands

Examples where genetic testing has identified homozygous ryelands, it is impossible for these to produce coloured ryelands.



A ram identified as homozygous during the development of the test. This ram is the progeny of two known recessive 'coloured' allele carriers and has coloured siblings. Encouragingly this animal demonstrates the very desirable dark skin around the nose, eyes and ears. He would have been considered as a recessive allele carrier by the breeder but now could replace his sire without the loss of the sires desirable characteristics or genetic diversity.



A ewe identified as homozygous during the development of the test. This ewe is the progeny of two known recessive 'coloured' allele carriers from lines strongly associated with producing coloured ryelands. Encouragingly this animal has a very successful show record demonstrating some of the very best animals can have homozygous white genetics.



A homozygous white ram lamb identified during members testing in 2014. This is a good example of identifying homozygous white genetics using the tool now available to all members. This lamb is an excellent example with dark characteristics. Having been confirmed with certainty as homozygous to the 'white' dominant allele.



A ram lamb born in 2015 from two homozygous white parents. This lamb by default is homozygous white and cannot produce coloured ryeland offspring. Notably this homozygous white ryeland has desirable breed character, dark ears and nose.

Opportunities

There are many opportunities associated with the introduction of a genetic test distinguishing homozygous and heterozygous ryelands.

Breeding Strategy

Any breeding strategy should not select on one character but take into account various characteristics such as sheep correctness, carcass size, breed character and wool quality, so that an adaptive management programme can be developed, not based on one single desirable trait. Being homozygous to the 'white' dominant allele is just another trait to consider. This test allows homozygous and heterozygous ryelands to be distinguished with certainty, this has significant advantages when incorporated into a balanced breeding strategy, allows more informed breeding decisions and ultimately reduces the frequency of coloured ryelands born to white fleeced ryelands.

It has been shown that ryelands that have previously sired coloured ryelands can produce homozygous white ryelands. The ability to test the offspring from known recessive coloured carriers can increase the genetic diversity of the national flock. It is common practice for known coloured carriers to be removed from the breeding pool when homozygous white genetics is being pursued in attempt to reduce the percentage of the recessive 'coloured' allele being inherited. This test encourages those animals, with other desirable characteristics, to be retained within the flock and offspring tested. The identified lambs with homozygous genetics could then potentially replace their parents in the flock without the loss of the desirable characteristics or genetic diversity.

Once homozygous white genetics are incorporated into a breeding strategy, where no two heterozygous ryelands are allowed to mate, no coloured ryelands will occur in that flock. Limiting mating to only homozygous x homozygous and homozygous x heterozygous removes the occurrence of coloured ryeland births and also increases the percentage of homozygous ryelands produced. This strategy progressively increases the flocks' percentage of homozygous ryelands and also retains the existing heterozygous ryelands maintaining genetic diversity. This strategy is already being implemented by some members where homozygous males identified in 2014 are being used on ewes that have previously produced coloured ryelands.

Commercial Benefits

Implementation of this test has the potential to reduce the occurrence of coloured ryelands from ryelands at both an individual flock and national flock level. This has the potential to make the ryeland a more commercially attractive breed to commercial farmers who do not want to introduce coloured fleece genetics into their flock. This has been the most significant and proactive development for improving the commerciality of the breed by the Society to date.

Improving the relationship with Cardiff University

The introduction of the test, as a member's tool, has further developed the relationship between the Ryeland Flock Book Society and Cardiff University and has opened up the opportunity for the Society to be involved with a significant European study into climate change and livestock genetics.

Update to Testing Protocol

For the 2015 testing program the protocol has been modified by the Genetic Sub Committee in conjunction with Council and Cardiff University as follows:

Cost

The cost of the test has been reduced from £18 per animal tested to £12.

Timescales

The sampling window has been changed from May/June/July to March/April/May which will allow Cardiff University to report the results earlier in mid-July.

Eligible Animals

In addition to registered lambs born in 2015, registered yearlings born in 2014 can also be submitted for testing.

Simon Donovan

Genetics Sub Committee

Coloured Lambs from White Parents

Background

On 11th March 2014 it was reported, in the RFBS facebook group page, that two white twin lambs had been born to a coloured dam and sire, there has been rumors of this happening before but with no substantive evidence.

The owners are new breeders and purchased the dam and sire from separate established flocks and were confident that there has been no accidental involvement of another ram. The Genetic Sub Committee raised this with Professor Bruford as we know that the recessive coloured gene is not involved with this issue, Professor Bruford felt that there were three possible explanations:

1. inadvertent involvement of an unknown sire,
2. presence of a dominant coloured gene or a
3. Genetic mutation.

Having met with the breeder and explored the circumstances we believe that the most likely explanation is that a '**dominant coloured**' gene was involved somewhere in the pedigree of that bloodline.



Fig 1 Coloured ewe with her white lambs sired by a coloured ram

Following discussions between the Genetic Sub Committee and Council it was decided to approach the breeder to explore the circumstances and obtain permission for the Society, at its cost, to arrange blood sampling of all animals involved. John Donovan met with the breeder and obtained agreement for blood sampling to take place and for those samples to be forwarded to Cardiff University for investigation.

Samples were taken and dispatched to the University and included the two white twin lambs, the sire and the dam. A sample of the dam sister and her lambs were also taken and sent to the University as she had also produced twin lambs in 2014 one of which was white and one colored but both parents were again coloured, the same sire was involved with both ewes.

We were confident regarding the parentage of the sire, he was typical in Ryeland character but having viewed photographs supplied by the breeder of the two ewes (dams of the lambs) figure 1 & 2 they were felt to be distinctly lacking Ryeland character, very clean in the face and legs. In this circumstance enquiries were made with the breeder of the ewes, as this was not the breeder of the lambs, with a view of obtaining bloods from the grandsire and grand dam of the lambs. Unfortunately the grand dam was found to be dead, the sire being alive was blood sampled for investigation at Cardiff University. When discussing the issue with the breeder of the ewes (dams of the lambs) we enquired if it was possible that another ram may have served the grand dam. There were two rams on the holding at the time so arrangements were agreed to sample both Coloured Ryeland rams.

In terms of testing Professor Bruford investigated all the sheep involved.

Results

- All 8 samples have been successfully tested using the test method established for the identification of Homozygous Ryelands, Heterozygous Ryelands and Coloured Ryelands.
- We found that the recorded sire of the lambs is a Coloured Ryeland.



Fig 2 Coloured ewe (sister of ewe in fig1_ with one white and one coloured lamb sired by a coloured ram.

- We found that the two ewes are both Heterozygous Ryelands that means white fleeced Ryelands carrying the coloured recessive gene. However they both have coloured fleeces which means that another gene has influenced the expression of colour. That is a dominant gene and proves that the two ewes together with their lambs are not pure Ryelands and that another breed of sheep is involved somewhere in the pedigree.
- We found that the recorded grand sire of the lambs was tested to be a Coloured Ryeland.
- We found that the second Coloured Ram was tested to be a Coloured Ryeland.
- In the circumstance it seems likely that the “faulty” bloodline is on the grand dams line but the grand dam is dead and cannot be investigated.

Further testing

The University has been engaged to carry out parentage testing on the samples provided, this will confirm the sire and grand sire lines.

The University has significant knowledge on the genetic mechanisms for colour expression in Black Welsh Mountain sheep, this is a potential candidate of the ‘dominant coloured gene’ in the coloured ewes. The University has been engaged by Council to carry out tests to confirm or exclude if the Black Welsh Mountain has been introduced to this pedigree line.

Conclusion and actions taken to date

The owner of the lambs will not be seeking to register them, nor will seek to breed pedigree Coloured Ryelands from that line again.

Council has decided to remove the pedigree of the two dams from the flock books.

Discussions have taken place between Council, the breeder of the dams and the breeder of the lambs and all parties have resolved the issue to everybody’s satisfaction.

Council is firmly of the opinion that all parties involved are the innocent victim of circumstance and that the ‘dominant coloured gene’ has been introduced several generations back in the pedigree.

Further genetic testing has been engaged that we hope will cast further light on this unfortunate situation, it will prove family links and hopefully answer how a ‘dominant coloured gene’ has been introduced to that line.

The circulation of a ‘dominant coloured gene’ in the national flock is concerning, this will be evidenced by further examples of white lambs occurring from coloured parents. Council has asked for this investigation to be brought to the attention of all members and for them to be advised that Society has the ability and will investigate circumstance of doubtful pedigree.

John Donovan, Genetics Sub Committee

RFBS Official Merchandise

NOW ON SALE

RFBS Polo Shirts, Sweat Shirts and very smart Hoodies with contrasting coloured hoods. Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland versions available



Choose from a wide range of colours and sizes. Embroidery is located on the left of the chest. Expanded range to follow in due course.



Polo Shirts from XS to 4XL.

Adults Hoodies XS to 3XL £19.00

All sizes £12 plus p&p

Kids Hoodies 5 - 12 years £13.50

Coming soon - a new edition RFBS Tie

Scottish Ryeland Group

The Scottish Ryeland Group are pleased to announce details of their first National Show, A few points about this are:

- * It's part of the Dumfries Show, on Saturday 1st August
- * There will be a full set of classes for the Ryelands, with a new class for Group of 3.
- * For the first time , there will be Coloured Ryeland classes, as per the Ryelands, except for a pairs class (instead of Grp of 3)
- * Entries are open to all, with trophies for Ryeland and C.R. Champions.
- * Scottish entrants will also be competing for the new 'Scottish Ryeland Champion' and 'Scottish Coloured Ryeland Champion' shields.
- * There will be Ryeland hospitality / breed promotion , on the sheep lines.
- * Anne Davies will be judging the Ryelands, with Andrew Hunter Blair judging the Coloureds. (White coats for handlers, please)

Entries via Dumfries Show Secretary -

susanbicket@gmail.com

Herefordshire Ryeland Group

The Group met on 29 January for our AGM with over 25 attendees. The meeting was held at Burghill Golf Club which we have found as an excellent location for our group.

The Chairman gave a summary of all the activities we held in 2014 and thanked all concerned involved in these to make sure they ran well. The success of the Herefordshire Group show held at Bromyard Gala in July, the BBQ held at Oakberrow in September , the support for the Ryelands at Wormside Ploughing match in October and of course the finale of the year the Flock Competition which was well supported by our group.

The meeting did discuss the proposed Regional groups and were generally in agreement but all felt the areas were too large and more work was required to reduce these to make them more manageable to reach the goal of communicating with Ryeland members.

2015

The Meeting unanimously voted the following Officers –
Chairman – Steve Gray, Vice Chairman – Rachel Leake, Secretary and Treasurer – Dorothy Hill.

Proposed events for 2015 to which all members located in Herefordshire and surrounding counties are invited to attend.

Date tbc – **Herefordshire Group Day** – A welcoming party for all those either new to owning Ryelands or new to attending our group events. The idea was to hold this in May, but at the moment struggling to find a suitable date.

Bromyard Gala 5 July – Classes for Ryelands and Coloureds. Schedules and entry forms will be available nearer to the event. Judging in the morning and then social in the afternoon, as well as the opportunity to walk around the Gala.

Group Visit – To be confirmed.

BBQ and presentation to the Flock winners to be held at Rosemary Hawnt's farm, Ashgrove Farm, Marden, Hereford. Details to follow.

Wormside Ploughing Match –Ryeland classes – Saturday 3 October

Any Ryeland members who live in Herefordshire or surrounding counties want to attend any of our events, please contact our Secretary Dorothy Hill (email hill.hanwell@btinternet.com) or Steve Gray – 01531 640102 (email info@oakberrow.co.uk).

Veterinary Special

Issue 1

Early Death in Lambs.

We're right in the middle of the lambing season. This is traditionally the busiest time of year on many farms. This is therefore an appropriate time to discuss problems associated with the lambing period. This article will concentrate on the important subject of **PERINATAL LAMB MORTALITY** (lamb deaths around the time of lambing).

PERINATAL LAMB MORTALITY ACCOUNTS FOR THE HIGHEST LOSSES IN THE LAMB PRODUCTION CYCLE. Losses of **15%** or more are common in many flocks. This article will discuss some of the commonest causes of early death in lambs, namely:

1. **Hypothermia**
2. **Starvation**
3. **Watery Mouth**

The role of other factors such as dystocia (difficult lambing), lambing injuries and abortion will not be discussed here.

1. HYPOTHERMIA

This is a more significant problem for outdoor flocks as a result of exposure. However, it is encountered in housed flocks especially when combined with the birth of lamb triplets and quads. Small lambs born into a cold environment are more at risk especially if coupled with wet conditions. Individual lambs from multiple births may be under a particular disadvantage especially if they are immature, weak, and fail to compete for their mother's licking and grooming attention. This maternal behaviour normally encourages early sucking reflex for essential colostrum. Bigger lambs are at risk after a difficult lambing especially if coupled with breathing difficulties. Lambs born from ewes in poor condition are also at risk especially if the lambs themselves are also in poor condition.

Hypothermia can be checked by taking rectal temperature. This is the most reliable method for making a diagnosis. A simple animal thermometer is all that's needed. If you haven't used this technique previously then please seek instruction – try your vet! The normal temperature range for a lamb is 102-104°F (39-40°C). A reading below 99°F (37°C) indicates severe hypothermia.

Hypothermia is responsible for around HALF the deaths of lambs in the first few days of life.

2. STARVATION

Starvation is usually manifested as delayed hypothermia which occurs in lambs over 6 to 12 hours old which have failed to suck and subsequently run out of energy reserve. The lamb is losing heat faster than it can be produced. Lack of activity is usually the first sign that a lamb is starved and is losing heat.

3. WATERY MOUTH

This usually happens when the lamb is a few day old. It is usually caused by E. coli infection. Affected lambs are cold, listless, wet around the mouth, possibly collapsed and often have a distended (swollen) stomach which “rattles” (hence “rattle belly”) when the lamb is shaken. The lamb is initially infected by swallowing large number of bacteria (E. coli) from its mother's fleece and the bedding during the first few hours of life. Watery Mouth is probably responsible for about 1 in 5 deaths of very young lambs born indoors.

The general management (prevention and treatment) of hypothermia, starvation and E. coli infection depends on the following THREE ESSENTIAL steps immediately after lamb birth:

1. **ADEQUATE COLOSTRUM** – the adequate provision of good quality colostrum is the KEY to lamb survival. Its importance cannot be over emphasised. Lamb losses occur because of too little colostrum (often none), or colostrum given too late. A healthy lamb needs 50mls of good colostrum for every Kg

bodyweight within the first 6 hours of life. This should be given via a lamb stomach tube – please seek advice regarding correct procedure to avoid complications. This needs repeating every 6 hours if the lamb still hasn't suckled. Colostrum can be obtained from milking the ewe, from frozen ewe colostrum, frozen cow colostrum (not as good), or a proprietary colostrum substitute that can be purchased. It is inadvisable to stomach tube a lamb that is completely collapsed and cannot lift or support its own head. It's better to inject these with a dextrose (glucose) solution into the abdominal cavity and then tubing once they can lift their heads. I would recommend that you seek advice regarding this from your own vet before attempting. It's a simple and effective technique but does need to be done correctly!

2. DRYING OFF – it is essential to thoroughly dry off fluids on the coat of the lamb if the ewe fails to. This will prevent heat loss and aids in stimulating the lamb.
3. SUPPLEMENTARY HEAT – If the lamb chills (temperature falls to or below 99°F (37°C) then it needs to be warmed. There are a variety of methods that can achieve this with a simple overhead heat lamp being the most common. Do be careful NOT to cook the lamb(s)!! This can be checked by taking the rectal temperature of the lamb with a thermometer ensuring it doesn't exceed 104°F (40°C).

It's advisable to contact your vet for advice if there's a suspicion that a lamb or lambs are suffering from Watery Mouth. There are additional preventative measures that can be very effective. In addition your vet can advise the correct treatment for lambs already suffering from the condition. Watery mouth is a condition where prevention is definitely better than cure.

Finally a quick word on hygiene and navel dressing. A condition called "joint ill" where lambs suffer from wet, swollen infected navels, swollen stiff joints and possibly internal abscesses in the stomach and liver is caused by poor hygiene. This can often lead to ill thrift, chronic lameness and possibly death. Ideally ewes about to lamb are placed in clean disinfected pens that have been mucked out since the previous ewe and lamb. The lamb's navel should be treated as soon as possible after birth. This should be done with either a strong iodine solution or an appropriate antibiotic spray (usually oxytetracycline based). **Navel dressing is an essential procedure in the management of the new born lamb.**

Best of luck with your lambing!
Ifan Lloyd MRCVS

Coloured Ryeland News

March 2015



Coloured Ryeland Ewe & Lamb 2015

Coloured Ryeland Sub Committee

Chairman

Andy McVicar 01686 610615

Committee members

Ruth Mills 01584 711489

Carol Bateman 01874 636549

Chris Smyth 01671 830359

Paula Wills 01736 786173

Jana Peach 01686 440636

Selwyn Evans 01267 275666

Tony Moore 01925 730530

Valerie Howells 01268 961260

Members Profile.

For this issue, we have been sent a members profile from one of our newer breeders Eleri Hughes, Please enjoy the article, and if you would like to contribute a members profile, just send an email to Jack.w.r.williams@googlemail.com and I shall forward you the question template.

Prefix - Celyn

Flock No. – 347C

Owner – Eleri Hughes (& Geraint Hughes)

1. Location:

Trefriw, which is near Llanrwst, about 5 miles from Betws y Coed in North Wales. An upland hill farm in Snowdonia. We have 40 acres at home and another 10 in Betws y Coed.

2. How did you get into Ryelands?

I am not from a farming background at all, was brought up in the seaside town of Prestatyn on the North Wales coast, I met Geraint in 2008 and we married in 2011. Geraint and his parents have been living on this smallholding all of Geraint's life. His parents kept sheep and a couple of horses. Me and my children, from my previous marriage, moved in in 2009. The first animals I kept here, of my own, were pigs, buying two sow weaners in 2009, then Geraint and I started with the highland cattle, buying 2 at Oban, also in 2009. I was interested in Ger's parents' sheep, particularly at lambing time and we visited local shows where I was able to get a good look at lots of different breeds. I fell in love, initially, with greyfaced dartmoors and began talking about having a couple of my own. While we were researching them we came across Ryelands, and I fell in love again, especially when I saw the coloured ones. It all went quiet for a while, then Christmas 2010 my surprise Christmas present was two CR ewes Millie & Nadir that we collected from Jenni Frost on Boxing Day. I was thrilled to bits with them both. My flock name Celyn is Welsh for Holly and is because my first ones were Christmas presents.

3. Do you keep any other breeds?

My parents in law, who live next door, but we farm altogether, keep Texels & Badger Faces (Torddu)

4. How would you describe a sheep as typical of your flock?

I only have 14 and know them all individually, but on the whole I would say we have good mothers, easy lambers, tough resilient sheep. It is important to us that they are good sheep first before good examples of the breed and we make sure anything we buy in is a good sturdy sheep with a good confirmation, and likewise anything we produce. I have two rams, a lightwater and a brookend (out of white parents). The lightwater is dark and stocky, the brookend very light and very big. We are getting some great lambs from them both and building and improving the flock. It has been slow and sure, rather than buying lots in we are breeding – but there is satisfaction in seeing the flock grow slowly and seeing good sheep emerge.

5. What is your attitude to producing coloured lambs?

I know I don't need to answer this one – but from a coloured breeders point of view – coloured lambs from white parents are essential new blood for us, especially since often the whites are bigger and much better examples of sheep, confirmation wise – buying in lambs from white parents might be useful for improving coloured flocks. I have one ram that is registered in the supplement and he is a great size and shape.



Geriant walking the sheep to new grazing

6. When do you usually plan to lamb?

We usually aim to put the rams in with the ewes towards the end of August. Therefore lambing begins February – March.

7. Your facilities?

Open fronted lambing sheds, all ewes are in from scanning onwards, after lambing ewes & lambs moved into recycled plastic individual bonding pens.

8. Do you have any help?

There are four adults, three of us work full time, I am a district nurse, my husband works for the National Trust as a countryside ranger and mother in law is a police call handler & dispatcher. We do the farm jobs before and after work and on days off, father in law is only one here full time.

9. Have you ever used sponging or A.I.?

Never for the ryelands, have done twice with the texels, but not with much success.

10. Do you scan? (If so When)

Yes, usually between Christmas and New Year, or early in new year – when most of us have a bit of time off.

11. What proportion do you usually send for meat?

Not sure it's as scientific as a certain proportion at the moment, with having so few and still building my flock – so far we have kept all the ewe lambs, selling one as an older ewe for breeding. All the males, bar one have gone for meat. So far have only had one ram lamb good enough to keep and sell as a ram. He was well grown and had good confirmation. The other breeds kept here is a similar system, although there are more, so only particularly good ones are kept (10%) for replacement ewes, some ewes sold for breeding and some go for meat. Males mostly go for meat and a few sold as ram lambs, if good enough, for breeding.

12. Do you eat your own meat?

Yes definitely. It is a pleasure to know we are putting good healthy meat on the table that we know has been well cared for.

13. What do you plan to do with your old ewes?

I still have my old ewe Millie, she is 7 years old, still healthy with a full mouth of teeth, she has just given us another set of twins. She is a bit of a

favourite and will probably be retired here when the time comes, but I realise I can't be so sentimental every time. The texels and badger face ewes are either sold on for breeding on lowland farms or go to market as cull ewes.

14. Shearing: when do you shear your show sheep?

Generally shear June/July but have started to shear my show sheep earlier, maybe April. I only show at small local shows.

15. Do you shear twice a year (lambs in late summer)?

No

16. What do you do with your wool?

At the moment it gets bagged with the other coloured wool (badger face) and goes off to the wool marketing board. We have sold a couple of fleeces individually in the past to a friend in Ludlow for felting. Would love to find a way of having the wool back as yarn, or to see to see it used, but not sure I have the time to take up spinning myself.

17. Describe your preparation of your show sheep (if applicable)

Fairly basic really, shear the adults early, bring them in, bit of extra feed, washing, trimming and a bit of halter training.

18. Do you feed hay, haylage or silage?

Yes, mostly haylage depending on availability. Prefer haylage.

19. Do you make any?

No, unfortunately not, nowhere flat or good enough for that.

20. What concentrates do you feed?

HJ Lea Oakes ewe nuts, just changed to them and they seem to be doing the ewes really well.

21. Do you use feed blocks or mineral supplements?

Yes, Crystalyx high energy mineral blocks and Mole Valley Farmers feed supplement blocks.

22. Health products and routines:

All sheep are in the Heptavac P Plus vaccination system, periodic worming and pest control.

23. What equipment do you have? - Turning crate? Weigher? Handling System? Creep Feeder? Hay Racks? Field Shelters?

Creep feeder/shelter, weigher, hay racks, troughs, footbath, heat lamp, handling system ...

24. What breeding records do you keep?

Keep a diary in which I note things that happen, jobs we do day to day with all the animals. Have a more in depth sheep record book that I note dates sheep covered, due dates, births, events, illnesses etc as well as the official sheep and goat record and medicines record.

25. Which sheep jobs do you like the most / least?

Love lambing, obviously, also time for putting rams out is an exciting time. Also enjoy showing the sheep, especially now our own breeding coming up to be shown.

Not keen on doing injections (sheep won't hold still like my patients do). The worst job, is a rare one, when my husband has to skin a dead lamb for adoption purposes. Only he can/will do it, it's a horrible sad job, but when it works, well worth it.

26. Any Ryeland highlights?

Shearling ram Celyn Tegid winning reserve rare breed champion at Bethesda (Dyffryn Ogwen) show. The way my second oldest, and one of the original two, ewe Nadir dry adopted a texel mule ewe lamb the day after slipping premature twins. She wanted a lamb and the lamb wanted a mum – when it's that simple and it works it's wonderful.

27. Why Ryelands?

Initially, just purely because I loved the way they looked, just wanted a couple, but they have proved themselves to be a docile, easy to handle, useful, productive, low maintenance, low input, good meat, easy care breed, they do well on poor pasture, are easy lambers, good mothers and full of individual character.

Ideally I would persuade my father in law away from texels for good and get a flock of white ryelands too.



Ewes and lambs out for grazing.

Coloured Ryeland Breeders.

We really need your input to make this section a success, we received very little to put in this section of the newsletter. Remember its for you and what you want to read.

So please can we send anything you want to see yo the editor by the submission date, and if appropriate it will be published.

Thank You.

Notices for Members

2014 Sheep Survey : Those of you who have not yet completed your 2014 flock survey, please complete online or return the completed forms as soon as possible but before 30th April at the latest.

2015 Subscriptions: The majority of members have now paid their 2015 fees. Those who have not yet paid will find a reminder invoice enclosed with this newsletter. If you have sent your fees in the last ten days or so, please ignore the invoice. Please note that if your 2015 subscription is not paid by 31st March, you will be removed from the Society's mailing list and membership benefits will be withdrawn.

2015 Genetic Testing Window: This year the time window for submitting applications to test Ryelands for coat colour runs from now until the end of May. Animals born since 1st January 2014 are eligible. Please note that the testing fee has been reduced by a third this year to £12 per head. Applications for genetic testing can only be accepted where the animal is already registered or when the testing form is accompanied by a registration form together with the appropriate fee.

Newsletter in Colour: There is a simple way to receive your Society newsletter in colour. Sign up to have your copy of the newsletter sent by email and you will be able to view or print a full colour version. Simply email info@ryelandfbs.com to request your newsletter by email. This will also help to minimize costs and reduce the impact on the environment.

2015 Year Letter: Please note that the year letter for lambs born in 2015 will be V.

Sale Dates for 2015: This year's Ludlow sale will take place on Saturday 29th August. The Carlisle date is as yet unconfirmed

Next Council Meeting: The next meeting of Council takes place on 25th April 2015. If you have any issues you would like Council to discuss, please contact the Secretary by Monday 7th April

2015 National Show: This year's National Show for Ryelands and Coloured Ryelands will take place at Tenbury Show on Saturday 21st August. This year the show is being held at a one day event to make it more accessible to larger number of exhibitors. However, if you need to travel a long distance and stay overnight, accommodation for the sheep and parking for exhibitors will be available. It is also hoped that a social event of some sort will take place on the preceding evening.

June Newsletter: Please send copy to the Secretary or the Editor by 31st May.