



SHROPSHIRE SUCCESSES AT THE ENGLISH WINTER FAIR



It was great to see five pairs of Shropshire lambs competing at the English Winter Fair - one of the country's major pre-Christmas Prime-Stock shows. This event, held at the Staffordshire County Show-ground, is a shopwindow for all the main meat breeds, so it was tremendous to have a good turnout of Shropshires there. The Shropshire class was won by a pair of May-born wether lambs from the Millenheath Flock. The breed society's Council would like to thank all the Shropshire contestants - Jeanette and Robert Hares (Millenheath), Anne Harvey (Roydon), Glynis Llewellyn (Harvest) and Madders and Johnson (Blackheath) for representing our breed. Shropshires also enjoyed success in the carcass competition, with a lamb from Madders and Johnson's Blackheath Flock taking third place in the class for native British breeds - an excellent achievement! (Main photo by Claire Jakeman, carcass shot by Jeanette Hares).

NEWS FROM THE AGM AND NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING

THE Society's AGM was held on 24th November at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich. Thirty six members attended.

The breed society had a good year with income exceeding expenditure by more than £4,000. The Registrar reported that pedigree registrations appear to be levelling off, although 34 new flocks were formed last year. She gave a presentation about the importance of selecting good rams, which is reproduced following this news item.

CHANGES TO COUNCIL & OFFICERS

Helen Forsyth and Peter Geddes joined the Council. Anne Harvey and Jeanette Hares stepped down from Council, having completed their terms of office. Jeanette also stepped down as Publicity Officer and will be replaced by Yvette Openshaw. Patrick Delaney is also stepping down as Irish Coordinator and a replacement will be appointed in due course. Rosie Lee takes up a new post as Youth Coordinator. All other officers agreed to remain in post. At the Council meeting following the AGM, Barry Hodson was re-elected as President of the SSBA for the coming year and Alison Schofield was re-elected as Vice President.

THE RAM EFFECT

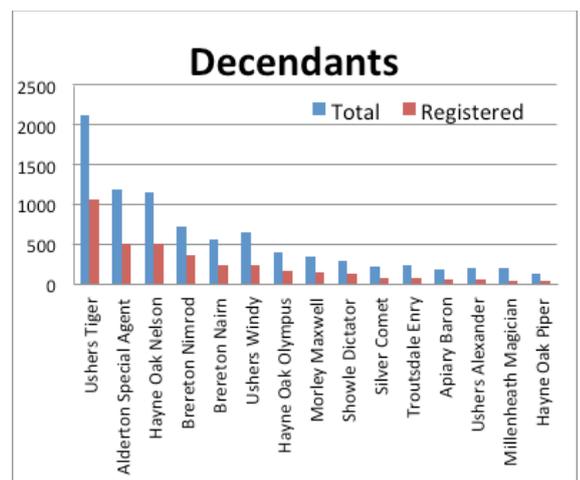
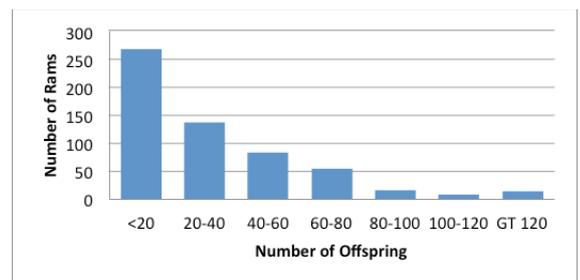
By Alison Schofield

With this *ShropTalk* you will receive a copy of the second edition of the *Critical Selection* booklet.

Changes include some updated pictures to make faults and good points easier to see and a new section on choosing your flock replacements kindly written by Harvey Clay. I would like to thank Sue Shimwell for her help with the booklet. We also decided to move the Show Preparation section to a new booklet which is currently in its draft form.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of selecting your replacement stock both female and more importantly male. For example if you kept a female with a minor fault, you can breed from her and see if the fault replicates itself in the

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SSBA TROPHY WINNERS

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Presented by the SSBA's President Barry Hodson at the AGM: 1. Anne Harvey winner of the Piddington Trophy for points won in Shropshire breed showing classes, 2. Ellie Russell winner of the President's Trophy for points won in Any Other Breed classes and the Junior Members' Hornpipe Quaiche. 3. Charles Morris - Novice Trophy winner. 4. Sue & Mark Shimwell, Halls Small Flock Trophy. 5. Liz Bowles Hardwicke Trophy for the Sansaw Sidedowns Most Prolific Ewe Award.

SELECTING FLOCK REPLACEMENTS



THE process of selecting flock replacements should start when the lamb is born, whether you are keeping the replacement yourself or planning to sell it to another flock.

To produce an easily managed and productive flock, replacements should be born preferably unaided to fit healthy ewes with a good supply of colostrum and good mothering ability.

If these lambs suckle well in the first few hours of life, and have a plentiful supply of milk in the coming weeks they should grow well and have good resistance to disease.

Do not select replacements from lambs that were weakly at birth, or have not grown well, or pet lambs unless these have performed in line with the best of the flock.

Keep good flock records and weigh lambs regularly; at 8 weeks as an indication of the ewes' performance, and then regularly every 3-4 weeks, which will indicate the lambs' own genetic potential.

Bear in mind that single lambs are generally larger and grow faster than twins. Twins often catch up by the time they are 12 months old. Twins are, however, more likely to produce twins. This is especially so if their dams were also twins.

Once the potential replacements are identified then the real selection process starts.

GOOD CONFORMATION

Lambs should have good conformation; a long strong broad back with no dip behind the shoulder. Good legs not turning in or out, with the hind legs not too straight, and short pasterns strong enough to support the sheep. The feet should have two evenly sized toes, which are not cracked or deformed. The tail should be set up well on the rump.

Lambs should conform to the Breed Characteristics as described in the official breed description in the flock book. These are the true flock type and must be adhered to as we are only custodians of the breed and we must not alter it.

The head should not be pointed and should have a good covering of wool with no black between the ears or on the top of the head.

The ears should be short and not droopy or pricked up. There should be no white on the cheeks or jowls. The skin should be cherry pink with a good tight fleece.

If you are buying replacements always talk to the breeder and if possible visit the farm to see the flock in its surroundings. Find out if lambs are grass reared or have been creep fed; are they singles or twins and what time of year were they born. Will they fit with your flock management? Sheep reared intensively may not thrive under harsher conditions.

Consider the health status of the sheep; are they Maedi Visna accredited or Scrapie Monitored. If not accredited, does the flock carry out any screening tests for MV, Johne's or other diseases? Have the sheep been vaccinated against clostridial diseases, abortion or foot rot? In a high risk year, vaccinations against Blue Tongue and Schmallenburg would also be important.

Is the flock Signet recorded or can the owner produce their own figures showing growth rates and performance at market. These figures can be used to compare sheep, and should only be taken into account after the more important factors of good conformation and correct breed characteristics.

We are all still trying to breed the perfect sheep, but when selecting replacements keep only the best to improve your flock. The rest will all taste very good!

USE OF SIGNET RECORDS

The SSBA runs a performance recording scheme called The Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme. This is based on the well-known Signet Performance Recording Scheme – used by many sheep and beef breeders in the UK to identify animals that are genetically superior for desirable traits.

Under the Signet system, Shropshire breeders measure and record the performance of their flocks. These breeders collect data such as the weight of lambs at birth and at 8 weeks old; the number of lambs born and raised by each ewe, and the carcass conformation of lambs. Carcass traits are measured by ultrasonic scanning in the loin area of the live lamb.

All the performance information gathered by the breeders is sent to Signet, who use a specialised computer program to calculate the genetic potential of all lambs, ewes and rams in recorded flocks. This program is able to recognise genetic links between related animals, which improves the accuracy of the evaluations.

It can also identify genetic linkage between relatives in different recorded flocks, allowing comparisons between flocks to be made.

THE Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme (SBIS) completed another successful year, with 15 flocks participating. This is the 12th season that members of this breed society have been enrolled on the Signet recording scheme, which evaluates the performance of sires, dams and lambs.

Once again, the breed averages moved forward: The Maternal Plus Index (calculated from maternal, carcase and growth traits) reached 180, while the Terminal Sire Index (just growth and carcase traits) climbed to 173.

The breed averages were set at 100 when the scheme started in 2007, so the new Index scores show just how much progress has been made.

Heading the top stock sires list for the fifth year in succession is Ushers Alexander, confirming what an outstanding animal he is. Alexander is now owned by the Hodghurst Flock and has sired 149 lambs across two flocks. His Maternal Plus Index now stands at 292, and he has a Terminal Sire Index of 225.

There are two newcomers to the Top Ten list of stock rams used last year: Alderton Monty, in 2nd place, is a past winner of the Signet Performance Award for ram lambs. He is by Alderton Maxwell, but has surpassed his sire in terms of genetic merit. In 9th place is Hodghurst Jackpot, by Ushers Barnaby. Jackpot was bred by Helen and Nick Forsyth, relatively new members of SBIS.

Leading the field for Terminal Sire Index is Hayne Oak Nelson with a score of 281. The terminal sire traits of some sires now include much more detailed information, following the CT Scanning undertaken on 21 Shropshire lambs last summer.

Reports of the full evaluations for the Shropshire SBIS in 2018 are available to download from the Signet website: www.signetfbc.co.uk. Click on "Shropshire" and then "Latest Reports".



Signet Performance Awards at Burwarton Show 2018: Millenheath Marquis, winner of the ram class (pictured right) and Alderton Randolph (above), winner of the ram lamb class. Both were also winners of the Signet Award for the best animal with high genetic merit in those classes.



Millenheath Marquis with his breeder Jeanette Hares.

The SBIS is pleased to welcome five new subsidised flocks in 2019. However, all SSBA members are welcome to join the scheme at any time - please contact the SBIS coordinator, Pippa Geddes, for more information: 01743 741689, pippa@aldertonfarm.co.uk.

Signet will be making some improvements to its evaluations this year, so there will be a meeting for SBIS members in to explain how the performance figures will be affected.

TOP TEN STOCK SIRES 2018

Ranked on the Maternal Plus Index (shown first after the ram's name, followed by the Terminal Sire Index)

1. Ushers Alexander 292/225
2. Alderton Monty 285/242
3. Ushers Apollo 281/239
4. Hayne Oak Nelson 280/281
5. Alderton Maxwell 273/247
6. Alderton Morgan 263/208
7. Ushers Captain 253/253
8. Timberline Dawson 249/273
9. Hodghurst Jackpot 248/231
10. Hayne Oak Randall 245/199

TOP TEN RAM LAMBS 2018

1. Ushers Frazier 288/232
 2. 778KX18 282/273
 3. Alderton Mitchell 273/256
 4. 784KX18 267/241
 5. = 752KX18 265/214
 5. = 741KX18 265/216
 5. = 725KX18 265/232
 8. = Hayne Oak Walter 261/255
 8. = 1450LX18 261/234
 10. Alderton Merlin 259/221
- Carcase plus Maternal Traits Index/ Terminal Sire Index shown after the animal's name or ear tag.*

THE RAM EFFECT

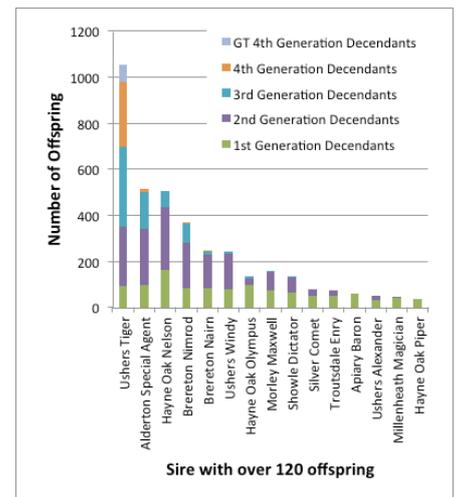
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next generation, if it does, not too much harm has been done. If that fault was in a male, a whole generation can be affected.

I would like to demonstrate this by way of three graphs: The first graph (on page 1) shows that 584 different rams have been used on the national flock in the last 5 years, siring over 18000 sheep in those 5 years, the majority have sired less than 40 sheep each. However, a few have been more prolific and hence more influential in the national flock. 15 of these have sired over 120 lambs each.

The second graph (on page 1) shows the number of descendants both in total and registered of these 15, and the third (on this page) breaks down all the registered offspring into the different generations i.e. Children, Grand Children, Great Grandchildren etc.

Using the first ram on the list, Ushers Tiger, as an example. Born in 2009, he has over 1000 registered descendants. Between them these 15 Rams have over 3000 descendants and that is in just 5 years. You can see, therefore, how important it is to make sure you have a good 'un.



Lastly, leaving you with a bit of food for thought on how important Critical Selection is:

In 1999 I bred a ram called Hornpipe Harrier; only 45 of his offspring were registered, 14 rams and 31 ewes. In the database today he has over 12,000 registered descendants. Good job he was a very nice ram!

SHROPTALK

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For more information about Shropshires visit our website:
www.shropshire-sheep.co.uk

And check out the latest news on our Facebook page:
"Friends of Shropshire Sheep"

KATE JONES CELEBRATES HER 21ST BIRTHDAY WITH THE SALE OF CRONKHILL ALBERT

Kate, from Crosshouses, Shropshire, advertised Albert on the Sell My Livestock website where Claire Jakeman (Sales Officer) spotted him. Claire bought him on behalf of the Duchy Estates who are delighted with him.



"The Society has progressed so much since I took on the role of Sales Officer in 1994," says Claire. "We need to reach a wider audience and prospective purchasers want to have access at any time. After personally doing a trial on SML I found it gets a good viewing, not just from members. I sold within five days. I've also had excellent feedback from our members when they've sold their animals. Remember to put a SOLD notice on your advert - it always looks good when you make a sale! Obviously there are no guarantees but it's well worth the effort of trying.

"When members contact me now on what animals they have for sale, I recommend them to this website. The cost is £10 plus VAT to place an advert. Please take good photographs as this is what sells the animal as well as its pedigree. When placing the advert it will ask you for your flock letters this then entitles your advert to have the society logo attached (automatically attaches). This shows that you are a member of the society. You will note that sellers outside of the society can place adverts but they are not able to attach our logo. Purchasers can be caught out by this but we have no control, so definitely worth mentioning that your animals are registered and please make sure that you identify that your ram (if not registered) is birth notified by including his BN number. I would just remind you of society rules regarding registration: **Ewes and ewe lambs:** over four months old being sold privately MUST be registered by the breeder, even if sold to an unregistered or non-Shropshire flock. Ewe lambs under four months old need only be birth notified. **Rams:** must be birth notified. There is a link to SML from our website via LINKS (top right corner on opening page) so it's easily accessible. When I'm contacted by purchasers I now direct them to this website. I'm more than happy to keep advising and helping so please keep in touch with me - 07766 238346."

JUNIOR MEMBERS' NEWS

Rounding off a very successful 2018, two of our Junior Members did really well at the East of England Winter Stock Festival: Ellie Russell was third and George Clay was fifth in a large class of 21 competing in the final of the Young Stock Person of the Year contest. Congratulations to both of them!



INTRODUCING LILY DAVIES AND FLOCK ISSA

Hi, my name is Lily Davies. I'm 14 years old and I live in Shropshire. I'm the owner of Flock Issa, which I started three years ago.

I keep my Shropshires on our (approximately) 450-acre farm in Hengoed. The Shropshires are kept on roughly 12 acres and the rest is used for our commercial flock and beef herd as well as our five sows.

Before having my own sheep I helped with the commercial flock and around the farm. Growing up on a farm I always had a lot of experience around animals, but never had any of my own sheep until I started my own flock when I was 11. I started with only one Shropshire ewe and I've now progressed to owning 13 breeding ewes and seven replacement ewe lambs. I was drawn to Shropshires by their appearance and friendly nature and hope to expand in the future.

In 2018, we lambed 12 ewes with much success. The lambs have grown well despite the rough start to the year with heavy snow, and I will look to sell some in 2019.

I also took six of my sheep to Oswestry show and was pleased with the results - especially my second placed ewe lamb and second in the group of three.

After losing our ram, Tushbrook Astronomy in early March, we purchased a new ram, Piddington Tod, which we put to our ewes in early August. With a successful round of tupping, I look forward to seeing his offspring and what

they have to offer. We currently monitor the sheep everyday to keep on top of any lameness (or other issues) that occur in the flock.

My ambitions are to continue to improve the flock and hopefully participate in more shows in the future. I would also like to expand to around 20 breeding ewes. I'm mostly looking forward to catching up with everyone in the showing community in the coming season and hopefully see the improvement we've made from last year's shows.

I'm currently in year 10 and studying media, food, and history along with the other core subjects as well as sitting my English literature exam at the end of the year. I hope to get an apprenticeship in animal nursing when I leave school. Besides my sheep I enjoy spending time with my family and friends.



Please send your Junior Members' news to Rosie Lee, email: 01606301503@talktalk.net