

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Summer 2020



The Troutsdale Flock, owned by Ray, Barbara and Kathryn Turnock, started with just a few sheep to graze amongst Christmas trees and now numbers 80 to 100 ewes. The Turnocks have had great success with marketing their Shropshire lamb locally - turn to page 4 to read more.

SUMMER MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi Everybody,

Welcome to another edition of *ShropTalk*.

It would be nice to report that everything is back to normal and we have all had the vaccine. Unfortunately, not.

More events have been lost this year including the English Winter Fair in Staffordshire where we had planned to hold the AGM. The AGM is now set to be a Virtual Event. See the box on the right for more details.

On a more positive note after a dip earlier in the Covid crisis, average lamb prices at market are now higher than this time last year and here in Cheshire, the grass, after a slow start due to the heat we now have far too much, can't win.

We, as a society have backed the "Sell My Livestock" website as the place to sell our sheep. There are more details on page 3 about developments and improvements for Shropshire breeders using this site.

Looking at the adverts, a lot of people seem to have been very successful in selling their sheep this way, key, I would say is a realistic price and good photos.

After a slow start we have had quite a few export enquires and all the sheep have now gone and are settling into their new homes. Sheep went to the Rep. of Ireland, France, Belgium and, for the first time, Estonia.

There have also been positive trends in membership and registrations.

Finally, Leeds United, after 16 years have been promoted to the premiership as Champions. Pity we couldn't all celebrate or attend the last few matches, but hopefully in the not too distant future we will be able to welcome the likes of Liverpool and Manchester City to Elland Road.

Look after yourselves, your family and your sheep.

Alison Schofield

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 28th November

Due to the current pandemic and regulations, the 2020 Annual General Meeting of the SSBA will be held 'ONLINE' with a webinar (access by either a computer or dial in with your telephone).

This is the only option open to us now.

Members will receive their 'Invitation to the event' at the beginning of November 2020 as normal. Once your acceptance to attend the event is returned to the Secretary, you will be sent specific log in information.

More details will be sent out to you closer to the date.

We look forward to you joining us.

PAYMENT FOR REGISTRATIONS

MEMBERS are reminded that they *must* pay for registrations at the same time that they apply to register sheep. This applies to on-line registrations via Grassroots as well as applications made by post.

Pedigree certificates will not be issued, nor will the status of sheep on Grassroots be changed to “pedigree registered” until payment has been received by the SSBA.

ERRATUM TO FLOCK BOOK VOLUME 119 (2019)

THE results for the Shearling Ewe class at the Shrewsbury Show and Sale 2019 (page 227) are those from the previous year and should actually be as presented in the *ShropTalk* of Summer 2019:

1. M and S Shimwell
2. Stonegrove Livestock
3. M and S Shimwell

IMAGES ON THE WEBSITE

THE SSBA’s website now has new picture galleries: Shropshires at shows, at home, in tree plantations and Shropshire history.

We are still looking to add new images, which ideally need to be at least 1.5MB in size, although well lit smaller images may also be suitable.

If you would like to submit images for inclusion, please email Peter Geddes (pngeddes@aol.com). Peter will then send you a link to allow you to upload the images - and you will be asked to sign an agreement so that the SSBA can have rights to use your photo.

NEW USBs AVAILABLE WITH SOCIETY BRANDING

USB sticks are a popular way of reliably transferring and backing up your important computer files.

The SSBA has now produced USBs branded with the Society’s logo, available for purchase at a price of £5 each including postage to UK addresses. They have a capacity of 1GB.

To purchase please contact our Merchandise Officer, Anne Harvey by email: anne.harvey45@gmail.com.



NEW SERVICE CAN CHECK INBREEDING LEVELS

THE Breed Society’s Registrar, Alison Schofield, is now able to offer members of the society an assessment of inbreeding within their flocks. This service can also check out the suitability of rams, to see if a particular bloodline is going to increase or decrease the level of inbreeding in your flock. The potential inbreeding risk of rams can be checked prior to purchase.

Keeping the level of inbreeding low is important both for individual flocks and the breed as a whole (see panel on the right). However, choice of ram can be restricted by membership of *Maedi Visna* and Scrapie Monitoring health schemes, and possibly for those who follow Signet recording, if they want to buy only animals with performance figures.

The inbreeding assessment is available through Grassroots Systems, using all the detailed pedigree information that is held on the Breed Society Record/Pedeweb database. However, the program can be run only by our Registrar. If you wish to take advantage of the new service, please contact Alison by email: registrar@shropshire-sheep.co.uk.

SIGNET INBREEDING CALCULATOR

Flocks that record their animals with Signet have access to an “Inbreeding Calculator” through the Signet website, which allows breeders to check whether or not particular matings are advisable.

The Calculator is simple to use and allows breeders to run trial matings of all their ewes with up to five rams at a time. To access the Inbreeding Calculator, you need to log-in to the members’ area and select “Inbreeding Calculator” from the SERVICES menu. Please note, only matings between Signet-recorded animals can be assessed in this way - to look at the inbreeding risk of using, say, an un-recorded ram, breeders will need to use the new service now offered by the Breed Society.

Breeders using the Signet recording scheme can also automatically check the level of inbreeding in their flocks by running the appropriate report from the genetic trends section on the website.



INBREEDING IN SHEEP

Inbreeding is broadly defined as the mating of individuals that are related. Strictly speaking however, all animals within a breed are related. So, in a sense, every purebred sheep producer practices some degree of inbreeding. In most cases this relationship is very slight. Therefore, inbreeding is more practically defined as *the mating of individuals more closely related than the average of the breed.*

On average, animal performance for traits such as fertility, prolificacy, disease resistance, vigour and survivability declines with inbreeding. This decline is called Inbreeding Depression. This phenomenon is well documented in all major livestock species. It is essentially the opposite of hybrid vigour, which is the advantage gained from crossing lines or breeds. Inbreeding also increases the frequency of abnormalities.

Debra K Aaron, “Inbreeding in Sheep” (2014) Agriculture and Natural Resources Publications.

Calculating Levels of Inbreeding

The level of inbreeding is calculated as the probability of two genetic alleles being identical by descent. This value is called the “inbreeding coefficient” and is expressed as a %. A low inbreeding coefficient means a low level of inbreeding.

What is a safe level of inbreeding?

An inbreeding coefficient of 3% or less is a low level of inbreeding.

Inbreeding Depression is likely to become apparent once inbreeding levels get above 10%. Most geneticists recommend much lower levels of inbreeding than this.

The inbreeding assessment offered by the SSBA categorises inbreeding as follows:

Green: The inbreeding coefficient is below 3% which is low risk - meaning it is safe to mate these animals.

Yellow: The inbreeding coefficient is between 3 and 5%, which represents a medium risk.

Amber: The inbreeding coefficient is between 5 and 7%. Although OK, thought should be given to such matings if genetic issues exist.

Red: The inbreeding coefficient is above 7%. This mating could cause genetic issues and these two sheep should not be mated.

GOOD YEAR FOR EXPORTS DESPITE COVID

SUE Farquhar and I thought this would be the first year we wouldn't keep our 100% record of securing yearly export orders, mainly due to Brexit and then the virus.

How wrong were we! I've secured eight orders to four counties amounting to over £18,000 on behalf of members.

I would like to thank all our exporting members for being totally flexible when the orders kept coming in which made for challenging quotas/rotation.

We have a good team, Alison Schofield who keeps the ram rotation spreadsheet up to date, which constantly needed updating when new orders kept coming in. And Sue who organises the Assembly Centre, journey log with the haulier and licences and makes sure the sheep get away safely.

Our society is the envy of many and are one of the foremost of all breeds with regards to export. We have had two articles published in the *British Livestock Genetics* magazine this year highlighting our success in our export market.

Claire Jakeman, Sales Officer



Shearling ewes exported by the SSBA in 2019, grazing in an olive plantation in Menorca.



MARKETING STOCK VIA FACEBOOK

THE SSBA is receiving an increasing number of enquiries for sheep via its Facebook page "Friends of Shropshire Sheep".

The page was set up by Pippa Geddes in 2013 and currently has more than 1,320 followers from around the world. It is turning into quite a hub for information and news about the breed.

Messages have been coming in over the summer from people in the UK wanting to sell sheep, buy sheep and hire rams. We've even received a large potential export enquiry.

Facebook does not officially allow animals to be sold via its platform so, as reported in the Spring *ShropTalk*, the SSBA will not allow any posts advertising sheep for sale.

The Society has now extended this to exclude posts from anyone looking to buy sheep or hire rams, because this may be seen by Facebook as facilitating animal sales. The Friends of Shropshire Sheep page is a very useful marketing tool and we simply do not want our page to be shut down because rules have been broken.

Anyone wishing to sell sheep is encouraged to place an advert on Sell My Livestock. Those looking for stock to buy or to hire are encouraged to look at the Shropshire sheep section of that website and place a "Wanted" advert if necessary. They are also advised to look at the regional lists of breeders on the SSBA's website, or to contact our Sales Officer if they still need help.

SIGN UP NEW MEMBERS IF YOU SELL SHEEP!

If you sell sheep to someone new to Shropshires, please do all you can to encourage them to join the SSBA.

The most effective way to sign up a new member is to simply add the price of the first year's annual subscription for the SSBA to the price of the sheep - and recruit them automatically.

Membership forms can be downloaded from the SSBA's website, or obtained from the Secretary.

MAKE THE MOST OF "SELL MY LIVESTOCK"

I have been working with the website, Sell My Livestock, for over 12 months and I'm now happy to say we are up and running. There are still a few little tweaks which their web designers are working on, but nothing to stop you placing an advert.

During our last council meeting the decision was made that we work with SML and become Partners, as we felt this was the best way for our membership to sell their stock. Any enquiries coming in to me are directed to SML. This is fair and equal to all.

Being Partners with SML, we have special benefits. One of them is that we have our own portal, which is basically our own page, BUT the adverts still appear in the main livestock section as well.

All adverts come into my account and I make sure that anyone placing an advert under the banner of pedigree Shropshires is a member of the society. I then approve and 'Shropshire Society' will then appear on the advert. I can also decline an advert if it comes from someone who is not a member. I cannot stop the advert but it won't have 'Shropshire Society' on it, and won't appear in our portal.

Please have a look on the home page: you will see on the right our society logo, select this and it opens the Shropshire portal.

I cannot stress how important it is to take good photos: in a nutshell, if you don't, you

won't sell your sheep. I would also ask that you pay particular attention and strictly adhere to our breed standard. This is a shop window for your flock and yourself so please think carefully - are your sheep correct? Only sell animals that you would like to own.

Please say in your advert that they are registered (if they are) because there is no prompt to say this when compiling your advert. We are noticing a few adverts that state the sheep are "eligible for registration" but, unfortunately, some are not because they haven't been correctly birth notified. The SSBA cannot be held responsible for the miss-selling of sheep this way - so we advise buyers to double-check with the Registrar that unregistered sheep can actually be registered *before* buying.

Have a look at other adverts - this may help you when creating your own. When you've made a sale please make sure you put SOLD on. I have noticed some breeders trying to 'bump up' their adverts so they appear at the top of the list. Sorry this doesn't work. I approve it again but it stays in the same place. There is now a link on SML, which ties into our website so any possible purchaser that visits the SSBA's website can see what sheep are available. This went live in August. I hope you all have great success in selling your stock through SML, but I am still available if you need help and support.

Claire Jakeman, Sales Officer



www.sellmylivestock.co.uk

TROUTSDALE LAMB ON THE MENU



TO say the Turnock family is passionate about Shropshire sheep is a bit of an understatement! Not only do they now run a large flock of up to 100 ewes, but they've also had great success with marketing lamb and mutton in their local area. The Shropshires are an attraction for visitors who rent award winning holiday cottages on their picturesque farm in the Peak District. Shropshire wool doesn't go to waste either and is used to produce a range of gifts - peg loom rugs, cushions and felted soaps.

Ray, Barbara and Kathryn Turnock, who farm at Blackshaw Moor near Leek first stumbled across the breed when looking for something to graze between Christmas trees. Then they discovered that the breed originated from the hills of their area of north Staffordshire as well as the uplands and heathland of neighbouring Shropshire.

Starting with just a few sheep to graze between trees, their Troutsdale Flock has grown into a successful enterprise supplying the Village Butchers at Ipstones, a local pub and The Moorlands Eater (caterer and food enthusiast). They also sell lamb boxes - quarter, half and whole lambs) - direct to the public.

Kathryn says that the leaflets designed by the breed society to promote Shropshire lamb have been a great help



in promoting the breed to local outlets and customers. These leaflets are free to download from the SSBA's website. "The butcher says that the flavour of Shropshire lamb is superb - some of the best he has ever had. I think the breed sells itself," says Kathryn. If you want to know more about Troutsdale Farm visit www.troutsdalefarm.co.uk.

SHROPTALK

is edited by Pippa Geddes
pippa@aldertonfarm.co.uk
 and printed by Simon Mackay
secretary@shropshire-sheep.co.uk

JUNIORS FLYING THE SHOWING FLAG DURING LOCKDOWN

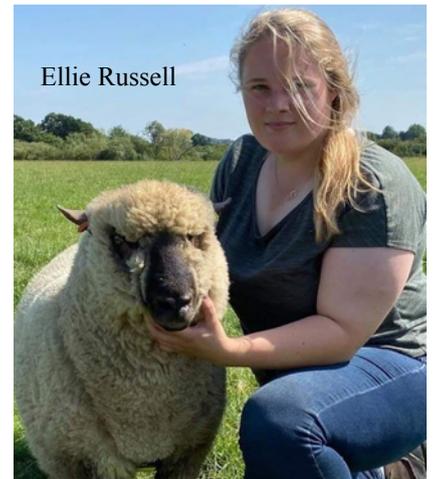
THE expectations for 2020 were high as we wanted to launch our Young Breeders calendar of events especially for them. However, in the strangest of years and with everybody's best interests at heart, events and Annual County Shows were being cancelled, one after another.

Nevertheless, I am very proud to report the initiative and enthusiasm our Young Breeders have shown is second to none. In this new world of "Zoom" and "Tic Toc" they have grasped the opportunities to demonstrate their handling and show ring skills. They have represented the Shropshire Breed admirably. Several members entered "The Online Sheep Show" Competition offered through Facebook. In their age appropriate categories, or breed sections they demonstrated handling skills, talked passionately about their sheep. We look forward to seeing all our young members out and about in the Show circuit next year when hopefully things will return to some sort of "Normal". The Society wants to thank them all for their commitment to the breed this summer.

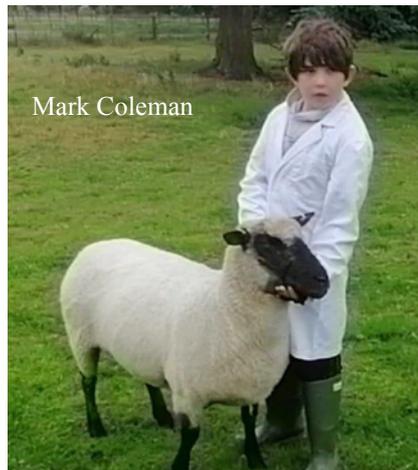
Rosie Lee, Youth Co-ordinator



Alfie Pritchard



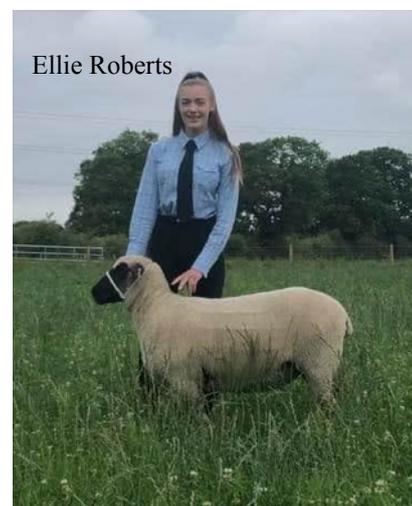
Ellie Russell



Mark Coleman



Charlotte Attwell



Ellie Roberts



Owen Powell

Ellie Roberts was 2nd in Penbode Farm Vets Virtual Young Handler contest.

Owen Powell, Charlotte Attwell and Ellie Roberts entered the Young Handlers Section (14 to 16 years) in which Owen was 3rd and Charlotte 4th. Mark Coleman and Alfie Pritchard entered a different section of the Young Handlers competition (with 40 entries). Ellie Russell took 1st place with a ewe lamb and 2nd place with a ram lamb in the Any Other Breed class of the on-line show.