

SHROPTALK



The Newsletter of the Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association

Summer 2015

COUNTY SHOW SEASON GETS UNDERWAY



THE first two County shows in the Midlands - Shropshire County and Staffordshire County - attracted a good turnout of Shropshires in the breed classes. At Staffordshire, the Millenheath Flock owned by Jeanette and Robert Hares from Millenheath, near Whitchurch in Shropshire had a very good day. They won four classes in the Shropshire section and went on to take the Breed Championship with a shearing ewe, as well as the Reserve Championship with a ram lamb. Both animals were sired by Ushers Windy. The Hares, pictured above with the Judge, Peter Titley, also won the Group of Three, Wool on the Hoof and the CC Walker Trophy (inset picture) for the most points accrued in any sheep breed section at the show.

At Shropshire County on 23rd May, Sue Farquhar from Canon Frome, near Ledbury, Herefordshire took the top honours in the Shropshire classes. Her shearing ram, Piddington Orvis, by Piddington Hugo, won the Breed Championship. Judge Carol Watson selected a ewe lamb by Ushers Windy from the Millenheath Flock as the Reserve Champion. The winners are pictured below with the Judge. **Well done all breeders who exhibited their Shropshires - it really does keep the flag flying for our breed!**



NATIONAL SHOW & SALE (WEST) AT SHREWSBURY SUNDAY 26TH JULY

Entry forms are available on-line from the SSBA's website, from the breed society's secretary and from Halls' website: www.hallsgb.com

Livestock entries close: 25th June

Don't miss the social evening: supper and pub quiz at the market on Saturday night. Tickets must be purchased in advance from Janet Morris or via stock entry forms - £7 a head for a hot pulled pork roll and dessert.

NATIONAL SHOW & SALE (EAST) AT MELTON MOWBRAY

FRIDAY 11TH AND SATURDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER

Entry forms available on-line from Grassroots Systems Ltd:

www.grassroots.co.uk

Livestock entries close: Paper on 2nd August; On-line on 9th August.

PEDIGREE REGISTRATIONS UPDATE

ALL the SSBA's current and historical pedigree data have now been successfully transferred to Grassroots Systems' database, and Ruth Mawer has been handling our sheep registration work since mid-May, as planned. Ruth has already entered over 1,600 birth notification records, and all registration applications were up-to-date at the time of this newsletter's publication.

SSBA members should, by now, have received their unique access codes to enable them to view their pedigree records on-line, and also to allow them to birth notify, register and transfer stock via Ped eweb. If you have not received your code, please contact Ruth. Her details are in the box below, and please note that she is now using a different email address to the one published in the Spring *ShropTalk*.

All SSBA registration activities can still be carried out by completing paper forms and posting these to Ruth, if you do not have access to a computer.

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REGISTRATIONS UPDATE

Continued from page 1

To assist Ruth, please ensure that you provide ear tags in the correct format: The unique animal number, followed by your Shropshire flock letters, followed by the year of the animal's birth.

Ruth says that if she is not in when you phone, please do leave her a message. All messages will be answered - usually the same day or shortly thereafter.

SOME REMINDERS ABOUT REGISTRATION RULES

- Please birth notify your lambs within 90 days of birth, otherwise they cannot be registered or transferred to new owners. It does not cost anything to birth notify.
- If you are intending to take sheep to either of our National Shows and Sales, please remember that they should be registered prior to the closing date for entries.
- All shearlings and older sheep must be registered before being shown at any show.
- 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 should be birth notified.
- Only current members of the SSBA may register sheep as full pedigree animals. Females and males born in the flocks of lapsed members may not be registered.

100 CLUB WINNERS

THE first draw of the 100 Club in 2015 took place at the May Council Meeting. The winner of the first prize of £49 was Garry Prance (Barnston Flock), Wirral, Cheshire. The runner-up was Peter Tavernor (Shebdon Flock), Staffordshire, who won £33.

The second draw this year will take place at the AGM in November. If you would like to participate, tickets can be purchased from the SSBA's Secretary at any time during the year.

SHROPSHIRE EXPORTS SET TO HIT NEW HIGH

RECORD export sales (post War) of Shropshires are predicted this year, as the breed society has received unprecedented demand from overseas buyers.

Orders have been confirmed for around 200 females and seven males to France, with a further seven females and three rams for Germany. However, the society continues to receive enquiries from foreign buyers. Sales officer, Claire Jakeman and Export Officer Sue Farquhar are working hard to find more sheep to fulfill buyers' requirements. The final total of animals exported this year seems certain to break the previous record.

Sheep are being supplied by 14 different flocks and they are destined to leave the UK on 17th August.

Our breed's unique ability to graze safely within tree plantations is the main driver behind the overseas interest, as well as the good quality and high health status of British Shropshire sheep.

IN THE RIBBONS AT THEIR FIRST SHOW!



THE breed society is always delighted when new members decide to show their sheep. It really is a great shop window, both for the breed and the individual flocks that take part. Making their debut in the show-ring this year are Jan and Charles Morris (Apiary Flock) from Stoney Stretton, Shropshire. Their first show was the Shropshire County at Shrewsbury. Jan takes up the story:

“Charles and I were a bit apprehensive about our first show. That’s why we only entered two animals to keep it manageable. I prepared a check list of items required on the day to minimize the risk of forgetting anything. It’s an early start if you set out on the morning of the show.

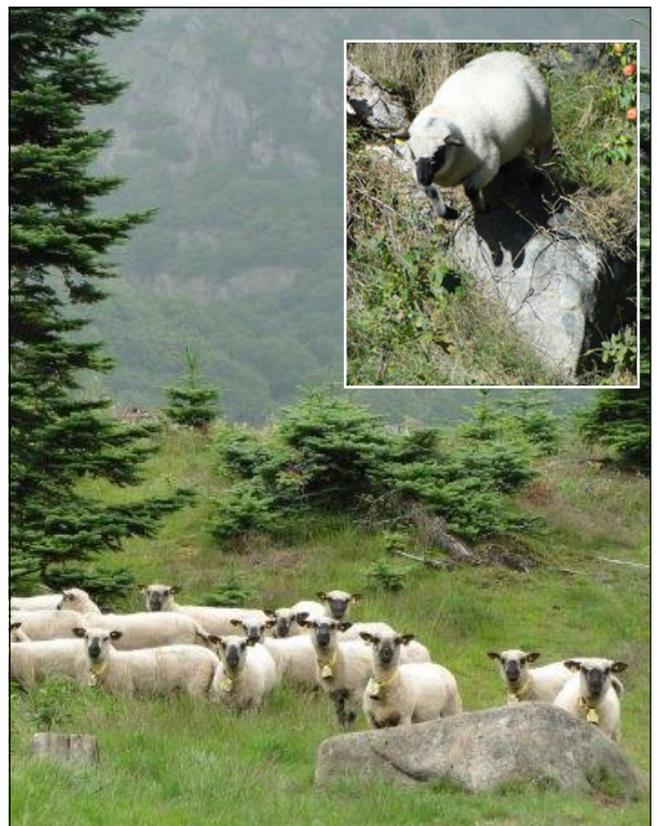
Once we were there, it was straightforward. It helped enormously that I had assisted Sue Farquhar at a couple of shows in 2014. For anyone wishing to show, the best thing to do is to offer help to other competitors so you can see what’s involved. There is always a need for an extra pair of hands.

We thought of our first show as a learning experience, so didn’t have high expectations. But to get a Second and a Fourth in the shearling class of 12 was very pleasing. Charles also got First place in the “Wool on the Hoof” class. An observation: “Judges look for different things, so one show will have different results from the next!” And yes, we are booking into a few more shows!

A full list of agricultural shows running classes for Shropshire sheep, and other shows with classes suitable for our breed, can be found on the breed society's website (Shows and Galleries Page)



Some beautiful pictures of Shropshires in Norway taken by overseas member, Uwe Rutzen. Uwe runs his sheep mainly in forestry. He purchased semen from British Shropshire rams a few years ago to improve his flock, which thrives in the challenging conditions. Uwe regularly contributes photos to our Facebook page.

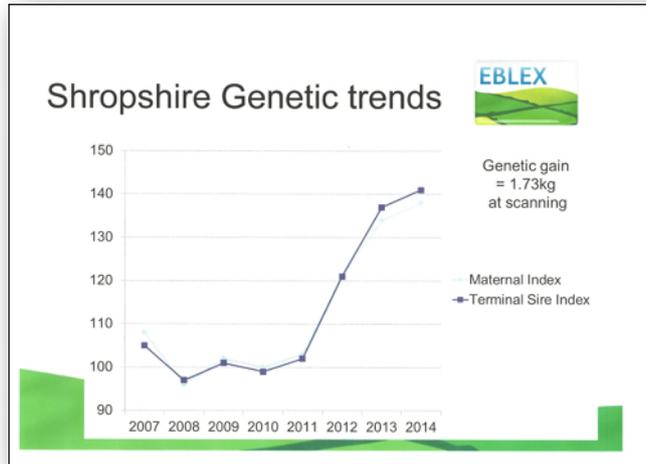


THE SHROPSHIRE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME MAKES IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS

AT the start of 2014, sheep breeders in England who record their sheep with Signet were surveyed by EBLEX to find out what impact recording had made to their businesses. Findings revealed that 95% of breeders think commercial interest in performance recorded stock has increased in the past decade. Over 90% of breeders said that performance recording enabled them to sell more rams, generate a premium for their rams or create a price differential for the very best.

Number of Shropshire Lambs Evaluated by Signet

Year of Birth	No of Records
2007	374
2008	538
2009	550
2010	982
2011	1006
2012	921
2013	1044
2014	1080



This was a survey of all breeders who record with Signet, not just the Shropshire flocks. However, many members of the Shropshire breed improvement scheme (SBIS) also see tangible benefits from recording.

Marion and Aubrey Webb (Ushers Flock, Leicestershire) started recording with Signet in 2006, collecting data from their lambs the following year - and every year since. At the recent SSBA open-day, Marion (pictured) was one of the speakers.



“We started our flock in 1996 with six in-lamb shearling ewes and now run a flock of 60, breeding our own replacements and occasionally purchasing rams to bring in different bloodlines. We lamb in January as that fits in with the dairy unit and grazing the pastures off in the autumn.

“Ram lambs are kept entire. Some are sold for breeding and the rest go to a local butchers. Ewes and lambs are turned out in February so we can use the buildings for calf rearing. Shropshires finish well off grass and produce a good carcass.

“We have benefited from investing in the SBIS, where our flock had the highest EBV scores in the breed last year. Our flock produced the ram lamb with the highest Carcase Plus Maternal Traits index in the breed

and five of the top ten sires in the breed used to produce the 2014 lamb crop had the Ushers Prefix, which we are extremely proud of.

“We have benefitted from sales where buyers are coming to us for good breed conformation, but also wanting good performance sheep as well. We won the overall points trophy for showing Shropshires awarded by the Society and the same year our flock was the highest Signet recorded flock in the breed, which shows that the attributes of good conformation

and good performance go together.

“This is very rewarding, and what was once a hobby for us is now a thriving business with our sheep in great demand.”



Staffordshire-based breeder, Peter Tavernor (pictured above, meeting Prince Charles at the Three Counties Show in 2007) started recording his sheep with Signet in 2010.

Peter's family have a very long connection with the Shropshire breed, with his great grandfather, William Stubbs Tavernor, owning a flock more than 130 years ago.

Peter runs his Shebdon Flock with his daughter's Madeley Flock - in total around 30 ewes and 20 flock replacements, lambing in late March and early April.

Peter also made a presentation at the Sheep Trimming and SBIS open-day: “At the outset, Signet recording helped us identify that the tup we were using at the time was not actually producing very good lambs, despite the way he looked.

“We invested in some high genetic merit sires with good conformation from the Ushers and Hayne Oak flocks. These included Hayne Oak Lucas, the breed champion at the 2011 National Show and Sale West. Using these rams has significantly improved our flock. Our lambs are finishing earlier, and our combined flocks are now much more uniform in quality.”

SUBSIDY AVAILABLE FOR NEW FLOCKS TO JOIN THE BREED IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

THE SSBA's Council has agreed to extend the financial support provided to the Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme (SBIS) to encourage new breeders to start recording the performance of their sheep with Signet.

The Society is now inviting applications from Shropshire flocks based in the UK to join the SBIS. Up to eight will be offered the subsidy. Once accepted onto the scheme, these flocks will receive a payment of £125/year for three years to help cover the cost of recording.

To be eligible for the subsidy, they must commit to recording continuously for three seasons (2016, 2017 & 2018) and also:

1. Provide timely and accurate pedigree information and weight records to Signet;
2. Use an approved Signet technician to scan at least a proportion of their lamb crop each year to determine muscle and fat depth in the live animals;
3. Agree to make their Signet evaluations public and available to the breed society, so that genetically superior animals can be identified;
4. Be a flock of sufficient size to breed at least 25 lambs from at least one stock sire over two seasons. Exceptions to this rule may be made if the stock rams concerned have strong genetic links with other previously recorded animals or flocks. This rule has been introduced on the advice of Signet to ensure that results are meaningful and with a reasonable accuracy.

SIGNET FEES

The Signet bureau service continues to operate on a non-profit making basis. EBLEX, HCC and QMS have agreed to contribute around £95/flock to fund the cost of the EGENES data analysis for the benefit of their levy payers.

As a result, Signet fees for SheepBreeder (the recording scheme) have remained unchanged again for 2015. They are reviewed on an annual basis, but for this season, the costs are:

An annual fee of £120 per breeder plus £3 per ewe. There is an additional cost of £1.75 per lamb for the scanning service, with a minimum visit fee of £175. It is possible to share a scanning visit, if you have another Signet recorded flock in your area that wishes to scan lambs at the same time of year.

Application forms for the new SBIS subsidy are available from SBIS Coordinator, Pippa Geddes, 01743 741689, email: pippa@aldertonfarm.co.uk.

The deadline for applications is 31st August 2015.

If more than eight flocks apply and all meet the criteria set out above, the subsidy will be awarded on a “first come, first served” basis. For more information about the SBIS, visit the SBIS page on the SSBA's website (Commercial Opportunities section), or visit the Signet Website: www.signetfbc.co.uk.

SANDWELL OPEN-DAY HELPS BREEDERS GAIN KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

THE Sheep Trimming and Shropshire Breed Improvement Scheme open-day on 25th of April at Sandwell Park Farm was a great success, with 43 Shropshire breeders attending. Rosie Lee, a relatively new member of the SSBA from Winsford, Cheshire, shares her views of the day.

My personal objectives for the day were to meet other breeders and learn what showing involved. I am happy to admit I was nervous but I really shouldn't have been. I received a lovely warm welcome and lots of encouragement throughout the whole day.

First up was Sue Farquhar, who delivered a no frills, no fuss approach to showing. A great recipe to encourage others is always wit and wisdom. "Stick to the breed traits, be proud of the sheep and enjoy the experience". That was the advice. A nose to toes assessment was the way to work through the sheep and make the crucial choice - the one to show!

Next: washing, carding and trimming. Barry Hodson very kindly demonstrated the different equipment and techniques you can use to achieve the finished fleece for presentation in the show-ring. Once the demonstration was over, it was time to step up and have a go.

It was all very relaxed and everyone was able to ask questions and share experiences. I need to practice carding - it is tricky.

After a light hearted and informative morning we moved on to the technical stuff - scanning muscle mass and fat in the live lamb. This was so clear, with Steve West from Signet talking us through the technique for locating the right area of the loin to scan: "Last rib, three fingers locate the third lumbar vertebrae". This is Precision Farming and takes body condition scoring to the next level.

Lunch was delightful - another opportunity to chat and share Shropshire experiences. With lambing only just finished, there was lots to talk about.

Afterwards Sam Boon from Signet introduced the Signet Recording Scheme. Two society members, Marion Webb and Peter Tavernor, shared their personal experiences and thoughts about the data recording and how it has improved and developed their own flocks. This was very useful to see how the data have been used in two very different ways but to the same end - flock improvement.

This was followed by discussion that was opened by Vice President, Paul Stead, about the way forward using Estimated Breeding Values, and should the society be considering recording other traits such as worm resistance and foot conformation? There was concern and much discussion on how this would affect breeding traits long-term.

It was my first real encounter with the data and it left me wanting to understand more and be able to interpret the figures in greater depth. For me, the science behind the data is enormously exciting and how it is used is hugely powerful for the breed's future placement in the commercial market place.

TERMINAL SIRES

This became further highlighted as the last session introduced an overview of a pilot project that Signet is about to undertake. In a new scheme called "Ram Compare" six commercial sheep farms have agreed to participate, each producing 500 cross-bred lambs a year and monitoring their performance from to slaughter. The sires used for crossing in the first phase will be Texel, Suffolk, Charollais, Hampshire and Meatline. However, if the pilot is successful, it should be possible for Shropshires to be included in the future.

It sounded very interesting and the outcomes will have implications relating to the adoption of EBV recording for our breed society. It did seem to have the potential to change commercial breeders' perception of using Shropshires as terminal sires for cross-breeding - which could be the future. I really

did get a whole host of ideas and confidence from being at the event. I loved being with like minded people and enthusiasm is infectious! Thank you to everyone involved.

The event was organised by Barry Hodson, Pippa Geddes and Simon Mackay, with the help of Richard Aldis and the farm staff at Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich.

SHOW SUBSIDY

THE breed society offers a show subsidy to breeders exhibiting their sheep at shows that last two days or longer. The subsidy rate is £5/head for two-day shows and £10/head for longer shows. The Cheshire County Show is considered a two-day event and the subsidy may be claimed, provided that exhibitors' sheep are shown on at least one of the days and the same sheep remain on the show-ground for the whole duration of the show. Subsidy claim forms can be downloaded from the SSBA's website, or paper copies can be obtained from our Secretary. Forms must be completed and returned to the SSBA's Treasurer, Marion Webb, by 31st August 2015.

SHOW POINTS TROPHIES

AT the end of each show season, the Society runs a show points competition and awards trophies to the most successful breeders:

The Farquhar Trophy is awarded to the breeder who has gained most points in Shropshire Breed Classes;

The President's Trophy is awarded to the breeder who has gained most points showing in Any Other Breed or Rare Breed Classes, in shows where no Shropshire classes are available;

The Novice Trophy is awarded for the highest number of points gained by novice exhibitors showing in Shropshire Breed Classes. Exhibitors are considered novices in their first five years of showing or until they win the Novice Trophy;

For the Farquhar and President's trophies, points are applicable only to sheep of the exhibitor's own breeding. In both these and the Novice competition, points are awarded as follows: 1st place = 3 points; 2nd place = 2 points; 3rd place = 1 point; Breed Champion = 5 points, Reserve Champion = 3 points; Interbreed Champion = 10 points; Reserve Interbreed Champion = 5 points.

The Hornpipe Quaich is for young members of the breed society showing in Shropshire classes and/or any other breed classes and young handlers' classes. See the application form for how points are awarded for this trophy. The closing date for all competitions is 30th September and forms must be sent to the Awards Officer, Anne Harvey.



Rosie tries her hand at carding, under the watchful eye of Barry Hodson.

SHROPTALK

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