

CHAROLLAIS

THE FARMER'S FUTURE



CHAROLLAIS
SHEEP
SOCIETY

FARMERS FUTURE SALE DATES

CARLISLE SUPREME SALE

Saturday 28th June

WORCESTER PREMIER SALE

Saturday 5th July

DUNGANNON EXPORT SALE

Monday 28th July

BRECON EARLY NSA SALE

Monday 4th August

EXETER NSA

Wednesday 20th August

CARLISLE (AND FEMALES)

Friday 29th August

MELTON MOWBRAY RAM SALE

Saturday 6th September

KELSO RAM SALES

Friday 12th September

BUILTH WELLS NSA MAIN SALE

Monday 22nd September

WELSHPOOL

Thursday 25th September

BALLYMENA

Monday 29th September

A BREED FOR ALL SYSTEMS

Welcome to the 2025 edition of Charollais – Farmers Future. It features just a few of the thousands of commercial farmers who find that Charollais tups are the key for profitable lamb production.

Their stories recount the benefits Charollais rams bring to their livestock enterprises in a wide range of geographical situations, production methods and ewe breeds.

We are all thankful that sheep prices were strong in 2024 and have continued strongly in 2025. But, on the flip side, we are all too aware of rising costs and expenditure has to be kept in check to ensure profitability. Government will certainly not be filling the gap, as they accelerate the reduction in support payments.

Charollais rams have all the qualities to keep your bottom line in profit, while adding value to the end product. We have the genetics that can get a quality carcass lamb to market quickly and at a weight that is profitable.

Charollais rams breed prime lambs with length and shape, excellent muscling and tender, flavoursome meat. Days to slaughter is one of the most influential factors in the reduction of carbon footprint.

The Society is driving ahead with genomic selection providing producers with the tools for further improvement on carbon reduction in their stock, all the while putting emphasis on rams that are ‘fit for purpose’. Charollais rams do live and work hard and have the added bonus of easy lambing and vigorous progeny.

Join these farmers and try a Charollais in your system – we are certain you will not regret the move. For more information on our sales or a breeder near to you, get in contact with the office or make a note of the sale dates published in this magazine.

Best wishes,

Carroll Barber
and the Charollais Sheep Society



**CHAROLLAIS
SHEEP
SOCIETY**

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CHAROLLAIS RAMS PACK A PUNCH FOR WELSH COMMERCIAL LAMB PRODUCERS

Charollais rams offer excellent growth rates and a high killing out percentage when used on native lowland crossbreds for the Williams family in Carmarthenshire.



The family run operation, managed by Aeron and his son Eifion, alongside his wife Lisa, value the Charollais sires highly when crossed on their 320-ewe flock, resulting in easily lambed progeny with excellent vigour that continually thrive in their system.

Due to restricted shed space, lambing starts with the turn of the year with some 200 Suffolk cross ewes lambing indoors in two batches through January and February. “We like the Suffolk cross ewes as they naturally lamb early, proving to be milky ewes and deliver lambs with ease due to their large pelvis,” Eifion explains. Some 25 Dorset ewes lamb at the same time, initially bought as a novelty for Lisa, a local school teacher, but they’ve proved their worth when crossed with Charollais rams.

In March some 100 Welsh mules follow the Suffolks through the sheds, proving to be good maternal ewes, but unable to lamb early like the Suffolks. Indoor lambing is preferred due to the ease of management, explains Eifion. “I can catch the ewes easily indoors, if need be, but usually it’s more a case of being on the ball to prevent miss-mothering. The weather in the spring can be unpredictable which is why we like the longer lambing period so there is less pressure to get the ewes out,” he adds.

Eifion says he cannot fault the Charollais sired lambs. “The lambs have a great survivability when turned outdoors. They are easily lambed with plenty of vigour and hit the ground running. Growing like mushrooms and offer a high killing out percentage.”

We like the Suffolk cross ewes as they are milky and naturally lamb early, delivering lambs with ease.

All Charollais rams are bought from Adrian Davies’ Glyn Coch flock with purchases usually done privately on an annual basis. “The rams work really well for us, they’re ready to work and don’t melt away and the lambs they produce are exceptional,” adds Aeron. Particular attention is paid in sourcing rams that have good length resulting in extra weight in the lambs and lighter headed rams with a little more wool cover on the heads are preferred. “We want Charollais tups for the commercial job, not the show ring,” Aeron explains.

Ewes consistently scan at about 170-175% which is at the optimum that the Williams family target to avoid any increase in the number of triplet bearing ewes. Replacements are bought either as hogget couples in the spring after selling barren ewes or in the autumn after selling any older or cull ewes that fail within the system. No passengers are carried through the system with a need for every ewe to perform, especially with the heightened ewe trade of late.

The rams work really well for us, they’re fit and ready to work and produce exceptional lambs.

Lambs are all finished off grass getting sold deadweight to Dunbia. The first draw of lambs usually go at Easter with the target lamb being a 20kg U3L lamb. This means earlier lambs can be drawn at 37kg upwards due to the good killing out percentage of the Charollais sired lambs with the weight adjusted as the season goes on, aiming to be clear of lambs by November. The whole crop of lambs last year averaged £140 with the majority of lambs hitting U grades.



Alongside the sheep flock, which is farmed over the 250 acres of owned land and 30 acres of summer grazing, ranging from 600ft to 1000ft above sea level, the Williams family run around 55 Saler suckler cows along with their followers. Traditionally breeding replacements have been purchased annually from Castle Douglas but there has recently been a move to use a Saler bull, usually over the heifers, to breed their own replacement heifers with the majority of the cows then going to Charollais bulls.

Calves are kept on and sold as stores at 15-18 months of age and are highly sought after through local markets. The Continental sire is again satisfying the Williams family for tremendous growth rates with very few assisted calvings at birth. "I can count on one hand how many assisted calvings we've had over the last few years," Aeron adds.

Some 15 to 20 acres of ground is re-seeded each year with long term leys with red clover added when suitable. The red clover leys provide excellent silage for the cattle and is proving valuable for lamb finishing. "Usually, the red clover will do two to three years before thinning out, but it varies with the weather as the red clover doesn't tend to like the wet conditions," Eifion adds.

For the Williams family it's a case of "if it's not broke, don't fix it," exemplifying the desire for them to continue to use the Charollais sires.

The lambs are easily lambed with plenty of vigour, have a great survivability and grow like mushrooms.



We don't use any concentrate to finish lambs, just the best quality grass we can get them on, so it's proof that the Charollais lambs finish quicker.



CHAROLLAIS OUTPERFORMING OTHER BREEDS ON CUMBRIA GRASS ONLY FINISHING SYSTEM

It might be a fairly new addition to the breeding programme at Studfold Farm, but thanks to fast growth rates and an ability to finish off grass alone, the Charollais ram as a chosen terminal sire of choice is one that won't change.

The sheep operation at Studfold in Wigton, Cumbria, is run by Rob Brazendale whose family bought the 45-acre unit around five years ago and now pair it with a further 45 acres of rented ground, as well as summer grazing nearby.

With hardy North of England Mules being the female of choice for Rob, 22, terminal sires are selected on their ability to produce easy fleshing lambs that grow well and finish effectively on the grass only system. Mules are purchased as shearling ewes from Cockermouth auction and currently number 150 ewes, with the hope to increase numbers as more land becomes available.

"While we still use Suffolk rams alongside the Charollais, we've found that there's more weight to the Charollais lambs than we could get from Texels," commented Rob, adding that Charollais rams have a good carcass with plenty of length to them, just the sort of sheep Rob wants to breed.

"Rams were easier bought too and have great longevity, and they're a good bit easier to lamb with offspring quick to get up and suckle which is another positive.

"When it comes to the last draws of lambs it's always the Suffolk-sired lambs that are left as





“We typically scan between 230% and 240%, which is pretty normal for us as we do have many older ewes in the flock at the minute, but that included fewer triplets than last year.”

Some three to four weeks pre-lambing, ewes are given ad-lib access to molasses as well as being fed a ewe roll from Ronnie Stobbart twice daily, but with no extra forage on offer to avoid the risk of prolapses. While kept on minimum grass during lambing, ewes are moved on to quality grazing once lambs have been castrated, tailed and numbered.

Charollais rams have great longevity, and they're a good bit easier to lamb with offspring quick to get up and suckle.

Ewes then receive no concentrate feeding and it is the Charollais lamb's ability to convert milk and grass into kilograms that makes it stand out for Rob.

“There is a strong demand for that sort of lamb throughout the season and we get our first draw away before weaning at the end of

August,” he explained, adding that the first draw in 2024 sold to average £150 or 318p per kg at 47kg and maintained similar levels throughout the year with draws sold through the Longtown auction every three weeks or so.

“We didn't sell anything for less than £150 all year and all the Charollais-sired lambs are sold by the new year when the export trade hits and there's less demand for heavier lambs.”

In order to produce an even crop of lambs, Rob has a particular sort of tup he is after and has bought privately from the Wales family's Thackwood flock.

“We like a ram that is long, stretchy and with plenty of power. They've got to be upstanding and with a good head, and we've been pleased with the rams bought so far with one still going strong as a six-shear,” highlights Rob.

“We also like the sorts that don't have a lot of wool, but it can go too far with bare lambs if you get a cold spell at lambing. We were lucky we had plenty space to bring ewes inside for lambing last year when it was so miserable.”

It's not just the sheep that make up the farming business at Studfold Farm as some 90 head of cattle can be on site at any one time with mostly dairy-bred cattle bought from local farms and sold through the local Wigton auction as forward



stores. Meanwhile, Rob also works for his uncles, Tim and Peter Tinniswood at Cockbridge Farm, in return for summer grazing.

That's why getting the sheep enterprise right is so important and for Rob the Charollais ram ticks all the boxes thanks to producing offspring that are easily lambed and can be finished on the grass only diet to meet the right market specifications.



REAL PROGRESS FOR CHAROLLAIS BREED

For nearly 50 years Charollais breeders have measured the performance of lambs on their farms with the aim of enhancing their value at the abattoir.

This hasn't been their sole focus, as they have also worked to produce fit, fertile and structurally correct sires, but by measuring lamb growth rates and using ultrasound scanning to assess muscling they have continually sought to enhance the carcass attributes of Charollais sired lambs.

The challenge in this approach is that it has always focussed on proxy measures for the traits of economic interest, namely carcass weight, conformation and days to slaughter.

Through the involvement of Charollais breeders in RamCompare, the National Progeny Test, which includes data from RamCompare's little cousin, ChazCompare,

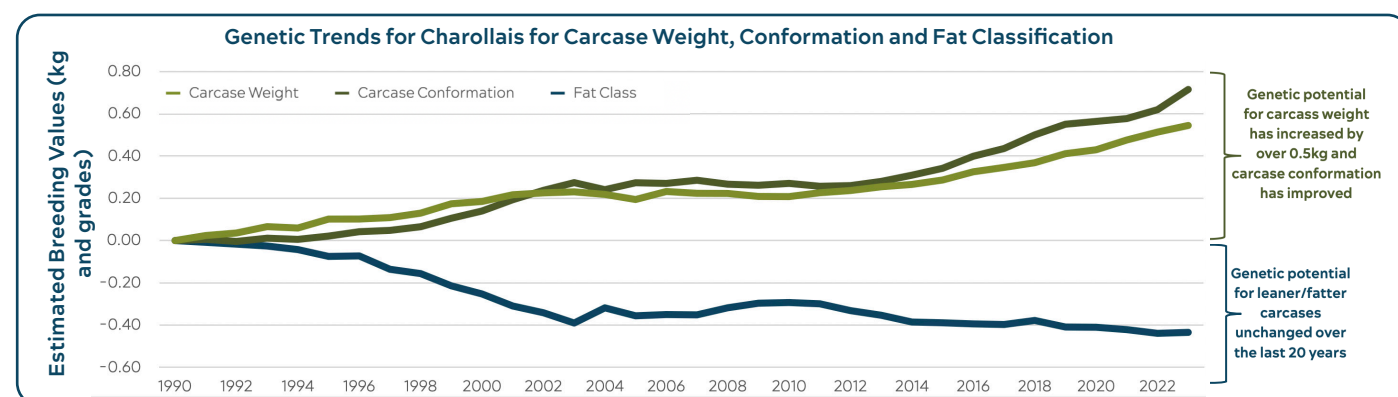
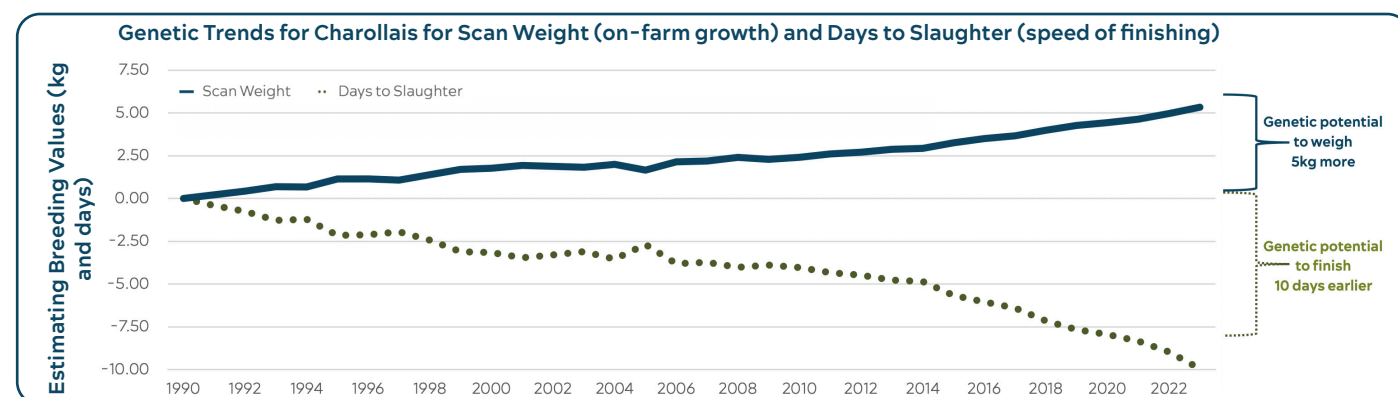
we now have a much better understanding of the genetic relationships that exist between those traits measured in the live animal within our pedigree flocks and those attributes expressed at the abattoir by commercial lambs at the point of slaughter.

In 2025 the National Terminal Sire Evaluation will be enhanced to produce breeding values that are direct predictors of abattoir traits, using the flow of data from both pedigree farms and progeny tests. For the first time producers will be able to confidently select rams on the basis of their EBVs for days to slaughter, carcass weight, conformation and fat class.

DATA ANALYSIS

The latest results derived from AHDB funded research shows exactly what the Charollais breed has achieved through performance recording.

Increasing breeding values for scan weight (an indicator of liveweight gain) has led to reductions in days to slaughter of more than a week accompanied by increases in carcass weight that now exceed half a kilo. Selection for muscling has increased carcass conformation, with little change in carcass fatness over the last 20 years.



HOW CAN CHAROLLAIS RAM BUYERS USE THIS DATA?

When buying Charollais rams, commercial ram buyers should select stock sires with high EBVs for Scan Weight and Muscle Depth if they wish lambs to finish quickly and receive a premium for conformation.

In addition to this ram buyers can start using the new breeding values for abattoir traits, such as Days to Slaughter and Carcass Conformation to refine breeding decisions and capitalise on the best genetics the breed has to offer.



CHAROLLAIS LAUNCHES GENOMIC EVALUATION

This means that the new genomic evaluations of an animal are based on its pedigree information, performance recording data and progeny performance (if available) plus the genomic data (or simply put its DNA).

To establish genomic evaluations - there is a requirement for genotyped animals that have many measurements - either on themselves or their progeny (and so a high accuracy traditional EBV proof). This is vital to set up a reference population and create a 'SNP key' to indicate which bits of the DNA (or genes) are responsible

for each aspect of an animal's performance. Once this is determined, young animals or those with little phenotypic data, can have their DNA compared to this key allowing the prediction of the performance and as a result the performance of animals in the next generation.

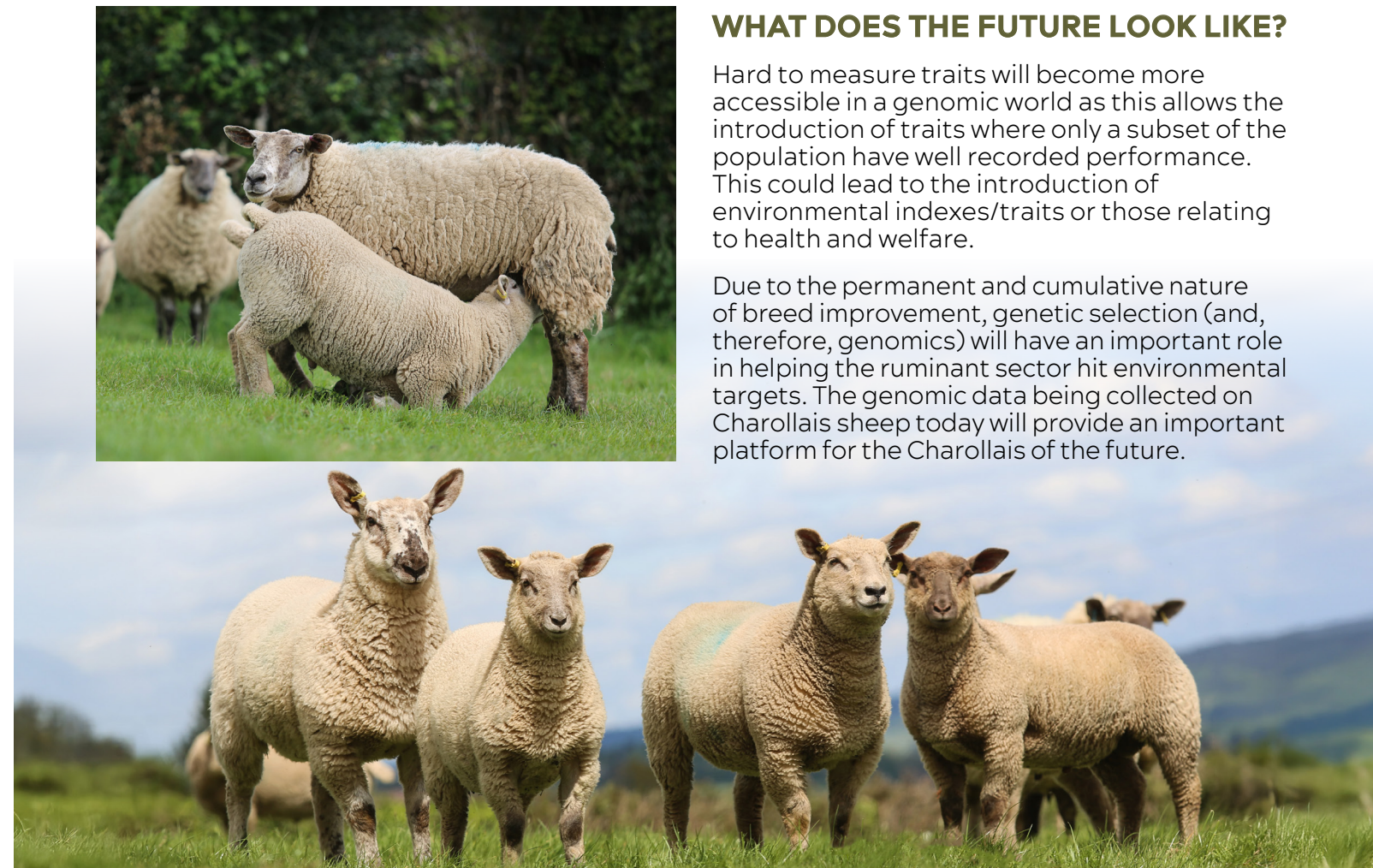
Genomic approaches have an advantage over traditional pedigree breeding analyses as they take into account the exact mixture of genes that have been passed down from both parents not just assuming exactly half has been received from each parent.



WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

Hard to measure traits will become more accessible in a genomic world as this allows the introduction of traits where only a subset of the population have well recorded performance. This could lead to the introduction of environmental indexes/traits or those relating to health and welfare.

Due to the permanent and cumulative nature of breed improvement, genetic selection (and, therefore, genomics) will have an important role in helping the ruminant sector hit environmental targets. The genomic data being collected on Charollais sheep today will provide an important platform for the Charollais of the future.





CHAROLLAIS BEST IN CLASS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND COMMERCIAL LAMB PRODUCER

Charollais sired lambs consistently grade better for Crosby Cleland compared to Aberblack and Primera rams when put over his commercial flock of predominately whitefaced ewes.

The 700-ewe flock is made up of a composite of Lley, Aberfield and Highlander genetics where traits from each of the breeds help create the ideal whitefaced ewe for Crosby. Stock sires are selected on their performance figures where he believes figures always wins. “I’ve proven that to myself comparing rams selected on figures against those that are selected on looks.”

With the collection of accurate data brings the ability to make the correct informed decisions.

The better half of the flock ewes are mated to maternal sires to produce enough choice to retain some 140 breeding replacements each year with the remainder put to terminal sires. “I’ll always select rams on figures first and foremost and take faith in the ram producer for producing structurally correct sheep,” adds Crosby.

Lambing takes place indoors from mid March with a rotational grazing system operated after turnout. Mobs of about 100 ewes and their lambs rotate two acre paddocks with moves every two to four days. “Moves are dependent on a number of elements, firstly the grass cover measured with a platometer, but also the weather and ground conditions,” explains Crosby.

Sheep are usually moved into paddocks at 2700kgDM/ha and exit at 1700kgDM/ha. Overgrazing results in a slower regrowth which would add more pressure on the rotational system. “It’s nice to have plans and targets but you have to be able to adapt these depending on other conditions.”

Multi species leys are present with plantain providing good benefits, but it’s the clover that gets the highest praise with its ability to fix nitrogen to be used within the ground, which has enabled low fertiliser use on farm. “Clover is usually stitched in after cropping or a tight grazing as ploughing or similar alternatives wouldn’t be an option on farm as the ground would be out of production for too long,” he highlights.

Grass samples are routinely taken. “It’s good to know what you’re feeding the ewes as looks can be deceptive. Last year a yellow field and a green field both measured the same for metabolizable energy with only the dry matter being different.”

The flock is run across some 160 acres of grassland with roads dissecting across it. “A mob size of about 100 ewes is optimal, as they are easier to manage for routine tasks and to move across or along the roads without holding the traffic up too much,” states Crosby. Clamp silage is made from around 15 acres at seven weeks growth, with an additional 60-100 bales made on paddocks that run away from the grazing management.

From eight weeks the Charollais lambs grow well, flesh up nicely and consistently grade well.

Lambs are housed in September and are fed silage and 0.8kg of concentrate per head with all lambs sold deadweight with a target of 21kg. “This target quite often changes as its more important to get the finish right on the lambs opposed to the weight,” explains Crosby.

Last year lambs were being sold at heavier weights as the finish wasn’t there to suit the buyer at the target weights. With this, 85% of lambs hit the grade of R3 or better with the Highlander males usually being the culprit for not hitting this target, this being the downside to its many positive traits for females.



The Charollais lambs are easily lambed but it's after eight weeks of age that the Charollais lambs really come into their own. "From here they grow well and flesh up nicely and they consistently grade better. Sometimes the lambs will be selected at a lighter liveweight, but the superior killing out percentage makes up for this," he believes.

The productive whitefaced ewes wean/sell consistently at about 155-160% year on year with an average price of £135 per head attained for lambs sold from last year's crop with the better performing females being kept for replacements.

The future of the ewe flock will see the introduction of Swifter rams. These have been developed to be good maternal ewes producing good crossbred lambs with the added bonus of being clean under the tails which will help massively on the management of the flock.

Hybrid vigour plays an important part in the system for Crosby with his extensive flock recording allowing him to select the appropriate sires for each ewe to maximise on this benefit. "With the collection of accurate data brings the ability to make the correct informed decisions," declares Crosby.

It's nice to have plans and targets, but you have to be able to adapt these depending on other conditions.



CHAROLLAIS MAXIMISES DORSET EWE LAMB PRODUCTIVITY

The search for a value adding tup suitable for use on ewe lambs led Thaxted, Essex-based Jeremy Durrant of Hydes Farming to use Charollais sires on his Dorsets, with the aim of lambing them at 15 months old.



"It's a great way of maximising the maternal traits of the Dorset and taking an additional crop of lambs from our ewe lambs which otherwise wouldn't be tupped until they were shearlings.

"We have exceptional growth rates in our Dorset lambs, so there's never a concern about them being big enough to tup. What we needed to add to that was a sire breed with ease of lambing and the ability to produce premium carcasses in a short space of time," explains Jeremy.

Lambs have graded E3L and averaged 24kg after being drawn at 44kg, killing out at 55%.

For that, he believes the Charollais is hard to beat. "We put two Charollais rams out with 100 Dorset ewe lambs and we're achieving 95% of them in lamb at 140% scanning. It's hard to fault performance like that when they're tupped at 10 months old.



“The September-born ewe lambs are tupped in June and July to lamb in November and December. Because of that we need a ram breed which will work early in the season and again Charollais have that advantage of being an earlier working breed,” he adds.

We’re optimising growth and carcass quality, it’s the ideal combination.

After being picked out as replacements in January, the ewe lambs are run at grass until tupping, with no hard feed offered. They’re then tupped at grass and brought inside to lamb about a month before lambing, being shorn at the same time.

“Every ewe hogg was fed ahead of lambing, receiving 0.5kg of homegrown oats, with their lambs then creep fed from early in life and weaned at eight weeks old,” he highlights.

“The lambs were up and sucking in next to no time which really sparks up the ewe hogg and

ensures her mothering instincts kick in. With other breeds the lambs can be slower and that gives the ewe hogg the chance to forget about them and then they both suffer.

“They stayed inside until a week after weaning, with the ewe hoggs then turned out at weaning in order to be ready for tupping again in April to lamb the following September,” he explains.

The lambs then went out to grass once they were settled after weaning, with creep feeding continued and the first lambs drawn at 14 weeks old. “They’ve eaten about 40kg of creep each which is twice what our pure Dorsets would eat at the same time, but they’ve been inside for a long time and are on ewe hoggs, so I’d expect them to eat more.”

The lambs are marketed through the Waitrose Premium Dorset scheme as they are out of pure Dorset females. “From the first two draws of lambs they’ve averaged £170/apiece and have all graded at E3Ls with an average carcass weight of 24kg. We’re being paid to 22kg and have been drawing them at 44kg, so they’re killing out at about 55%.”

Jeremy says the Charollais cross is producing absolutely no waste and the great thing is that they aren’t running to fat at that sort of weight.

“We’re optimising growth and carcass quality, it’s the ideal combination,” he believes.

“With lamb prices high this system is proving more than worthwhile and by the time the ewe hoggs get to tupping it is hard to see the difference in those which have reared a lamb and those which haven’t.”

Now in his third season of using Charollais rams on the ewe lambs Jeremy says the system is working well. “It’s a simple system which is producing a marketable lamb. We sell them all deadweight, but I’ve no doubt they’d sell equally as well in a live market as they have great skins and super fleshing throughout, from the shoulder all the way back.

“The added advantage is that those ewes which lambed as hoggs ultimately make better mothers as shearlings,” adds Jeremy.

The lambs were up and sucking in next to no time which really sparks up the ewe hogg’s mothering instinct.



CHAROLLAIS RAMS OFFER PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY FOR SCOTTISH STRATIFIED SYSTEM

Ease of lambing coupled with the ability to finish off milk and grass alone make Charollais a prime choice of terminal sire for Duns, Berwickshire-based Stephen Patterson who farms in partnership with his father, Andrew.



“We run a mixed flock, starting with about 500 hill ewes, which traditionally have been Blackfaces, with these being phased out in favour of Shetlands, followed by 1000 Mules and Texel x Mules.

“Historically, we have run a stratified system within the farm, with the Blackface ewes put to Bluefaced Leicester tups and the resulting Mules then put to Texels and the ewe lambs retained from this cross put to Charollais tups.

“However, we began moving away from Blackfaces a few years ago as Shetland ewes could be bought for less money and achieve a better return in our system. We now put these Shetland ewes to Bluefaced Leicesters to breed Shetland Mules, with the Texel and Charollais tups put with them later on and these lambs finished or sold as stores.

“There aren’t many ewes around that can easily wean their bodyweight, but the Shetland ewe can and she’s fertile and thrives on our harder ground. The Charollais x Shetland lambs can be finished at 17-20kg carcass weights, albeit they may not be finished until November or December. But they still do it off grass, without the need for any concentrate feed,” explains Stephen.

The family’s main use of the Charollais rams is across their 450 Texel cross ewes. “They’re also used across all the hoggs and the Shetland gimmers, making use of their easy lambing traits to get a quality lamb out of these young sheep.”



With lambing starting for the lowland flock in Mid-March, ewes are wintered on fodder beet and silage, with just 5.5t of a 19% concentrate used across the flock last winter. “I’m not keen on heavy concentrate feeding and the fodder beet is a great way to set the ewes up for lambing, also giving our grassland a good chance to rest over winter,” he explains.

“We leave all the tup lambs entire, aiming to get them away as soon as possible. More than 95% of the Charollais-sired lambs are sold as finished lambs, with just the odd stragglers sold as stores. The finished lambs are all sold deadweight, aiming to get as close to the 21kg top weight as we can, with most of the Charollais cross lambs grading as U’s and R’s.

“We generally start to draw the first of the singles in mid-June and will then be drawing lambs every fortnight from then on, aiming to sell 1.7 lambs per ewe, with the flock usually scanning in at about 180%,” he says.

“Tup selection is an important part of flock management and the Charollais rams we want to buy must have good length, tight skins and have good head cover. We’re out on the east coast, so it can be quite exposed. Tups are often bought privately off farm from Robert Patterson at Upper Auchenlay. Good skins and head cover are essential for lamb survival, particularly as our land rises from 450-800ft and catch the worst of the easterly weather when it comes through,” adds Stephen.

More than 95% of the Charollais-sired lambs are sold as finished lambs, most of which grade as U’s and R’s

Allied to this is good health management, with all ewes vaccinated for clostridial diseases as well as enzootic abortion and footrot. “Keeping the ewes healthy helps boost lambing percentage and minimise any health issues we might see throughout the year.”

Stephen says grassland management is equally important, with the flock grazed on what he describes as a ‘relaxed rotational system’. “Cows and calves from the suckler herd follow the ewes and lambs around the grazing, aiming to make the best use of available grass to suit both the cattle and sheep enterprises.”



A TUP FOR ALL EWES



NO COMPROMISE, JUST MAXIMISE!

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