

EBLEX/Signet Texel Breeder Development Days

by Samuel Boon, Signet

Texel breeders and commercial ram buyers were given two fantastic opportunities to see the best of what the Texel breed has to offer at two EBLEX/Signet Breeder Development Days held at the Beeford Flock owned by Stephen Curtis, APMC near Driffield and the High Weald and Colwood flocks owned by Trinidad Investments at Warninglid in Sussex.

The events which were supported by the Texel Sheep Society and Performance Recorded Texel's (PRT) saw 80 attendees hear about the latest enhancements to the National Genetic Evaluation and receive a reminder about the importance of good grassland management.



Samuel Boon and Stephen Curtis talk about Breeding Strategies

Samuel Boon from Signet and Kirsty Moore from EGENES spoke about the importance of submitting accurate records and the relative ease with which breeding values could be located on the web. Breeders heard how they could download bar charts to promote the EBVs for their flock from the EGENES websearch (via the Society website).

Time was also spent discussing the new Lambing Ease and Birth Weight EBVs – a first for any sheep breed in the UK. This story subsequently featured in the Farmer's Guardian.

Liz Genever from EBLEX challenged producers to think about optimising the use of grass within their systems.

This means ensuring that the species mix and sward height are conducive to high levels of intake. The groups talked about soil testing and novel forages such as chicory.



Liz Genever calls a spade a spade at Trinidad investments

Beeford Flock

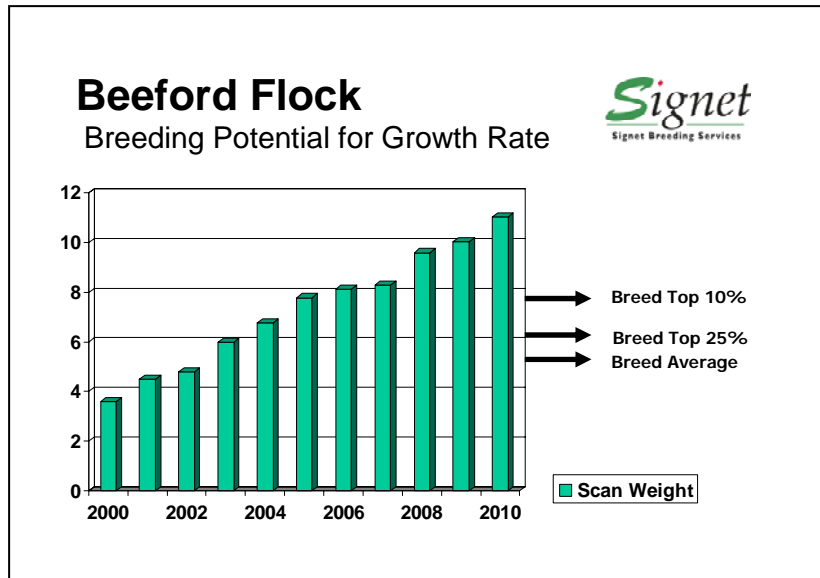
As always it was the sheep that were the main attraction. At Beeford high rates of genetic gain have meant 97% of Beeford lambs now sit in the top 10% of the breed.

The use of CT and a focus on muscling have contributed to this success.

Using a series of proven, high performance sire lines has done a tremendous job at Beeford.

The shearing ewes looked particularly impressive - they were well shaped, level backed and tremendously uniform. The combination of a stockman's eye and an accurate assessment of genetic merit is clearly working well.

Information about the Beeford stock sires CBS07161, CBS08306, CBS09430 and CBS09370 can be viewed on the BASCO websearch.



Trinidad Investments

Diversity is a strength in the Texel breed and at Trinidad Investments breeders were reminded to think about the different markets for their sheep when establishing their breeding objectives. At Trinidad Investments there are two Texel flocks. The High Weald flock contains some of the countries leading showlines. Ewes are lambed earlier in the season, with lambs aimed at the pedigree market.

The Colwood flock is predominantly focussed on producing later lambing, grass reared high performance commercial Texel rams.



This clear division of objectives enables the enterprise to strive for two slightly different breeding goals.

The High Weald flock is still at that exciting stage where new breeding lines are still being tested and their performance on the Sussex download compared. The ewes on display looked great and indicated the potential within the High Weald flock to hit the top. The ewe lambs indicated the potential for the future.

Amongst the grass reared Colwood lambs visitors could see what the Texel can achieve in a (very!) dry year. Performance within this flock has been greatly assisted by the extensive use of high EBV stock rams including Gaynes Major CMG06129 and last years purchase Meon Valley Prince SYD091310 (see web search for details).

It will be fascinating to see how both flocks develop over time.

Summary

Both events provided a great example of what the Texel breed can achieve in the hands of enthusiastic and capable breeders.

I am sure everyone that attended these events learned something new and I look forward to working with PRT to organise similar events in 2011.

On behalf of those that attended our thanks go to the Curtis family at Beeford and all those involved at Trinidad Investments for hosting such informative meetings.



Peter Sutton with daughter on shoulders and wife Dawn (far right) talk through the breeding lines in the High Weald Flock