

Why I like Texels

My first encounter with Texels was ten years of age. I was helping my Uncle feed his pedigree Llanelwy flock when I was bowled over. There looking down at me was this large white face with black eyes and a wrinkled, bashed in nose, it was the prize stock ram, Clougher Goliath. It was from this point on I started to take an interest in Texels. Sadly, my Uncle died the following year, but sitting at home 80 miles away on the eve of his dispersal sale, I turned to my family and said I wanted to start my own Texel flock. There was a flurry of activity, we raced up to North Wales to negotiate the purchase of three shearling ewes from my Uncles flock. In tow, acting as 'Consultant' was my grandfather, of farming stock and nearly 90 years of age. We arrived, I selected my three with spray marker, only to be informed they were Uncle Phil's prize shearling ewes- not bad for first selection. And with the red crosses I put on them they definitely were not going to be going to the sale. Perfect.

I was now in possession of my Texels. I sat on the gate at home that evening admiring them. They turned to stare at me, probably expecting food, but standing alert with plenty of width on their chests and with bright white faces. These are two texel characteristics I still like most now. I remember being so proud as I began a completely new venture that has been central to my life ever since.

The process has been one of learning as I go. I particularly enjoy lambing, hoping that the ram I have selected will produce something special with my ewes. There is often something special but yet to be a Tophill Joe. It is that strive for perfection that keeps me enjoying my flock, hoping that one day it will happen. I bought a Tophill Joe grandson from the Lyonshall Flock at the Welsh National Sale that has greatly improved the length of the animals in my flock, resulting in many great females.

Watching ewe lambs grow is one of my favourite aspects of the flock as I take sole responsibility of feeding them everyday and keeping them in peak condition to turn into strong ewes. The science of breeding is advancing so quick within the sheep world with MyoMax and embryo transplanting but it is great to see the Texel breed at the forefront of these advances and is something I hope to be involved in one day.

My Texel flock has given me many new friends, both from the two clubs I am a member of, and the farmers in my local community who occasionally pop round to have a look at the flock. The Texel community have been encouraging and extremely helpful from letting me borrow rams to very useful advice.

One of my special moments was when I was invited to become a member of the Ruthin Texel Breeders Club. Several years earlier my Uncle who was the local vet helped found the Club and became its honorary vet. I am now one of many young breeders in the club, which looks great for the future. This year at the clubs 21st Anniversary Annual Show and Sale, I was extremely proud to win the Young Handlers competition. Showing the best animals in my flock in the summer mainly at local shows provides me with hours of enjoyment and fun. I have had great thrills of winning classes against established breeders as well as many young handler classes, even though, all the prize money goes straight into feed or for new purchases.

My lambs that are not good enough for breeding purposes do very well at markets or at the abattoir, always achieving top grades, which shows what a great breed Texels are.

In September I started University in Liverpool studying Veterinary Medicine. In animal handling classes and sheep lectures I realised my Texel Flock had given me an

advantage over my peers as I was one of only a few able to turn a sheep over. Many were amazed that I had my own flock of sheep and I have been named the sheep vet in the year and am consulted on sheep issues and get to pass on my knowledge that Texel people have taught me which is rewarding.

Whilst at University, my flock is being maintained with the intention of having a nucleus of young females on my graduation, it is then I will truly develop my love of Texels, applying my veterinary knowledge keeping my flock in peak health and productivity. I hope one of the big expenditures for many breeders will become minimal in my flock, caesareans!

Beth Lawrence
Rhiew Texels



Champion Young Handler at Ruthin Texel Club Annual Show & Sale 2008