

Profit from Performance Farm Walk

The Suffolk Sheep Society held their Profit from Performance Farm Walk at the farm of William Tait Omagh, attracting people from all corners of Ireland, including Cork and Donegal. Society Commercial director Robyn Hulme spoke of the new Suffolk recording scheme which was launched last week, and which will provide recording to all Suffolk Society members as part of their overall membership service. He said " The carcass is the most important driver and figures are essential to achieving the carcass quality that today's market requires. Most of the top breeders are now recording, but the wealth of data which will be created by the new service will be unprecedented and of huge benefit to our commercial customers. The Society's total commitment to breed improvement is reinforced by this revolutionary move, which continues the Society's drive to deliver 'figures to kill for'. The Suffolk Society is also negotiating the importation of New Zealand Suffolk semen and Mr Hulme said "The Suffolk Breed has been to the forefront of innovation for the past 120 years and its endeavour to integrate additional easy managed traits into its' world beating performance will enable the Suffolk breed to retain and increase market share both as a terminal sire and a cross-bred ewe. New Zealand cross Suffolks are already being used with dramatic success on six focus farms in the north of Ireland. When it comes to importing we hope we can make life much easier by overseeing the operation on behalf of our members."

Research carried out on farms across Northern Ireland has shown the benefits to commercial producers of purchasing performance recorded rams' noted Alistair Carson from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Hillsborough. This work funded by DARD and AgriSearch showed that lambs sired by rams selected on the basis of their estimated breeding values (EBV's) were ready for slaughter 12-days earlier and produced 0.5 kg more carcass weight compared with lambs selected from rams on the basis of visual appearance. Over the lifetime of a ram, these improvements in performance were worth an additional £500 per ram. Alistair concluded by highlighting the benefits of embedding recording into all sectors of the Northern Ireland sheep industry. Pedigree breeders through performance recording are leading the way, producing major benefits to the commercial producer.

Lewis McClinton from Greenmount Campus CAFRE explained how performance recorded rams and the use of EBV's can assist commercial lamb producers to identify the appropriate ram for their stock ewes, to meet the market demand.

Host farmer William Tait explained that he had been using recording from the beginning, and had found that his flock was making progress, as he was making use of the recording figures when selecting replacements for his ewe flock. It was also becoming much easier to purchase stock rams with figures, this was due to the drive made by the society to encourage breeders to record. William said that his most recent purchase Sitlow Sensation, which has won many championships and interbreeds throughout the season, was bought on figures, and he felt that with the new recording scheme, this was a good opportunity to get figures right through the breed.

After the speeches, everyone enjoyed taking part in the various competitions which were kindly sponsored by Janssen Animal Health, Merial and Greenvale Animal Feeds and Crystalx.



Competitors casting their eye over the pens for the stock judging competitions



Master Judges - Isaac Crilly NSA Chairman and Robyn Hulme Society commercial director, master judges for the stock judging competitions, take the final look over the stock judging pens.



Robyn Hulme and Isaac Crilly present stock judging prizes to Patrick Donnelly, Richard Wilson and Pat Lynch.



Daniel Buchanan and Glynis Wilson receive their stock judging prizes from Dr Caroline Bryson, centre.



Lewis McClinton presents the competition prize to Glynis Wilson and John Stafford



Gary Beacom, Lee Beacom, Ian Donald, Cahal Devine and Mark Priestly receive their stock judging prizes from Dr Caroline Bryson branch chairperson.