



### Bryan's statistics highlights Suffolk qualities

WHILE enhancing carcase quality remains the primary objective of Suffolk breeders right across the board, a well-known farm manager from Northern Ireland believes the numerous other attributes of the popular breed are just as important and remain as relevant today as ever they were.

Confirmation apart, the Suffolk has built its reputation on liveweight gain, superior growth rate and early maturity, and, according to Bryan Wilson, farm manager at the Antrim Estate (Glenarm Castle), which annually stages the Highland Games, it's the combination of all the key components that ensures maximum profit.

Mr Wilson oversees a flock of some 240 ewes, 180 of which are Texel/ Mule cross. These ewes, which lamb down in February/March, are crossed with the Suffolk ram and a high percentage of the progeny are fattened and sold off in May and June.

According to Mr Wilson, a former sheep shearing champion, it's the ability to beat the glut of lambs coming onto the market that is the key to maximising profit on a commercial unit.

He said, "Nothing beats the Suffolk for growth which results in increased income as lambs are sold before the price begins to fall."

Never was that more relevant than in 2009 and Mr Wilson backed up his comments with some revealing statistics.

"93 of the first 100 lambs sold in 2009 were Suffolks," he added.

While the experienced farm manager hails the Suffolk as the supreme terminal sire, the breed also offers tremendous versatility with many farmers endorsing the Suffolk as ideal for breeding female replacements. The Suffolk Cheviot ewe cross is increasingly providing the foundation for many well run commercial units and the unprecedented demand for this type and quality of female replacement has meant a premium price in the marketplace is guaranteed.