

# Ryeland FBS Summer 2022

Incorporating Coloured Ryeland News



*Thomas Nash (12) was crowned Rare Breed Survival Trust's Young Shepherd of the year at the RBST Spring Time Live event in April*

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## Editor's Note

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Summer's arrived, and along with that, the shows. It's so nice to be back to some form of normality.

I've been the Ryeland Editor for a while now and whilst happy to continue, if anyone has a burning yearning to take over do please let me know, I really won't be upset!. I'm aware that newsletters can become 'samey' and fresh blood and a new perspective is always good.

In the meantime enjoy the newsletter: we have a write up from Jayne Carter and her family (Ryecroft Ryelands) on their exciting new meat project. Also a really informative article from Sophie Gumble on ram fertility.

If anyone would like to do a member profile do please let me know. Thanks to Honeymeade Ryelands for their contribution.

Please let me have any articles etc by 20 August.

Enjoy the summer. May the sun shine on your harvest and your lambs be all you hoped for.

*Lin Whittall*

Ryeland Editor

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## From the Chair

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Lambing has officially finished here, although commencement was rather later this year in comparison to other years... In South Wales we have been challenged with very limited grass and only in the last week or so have we seen the sprouting of that green gold...

During the start of the year we have held two council meetings and at the April meeting we welcomed two new council members. Zoe Unwin has now taken over the role of Chair of the Ryeland committee as Alison Robinson stepped down from the Ryeland Committee and Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Alison for her support and contribution to the society as Deputy Vice Chair of Council over the last few years and as Chair of the Ryeland Committee over the past 12 months. Stephen Ramsden has also joined Council from the South West region as their regional representative and will replace Margaret Wear. We also sadly lost a number of long standing members of council namely Tony Moore, Margaret & Richard Wear and again I would like to thank them for their time and commitment given

to the society over many years.

At the end of April we were able to hold the annual AGM and this year the event was held in Stafford at the agricultural showground. Numbers were disappointing I felt for the size of society membership but it was lovely to actually meet new members from that region and to welcome members who had travelled significant distance from across the country. Special thanks to Dot Tyne for her very informative talk held in the morning session before the AGM in the afternoon and it was lovely to formally say farewell to the current president Pam Bateman and to appoint the presidents for 2022 Alun and Eleanor Parry, along with the president elect who is John Reed. There will be a president's dinner this year in October in Anglesey and further details can be gathered from Dot.

Unlike last May I am able to say that it is full steam ahead with regards to the Agricultural shows.. Although Covid may have scuppered many people's plans to show, it would seem that fuel costs and growing feed prices are the next things for show people and their teams of sheep to consider. I, like many, ventured to the Small holding and Countryside Festival in Builth over the weekend and although it was fantastic and very enjoyable to see everyone again, the actual show was very quiet in comparison to previous years, with trade stands and exhibitor numbers notably down on previous years and actually attendance by the general public extremely quiet in comparison

## **Council Members**

**President** - Alun & Eleanor Parry

**Vice President** - Pa Bateman

**Chairman** - Caz Bateman

**CRC Representative**

Caz Bateman

**Ryeland Committee Representative**

Zoe Unwin

**Councillors: retire 2024**

Joanne Fisher (Northern England)

Stephen Hipps (Yorkshire)

Matthew Pink (Yorkshire)

Pam Bateman (North Wales & Mercia)

Jack Williams (Hereford' & T. Marches)

Susan Quigley (Hereford' & T. Marches)

John Donovan - Vice Chair, (Mid, W. & S. Wales)

Andy McVicar (Mid, W. & S Wales)

Vacant (Eastern England)

Annette Reid (South East England)

Vacant (South West England)

David Mitchell (Scotland)

**Regional Representatives:**

**Retire April 2025**

Vacant (Northern England)

Jill Gray (Yorkshire)

Jonathan Webb (Hereford' & T Marches)

Carol Bateman (Mid, W. & S. Wales)

Jenny Hughes (Eastern England)

Stephen Ramsden (South West England)

**Please note** that there are vacancies on Council, the Ryeland Committee and on several regional committees.

If you are interested in joining and having a closer involvement in the running of the RFBS, please get in touch via the office.

**RFBS Office Hours:**

Tuesdays - Thursdays

9.30am - 5pm

to the hustle and bustle of previous years. I wonder if this will be a trend for this showing season.

At present I believe the majority of shows will be running this year in some form, excluding Monmouth, a personal favourite of mine. I wish you all a very enjoyable showing season, to those exhibiting, those judging and those visiting the show to see what breed lines they may wish to invest in for their own flocks, going forward. I wish you all good luck and some fun social experiences. We could do with them after the past couple of years.

In 2022 the society has finally been able to commence the Young Handler competition and further details are in this current newsletter and will be circulated via the various communication channels and regional committees. This competition is being organised jointly by the Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland committees as a means of encouraging the younger members of the society and to acknowledge their contribution in the active promotion of the breed.

As always I look forward to seeing you all at the society sales in Worcester and Carlisle and wish you all success in the show rings wherever you are in the UK. Always remember though that if you don't get a rosette it does not mean that your sheep are not something to be proud of, every judge has a different opinion on their perfect sheep, as long as they are correct, have good conformation, are presented well and are perfect in your eyes that is all that really matters.

Good luck to you whether you be showing or just flock growing.

*Caz Bateman*  
RFBS Chair

## **Eastern England Regional Report**

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Please join us on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July at the Summer Wool Festival, Redborne School, Ampthill, MK45 2NU for an informal regional catch up and weather permitting picnic.

Letters will be sent out to all regional members with details of how to be added to our mailing list. Please join the Eastern Region Facebook page if you are a Facebook user.

For more information on the Summer Wool Festival please email me [jennyec@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jennyec@hotmail.co.uk) or my contact number is 07590035777

*Jenny Hughes*  
Regional Chair

# Hereford & the Marches Regional Report

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Our first workshop was held at Three Counties Showground, Malvern on Sunday 1 May. We had a great attendance and all the workshops were well received with lots of questions and answers. Grateful thanks to all our speakers and for those who supplied the sheep. Our next Workshop is shown below. Grateful thanks to Stephen and Zoe Unwin for hosting this event and also a thank you to our sponsors who are providing lunch for all attendees.

## July 9

Summer Flock Assessment and Planning Topping Workshop

Moat, Stapleton, Shropshire SY5 7EL

### **Workshops throughout the day**

- Ram & ewe assessment prior to topping
- Pre topping vaccines, treatments & planning for a compact lambing
- Lamb assessment for retention, sale, or market

**Refreshments and lunch will be provided so please ensure you book in by Monday 27 June 2022.**

The day commences at 10am. Informative goodies to take home with you.

If interested please register with Doreen Smillie-Gray on 07971675162 or email [dsg.oakberrow@gmail.com](mailto:dsg.oakberrow@gmail.com)

## September 10

Grand Autumn Lamb Show in conjunction with Kington Show

Kington, Herefordshire

Judges – Ryelands – Rob Morgan (Cagedale)

Coloured Ryelands – Jane Pinches (Justthree)

Schedules available from Kington Show – 01544 340598 or email

[info@kingtonshow.co.uk](mailto:info@kingtonshow.co.uk)

There will be the normal classes for Kington Show and the Lamb Show judging will take place after the Ryeland/Coloured Ryeland judging.

**Any queries regarding the Grand Autumn Lamb Show please contact**

**Doreen Smillie-Gray** [dsg.oakberrow@gmail.com](mailto:dsg.oakberrow@gmail.com) **07971675162**

We look forward to seeing you at our events.

*David Duggan*

Regional Chairman

## Mid, West & South Wales Regional Report

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This year we will be holding a number of Regional Events across our area. In July we are planning an open day at Llandovery to include guest speakers, hopefully a young handler's event and much more, full details to follow when finalised. We are also planning a lunch at the Castle Hotel, Llandovery on the day.

An open day will take place on 18<sup>th</sup> September between 11am and 5pm at the home of Sue and Andy McVicar, Garth Cottage, Aberhafesp, Newtown, Powys, SY16 3LN, the home of the long-established Montgomery Flocks. We will be having various events including a demonstration from Hevin Rowlands a well-known shearer who will be talking about selecting and setting up the right shearing equipment and giving a shearing demonstration. He is employed by Listers and works closely with the British Wool Board so should be very interesting to everyone. To book your place please contact Sue and Andy on 01686-621977 e/mail [andrewmcvicar245@btinternet.com](mailto:andrewmcvicar245@btinternet.com).

We are also planning events to involve Young Handlers and have purchased a number of trophies and rosettes to present to the winners and participants. We do hope that you will be able to join us on one of the two days, it will be great to catch up with friends old and new.

*Andy McVicar*  
Regional Chair

## North Wales & Mercia Regional Report

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It's been a busy start to the year in our region, beginning with us hosting the National AGM at the end of April. This was held at Stafford showground in one of the many suites available for hire. The society's secretary Dot Tyne gave a very interesting talk about her & Tim's life, from their time spent on Bardsey Island to their current farm and life of self-sufficiency. It was entertaining and informative, and enjoyed by everyone present. After a break for lunch the AGM took place with time for questions and suggestions to follow. It was disappointing that only around 50 members were present, especially with such a central venue, as each year the AGM offers an opportunity for members to meet others and learn more about the society, as well as having the opportunity to shape its future.

The following week we held a workshop at my own farm near Macclesfield which was well attended. The day started (after a bacon sandwich & coffee) with a very informative practical session on foot care & trimming with my vet (Jenny Marmion

form Cheshire Farm Vets), and she also discussed mouth conformation & faults. We then had a presentation from fellow RFBS member Jayne Carter from Ryecroft Rare Breeds about record keeping, discussing both the legal requirements and what records she keeps to help improve her flock. This gave much food for thought, and the templates she made available to those present were really appreciated.



After lunch we used some of my shearlings for Steve Briggs to demonstrate show preparation and also discuss breed standards and showing etiquette, and several members took up the offer of trying their hand at trimming. It is our aim to hold several events such as this through the year, with another already in the diary for 4<sup>th</sup> September where the emphasis will be on wool and crafts. This will be held at Tracy & Ian Roberts' home, near Liverpool and full details will be available soon.

The best way of keeping up to date with events in the region is to look at our website [www.ryelandnwam.org](http://www.ryelandnwam.org) where you will find full details of shows with classes for Ryelands & Coloured Ryelands as well as organised events. There is a 'sales and wanted' section where you can advertise stock - just send details and photos to Tracy and they can be added to the site. There is also a members section (access code 2020-NWAM) with a video on show preparation as well as other useful information.

I hope to meet some of you at shows during the Summer – please come along even if you haven't entered any sheep just for 'sheep talk' and a coffee.

*Michele Varmen*

## **South West Regional Report**

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We have come through winter and are filled with optimism for the upcoming show season down here in the Southwest. Following the RFBS elections in March, a few positions have changed on our committee. Our thanks go to Liz Rowe and Sue Lake who have stood down, both of whom have made valuable contributions to the Society over the years. New to the committee are Gillian Dixon (Secretary) and Helen Griffiths; they join John Mills (Chair), Stephen Ramsden, Jeanne Charlton (Treasurer), Philip Blatchford, Bettina Addington-Smith and Paula Wills.

Our Committee meeting in April focussed on plans and preparations for this summer's shows. There will be teas and a warm welcome for visitors to the Ryeland area at the region's largest three-day shows, the Bath & West, Devon County and Royall Cornwall. We invite members to come along to say hello and make themselves known. Bettina will be putting on an attractive display of all things woolly at the Royal Cornwall Show to illustrate the versatility of Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland fleece and what can be done with it.

An 'Introduction to Showing Ryelands' event was kindly hosted by Stephen and Sally Ramsden at their picturesque farm near Torrington at the beginning of May. The event was well supported with many new members and people keen to learn what is involved in showing sheep. Stephen gave a comprehensive presentation on the details of booking in to shows, classes, regulations etc. followed by outdoor sessions on checking the breed standards for both Ryelands and Coloured Ryelands, halter training and an introduction to trimming sheep and preparing them for the big day. The weather was kind and the tea, coffee and cake were bountiful! Members went away full of enthusiasm to get showing.



One of the Southwest's junior members, Thomas Nash from Somerset, was lucky enough to scoop the 'Young Shepherd of the Year' title at the RBST national Young Shepherd of the Year finals at Spring Time Live on April 2nd, competing against many other breeds with his homebred Coloured Ryeland shearling ram Windsor Benji. Our congratulations go to Thomas.

Finally, the Southwest has arranged a Show and Sale on September 17th at Hols-worthy Livestock Market, run by Kivells auctioneers. Open to all registered Ryelands and Coloured Ryelands from any region; further details in future newsletters or from Gillian, the regional secretary.

## News from Scotland

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May 1st saw a gathering of Scottish RFBS members at Blairdrummond Hall near Stirling for their annual meeting. Coffee, cakes and catch-up chat were the order of the day in the morning, then in the afternoon the more formal part of the day took place,

Subjects up for discussion included planning of events for the year, shows with Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland classes (which are on the increase) including the Scottish national at Kinross in August, points competition, and breed promotion. Thanks are due to Janice Milne who organised the day and to everyone who attended, many of whom had travelled long distances to attend.

The first Ryeland classes of the show season were contested at Ayr Show on Saturday, May 14, judged by David Robinson from Wigton, Cumbria.

Champion was Pembroke Apollo (right) for Andrew Hunter Blair (Carsfad) who also lifted the reserve champion title with a Gardwr shearling ewe.

Class results were:

Tup Class: 1st Andrew Hunter Blair; 2nd Andrew Farley; 3rd Andrew Farley.

Tup Lamb: 1st Annette and David Mitchell .

Ewe: 1st Annette and David Mitchell; 2nd Douglas Stainton; 3rd Douglas Stainton.

Ewe Hogg: 1st Andrew Hunter Blair; 2nd



Annette and David Mitchell; 3rd Douglas Stainton.

Ewe Lamb: 1st Andrew Hunter Blair; 2nd Andrew Hunter Blair; 3rd Annette and David Mitchell.

Group of Three: 1st Andrew Hunter Blair.

Three weeks earlier, there was success in the native breeds section at Beith Show for RFBS member Douglas Stainton (Ochiltree) when he lifted the championship with a Carsfad-bred gimmer.

## Yorkshire Region

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### **The New Committee**

Chairperson: Jill Gray

Secretary: Julie Ellis

Treasurer: Philippa Gray

Show Secretary: Matt Pink

Members: Jeannie Scott and Charlotte Ellis.

We will soon be welcoming 4 new members on to the committee.

As I sit here thinking about what to write for my first newsletter report, I can see my ewes and lambs in the field, with the lambs doing what could only be described as training for the Grand National!! I hope that everyone has had a good lambing and have lots of healthy lambs on the ground with a few show potentials among them.

On April 24<sup>th</sup> the Yorkshire region held their annual Open Day, focusing on judging skills for stock selection and show preparation. The event was kindly hosted by Jill and Philippa Gray @ Northedge Ryelands. There was an excellent talk about which animals should be selected for registering with good examples on display of what makes a suitable Ewe and Ram, also a good discussion around breed standards with lots of interesting questions raised. The afternoon was focused on Show preparation and what is expected of the handler whilst in the ring. There was an opportunity for people to have a go at carding and using hand shears, with lots of knowledge sharing. Thanks to Mr Hipps for his talk about wool and showing fleeces. We had a good turnout of new breeders and established ones, the new people were keen to get out into the show rings this summer, and all went home having learnt something new.

The GYS is held over 4 days this year and you are welcome to join us after showing on both days in the sheep lines for after show hospitality.

After a successful Flock Competition last year we are running it again this year, in the autumn. It's open to all flocks in the Yorkshire region old and new. If you are interested in taking part then please email me at [farmgirl196843@gmail.com](mailto:farmgirl196843@gmail.com).

As a committee we would like to hear from members about ideas and suggestions for events that they would like to attend, for eg a vet talk which could include a social. Anything at all, ideas welcome to the email above.

Looking forward to seeing old and new faces this summer. Good luck at any shows you attend, and remember to fill in the chart for the points trophy which will be awarded at the end of the year.

*Julie Ellis*

Secretary, Yorkshire region.

## **Ryeland Committee**

The Ryeland Committee has a couple of vacancies so if you're interested in finding out more please contact either Zoe Unwin on [zoe@gingercatuk.com](mailto:zoe@gingercatuk.com) or Dot Tyne.

## **What's a Smallholder to Do??**

A while back I wrote a little bit about how we produce our lamb, hogget, and mutton for retail and I know some of us try to do this but find selling direct to the public somewhat .....tricky!!

In order to sell to the public there are quite a few hoops we have to jump through, and all of which have to be passed by your local Environmental Health Officer (EHO). There is nothing stopping us from selling our produce direct to the general public as long as we have a trusted butcher who will pack and label everything up and we then deliver direct from him to our customer. Or we can comply with certain rules and regulations and be inspected by the EHO to store the prepacked and labelled meat in freezers at our homes.

The trouble we have encountered is not the rules and regulations opposed on us by the EHO, but the 'find a trusted butcher' bit! And I don't think I'd be far wrong in guessing that most of you are thinking the exact same thing right now? We thought we had found a trusted butcher, and we used his services for 3 years. Yes sometimes our sausages came back different weights or sizes. Yes sometimes our burgers weren't quite labelled correctly and I had to hang around while he or his staff relabelled them. Yes sometimes he left a leg of mutton whole instead of cutting the dinosaur leg into halves. But on the whole he allowed us to sell our meat without upsetting the EHO and so we could overlook these little inconveniences. Unfortunately though, just before Christmas, our butcher decided he no longer wanted to offer us the service of packing our produce. He was more than happy to

continue to butcher, but the packing bit is time consuming and isn't very profitable for him so we found ourselves in a bit of a dilemma!!!

It had always been in our long term plan to have an onsite butchery, emphasis on the words 'long term' however was now really the right time? We haven't really got the flock size at the moment to warrant one, that's for sure, but on the other hand we wanted to continue to sell our produce to our local community rather than sell live animals to market. It was time to do some serious thinking and soul searching to come up with a plan. The thought of trying to find yet another butcher (we've had three) just filled me with dread; the idea of clearing an area in the kitchen and dedicating it solely to a packing plant also was not a viable option.

Then one afternoon, out of the blue, I saw an advertisement on a WhatsApp group I'd become part of and my heart began to race!!! The advert was for a second hand butchery unit! It was a mobile one meaning that everything from electrics to drains was 'plug and go'!! Within a week of the advert I had persuaded Mike that it was a great idea, in reality it didn't take much, and we became the proud owners of a beat up butchery unit complete with a 14' chiller!

So our plan is two fold....

Firstly we renovate the unit and get it passed with flying colours by our EHO! Then we butcher and package all our own produce just as we want it, using environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic.

Secondly, we also want to offer a bespoke butchery service to other small holders in the area who are rearing amazing produce but just can't find that 'trusted butcher'!!

*Jayne Carter*  
Ryecroft Flock

PS if you want to know more about the service we are hoping to provide and are in our area please don't hesitate to contact us. Our website is under construction but our contact page is fully functional at [www.ryecroftrarebreeds.co.uk](http://www.ryecroftrarebreeds.co.uk) or you can follow us on social media [www.instagram.com/ryecroft\\_rare\\_breeds](https://www.instagram.com/ryecroft_rare_breeds) or [www.facebook.com/ryecroftrarebreeds](https://www.facebook.com/ryecroftrarebreeds)

## Fleece & Yarn Committee Report

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Our committee continue to 'meet' regularly through Zoom and we're gradually beginning to get to know each other and suggest ideas for promoting our lovely wool. We'd like to see further stands at Agricultural/Craft shows but it can be difficult as we are spread so wide geographically. Fortunately some of the regions are manning stands in their own area, which is great.



There will be a Fleece Competition at the National Show at Tenbury Wells so please keep your best fleece for this event. There are trophies for Ryeland and Coloured fleeces so it's well worth entering. See below how to prepare your fleece. Don't forget to remove vegetable matter and any secondary clippings. Lay the fleece cut side underneath, fold in the sides and roll up so that the cut side is on the outside. NB If anyone would like the full text to accompany the pictures please email me. I suspect there may not be room in this edition for them.



Additionally we wish to encourage shows to do Wool on the Hoof classes and we hope to have special rosettes for this class.

The good news is that the Wool Board are paying more for the 2021 clip as sale prices were better last year. Let's hope this trend continues and isn't just a blip.

The RFBS will be having a stand at the NSA event at Malvern this year where it is hoped to have both pure bred and cross bred sheep to encourage the more widespread use of Ryelands as breeding tups.

It is important to remember why we have Ryelands. They aren't just pretty sheep grazing the pastures; they need to work for their living. This means breeding selec-

tively in 3 different ways - conformation and bloodlines for passing on good genes, meat to encourage the commercial use of our sheep, and good fleeces to encourage use of the wool and better prices offered for it.

If anyone has any ideas for the Committee we'd love to hear from you.

*Lin Whittall*

[lin.whittall@gmail.co.uk](mailto:lin.whittall@gmail.co.uk)

## Member Profile: Honeymeade Ryelands

Rosalind and Simon Cook

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Having come from a farming background but spent most of my earlier life in ponies, showing etc and then catering and raising a family, I decided to go back a little and rent a small piece of land which I used to bring on some ponies.

When the recession hit in 2008 we were lucky enough to ride the storm quite well. However the bottom dropped out of the pony market and we were left with the land. So we bought a pair of weaners and fattened them through, and quite enjoyed the process. So we progressed on to buying a Hereford cow and calf and some more weaners, and some bottle lambs from the local shepherd. And that is when we decided we would like to start a small flock of sheep. After many hours and months of research and talking to other people we settled on Ryeland sheep. The criteria we used in our decision making process was -

- They needed to be easy to handle.
- Light enough to be easily turned up
- and as near as possible easy to keep in a fence.



We were running 2 catering businesses at the time so we needed the sheep to be manageable in our spare time which in the summer was minimal. Ryeland sheep fitted the bill perfectly so we set about finding some and ended up travelling to Wales to the Cagedale flock for our first 3 ewes and a tup.

Our business name is Smugglers Catering so our youngest son nicknamed the tup Budgie as in Budgie Smuggler! Having started with 3 ewes and added a further 8 ewes from Robin at Cagedale, some of which we still have in the flock at age 14!, we now have a flock of 45 ewes and their associated followers. Any surplus ram lambs were used for meat in the business, home use or sold to the local butchers unless we are able to sell them for breeding.

We grow our lambs to around 50 KG which gives us a carcass of around 27KG on the hook which is not always ideal for the butchers as they like an optimum weight of 18-20KG. However we feel that the extra time spent on good grass is worth every second. We are lucky enough to have the facilities to cut our own lambs for our use and it is a pleasure to work on a well fleshed out carcass. Especially as we then know that it is all grass fed with no hard food.



We started with an entirely white flock and at the time did not realise there were coloured Ryeland sheep (which shows our naivety at that time). It was a surprise 4 years in to find one or two black lambs suddenly appear in the flock. After some research on line and in person it set our minds at rest

that we were not alone in producing some black lambs! Our first black lamb was a ewe lamb and as our first grandson is named Marley and born at the same time she was named Bob after Bob Marley and our grandson. We have subsequently found that the coloured Ryelands are somehow slightly less susceptible to fly strike but other than that are a great addition to the flock.

We plan to lamb in early March as that fits in with the business. We also find that as we usually lamb on sandy hill, which as the name suggests, is a 35 acre hill grounded on sand and gravel and does grow great grass when we have had enough rain. We are aware however that the hill is very susceptible to drying out and burning off in hot dry spring and summers so we make the most of it at lambing.

Our flock always lamb out; in fact they very rarely come in at all. The only exception to this is once they have lambed we bring the ewe and lamb in for one night just to

mother up and make sure they are milking etc. For this purpose we happen to have 2 large pop up tents which we set up in the lambing field with some hurdles (affectionately known as lambing pens designed by BUPA! etc). We know we can set up around 5 pens which is perfect for the task and gives us somewhere to keep all the kit we use: tail rings and pliers, Iodine for navels, Kick start for when the lambs need a little boost and dried colostrum just in case. We have been known to milk the ewe and tube a lamb if necessary. We do use some medicines should we need them but try as far as we can to keep their use as small as possible.

The hill is around 3 miles from home as we speak so there is a lot of driving. We check around 10pm and again at day break and throughout the day. We find that the ewes very rarely lamb at night, if they have not already started at last check 10pm they will usually wait until the morning.

We rent all the land we use to graze the sheep and have some good fields we are able to graze after the hay has been cut which helps the re growth which is mainly paid for with joints of lamb. We work very closely with a few hay merchants who recognise the value of grazing their fields with sheep about a month after the hay is cut which does the fields good in a natural way. We graze the sheep on good grass and are lucky enough to have access to plenty of ground. We only feed hay if there is no alternative. We do make some hay as part of our pasture management some of which we use and the rest we sell.

We shear twice a year in the late spring and spray the ewes with Click extra to keep the flies at bay, and again in the autumn as the Ryeland ewes carry a thick wool fleece and we feel the ewes do better double shorn. Our wool goes to a few home spinners and the rest goes off to the Wool Board. However we are trying to find a better use for this very versatile product. Any suggestions on a post card please.

After the Autumn shearing the ewes are numbered on both sides so we can tell which ones have been tupped and when from whichever side they decide to present to you! We are planning to dag the ewes as they come in having lambled as we found this year getting hold of a shearer is proving difficult.

We flush the ewes and worm them in the end of September on good grass and put the rams in on the 9th of October which gives us 1st week in March lambs.

We have taken to scanning the ewes as we find that knowing what we are expecting from each ewe is preferable to wondering what we are getting, which is how we started. We scan the week after Christmas and number the ewes and mark them with what they are expecting. We keep the information in a diary along with the dates they were tupped. We are always happy to leave the ram in with the ewes after tupping and have had some happy surprises finding a couple of ewes scanned empty and beginning to bag up later on. We have found they are usually



shearlings and just having a lamb is helpful to their future career and extra lambs are very useful. We have never put our ewe lambs in lamb preferring them to grow on to big strong shearlings before tupping.

We buy a new young outcross tup every three years. This year's tup, affectionately known as Abe and registered name is Hardgate Albie by Dolwen Wisdom came from Stephen Hipps in North Yorkshire. We feel that the Ram is a big part of the flock and are happy to spend some time looking for the right one, and as we have been lucky enough to be able to grow the flock with our good offspring rather than buying in ewes which we did once only! a new ram is essential. Having spent the last 20 years catering at county shows it has been impossible to show our sheep. However it has turned out to be a great place to find a new ram. Ros has been known to disappear during a busy service at Lincoln show only to return with a beaming smile having bought a new ram! This year we have taken the decision to retire from our catering businesses and are planning to think about some showing of our sheep.

We are never sure about going as far as sponging or using AI as we feel if the flushing is right we do have a relatively short lambing anyway and our aim is to do as little to the ewes as possible. We feed ewe nuts from 6 weeks to lambing and also they have lifeline mineral buckets ad lib at this time.

We vaccinate all the ewes and the rams 4 weeks before lambing with Heptivac.

Our aim is to breed our perfect sheep. We look for good conformation and a bright eye, dark ears, good broad shoulders, and a good strong back. We like them to stand well and four square with a good walk. Temperament is all important especially in the rams. And as we are always trying to make as much of our sheep as we can our new ram is especially good for fleeces which we are hoping to find a sale for. His twin brother was champion Wool on the Hoof at Great Yorkshire show last year.

Having worked a little with other breeds of sheep we would not change from Ryelands.

*Simon & Ros Cook*



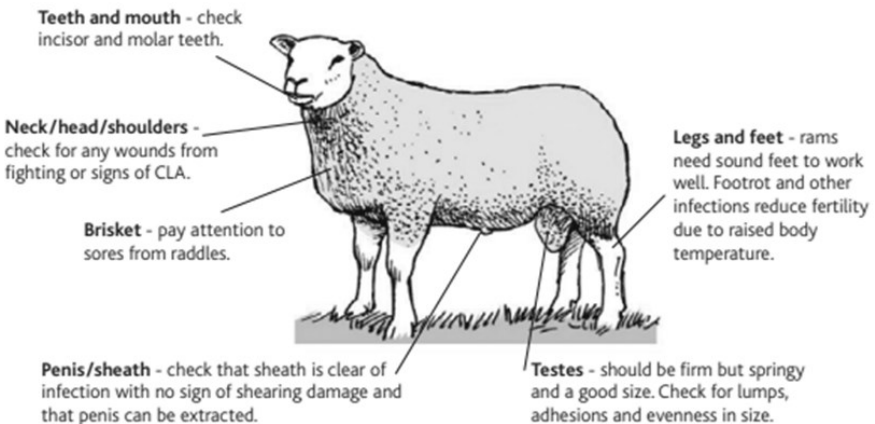
## Vet Notes: Ram Fertility

To some it may seem rather early to be planning for tupping time already, but for those of us crazy-enough to lamb in January, the season is soon approaching! Whether you are aiming to use the same rams that have done well in previous years, retain a ram lamb or purchase a new tup, all require a thorough check-over ('ram MOT') and careful preparation to achieve the best results possible.

Ram subfertility is the most common cause of poor conception rates. Approximately 20% of rams have sub-optimal fertility. Not all of these animals will be completely sterile, but they will likely require more matings to achieve pregnancy and often result in less lambs being born. The target for ram performance is for >85% of ewes to become pregnant in the first breeding cycle.

### The Ram MOT

Sperm production takes a total of 7 weeks, so the ram MOT should be performed **8-10 weeks** prior to breeding, to give you enough time to treat any issues that can affect fertility or find a replacement ram if really needed. Repeat the checks again 1-2 weeks before tupping. If you find anything of concern, then please consult your vet.



**Lameness:** Check for lameness and ease of locomotion. A lame or arthritic ram will spend more time lying down and less time pursuing the ewes. These issues may also prevent him from physically mounting the ewe. Check feet for any lesions or developing abscesses that may require treating. Poor limb and joint conformation may affect longevity.

**Teeth:** The ram may have difficulty maintaining condition if they cannot eat efficiently. Any missing front teeth ('broken mouth') will limit the ram's ability to maintain condition, but bear in mind that younger animals may just be changing to

their adult teeth. Check the ram's lower jawline for lumps or tender areas that could indicate molar issues or abscesses. Check for undershot and overshot front teeth, the lower incisors should meet the edge of the upper dental pad. An incorrect mouth may be heritable, so it is not advisable to use such an animal for breeding.

**Testicles:** It is widely accepted that overly small testicles could indicate subfertility due to lower sperm production. It is not common practice to measure testicle size for Ryelands but the industry standard target for sheep is a testicular circumference of >30cm (6-14 months old) and >33cm (adult). The testicles should be well descended into the scrotum but freely movable, equal in size and have a firm, even tone (likened to a flexed biceps), without irregular lumps or bumps.

**Penis:** Tip the ram over and carefully expose the prepuce. Examine for ulcers or infection that could require treatment.

**Condition:** Rams should be to be 'fit for purpose' and not fat. Body condition score should be 3.5-4 (out of 5) at the start of mating and reassessed frequently. Checking ram body condition at 8-10 weeks pre-breeding allows you time to make any necessary feeding/grazing adjustments. Overly fat or thin rams will have reduced fertility, fitness levels and libido.

**Conformation and correctness:** Check rams for conformation faults and correctness against the breed standard of your rams, as any faults may be passed to his progeny.

### Fertility testing

Ram pre-breeding checks will detect issues in approximately 50% of sub-fertile rams. Further suitability for breeding can be assessed by semen sample examination (to check sperm quality and quantity) by a vet. The sample can be taken on farm and is examined under a microscope, often giving immediate results. It is recommended that rams are tested 6-8 weeks prior to breeding.

### Ram Management

**Reduce illness:** Any illness during mating or in the 7 weeks prior to breeding may affect sperm development and fertility. Take steps to protect your flock from infectious diseases. Vaccinate against clostridia and pneumonia. Test or treat (if indicated) the ram for parasites, especially liver fluke.

**Quarantine new animals:** A new ram should be quarantined for 3-4 weeks prior to mixing with your flock. Test new animals for parasites and infectious diseases during this time which could reduce the general health and fertility of your entire flock.



Carefully consider the biosecurity implications of hiring and sharing rams between multiple farms.

**Stress:** Stress before and during tupping may reduce sperm quality and fertility. Consider this carefully if you are planning your tupping dates soon after purchasing or travel of a new ram.

**Heat stress and overheating:** Overheating of the testes will reduce sperm quality. If breeding in summer months, make sure rams are shorn prior to tupping and remove as much wool as possible from the scrotum. Make sure rams have access to shade during summer months.

**Ewe to ram ratio:** Commercially the maximum recommended ratios are 40:1 for mature rams and 20:1 for ram lambs. This ratio should be reduced if using a teaser or hormone synchronisation. The CIDR datasheet advises no more than a 10:1 ewe to ram ratio.

**Minerals and Trace elements:** Research shows that zinc and selenium supplements improve semen quality. Vitamin A is important to sperm production so ensure rams have access to grazing for the 7-week period prior to mating.

**Feeding:** Grass (supplemented by minerals) is the best food for productive, fertile rams. Some data suggests that rams may benefit from an increase of protein in their diet 6-8 weeks prior to mating to improve semen quality BUT this should not be at the expense of becoming over-conditioned! Take care that feeding excessive amounts of protein can also be detrimental to fertility and can increase risks of penile sheath infections ('pizzle rot')! If feeding is warranted, only give concentrates that are specifically formulated for rams, as higher levels of magnesium and phosphates in ewe feed can result in kidney stones. It takes 2-3 weeks for a sheep's digestive system to adjust to changes in feeding. Therefore, rams that may have been housed and fed concentrates for shows/prior to sale will not adjust well and lose significant condition if suddenly turned out to work.

**Age:** Most ram lambs reach puberty from 5-7 months old but are suitable for breeding once they reach >60% of their mature body weight. Most older rams will become less fertile from around 6 years old.

**Raddle:** On average ewes cycle every 17 days. Change the ram's raddle paint colour between cycles to check the number of ewes that are repeatedly served or do not held to pregnancy. If you are using a raddle harness, check the ram frequently for rubs and sores. Alternatively apply raddle paint straight onto the ram's brisket but reapply the paint every few days to prevent it drying out.

**Sweeper:** It has been shown that a small



number of ewes are simply fussy and may not stand as long for a ram who they take a disliking to! This may affect conception rates in pedigree flocks where groups of females run with just one ram. Changing to a different ram for the third cycle will help to mitigate any ram preference issues on overall conception rates.

As well as ram fertility, other causes of low pregnancy rates are early foetal abortion or issues affecting ewe fertility such as infectious disease, parasites or being too fat. Consult your vet for advice and investigations.

*Sophie Gumble MRCVS*



Junior Shepherd  
5-9 years  
and  
10-16 years

# Regional Qualifying Shows

TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON!

## 2022 RFBS National Young Handlers Competition

Points awarded from Qualifying Shows

REGISTER NOW TO LEARN MORE!



To register email entrants name and age to  
Justine Williams for Ryelands (justinewilliams16@gmail.com)  
and Joanne Fisher for Coloured Ryelands (je.fisher@aol.com)  
adding the subject heading 'RFBS 2022 YH Entrant'

## **RFBS ANNUAL HANDICRAFT SHOW**

NOVEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup> 2022

ENTRIES CLOSE, NOVEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup> 2022

JUDGE DEE TIPPETT

Entries. 1 entry per person per class, maximum of 2 good, clear photos per item please.

Photographs to be emailed no later than 12<sup>th</sup> November to

[claireweedall095@btinternet.com](mailto:claireweedall095@btinternet.com)

### **ALL HANDICRAFT ITEMS MADE FROM RYELAND OR COLOURED RYELAND WOOL ONLY.**

Class 1. Any knitted item

Class 2. Any needle felted item

Class 3. Any wet felted item

Class 4. Any woven item

Class 5. Any other woolly crafted item not listed above

Class 6. Under 16's (please include age)

Class 7. Any sheep related DIY creation ( just for fun)

**ALL EXHIBITS MUST BE EXHIBITORS OWN WORK**

**NOT PREVIOUSLY ENTERED IN COMPETITION.**

# Coloured Ryeland News

Welcome to the summer edition of Coloured Ryeland News. I would like to put out another plea to members for articles for inclusion in the newsletter. Would you like to feature in a member's profile? Have you created something fabulous with your Coloured Ryeland fleeces? ...If so, I would love to hear from you (contact details below). Please be aware that the deadline for submissions for the next edition will be 26/08/2022.

## Holly Price

### Coloured Ryeland Committee

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Claire Weedall 07539 195580

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hollyprice127@gmail.com

## The Rare Breed Survival Trust's Young Handler of the Year Thomas Nash

The RFBS have a superstar member amongst us – Thomas Nash from the South West Region has been awarded Young Handler of the Year by the RBST! This is a fantastic achievement, and one which Thomas should be very proud of.. Huge



congratulations to Thomas of the Windsor Flock! He has described his experience below.

The RBST's Young Handler of the Year final is made up of handlers that have been awarded overall Champion young handler at one of the RBST's qualifying County Shows during the year; I qualified at the Devon County Show in July last year.

The event was run superbly by the Yorkshire RBST in April and held at the Great Yorkshire Showground in Harrogate where we were welcomed very warmly by the other Young Handlers and their families. The competition followed the usual format with the winners of each age bracket going head-to-head in the final to become overall Champion.



The Junior round was tough with some stunning sheep and fantastic handlers, but I was lucky enough to win. There was a nail biting wait for the Seniors to be judged and then the Overall Championship was under-

way. After some tricky questions and a demonstration of handling to my amazement the judge came towards me with the Champion's rosette! I was pleased that I had taken the time to halter train and trim Benji for the event and am sure that this contributed towards my success on the day.

I felt very proud to represent the Ryeland Flock Book Society with my Coloured Ryeland at this event and talk to lots of other children about the breed. Liz Rowe, of Stembridge Coloured Ryelands, helped me so much at the beginning





and I am trying to 'pay it forward' by helping other young handlers wanting to show for the first time.

Looking forward to catching up with everyone at the South West shows this year.

*Thomas Nash*

*Photographs courtesy of Jackie Nash*

Thomas also featured in an article about his experience for FarmingUK, which can be found here:

[https://www.farminguk.com/news/12-year-old-young-shepherd-aiming-high-at-royal-bath-west\\_60389.html](https://www.farminguk.com/news/12-year-old-young-shepherd-aiming-high-at-royal-bath-west_60389.html)

## **...Which leads us nicely onto: The RFBS Young Handlers Competition!**

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This year the Coloured Ryeland Committee are delighted to announce that there will be a Young Handlers Competition.



**Junior Shepherd**  
5-9 years  
and  
10-16 years

**Regional Qualifying Shows**  
TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON!

**2022 RFBS National  
Young Handlers Competition**

**Points awarded from  
Qualifying Shows**  
REGISTER NOW TO LEARN MORE!

To register email entrants name and age to  
Justine Williams for Ryelands ([justinewilliams16@gmail.com](mailto:justinewilliams16@gmail.com))  
and Joanne Fisher for Coloured Ryelands ([je.fisher@aol.com](mailto:je.fisher@aol.com))  
adding the subject heading 'RFBS 2022 YH Entrant'

## Member's Profile

### Susan Trimmings (Lightwater Flock)

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Susan owns the Lightwater Flock of Coloured Ryelands in Northumberland. Here she presents an introduction to her flock, her preferences for Coloured Ryelands in her flock and some of the background to her flock ownership...

My no nos for ewes are jaw problems in their lambs, bad mothering (rare, but I cull if it happens twice), poor udder (difficult for lambs to latch on), recurrent foot problems (rare). I hope to retain 2 ewe lambs a year on the premise that ewes will lamb until they are 6 so that should maintain a flock of 12. In the event ewes have lambed successfully sometimes until 10 years old!



For rams the negatives are producing offspring with poor conformation or vigour, mistreatment of ewes and being unreliable with me.

I have land on heavy clay, and it makes winter grazing difficult. However, I have a 21'x70' barn and have sometimes kept hogs in the yard and barn for many weeks to allow the fields to recover and get earlier grass.

I have a quad bike - I call it my mobility scooter since I have developed hip problems, a topper that I rarely use, a 6x4 road trailer, a tipping trailer for heavy equipment in the fields and dozens of hurdles. I recently invested in a Shepherdless lamb milk feeder for lambs taken from their mother - I have not yet weeded out ewes that bear triplets.

I have 500 metres of 7yr old hedging that is due for laying but have decided to coppice 100 metres a year instead. My land is a rich clover and grass mix but very exposed and south facing.

I showed rarely in the early years and now not at all, but I think the online competition is a great way for us to see those breeding animals that never enter a



show ring. I hope it continues.

I have sometimes sold individual fleece but mostly use mine in the garden and underneath newly laid hardcore. But fleece quality is still a consideration when adding to my flock.

I have only had one sheep worrying incident. I had taken my neighbour's dogs back 3 times when they wandered and then they started to run the flock. I was livid. Fortunately, the police were very supportive. I think the idea of me getting a gun and using it unnerved everyone. The neighbour still does not speak. I have badgers and foxes in the adjacent wood and never had a problem, but I wouldn't like a ewe to lamb unattended in the fields.

As I grow older, I am reducing my flock - selling some breeding ewes and all my lambs. As in the past ram lambs are kept entire and most go to the meat market before the end of September. A local butcher will prepare 2 for me and the family to put in the freezer. I might keep one, or occasionally 2, ram lambs that look promising. I rarely sell them now but might retain one for my own breeding. After clipping their conformation is easy to assess.

If I didn't have Coloured Ryelands I would miss the sound of them cropping the grass on a summer's evening; the smell of a contented flock as they surge round me hoping for food; the feel of the soft fleece on their chests; the sight of them moving cooperatively round the sward; the rhythm of the year set by the weather and their husbandry.

I have had immense pleasure from my Coloured Ryelands. Anything I have achieved has been on the backs of those who went before. Lambing is a demanding time and if I am unfit for it in the future, I will still keep some Coloured Ryelands and enjoy the sight of them in the fields and take pleasure in keeping them in great condition. Best of luck to you all in your quest to improve the breed on all fronts. As Pat Maddock once said of her sheep, *"they are my friends"*.

*Susan Trimmings*

## Notices:

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**Worcester Sale 2022:** Enclosed with this newsletter is the entry form for the 2022 RFBS Worcester Sale. Entry fees are unchanged from 2021. Closing date for entries is Monday 18th July. Please note that late entries will NOT be accepted. All entries must be registered with RFBS or applications for registration must have been submitted by the closing date. Also note that all timings on the morning of the sale have been moved forward by 30 minutes. All entries will be subject to ear tag and veterinary inspections on entry to the market.

**Names for Females:** Following a request from a number of members, RFBS Council have approved an amendment to the rule relating to pedigree names. Names for females are now optional, and where a name is recorded, it should be the flock prefix followed by a name beginning with the relevant year letter. The letter for 2021 born lambs is B and C for 2022.

**Carlisle Sale 2022:** Enclosed with this newsletter is the entry form for the 2022 RFBS Carlisle Sale. Entry fees are unchanged from 2021. Closing date for entries is Monday 8th August. Please note that late entries will NOT be accepted. All entries must be registered with RFBS or applications for registration must have been submitted by the closing date. All entries will be subject to ear tag and veterinary inspections on entry to the market.

**National Show 2022:** The RFBS National Show is back on this year and will again be hosted by Tenbury Countryside Show on Saturday 6th August 2022. If you need to travel a long way, and stay overnight, accommodation for the sheep and parking for exhibitors will be available. Please let the organisers know when you submit your entries. Schedules will be available to download from:  
<https://www.tenburyshow.co.uk/competitions/national-ryeland-rfbs-sheep-show/>

**Shows 2022:** With the 2022 Show season in full swing, please keep your camera and show catalogues handy to record results. The RFBS office is always on the look out for good quality images of the breed for publicity purposes and Society publications. So if you have any nice images, please feel free to email them to the office (admin@ryelandfbs.com). Show results are also very welcome - event websites are not always correct.

**Registrations:** Many of you will be aware that the online flock book system recently underwent an upgrade which will hopefully work more efficiently and be simpler to navigate. If you have any feedback, please get in touch.