



# Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: [www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk](http://www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk)

Newsletter 73 – December 2010

## Chairman's Message

### *Woody weather!*

Please may all our readers have a very Merry Christmas and a productive and prosperous and happy New Year. I always reckon the new year starts on 22 Dec being the day after the winter solstice and when the days start getting longer and we can see what we are doing after 4 o'clock – wind blown snow and fog permitting!

If I hear another twerp on the radio announce "it's like a winter wonderland out there" again I'll go completely Olde Scrooge and cancel my TV licence – on second thoughts – better not as the BBC weather website is the best source of 24 hour / 5 day local weather forecast, updated twice daily. Good old BBC.

### *Registrations*

Good to see some top notch tups entering the Society register this year and the first of the progeny ewe lambs (from inspected foundation tups and ewes). Also good to see RBST /CFB registrations up on last year – don't forget to birth notify any lambs before the end of December to Grassroots otherwise you will not be able to register them in due course.

### *Census*

A census of Whitefaced Woodland sheep flocks was carried out for the Society by committee member John Jones in Autumn 2009 and the full results are here attached including the crucial flock distribution maps.

It looks like there are 3,500 woodies in the UK. I suppose though there must be another 1000 out there in commercial hill units being used for cross breeding and they are frequently evident at autumn stock markets in the North / Central England region. Also a few more pure bred units keep coming to light as interest in the breed grows.

There are still about ten Woodland Calendars left – Contact Paul Dixon (07720 765094) or Karen Dowey (07787 241960) **NOW** or you'll miss out!

### *Mordun Foundation*

This is a farmed animal health research institute in Scotland. They research farm animal diseases and publish their findings with commentaries on the efficacy of available treatments. Summaries of their research on specific issues can be found on their website [www.moredun.org.uk](http://www.moredun.org.uk).

Of particular recent importance to us will be the reported rather rapid spread across the UK of liver fluke. I know I keep banging on about this but it was unheard of for example in the eastern counties 20 years ago and now occurs in 20 % of flocks / herds. It's devastating in sheep and extremely debilitating in cattle (and a definite killer in llamas). Incidence in parts of Wales is in the 90% range and in the north and central region of England, 50%.

Infection takes place in autumn or early winter when the immature fluke invade the liver and a chronic condition prevails in the spring when the adult fluke are ensconced in the bile duct and releasing their beastly eggs at the rate of 50,000 a day. Sheep respond well to drench treatment as the liver is a very resilient organ, but be careful when handling infected lambs as rough handling can damage the liver.

Anyway... please do have a look at the Mordun website and if you don't have web access, I'll send to you a 10 page fluke factsheet if requested. Sorry to go on about this but it's a new disease threat in effect because of its rapid spread from infected areas into areas with a low incidence. Wet summers, extensive flock movements, encouragement to keep wetland wet etc. have all contributed to its dramatic increase.

Best regards, Rob Ford

## Mayday

The 1<sup>st</sup> of May had arrived at last! Oh how often during the longest and coldest of winters for so many years, I had longed for the month of May to arrive! Lambing was finally fizzling to an end, the wild cherries along the drive had erupted into blossom, the grass in the meadows was starting to get away and the buds were bursting open on the trees.

So in the pause before the silage season and shearing started again, Katie (my daughter) and I arranged a small treat and made a quick visit to Rachel Godschalk's flock to see her new lambs.

Katie and I left the green of Kirkby Lonsdale and headed north up the Lune Valley to Sedbergh and the Howgill Fells beyond. Up in the hills above Kirby Stephen we were surprised to see that even after a week of temperatures at home in the upper teens [centigrade] there were still odd patches of snow on the tops. Either that or there were huge piles of wool filling some of the gills, not casualties of four months of snow we hoped!

Passing over the top of the Pennines along the A 66 the landscape was still drab and brown too, despite the in-bye land being full of tiny Swale, Dalesbred and Kendal Rough Fell lambs, but as we descended down the other side we returned to the verdant green of spring once more with lush fields of ankle deep grass and cereals growing between hedges bursting into flower and leaf.

Rachel farms on the stunning banks of the rivers Tees and Greta in rich, fertile parkland full of spectacular mature trees and two grand country houses. Her charming cottage nestles at the end of a private lane, sheltered by woodland overlooking the Tees itself and from her windows she can watch and be watched by, some of her and her mother Ann's Woodlands contentedly munching on herb rich meadows full of lesser celandine and clover.



Newly lambed sheep graze the lush new pasture

Oh how jealous my own woodies would have been, if they could have observed how the other half live from their tightly cropped and over grazed rush pasture on the edge of Docker Moor I thought, but first appearances can be deceptive and we were soon to learn that this lush pasture had only very recently come into Rachel's possession and that the rest of her land had yet to recover from the harsh rigours of winter just like ours.

It would have been interesting to see Rachel's flock, just because of the active roles that she and her mother take within the society, but on top of this Rachel has built up one of the largest flocks of Woodlands that I know about, enthusiastically buying in sheep from a great many sources. This has ensured that her flock is possibly one of the most representative of the whole breed – it is certainly the biggest and possibly most genetically diverse one that I have yet seen – however I was really surprised by the uniformity with in it. Rachel must have a very sharp eye and be a very good judge of sheep.

It was fascinating to listen Rachel and Ann discussing in great detail the breeding behind their sheep!

### The Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society Flock Profile 8

Date of Profile: 1/5/2010



Rachel's new tup, bred by Paul Thorp

#### Contact Details

**Name of Flock:** The Mortham Flock

**Flock Prefix:** Mortham

**Name of Breeder:** Rachel and Ann Godschalk

**Address:** North Park Cottage, Rokeby, Barnard Castle, DL12 9RZ

**Telephone:** 01833 627102; **Mob.:** 07962 152242

[RachelGodschalk@whitefacedwoodland.co.uk](mailto:RachelGodschalk@whitefacedwoodland.co.uk)



Rachel demonstrates a good clean head with the sort of horns that she is looking for.

**Flock Details**

**Year Started Farming:** 1998

**Year Pedigree Flock Established:** 1998

**Size of Woodland Flocks:** Major

Small 1-20, Medium 21-50, Large 51-100, Major 101+



Ann holding one of the lambs from the AI group

**Breeding Policy.**

Ann originally started the flock with some sheep that she purchased from Chris Steel’s flock. Rachel has however built upon this nucleus by selecting sheep that she liked from many others.

Rachel’s policy for breeding is a process of elimination; any ewe that has a significant “fault” is not bred pure, but put onto her Texel cross Beltex tup. Then the best 60 of her ewes were put to AI this year, using tups from Paul Thorp and James Gill and Crossfield Keith, from Richard

and Sue Bottom. These ewes were selected as if for showing. Rachel did not want any sheep with tufts on their heads or woolly legs; they had to be “clean”. She wanted the sheep to have a good straight back, to stand well and be good boned. Rachel considered the legs of her sheep very carefully, judging whether the legs were too close, turned in or out, down at the pasterns and so on. She also examined the horns. Rachel explained that she wanted the horns to be flat; this means flat from the top of the head, not flat in profile or flat to the face.



An ewe and lamb from the AI group

“It is less important where the horns grow to; I’m not so worried if they end up sticking out a bit,” she said. “But when the lamb is born, the horns must be growing flat from the top of the head or you can have terrible problems lambing them. You don’t want great big horn buds pointing out at horrible angles and ripping the ewe up inside or even getting stuck!”



Rachel shows us a gimmer lamb with well-placed horns

Rachel also prefers Woodies with wider faces and broader noses, but did not feel that this would be too much of a problem at lambing.

Finally, Rachel will not cull any ewes just because they have one of the faults described above, only if their performance as a mother is poor. Her rejects go to be crossbred because an

animal that would be poor in the show ring might still make an excellent and productive mother. Only sheep that are poor mothers are sent for culling – a policy that will insure the long-term instinct of mothering within the breed!

### **Marketing Policy**

Fat lambs and those not intended for breeding go through the local mart. Rachel sends a number of lambs to a butcher that she knows, he cuts and packs the meat for her very professionally. She sells these directly herself. When Ann started the flock in Hertfordshire, she told me she used to trade all but one gimmer lamb each year to a local butcher in exchange for meat credits, so that she could swap lamb for pork or beef and so on.

### **Showing achievements**

When we arrived, Rachel's living room was full of rosettes and trophies, but when asked what their showing achievements were, Rachel modestly told me "Oh nothing really."

"So what are all these?" I asked.

"Well I don't think that it means much if you came first when there was little competition; I think that it means more when you measure yourself against real opposition. So I suppose the ones that I am most proud of are 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Hope Show and a couple of seconds at the Great Yorkshire Show."

### **Farm Details**

**Year Farm started:** 2006

**Size of Farm:** C

Group a 1-20ha, b 21-50ha, c 51-100ha, d 101- 500ha, e 501-1000ha, f 1001+ha

**Land Classification (LFA):** Non LFA

**Other Breeds of Sheep/Livestock:** Texel x Beltex, and Welsh Badgerface sheep

### **Description of farm:**

Rachel rents land on the banks of the rivers Tees and Greta. It is rich, fairly flat parkland, with a series of steep terrace like banks that must have once been the banks of the river as it cut down from the moors above, through this fertile landscape. The ancient pastures are rich in broadleaf herbs and wild flowers.

The landlords keep a few ducks, chickens and geese, which have the run of the courtyard, where Rachel can use some of the buildings and they also have their own private pond. The landlords also keep a couple of Kerry heifers and a number of alpacas.

The fields are fairly sheltered and surrounded by mature woodland and trees of all ages are scattered throughout the parkland, providing useful refuge and shelter.

### **Flock Management:**

The flock lambs April to May, outside. As soon as they can be, the ewe's eartag number is noted and the lambs and their mother are numbered and their details meticulously put into the comprehensive computerised record system, which logs the whole flock's records.

Keeping different groups apart is difficult, with the existing fences, walkers leaving gates open and a river that's difficult to fence. This was the main reason for using AI this year, to try and ensure that the right ram served the right ewes.

The biggest problem on the farm is one of worms. There are really only four fields and these have to carry sheep most of the time to be economical, so this is inevitable. Rachel worms the ewes as and when they need it, but the lambs get wormed every six weeks or so, from a month old. There is no known fluke problem.

All the lambs get Bravoxin 10 multi-vaccine (which is like Heptavac P), but not the ewes. At the end of May they all get treated with Klik. Pre-topping the ewes all get a trace element bolus which contains selenium and cobalt.

Rachel makes her own hay on the farm.

Philip Onions 1/5/2010

### **Congratulations...**

to Tom Davis of Vauxhall City Farm, who ensured that Woodlands were represented at the Dairy Event and Livestock Show, in its new incarnation at Birmingham NEC. Vauxhall's ewes took first and second places in the Hill and Heath ewe class, and went on to become Hill and Heath Reserve Champion.

### **Stock Wanted**

Two or three in-lamb Woodland or Woodland cross ewes, or geld Woodland gimmer hogs. Preferably within 100 miles of Ravenglass, Cumbria (may be able to share transport if further away, in which case contact Philip Onions 015242 21019).

Contact Mr Foster 01946 724606 or email [janice.mark@btinternet.com](mailto:janice.mark@btinternet.com)

### **Woodland Census**

As Rob has mentioned, the results of John Jones's census are enclosed with this Newsletter, including the crucial flock distribution maps.

### **List of current members**

"By popular demand" I have attached a contact list of current members who have agreed that we may circulate their details. The normal Committee details will reappear next time.