



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Newsletter 82 - October 2012

The Annual General Meeting of the Whitefaced Woodland

Sheep Society

will be held at the Dog and Partridge
on Saturday 13 October at 11.30 am.

Lunch will be available at around 1 o'clock

*Please bring a copy of this Newsletter with you,
to save printing out more copies of the Agenda
and Accounts. Minutes of the 2011 AGM were
circulated with Newsletter 78, with a small
amendment in Newsletter 80*

The Dog and Partridge is on the A628
Manchester to Penistone road, one mile west of
the Flouch roundabout (the A616 junction).
Post code for your satnav is S36 4HH

Statement of Accounts

Opening balance		£2596.69
<u>Income</u>		
Mugs and calendars	£224.50	
Membership	£375.00	
Registrations	£109.00	
Donations	<u>£ 9.50</u>	
	£718.00	
<u>Outgoings</u>		
Calendar	£225.00	
Mugs	£199.60	
NSA membership	£ 75.00	
Rosettes	£ 23.25	
Newsletter & postage	£154.19	
Flock profiles	<u>£100.00</u>	
	£777.04	
Excess of outgoings over income	£ 59.04	(£ 59.04)
Closing balance		£2537.65

AGENDA

1. Members present and apologies
2. Minutes of the 2011 AGM
3. Chairman's report of the year
4. Treasurer's report and Accounts
5. Election of officers
6. Position of Honorary President
7. Selection of Show Judges
8. Whitefaced Woodland Register
9. Open day/ Social event
10. Any other business

Item 3: Chairman's Report of the Year will be given at the meeting

Item 5: Officers of the Society
The current officers (as listed on the back page) are willing to stand for a further year. No other nominations have been received.

Item 7: Show Judges
Shows this year have been badly affected by the weather. In addition, several of our nominated judges were not actually appointed. Earlier and better contact with Show Secretaries is needed. Can we increase the list of available judges?

Item 8: WFWSS Register
Rachel has made this suggestion for discussion: "I do like to have a fairly complete register of breeding stock, and although I like our idea of having no cut-off point for any registration (no need for sire and dam to be registered, or age cut-off), it means that people only register a few, and gives us no real data base of breeding and blood lines. Would anyone be willing to give me a list every year of the woodland lambs they think are good and their sire and dam? Then we can keep a record, even if they don't get registered."

If you cannot attend the AGM, but have thoughts on any of the above, please contact Rachel or any Committee Member to express your views.

The Brosc Kinship Programme

Recently the RBST held a workshop for representatives from all the breed societies or breed groups in the Combined Flock Book to grant each group one licence and one copy of a new Brosc Kinship programme that they have developed to assist with the selection of breeding stock.

It was pointed out that we should balance the need to selectively breed livestock to improve our breeds with the need to keep a diverse genetic population. One concern of the RBST has always been that when saving small populations of any rare breed there is a chance of inbreeding and they have drawn up this complex piece of software to help with this problem, but they went to a great deal of trouble to spell out that this software should not be used to replace the selection of good breeding stock, but was intended to assist with a more informed choice.

In other words, breeders should always select healthy animals first, with the desired breed characteristics, but then they should also take into account the possibility of inbreeding and now they can use this programme to help select a more unrelated sheep when considering two or more equally good sheep to breed from within the Combined Flock Book.

The programme makes use of the past 30 or so years of breeding (and the accuracy of breed records) within the RBST flock book. Using the current database (which we can update) of all known living sheep in this list, it compares any animals' pedigrees and produces a theoretical kinship coefficient. The exact way it does this is not really important and it has some pretty fundamental limitations, but it does provide us with a reasonably accurate idea of how closely related certain sheep are, since the flock book was set up.

As most of us know, the more inbred any population becomes, the more likely it is that recessive, undesirable traits or malformations are to appear. In the past the RBST has concentrated on trying to maintain certain rare bloodlines from the founder members (i.e. sheep brought into the CFB for which the previous pedigree was unknown). However it has become apparent to the RBST that actually breeding to bloodlines does not really help with genetic diversity, nor does it keep those bloodlines pure and eventually they all get mixed up anyway. In this way, animals from different flocks while appearing to be unrelated, can actually end up being very closely related, sharing a close common ancestor. Of course all the members of any breed share a

common ancestor, that's how they share the same genes which make them a breed, but this programme, it is hoped, will keep as many generations as we can between relatives.

Okay, to be frank, we spent all day discussing the programme and how it works and what its limitations are and I walked away with a whole booklet of instructions and it is just not practical to spell it all out in our newsletter, so what do you need to know and how are we going to use this?

Given any sheep or flock identification numbers, within the RBST registered flock book, we can compare different animals and come up with a number that represents their current kinship relationship. The smaller the number, the more unrelated they are. Unfortunately we do not have a magic number that we should be aiming for.

So if you wanted to buy a new tup for example and you had a choice of several equally good looking specimens, with their details, I could compare them with the ewes that you might want to put to those tups and tell you which tup was the most or least related to each ewe. I could then email (or print out and post it) to you with an Excel table comparing each kinship coefficient. The rest would be up to you. It would be quite unprofessional of me to advise you which tup to buy (I've done that before and got it wrong, so I won't be making that mistake again!), but I could show you which tup had the strongest or the weakest kinship to your own sheep.

The same could be done for ewes or this programme might even be used to identify who might own the most unrelated animals to your own, but that would take a lot of time.

The possibilities are endless and one could compare crossings with every sheep that has ever been put on the database regardless of sex or whether or not the males were castrated or were even alive. So although male to male crossings are not possible it is still possible to compare how closely they are related, which might help in making breeding selection decisions.

Needless to say you could waste an awful lot of my time testing out the relationships of every sheep pairing in the CFB, so I have to draw the line somewhere and I will offer this service free of charge to any Whitefaced Woodland breeder once in any one year, but if some people keep coming back to use this service again and again, I will expect to be paid for my time and costs associated with the programme, such as printing

reports or postage (emailing details *should* be easier and cheaper but I still have my own business to run so will expect you to pay for my time).

In the meantime the RBST recommend that to reduce inbreeding we should try and follow these rules:

- Keep as many males as possible
- Not keep too many offspring from any one male
- No one male should be producing 5% of all the lambs in the whole data base (currently 3 produce more than 5% each)

Now I must remind you of the statement at the top of this piece, that we need balance between the need to keep stock unrelated and other breeding selection needs, so please use these guidelines sensibly within your own flocks and don't breed from deformed or substandard animals just to preserve a bloodline. It really would be bad news for the breed if you did.

We in the Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society are intending to offer anyone interested the opportunity to attend a workshop using this programme and as soon as we have finalised the details of this we will let you know in a newsletter or contact me direct.

Philip Onions
Contact details below

Philip will bring the program to the AGM for anyone who is interested.

The Kinship program is, of course, only of use for CFB registered sheep. However, Breeders Assistant, which we use for the Society's Whitefaced Woodland Register, is also able to calculate coefficients of inbreeding. We have used this for several years to help us work out which of our ewes should go to a particular tup. Ed.

Show results

John Jones let me know that some of the information from the Hope Show was incorrect: "It was Paul Thorp who won 1st in the ram lamb class, not me, and the breed classes were judged by Mike Salisbury, with Neville Belfield judging the Champion of Champions class only."

Stock for Sale

Well made shearling tup for sale. Excellent horns, carried off his face. Ready to work. For sale at a realistic price, as he is related to my ewes. Hazel Hindmarch, Wolsingham, Co. Durham 01388 527119 or roland.hindmarch@btinternet.com

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