



Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society

Web site: www.whitefacedwoodland.co.uk

Newsletter 89 – July 2014

Chairman's Ramblings

This is my final report - does not seem like three years. Sorry Ann for not responding earlier. I hope the next incumbent of my position responds better than me.

The sun is shining, no show cancellations, hay and silage time has been friendly.

Good attendance at the Yorkshire Show. Well done to all winners and hope for a good day at Hope.

Nearly time for the sales. Bretton Mill on the new field is planned for Saturday 27th September.

Thanks to all who have helped me through the last three years, it hasn't seemed that long.

Philip is still working hard on RBST, I think the register is still a long way from sorted, but it may be sooner than I think.

Hope to see you all soon.

Thanks, Paul

Editor's Bleat

I'm sorry that Newsletters have been a bit thin on the ground of late, but with haytime nearly over and clipping finished, I've now no excuse. Next is spaining, when we shall see what lambs we have worth keeping, or any good enough to sell!

As noted elsewhere, the AGM will be on 18 October, when the current Chairman retires. Volunteers for any of the Officers or Committee will be welcomed with open arms...

Equally, I should love to have your news, stories, photos or articles for inclusion in the Newsletter.

Flock Book Review Committee

We live in a crazy world of rules and regulation! Everything that we do as farmers is controlled, recorded and watched over by one authority or another. I had the perfect example of this just the other day when, quite out of the blue, a trading standards officer appeared here and announced that he wanted to do a spot inspection, just as I was walking back to my tractor to go and bale hay! Talk about bad timing! Rain was forecast too! But here's the thing, I really had (and you really have) no power to stop this kind of interference from the powers that be and bitter experience tells me that to stop him would be like saying "yes I have something to hide". To inconvenience him would irritate him and he could then come back into my life with a chip on his shoulder and then he would be looking for something to set me straight and put me in my place. I'm not saying that I have anything to hide, but I know that even if you don't have something to hide, these people have a way of finding something to condemn you with and make life very difficult!

So I explained how inconvenient it was and then marched him through the inspection there and then as fast as I could. Which of course I passed and we still made our hay before the rain.

I've always wanted to farm, I am lucky to be able to farm, for me it's dream come true but I don't have to farm, I could do other things (and probably make a better living). To me it is a privilege and I farm because I like working with animals and enjoy the freedom of being able to be my own boss. But sometimes this feels just like an illusion, because I'm not free at all; everything that we do as farmers is being controlled and regulated by others. Quite frankly, if it were up to me, I'd sack all these bureaucrats and throw the rule book out!

So here I am, chair of a committee looking at the rules for registering Whitefaced Woodlands, talking about inspections, rules and regulations! Talk about poacher turned game keeper!

If that is not ironic enough for you, the one thing that we all agreed on when we started this debate was that none of us wanted two flock books for the breed, we wanted one and after a year of hard work and debate, we are now talking about four registers!

How the heck did we get here? And how am I going to explain this to you or justify it to you?

Okay, well first of all let me say that despite what I say above, although I do abhor rules and regulations, I do recognise that we must have them; no group of people can live together without some rules. We must have a structure that is fair to all and works in the common interest, and we must have a way of making sure that the rules are being followed in a fair, concise and honest way.

I take my role as Chair of the Flock Book Review Committee very seriously; I believe that the Whitefaced Woodland is a fantastic breed that is under rated, but we simply can't have a situation where some of our best tups are unregistered! We're a laughing stock! We really are. How can we expect anyone outside the Woodland world to understand that some of the best of our breed, selling for more than a thousand and in one case two thousand pounds, are not registered at all! What's more they and their offspring can't be registered in the official RBST, government recognised register!

So how do I explain then that in looking for a way to build a single viable flock book we have taken two and now made four registers?

Well what do you do when you have an impossible, tangled knot? You pull out the threads; you untangle them one by one and lay the untangled threads out side by side until you have taken out all the tangles and crossovers and then eventually you get one thread.

We in the Woodland world are in a terrible tangle and the best way we have of getting out of this in our view, is to pull out the threads and then start to bring them all together into one flock book, all be it with four threads at first. We can't just ignore the knot and pull it all in to one thread by tugging harder and harder at one end only.

Of course some of you won't like this (I don't like this) but it has to be done if we are going to sort all this out. Once we have laid out the individual threads in one overall flock book, we can start to amalgamate the individual threads and then there will be three, then two and hopefully one day, just one thread for all Woodlands.

Exactly how we are going to pull these threads out, is not yet fully agreed, so I can't yet give you the full details. Once the Flock Book Review Committee has a possible way agreed, it has to get its recommendations agreed by the Conservation Committee of the RBST and the Whitefaced Woodland Sheep Society Committee and of course we can't do anything at all without a formal consultation of all Woodland breeders from both camps. That's a lot of people, all with different viewpoints and opinions, needs and requirements, all of whom may want changes. So it might still never happen.

At this stage however, before we go any further, I would like to talk this over with you. The best place to do that would be at our AGM. Please come. I will do my best to explain how we think this might work and then you can ask members of the Flock Book Review Committee questions. But please understand that there are some things that we have no control over, we have to follow rules laid down by the RBST or the government or the EU, just as all of us have to do every day of our lives as farmers. None of us is really free to do things as we want are we? Sometimes we have to do extraordinarily complicated things, just to keep going!

See you at the AGM.

Philip

For your Diary

The Society's AGM this year will be on Saturday 18 October.

Chris and Helen Wray are kindly hosting it at Gam Rare Breeds Farm in Grassington, North Yorkshire. They are inviting members to a BBQ and to visit their farm, which specialises in native British breeds.

Full details in the next Newsletter

Show Results



Judging at the Hayfield Show –
Laura Brown, Karen Dowey and
Chareen Kaye's tups.
Photo: Jen Dick

Honley Show, Saturday 14th June

Neville Belfield judged this first show of the season, in which there were four competitors.

Aged tup: Casey Campbell

Shearling tup: Paul Thorp

Tup lamb: Karen Dowey

Aged ewe: Chareen Kaye

Shearling ewe: Paul Thorp

Ewe lamb: Paul Thorp

Chareen took the Championship with her aged ewe, and Karen's tup lamb was Reserve.

North Yorkshire County Show, Sun 15th June

Only two competitors were forward for Paul Dixon to judge at Northallerton. Judith Hawkhead's aged ram won the Championship and her gimmer shearling and gimmer lamb were first in their classes. Godschalk Partners' ram lamb was Reserve Champion and their ewe was 1st in its class. Judith also won the Group of 3.

Woodland classes on the- Rare Breeds Day at the Royal Three Counties Show were judged by Carole Muddiman.

Ram: Stephen and Francine Burns

Ram lamb: Robert and Jean Price

Ewe: Chris Sully

Ewe lamb: Stephen and Francine Burns

Group of three: Stephen and Francine Burns

Chris Sully's ewe took the Championship and Robert and Jean's ram lamb was Reserve.

Clive Mitchell judged the line up at Harden Moss Sheep Show on Sunday 22nd June.

Aged tup: Chareen Kaye

Shearling tup: Karen Dowey

Tup lamb: Chareen Kaye

Aged ewe: Karen Dowey

Shearling ewe: Karen Dowey

Ewe lamb: Chareen Kaye

Karen won Champion with her shearling ewe and her aged ewe was Reserve Champion. There were three competitors

Karen Dowey judged the Woodland classes at the Great Yorkshire Show on 8 July, where six breeders were competing for Breed Champion.

Results were:

Aged tup: Paul Thorp

Shearling tup: David and Debbie Wardell

Tup lamb: Paul Thorp

Aged ewe: Paul Thorp

Shearling ewe: Casey Campbell

Ewe lamb: David and Debbie Wardell

Champion male was Paul's senior ram, with Dave and Debbie's shearling tup as Reserve. Paul's

aged ewe was Female Champion, and went on to

win Breed Champion. Female Reserve

Champion was Dave and Debbie's ewe lamb.

Reserve Breed Champion was Paul's senior ram.

The fleece class was won once again by Deidre Halsall. The class was well supported this year, with nine entries.

A reminder that the **Hope Show** is on Bank Holiday Monday, August 25.

Those qualified for the Champion of Champions so far are:

Chareen Kaye's aged ewe, and Karen's Dowey's tup lamb from Honley Show

Judith Hawkhead's aged ram and Godschalk

Partners' ram lamb from North Yorks County

Chris Sully's ewe and Robert and Jean Price's

ram lamb from Royal Three Counties

Karen Dowey's shearling ewe and aged ewe from

Harden Moss

Paul Thorp's aged ewe and senior ram from the

Great Yorkshire Show.

News of past members

At Woolfest last month, I was pleased to meet Richard and Sarah Stacey, who were members some years ago, and whom many of you will remember. Richard was involved in the very early attempts to launch a Whitefaced Woodland Society Register some ten years ago. They are still based at Cwmyoy in the Black Mountains, producing and marketing their Hedgehog carding and weaving equipment. They still have a herd of Black Welsh Mountain cattle, but no longer keep Woodlands. Instead, they have Hill Radnors and Badger faced Welsh Mountain sheep, which they find suit their terrain better.

Sheep for Sale and Wanted

I have had no specific requests so far, but please let me know if you want animals mentioned in the Newsletter, or listed on the web site. The alternative may be to use Facebook – in which case you might be better doing it yourself, or contacting Rachel or Jen Dick, since my competence in that area is minimal!

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