

Genetic Improvement



Cwmtawe Welsh Mountain

Cwmtawe Welsh Mountain Sheep Breeders Group was established in 1998 by a group of farmers mainly grazing sheep on the Black Mountain, at the top end of the Swansea Valley. The group was formed to focus on improving the local breed and to develop a collective breeding policy, in order to face the challenges of the future.

The Cwmtawe Welsh Mountain sheep have evolved through generations of inter-crossing with neighbouring ewe types, to form a breed with specific characteristics best suited to the wet harsh environment in which they thrive.

Hardiness: The Cwmtawe Welsh Mountain ewe lives on the hill for up to 8 months of the year, grazing and rearing lambs, up to 2000 feet above sea level, on peaty molinia and heather dominant swards.

Size: A medium size ewe (50Kg), which can consistently rear pure and crossbred lambs that kill out within the 18 – 21 Kg weight range, of “R” or above conformation.

Mothering ability: The Cwmtawe ewe has strong maternal instincts and has been selected for its ability to utilize back fat reserves and convert it into milk.

Longevity: Great emphasis is placed on breeding ewes with good teeth and feet

therefore reducing costs. It also means that draft ewes thrive on better land, with full mouth ewes going on to breed successfully for many seasons.

Productivity: On the hill the Cwmtawe Welsh Mountain ewe has a lambing percentage of between 105% – 120%. However on better ground these ewes regularly achieve lambing percentages of 140% and above.

Health: All members participate in the NSP and WEGS Scrapie testing schemes. Stock rams, ewes and ewe lambs are therefore sold with good genetic resistance.

Since 2001, group members have been performance recording a proportion of their flock. Using Artificial Insemination on some ewes and stock rams on others, the progeny are then recorded – weights are taken at 8 weeks and again at 5 months, along with ultrasonically scanning for muscle and fat depth.

The Group aims to achieve improvements in performance through the identification and selection of the animals with best growth and conformation, whilst still maintaining breed type.

HCC supports genetic improvement through the Farming Connect Sheep and Beef Development Programme. For further details on this group, please contact HCC Industry Development team:

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