

Genetic Improvement



Llysfasi Welsh Mountain Group Breeding Scheme

Aims

The Llysfasi Group Breeding Scheme was set up in 1990 to promote genetic improvement in Welsh Mountain ewes. The nucleus flock of 250 ewes are run at Llysfasi College in Denbighshire and is primarily run for the benefit of the members. As a result of the genetic improvement the group are producing heavier draft ewes that achieve a higher price at the market and also produce rams for breeders.

Selection

When selecting replacement stock, emphasis is placed on the breed type and genetic index of each individual animal along with the scrapie genotype. It is strongly felt that the valuable characteristics of the Welsh Mountain ewe such as hardiness and mothering ability are retained, but at the same time improvement can be made to ewe and lamb size, lambing percentage, tooth retention, longevity and conformation.

The individual index is used as an aid to selection, with members making collective decisions on the suitability of replacement stock.

Within the index, weighting is given to litter size, lamb growth, mothering ability and ewe performance.

Genetically Superior rams are used each year to cover the flock, some of which are bred within the nucleus flock and the others selected from one of the group members' flocks.

Progress

There is a marked improvement in ewe and lamb performance and ewe type is much more uniform. There remains however, sufficient variation to give a good and essential basis for selection. In 1996 and 1998, rams from the group won the Welsh Mountain Breed championship at the Royal Welsh Show, with a ram lamb winning its class at the 1999 show.

Individual ewe recording, collective breeding and pooling of top genetic material can only point towards progress and benefit to group members.

Increased genetic progress is being aided by the use of Embryo Transfer, AI and muscle scanning as part of HCC genetic improvement project.

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:

Hybu Cig Cymru
PO Box 176
Aberystwyth
SY23 2YA
01970 625 050
enquiries@hccmpw.org.uk
www.hccmpw.org.uk