

JANUARY 2019

The AGM of members of the association is to be held on Wednesday, 30th January 2019 at 7.30pm at the offices of Welshpool Livestock Sales, Buttington Cross, Welshpool

2019 SALE DATES:

WELSHPOOL:

- Wednesday, 11th September (Ewes)
- Thursday, 12th September (Ewe Lambs)
- Thursday 10th October (Ewes & Ewe Lambs)

BUILT WELLS:

- Friday, 13th September (Ewes & Ewe Lambs)
- Tuesday, 15th October (Ewes & Ewe Lambs)

RUTHIN:

- Saturday, 14th September (Ewes & Ewe Lambs)

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Welsh Mules Sheep Breeder's Association Newsletter

Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association Ltd;
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A challenging sale season in 2018

A difficult lambing period followed by a long, hot, dry summer went a long way to explain why, on average, the association's sales proved to be more challenging in 2018 than for a number of years.

There was a lack of available forage in many of the areas where a lot of Welsh Mule buyers live and a number were noticeably absent from the sale rings.

At the first yearling sale at Welshpool in September, prices eased back by £1 to £143 on the previous year while ewe lambs fell back £6 to £94. H & E Powell, Llwyngwilym, topped the yearling market at £240 with two pens, one sold to DJ Lloyd & Co, Cefn Barrach & the other to SN Powell, Werndansay. The highest ewe lamb price of £200 was received by E&SM Hughes, High Park Farm for a pen bought by G Evans & Son, Upper Ffridd, E&SM Hughes were also the winners of the competition for the best pen of ewe lambs forward at the sale.

At the Builth Wells September sales, average yearling prices at £142 had fallen back £9 compared to 2017 with H & E Powell, Llwyngwilym, again obtaining the best price, this time of £258 for a pen sold to RT Jones & Co, Corrin. There was an increase in ewe lamb numbers forward with the average for the day at £93, down by £8 on 2017. Wyn Jones, Maesyderi topped the market with a pen sold for £195 H & E Powell, Llwyngwilym. Wyn Jones also won the prize for the best pen

of ewe lambs at the sale while the Elwyn Bennett Memorial Cup for the best consignment of ewe lambs at the sale was won by DB & MM Fairclough & Sons, Wernhir.

The sale at Ruthin also saw prices falling back quite a bit for both yearlings and ewe lambs. Yearlings obtained an average of £114, with the top price of £152 being received by Gareth Jones, Ty Nant for a pen bought by IH Morris and Son. RD & CE Davies, Ty Canol won the Keith Evans Memorial Cup for the best consignment of yearling ewes. Ewe lambs averaged £73 down £9 on 2017 with G Davies, Penrallt receiving the best price at £102 from D W Jones, Ty'n y Waen for a pen that was awarded the prize for the best ewe lamb pen.

The October sale in Welshpool, while challenging, saw yearling prices ease up £5 to £111 com-

pared to 2017 with fewer forward while ewe lambs fell back to £75 from £80. DI Roberts, Stingwern topped the yearlings at £150 for a pen sold to B Balmer, Townsend while IC Goodwin, Lower Esgair & Gareth Hamer, The Cwm both topped the ewe lambs at £102 for pens sold to Poole & Son, Limebrook and Breeze & Co, Upper Fachwen respectively.

The final sale at Builth the following week followed a similar pattern with the average yearling price up £9 on the year at £121 with AD Powell, Llwyn Neuadd getting the best price of £136 from C Rowlands, Neuaddhen.

Ewe lamb trade however fell back by 13% to £73 where RG Jones & Son, Ty Mawr obtained the best return of £120 for the pen that won the Vernon Wilson Memorial Cup for the best pen of ewe lambs at the sale and bought by OB Pugh, Godway.

Very many congratulations to association members, John & Sarah Yeomans, Llwyn y Brain, Adfa, Newtown (below) who won the Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmers of the Year for 2018. For further details, see page 3



TAGGING SEQUENCE

The association's executive committee has approved the following tagging colour sequence for the next seven years.

2019	BROWN
2020	PURPLE
2021	GREEN
2022	BLUE
2023	ORANGE
2024	WHITE
2025	PINK

2018 Sale results in detail

Welshpool	2018	2017
September:	Av Price	Av Price
Yearlings	143.15	144.10
Ewe lambs	93.74	99.89
October:		
Yearlings	111.10	106.21
Ewe lambs	74.46	79.81
Builth Wells		
September:		
Yearlings	141.94	150.82
Ewe lambs	92.89	101.15
October:		
Yearlings:	120.51	111.95
Ewe lambs	73.94	80.89
Ruthin		
Yearlings	113.45	130.83
Ewe lambs	73.08	83.77

Mules Breeder Takes Advantage of Farm Records Facility

Jolyon and Alex Higgs of Cwmfron Farm, Tylwch, run a beef and sheep enterprise which lies between 650 – 1000ft on the up-lands of Llanidloes.

As members of the Farm Assured Welsh Livestock (FAWL) scheme, Jolyon and Alex have taken advantage of the online WLBP Farm Records facility available to them as part of their subscription. Jolyon says:

'I first heard of the facility when I went to a Waitrose producer meeting. It prompted the idea that I could reduce paper-work and maintain more accurate online records. With increasing demands from retailers and government to keep records I felt it was beneficial to have all of the records in one place.'

There is also a mobile phone application that works alongside the WLBP Farm Records website; The *Stock Move Express* app, this allows users to input information offline while on the farm.

'I mainly use the Stock Move Express app, I can input information standing by the animal. As I always have my phone with me, I can look up information such as treatments, withdrawal dates and animal details.'

Jolyon uses the facility to record movements which can be linked to EID Cymru and BCMS. He also records medicine purchases, treatments, individual ewe records and registering births and deaths.

'By recording the medicine treatment of my animals either as a batch or individually, I can build up a history of individual ewes. It helps me manage my flock better as I can select animals that are prone to regularly occurring diseases.'

If you would like more information on the WLBP Farm Records facility, please visit our website <https://farmrecords.wlbp.co.uk> or contact the FAWL office on 01970636688 to speak with our Farm Records Co-ordinators:

Llŷr Lewis - 07741549270, LlŷrL@wlbp.co.uk
Sion Ifans - sionifans@wlbp.co.uk



Welsh Mule Members Sheep Farmers of the Year

John & Sarah Yeomans, association members and regular vendors at Welsh Mule sales won the coveted Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmers of the Year for 2018. Brought up in the middle of Birmingham, John was eleven when his family moved to Llwyn y Brain. He attended the Welsh Agricultural College in Aberystwyth where he met his wife, Sarah. At first, the family had 200 Beulah ewes, lambing at around 90% and 23 Welsh Black and Hereford cross cows calving at less than 50%! Only forty lambs were finished in 1984 at 13.6kg carcase weight, the rest sold as stores.

Working closely with trusted advisers, John and Sarah tried to turn things around by improved management, including individually recording stock performance. With the objective of lifting the average flock performance overall, the index threshold of ewes to be bred pure to Beulah rams was continually raised to lift the genetic performance of the whole flock. Ewes served by Blue Faced Leicester rams have also improved considerably. Individual tagging at birth since 1986 has enabled the pair to cull out many problems: difficult lambings are now under 1%. Only males are bought in to the closed flock which is still recorded with Signet. John visited New Zealand on a scholarship to look at sheep production. Consequently, Llwyn y Brain was selected as part of demonstration farm network based on the NZ Monitor Farm model. Travelling and John's Nuffield Scholarship has provided the pair with an invaluable network of friends, many of whom double up as advisers. Their three sons are currently travelling and working around the world.

Blue-Faced Leicester rams were first crossed with Beulah ewes to produce Welsh Mules in 1994. A premium for breeding females and larger carcase weights of the male lambs lifted their sheep enterprise output, and hence profit, considerably. Sheep spend a big part of their lives on hill blocks, so when John & Sarah wean and bring the mule ewe lambs home, they aim to get the sheep eating before sale so they will settle to being fed at lambing with their new owners. Rotational grazing and more use of forage crops was introduced in 2013 and habitat improvements have impacted on the environment: sixty five lapwings returned to the hill recently.

John and Sarah now farm around 285 acres with around 700 Beulah ewes and ewe lambs. Ewes scan up to 160%. 300 go to Beulah rams, the remainder and ewe lambs to Blue-faced Leicesters, including two performance recorded. Entire male lambs are sold to Dunbia at an average 20kg carcase weight.



Left: Kevin Parry and Judge Marcus Williams presents the Elwyn Bennet Cup for the best consignment of ewe lambs to DB&MM Fairclough & Sons, Wernhir, N'bridge on Wye at the September sale in Builth.



Right: Dilwyn Davies receiving the Keith Evans Memorial Cup from Rita Evans for the best pen of yearling ewes at Ruthin. Also pictured are judges Arwel and Guto Owen, Foelgadeiriau and Field Officer, Joe Hamer.



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**For the 2019 sales, ewe lambs
must be tagged with a yellow
electronic tag in the left ear and a
BROWN coloured tag in the right**

YOUR CONTACTS WITH THE WELSH MULES

The association's Field Officer, Joe Hamer has many roles to play from promoting the Welsh Mules at shows and events to following up queries after sales. He is on hand to help both vendors and buyers and can be contacted on 07527 174420.

The association's official auctioneers can be contacted at:

For the Welshpool sale:

Welshpool Livestock Sales; Buttington Cross, Welshpool, SY21 8SR
(01938) 553438

For the Builth Wells sale:

Brightwells; 33 High Street, Builth Wells, LD2 3DL (01982) 553614

For the Ruthin sale:

Vale of Clwyd Livestock Market; Plas Glastir, Ruthin LL15 1PB(01824) 702025
Jones Peckover; 1 The Roe, St Asaph, (01745) 583260

2018 Competition Winners



Eric Hughes, High Park Farm receives the cup for the best ewe lambs at Welshpool in Sept from Field Officer Joe Hamer.



Association President Gwyn Davies presented Wyn Jones, Maesyderi with the cup for best ewe lambs at Builth in Sept. Also present are judges Mr and Mrs Davies, Llwyncwttá.



Gareth Jones & family, Ty Nant receiving the cup for the best entry of ewe lambs at Ruthin from Field Officer Joe Hamer and judges Arwel and Gutoe Owen, Foelgadeiriau.



WC Gittins, Ashton Farm presents the Vernon Wilson Cup for the best ewe lambs in the Builth October sale to Neil Jones, Tymawr. Also pictured is Field Officer Joe Hamer.



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