

WHAT DOES HISTORY HAVE TO DO WITH SHEEP NUTRITION?

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At the end of World War 2, Germany sought revenge on the Dutch who had not helped their war effort, by blockading Holland. This meant food and fuel supplies were limited, resulting in restricted food intake, with calorie intakes dropping as low as 500 calories per day and poor living conditions across the country. By the following spring, allied forces regained control and with it, diets and living conditions were very quickly back to 'normal'. However, the consequences of the famine would live on.

The consequences were longest lived for babies which were **conceived** during the famine. If we consider a family where the first sibling was conceived before and another conceived during the famine, but were then raised exactly the same, the second sibling was generally more susceptible to ill health; obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and schizophrenia. Whereas parents and other siblings went on to have reasonably 'normal' lives.

What this shows us is, nutrition and stress at point of conception has an influence throughout the offspring's entire life. This is the concept of 'Epigenetics' in practise.

The same is true when we consider sheep performance. By understanding epigenetics and therefore getting our management and nutrition right just before and throughout tugging, we can influence which

performance genes are switched on and how this goes on to enhance overall lifetime performance of the subsequent lambs.

“Nutrition and stress at point of conception has an influence throughout the offspring's entire life.”

Through combining science and innovation, Harbro have taken the concept of epigenetics and made it practical and easy to implement on every sheep farm and smallholding across the country. **Feet & Fertility mineral buckets** are such a simple way of supplementing the late summer and autumn grass to help boost scanning percentages, increase number of viable pregnancies and also to have a positive epigenetic effect, which means lambs

are stronger at birth and perform better throughout their entire life.

When supplemented with Feet & Fertility mineral buckets, coupled with good management, we see an increase in:

- overall foot health
- less lame sheep
- scanning percentage
- number of live lambs and lamb vigour
- subsequent lamb performance

Finally, don't forget about the tups! Half the genetics come from the ewe and half from the tup. Semen production takes around 7 weeks, so to maximise your return on investment, tups should also be offered Feet & Fertility buckets for at least 7 weeks pre-tugging too.



GREENALL TEXELS, GROWN TO LAST THE PACE

Between pheasants, sheep and trees, there's never a quiet spell at the Craggs Farm, Melrose where the Green family runs a tight ship.

John and his wife Emma moved from Lancashire up to the 240 acre Borders farm in 2008 followed by John's parents Roger and Susan who still help on the farm. The next generation - sons Gilbert and William - complete the family.

Along with 12 pedigree Charolais cows, the flock at Craggs comprises 220 cross-bred ewes, 80 cross ewes which are used as recipients for flushing and 120 pedigree ewes - 100 Texel and 20 Beltex.

40 acres are rented for growing Christmas trees and 55,000 pheasants are reared annually. Further rented ground will allow the Greens to host their own 12-15 days of shooting this year.

"Everything has to fit in here." says John. "It is very much a cycle with lambing finishing, pheasants arriving in early May, rearing them until the end of August, tup sales, flushing and AI, pheasant shooting and back to lambing."

The flock was established in 2011 with 14 ewes from the Summerwood flock. "They were all AI'd to Etrick Rainbow Warrior in the first year which we felt was the best of the breed and the crop of lambs from the first year sold to £1100. Following that, lambs sold to a top of £4000. Moving from selling lambs to shearlings, we are now flushing using ewes related to the best Summerwood families along with another family originating from an Etrick ewe. We like to work sensibly and the most we have paid for a stock tup is £2400 plus a half share in a tup at £4000."

The flock is performance recorded, scanned for back fat and all AI'd with the best eight to ten ewes being flushed each year.

The highest price achieved so far is £8500



for a Texel, Greenall Billy Whizz who was out of a home-bred tup.

"We started in Beltex in 2017 with a gimmer bought for £1000 and the first three sons from her sold as shearlings for £3000, £2400 and £1600. "Though expanding the Beltex a bit more, the focus will be on Texels."



Billy Whizz, Texel sold for £8500

Since starting selling at Kelso in 2016, Greenall has always been in the top 10 average for the Texel breed. Top prices for the flock were £4000 in 2016, £5000 in 2017, £2800 in 2018 and hitting £8500 in 2019 where it was one of two registered shearlings that achieved the highest price.

Covid 19 turned everything on its head last year so no physical sales took place but having built up a reputation for quality, John found himself busy on the phone and his Kelso customers coming back to make repeat purchases. "We had built up a good customer base and sold lots in the £1500-2000 range with one going for £4500."

Rearing lambs was a route that John

didn't want to take. "You have to invest so much in them, I feel it's a bit like chasing the dream. There is a lot of wastage and when you are chasing the finer points of the breed, it can bring some other health issues."

"My aim with the shearlings was to sell at £1000, a more commercial type of shearling which would do the job and last commercial producers for four to five seasons. It's a more simple system, the management is easier and it has to fit in around the pheasants. In a nutshell, I'm turning out pedigree stock on a commercial system."

Ewes are taken inside in the last week of February and fed a mix of silage and **Premium Ewe 18** meal through a mixer wagon. "We make a very good first cut silage and ewes with twins get the mix for two weeks prior to lambing with singles starting on it just a few days before lambing."

"The Olympic Mash makes a lot of difference as it fills in any holes on them."

Ewes are sorted into groups of 15 with their lambs and for four weeks, receive 1.5kg Premium Ewe 18 meal and 3.0-4.0kg silage ad lib.

Once out to grass, lambs are creep fed **Rapid Lamb** until the end of June, with them weaned off in July and clipped at the end of August.

Over winter, tup and ewe lambs are kept inside, fed ad lib silage and 1kg of **Lamb Feeder nuts** to allow them to get a taste. "We used to overwinter them on kale and turnips but due to the wet weather over the last few winters, it was easier to bring them inside."

They are turned out in March and receive no feed until July. "I think it is really important this period is taken slowly in terms of feeding. When we do start to feed tups, they are fed **Maxammon Kelso Tup & Lamb** and **Olympic Mash** at grass during the day and taken inside at night to keep them clean."

"They don't lose flesh after being sold, very few are infertile and they put on muscle

not fat and that translates into customer satisfaction. The Texel breed is easy to flesh, the feed works and they don't need lots of push. The Olympic Mash makes a lot of difference as it 'fills in any holes on them'. They are very keen to come inside and get the mash at night.

“The Harbro feed is very palatable and with the quality, we don't need to feed so much.”

To make them hold that flesh, it needs to go on slow and steady. You need to keep them fresh, going forward, keep them at grass and keep them active. I think they just go lethargic if they are kept inside full time.”

“I like to keep things straightforward, the ewes are run commercially and simply fed, although flushing plays a key part in maximising numbers from the best ewes. The last ewe to lamb this year is nine years

old, she was flushed in October, has lambed naturally in April and will rear her own lamb. Shearlings from her have realised £2200 and £2400 and with over 50 lambs registered to her, she is definitely earning her keep.”

In 2019, the 'Kelso pen' of 18 shearlings averaged £1580, all 42 averaged £1060 with a top price of £8500. 2020 saw them sold privately, the Kelso pen of 16 averaged £1620, a top price of £4500 with 46 sold averaging £940.

“These shearlings are doing what they should do. I had a call from a customer who'd bought a £700 shearling for his commercial flock - he said it had served 106 ewes, only two were empty and the shearling 'hadn't lost a peck of flesh'.

I had some shearlings destined for the Skipton sale in 2018 and as a trial, we fed six of them with Harbro feed. The difference



Dennis the Menace, Beltex sold for £3000

was noticeable and they gained condition much easier, so from 2019, the sheep were totally fed on Harbro.

We just couldn't get condition on with some other feeds. The Harbro feed is very palatable and with the quality, we don't need to feed so much. We have built our reputation through selling at Kelso, we are still trying to get the breeding right but we've got the feeding right.”

Plan ahead - secure your winter feed costs

Speak to your Harbro specialist or local Country Store about rations for the winter and securing your winter feed costs, helping you to plan ahead and removing exposure to the fluctuations of the raw materials markets.

Finishing lambs

Our Beef & Sheep specialist, Peter Oag gives us some expert advice for finishing lambs.

Grass levels are low across many parts of the country with the grass not having recovered from the fast growth we saw in late spring then a lack of rain in the last month and parts now heavily burnt.

Although it's tempting to finish lambs with as little input as possible, relying solely on grass will mean that ewes could be left

short, especially at this crucial time of year coming into tugging.

With the deadweight market currently very buoyant with the price currently over £5, it's a perfect time to maximise growth to secure healthy profit margins.

Our Lamb Feeder pellets provide a cost effective solution for finishing lambs as they consistently achieve a feed conversion ratio of 4:1, saving 20% on feed compared to other finishing products.



- Includes Rumitech - improves feed conversion, reduces £/kg liveweight gain
- Includes Alkacid - reduces the risk of acidosis

Ewe compounds

We have a range of ewe compounds designed to be fed during pregnancy and after lambing to support the ewe and her lambs.

The compounds are highly palatable, quality complete feeds, high in energy and bypass protein and include fish oil.

Our range includes a quality mineral package including high vitamin E and Sel-Plex.

COMPOUND RANGE BENEFITS:

High energy - helps reduce risk of twin lamb disease

Boosted mineral pack - increases ewe immunity and lamb viability

Formulated to boost colostrum supply

Omega 3 - on farm trials show feeding fish oils pre-lambing produces lambs with the ability to stand 4 minutes quicker and suckle 9.4 minutes faster.

This improvement of vigour resulted in a decrease in mortality of 3% within the first two weeks of life.

PRODUCT FOCUS

Maxammon Kelso Tup & Lamb

This highly palatable 16% nut has been designed to meet the needs of high quality lambs, shearlings and gimmers and maximises the performance of both pedigree and commercial stock.

New improved formula includes Rumitech and Rumi Defence.

- Maxammon improves rumen function, rumen health and animal performance
- Rumitech has many benefits, including increasing loin eye-muscle growth and increasing feed conversion
- Rumi Defence helps develop stronger, more resilient animals
- Sel-plex and Omega 3 oils promote health, immunity and fertility
- Adds condition and bloom ahead of shows and sales

These leading producers are feeding for success on Maxammon Kelso Tup & Lamb:



Dalchirla £200,000



Artnagullion Edwin 6,200gns



RHS Winner 2021

Our nationwide network of Country Stores

Our Country Stores stock a wide range of livestock feed as well as:

- Animal health products
- Farm equipment and hardware
- Workwear and country clothing
- Vaccines, boluses and drenches

Each store has a Registered Animal Medicines Advisor (RAMA) who can recommend and supply certain veterinary medicines. Our friendly team are also trained to advise on cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, equine and pets.



Three ways to get in touch:
Call your Harbro specialist.
Email us: farming@harbro.co.uk.
Visit your local Harbro Country Store.

