

CEO UPDATE



Building for the future

I can't believe that by the time I do the next report I will have been with the Society a year. Where has that time gone! It's been a year of learning, listening and developing a structure to the Society that will make it run smoothly and efficiently.

As I work through the year coming in with fresh eyes and a bit of background in a breed society and its workings it's been good just to look at the status quo on everything. As we work through next year, we can adjust things to make it work more efficiently.

In the last month the staff have been processing birth notifications and between us we have seen several things that we can change to make that process better. We had two busy weeks in the second half of May just before the deadline of 31st May and estimate that some 80% of the birth notifications came in in that period. The number of lambs on the ground from unregistered rams is an issue and the cause of 90% of the phone calls during that period. We will have a look at how we do this process and seeing if we can spread the load over the 4-month period that the window is open to birth notify for next year.

My ethos is to constantly review what we do and see, along with the staff in the office and Council to see if we could do things differently to make them better, easier, and less expensive with everything we do. Anna, Margo, and Gill in the office are a fantastic team and manage the phones, administration, social media, and everything really well and I receive nothing but good reports from all who come into contact with them.

SHOW & SALE SEASON

The show season is now well and truly with us, and the next three months will be a whirl with the sales mixed in with that. The advantage of this for me is that I get the opportunity to get out and can meet many more of you and get the feedback about things we do, good and bad, so that we can bring ideas to the table when we are moulding the Society as we move forward and making it fit for the future. Some of this will require some changes, changes are never easy, but technology moves forward, and we need to keep pace with that and not let unwillingness to change stand in our way to make things better.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

An indication of some progress to making a change is that we have formed a Finance Committee, a group of Council members which is working well and reviewing all our activities, income and expenditure. We are working our way through this year and the task of ensuring that we remain solvent is a shared one. As a registered charity it is ultimately the responsibility of the trustees to look after the coffers. This group is committed to keeping us in good standing and taking thoughts and ideas forward to council for discussion and ratification.

It's very important that we keep you as members up to date with all the activity that we have going on in the Society. Your elected Council members represent you around the table so make sure you make them aware of anything that you believe would help and improve what and how we do things. At our recent council meeting we had a very full agenda and lots of actions and discussions to implement as always follows a meeting. Some of the items I feel are important to make you aware of are:

EVENT ATTENDANCE

We are looking at the costs associated with attending events and how we manage to control that, particularly the CEO travel costs and time. It's a cost versus benefit exercise that will help us plan next year's events carefully and make the best use of our finances and resources.

RAM REGISTRATIONS

We have been seeing a high number of cases when it comes to birth notifications where there are rams which have been used but not registered, and this causes a great deal of work for the Society staff and we would ask you to register your stock rams prior to use. DNA genotyping kits and Ram registration forms will be available at Ballymena sale this year and the hope is that if you are buying a ram to use as a stock ram that you will be able to register it straight away.

ET / AI

The use of Advanced Breeding Technologies ET/AI - the practice is becoming more widespread and is the subject of much discussion and differing opinions. The technology is here for us to do it and it is a breeder's choice to engage with it or not. What we do ask is that when you have your AI day or ET day which again is fast approaching, PLEASE, PLEASE send in your AI and ET certificates to the Society Office. If you could also make sure that any sires you use for AI or ET work are fully registered prior to use and have a DNA profile as without this we will not be able to register your lambs.

ADVERTISING

We have been running a few campaigns on social media which are paid for adverts and evaluating the success of that, which is proving to work and we can actually see how many people we are reaching and select target audiences – It's a work in progress but a way of perhaps reducing our costs while improving our audience.

1886 HERITAGE SUFFOLK

The project is moving on at pace with many visits to commercial Suffolk lamb producers to run our thoughts on a scheme past them. The principle has got merit in the eyes of the Commercial sheep producer, and the next stage is to prove the concept at other levels of the supply chain. We are ahead of schedule so far and it will possibly just have to go on the back burner for a short time until we get to the end of the show and sale season.



FLOCK COMPETITION

Competition Judge for 2023 Stewart Lathangie is working his way through the entries and hopes to have completed the judging by just after the Highland show. The results will be published by early July at the latest and then we can prepare for the View day with the overall winner.

SOCIETY SALES

These are all getting sorted out and the ballots all completed with the pre-entry numbers that we have to date. Thanks to Anna, Margo, and Gill for their help with preparing for filming and uploading the ballot.

HOG ROAST AT THE NATIONAL

There will be a Hog roast and Ice cream cart at the National at Shrewsbury rather than our formal dinner. Adults are £15.00 per ticket and Children £2.50. This will hopefully make it affordable for families and we hope that we can have a good Society get together on that night which is long overdue! Book your tickets through the office, and we will invoice your account. Pre-Bookings only please to help with the catering and make it a great evening. Why not buy a ticket for those who might be there to buy your sheep!

Alastair Barkley, our current president, has been invited to Judge the Suffolk classes on 12th August being held in Llanera, which is in the centre of Asturias, very close to Oviedo in Northern Spain. Irene, Alastair's sister is busy trying to teach him a few key phrases in Spanish which I am sure with the Northern Irish brogue will be easily understood!

My ambition for the Society is to improve member engagement and make the things that we do and offer of benefit to all. We need to be able to stand behind our flock book with confidence and promote the Suffolk breed as the best option for the commercial farmer.

Promoting the Suffolk brand at all levels of the supply chain and making sure and verifying that the "Suffolk Advantage" at each stage from farm to fork is hammered home is a really great prospect, and the work that is being done at the moment to prove that our breed is the most sustainable and viable prospect will be a key part in delivering a net zero industry. Linking Carbon footprint to profitability is key to helping everyone understand the benefits of using Suffolk genetics in their flocks.

We are in a good place as we build for the future. We have a great team on Council led by Jane Soulsby and Andrew Evans, along with our President Alastair Barkley and President Elect Pat Machray taking an active part in the well-running and governance of the Society. There is no time to be complacent and we need to keep the foot on the gas to keep the momentum of growth going and put Suffolk back at the top of the leader board in the industry.

