

CEO UPDATE



Keeping you informed...

Hopefully lambing for most of you on the pedigree front has now finished although I know that many of our members also have later lambing breeds and commercial flocks so the hard work may still for many be going on.

We had our council meeting and AGM on the 14th March 2024 in Ballymena this year where we all gathered to take some matters to conclusion, some to progress and some to initiate. The purpose of the update is to keep you informed of any news that we can bring you from the last three months activity.

COUNCIL MATTERS

Our finances are a very important topic at every meeting and the pledge to review every cost that the Society has and make savings is the task that the CEO has been given for this year.

When given a task I always try and do it to the best of my ability and so far this year everything is heading in the right direction. Continued focus on all aspects of spend and income is the byword that we are living to in the office.

I am also tasked with looking for avenues to increase income, so moving the two poles, income and expenditure apart we should see a slight surplus in the middle! The changes to our reserves investment portfolio that have been made are seeing us recover some of the financial loss to the valuation to its previous levels following the financial crash.

SALES REVIEW

Following a period of consultation with the joint Show and Sale Committee, Finance Committee and Council the decision has been taken to remove the requirement for pre-sale SRUC

Scrapie testing for all sale entries. Representations from the Branches and feedback from the membership through that channel and following consideration put the issue to bed. It is hoped that by doing this it will take some of the cost out for members wishing to use the Society sales to market their sheep and encourage more people to make use of the facility offered by the Society. However, the Society would like to recommend to breeders that they avail themselves of the facility to sire verify their male entries prior to sales that we can provide via Neogen by nasal swab test, no need for a vet, and we will also report the ARR/ARR status. This is a voluntary process not mandatory, and it is up to the individual to choose to test if there is any uncertainty to the sire of a lamb.

The Society does not take any responsibility for the correctness of the test, and there will be no change to the requirements for a DNA sample to be accompanied by a ram proforma when registering any ram.

You will be receiving an email, and we will be publicising the amended sales process on our various channels.

YEARBOOK 2024

The publication of the 2024 Yearbook is imminent, and I need to thank all contributors and advertisers for their support this year. A huge thank you to Gill in the office who has worked tirelessly, chasing content and adverts, and liaising with the design team and printers to get it to you in as good a time window as we can achieve. The difficulty with print material is that you can't resolve any errors after its printed, unlike if it's online so checking and double checking everything is imperative. We hope that you enjoy the read when it drops on the mat!

SUFFOLK YOUTH

We have started a new journey with the Suffolk Youth and devolved some of the thinking to the younger members of our Society who perhaps know a little better than us just what they would like to do to encourage more involvement and activity for them. We are grateful to the first swathe of volunteers, Hannah Lorimer, Emily Boby, Harry Lyons, Andrea Smith, and Graham Denby for their efforts to date.

We are planning a Next Gen event by kind permission of Mark Priestley and family (Limestone Flock) at Seaford in Northern Ireland as our National event which will be taking place on the 7th September 2024 so keep your eyes on the social media pages for more details. The Branches are being encouraged to run "Experience Days" as a get together for our younger members and their families for a bit of sheep and a bit of fun!

We are in the process of rebranding to "NextGen" to freshen the whole thing up and will update the web site and start "Next Gen" social media as a separate page to the Society with lots of good ideas being pooled to make 2024 the start of the refreshment of activities for our younger members.

EMBRYO TRANSFER

We discussed at Council the Advanced Breeding technology of Embryo Transfer that seems to be causing an undercurrent of unrest. Council have asked the CEO to glean as much information about the practice within the flock book and following discussion an objective view of the position within our breed will be communicated to you as members very soon.

1886 HERITAGE SUFFOLK

The quest, when I can, to develop 1886 Heritage Suffolk lamb project continues and we have a journey ahead as was described to me by one processor representative “you are on the first steps of what could be a marathon!” I did however establish with them some further steps into that journey that we needed to take to prove the theory on the larger carcass with the extra rib. I am very grateful to Council that they approved some of these steps, which will involve some financial investment by the Society to get us further down the road with this project and take it nearer to fruition.

Linked to the 1886 Heritage Suffolk branding is the relationship that is building with other breed Societies which is a group that has got together and is growing to look at the merits of the stratified sheep system and establish if this tried and tested system has merit in the industries quest for net zero. Being part of the British Native Stratified Sheep group is an important part of our future in the medium and long term as we get through our plan to take Suffolks back to their previous position in the market.

We are engaged with and have joined CIEL soon to become Agritech with the merger of 3 scientific and industry led bodies that lead research into innovation. The project is receiving a great deal of interest from various sectors that can help us establish the Carbon footprint. We are also looking at a potential project for the group to investigate MV resistance and potentially OPA using DNA profiles.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The year is moving on fast, and we are planning forward for the busy summer period from a publicity point of view. The National Flock competition information and entry forms will be available just after the Easter break. Keep your eye on social media for links and information on how to take part. Judging will be in June 2024, and we are grateful to Dennis Taylor (Ballynacannon flock) for taking the task on this year.

Shows have an early start in the year this year and it's only 6 weeks to Balmoral in Northern Ireland and less to the "Nomadic" Scottish National which takes place at Ayr Show this year. The calendar of all these events is available on the web site.

Sale Season will be upon us before we know where we are and entry forms will be out from the auctioneers very soon. Please remember that all entries must be Birth Notified, with the Society prior to entry and be aware of all the sale conditions of entry, and optional extras that are available to you.

THE BRAND IN DEMAND!

I will be working on a “Tool Kit” that will hopefully give you some good points and information on the “Suffolk Advantage” that you can build into your sales pitches both at Society and other sales but also useful to the many of you who sell your sheep at home. Every tup that you sell means another 80–100 Suffolk sired lambs on the ground next year.

There has never been a better time to be a part of the Suffolk breed and be a part of that which has an exciting future as the resurgence in interest because of what the Suffolk Advantage can bring to so many sheep businesses and the extended supply chain beyond the farm gate continues.

The Council, Office staff and I are all committed to taking the Suffolk Breed forward and we will do our utmost to do that with the resources that we have available. Taking the Society forward in a positive manner is our focus. I think that we are in a good place with good people at the helm, but we can't do it without you, our membership, and your support to go with us in that positive direction and bring more people along on that road with you.

Have a great Easter break and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible over the summer months.

Brian L. Tine