

GENETICS ARE KEY AT THE SANDYKNOWE SUFFOLK DISPERSAL

From the foundation of the Sandyknowe Suffolk flock in 1957, the aim has always been to produce rams specifically for prime lamb production. Performance recording of the flock began as far back as 1968 and the flock was subsequently split into five families in 1980, with the best ram from each family being used in one of the other families. Since then, Sandyknowe flock has consistently produced Performance Recorded rams in the top 5%.

Since moving to Brotherstone, near Melrose, in 1999, Malcolm Stewart has aimed to rear everything on a commercial basis, with ewes lambing outdoors in April and kept on grass with no concentrate, other than triplets and no creep feeding. The aim being, to produce fine boned, smooth haired rams with deep loins, broad backs and meaty gigots for commercial breeders.

The flock has enjoyed many prime lamb show successes, including Scottish Winter Fair Champions in 1994 and 2007 as well as many first prizes and native breed awards.

It was these genetics, which attracted buyers from all over the country, to the flock dispersal on Wednesday 21st July. Many of the buyers were previous purchasers of Sandyknowe rams, which had bred well for them in the past and the opportunity to purchase these rare genetics was too good to miss.

The first sheep in the ring was a gimmer by Sandyknowe Leader Y13:14 out of a ewe by Sandyknowe Y13:17. She made the top price of the day at 4,500gns going to the Ingram family from Logie Durno, Inverurie. Willie and Carol Ingram, then went on to buy her mother Y13:18 for 1500gns. Y13:18 was also the dam of Sandyknowe Tweed 18:1, bought by Logie Durno two years ago for 5,000gns at the 2019 Sandyknowe on farm sale and is the full brother to another sister, Sandyknowe Y:13:18, which they also purchased for 2,200gns. Semen from Tweed 18:1 had previously been sold to the Ram Compare Scheme. His figures show an outstanding growth rate, which has been transferred into his lambs.

“Genetics like these come round once in a generation.” said William Ingram. “The Tweed ram has been an outstanding breeder for us and we were keen to get more of the genetics, with which he was bred. The

sheep here are like peas in a pod and that is quite an achievement for any flock.”

Logie Durno went on to purchase Y13:19, this time by the Yarrow line Sandyknowe 18:2. She is the maternal sister to a 4,000gns ram bought by Messrs Mackenzie, Fortrose at a previous Sandyknowe ram sale.

Messrs Hume from Elmsmere, purchased two of an outstanding selection of gimmers for 3,000gns each. The first was Sandyknowe Y13:20 by Sandyknowe Leader 19:1 and out of a ewe by Y13:13. The second was by Sandyknowe Y13:19 and out of a ewe by Sandyknowe Y13:18. Both showing exceptional figures.

The choice of Charles & Matt Harding of Atterton, again a regular purchaser at the ram sale, including the highest price ram at the very first on farm sale was a 2000gns gimmer by Sandyknowe Leader 19:1 and out of a ewe by Sandyknowe Y13:16. With a muscle depth of 3.53, she is the third highest EBV in the UK across all breeds.

“I am very proud of the flock we have built over the years.” said Malcolm “Of course, I am sad to see them go but I am delighted that the genetics we have built here at Sandyknowe, have been recognised by so many renowned breeders and it will be great to see how they influence these flocks in the future. It is also great to see some of these breeders purchasing their foundation stock today. I don’t get to finish just yet though, as we will have this year’s ewe lambs for sale in July 2022 and the shearling ram, on farm sale, the night before Kelso ram sales as normal this year.”

There was a 100% clearance through the ring sold and overall average for the 220 females of £662.13

63 Gimmers averaged £925.50

157 Mixed Aged Ewes averaged £556.45