

BRITISH TEXEL SHEEP SOCIETY



The British Texel Sheep Society is the UK's largest Pedigree Sheep Society supporting 2000 Members from across the entire UK. The Society is based at the home of the Royal Agricultural Society's Exhibition Centre near Warwick, in the heart of England

The Breed is famed for its exceptional carcass qualities, conformation and growth, making it the most popular terminal sire in the UK. In recent years the breed's hardiness and adaptability has been recognised by upland and hill producers, who farm in harsh climates >350m above sea level. Texel rams are much in demand in this environment and they increasingly replace traditional hill breeds to produce a more marketable product, such as store lambs and cross bred females.

The Texel sheep originates from the island of Texel, one of the north-western islands off Holland where the ancient native sheep was known as Pielsteert (Pin-tail, because of its thin short tail).

In an attempt to improve prolificacy, growth rate and size several English breeds such as Lincoln, Leicester and Wensleydale were introduced at the end of the nineteenth century. Rigorous selection resulted in the development of a large, prolific and well muscled sheep. 1909 saw the formation of the first Texel breed society in North Holland which in 1911 issued the first description of type.

About 1933, the Texel was introduced to France and has since become established, particularly in the Northern provinces. In 1970, the first Texels were introduced to the United Kingdom with an importation organised by the Animal Breeding Research Organisation, who brought in four rams for experimental purposes. Another four followed in 1971 and ABRO initiated extensive trials to compare the Texel with other terminal sires. The verdict was that the Texel excelled in carcass quality and, in particular, in lean meat yield.

In 1973, thirteen Lanarkshire sheep breeders joined forces with ABRO to import twenty-seven Texel females and thirteen rams from France. Further importations were made throughout the 1970s, with the first direct import from Holland at the end of that decade.

In Great Britain, the Texels have shown that they are capable of withstanding the rigours of the Scottish winter with little hardship and their progeny have proved to be as adaptable in our climate and altitude as the flocks in Holland and France.

The Breed is well known in Europe, Australasia, Africa and North and South America as a provider of a high quality carcass that has a high killing out percentage. It is also well known in many countries as a breed that transmits its qualities to its progeny when used for crossing purposes.

“A progressive Society, assisting its membership to develop a breed that continues to evolve and meet the requirements of a modern and reforming Industry.”

Society sales held in high recognition by Industry and Members.

The Society provides pedigree registration, marketing services and governance to its 2000 strong member base across the UK. Whilst the nineteen Clubs run regional sales, the Society is responsible for its four National sales. Held in high recognition, the showcase of production from a cross section of the membership are held in August. Ballymena – Northern Ireland, Lanark – Scotland – Welshpool – Wales and Worcester – England. Although a significant amount of stock is also sold privately direct from farm or through collective sales.

Texels are the popular choice of commercial producers indicated by the success and popularity of the breed at two of the largest commercial ram sales held in Europe in mid September. The Border Union Agricultural Society Ram Sale, at Kelso Scottish Borders and National Sheep Association (NSA) Ram Sale at Builth Wells Mid Wales (see table).

Sales held under the Society Auspices, including the Society Club and National sales, collectively grossed in excess of £4.02M (not including Kelso) during 2010 adding further evidence to the increasing popularity and influence to the UK Sheep Industry. A 5% increase in sales revenue on 2009 performance.

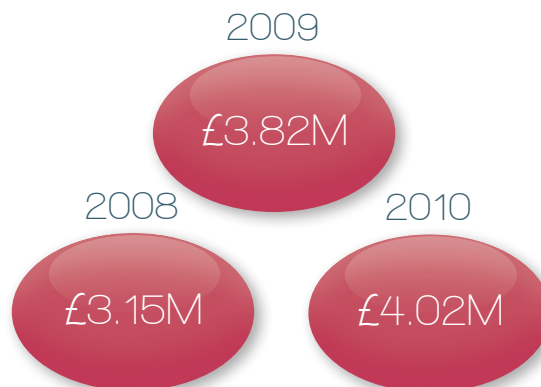
Texel Breed sales Performance at the largest Commercial rams sales held in Europe.

	Shearling Ram & Older Sale Entries	Clearance Rate (%)	Sale Average (£)	Sale Gross Income (All Classes) (£)	
NSA Main sale (Builth Wells)	849	93%	£626	£633,000	“An increase of £58,000 10% more than 09”
Border Union - (Kelso)	1416	84%	£686	£814,000	“An increase of £94,000 13% more than 09”

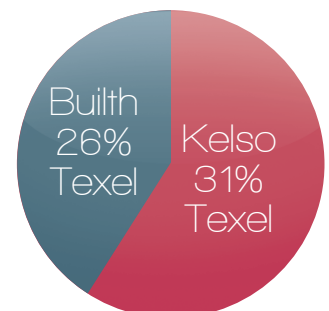
Texel Breed sales performance at the Societies four UK Premier National sale events.

	Gimmers		Ram Lambs		Shearling Rams	
	Clearance Rate (%)	Sale Avg (£)	Clearance Rate (%)	Sale Avg (£)	Clearance Rate (%)	Sale Avg (£)
Northern Ireland	82%	£536	70%	£792	86%	£585
Scottish	78%	£834	78%	£2,445	69%	£782
English	78%	£418	68%	£643	79%	£694
Welsh	81%	£578	79%	£800	69%	£577

The successful Society National Sales totalled 1577 entries of supreme quality breeder's stock from across the 2000 strong membership in the UK. Gimmers averaged 80% clearance rate, £575 average, Ram Lambs 75% clearance rate, £1541 sale average and Shearling Rams 79% clearance rate with £615 sale average.



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NSA & KELSO Sales 2010

	NSA	Kelso
Total Texel Rams entered	1272	1416
Total Rams entered	4617	4801

Research, Development and Progress

The Society concentrates its breed development on the use of modern technology and increasing awareness of breed improvement tools to its membership. Breed attributes for commercial production are promoted to the Industry as a whole, marketing the breed extensively within the UK and abroad. The breed strengths help producers to increase margins, with improved conformation and growth providing efficient production of lean red meat from a diverse environment.

The Society actively engages with research institutes worldwide to ensure the breed maintains performance with the desirable functional traits, lamb vigour, hardiness and growth. Breed research and development focus on ensuring that quality, taste and tenderness are also managed for the added benefit to the Red Meat Industry which has led to the success of the breed in the UK over the past 4 decades.

Phenotype is judged at the extensive array of shows throughout the year, ranging from traditional local shows to the larger national shows.

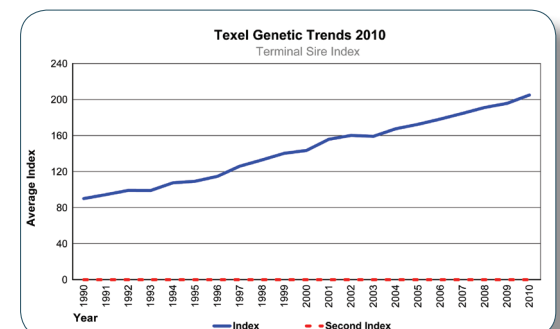
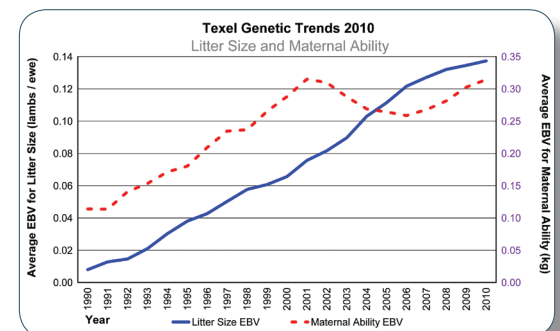
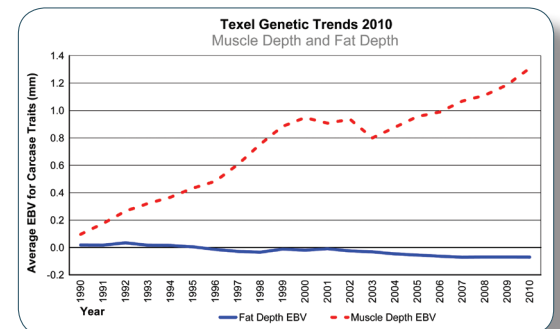
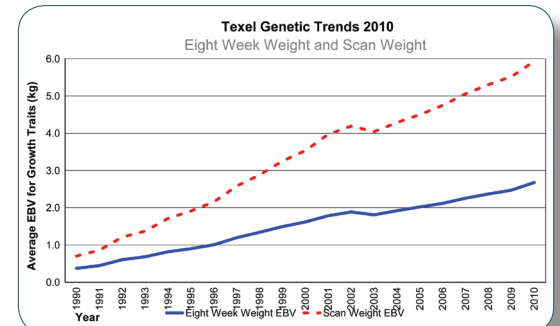
Research initiatives include collaboration with researchers to improve the breeds' resistance to internal parasites, Footrot and Mastitis. Whilst maintaining essential carcass traits and meat quality.

Early enthusiasts recognised the value of performance recording and the first progeny test started in 1974. The development of new reproductive technologies and Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP), a statistical procedure for determining how much of an animal's performance is due to its genes and how much to its environment, made a fundamental difference to performance testing programmes.

Each year the top 10% of the breed can be scanned using Computer Tomography (CT), which enables breeders to enhance their flocks overall rate of genetic gain. Aiming to improve the efficient production of lean meat whilst maintaining conformation, growth and meat quality.

Maternal traits are also recorded, with EBVs for litter size and maternal ability (milkiness) presented as standalone EBVs, which are not incorporated within the Texel Index. Lambing Ease and Birth Weight EBVs were added in 2010 as the Society recognises the value of these important traits that will assist breeders to develop breeding goals based on commercial producers' needs.

Genetic Progress in the Breed 1990-2010



Value of Performance Recording

Texels have an excellent reputation for their efficient production of lean meat from across a wide range of production systems, and environments.

Efficiency is the key to increased profit, and the identification of efficient systems that include the Texel breed is crucial. The Society recognising the importance of accurate record keeping including the production of EBV's as these become ever more important to recognise superior animals that perform well in terms of longevity, fertility and growth rates, whilst grazing well managed forage.



The Society also recognises the importance of efficiency in the operation of its

charitable business on behalf of its large and diverse membership. Focusing on reducing costs and paperwork in the long term for all sectors of its membership. An essential tool at its disposal is the BASCO Database which is a single source of pedigree and performance information that provides pedigree and commercial producers with fast access to reliable information regarding the valuable Texel breed.

There is no doubt future profitable sheep businesses will depend on selecting the right animals for the right purpose. BASCO Data is a valuable tool that allows you to define minimum standards for a variety of traits, with the BASCO websearch providing animals meeting those criteria.

The Texel Society is instrumental in driving change and improvements across its business that includes BASCO, working closely with breeder organisations and technologist from SAC with genetic evaluations for beef, sheep and dairy all being consolidated into one centre of excellence at SAC Egenes, Edinburgh.

BASCO allows for beef and sheep records to be stored in the same database, BASCO is a solution to the increasing demands for performance recording both now and in the future. The Society has already developed new EBV traits to enhance those proven in the area of meat production, and will be focusing on those involved in health, fertility, product quality and welfare to allow for the further evolution of the Texel breed in line with commercial producer requirements.

“The genetic improvement of Texels is worth millions of pounds to the sheep industry by the time it is passed out to commercial producers.”



Performance Pays

A major trial involving 12,000 lambs has shown that high EBV recorded rams can generate premiums of up to £8/ewe mated.*

This benefit may be expressed through

- ✓ Increases in carcase weight
- ✓ Savings in feed costs
- ✓ Premiums for carcase quality
- ✓ Reductions in penalties for fatness

The trial showed that to optimise returns, commercial farmers should;

- Identify whether it is most profitable to change growth or carcase characteristics
- Pick rams based on their EBVs, not just their overall index
- Avoid rams with very low fat depth EBVs where lambs are to be finished under 21kg
- Time lamb sales to capitalise on periods of high returns

* Trial run in 2005 - 2007 by CST Recorded Ram Marketing Ltd, Grampian Foods and ASDA Walmart. Managed by Lesley Stubbings, LSSC Ltd