

Producing Quality Rams on a Mixed Family Farm

DT Jones, Bryn-Rhydd, Edern, Pwllheli, Flock 2339



Dylan and Annwen Jones farm at Bryn Rhydd on the Lleyn Peninsula along with their son Dyfed and some local help for evenings and weekend milking. They cover approximately 320 acres, a mixture of owned and rented with extra ground taken on a neighbouring farm for the summer.

The main enterprise is the 250 head dairy herd plus followers. Mostly Holstein Friesian with a few Flekvieh. Alongside 30 crossbred heifers that are reared for beef. This has been bolstered by the diversification into ice cream production. Those who attended the 2022 AGM weekend got the chance to enjoy this treat. The ice cream is produced on farm and sold at various local outlets, including a shop in Pwllheli which is run by daughter Eiliw and son-in-law Myrddin.

They run 50 registered Lleyn ewes and 60 Texel ewes. Dylan has lived at Bryn Rhydd all his life. His parents moved here in 1956. Dylan jokes “I attended Botwnnog School and spent more time on the school small holding than in the classroom”. He enjoyed working with the cattle alongside his father, but it was his mother that ignited his interest in sheep as she started a Lleyn flock in the 1970’s. Seven years ago, he bought in his new foundation stock. He decided to buy from local breeders to ensure the sheep could work with the local climate.



Being situated a short distance from the coast means that large parts on the farm are very sandy. This helps enable early turnout of the cattle in the spring. The wetter parts of the farm are ideal for dry summers as the livestock can graze here when other parts are burnt up. The sheep help with grassland management. During the winter when the cattle are housed, they graze the nearby fields. Once the cattle are turned out the sheep can be moved to the rougher ground ensuring they keep the 'best fields' for cattle grazing and silage making.

Ewes are run out all winter with only feed blocks offered. Lambing takes place end of February to early March with ewes housed about one week prior and only then are they offered concentrates and hay. Once lambled and subject to the weather they are turned out to grass within a couple of days with no further concentrates given and no creep for the lambs. Lambing early helps ensure the lambs are strong enough to survive on their mothers milk when moved away to the rough sheep ground for the summer.

The ewes have scanned at 210% this year which is what we like to see, "a ewe with only one lamb is not profitable".

The main aim is to produce valuable registered shearling rams to sell at Society sales. Already Dylan has been hitting the headlines at the Ruthin sale. In 2017 he was awarded champion ram and sold for 1550gns. 2022 saw him go one step further with champion ram and top price of 4200gns with Celt Ken. This has been helped by careful selection of breeding rams, Dylan looks for carcase and length and the ability for them to stand out from the crowd. He likes them to meet him with a wide front and clean head followed by a tight fleece.



The females are bred for breeding replacements with maternal and prolificacy a prime topic when selecting. To help maintain prolificacy Dylan says "I usually give the ewes two cycles with the Lleyr ram and then swap for a terminal to sweep up. This helps ensure only the most fertile ewes are allowed to produce Lleyr lambs". All crossbred lambs and any purebreds not considered good enough for breeding are sold as prime lambs at the local markets.

Looking further into the future the family is aware of the issues and increasing burden of regulation around slurry storage. Hence consideration of digesters and electricity production are on the table with thoughts of being able to supply a wider area such as the local village(s) but financial incentives from

Government will be needed. It may also be another reason to reduce cow numbers and increase sheep on the farm.



The Jones family see a bright future for the Lleyn breed as she is seen as a prolific commercial ewe with her known maternal traits and the ability to milk. She also has the added bonus of being able to cross with any terminal sire. The Lleyn ram is now becoming more respected as a crossing sire. With confidence high, Dylan suggests they may increase their flock numbers to help produce more rams to sell.