

## Carving out a True Lleyn

### Fergal Leonard, Offaly, Ireland. Flock 2830



Fergal Leonard, the Soothern Ireland Club Secretary farms at Garbally, Blueball, Tullamore, Co.Offaly. He works as a full-time secondary school teacher, teaching woodwork and drawing in a local school. From a farming background of dairy, beef and sheep, Fergal has always had a keen interest in farming from a young age.

Fergal was first introduced to Lleyn sheep when his friend Alan McDonald asked him to help him show sheep for the 2017 season. Despite having no experience in showing, Fergal was not one to shy back from an opportunity to try something new. He was very quickly bitten by the showing bug and by the end of the season, having enjoyed the experience so much, decided he wanted to start his own flock of Lleyn. Later that year he purchased five hoggets at the Roscommon Society Sale and three more ewes from the in-lamb club sale.



After a successful lambing in Spring 2018 and a good show season, Fergal continued to build his flock and purchased more breeding stock at the Roscommon sales. That summer, Fergal and Alan took a trip across the water where they visited a number of Lleyn breeders in the UK to purchase a new stock ram. After their visits they purchased a ram from Derek Steen and this ram's progeny are

now at the core of Fergal's flock. The highlight of Fergal's showing career to date was when he won first 'All Ireland Ewe Lamb' at the Tullamore Show in 2019. He also won first prize in the club online show in 2021 with his shearling ewe which was judged by Dylan Jones.

Working a full-time job, the Lleyn really suited Fergal's work-life balance as they are low input and low labour. The maternal traits of the Lleyn with milk and great mothering ability makes lambing short and easy, with ewes returning back to grass with lambs at foot two to three days after lambing.

This in return reduces additional expenses such as housing, bedding and meal. It reduces labour on the farmer. The high weaning ratio is also a big

addition to the number of lambs sold at the end of each year, a trait the Lley is well known for.



Currently, Fergal has 65 ewes and continues to expand his flock each year, retaining only the best females to add to his breeding flock. He lambs during the school's mid-term break and sponges his ewes to make his lambing period short and compact to suit his holidays. This has worked well for him in the past and is something he will continue with in future as part of his flock management plan. He is now in a position to sell stock at the Society Sale this year and is looking forward to sale day. He also plans to increase his numbers and replace

old ewes that have been culled from the flock with quality home-bred hoggets. He is currently renting all his land and is always looking for more land in order to keep expanding his flock.

There is a great social aspect to showing and being a society member which has been greatly missed the last two years due to Covid. Shows are a great day out to meet other breeders and farmers. It allows breeders to talk to other farmers, meet new breeders and maybe even learn something new that might assist with their own farming system. If nothing else, it provides a day of leisure off the farm and a bit of craic.

*Written by Clifford Richardson*