

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE NEW MEMBERS

Thank you for your interest in Cotswold Sheep.

Some of our members are commercial farmers, while others are smallholders with small flocks, who do not have a great deal of land but want a breed that is attractive and has a great history. The Cotswold is now a rare breed, so every one of these flocks is helping its survival. We are always delighted when new flocks are established, whatever the size. We also have members who do not have livestock at all, but wish to support the breed and our work through membership.

The Society was founded in the late nineteenth century and is now a registered charity, which aims to conserve, promote and develop this historic breed. The membership year runs from 1 April to 31 March and the annual subscription is £30.00. Membership gives great value for money, and is a must for anyone interested in helping to conserve the Cotswold. We hope very much that all those who buy registered Cotswold sheep will join, as it is a loss to the Society and the breed, when lambs, our future breeding stock, is not registered.

Publications

Our breed leaflet gives useful information on various aspects of Cotswold sheep. Main areas of interest to breeders are:

- Temperament – Cotswolds are exceptionally docile and easy to handle which saves the farmer time and effort.
- Traditional qualities – these include hardiness and longevity which help to reduce labour and input cost.
- Economy in feeding – they are thrifty sheep and can do well on relatively poor land.
- Lambing – they lamb easily, have an excellent mothering instinct, and milk well.
- Marketing – there is a strong market for pedigree breeding stock. Any of their lambs, which are surplus to breeding requirements, can be sold for meat. The Cotswold produces a large, lean lamb, with an excellent, delicate flavour.
- Crossing – the rams are often used as crossing sires to produce good quality half-breed ewes.
- Wool – the Cotswold is renowned for its high quality, lustre fleece, much sought after by hand spinners. A shearling ram will produce about 10kg of wool, an older ewe about 6kg. We have in the past worked with the British Wool Marketing Board, and a Gloucestershire woollen mill producing a range of Cotswold travel rugs and throws - these were very popular both here and abroad, a pure Cotswold sweater was also produced by a firm in Yorkshire, again very popular and sold out!

Newsletters are normally mailed, or emailed, to members three times a year. This keeps members up to date with information about the breed, and the Society. It

also provides a free advertisement service for registered stock, as does the Society website – www.cotswoldsheepsociety.co.uk .

Members receive a copy of our annual Flock Book, which contains a great deal of useful information about our registration rules, the breed standard, undesirable characteristics, a list of current members, show results and advertisements from breeders who regularly have stock for sale. The next volume will include all pedigree Cotswolds registered in 2013. It is available to non-members at a cost of £3.00 plus p&p.

We hope that you will find our book *The Cotswold Sheep* interesting (£4.95 plus p&p) it will give you a complete picture of the Cotswold's development from early times right up to present day. The Cotswold is one of the country's oldest breeds, descended from longwool sheep introduced by the Romans, and has a very distinguished history both as a wool and meat producer.

The Society also publishes help sheets on various aspects of the breed, which are free to members, including one on selecting Cotswold sheep.

Society Registration and Transfer Services

When their sheep have lambed and the breeder has decided which lambs they wish to register, they choose a unique prefix for their flock, and complete a Society Lamb Registration application form – this form can be completed on paper, or through our online Flock Book, via our website. We issue registration certificates and ear tags bearing the animals' registered numbers and the breeder's flock number. The lists of registered lambs are published in the annual paper Flock Book. We operate a tag for life policy, which means that if a registered sheep should lose a tag we replace it and issue a re-tag certificate without charge.

Our Transfer Service transfers sheep that you have purchased into your name, and provides essential paperwork, which should be kept safely in case you wish to sell the sheep in the future.

Workshops

Topics in the past have included lambing, selection of butchers' lambs, carcase evaluation and ram fleece assessment with the British Wool Marketing Board, also selection of breeding stock.

Buying sheep

There are various possibilities for acquiring stock – do contact Lynne Parkes, our Registrar, if you require more information, and check out the website's Sheep for Sale page.

- a. **Private Sale** - We publish advertisements of stock for sale, free of charge,

in our newsletter, and on our website, and also maintain a frequently updated list of stock available. The current list is shown at the back of each newsletter and on the Society website.

- b. **Breed Sale** - We hold our Breed Show and Sale each year on the first Friday and Saturday in August, at Cirencester Market. This is currently under the auspices of Voyce Pullin, Auctioneers, as part of their Sale of Rare and Native Breeds, which includes Breeds of Gloucestershire; so Gloucester Old Spot Pigs and the Gloucester Cattle will also be there, together with a poultry sale.

If you already have sheep you will be aware of the regulations. However if not, you will need to obtain a CPH (County Parish Holding) number from the Rural Payments Agency (part of DEFRA) before you buy your sheep. You will also need to register with your local DEFRA Animal Health Office, who will arrange for you to be issued with a unique flock mark, which is a six digit number, preceded by the letters UK. You will need to register all movements with the Animal Health Department of your local Trading Standards Office. All movements of your sheep must be accompanied by a DEFRA licence for which you will need to supply your CPH number, and your sheep's individual ear tag number. This is not quite so onerous as it first seems. Current legislation for animal movements can be found on the DEFRA website www.defra.gov.uk. Please contact Lynne Parkes if you need help with any of this.

Mentoring Scheme

The Society is aware that new members may like to have someone from whom they can seek advice, as they take on their flock of Cotswolds - particularly when this may be their first experience of keeping sheep. If they wish, they can be put in touch with an experienced member, who will be happy to answer any questions and offer advice as needed.

Social Events

We hold our Winter Social, which is our annual get together, in late November, when we enjoy a meal and the annual presentations of trophies.

Showing

Often Cotswolds are kept in small isolated flocks and after a few years it can be difficult to monitor how your flock is shaping up to the breed standard. One way to overcome this is to show your sheep. There are a number of shows throughout the summer, which run Cotswold classes. The first of these is The Three Counties Show, at Malvern, which takes place in the middle of June. The Society Show in August provides new flock keepers with a great opportunity to dip a toe into the showing water, as we run novice classes. Showing is very sociable, and is a great

way of getting to know other members. Moreton-in-Marsh Show in early September, is our 'National Show' and provides the Grand Finale to our showing season. We are very conscious of the importance of attracting younger members to the idea of keeping and handling sheep and so we run Young and Junior Handler classes alongside Cotswold classes throughout the summer.

Flock Competition

This is run bi-annually and is a wonderful way of getting some expert eyes on your entire flock and for you to show off all you have achieved. The judge, will look at how you manage your flock, how you market your wool and meat, as well as the sheep themselves. The results will be given at the Winter Social.

Further Reading

If you are an established sheep farmer you will not need guidance on publications, but if you are new to sheep you may like to buy a book or two on general sheep keeping. Recommended books are: *Shepherds Calendar*, a small publication written for the novice sheep keeper by Val Stephenson, £4.75, available from Shepherd's Bookshop, Burnt House, North Chailey, East Sussex, BN8 4DJ, tel 01825 722329 (best to check the price before ordering). A larger publication would be *An Introduction To Keeping Sheep* by Jane Upton and Dennis Soden, (£14.95), or *Practical Sheep Keeping* by Kim Cardell (£16.95) aimed particularly at the keeper of a smaller flock, both books should be available at any good book shop or from www.amazon.co.uk .

If you have any questions, or require any help, please do get in touch with our Registrar – Mrs Lynne Parkes - 01451 830461