



# Cotswold Sheep Society Newsletter

Registered Charity No. 1013326  
June 2015

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## Editor

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This Newsletter is independently edited and readers should be aware that the views expressed within its pages do not necessarily reflect the views held by Council.



*Kespar Martha winning Longwool Championship and Interbreed Championship at The Bath and West Show for the Wheeler family*

## **EDITORIAL**

**Mark Pettitt**

I bought my first five sheep, Cotswolds (from Steve Parkes), in May 2012, to put on my five acre smallholding. I now have 23 sheep and because some of my land is used for Tamworth pigs, I have been wondering whether I have enough grass. This led me to investigate the best way to manage my land. My Tamworth pigs have been on the same ground for the last three years, I have decided to move all the pig pens to a new area and to re-seed where they have been. My land is split into three fields and up until now, I have allowed my sheep to graze anywhere. I realise now that this is not the most beneficial method of grazing although it might be nicest for the sheep. I have reproduced part of an article by EBLEX entitled 'Planning grazing strategies for Better Returns' which gives detailed information on grass and ways to manage grazing. The full article can be downloaded from the EBLEX website.

If you keep Cotswold Sheep in The Cotswolds, then you may be interested in 'Cotswolds Choice' which helps to promote produce from The Cotswolds. Further information can be found in this newsletter.

I received an email from Alison Garne who had seen an article in a local paper about the old prison at Northleach. The Old Prison was owned by The Cotswold District Council and housed agricultural collection. It is now owned by 'The Friends of The Cotswolds' who run The Lion Cafe there and are hoping to reopen the agricultural collection. I have reproduced the article in this newsletter.

If you see something that might be of interest to other members, or would like to contribute an article about your own experiences, please do let me know. We would love to hear to hear from you.

## **The View from Here**

**Mark Pettitt**

After having a problem with *Chlostridium* last year, I vaccinated my ewes with Heptavac P+ at the beginning of January. We had a relatively stress free lambing at the beginning of February, or perhaps it's my poor memory, and we ended up with nine lambs. However, three of our ewes did not have any lambs, even though they were marked once by the ram. Could this be due to the ewes being frightened by dogs during early pregnancy? (Our field is next to a public footpath). I will make sure they are on the other side of the field next year.

I have to admit that I am a bit of a techie and decided to build a remote monitoring device so that I could check on any activity in my lambing shed while I was at work. This was built using a Raspberry Pi (which is a matchbox size computer) attached to an infra-red camera and light which came on and took a picture every 10 minutes. This was then uploaded to my mobile phone using a Vodafone Sim. It was quite reassuring and it did manage to capture an image (below) of one lamb face to face with a badger at 4am.



The lambs are looking healthy and strong and I think we will separate them from their mothers soon. We decided not to castrate the ram lambs this year, so we will also have to split up the ewe lambs from the ram lambs. I'm now thinking this may have been a mistake! All being well, we will show one or two of our flock at the Annual Show at Andoversford again and see if we can do a bit better than last year. At least we can be assured of a nice picnic.

Our grass has taken a long time to start growing and I have been worried about overstocking my land. The ridiculous quantity of thistles and nettles that have appeared have not helped. The advice that I took was to spray with Grazon Pro and to over-seed with a ryegrass mix. I wasn't keen to use pesticides but there really didn't seem to be any other option. The fields are starting to look better now with plenty of grass to eat, so hopefully we will be ready for when Steve Parkes arrives to judge us in the Small Flock Competition. We won 'Best Newcomer' two years ago so we'll see how we get on this year.

We have decided to move most of our lambs on as early as possible this year due to limited space and wanting to make sure we are able to rest a field at the end of the year. We are also planning to keep one or more sheepskins, and after investigating this earlier in the year, we have found that there are very few tanneries left in England. We also discovered that sheepskins can only be tanned successfully if they are processed early in the autumn before the winter fleece starts to grow. If you want more information on keeping a sheepskin, let me know.

## **Cotswolds Choice**

Cotswolds Choice, a new local 'environmental quality' food brand to support producers in the Cotswolds, is being launched under the aegis of the Cotswolds Conservation Board (the AONB). It is marketed through brand labels bearing its distinctive logo – a 'Cotswold Lion' sheep – and through a range of promotional activities. A pilot has been run in the Stroud district, and the scheme will shortly be rolled out across the Cotswolds as a whole.

It is aimed at small to medium producers, and especially at those who make the Cotswolds such a special place. The scheme is non-profit, and membership is a very affordable £25. We are delighted that the Cotswold Sheep Society has decided to become an associate member of Cotswolds Choice. The Cotswold Sheep Society and the scheme share common interests in offering practical backing to the people who make the Cotswolds such a special place, with a unique history and 'culture' of farming and food. Members of the Cotswold Sheep Society whose flocks are in the Cotswolds area are warmly invited to join the scheme.

To find out more, go to [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/explore-and-enjoy/local-produce](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/explore-and-enjoy/local-produce) or contact the Project Officer, Stephen Aiano, on [info@rural.support](mailto:info@rural.support) or 07798 645666 for a conversation.

# Recipe - Left over lamb shepherd's pie

By Wendy Pettitt



## Ingredients

400g shoulder of Cotswold lamb, roughly chopped  
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce  
1 tablespoon sunflower oil  
2 onions, diced,  
2 carrots, diced  
2 celery sticks, sliced  
2 parsnips, diced  
200g swede  
1 tbsp cornflower mixed to paste in cold water  
100g Frozen peas  
200ml lamb stock  
2kg Maris piper potatoes, or similar ( or left over mashed potatoes)

## Method

Preheat oven to 180C

Marinate lamb in Worcester sauce

Heat oil in large pan and sweat onions for about 4-5 mins

Add carrots, celery, parsnips, swede and stock and cook gently until vegetables are cooked.

Add cornflower mixture and cook until thickened. (I sometimes use a tablespoon of bisto granules for a meatier flavour!)

Add frozen peas and leave on one side

Cook potatoes until tender and mash with butter. (Variation, add a teaspoon of mustard to mash)

Transfer meat mixture to lasagne dish and top with potatoes

Cook in preheated oven for 40 mins until potatoes are golden brown

Serve with green vegetables of choice

## **Festival to celebrate Northleach's heritage is great success**

**Originally published in 'Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard'**  
Sent in by Alison Garne



ALMOST 900 people flocked to the Old Prison in Northleach to celebrate the market town's heritage as a wool trading capital.

Organisers were only expecting 100 people to turn up for the town's inaugural Sheep and Wool Day. However, buoyed by the good weather punters came in their droves to sample the live music, meet fluffy sheep and to learn the ins and outs of spinning wool.

The idea for the day came from the Northleach Spinners and Weavers who wanted to show people about an important part of the area's history.

They were on hand all day to demonstrate how wool used to be woven.

Jessica Hughes runs Cotswold Lion Cafe in the Old Prison and was part of the team organising the event.

“The day was a massive success. The weather was on our side and people had a really good time - now we're looking forward to next year.”

Also there on the day were sheep from Conygree Farm whose staff were also manning a BBQ.

# Planning Grazing Strategies

by Dr Liz Genever, Dylan Laws and Poppy Frater, Eblex

(Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board copyright)

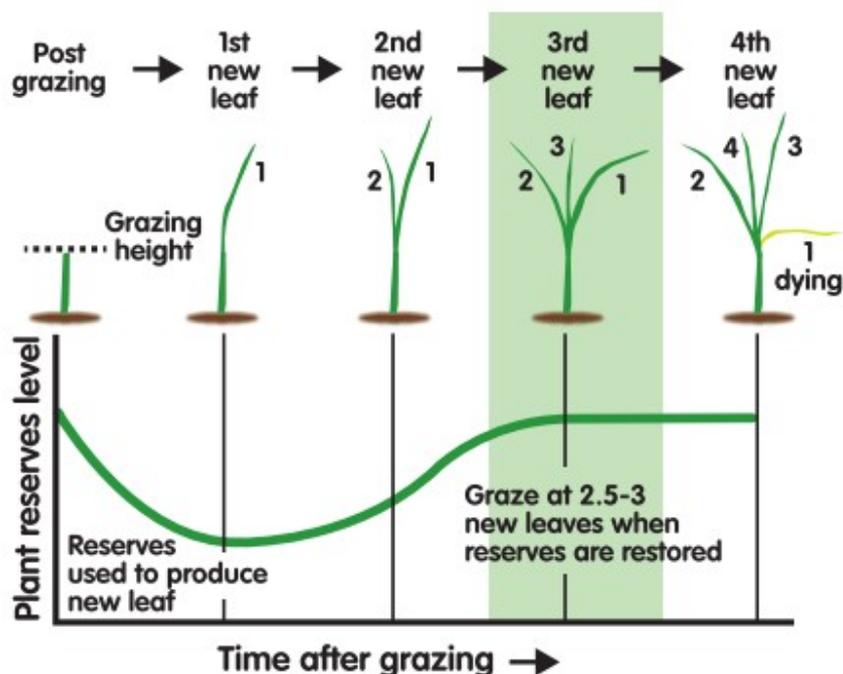
Grass is an important crop, providing 95% of the energy requirements of English sheep. Yet it rarely earns the respect it deserves as a potentially high-quality, natural ruminant feed. Half of what is grown is commonly wasted.

Most grasses have evolved to withstand grazing by having growing points at or near ground level, which quickly spring into action after defoliation. Perennial ryegrass, the UK's most commonly sown species, has three leaves on every individual plant (tiller). As the fourth leaf starts to grow, the first and oldest leaf dies. When grass growth is at its highest, usually in May, a new leaf is produced every four to five days. At peak growth, all three leaves can be replaced within two to three weeks. But when grass growth is at its slowest, in mid-winter, it can take 30 days to produce one new leaf. The best time for grazing is when the plant is at the two and a half to three leaf stage.

Table 1: A guide to annual grass growth in England

Month	Average	Minimum	Maximum
	(kg DM/ha/d)		
January	0	0	10
February	5	0	10
March	10	0	20
April	25	10	40
May	45	20	60
June	30	20	50
July	20	15	40
August	30	20	50
September	20	10	40
October	15	5	30
November	10	0	20
December	5	0	10

Graph 1: The leaf life cycle of a grass plant



Which is the best managed pasture?

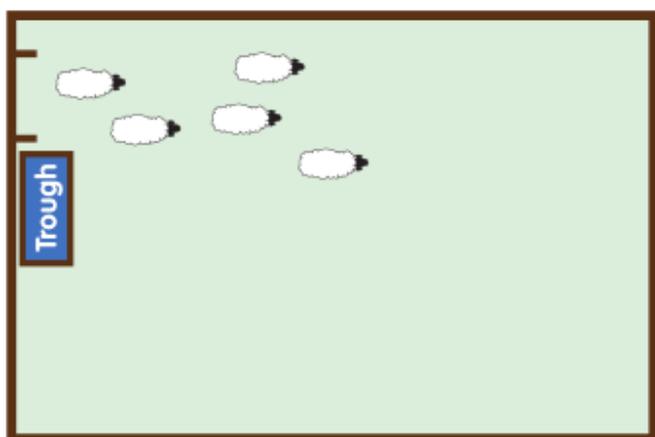
Grazing management aims to make the most of the grass that grows. Preventing plants getting to the fourth leaf stage and dying, reduces wastage and the build-up of unproductive thatch at the base of the sward. Dead material uses nitrogen to rot down: plays host to pests and diseases, and can limit grass and clover growth by shading out the growing points. Grass harrows can be used to drag some of it out, but this takes diesel and time.

Reasons for poor use:

Utilisation of grazed grass can be as low as 50% but could be as high as 80%. It is an underappreciated part of grazing management. Good utilisation happens when fields are grazed at the right time to the right height with the right amount of stock.

Set stocking

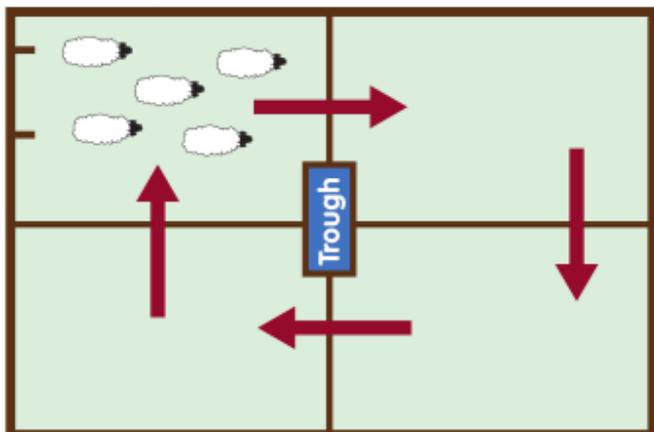
Animals have unrestricted access over a wide area throughout the grazing season.



Pros
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low management input</li> <li>• Low capital costs</li> <li>• Can work well if sward height targets maintained</li> </ul>
Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower forage yield</li> <li>• Can be difficult to maintain grass quality and even sward height</li> <li>• Uneven manure distribution</li> <li>• Lower utilisation due to trampling</li> <li>• Weeds can build up</li> </ul>

## Rotational grazing

Stock is moved around a small number of fields based on sward height or grass cover targets, or after a certain number of days.



### Pros

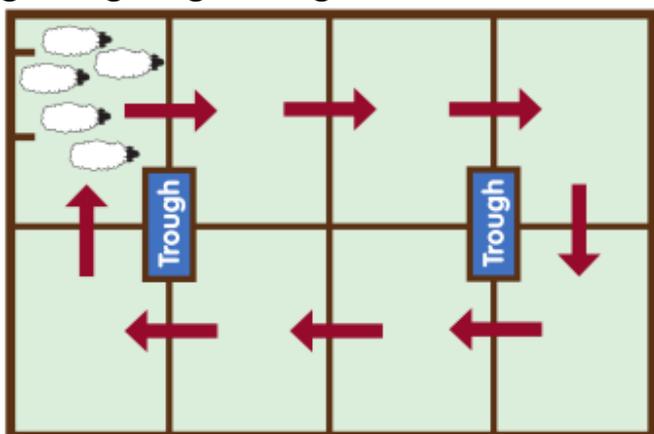
- Higher productivity than set stocking
- Allows the pasture to rest and re-grow
- Can extend the grazing season
- More even manure distribution

### Cons

- More fencing required and water provision increases cost
- Forage production and pasture utilisation is not optimal

## Paddock grazing

Livestock is moved frequently through a series of paddocks based on measured grazing heights or grass covers.



### Pros

- Highest forage production and use per ha
- Provides very high quality feed – 11-12ME
- Higher stocking rates can be sustained
- More even manure distribution
- Weeds can be controlled through grazing
- Reduced need for conserved forage by extending the grazing season

### Cons

- Requires careful monitoring of forage supply
- Initial costs of fencing and water provision may be high
- More management intensive

## COUNCIL CORNER

- **The Importance of Showing** – Showing your sheep is one of the best ways of improving your flock, however large or small. Take a sheep to a show and see how it compares to the rest of its class. If it does well you have the reassurance of knowing you are breeding good sheep, but if not, then you know what to do to improve your stock – maybe you need more size, more crimp in your wool, or better conformation and you can seek out a ram with that characteristic.

- **Fleece Competitions** – If training a sheep to walk on a halter is really not your thing, then you can still take part by entering a fleece into a Fleece Competition, there are fleece classes at most shows. For information on how to best present your fleece, visit the Newsletter tab on the Society website and read Davina Stanhope's excellent notes on preparing a fleece for a show in the October 2013 Newsletter.
- **Raffle** – We will be running a raffle to raise funds for the Society at Moreton Show – all prizes will be gratefully received!
- **Christmas Card Competition** – A reminder that we are running a competition for the 2015 Christmas Card. It will be judged at the AGM – so please either email the photo to the Secretary beforehand or bring along a print of your entry/ies to Andoversford. The photos must have been taken by you so that you own the copyright, and by entering the photo into the competition you are agreeing to the Society using the photo as it wishes to promote Cotswold sheep.
- **Trademark** – The Society owns two registered trademarks; one for Cotswold wool and one for 'Pedigree Cotswold Lamb,' which is designed to identify lamb from the Cotswold breed, rather than lamb of any breed reared on the Cotswold hills. It is important that these Trademarks are more widely used as this will raise the profile of the breed and help secure their future. The Trademarks are also excellent marketing tools for producers. We will be launching our new 'Trademark packs' at the AGM so please do come along to find out more, or contact the Secretary.
- **Past Flock Books** – A final reminder - The Society can no longer store large numbers of surplus Flock Books and these will be recycled in the autumn. If you would like a complete set of Flock Books to collect at the AGM, or a replacement for a particularly tattered old friend, then please contact Angela Reid on 07768 354613.

## EVENTS

- **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July – Stroud Show** – This is always an excellent show and well worth supporting. If you want to take your sheep to Stroud and Andoversford shows - and don't have a quarantine unit - it may be possible to take your sheep direct to Andoversford from Stroud on Saturday evening. Please contact Lynne and Steve Parkes on 01451 830461, if this is something you might like to do.
- **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July - The Society Summer Show & AGM** - will take place at Andoversford as part of the 'A Taste of the Cotswolds' Country Fair. Exhibitors and

members will have free entry – for those without livestock trailers - just tell the ticket sellers on the gate you are a member of the Cotswold Sheep Society!

- If you have never shown your sheep before then the Summer Show is the perfect occasion to start! There will be novice classes, and fleece classes too. Lunch following the show will be ‘Bring and Share’ - so bring along a favourite salad or pudding to share; the Society will provide meat, cheese and bread.
- **The AGM** - will start at 2.00pm so there will be time to explore the Country Fair afterwards, if not before. Stephen Aiano, responsible for setting up ‘Cotswold Choice’ the new local ‘environmental quality’ food brand, described elsewhere in the newsletter, will be at the AGM - so you can ask him any questions you might have. The AGM notice, along with the abbreviated accounts, is enclosed with this newsletter. If anyone wants a full set of accounts there will be copies at the AGM, or they can be requested from the Secretary or the Treasurer. The Summer Show entry form is also included with this newsletter. Entries close on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July.
- **Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July/Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August - The Show and Sale, Cirencester Market.** If you have quality breeding stock to sell, or want to increase your flock, then the breed sale is a must! All sheep are card graded the afternoon before the sale, or on Saturday morning, so you can buy and sell with confidence. After card grading on Friday, there is the breed show, which is followed by a Society BBQ to which all are invited. It’s a relaxed social evening – just bring a bottle and a burger, or similar, and come and join us. Saturday is Sale day. Remember that there is no restriction to the number of Senior Rams you can enter into the sale, but the rule for selling Ram Lambs and Shearling Rams, is that you need to sell two females for every male sheep.
- **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August - Monmouth Show** – Members are encouraged to support this show, if the numbers of Cotswold entries rise, we would hope that there will be purely Cotswold classes, currently there are ‘Cotswold and Other Longwool classes’. For the first time all entries will be online only. The closing date for entries is Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July.
- **Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August – Berkeley Show** – Do think about supporting this excellent show. Jon King will be judging the Cotswold classes, and there will be fleece classes too! Entries close on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> August.
- **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September – Moreton Show** – Our National Show of Cotswold Sheep - entries close on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July. There is usually an impressive turn out of sheep. All members with sheep at the show are encouraged to join the Grand Parade, which takes place during the afternoon. Please do come along to support the Society, even if you don’t bring a sheep with you!

## **A TIMELY REMINDER FROM TRADING STANDARDS**

Trading Standards would like to remind livestock keepers that you cannot transport livestock in the back of a van / car, where it has not been suitably modified. Ideally an adequate vehicle / trailer that is designed to meet the needs of animals in transport and the requirements under the legislation should be used. If you do not have access to a suitable vehicle you could arrange a transporter to bring them to and from the market / show on your behalf.

It is an offence to transport animals in a vehicle that does not meet the required specifications under the above legislation. Vans would need to have ventilation flaps added, or else a roof ventilator as you see police dog carrying vans. Window glass is replaced with metal grills to allow for extra ventilation and for safety. The internal spaces must be free of sharp edges and where any wheel arch meets the carrying space, this would need to be contoured appropriately. There is no need for a ramp provided the animals can be lifted out by no more than two people. The flooring needs to be non-slip, or else bedding or other suitable surface added. You would need to be able to cleanse and disinfect the vehicle appropriately (rubber mats can be used as they are easily removed and disinfected).

## **SHEEP FOR SALE**

This is a free service for buyers and sellers. The list is constantly being updated, so please do contact the Secretary, or check the website, if you wish to buy.

**RAMS FOR HIRE: Contact Mr Steve Parkes, 47 King George's Field, Stow On The Wold, Gloucestershire, Tel. 01451 830461 for further details.**