



# Mule News 2020



*Photo courtesy of Mary Brough*

## Edition 32

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PALLETFORCE



**M**uch of what I want to say is again contained in the report on our AGM elsewhere in Mule News and when I penned the original version back in January I made reference to the horrendous wet weather we were experiencing, which made the land so wet and farming conditions so difficult.

Fortunately, as I now re-write my original report, the weather is improving and the land is drying out, which can only help now that we are in the midst of lambing time. Here's hoping we all get plenty of fit and healthy lambs on the ground.

But I unsheathe my pen in the light of Covid-19, which cannot pass without comment as it will affect one and all of us in some way or other. Our secretary Marion thinks likewise, as you will see from her report on Page 5. I wholeheartedly concur with all she says.

Many auction marts have now implemented procedures in the light of Covid-19 in accordance with Government guidelines whereby vendors are only permitted to drop off livestock. In turn, buyers can only walk in, sign in, go straight to the ringside and purchase what they see in front of them. All shows have also been cancelled until further notice. These are measures which are vital if marts are to ensure they keep food on shop and supermarket shelves in the short, medium and long term. And we, as farmers, still have to pay our bills and sustain our farms during the Spring when most of us traditionally concentrate on lambing and calving the next crop.

At the time of writing, Covid-19 policy was changing virtually on a daily basis as the gravity of the situation was revealed, but one thing remains patently clear: we must all follow the Government's advice to minimise risk, whether we like it or not. Of course, many of us are already on our annual self-isolation exercise due to lambing!

On a more pleasant note, the last two years have gone very fast. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as your chairman, going to events and shows, representing NEMSA, meeting people old and new to the society. We managed to have representation at all major shows and sheep events, including the Royal Welsh for the first time.

A big thank you to all who provided stock and freely gave of their time to help promote the breed;

the committee have allocated funding to help with travelling for those representing NEMSA at these high profile shows and events, though many have, unfortunately, already been cancelled this year due to Covid-19.

Encouraging the younger generation remains essential for the industry and with this in mind we are still hoping to find the correct approach for college students and our breed to go forward together.

We are also having a new website designed and this should soon be ready. Social media is very important, too, and I ask you all to keep posting articles and pictures promoting the breed.

Promotional articles in different farming papers this last year have increased thanks to Robin and Wayne, giving us a greater presence in the farming and regional press.

Eventually, Brexit has happened, we have left Europe, but none of us knows what the outcome will be in the future, especially in the current climate. Only time will tell.

I must again stress just how important it is to keep our standards up, to keep pushing the North of England Mule, improving the breed, staying at the top. Our tagging system is among the best, guaranteeing full traceability and quality. UK farmers are also among the best in the world. Times may be uncertain, but we have something positive to go forward with and I am sure there will be plenty more opportunities to promote the breed.

Thanks to our sponsors, Shearwell Data and Animax, for their continued support, though it does, sadly, appear that after many years we have lost Animax following the acquisition of the company by a new owner. Potential new sponsors please take note!

Thanks, too, to Presidents Randall Raine and Geoff Taylor, District Area Chairmen and their committees for their help and support over the last two years. Also, our Secretary Marion Hope, whose continuing hard work and efficiency was very much appreciated.

Very best wishes, too, to my successor as chairman, Chris Harrison, and the new vice chairman, Jonathan Hodgson. Both are North of England Mule aficionados through and through. There is little doubt that both our Association and our breed remain in strong and very safe hands. Keep safe, stay safe

*Kevin Wilson*





**AUCTIONS**

**Pedigree & Commercial Auctioneers & Valuers**

## **15,000 GIMMER LAMBS**

from The Lakeland Hills, Yorkshire Dales & The Trough of Bowland sold  
between J36 Rural Auction Centre & Lancaster Auction Mart



**Friday 11th September at J36 Rural Auction Centre - Ambleside Fair**  
4000 Mule, Masham, Rough Fell Mule, Cheviot Mule & Continental Gimmer Lambs

**Saturday 12th September at J36 Rural Auction Centre**

**8000 North of England Mule Gimmer Lambs**

on behalf of the Kendal Branch of NEMSA

Judging of Show Pens & Stars in Your Eyes Competition on the Evening of Friday 11th

**Wednesday 16th September at Lancaster Auction Mart**

3000 Mule, Masham & Continental Gimmer Lambs including NEMSA Lambs

**Breeding Sheep Sales at J36 Rural Auction Centre**

**Saturday 22nd August** - 5000 Breeding Ewes & Gimmer Shearlings  
including Mule, Masham & Continental

**Friday 25th September** - 8000 Swaledale, Rough Fell, Cheviot  
& Other Hill Bred Draft Ewes, Shearlings & Gimmer Lambs

**Monday 5th October** - 250 Bluefaced Leicester Rams & Females

**Full List Of Sale Fixtures Available on Our Website**

J36 Rural Auction Centre, Crooklands, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7FP t. 015395 66200  
Lancaster Auction Mart, Wyresdale Road, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 3JQ t. 01524 63308  
w. [nwauctions.co.uk](http://nwauctions.co.uk) e. [info@nwauctions.co.uk](mailto:info@nwauctions.co.uk)



## **T**empus fugit – eleven years as your secretary and still enjoying every minute of it!

Our annual meeting in February again went well and was extremely well attended. Kevin Wilson stepped down after two very successful years as chairman – and a very able chairman and figurehead he has proved to be. I am sure his successor Chris Harrison will both carry on and build on the impact Kevin has undoubtedly made.

My thanks to all officials and branch chairman for their continuing support. We have an Association and a breed of which we can all be truly proud. Both are in fine heart, with our four-figure membership continuing to show steady growth and the all-purpose North of England Mule still the preferred choice of countless users the length and breadth of the country.

Our PR and social media team continues to spread the word near and far in the farming press and regional media. This increased exposure can only benefit both breed and body and we must continue to shout our many successes and achievements from the rooftops at every opportunity.

Social media continues to be a notable growth area, particularly among our younger generations. Like others, I appeal to all to make full use of it. Please keep on posting your news and pictures through our social media channels on the NEMSA website. It's not rocket science, just another extremely effective modern-day method of spreading the word. And don't forget to look out for our brand-new, more modern and user-friendly website, which should be going live soon.

Once again, this issue of Mule News contains many of the press features we have commissioned and distributed to the media throughout the course of the past year. I hope you all agree they make interesting reading. They certainly make for a bigger, better, bumper Mule News!

At the time of writing, lambing was in full swing and earlier scanning results were said to be excellent.

However, the world at the moment is not as we know it. Covid-19 concerns are increasing on literally a daily basis. It is undoubtedly the biggest single challenge to health we have faced in a century. Already, major annual events and shows have been postponed or cancelled completely, including several at which we are normally represented.

Our hands may be tied, but we are a resilient lot. As farmers and producers, we are the UK's food basket and of crucial importance to the lifeblood of the entire nation. The supply chain must be maintained at a critical time of such high demand. Our flocks and cattle herds still need to be tended, our cows milked.

We are all affected in one way or another, but we must persevere, press on and pull together, making every effort to keep our own houses in order under whatever constraints are thrown at us. The future may be uncertain, but we can only hope and pray that Covid-19 is confined to history sooner rather than later.

### *Marion*



*NEMSA Secretary: Mrs Marion Hope*

### Trade for NEMSA gimmer lambs improves after cautious opening.

The headline says it all. While the UK breeding sheep sector faced plenty of well-documented adverse factors in 2018, notably extreme and severe weather conditions countrywide, 12 months down the line 2019 was a completely different story, producing renewed optimism and confidence. The welcome change in fortunes was reflected at the North of England Mule Sheep Association's high profile annual gimmer lamb sales at northern auction marts this autumn.

Close on 150,000 NEMSA-tagged ewe lambs went under the hammer last year, very similar to 2018, and while early trade was best described as 'cautious' sales averages increased as the season progressed, according to the majority of marts.

NEMSA's national chairman Kevin Wilson said: "After a guarded start Mule gimmer lambs were increasingly sought after, with buyers positive and demand rising at later sales.

"All season long there has been a solid requirement for breeding females and Mule gimmer lambs proved as popular as ever with buyers the length and breadth of the UK, both familiar and new faces. We thank them all for their ongoing support and our northern marts for continuing to serve us well.

"Tribute, too, is due to our growing army of breeders. There is little doubt that lambs were stronger and presented in better condition last year. This is true testimony to their efforts and their skills in continuing to produce high quality ewe lambs.

"However, as breeders of the all-purpose North of England Mule, which remains one of the UK's most popular commercial sheep for both prime lamb production and as a Continental cross female, we must continue not only to maintain the exacting standards of the breed, but also seek to enhance and improve its quality at every opportunity. This can only benefit our buyers and users – shepherds UK-wide."

Here, we give feedback from northern marts staging NEMSA sales:

### BENTHAM

A total of 15,709 North of England Mule gimmer lambs were sold at the first two Bentham sale fixtures in 2019, an increase on the year of 15%. The first sale averaged £77.27, up 48p on the year, while the second sale, comprising probably 95% running lambs, averaged £66.08, down 34p on the year.

Auctioneer Stephen Dennis commented on a strong trade and plenty of interest for top pens, boosted by keen interest in an outstanding pre-sale show on the eve of the sale. The next draw down of potential tupping lambs were harder to place, quickly falling into the price range of strong runners, with small running lambs selling at increased rates to the previous year.

### BARNARD CASTLE/ST JOHNS CHAPEL

Barnard Castle & Teesdale Farmers Auction Market Co Managing Director and Auctioneer Libby Bell reported: "Barnard Castle breeding sheep sales got off to a flying start, with Mule shearlings averaging £135.97, £9.07 up on 2018, and numbers being slightly up on the year. A marvellous show of sheep with regards to both quality and condition were forward.

"Next on the agenda was Barnard Castle's Mule gimmer lamb sale, a catalogue of 4,500 with similar numbers sold. A marvellous average of £95.15 – up £4.88 – was achieved.



*Barnard Castle and St Johns Chapel*



The power, quality and consistency of the lambs on offer at this sale can never be overstated and all credit must be given to the vendors for presenting such an outstanding show of stock.

Late September saw another fantastic Mule gimmer lamb sale at St Johns Chapel with a catalogue of 2,600 being presented to a full ringside of buyers, resulting in an average of £81.15, only 11p down on 2018 for 350 more sold. This sale has gone from strength to strength and again had a tremendous show of lambs with regards to quality.

“Once again the North of England Mule sheep sales have gone very well for us, and as the Auctioneer I can never offer enough thanks to the vendors for their stockmanship and commitment, and to the purchasers for their continued support. It really is their goodwill that secures the future for our ‘Dales Marts.’”

### CARLISLE /LAZONBY/ KIRKBY STEPHEN/ MIDDLETON-IN-TEESDALE

Worthy of mention are Harrison & Hetherington's two early season NEMSA gimmer shearing sales. The first sale at Lazonby saw well over 3,000 sheep sold to average £128.50, a rise of £4.32 on the year, while the 2,700 shearlings sold at Carlisle averaged £124.55, up around £1 on 2018.

The Kirkby Stephen NEMSA ewe lambs opener, the first for H&H, saw just over 12,500 lambs sold to average £83.28 and while this was down £3.16 on the year, it is well worth noting that the annual turnout comprised 1,500 more running lambs.

Kirkby's livestock manager and auctioneer, Mark Richardson, commented: “The very strongest and best tupping lambs were highly sought after once again by buyers and were equally as dear, if not dearer than last year. Smaller running lambs were also a shade dearer, while stronger runners/smaller tupping types would be the best value.”

Middleton-in-Teesdale's sale attracted an increased entry of 2,500 head, which proved popular with a ringside from near and far. Trade mirrored that of Kirkby, with medium size lambs best bought.

The circa £70 average was down around £2.

At the Carlisle Latter Fair, a catalogued entry of 5,235 saw just short of 1,000 more sheep sold on the year, with flying trade for tupping lambs, while running lambs also met a firm enquiry. While the overall average of £83.82 was down on the year it nevertheless proved another successful sale.

Likely the best trade was seen at the main Lazonby Alston Moor highlight, with all types good to sell to a packed ringside, with an abundance of buyers present. The 13,500 head sold to an overall average of £ 82.99, a solid rise of £5.54 on year.

The Lazonby third sale of 7,672 gimmer lambs also proved a great success, with a packed ringside of buyers, all keen to secure lambs to run on for next year. Many more lambs could have been easily sold. A sale average of £75.01 showed a rise of £13.41 on 2018.

Auctioneer James Little noted: “At Lazonby, local demand for tupping lambs remained strong and would be in line with earlier sales. Stronger demand for shearlings in the south, along with a better grass season, saw trade for running lambs come on stronger at later sales. This trend was also seen to an extent at Alston Moor, but really came to a head at the third sale, seeing running lambs in high demand resulting in a rise of £13.41 on the year.”

### CCM SKIPTON

The traditional pipe-opener to CCM's 2019 breeding sheep season, the annual gimmer shearing fixture, saw North of England Mules create the usual buzz, with buyers keen to replenish their breeding flocks.

The overall selling average of £137.33 showed a healthy increase of £15.85 on the year. Livestock sales manager Ted Ogden commented: “This was a good response from buyers, showing the call for quality Mule shearlings. However, a commercial sort was easily bought. Power and quality were definitely the watch words.”

In September, the first major sale for NEMSA gimmer lambs set the season off well, when an increased entry of 6,929 head from breeders right across the district and buyers countrywide sold to an overall average of £90.75 per head, just 47p down on 2018. "Trade was better than anticipated and again quality sorts being easily sold," noted Mr Ogden.

At September's second sale, a tidy entry of 6,470 lambs sold away nicely, while still being sensibly priced for all concerned, with an overall average was £77.23, up £5.51 on the year. Sales at CCM continued fortnightly and the third sale in early October was £71 average, and the fourth sale £61.



*Skipton*

### COCKERMOUTH

Mitchells Auction Mart's John Wharton commented: "We started the Autumn sales season with a North of England Mule gimmer shearling sale which was a flyer, having buyers travelling from all four corners of the UK to purchase good Mule shearlings which lamb down and rear two lambs comfortably. The sale average was a wonderful £129.44. Our Mule 2 shear section was also well supported.

"Two weeks later, we staged the sale of 10,415 NEMSA gimmer lambs, which is regarded as one of the most improved sales centres for quality and type of the last decade. This, I suggest, is because our Lake District vendors have kept carcase to the Swaledale ewe, as well as type.

"Sale average was a very pleasing £77.60 a slight increase on 2018. This is a true sale with full runs of lambs and the auction had a purchasers' list of 104 buyers, including many new customers."

### HAWES

Improved averages were seen at all three NEMSA gimmer lambs sales at Hawes Farmers Auction Mart. The traditional and keynote two-day opener attracted a solid turnout of 23,459 head, compared to 23,036 the previous year, and they averaged £80.38, a small, yet significant improvement on 2018's £79.06.

The second sale of 6,262 lambs (2018 7,035) averaged £69.74, a nice rise on the previous year's £63.53. While numbers at the third sale decreased from 1,639 to 1,394, the average again showed a very significant increase – up from £51.27 to £67.40.

Chairman Andrew Pratt commented: "Confidence in Mule gimmer lambs increased as the season progressed following a cautious start. Small running lambs, especially, became more sought after in the later sales as demand went up."

### HEXHAM/TOW LAW

Hexham and Northern Marts' opening ewe lamb sale produced an overall average of £101.84, with the second sale averaging £95.55.

Auctioneer Trevor Simpson commented: "The turnout of lambs at the first sale were all bred from Northumberland-type Blackface ewes and mainly all tupping lambs. An excellent show of lambs presented in good bloom was considerably easier on the year.

"The second sale again saw the majority bred from the Blackface ewe, with the tupping lambs following the trade of the first sale, but the running lambs met a fast trade and finished well up on the year."

The traditional Tow Law sale of Mule gimmer lambs, again all out of Swaledale ewes, sold at Hexham on behalf of NEMSA's Weardale Branch, had an entry of 5,805 head to average £84.13, +20p.



Hexham



Tow Law

"A great show was forward, with a packed ring of both local and distant buyers from the North of Scotland, Worcester and Wales who attend this sale annually, along with new faces to this centre, resulted in the stronger tupping lambs easily sold, but others harder to sell, though stronger and smaller running lambs were easy to sell," said Mr Simpson.

### KENDAL/LANCASTER

North West Auctions J36 great annual show and sale on behalf of NEMSA Kendal Branch began with the traditional 'Stars in Your Eyes' show evening the night before. It continues to grow in popularity each year and produced a new record high price of £360 for the champion lamb.

The main sale had an entry of over 7,000, with trade remaining firm throughout. Top pens of gimmer lambs and tupping lambs sold to a very similar trade to previous years, with smaller tupping and running lambs a lot sharper than in 2018. The overall average of £75.60 was a welcome rise on the previous year's £71.

Lancaster's annual highlight included an entry of 1,500 Mule gimmers, which again attracted a good following of both local and travelled buyers. NEMSA lambs averaged £77.80, virtually identical to 2018.

Kendal's second sale produced strong trade for lambs that will grow into decent shearlings, with smaller types selling to their value. An increased entry of 787 lambs forward for the sale saw NEMSA lambs average in the mid-sixties.

Auctioneer Ian Atkinson said: "What a difference a year makes for breeding sheep sales. Throughout the season there has been strong demand for breeding females, many returning and new faces being present this year, with the Mule gimmer lamb proving as popular as ever.

"A good grass growing season saw lambs forward to the sale stronger and many southern buyers this year not affected with a shortage of grass due the drought conditions of the previous year leading to stronger trades and averages. "

### LEYBURN

Leyburn's opening NEMSA sale saw an entry of 1,611 head forward, compared to the previous year's 1,530. "Lambs in general looked stronger than ever without any sacrifice to quality. The overall average of £82.30, down exactly £1 on 2018, was very well received by the sellers, who also remembered last year's sale faring better than most that year," noted Auctioneer & Manager, Stephen Walker.

The second sale turnout of 680 lambs saw anyone looking for decent types to tup or run certainly not disappointed. Plenty of eager bidders pushed the overall average to £75, up £14.10p on the previous year.

The good trade continued for the third and final sale, which saw lambs average £60, a very satisfactory result for the smaller lambs on offer. Mr Walker added: "All in all, the sale of Mule gimmer lambs has fared fairly well this year and although trade at some of the earlier sales may have been disappointed, they recovered well to prove that the Mule is still a very popular sheep to breed a prime lamb or a Continental cross female.

### LONGTOWN

C&D Auction Marts' annual breeding sheep sale at Longtown had a catalogue entry of 7,967, with buyers represented from across the UK and trade very good throughout.

John Walton, auctioneer and head of sheep sales, said: "The main sale of Greyface Mule ewe lambs were an outstanding quality show, with buyers again present from a wide area. Strong tupping lambs were seen to be less money on the year, with running lambs considerably dearer. The sale averaged £76.56, down £1.69 on the year, with all vendors happy with the day's trading. The 1,116 NEMSA lambs averaged £77.51.

"The second sale attracted the biggest ring of buyers seen all season; with many from the south of Wales, plus another good quality show forward."

### PENRITH

Penrith & District Farmers' Mart's opening annual sale of 9,000 North of England Mule gimmer lambs, a similar number on the year, produced a very pleasing trade and a better than expected overall average of £81, this slightly up on the year.

Auctioneer Andrew Maughan commented: "One of the most even runs of lambs was forward, with many runs from local farmers notably getting better and better each year in both colour and carcase. "Most vendors were reporting being up £3 – £5 a head and quite a few new ones said they were highly delighted with their trade. The number of buyers around the ring ensured spirited bidding throughout.

"The second sale of 500 head also attracted a good ringside of buyers, ensuring a strong trade, with Mule gimmers lambs selling exceptionally well, the majority of runners averaging £70.79."



The advertisement features a dark blue header with the text "THE BUSINESS BREED" in large yellow letters, followed by "DELIVERING" in white, and "UNRIVALLED HYBRID VIGOUR" and "PROLIFICACY | MILKING ABILITY" in white. Below this is a photograph of a group of sheep standing in a field. At the bottom, a red banner contains the contact information: "e: info@blueleicester.co.uk t: 01228 598022" and "www.blueleicester.co.uk". A Facebook logo is also present in the bottom right corner. On the left side, there is a logo for the Blue Leicester Sheep Breeders Association, featuring a stylized sheep head and the text "BLUEFACED LEICESTER SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION".

## WIGTON

Wigton Auction Mart's standalone NEMSA sale attracted a larger entry of 2,580 lambs (2018 2,076). David Bowman, of Hopes Auctioneers, said:

"A super selection of complete run lambs produced a satisfactory average of £74.55' reflecting a slight reduction on the year (2018 £79.36). Strong tupping lambs were good to sell and more could easily have been sold, with increased interest for the genuine runners."



Wigton

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**FRIDAY 4th SEPTEMBER** - Annual show & sale of **5,000** Mule gimmer shearlings & ewes. Annual show & sale of **350** breeding rams.

**FRIDAY 18th SEPTEMBER** - Great Annual Lakeland show & sale of **10,000** Mule gimmer lambs.

(2019 sale figures – 8021 NEMSA)

**SATURDAY 19th SEPTEMBER** – Annual sale of **5,000** Lakeland store lambs.

**MONDAY 21st SEPTEMBER** - Annual Show & Sale of **150** Bluefaced Leicester rams & females

For information contact John Wharton 07912946549 or David Porter 07704282373



**T**he first event in the Northumberland branch calendar was NSA North Sheep down the road at Frankland Farms, Settle.

NEMSA once again displayed a fantastic representation of our breed of which Northumberland presented a quality outfit of a Hexham Blackface bred Hogg with a tremendous Suffolk x lamb at foot, kindly loaned by Mr Joe Vickers, Rennington South.

*Next was our first sale at Hexham Auction mart where a strong show of lambs was brought forward by all exhibitors. Our master judges on the day, Mr R. Telford and Mr J. Elliot, expertly placed the pens of 25 in the following order.*

*First – R.D. Archer & Son, Carry House.*

*Second – J. Hunter & Sons, The Steel.*

*Third – R. English & Son, Brownsleazes.*

The Stuart Ridley Memorial trophy for the best run of 100 lambs was awarded to R.D. Archer & Son, Carry House. Top end lambs weren't in as much demand as previously seen but smaller tupping lambs seemed a good trade on the day.

*The second sale saw another great show of lambs forward. Trade would be deaver on the year with most vendors content with their day's trading. The show pens of ten were ably judged by Mr I. Hamilton, Claywalls and he awarded the tickets as follows.*

*First – J.W. Smith-Jackson, Hightown.*

*Second – B.D & M.S Hope, Albierigg.*

*Third – R. English & Son, Brownsleazes .*

The best run of 60 was awarded to B.D. & M.S. Hope, Albierigg

I would like to wish everyone my best for the coming year and hope you all have a good lambing.

*Kevin Ridley*



*Hexham 21st sale Champion lambs RD Archer and Sons*

**A**s I write my first report, on a cold wet January night, I can't help thinking back to that nice spring, when we had grass to turn the ewes and lambs onto. There was grass aplenty throughout summer and lambs were on good form going in to the sales.

Our sale season started with the 'Tow Law' Sale at Hexham Auction Mart. A similar trade to last year with more lambs forward, running lambs were easier to sell. Sale average £83.23.

### Show Results

#### Pens of 10

<b>1st</b>	<b>WM Reed &amp; Sons, Lands Farm</b>
<b>2nd</b>	<b>J Lee &amp; Sons, Agars Hill</b>
<b>3rd</b>	<b>R &amp; MJ Lee, Harwood Shield</b>
<b>4th</b>	<b>TA Collingwood &amp; Sons, Ambling Gate</b>

The following day was our sale at St Johns Chapel. Again an increased entry met a similar trade on the year averaging £81.15

#### Pens of 10

<b>1st</b>	<b>WM Reed &amp; Sons, Lands Farm</b>
<b>2nd</b>	<b>C Hodgson, Hill House</b>
<b>3rd</b>	<b>M &amp; B Coulthard, Bridge End</b>
<b>4th</b>	<b>JM Robinson, Lin Riggs</b>

We would like to thank our judges, Julie Brough, Geoff Carrick & John Bell (Tow Law Sale) and Sarah Brockbank, Edwin Holliday, Philip & Anthony Walker (St Johns Chapel) for their time and expert opinion. Also thanks to Hexham Auction Mart & Barnard Castle Auction Mart Auctioneers & Staff for their continued hard work and support of our sales.



*Tow Law Champion Lambs - Messrs Reed, The Lands*

#### Runs of 100

<b>1st</b>	<b>WJ Scott Ltd, Low Leam</b>
<b>2nd</b>	<b>WM Reed &amp; Sons, Lands Farm</b>
<b>3rd</b>	<b>R &amp; MJ Lee, Harwood Shield</b>

#### Runs of 50

<b>1st</b>	<b>C Hodgson, Hill House</b>
<b>2nd</b>	<b>M &amp; B Coulthard, Bridge End</b>
<b>3rd</b>	<b>Crooks Altar Farming</b>

Congratulations must go to John & Barbara Reed and Family, Lands Farm for producing the winning lambs at both centres and also the 'Alston Moor Day' at Lazonby.

I would like to wish you all a Happy Lambing and hope the weather & Brexit are kind.

*Stephen Collingwood*

**A**nother year has gone by where does the time go!

The season began with some of our members along with some members of Kirkby Stephen Branch going to the Royal Cornwall Show returning with hope for the autumn gimmer lamb sales. At the end of July Lazonby and Skipton Branches attended The Royal Welsh Show the first time in a number of years with an excellent mule ewe and her pair of texel cross lambs on the stand creating a lot of interest.

There was an abundance of grass late summer into autumn with lambs presented in good condition.

### **Penrith District Farmers Mart LLP – Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

The sale average was £81.00 for 9,000 lambs. Judges were Mr B. McIntosh Manor Farm and Mr E. Holiday Cleamire Wigton referee was Mr I. Cantrill, Boundry Farm.

Sponsors were Eden Farm Supplies Brough Ltd and PFK Land Agency.

#### **Results**

*First and Champions winning the Eden Farm Supplies Trophy and NEMSA Rosette Messrs Lord West Dowgill*

*Second and Reserve Champions –  
Messrs Louis Waterside House*

*Third – Mr W.H. Raine Ravenwood Cottage*

*Fourth – M. J.H. Little Bank End Mill*

*Fifth – Messrs S. Allan and Son Greenhow*

### **Harrison & Hetherington Ltd Lazonby Mart – Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

Judging the shearlings and then the lambs were father and daughter team Mike and Marie Faulder Sponsors were Brian Johnson Haulage, NewBreed UK and Murray Farmcare.

#### **Results**

*First and winning the Richard Hodgson Cup –  
Messrs R.J. Bell Scarroumanwick*

*Second – J.J. Armstrong Croft House*

*Third – J.J. Armstrong Croft House*

### **Harrison & Hetherington Ltd, Lazonby Mart – Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019**

The sale average was £82.99 for 17,055 lambs. The show held on Tuesday evening was judged by Eddie Bulman Thornborough and Mr J. Vickers Alnwick with Mr D. Buck Quarry Grange referee. Sponsors were Shearwell Data, L A Smith Livestock Scanning, Katy Edgar Outside Catering, A.W. Jenkinson, Carrs Billington, Dodd & Co and I'Ansons.

£89.00 was raised for North West Air Ambulance from the stock judging.

#### **Results**

*First and winning the William Armstrong –  
Messrs W.M. Reed Lands Farm.*

*Second – Messrs G.R. Wharton Keisley Farm*

*Third – Messrs G.R. Wharton Keisley Farm*

*Fourth – Messrs F. & M. Moore & Son  
High Side Farm*

*Fifth – Messrs J. Lee Morley Hill*

*Sixth – Messrs J. Reed The Knarr*

*The late Jonty Stalker Memorial Cup for the best run of 60 or more kindly sponsored by Farmers Guardian 'The Marts the Heart', judged by Andrew Geary was won by Messrs J. Lee Morley Hill.*

A huge thank you to Harrison & Hetherington for providing an excellent supper.

**Harrison & Hetherington Ltd Lazonby Mart –  
Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

The third mule gimmer lamb sale of 7, The presale show was sponsored by Davidson Feeds and D.W. Toppin Ltd and judged by Mr John Ackerley 672 averaged £75.01.

Lastly a huge thank you to Harrison & Hetherington and Penrith District Farmers Mart LLP staff for their continued support and hard work and also many thanks to all the sponsors and judges and referees for their support at all the sales. I would also like to say thank you to all the committee members for all their help and especially our secretary Joe Bowman.

Best wishes to you all for 2020

*Philip Dawson*

**T**he year started with a trip down to Devon to NSA Sheep South West, kindly hosted by Brian and Liz Griffiths who also supplied us with a very good NEMSA ewe with lambs. This was a very good advert for the Mule, with plenty of praise for how the ewe looked and how she was milking her lambs - exactly what the commercial buyers are looking for. Kendal branch also attended Oakehampton show and it was great to catch up with many familiar faces whom where pleased to see we had made the effort to travel and see them.

The gimmer lamb show and sale soon came around with the show on the Friday night once again a huge success and a great event with the auction packed once again. This year the judging was conducted by Bryan Griffiths and Martin Woodward.

They had a great line up of 13 pens of 20 put in front of them, they awarded:

- 1st - A & H Watson, Middleton Hall.**
- 2nd - PE & M Capstick, Whicham Hall**
- 3rd - Inman Family, Strickland Hill Farm**
- 4th - JA & CA Gibson, Longwell**
- 5th - TA & JA Dixon, Yoadpot**
- 6th - JA & J Burrow, Thursgill**

And in the 10's the judges had a tough job with 22 pens put forward.

- 1st - RH & C Ayrton, Ouzlethorn**
- 2nd - PE & M Capstick, Whicham Hall**
- 3rd - TA & JA Dixon, Yoadpot**
- 4th - A & H Watson, Middleton Hall**
- 5th - Messrs Hodgson, High Borran**
- 6th - JA & J Burrow, Thursgill**

The "Stars in your Eyes" show and sale of individual gimmer lambs kindly judged by Mr David Buck.

- 1st - TLB & J Knowles, High Borrowbridge**
- 2nd - RI Dixon, Low Newton**
- 3rd - D & CE Marston, Easgill Head**
- 4th - R & E Ladds, Benson Hall**
- 5th - JS & S Atkinson, Sykes Farm**
- 6th - Messrs Hodgson, High Borran**

A record-breaking year with this year's champion "Stars in your Eyes" from T L B & J Knowles selling for £360.

The main sale came the Saturday with over 7000 lambs forward, selling to an average of £75.60. Receiving the Bruce Willison shield for the best run of lambs was A & H Watson, Middleton Hall judged by Mr M Archer. Congratulations and well done to all prize winners.

Kendal Branch held its annual charity night, raising £1500. A great opportunity to get everyone together after the hectic sales season. These evenings have been really well supported and hopefully they will continue to be so.

Then down the road to the Lancaster sale with 1600 lambs forward averaging £76.30. Thank you must go to M Barker for his expertise with 13 pens of 10 put before him to judge, he placed the pens of 10 in the order of

- 1st - T Ayrton & Son, Yates Farm**
- 2nd - RH & C Ayrton, Ouzlethorn**
- 3rd - AC & K Pye, Dunkenshaw Farm**
- 4th - WI & A Atkinson & Son, Holme House Farm**

And the 20's

- 1st - B & SE Carter, Cragg End**
- 2nd - W & A Cornall, Bank Farm**
- 3rd - AC & K Pye, Dunkenshaw**
- 4th - W & A Cornall, Bank Farm**

Now this just leaves me to thank all the branch committee, judges, sponsors, auction mart staff and Yvonne for all the work they have put in over the past 12 months and finally a thank you to all customers I hope you have a good farming year and look forward to seeing you in the Kendal branch in the autumn.



*Champion pen of 10 from RH & C Aryton*



## LONGTOWN MART



**Wednesday 2nd September**

**Show & Sale of Mule Shearlings & Ewes**

**Tuesday 15th September**

**Principal Show & Sale of Mule Ewe Lambs**

**Second Sale of Mule Shearlings & Ewes**

**Tuesday 29th September**

**Second Sale of Mule Ewe Lambs**

**Sale of Mule Shearlings & Ewes**

**Tuesday 18th August**

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**2019** thankfully saw a much needed and kinder season weather-wise for us all, helping towards producing bigger and better lambs for the market.

Throughout the summer, Skipton Branch Committee members attended NSA North Sheep held locally at Frankland Farms, Rathmell, near Settle. I would again like to thank the Frankland family for supplying us with a Mule ewe with two Texel lambs at foot to exhibit on the stand.

Some members also travelled down to Burwarton show, where again we took another excellent example of the Mule ewe rearing twin lambs kindly provided by Angus Dean, of Threshfield.

It is important to continue to make the effort to attend these shows as it is a great way to promote the breed and get speaking to existing and potential new NEMSA customers.

### **First Sale**

Again at Skipton we had another successful first sale, when 6,929 lambs were sold with a sale average per head coming to £90.75, which was down £0.47p on the year. The top end and stronger tupping lambs had high demand and a sharp trade. Running lambs were a straight trade and in line to where they should be. The show was very well supported with a record number of pens well turned out. Thank you to Mr P Fox and Mrs C Mole for judging the pens of 10 and Mr J Putt and Mr C Harker for judging the pens of 20.

#### ***Pens of 10***

***1st JC Walker & Son, Dunsop Bridge***

***2nd JK Wilson & Son, Blubberhouses***

***3rd CD&RF Kitching, Threshfield***

#### ***Pens of 20***

***1st & 2nd JA&R Caton, Otterburn***

***3rd FA Caton, Weston***

### **Second Sale**

Lambs sold away nicely on the year while still being sensibly priced for all concerned. 6,470 lambs sold with the sale average per head £77.23 up £5.51 on the year. This sale saw a much better trade for running lambs with only 2 pens of lambs under £60 all day. Thank you to Mr J Towler and Mr T Binns for judging the pens of 10 and Mr D Hawley and Mr D Kettringham for judging the pens of 20.

#### ***Pens of 10***

***1st JK Wilson***

***2nd CD&RF Kitching***

***3rd KA& HL Fawcett***

#### ***Pens of 20***

***1st & 3rd CD&RF Kitching***

***2nd FA Caton***

Thanks to all our sponsors Carrs Billington, Armstrong Watson Accountants & Financial Advisors, Barclays Bank and NFU Mutual. As a branch I would also like to thank all at CCM for their continual support. Thank you to all committee members for their hard work throughout the year, especially branch secretary Claire Mason for all the work she puts in behind the scenes. I would also like to thank Shearwell Data for the £250 voucher donation, which was won by JR Smith, of Carleton, this year. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best in the year ahead.

***Frank Kitching***





**W**riting my first report after taking over as Chairman from John Ritson. I'd like to thank John for all the time and work he put into the job over the last three years.

As I write we have just scanned our ewes to the BFL tups and they seem to have scanned heavy in lamb and talking to others the trend seems to be the same, so let's hope for a kind spring. Our autumn sales showed a slight increase in the average prices especially for the runner type of lambs. Talking to a lot of the buyers at the autumn sales they are looking for a thicker bodied lamb with darker faces, maybe we should be focusing more on confirmation rather than face colour.

### Results for 2019

#### *Longtown (17.09.19)*

*Judge: Jimmy Sinclair.*

##### *Ex Northumberland Blackface.*

*First – A. Carruthers and Sons, Peela Hill.*

*Second – R. W. and S.D. Flintoff, Sourhope.*

*Third – Wanwood & Partners, Wanwood Hill.*

##### *Ex Swaledale*

*First – J.P. Lee, Morley Hill.*

*Second – M. Smith, Mount Farm.*

*Third – W.H. and D.A. Gass, Nunsleugh.*

#### *Hopes Auction Co, Wigton (18.09.19)*

*Judges: David Mattinson and Norman Bowe*

*2,580 lambs averaged £74.56*

*First – J. Lee and Sons, Morley Hill.*

*Second – Messrs Pears, Fellside.*

*Third – Messrs Ridley, Woodhall.*



*Martin Allan - Champion Lambs Mitchells Auction Co 2020*

#### *Harrison and Hetherington, Carlisle (19.09.19)*

*Judges: William Hird and David Mattinson*

*5,235 lambs averaged £83.82*

*First – F. & M. Moore & Son, Highside.*

*Second – F. & M. Moore & Son, Highside.*

*Third – Kilnstown Farms, Kilnstown.*

#### *Mitchells Auction Co, Cockermouth (20.09.19)*

*Judges: Mr Norman Story and Mr Allan Collett*

*10,415 lambs averaged £77.60*

*First – Messrs Allan & Son, Greenhow.*

*Second – Messrs Folder, Wescoe.*

*Third – A.G. & K.F. Nicholson, Swinside.*

Our thanks go to the judges, referees, sponsors and all the auction marts and staff for all their hard work and time they put into making the sales a success. A big thankyou to all the customers for supporting our sales and we hope to see you all in the Autumn of 2020. Lastly thanks to our branch secretary Christina Coulthard for keeping things running smoothly.

*Chris Walton, West Cumbria Branch.*



*JP Lee and Sons, Champion lambs Hopes of Wigton*



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### **Annual Sale of 4000 Mule Ewe Lambs Wednesday 16th September 2020**

**Details from:**

**David Bowman - 07721 616786**

**Jimmy Fawcett - 07827 966377**



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**‘NEMSA must encourage younger generation’  
– retiring chairman’s clarion call.**

Encouraging the younger generation is essential for the industry, stressed retiring chairman Kevin Wilson at the 36th annual meeting of the North of England Mule Sheep Association. (Morritt Arms, Greta Bridge, Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>).

The North Yorkshire sheep farmer – he farms with his wife Daphne and son James at Hewness House Farm, Blubberhouses, between Skipton and Harrogate – said that with this in mind NEMSA was attempting to find the correct approach to improve links with agricultural colleges across the UK to work with both students and the breed, and to move forward together.

Mr Wilson said he had thoroughly enjoyed his two-year term in office, representing NEMSA at events and shows both near and far and meeting people old and new to the society.

Regarding 2019 lambing, he commented: “Most of us had a good lambing, with plenty of lambs on the ground and a decent summer, also keeping dry for our annual sales, which started slowly, with buyers cautious, but did improve through the sales season, with average prices up on the previous year.”

The outgoing chairman reported that the breed was now gaining a greater presence in the farming press. “Even Jeremy Clarkson has seen the light, buying Mules at Thame for his farm. We have also been asked to find a shepherd for lambing time, which is to be filmed for a tv programme. This is a great opportunity for us to gain more support and publicity for our commercial breeding sheep which must not be missed,” he said.

He also stressed the importance of social media and urged members to keep posting articles and pictures to further promote the breed.

Mr Wilson noted: “Eventually, Brexit has happened and we have left Europe, but none of us knows what the outcome will be in the future. However, the finished lamb prices at the moment are good, so let’s hope they are maintained.



*Chris Harrison, new Chair*

“We must keep our standards up, keep pushing the North of England Mule, improving the breed and staying at the top. I am sure more opportunities will appear,” he said, thanking all sponsors, past and current officials, district chairmen and committee members for their support over the past two years.

Unanimously elected to succeed Mr Wilson as chairman was vice-chairman Chris Harrison, who farms at Coatlith Hill, Alston. A former chairman of NEMSA’s Lazonby branch, he is a third generation Mule breeder, now joined by the fourth generation in his son Richard. The family currently keeps a 700-strong flock of Swaledale ewes, which are put to bought-in Bluefaced Leicester tups – the dam and sire of the all-purpose North of England Mule.

Outside farming, Mr Harrison played rugby at county level for Cumbria and is now a season ticket holder at Newcastle United FC. He is a former Eden District councillor and currently serves on Alston Parish Council.

“My immediate aim is to follow in the footsteps of my illustrious predecessors and continue their fine work in promoting both the association and the breed at every opportunity in times of continuing uncertainty,” he said.

The vice-chairman's role has been filled by second generation North of England Mule breeder Jonathan Hodgson, who farms at High Borrans, Windermere, and is a former NEMSA Kendal branch chairman. He is a director of North West Auctions and former president of Windermere RUFC.

Geff Taylor, who farms in Great Asby, was re-elected president and Jeff Burrow, of Kendal, as treasurer. All other officer were re-elected en bloc. Guest speaker was farmer and building contractor Mark Smith, founder and managing director of The HACs Group in Ripley, Harrogate.



*With re-elected president Geoff Taylor standing centre, retiring NEMSA president Kevin Wilson, right, congratulates his successor Chris Harrison. Flanking them are new vice-chairman Jonathan Hodgson, right, and re-elected treasurer Jeff Burrow.*

**The Scottish-based Pickard arable, vegetable, cattle and sheep farming family – and dyed-in-the-wool users of the North of England Mule – embarked on the journey south of the border to source their annual consignment of Mule gimmer lambs this autumn.**

Dan Pickard and his wife, Caroline, again travelled down to CCM Skıpton for its opening September Mule ewe lamb show and sale staged on behalf of NEMSA members.

For Dan in particular, it's a trip down memory lane and an opportunity to meet again and buy lambs from some old friends, among them his mentors, the Caton family from Weston. It was with them that Dan first cut his teeth in farming as a fresh-faced 13-year-old.

It was also where he first became acquainted with the North of England Mule – washing their faces, dipping, sorting and helping to prepare them for sale.

The Pickard family home is now in Fife – and has been since 1992 when Dan's parents, Wharfedale cattle and sheep farmers, Duncan and Barbara Pickard, upped sticks from Denton, Ilkley, and moved lock, stock and barrel to Straiton Farm in Balmullo.

The couple first met while undertaking the same PhD degree research in Animal Physiology at Nottingham University. Both qualified as doctors and, as well as their farming background, have led full and active lives.

Among many outside interests, Duncan is a former university lecturer and published author, while Barbara is renowned for her extensive garden at Straiton, a member of the Scottish Garden Scheme, which welcomes paying visitors at certain times of the year in aid of charity.

She also lectured and spoke in the 1980s in defence of saturated fat. The 'less saturated fat is good for you' lobby has no place in Barbara's book! In fact, it's a philosophy shared by the Pickard family in general.





The family continues to trade in partnership as D.W. & B.M. Pickard, and while Dan and his own family are now running the lion's share of the operation, both mum and dad – who have four children and 12 grandchildren – continue to play a hands-on role, though Duncan, now 75 and still looking after the farm sheep records, admits he is taking things a lot easier these days.

Not so dairy farmer's daughter Barbara. She continues to mastermind the cattle operation, which is now centred around a thriving Aberdeen-Angus-x-Friesian suckler herd, put to both Angus and Stabiliser sires. This year, 152 cattle were successfully calved. The beef all goes to ABP in Perth.

With an average of 26 inches of rain per year, among the lowest in Scotland, the mostly grade 3 land is suitable for mixed farming. The farm, like many others in the area, grows wheat (for the Scottish whisky industry), spring barley (for Scottish lager brewing), spring oats (for Scotch porridge), along with carrots and swede, which are processed locally for British supermarkets – as well as beef and sheep.

Dan, 46, was just 20 when the family moved to Scotland, where he was to meet his future wife Caroline, who also comes from a farming background and helps in the office and on the farm, particularly at lambing time. Further support at this time comes from the couple's three children – 14-year-old Jen, Bruce, 12, and Neil, eight.

Straiton also employs two full-time farm workers – Ron and Ross – who have both been with the Pickards for a decade.

Straiton Farm stands in the middle of a triangle between Cupar, St Andrews – the world-famous Old Course is no more than a few decent drives away – and Dundee. It is sandwiched between the Firth of Forth and the Tay Estuary some seven miles distant from the Scottish coast, 30 feet above sea level at its lowest point, 370 feet at the highest.

When the family first arrived at Straiton it came with some 600 acres. With further land both bought and rented it has now virtually doubled in size to 1,100 acres.



*Dan and Caroline Pickard with their three children and a group of their North of England Mule shearling ewes.*

The farm also comprises mixed deciduous and conifer woodland, covering about 10% of total area, plus its own Cruivie Castle ruin – it dates back to 1400

In their first year at Straiton and for that one year only as they proved unsuitable for the family's needs, the couple tried Scottish Blackface sheep. They then started buying English Mules. In the mid-1990s, they were annually buying in over 600 gimmer lambs from both Hawes and Skipton to sell with lambs at foot the following year.

In 2001 they were unable to buy sheep from England and had to buy Scotch Mules. These proved to be inferior to the North of England Mules, which have been the breed of choice ever since. After 2002, when more grazing land became available to rent, they were able to develop a permanent flock. Since then they have sourced gimmer lambs only from Skipton.

Today, there is a flock of about 1,600 ewes and lambs and Dan and Caroline again headed back to Skipton last year to supplement their holding with around 120 more gimmer lambs.

Dan explained: "Most of the time we buy from the same vendors because we know what quality they breed and we know what quality we want. All the Skipton-sourced gimmer lambs go to our bought-in pure-bred Texel, Texel Beltex and Suffolk Beltex tups.

"In 2018, we sold over 1,100 prime lambs, taking around 100 to the live market, the remainder going to Scotbeef in Bridge of Allan. The majority of these go to Marks & Spencer. We are looking for a carcass weight of 20kg to 21kg, which is ideal for Scotbeef – in fact, they demand it. They do not pay for any weight over 21kg. We finish all our lambs and don't sell any as stores. We keep all our ewes for as long as they can do the right job, with six crops of lambs not uncommon."

Spring sowing and calving begins in March, so they plan to lamb from April 1 when there is grass about. Dan explained: "We start lambing the ewes first, with the previous year's bought-in gimmer lambs due to start lambing from April 20<sup>th</sup>.

It may seem a tight timescale, but in a multi-purpose operation like ours with timing critical to other seasonally-led enterprises we need it to be – and we can rely on the North of England Mule to deliver on time.

"We supplement the sheep's grass-fed diet with greening, which gives them a boost prior to lambing. We also use our own home-grown oats and barley and a small amount of bought-in feed around lambing time."

Of the North of England Mule, Dan commented: "They have always served us well – they do exactly what it says on the tin. They are easy to manage and work with. They lamb well, have plenty of them and are great mothers. Our scanning results have been consistently good, almost 200% last year and 210% the year before – 200% is perfect for our needs.

"They also look after themselves well, which is extremely important. I can't remember the last time we had a caesarean or took a sheep to the vet. In a busy Spring when we are trying to plant we need sheep that are easy to manage and easy to keep.

"The positive characteristics of the Mule have not been bettered by any fancier continental breeds. The mothering ability of the English Mule is superior, although in my mind there is no such thing as an easycare sheep.



*Dan and Caroline Pickard with some of their annual consignment purchased at CCM Skipton's 1st sale.*



There is only care or no care. That is why the North of England Mule works so well for us. They are the ideal sheep for our kind of operation.”

Animal care is fundamental at Straiton with the whole family involved in the springtime. Caroline and the kids are very conscientious at lambing time. Twins are lambed outside and triplets and singles are lambed inside. With 22 lamb adopter spaces, as many surplus lambs as possible are mothered on. Triplet ewes are turned out with twins and twin hoggies are turned out with singles. Surplus lambs are then reared on the Milkmaid 2000. After weaning these vulnerable pet lambs go onto clean fresh grass and creep feed.

Looking to the future, Dan and a group of about 20 local farmers, who are under the age of 50 and who also keep livestock, have established an informal unsponsored networking group Future Farming. They meet four times a year to learn from each other's experiences with the aim of farming smarter rather than farming bigger. Dan has no hesitation in promoting the many and varied benefits of the all-purpose North of England Mule to fellow members of the group!

*Words and pics: Robin Moule, NEMSA Press Officer*



*Family Pickard – from left at rear are Dan and Caroline Pickard, their daughter Jen and Barbara and Duncan Pickard. Front are sons Bruce and Neil.*

**A**s I write this I have finished my three year term as Hawes Branch Chairman. I have really enjoyed my time and have met and made life long friends with many people in our industry. It has left me feeling very positive for the future of the breed.

2019 has, as usual, had its ups and downs but did however start with a fantastic spring making lambing a pleasure and resulting in plenty of strong healthy lambs. Summer was growey and a lot of good forage was made with sheep going into winter in excellent condition.

I have attended and judged at many shows this summer and I must congratulate the members for the excellent quality of the stock on show; it improves year on year. The pride that is shown when exhibiting the mule gimmers is tremendous and I am confident that the breed is in good hands for the future.

Huge congratulations and thanks to all exhibitors and breeders for their efforts to show and promote the breed.

Now to the sales starting with  
*Hawes Shearlings on 20<sup>th</sup> August*

*First – J.R. & L.A. Capstick*

*Second – S. Yates*

*Third – J.R. & L.A. Capstick*

Average £139 up £2.

*Bentham Shearlings*

*First – Brian Lawson*

*Second – Chris Hewitt*

*Third – Chris Hewitt*

*Fourth – D.W. & D.M. Elliott*

*Fifth – Fox Farms*

Average £127.15 up 40p.

*Leyburn Shearlings*

*First – Raymond & Robert Johnson*

*Second – Lowesby Farms*

*Third – Hannah Brown*

*Fourth – Tom Anderson*

Average £140 up £19.

*Bentham Gimmer Lambs*

*First – W.A. & A. Booth*

*Second – S. & T. Fawcett*

*Third – W. & G.J. Huck*

*Fourth – J. Garth & Sons*

*Fifth – J. Huddleston*

Average NEMSA lambs £77.27 up 48p

Non NEMSA £64.81.

*Hawes Gimmer Lambs on*

*Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September*

*First and Best in Hawes Branch Cup –*

*W. & D. Lawson*

*Second – S.Allan & Sons*

*Third – G. & H.R. Shields*

*Fourth – J.H. Pedley*

*Fifth – C. & R. Metcalfe*

*Sixth – N.C. Marston*



*1st & Best in Hawes Branch Cup - W. & D. Lawson*

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September**

- First – Messrs Lord**  
**Second – W.A. & A. Booth**  
**Third – J.A. & R. Caton**  
**Fourth – S. & T. Fawcett**  
**Fifth – G.P. Taylor & Son**  
**Sixth – R. & P.E. Hargreaves**



1st - Messrs Lord

**Hawes Branch NEMSA Trophy for best run of lambs was won by Robert Wallis & Sons for the third year in a row.**

I felt the backend sales were disappointing considering how favourable the conditions had been over the summer but undoubtedly the uncertainty in the industry had a negative effect. Hopefully this will change in the year to come. We must focus on keeping the quality of the mule at the highest standard.

As a branch we would like to thank the auction companies for marketing the lambs on our behalf. Finally, I want to thank all the committee members for their support during the past three years and to Carol Moffat the Branch Secretary for all her hard work. Good luck to Tom Willoughby who is taking over the reins from me. I hope he gets as much out of the job as I have!

*Will Sedgley*

**Best in Hawes Branch Trophy – W.C. Porter & Son**

Total forward 23,459. Average £80.38 up £1.32

**Leyburn Gimmer Lambs**

- First – Bainbridge Bros.**  
**Second – R. Wallis & Sons**  
**Third – David & Tim Brown**  
**Fifth – R. Tiplady & Sons**

Average £82.30 down £1.




**Major Seasonal Sale of**

**MULE GIMMER LAMBS**

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020**



10,000

Mule Gimmer lambs off noted flocks from Alston Moor, The North Pennines and the Lakeland Fells.

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**B**rexit was mentioned in my last report but a year on we are still no closer to a decision. However life goes on as the seasons don't stop.

As always the weather is unpredictable and spring came and went without too much of a hitch. Then straight into the show season with our branch alongside Lazonby attending the Royal Cornwall Show, it was my first attendance this year and I must admit it was a very positive trip. With many regular customers whom travel north to the sales coming into the tent for the crack. It's very important we go south to keep the mule at the top of their list for replacement stock.

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> (lucky for some) was the date set for our NEMSA gimmer lamb sale at Kirkby Stephen. 12,410 lambs on offer. Topping the sale at £380 were the overall champion pen of 10 gimmer lambs and winner of the C. Jackson Trophy, from Messrs Hutchinson, Redgate. The overall auction average was £82.28.

(-£3.16) for 1,500 more lambs sold than the previous year.

### Show and Sales results 2019

Many thanks to the judges S. Deeming, G. Jackson, J. Brough (referee) and pens of 20 judges R. Graves and D. Clarke.

#### Results Pen of 10 Open

- First – Messrs Hutchinson*
- Second – Messrs Brown*
- Third – Messrs Hayton*
- Fourth – Messrs Dawson*
- Fifth – Messrs Dent*

#### Vendors of 200 or less

- First – Messrs Richardson*
- Second – Messrs Curr*
- Third – Messrs Cannon*
- Fourth – Messrs Wharton*
- Fifth – Messrs Alderson*

#### Pens of 20

*First – Messrs Taylor*

*Second – Messrs Hayton*

*Third – Messrs Jenkinson*

Thanks to our sponsors for their support. H&H staff as usual made the sale run smoothly with Mark and James at the helm. Special thanks to our secretary Christine who keeps me in check. Shearwell once again supported NEMSA with this years £250 branch voucher being won by Messrs Hodgson, Park House.

Although the average was down on the year there are still plenty of people committed to the mule as their breed of choice. We need to keep on breeding quality mule gimmers up here in the north that go on and do a great job keeping the Mule the front runner for breeding consistent fat lambs around the country.

*Mark Jenkinson.*



Champion lambs Kirkby Stephen - Messrs Hutchinson

**I** have just completed my second year as Chairman of Teesdale Branch and the past year has been better than the first year with winter and lambing time one of the best I can remember and the summer was not as dry with more grass about and lambs in much better condition.

#### Sales:

We started the sales with Middleton in Teesdale on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September. The prize show for a pen of 10 lambs were as follows:

- First – C. & R. Metcalf, Park House*  
*Second – C. Hodgson, Hill House West*  
*Third – M.W. & E. Dent, Wythes Hill*  
*Fourth – J.E & A.J. Mitchell, Parrick House*

The sale average for 2700 lambs was £70, down £2.90 on the year.

The following day Barnard Castle Auction Mart had their sale with:

- First – J. & S.E. Bainbridge & Sons, Dousgill*  
*Second – C. & R. Metcalf, Park House*  
*Third – M.W. & E. Dent, Wythes Hill*  
*Fourth – J.E. & E. Dobson & Son, White Kirkley*

The average for the sale was £95.15 for 4,300 lambs, which was up £4.88 on the previous year. I would like to thank all the sponsors for both sales and both Barnard Castle Auction Mart and Harrison and Hetherington at Middleton in Teesdale Auction Mart for all their hard work bringing the sales together. Finally, to thank all customers who have purchased lambs from our sales this year.

*Philip Dixon*



*C. & R. Metcalf Middleton Lambs*



*J. & S.E. Bainbridge Mule Gimmer Lambs*



**A**dstone Lodge, set in sleepy rural backwaters near Northampton, may seem a long way from the hustle and bustle of the Mule gimmer lamb sales up in the North of England, but the two places are well connected - and have been for nearly half a century.

Sid Smith first ventured “Up North” back in 1972, buying initially Mules and Mashams, though soon just sticking to the North of England Mule, which have been at the centre of their farm business ever since. In 1974, they were heading back up the road again and brought back another 200 gimmer lambs to add to the flock.

The family came to Adstone Lodge in 1959 and when, in the late 60s, they turned from arable to sheep, they kept hearing about the Mules from up north doing a good job and decided to investigate further. The first sheep cost around £7-8/head. They say they have been addicted ever since... although the costs have gone up a bit since then!

Sid and his wife, Jane, now run the business with their grandson, Dan Branson, running around 500 acres or so, some owned and some taken. They run 1,100 sheep altogether, lambing around 900, and get between 170 – 180% turnout lambing, including the gimmer lambs.

They see the North of England Mule ewe as “the flagship of the fleet,” as it combines everything they want in a sheep, namely excellent mothering, plenty of milk, plenty of lambs and hard wearing to boot.

Sid has seen the fashion change a lot since they first went north, but believes the Mule is a far superior sheep today than it was back then, with the sheep being more uniform and having better skins. “It’s easier to buy good sheep now than it used to be, as more people than ever are aiming for that market,” he notes, adding: “The North of England Mule continues to fit well into our system, meeting the ever-changing market demands really well.”

They haven’t just bought sheep for themselves. One year, Sid bought a further 6,000 gimmer lambs for his neighbours, mainly transported south by good friend Ken Metcalfe, from Apersett, near Hawes, who has brought tens of thousands of sheep into the Adstone Lodge yard over the years.

They say one thing they enjoy about the sales is not just the sheep, but meeting fellow farmers and they have built up great friendships with many breeders over the years, ranging from the auctioneers such as the late Gordon Pratt, from Hawes, to breeders such as John Thorpe.



*Dan Branson with some of the Adstone Lodge North of England Mules.*

Sid travelled north every autumn, taking in sales from centres such as Hawes, Bentham, Kirkby Stephen, Barnard Castle and Leyburn, where, on his first visit there, he bought over 600 lambs, around a third of the sale, and no one from the mart raised an eyebrow or asked who he was! The North of England Mule gimmer lamb sales form the basis of Sid and Jane's 'holidays,' with a full week of sales and catching up with old friends.

Traditionally, they always used to use the Suffolk across everything, but they now put the Beltex across the gimmer lambs, having also tried the Charollais too. "The gimmer lambs are still growing in that first year and so using a tup like the Beltex, which produces smaller lambs at birth, helps reduce stress and work with them," comments Sid.

The ewes are still run with the Suffolk, which produce big, quick fleshing lambs, as well as the Texel. Gimmers from these are retained and they sell 150 – 200 a year at the Thame highlight. They keep a young flock, with the oldest sheep six toothers. Sid says by following this system their draft ewes retain their value and he also feels this helps keep health problems to a minimum, as opposed to only selling when fully cast.

The lambing, which takes place in March, involves gathering a good team around, with Dan's wife, Vicki, a big help, as well as Sian Stokes, who is in her second year at RVC, and will be coming back for her third year's lambing next year. This year also saw a debut appearance for Rebecca Nelson, from Hawes, joining stalwarts Annie Bonner and Ollie King in the lambing sheds.

Dan has judged classes at the pre-sale shows at several of the autumn NEMSA sales and says he finds the whole experience a real privilege to be able to be in that position.

They fully appreciate the work that goes into presenting and breeding the stock, and also the fact that year upon year North of England Mule breeders stick to the founding principles of the breed as the ultimate breeding sheep within the national flock, where the majority of fat lambs in England can trace their lineage back to the hills of Northern England.

**Words and pics:** Wayne Hutchinson  
[www.farmimages.co.uk](http://www.farmimages.co.uk)



*Sam Smith and grandson Dan Branson at Adstone Lodge with some of the family's North of England Mule flock.*



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## **H**aig Murray's RHS debut impact with Valais Blacknose/North of England Mule-crosses.

Haig Murray made a colourful impact on the show lines on his 2019 Royal Highland Show debut in the North of England Mule classes with his Mule gimmer shearlings with Valais-sired lambs at foot. They were certainly attracting attention down all the sheep lines and despite not picking up any tickets, Haig was pleased with the impact he made.

Haig has worked for Dunbia for 12 years and is now the procurement manager for Scotland. Prior to that he was an auctioneer for United Auctions in Perth, before moving south to Longtown auction, so it's fair to say he has certainly had plenty of experience with sheep!

He also farms in his own right near Carlisle, with help from his father, family and friends, lambing 150 ewes this year, a mixture of breeds, and fattens several hundred lambs too.

The jewel in the flock's crown is the Valais Blacknose, which are his pride and joy, and, he says, a great way to escape the daily challenge of the lamb industry. He has had them for two years or so now and as a bit of an experiment crossed some Jacob ewes to the Valais and was amazed at the growth rate of these lambs – and thought it was worth looking into further.

He crossed some North of England Mules in 2018, after Peter Lee, one of his best suppliers for well over a decade, won the Wigton Mule sale

championship and Haig felt it was a chance to say a thank you for all the help and support he has given him over the years.

After getting the sheep home and adding another pen to the load too, he had to decide what to tup them with. Initially, he settled on the Cheviot for ease of lambing, but at the back of his mind was a niggling thought, after seeing the Jacob X lamb - "what about the Valais?"

So, come lambing time, he had ten North of England Mule hogs with 16 Valais lambs at foot. The last two lambed in mid-May, and they were the pair he had up at the Highland. They might not be the most conventional lambs to look at, but at the end of the day, as Haig well knows, it's not what they look like, it's what the hang up like. The industry needs fast growing, long lean lambs with a good loin, and these lambs are matching the spec needed to a tee.

From what began as a pure experiment two years ago, it's looking like a winner to Haig and he intends to cross a lot more with the Valais this autumn. Trust the North of England Mule to take the most modern of fashions in its stride... it's the perfect sheep for any tup! And as Haig says about his lambs: "Laugh if you like, but it works for me. Just sometimes it's good to be different" And they certainly are!

***Words and pics:** Wayne Hutchinson, Farm Images*



*Haig Murray with one of his Valais Blacknose tups.*



*North of England Mules with their Valais lambs.*



**N**SA North Sheep 2019 hosts and dyed-in-the-wool sheep aficionados, the Frankland family, were over the moon with the success of event at their New Hall Farm in Rathmell, North Craven.

The Franklands run 1,200 ewes, which are in the capable hands of sheep manager Jon Frankland, the fifth generation of the family to farm at New Hall, which was originally taken over by his great, great grandfather way back in 1880.

North of England Mule ewes figure prominently in the flock, with numbers standing around 350 head. They are bought in as shearlings at both Skipton and Bentham Auction Marts, with the family always keen to source the top end, prize-winning pens among them. They purchased last year's Bentham champions.

Shearlings are then put to the Franklands' Texel tups, with Texel-x-North of England Mules now forming the majority of the flock. Some are sold as gimmer lambs, though most are retained as replacements.

These, in turn, go to the Beltex tup to produce prime lambs, which are again sold at both Bentham and Skipton, where the family has also shown and picked up prime lamb championships.

They say around 43kg is the ideal selling weight for their fat lambs, which continue to be in ready demand by both leading retail and wholesale butcher buyers.

The Franklands, who also run a few Cheviot Mules, with numbers increasing, are big fans of the all-purpose North of England Mule, which were first introduced in the early 1990s when Jon's father, Richard, moved away from horned sheep to start breeding commercial Texel-x-Mules.

Their 2019 crop of Mules scanned at around 200% in-lamb and at times in the past have even scanned at 220%. They regularly produce up to 700 Texel-x-Mule lambs, circa 50% of them gimmers. Wether lambs are again sold through Skipton and Bentham.

"The North of England Mule has served us well. They are very easy to farm, require very little work and are easy lambing, with big lambing percentages," said Jon, who also acts as an agent for major NSA North Sheep sponsor, Agri-Lloyd.

*Words and pic: Robin Moule, NEMSA Press Officer*



*Jon Frankland tends New Hall Farm's North of England Mule flock ahead of NSA North Sheep 2019.*

## ROYAL HIGHLAND

Neil Marston, Highberries BFL flock, Millstone Moor, was crowned champion for the second year running in the NEMSA show classes at the Royal Highland Show.

Neil, who farms in partnership with his parents, Raymond and Francis Marston, retained the title with his first prize ewe lamb, which, like his 2018 RHS ewe lamb victor, was by the home-bred BFL ram, G1 Highberries Highlander, so named after also becoming male champion as a ram lamb at the RHS.

Long-standing NEMSA member and loyal supporter Neil, who was securing a memorable hat-trick of RHS Mule titles – he also won it in 2012 – first started with North of England Mules in the 1990s, establishing his BFL pedigree flock in the late 90s and moving to Millstone Moor in 2008, when he really started concentrating on breeding Mules. He currently runs 1,700 ewes, predominantly Swaledale, and 40 Leicesters.

Neil's latest title winner at the RHS, one of Scotland's most iconic events, retained the J. Lee & Son Perpetual Challenge Cup, presented by another NEMSA stalwart, Peter Lee, Morley Hill, who has masterminded the Association's increasingly successful presence at the RHS over the past seven years.

He has served on NEMSA's Lazonby branch Council and over the past 30 years has travelled the

length and breadth of the country promoting the North of England Mule. He is a true champion of the breed. In 2014, Peter also received the T.I. Allinson Memorial Award for lifetime achievement presented by the NSA Northern Region.

Last year's RHS proved the best to date, attracting a record 69 entries, including seven new faces, in the four show classes.



*Neil Marston (centre) and from left NEMSA chairman Kevin Wilson, trophy presenter Peter Lee and judge Dick Ellis.*



*Show judge Dick Ellis inspects the North of England Mules at the RHS.*



*Judging pic also attached*

Standing reserve champion with a ewe and pair of lambs at foot was Phillip Elliott, Mungrisdale, who had a great show, also finishing the first and third in the geld Mule hogg show class, and runner-up in the Mule hogg with single lamb class.

So too did up and coming show woman Julie Brough, Langrigg. She won the Mule hogg with lamb show class and also finished runner-up in both the geld Mule hogg and shearling/ewe with pair of lambs show classes.

Show judge was another well-known breeder and great friend of NEMSA, Dick Ellis, Addingham Moorside.

***Pictures:** Wayne Hutchinson, Farm Images*

## GREAT YORKSHIRE

Our chairman Kevin Wilson and son, James, Blubberhouses, were crowned NEMSA champions at the 2019 Great Yorkshire Show with their first prize single gimmer lamb.



*Kevin Wilson female commercial champion*



*Dave Lawson is pictured receiving the NEMSA perpetual trophy for his champion lambs.*

The product of their home-bred Bluefaced Leicester tup, Hewness L1, himself a son of Harland F1 Bighead, then became champion commercial female – a great honour for both breed and Association.

Reserve champion with the first prize geld shearling was Philip Elliot, Penrith, while the pair of suckled shearlings show class fell to Mike and Betty Allen, Whitby. Show judge was NEMSA treasurer Jeff Burrow.

Thanks to all competitors for another superb show of North of England Mules and to all who

*Left: Kevin Wilson receives the A&K.M Barnes Trophy from Great Yorkshire Show judge and NEMSA treasurer Jeff Burrow.*

## AGRI EXPO

One of the most popular classes at Agri Expo was the pairs of North of England Mule gimmer lambs, with 20 pairs out. Winning was James Robinson with lambs bought off Dave Lawson. Massive congratulations to James, a first time exhibitor at Expo.

## SKIPTON BRANCH PROGENY SHOW

NEMSA Skipton branch staged a highly successful progeny show of BFL rams and Mule progeny, kindly hosted by CCM Skipton.

It attracted over 40 entries split into five show classes. There was yet another championship success for the Wilsons with their home-bred 2018 BFL ram, Hewness L1, with its three Mule gimmer lambs.



*NEMSA chairman Kevin Wilson, right, with the Skipton branch progeny show champion quartet.*



*Francis Caton, second from right, with the family's Skipton branch progeny show reserve champion quartet.*

Reserve champion was the winner of the two shear or over BFL ram show class owned and bred by Francis Caton and son, James, Weston. Their J10 Weston is a son of the Smearsett "Ted" tup.

Judges for the day were NEMSA president, Geoff Taylor, and David Watson, Kirkby Lonsdale.

A stock judging competition for Mule ewes and shearlings, BFL and Swaledale gimmer shearlings was also held, with first prize in the men's section going to Alan Watson, Kirkby Lonsdale, with Skipton's Milly Eaton winning the women's class.



*Show judge was Ross Sizmur, Okehampton, who is pictured right with David Morris.*

### THAME SUMMER SHEEP FAIR

David Morris, who farms with his parents, Peter and Gwyneth, in Brill, produced the best run of 60 or more North of England Mule Theaves at the annual Shearwell Thame Summer Sheep Fair.

They went on to sell for top price of £170, with their four-pen run averaging £151.68.

The Morris family have been travelling 'up north' since the 1980s to source North of England Mule gimmer lambs from both Kirkby Stephen and Bentham marts, around 700 annually and largely from the same breeders. They are then sold on as shearlings the following year.

At the traditional seasonal Thame pipeopener, the 6,500 North of England Mule Theaves and Double Theaves, all bought at NEMSA's autumn gimmer lamb sales the previous year, sold to an overall average of £122.00, £5 up on the year. Another highlight was Jeremy Clarkson being filmed buying Mules at Thame, more great exposure for our breed.

Detailed reports on NEMSA's 2019 main sales start on page 8.



### NSA NORTH SHEEP 2019 & ROYAL WELSH

We had a really great time and did a great deal to promote both breed and body at two very high profile events.

First up was NSA North Sheep 2019, hosted by the Frankland family at their New Hall Farm, Rathmell, followed by our first-ever appearance at

the Royal Welsh Show in Llanellwedd.

Lots of people visited the NEMSA stand at both showcases - breeders, shepherds and friends both old and new. All agreed they were exercises well worth repeating.



*North Sheep*



*Royal Welsh*



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### 2020 Sales

Mule Gimmer Shearlings – Friday's 4th & 25th September

Mule Gimmer (Ewe) Lambs – Friday's 18th September & 2nd October

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**N**estled in the beautiful, rolling Shropshire Hills AONB, right on the Welsh borders, lies a major family farming operation. Well hidden and low key, it's not really visible from the roads and it's not until you get talking to Phil, the elder brother behind this business, that you begin to get an idea of its scale.

The Wood family moved to Kinnerton Farm some 57 years ago when they took on 144 acres. This has increased over the years and they now run around 2,700 acres, shared between taken land and what they own.

They lamb around 4,200 ewes, finish some 10,000 lambs and if that wasn't enough they run a beef herd of 450 breeding cattle, some run pure Limousin, the rest a combination of Limousin and British Blue X.

The farm is run in partnership by Phil, who lives at Kinnerton Hall, his brother Michael, who lives at nearby Brookshill Farm, and their mother. Phil's wife, Sue, sons Martin and Simon, and Michael's son, Tom, all work in the business too. It really is a full on family business, with everyone helping out in all jobs at all times.

The home farm lies at around 1,000 feet and runs up to 1,700 foot at its highest, and they take land to feed the fattening lambs on 25 – 30 miles away.

Lambing is undertaken outside at the end of March and for this they need to use ewes that they can trust and rely on to do the job – and this is where the North of England Mule comes into its own.

They used to buy Welsh Mules as they were they handiest to source, being so near to the Welsh border, but found that they didn't match up to the North of England counterparts. Once they had tried the North of England Mule there was no going back for them, as they find them hardier and last better.

"We can catch a good amount of snow where we are and need our ewes to be able to live and thrive outside in all conditions, which the North of England Mule excels at," claims Phil, "as well as being great mothers to the lambs, milking well and taking their lambs from the off. The less we have to do the better and the North of England Mule fits that bill perfectly," he adds.

When they bring in sheep they look for sheep with good skins, good frame and good on their feet, selecting the best sheep they can.

They return regularly to the same flocks year after year, partly for flock health reasons and also consistency of stock, buying around 350 – 380 shearlings a year out of Carlisle and Lazonby, although they have bought up to 900 yearlings some years!



They like to buy their shearlings from “Up North” as they find they are a better type of sheep to suit their farm than those which come down south as gimmer hoggs, having that extra year in which to grow and fill out in a tougher environment, which is needed at Kinnerton.

They run the Mules with Beltex and Beltex X tups to produce good fat lambs that have shape and also grow well. They run some of the Mules with the Suffolk tup and retain the best females from this cross for breeding from, as they still feel that this cross is as good as you can get, producing a quick growing, strong, easy fleshing lamb ideal for the finishing market, and that the females when crossed with the Texel again produce that great fat lamb. Breeding their own replacements keeps down the cost of bringing more females into the farm, and the Suffolk X females retain that milkiness and mothering from the Mule ewe to help keep the management to a minimum.

Fat lambs are sold through Shrewsbury, Welshpool and Bishops Castle markets. They find that the lambs out of the North of England Mules sell well as they have that bit of extra length and weight, as well as tight skins, ideal for hitting spec for which the markets demand.

The farm was in an ESA for 20 years and the sheep ground receives no artificial fertiliser, which the North of England Mule thrives on this type of ground, they find, as they have that extra hardiness built into their genetics and are able to convert the grass better, only being one generation removed from the Swaledale ewes, which graze some of the harshest grazing in the country in the northern hills. Not all sheep would suit this hard ground as well, as Kinnerton Hall isn't an easy farm at all, and it is fitting that the North of England Mule should thrive here as the land certainly mirrors where they originate from.

*Words & Pictures: Wayne Hutchinson, Farm Images*



*Phil Wood is pictured at Kinnerton Farm.*



**Paul Coates is taking his traditionally-bred commercial ewe flock to the next level of production without increasing labour using new technology and principally home-grown feed.**

Paul and his father Peter run a mixed enterprise at Barrock End, Armathwaite, where pedigree Beef Shorthorns, predominantly North of England Mules and arable cropping complement each other to aid self-sufficiency.

The 420-acre Barrock End runs up to 720 feet above sea level on the top of Barrock Fell. They rent a further 400 acres in a ring fence at Norde Vue, Armathwaite.

The ground is used for grazing and for 400 acres of arable crops – wheat, barley, OSR, spring barley and some fodder crops with a grassland re-seed in the rotation every four or five years.

They aim to be as self-sufficient as possible with inputs and with labour and they are only helped with one self employed man for lambing and the arable work.

Prior to 2015 they finished crossbred cattle selling them deadweight to Woodhead Bros. The long established relationship with Woodheads, a subsidiary of the Morrison's supermarket group, then presented the opportunity for them to take on a pedigree Beef Shorthorn herd.

The Barwood herd now runs to 250 head – 100 breeding females plus followers. Pedigree breeding bulls are sold each year and surplus heifers will be available for the first time this year.

Sheep numbers have gradually increased from a few hundred to 1,000 lambed this year, rising to 1,200 this autumn. They are 80% North of England Mules with Cheviot and Scotch Mules.

"We can manage that number ourselves employing one full time man who looks after the sheep and does other general farm work as well as self employed help at harvest time. We're trying to run a mixed farm with different enterprises which complement each other and without having all our eggs in one basket," said Paul.

"The sheep and cattle work well with our management on the 420 acres of owned and rented grazing ground. We use as much home grown feed as possible for the sheep and cattle fed through a TMR," he added.

The arable cropping, which includes 180 acres of the rented land, grows oil seed rape and winter wheat which are sold, winter and spring barley and fodder beet – of which 60% and 50% respectively are also sold.

"We have run predominantly North of England Mules in the flock since we started, running the other crosses as a comparison. We prefer the Mules for profitability, efficiency and scale," said Paul. "I don't think there's much extra work running 500 sheep compared with 100. They are good mothers and they produce quantities of lambs. They are doing what they say on the packet!"

"The North of England Mule suits the system. They are easy to keep and they produce a lot of good quality, fast-growing lambs for the meat market, however, any with triplets we foster one onto a ewe with a single lamb."

The replacement Mules are bought through the ring at Penrith, Lazonby and Carlisle with up to 50% purchased as gimmer lambs and the remainder shearlings while flock numbers are being in-created. Once flock numbers are established the aim is to buy 200 with 120 gimmer shearlings and the remainder lambs.

The Coates select 'the better end of the middle' pens on conformation and whether they have been vaccinated for enzootic abortion, toxoplasmosis as well as having had Heptavac P and Footvax vaccinations. Their preventative approach is aimed at reducing the use of antibiotics and time as well as ensuring the thriftiness of the flock.

Paul says they are more than happy with a lambing percentage of 120 from the gimmer lambs. The whole flock averages up to 195% with little mortality and 185% lambs sold.

The majority of the ewes are run with the Suffolk although Innovis rams Aberblack and Abermax are also used.

The first batch of the older ewes lamb inside from mid-February after housing depending on the weather for ten days. The next batch of up to 400 ewes starts lambing in the first week of March with the gimmer lambs starting at the beginning of April. A month prior to housing the ewes are either fed hay or they are grazed on stubble turnips. At housing they are fed a TMR according to age and condition with the triplet carrying ewes fed more pro-teïn and those with single lambs fed only haylage.

The daily TMR comprises 1.6kg clamp silage made off one cut a year, 0.5kg fodder beet, 430g alka grain, 150g molasses, 430g ewe meal (soya and minerals). The alka grain is alkalisied home-grown barley.

The ewes and lambs are turned out after 24 hours after the lambs have had enough colostrum. The ewes are fed ewe rolls for two or three weeks although this amount is being gradually reduced from 35 tonne to 15 tonne this year as the ewes continue to be fed home-grown alkagrain. Last year 200 tonnes was alkalisied. The lambs also have access to this and they are to creep fed.

The first lambs are sold at 42kg deadweight off their mothers in mid-June in batches of 80 – 120 lambs with 650 lambs being sold by the beginning of August this year.

The majority of lambs kill out at around 50% and classify at R3L. Deadweight prices started this year at £4.80/kg and by the beginning of August were at £3.80. Last year the lambs averaged £87 – £89 a head however, Paul expects the overall average this year to be around £80.

The aim is to finish all lambs off the farm. Last October there were 240 mostly gimmer lambs remaining which were finished on stubble turnips by Christmas and cleared before lambing starts.

All lambs are sold as Paul says it would take more land and increase the fertiliser bill to breed re-placements - and the current flock suits the farm and the system.

Depending on the year, cast ewe values when sold at an average of five years old can run at just £25 – £35 less than the price of replacement shearlings. Flock management has become more automated since last year when with the aid of a grant the Coates invested in a Shearwell stock recorder package which comprises electronic ear tag reading equipment and Te Pari Racewell HD3 handler which can weigh and draft automatically by weight or EID with data downloadable through a smart phone app.

Ewes and new-born lambs are tagged and lambs are weighed every month from six to eight weeks which helps with the selection of lambs for sale which are then also drawn by handling. The ewes are run through from lambing until weaning and the system records of animal health treatment and individual breeding. Paul plans to batch his ewes into groups of 100 to run with the tup to monitor the rams' breeding performance.

*Words and pictures: Jennifer Mackenzie*





**N**EMSA member Julie Brough, who farms in Cumbria and was among the exhibitors in our show classes at last year's Royal Highland Show, was visited by Maureen Hodges, Farming and Rural Affairs Editor with Newsquest Cumbria. It's a great article and we warmly thank both Maureen and Newsquest for giving us permission to reproduce it in Mule News.

As I park my car in the farmyard I'm greeted by clucking, rust-coloured hens and two fawning sheepdogs, who follow me to the door of the 19th Century stone farmhouse.

Beckoning me into the kitchen, Julie Brough's mum Ann tells me Julie has just popped out for a few minutes. She doesn't know where, but she's probably with the sheep. "I'm sure she won't be long," says Ann, who motions me to sit in a comfy armchair by the kitchen stove as she finishes sweeping up bits of hay from the stone floor. While she makes a pot of tea, Ann tells me she is now in charge of the house and garden because of a stroke some years previously, and how Julie is doing a "grand job" of running the farm.

Just then a young woman bursts in through the kitchen door, shrugs out of a pair of dirt-stained waterproof trousers, and shakes my hand. "You know I thought it was tomorrow you were coming. No worries, today's better, but I might have to leave you at some point as I have a sheep that looks like she might need a hand to lamb."

Life at Clappers Farm, near Langrigg, Wigton, set in rolling scenery stretching for miles to the Solway Coast, is one of old-fashioned values, hard graft and plenty of love, but Julie wouldn't have it any other way.

Life is rarely dull. If 37-year-old Julie's not looking after her beloved ewes and hogs, beef cattle, and two farms, she's dashing to the auction mart, or ferrying her two young children, Henry, three, and 14 month-old Elsie to playgroup or to the childminder. But Julie brushes off her role as anything special. She is, she insists, just an "ordinary mam", who happens to farm.

Julie's sheep of choice is the resilient north of England mule. "It is a great sheep, easy to look after and always gets you out of trouble by doing the best they can," she says. And, if there is a problem, Julie just rolls up her sleeves and pulls out the lambs.

"We had one sheep who gave birth to a massive lamb. It lambed on when any other sheep breed would not have done. Someone joked mules could lamb sideways," laughed the self-confessed mule-obsessed farmer.

"Don't ask me why, I just love them. I have grown up with them, but I don't know why we have so many of them. We know we have a great sheep that has both the mothering ability and the milkiness."

A mule sheep has a mottled brown/black face. It has tight wool, a good set of ears and a good shape. "I just love its face, it's the bonniest of all the commercial sheep breeds," muses Julie, as mum Ann laughs.

How did Julie find herself farming? "I don't know. It was a bit of an accident. I was always helping dad and have always loved being outside. I was in the sixth form at Wigton and it was in the October half-term; I was helping dad snagging turnips, when he said, "we could do with you here all the time", and that was it. I didn't go back to school. I did a lot of milking elsewhere and in between I was here for the bulk of the jobs. That was 20 years ago."

Julie farms with the help of partner, Ross McNay, an accountant, and dad, John, who is 74. They run 480 north of England mules and a few Suffolk crosses, as well as 80 suckler cows on around 300 acres of land in total at Clappers Farm and the nearby Marshall Hall Farm. "We have around 210 head of cattle that includes followers and bulls too."

"John should be here," says Ann. "He'd love the crack." "Oh he'll be back soon, he's taken the tractor," said Julie, who went on to explain: "Dad bought a little tractor to help move the sheep and lambs. He'll take one sheep and be gone for an hour or so. But know he's met someone on the way and stopped for a natter," said Julie.



"There's a lot of mam in me; I do not sit still either," says Julie. "Dad is a bit more laid-back. I like it to be right, but that puts pressure on me."

Just then, Julie stands up. "Excuse me, I'll just go and look out of the window at the front of the house. A sheep might be lambing."

Julie gets up every day at 6am and sets off to feed the sheep spread out on various bits of land, while Ross sees to Henry and Elsie. "I have to get outside and get my jobs done; I have to get a headstart."

When not at the playgroup or at the childminder, Henry sometimes accompanies Julie on her daily chores, while Elsie plays in her playpen watched over by grandma Ann.

It's nearly dinnertime and right on cue dad, John, who describes himself as a 'bit of a character', appears in the kitchen.

He proudly explains how he has farmed at Clappers like his dad and his grandad before him. "Julie is fourth generation, you know," he says.

Julie explains: "Dad sees to the last feed and likes to check the stock. He rang me one night at 12.45am and said a sheep needed help lambing. In ten minutes it was caught and sorted."

"We don't need to sit up with them," adds John. "That is how we can have so many sheep to lamb." The family sell their fat lambs in June at Borderway Mart in Carlisle and Mitchell's at Cockermonth, with cattle mainly going to Carlisle.

"The Suffolks are normally kept until 45 to 55 kilos. We handle them and if they fit they go away," says Julie. Lambing starts in the middle of February for the Suffolks, and continues with the mules. "We buy hogs, lamb them as two-shears. We always buy 150 gimmer lambs," adds Julie.

John feeds the cows at 7am every day. "We put silage in front of them all the time; we keep it simple," she continues. "We don't have a lambing shed and have just started scanning the sheep this time, and have had singles, twins and triplets, the triplets are kept on creep."

Julie's favourite sale is Lazonby 'Alston Moor', and has been asked to judge there in the past as

well as other mart sales, including Hawes, Skipton, Carlisle, Cockermonth and Middleton-in-Teesdale. In addition, she won at the Royal Highland Show with a hogg and lamb, and has took a third at the Borderway Agri-Expo in Carlisle last year.

"The first time I judged a show I was nervous, but you learn as you go along. I look at a sheep's colouring and stretch and bone, and I ask myself, 'would I buy that sheep?' Judging is an honour." She adds: "You don't have to be a boy to farm; women are more than capable of doing it."

Just as I reluctantly get up to go, Julie informs me she is also preparing for her wedding day in October. "It's Alston Moor sale at Lazonby on the Wednesday. If I am getting titivated up for my wedding on the Friday, I haven't planned it very well, but I'm not missing the sale."

"Elsie will be a flower girl and Harry a kilted pageboy as Ross is Scottish. I'm having a hen party at Cockermonth Show and my friends have organised another on a farm in North Yorkshire."



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## MULE GIMMER LAMBS



Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September – 8,000 lambs (NEMSA Members)

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September – 10,000 lambs (NEMSA Members)

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> Oct – Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> Oct – Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> Nov (Open Sales)

## BREEDING SHEEP

*Autumn Sales of Shearlings & Ewes plus Spring Sales of Hogs with Lambs*

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> August – 5,000 Gimmer Shearlings

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September – 300 Blue Faced Leicester Rams

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October – 5,000 Swaledale Draft Ewes & Shearlings

STORE LAMBS - Fortnightly Autumn Sales of 5,000-12,000 Store Lambs

STORE CATTLE - Fortnightly Sales of 500-1,200 Young Feeding Bulls,  
Beef Feeding Cows, Bullocks & Heifers & Breeding Cattle.

**NEMSA has again been promoting the breed with a high profile presence at many local, regional and national shows and events across the country in 2019.**

One with especial interest was the North Devon highlight, NSA Sheep South West, in June, hosted by NSA national chairman and long-standing Mule sheep aficionado, Bryan Griffiths, and his wife Liz, at Southcott Farm, Burrington.

The well-known couple have farmed at Southcott for 35 years and their love affair with the all-purpose North of England Mule stretches back over a quarter of a century.

"We began buying in Kendal and have made good friends. We tend to buy from a select few vendors whose lambs do well with us – not necessarily show lambs, but big enough to tup. The sale also coincides with our wedding anniversary, so it's an added opportunity for a bit of time away. The 'crack' of the show and sale makes it an important part of the social side of sheep farming," said Mr Griffiths.

Southcott runs to 320 acres, all grass, ideal breeding ground for the versatile North of England Mule. This year, 420 Mules for late March lambing have scanned at 212%, while 100 Kendal-bought ewe lambs are 80% in-lamb, as are 80 home-bred Suffolk-x-Mule ewe lambs, both again due late March. In addition, 320 home-bred Suffolk-x-Mule ewes, which began lambing mid-February, scanned 185% in-lamb.

Mr Griffiths explained: "We use both Charollais/ Texel composite rams for prime lamb production – all sold dead weight, with 150 strong boned, big bodied Mules also put to the Suffolk to produce replacements for our early lambing flock.

"The Mules' mothering ability and prolificacy remain second to none. The key to a good year is a good crop of lambs and the North of England Mule delivers.

"The challenge for Mule breeders now is bio-security. The role of NEMSA is to continue

to develop ways of assuring purchasers of the provenance and health status of the sheep," he commented.

Mr Griffiths, who also farms some 50 finishing steers, joined the NSA around 25 years ago and has served, in succession, as both regional and English committee chair, and now national chair. "Our main aims remain to represent the primary producer, as well as keeping regulations both practical and beneficial," he said

"Visitors to NSA Sheep South West enjoyed an informative day out on a typical family-run livestock farm of a type that I believe remains at the heart of sheep production."

NEMSA's national chairman Kevin Wilson said: "We had a great day. Bryan and Liz have supported us for many, many years. We, in turn, were very keen to support them on their big day. Showpiece events such as NSA Sheep South West work wonders in helping to promote the North of England Mule and attract future buyers and breeders."

Last year, NEMSA also had a presence at the following shows: Royal Highland, Royal Cornwall, Royal Welsh, NSA North Sheep, Great Yorkshire and Thame.



*NSA national chairman Bryan Griffiths, and his wife Liz, are pictured with some of their North of England Mules at Southcott, venue for this year's NSA Sheep South West.*

## Garment Options:



### Unisex Poloshirt

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\*colours available up to 5XL

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Apple Green, Black\*, Burnt Orange, Bottle\*, Burgundy, Canary, Graphite\*, Heather Grey, Jade, Kelly Green, Light Blue, Lime\*, Magenta, Natural, Navy\*, Pink, Purple, Raspberry, Red\*, Royal\*, Turquoise\*, White\*, Chocolate, Charcoal\*, Mid Blue, Mint Green, Dark Purple, Denim Marl



### Ladies Fit Poloshirt

Size range 6 – 22

colours available in sizes

#### Available Colours:

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### Kids Poloshirt

Sizes – 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14

#### Available Colours:

Canary, Light Blue, Navy, Red, White



### Unisex Dover Jacket

Size range XS-4XL

\*colours available in sizes XXS and 5XL

#### Available Colours:

Bottle Green, Black/ Ash\*, Classic Red/ Navy, Royal/ Navy, Seal Grey/ Black, Navy Blue\*, Burgundy, Oxford Blue, Black/ Red, Key Lime/ Seal



### Kids Dover Jacket

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#### Available Colours:

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### Heavy Blend Kids hoodie

Sizes – 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-11, 12-13

#### Available colours:

Black, Forest, Gold, Light Pink, Navy, Purple, Red, Royal, Sport Grey, White, Maroon, Irish Green, Heliconia, Garnet, Dark Heather, Graphite Heather



### Unisex Fleece

Size range XS-4XL

\*colours available up to 5XL

#### Available Colours:

Black\*, Bordeaux, Bottle Green, Classic Red, Dark Navy\*, Glowlight, Royal Blue, Seal Grey, Oxford



### Ladies Fit Fleece

Size range 10-20

\*colours available in sizes 6, 8 and 22

#### Available Colours:

Black\*, Bottle, Blueskies, Classic Red, Dark Navy\*, Royal, Hot Pink, Oxford



### Kids Fleece

2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10, 11/12, 32"

#### Available Colours:

Navy, Classic Red, Royal Blue, Black



# Order Form

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