

2020 CLUB REPORT

2020 has turned out to be a year that none of us will ever forget.

The eager anticipation of the upcoming sales season soon turned to concern and uncertainty about what the effects of Covid would bring to the sheep industry in 2020. Thankfully however, our concerns turned out to be unfounded.

The convergence of Easter and Ramadan in 2020 resulted in an increase in demand for Irish lamb, and this demand has continued throughout the selling season. This has resulted in the average sheep meat prices for 2020 YTD being nearly 40c/kg higher than 2019 levels. The demand for top quality Suffolk Cross ewe lambs and breeding hoggets was high with prices around the country topping €165 and €262 respectively.

The demand for breeding such stock was reflected in turn, in demand by the Commercial farmer in the West of Ireland for top quality breeding rams. As a result, our Club sales this year reflected clearances and averages well up on our 2019 season.

SOI PREMIER SHOW & SALE, BLESSINGTON

Due to the cancellation of the NSBA National Championships this year, the first outing for some of our Club members was the SOI Premier in Blessington, held on the Bank Holiday Weekend in August. This was the first major Suffolk Society event of the Sales Season in the South of Ireland, and the SOI Branch committee must be commended on their exemplary running of both the Show and Sale under very difficult circumstances. Much time, effort and discussion went into the organisation of the day while adhering at all times with Covid restrictions, and this effort and the favourable weather meant the day was a huge success.

8 Club members took part in the Premier, 2 for their first time. Michael Hastings, Western Suffolks, travelled with a stylish ewe lamb out of Strathbogie Its a Kind of Magic while new Junior member Harry Graham, Westside Suffolks, showed off his strong Ram lamb, sired by Forkins, Dizzie Rascal.

The Shearling Ewe Class brought the first of the rosettes to our club members with Kenneth Bailey, Lismurtagh Suffolks securing 2nd and Cootie & Trevor Geelan, Lough Rynn Suffolks, taking 3rd place. The ewe lamb Class was a stylish affair but in the end, Judge Campbell Watson of the renowned Bannview Flock chose Kenneth Baileys, stylish and upright ewe lamb as the recipient of the Red Rosette and the Poole Challenge Cup. Kenneth's ewe lamb then went on to compete for Female Champion and was successful in again winning Campbell Watsons favour and took the top spot as



Alan & Kenneth Bailey, Lismurtagh Suffolks and their father Pat with Kenneth's Champion Ewe Lamb and overall Female Champion at the SOI Premier Show & Sale, Blessington 2020



Socially distanced ringside bidding, Roscommon Mart



Marie Jennings, Ballygarris Suffolks with top price lamb from Club Premier Roscommon

Female Champion of the show, one step up from Kenneth achieving Reserve Champion in 2019 with a ewe lamb. Kenneth's ewe lamb then went on to sell for €1100 in the ring.

Congratulations to all our club members on the standard of stock presented on the day. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication Club members show year on year to their flocks and the Suffolk breed.

CLUB SALES

As a Club, the decision was taken not to hold Shows alongside our Sales this year due to Covid restrictions. All sales took place under mart guidance and adhered to social distancing and government regulations at all times.

Our first sale was held in Carrick-on-Shannon as part of The Big Boy Multi-breed Ram Sale. Interest on the day was keen with many buyers in attendance. Buyers in the ring were staggered due to numbers but this not dampen trade. Top Suffolk price on the day was €780 going to Kenneth Bailey, Lismurtagh Suffolks for his Shearling Ram. The top price was an increase of 8% on 2019 while the average price for Suffolks showed an increase of 12%. Thank you once again to Stuart Dorran and his team for hosting a very well organised and well supported event.

This upward trend in demand continued throughout the rest of our Club sales. Our **Club Premier Sale** in Roscommon, always the highlight of the Club calendar, took place without a show but this did not dampen spirits. Members were out in force with a selection of top class, strong lambs, reflecting the continued investment in new

bloodlines, enhancing flocks within the club as we celebrate 50 years of Pedigree Suffolk Sheep Breeding in the West of Ireland. Interest was keen in the pre-sale viewing period and lambs were much admired. Trade was brisk when bidding got underway with the top price of the sale of €1380 going to Michael & Marie Jennings, Ballygarris Suffolks. Clearance on the day was a whopping 92% while the average price showed an increase on 2019 of 21%. The top priced pen on the day was Jennings' Ballygarris Pen. Next was Garth Graham's pen from Kirriemuir Suffolks followed closely by JP Screene, Windfield, Trevor Burke, DeBurca, Coote Geelan, Loughrynn, Kevin Kelly, Summerhill and Charles Hughes, Lankill.

Congratulations also to New Junior Club member, Harry Graham, Westside who sold his first ever Pedigree Ram Lamb at the sale.

Our sale in **Athenry** continued in the same way with increased clearance, prices and averages on 2019. Once again there was a superb selection of rams available and prices were reflective of this with top price of €1120 once again going to the Ballygarris pen. Clearance was increased by 49% on what had been a poorly attended sale in 2019 while the average price increased by 25%.

The **Ballinasloe** sale again commanded good prices with a 77% clearance and a top price of €900 going to Ballygarris Suffolks.

Our final sale of 2020 was our **2nd Sale in Roscommon** where again the quality of stock was high and interest was keen. The top price of €1260 was achieved once more by the Ballygarris pen. Clearance was high at 81% and the average showed an increase of 11% on 2019.

As a Club, we must congratulate all the members on achieving such phenomenal results in what everyone had anticipated would be a very difficult year. This success was in no small part, due to the hard work and the commitment to the breed which all our flocks demonstrate on an on-going basis. As a club, we pride ourselves in showcasing the Suffolk Breed to its full potential in the West of Ireland. Special mention must be given to Michael & Marie Jennings on achieving the top club prices all year.

The Suffolk Ram, long recognised as the top terminal sire is continuing to dominate the

commercial breeding market and this demand has been demonstrated in the fact that all rams produced by club members in 2020 have moved on to pastures new both privately and via club sales, to produce top quality pedigree and cross bred lambs for the 2021 markets.

We would like to thank all our buyers for their continued custom and support. Our policy of culling hard and only retaining the top quality animals for the breeding market gives our buyers added confidence that they are buying the top rams available in the West of Ireland ensuring a superior finished product in both the factory lamb and the breeding ewe market.

Finally, thank-you to the Suffolk Sheep Society for their continued support, the marts, our sponsors for 2020, A.W.Ennis Ltd and most importantly our buyers. We wish our buyers every success in their upcoming breeding season. We hope for and look forward to a return to some normality in 2021 with a return of Shows and continued success in our breeding programs and the sales ring



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*Best wishes to the West Of Ireland Registered
Pedigree Suffolk Sheep Breeders Club
on its 50th Anniversary*



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