

doing what they do best

SUFFOLKS



Trevor Burke, Club Secretary

2020 has been a year everybody would like to forget, but amongst all this madness the sheep trade has had one of its best years in a decade. The commercial farmer has seen:

- A beautiful spring for lambing time
- High return of lambs due to the mild winter and late grass growth
- Factory prices remain steady all year
- Excellent Ewe lamb and hogget trade.

Extremes in weather are becoming the norm and 2020 was no different. March and April's weather was excellent which reduced the housing of commercial ewes at lambing time. This in turn reduced the cost and the risk of disease associated with housing. The Suffolk cross lambs are versatile and can thrive in any of the above scenarios. With the lambs having this great start it wasn't long before the Suffolk cross lambs were thriving and making the 21kg carcass required for the factories. This early finishing, allows the farmer to avail of generally higher factory prices for Spring Lamb, thus helping to increase profits on farm.





Cross-bred Rear James Pate

When the commercial female sales started in July and August, we saw the Suffolk cross ewe lamb and hogget's soar pass their nearest rivals. In my local mart, Suffolk cross ewe lambs and hoggets were topping the prices at every sale and this was a trend across all marts. The main visual features were size, sharp heads, carcass, gigot and length. The hidden traits of the Suffolk Cross Ewe include mothering ability, versatility (can be crossed on any sire), prolificacy, resistance to foot rot, growth rate and ability to produce an E or U grade carcass.

As a result of the above profits, and performance, farmers were keen to maintain high standards by using Suffolk rams. When the pedigree sales came around, we saw great demand for Suffolk rams with strong averages and high sale clearance rates. It was clear that farmers were sticking with the sire that worked for them and were seeking to maintain or improve on faster finishing rates and production of replacement breeding stocks as well as quality commercial ewe and factory lambs.

Suffolk Rams continue to hold their place as the NO.1 Terminal Sire in the West of Ireland.



Wexford Ewe with Lambs © Farmers Journal



1st Prize Hogget Ewe, Borris Ewe & Lamb Breeders Sale © Maura J Ryan