

FARMER HARRY (13) SELLS HIS FIRST PEDIGREE RAM!

YOUNG BALLYGAWLEY TEENAGER SEES HARD WORK PAY OFF WITH HIS DEBUT PEDIGREE SALE RECENTLY.

BY EMMA GALLAGHER

Harry Graham from Ballygawley has always had an interest in sheep. At age 13, he has just sold his first Pedigree Suffolk Ram at a Suffolk Sheep Society accredited sale.

The young farmer brought his fine ram lamb to Connacht's biggest Pedigree Sale in Roscommon recently with potential buyers travelling from all over. Harry's ram didn't disappoint and was sold to a large commercial farmer.

Born into sheep farming through his parents, Alison & Garth Graham and his Grandad, Bert Irwin, he took a keen interest from a very early age and once he got his first pair of wellies, there was no stopping him.

The family farm has always carried commercial Suffolk cross ewes, but in 2011, Alison and Garth decided to start a Pedigree Suffolk Flock, Kirriemuir Suffolks, which are affiliated to the Suffolk Sheep Society.

Kirriemuir Suffolks won a number of Certificates of Merit in last year's National Flock Competitions for Ireland and the UK. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, these are not taking place this year.

Harry has been helping out on the farm since he was able to hold a bottle, feeding pet lambs and gradually progressing to helping out with more difficult chores required throughout the farming year.

It wasn't long before Harry wanted some sheep of his own, so after receiving some money for his 8th birthday party, he insisted on going to the mart to 'buy some sheep' for himself!

He bought a super hogget ewe which turned out, unexpectedly to be in lamb, and his parents gifted him the best Suffolk Cross ewe lamb on the farm the same year.

The following year, he had 2 lambs - a ewe and a ram. He retained the ewe lamb for himself as a breeding ewe and sold the ram lamb.

Harry's policy for the past few years has been to retain his good ewe lambs and sell everything else.

With the money he saved from his sales, in 2019, he decided he would start up his own Pedigree Suffolk Flock.

The Suffolk Sheep Society actively promotes Youth Membership, and runs competitions for young breeders, young handlers and encourages young members to learn about all aspects and key elements of modern farming.

Harry named his flock 'Westside Pedigree Suffolks' and in 2019 he purchased 2 females.

A ewe lamb from Quarrypark Suffolks in Galway and an in-lamb Gimmer from Malinhead Suffolks at the All-Star Female Sale in Blessington in November.

His Gimmer lambed a terrific ram lamb with superb progeny from some of the top flocks in the UK & Ireland such as Solwaybank, Lakeview, Cairness and Clyda.

He has taken responsibility for looking after this ram since it was born and has nurtured it through to be a superb lamb with great bone and carcass.



Harry Graham from Ballygawley showing his Westside Ram at the Suffolk Sheep Society (South of Ireland Branch) Premier Show in Blessington this year.



Ballygawley's Harry Graham with his pedigree ram at the Suffolk Sheep Society (South of Ireland Branch) Premier Show 2020 in Blessington.



Harry at the Club Championship Show in Athenry where he won Young Junior Handler. INSET: The first Pedigree Ram he sold recently.

Harry joined the West of Ireland Registered Pedigree Suffolk Sheep Breeders Club in 2020 as a Junior member.

This allowed him access to the Pedigree Sales which take place each year in the West of Ireland.

He brought his ram lamb to the Club Premier Sale which took place in Roscommon on Saturday, August 29th.

This sale is the largest sale in Connacht for Pedigree Suffolk Ram Lambs and farmers travel from all over the province to purchase top quality Pedigree Rams for the up-coming breeding sea-

son. It was a particularly successful sale this year with over 90% clearance of rams on the day and Harry was very pleased to sell his ram to a large commercial farmer. Harry now plans to re-invest his money in another in-lamb gimmer at this year's All Star sale to add to his flock. His Quarrypark Ewe Lamb and his Malinhead Gimmer have already been running with one of Kirriemuir Suffolks stock Rams, Errigal Jack the Lad, who won the Certificate of Merit in the UK & Ireland Flock Competition in 2019.

Harry says he is really looking forward to the

lambing season for 2021 which starts in January and to a successful sales season next year.

At just 13 years of age, no doubt he has a very bright future ahead of him.

For further information on Pedigree Suffolk Sheep in the West of Ireland go to www.westofirelandregisteredpedigreesuffolksheepbreedersclub.com or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/westofirelandregisteredpedigreesuffolksheep>

The National body to whom Westside Pedigree Suffolks is affiliated is the Suffolk Sheep Society at www.suffolksheep.org