

## INFORMATION FOR NEW MEMBERS

Thank you for your interest in Cotswold Sheep.

Some of our members are commercial farmers and others are smallholders with small flocks, who do not have a great deal of land but want a breed that is attractive and has a great history. The Cotswold is now a rare breed, so every one of those flocks is helping its progress and we are always delighted when new flocks are established, whatever the size. We also have members who do not have livestock at all but wish to support the breed and our work through membership.

The Society was founded in the late nineteenth century and is now a registered charity, which aims to conserve, promote and develop this historic breed. The membership year runs from 1 April to 31 March and the annual subscription is £30.00. Membership gives great value for money and is a must for all those interested in helping conserve the Cotswold. We very much hope that you will decide to join.

### Publications

Our breed leaflet gives useful information on various aspects of Cotswold sheep. Main areas of interest to breeders are:

- Temperament – Cotswolds are exceptionally docile and easy to handle which saves the farmer time and effort.
- Traditional qualities – these include hardiness and longevity which help reduce labour and input cost.
- Economy in feeding – they are thrifty sheep and can do well on relatively poor land.
- Lambing – they lamb easily, have an excellent mothering instinct and milk well.
- Marketing – there is a strong market for pedigree breeding stock and So the ewes are generally pure breed: - with regard to lambs surplus To breeding requirements, the Cotswold produces a large lean lamb with an excellent flavour.
- Crossing – the rams are often used as crossing sires to produce good quality half-breed ewes.
- Wool – the Cotswold is renowned for a high quality lustre fleece, which is much sought after by handspinners, a shearling ram will produce about 10kg of wool, an older ewe about 6kg. We have in the past worked with BWMB and a Gloucestershire woollen mill producing a range of Cotswold travel rugs / throws, these were very popular both here and abroad, a pure Cotswold sweater was also; produced by a firm in Yorkshire, again very popular and sold out!

Newsletters are normally mailed to members on a quarterly basis to keep everyone up to date with information about the breed and the Society and to

provide a free advertisement service for registered stock. I enclose a copy of the latest issue.

Members also receive a copy of our annual flock book which contains a great deal of helpful information about our registration rules, the breed standard, undesirable characteristics, a list of current members, show results and advertisements from breeders who regularly have stock for sale. The latest volume includes all pedigree Cotswolds registered in 2008. It is available to non-members at a cost of £3.00 plus 50p p&p.

I think that you will find our book *The Cotswold Sheep* interesting (£4.95 plus p&p) it will give you a complete picture of the Cotswold's development from early times right up to present day. The Cotswold is one of the country's oldest breeds, descended from longwool sheep introduced by the Romans, and has a very distinguished history as a wool and meat producer.

The Society also publishes help sheets on various aspects of the breed, which are free to members, including one on selecting Cotswold sheep.

### **Society registration and transfer services**

When sheep have lambed and the breeder has decided which lambs they wish to register. They complete a Society lamb registration application form, we issue registration certificates and ear tags bearing the animals' registered numbers and the breeders flock number, and then publish it in the Flock Book at the end of the year. We operate a tag for life policy, which means that if a registered sheep should loose a tag we replace it and issue a re-tag certificate without charge.

Our transfer service transfers sheep that you have purchased into your name and provides essential paperwork, which should be kept safely in case you wish to sell the sheep in the future.

### **Workshops**

Topics in the past have included lambing, selection of butchers lambs, carcase evaluation and ram fleece assessment with the British Wool Marketing Board, also selection of breeding stock.

### **Buying sheep**

There are various possibilities for acquiring stock – do contact me if you require more information.

- a. Private Sale. We publish advertisements of stock for sale free of charge in our newsletter and if required on our website and also maintain a frequently updated list of stock available. An up to date list is shown at the back of the enclosed newsletter.

- b. Breed Sale. We hold our Breed Sale each year on the first Friday and Saturday in August, at Cirencester Market – Breeds of Gloucestershire Sale. The Gloucester Old Spot Pigs and the Gloucester Cattle will also be there, together with a poultry sale.

If you already have sheep you will already be aware of the regulations – once you have bought your sheep you need to register with your local DEFRA Animal Health Office, who will arrange for you to be issued with a unique flock mark, which is a six digit number preceded by the letters UK. You will need to register all movements with the Animal Health Department of your local Trading Standards Office. All movements of your sheep will need to be accompanied by a DEFRA licence for which you will need to supply your Agricultural Holding number (this is obtained from DEFRA), and your sheep's individual ear tag number. This is not quite so onerous as it first seems. Current legislation for animal movements can be found on the DEFRA website [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk). Please contact me if you need help with any of this.

### **Social events**

We hold our annual get together, usually early December, where we enjoy a meal and the annual presentations of trophies.

### **Further reading**

If you are an established sheep farmer you will not need guidance on publications, but if you are new to sheep you may like to buy a book or two on general sheep keeping. Recommended books are: *Shepherds Calendar*, a small publication written for the novice sheep keeper by Val Stephenson, £4.75, available from Shepherd's Bookshop, Burnt House, North Chailey, East Sussex, BN8 4DJ, tel 01825 722329 (best to check the price before ordering). A larger publication would be *An Introduction To Keeping Sheep* by Jane Upton and Dennis Soden, (£14.95), or *Practical Sheep Keeping* by Kim Cardell (£16.95) aimed particularly at the keeper of a smaller flock, both books should be available at any good book shop.

We hope that the enclosures will be of interest, if you have any questions or require any help, please do get in touch.

Secretary – Mrs Lucinda Foster 01285 851197  
Registrar – Mrs Lynne Parkes 01451 830461