RamCompare Update for Texel Breed Society by Bridget Lloyd (January 2017)

What is RamCompare?
- Launched in May 2015
- Running for two breeding seasons
- UK's first commercial progeny test
- Over 6000 slaughter lambs
- Identify rams with most profitable genes for commercial sheep production
- Results published spring 2018

RamCompare provides a direct comparison between the commercial performances of rams from five terminal sire breeds. The industry scheme aims to drive genetic improvement forward through the inclusion of commercial data in genetic evaluation.

RamCompare involves a partnership of six commercial flocks and 16 organisations. Over two breeding seasons, 68 rams will be tested from five breeds producing over 3000 commercial lambs per year for data collection.

The farms represent a range of UK systems and have provided a minimum of 320 ewes each using four ram breeds: Suffolk, Texel, Charollais and either Hampshire Down or Meatlinc. Performance of lambs from the different terminal sire breeds will be examined under commercial conditions.

Year one completes
More than 3,600 lambs were born in 2016, sired by 39 different rams. The eight sires used for AI averaged 30 lambs each. The aim for single sire natural service rams was to achieve 50 lambs per progeny group and this was achieved in all but one group.

Year one lambs per sire:

Texel Sire ID	Texel Sire Prefix/Name	Natural Service / AI	# lambs/sire
AAS1401255	MISERDEN	Natural service	135
AAS1401351	MISERDEN VALEGRO	Natural service	75
CMG06129	GAYNES MAJOR	AI on three farms	92
EJR1101108	ROXBURGH SHOT GUN WILLIE	AI on three farms	98
MDY1400927	TYNEWYDD	Natural service	84
PAP1401307	PENYGELLI	Natural service	104
PJP1304727	DRINKSTONE UNION	Natural service	113
PPK1400417	KIMBOLTON VOYAGER	Natural service	72
UK 0 561473 11473	PIRNTATON	Natural service	79
Grand Total			852

Participating farms have gathered a huge amount of data following lamb growth throughout the season with the collection of detailed lambing data, eight-week, 90-day and sale weights. Data analysis of the first crop of lambs is underway.

Ram selection for second year
We were delighted with the number of ram nominations received for year two of the project with a total of 72 AI sires and 240 NS rams being presented across the five breeds. This demonstrates a

keen interest in the project from pedigree breeders with an eagerness to be involved, we are grateful for the support of the project.

All selected rams have estimated breeding values (EBVs) in the top 20 per cent for their breed and provide variety to other rams on test. Linkage between other flocks is important, especially for the rams destined for use by AI.

In 2016 an additional five sires were introduced to the AI team, each used on two or three farms to increase links between the project farms. All farms have used two AI sires for a second year.

24 new rams were selected for the natural service groups. Each of the project farms were provided with four new rams and some of last year's rams were used for a second season to strengthen linkage between years. Year two mating is now complete for all farms.

New Texel sires for 2016

Stainton Vantage II, WPS1400599 joined the AI team this year alongside Gaynes Major and Roxburgh Shot Gun Willie, each sire was used on 2 farms this season**.**

New AI sire for 2016 - Stainton Vantage II supplied by Claybury Texels (Image by Catherine MacGregor)

Six new natural service Texel sires included:

- PAP1501802 Penygelli supplied by Alwyn Philips
- JER1505263 Rugley supplied by Alan Jackson
- HME1501742 Elkstone supplied by Matt Hobbs
- HTW1501312 Wealden supplied by Tim Healy
- PRH1500573 Handbank supplied by Peter Baber
- YDP1500991 Stonedge supplied by Matt Price

Table 1: The EBVs for artificial insemination sires in year two

Breed	Name	ID	Eight week weight EBV	Scan weight EBV	Muscle depth EBV	Fat depth EBV	Index
Texel	Gaynes Major	CMG06129	5.35	12.28	3.47	0.43	353
	Roxburgh Shot Gun Willie	EJR1101108	6.25	13.11	3.11	-0.56	424
	Stainton Vantage II	WPS1400599	5.56	11.68	3.09	-1.61	362

Table 2: The EBVs for natural service rams used in year two

Farm	ID	Prefix	Eight week weight EBV	Scan weight EBV	Muscle depth EBV	Fat depth EBV	Index
Beili Ficer	PAP1501802	Penygelli	6.25	13.76	4.10	-0.22	438
Bowhill	JER1505263	Rugley	6.67	13.99	3.30	0.00	409
Bradley	HME1501742	Elkstone	4.45	9.50	3.09	0.10	323
Chawton Park	HTW1501312	Wealden	7.87	16.49	3.47	0.32	446
Moat	PRH1500573	Handbank	7.19	15.97	3.62	-0.11	480
Thistleyhaugh	YDP1500991	Stonedge	4.83	11.07	4.59	-0.02	410

Key:	Top 1%	Top 2-10%	Top 11-25%	Top 26-50%	< average

PAP1501802 Penygelli

JER1505263 Rugley

HME1501742 Elkstone

HTW1501312 Wealden

No picture supplied
PRH1500573 Handbank

YDP1500991 Stonedge

Full estimated breeding values and pedigrees for rams used are available at **www.ramcompare.com**

Results

Following the second year of the project a full genetic analysis will be undertaken. Results will be presented in tables showing the top 25 rams across the five breeds involved for eight-week weight, scan weight, muscle depth and fat depth EBVs. Data from the project will be used to develop new EBVs for days to slaughter and carcase weight.

Early results will be previewed at the SBRT event in November 2017. Data collection will complete in December and full results will be published spring 2018.

How to engage with RamCompare

We will be hosting three farm events during 2017 where lambs and rams will be on display, a good opportunity to discuss early analysis and on-going data collection for the project.

- 2nd June 2017 – Antony Pearce – Moat Farm, Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire
- 13th June 2017 – Sion and Claire Williams – Beili Ficer Farm, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire
- 19th June 2017 – Sion Williams – Bowhill Estate, Selkirk

Find us at these events:

- 16th May 2017 – Welsh Sheep
- 31st May 2017 – Highland Sheep
- 7th June 2017 – North Sheep
- 20th June 2017 – South Sheep
- 3rd July 2017 – NSA N Ireland, Ballymena
- 24th – 27th July – Royal Welsh, Builth Wells
- 17-19 November 2017 – Sheep Breeders Round Table Conference, Nottingham

Semen is available

Frozen semen from some of the RamCompare sires used on our project farms is being offered for use on Signet recorded flocks free of charge. Contact bridget.lloyd@ahdb.org.uk for more details.

You can keep up to date with the commercial flocks involved and rams on test by visiting **www.ramcompare.com** or following us on Twitter **@RamCompare**.