

Your Chairman's bits and pieces

Our Editor insists I take part this time. He is correct of course. So here goes.

Your Committee is trying very hard to see the way forward for the C S A following the additional courses now being offered by Reaseheath. It is an acknowledgement of the success of our many years of course work which has proved invaluable to all our many members. The College are now realising just what they have missed.

At your Committees last meeting we agreed to review all our options at the September Committee meeting in order that we can put firm proposals before you at the A G M in October. You will all recognise that our Society is very much at the call of all its members and we can not progress without your help. So first can I ask you to note your Diaries or your Wall Charts so that you do not miss the October A G M, it will be very important to us all. Second it would help considerably if before then you could approach any Committee member with ideas for the future success of the C S A.

A bit of good news for us all. I have recently heard that two of our Honorary Life Members, John and Avis Shaw have been invited to the Queens garden party as a direct result of their very extensive work in the Rare Breeds field. Congratulations.

Best wishes for a happy summer. Arthur T. Green. President and Chairman.

Lectures and Visits

July 4th Barbeque - At Gill's (Kingsley, Nr Frodsham)

Starts at 5:00 ish and finishes when the drinks run out. There is a small barn for cover if it is cold/raining. The weather will, however, be excellent!

Bring your own meat and drink, we will supply salad type stuff. Courtesy of Kim Lathaen we have free trout! If you do not know where Gill lives give me a call on 077 737 807 22 I can email detailed directions or give you her address for the sat nav.

Next meeting is on 28 September at Reaseheath. Topic TBA

Keep looking at the web for updates and visits. (www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk)

Doors open 7.30 for 8pm start. Entry £2. Notice board for ads, sales table, Tea and coffee available. Room L3/L4 The Leverhulme Centre, Reaseheath College, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DF. Come early and have a chat.

Sad News

It is with sadness that I report the death of one of our members, Michael Howard, following a period of illness. Michael often had a relevant anecdote at our meetings and was a well respected farmer in Staffordshire and amongst the ploughing match fraternity. He was buried with his muck fork and his coffin was taken to the church on a trailer pulled by a grey fergie. Our thoughts are with his family John and Linda.

Future Courses

I am tidying up the list of courses to those which we have sufficient interest in and a possibility of getting a lecturer. See the lists at the meetings and on the web site. I will be updating the web site so keep on looking if they are not there today.

Traditional Pig Keeping - Lots of people want this course so we are trying to find a suitable lecturer and will be in touch.

Bacon Curing - We are trying to organise this for the summer.

Pig Butchery - A new course that a few people have expressed interest in, we are trying to organise it at the moment, contact Kevin on 07773780722 if interested.

Dates for your diary

Always check with the organisers before making arrangements or travelling, shows are sometimes cancelled, often at the last minute! Links to web sites are on www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk/news.htm

Nantwich & South Cheshire Show - Wed 29 July

Bakewell Show - Wed/Thur 5 & 6 August

Anglesey County Show - Tue/Wed 11 & 12 August

Denbigh and Flint Show - Thur 20 August

R B S T Show and Sale - Chelford, Sat. 19 September

Cheshire Ploughing and Hedge Cutting Competition - Wed 30 September

Lecture Report

Vet Evening

14 intrepid members gathered at Gill's to have a hands on evening with a vet. Fortuitously one of Gill's sheep had recently had a lamb so we started with a practical demonstration of what to do with a 4 day old lamb and two rubber bands as well as worming lamb and mother, dagging mother, drenching, feeding and general welfare questions.

We then moved to Gillian and Stuart's where their cattle were discussed. A co-operative cow was put into the crush and all the standard things we should do with a cow in a crush were covered.

A lot of questions were answered relating to injecting (under skin and into muscle), worming, administering boluses, licks, fertility of bulls, ringing bulls, vaccinations and a whole variety of general welfare issues.

All who attended felt that it had been a very worthwhile evening and would like to go on another event covering different animals.

Many thanks to Tom Beech, the vet, for an excellent presentation.

Ferrets

Kim Lathaen brought along a few ferrets and her rescued lurcher to help with her very entertaining talk. Kim described how to use ferrets as well as how to care for them and had many amusing anecdotes. While ferreting is normally seen as a male activity Kim mentioned that the Bayeux Tapestry contains ladies ferreting. Kim is registered as a authority on ferreting and has made three videos on ferreting as well as judging in Sweden and Ireland and has run judging courses.

Kim has kindly agreed to give a days ferreting course on Saturday 7th Nov. Gill has volunteered her fields for the day. We are limited on numbers so if you are interested please let Kevin know.

Legislation Update

Never the most popular topic, despite being essential, but there was a good attendance for the presentation by Janet Todhunter on what we need to be doing to stay legal. Janet is an animal health officer with DEFRA as well as being on the council of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and was therefore able to put the regulations into context relevant to us. A very informative and well presented update on the current legislation with a good handout for us to take away.

Setting up a Farm Shop

Andrew Shufflebottom gave an excellent presentation, without notes, on the challenges he faced and the successes achieved during the setting up and growth of his farm shop, Cheerbrooks Farm Shop, Nantwich. Apart from what must have been a lot of hard work and risk, he attributes his success to offering a consistent quality local product. This means having agreements in place with local suppliers for constant supply of carcasses to a consistent finish. An informative and thought provoking presentation for those thinking about setting up and running a shop and the challenges producers face to bring small quantities of stock to the retail market.

Some thoughts from the Staffordshire County Show; 27th - 28th May 09.

Our main showing outing with our Ryeland sheep is our local show, the Cheshire Agricultural Show, in June. There we are in combined classes for Rare Breed Downland sheep, since there are not enough Ryeland breeders locally to have classes for the breed.

To get to measure our sheep against other Ryeland flocks, we like to go to one or two other shows where there are specific Ryeland classes. Our favourite and regular venue is the Mottram & District Agricultural Show in August, set up on the hillside near Stalybridge. It is an open air 'village' show, with a friendly atmosphere and superb views (except one year when it threw down with rain all day - do you wear the white show coat inside or outside your waterproofs?) Others we have been to in the past include:

- the Royal Lancashire County Show, sadly now defunct after repeated last minute cancellations due to ground conditions
- the Cumberland Show, a really traditional Agricultural show without much of the Retail Therapy aspect, but it is a long 2¾ hour trek each way

This year some fellow Ryeland breeders persuaded us to enter the Staffordshire County Show. It is held much earlier than our usual first outing to the Cheshire Show, but we bit the bullet and started our preparations a month earlier than usual. The Show is held on a permanent site over two days, with most of the judging done on the first day, and the Championships and 'Wool on the Hoof' on the second.

We had heard that it is a permanent show ground, but we were still taken aback on arrival on the first morning at the standard and size of the accommodation for the sheep classes. Our 'shed' had a toilet block in one corner, and hot and cold water taps! The interior was light and airy, and well set out with galvanised hurdles, with plenty of room to move down the aisles. The first job after unloading the sheep was to find our breakfast tickets, and head off to the restaurant for the exhibitors complimentary 'full English', or any variation you could wish for. Once fortified, it was back to business preparing for the show classes. Some juggling was required when we found out that the classes had been rearranged, and that both the 'Ryeland' and 'Any Other Downland Breed' classes (for our Coloured Ryeland entries, which are not allowed to be shown in Ryeland classes) were to be held simultaneously. Luckily the Judge took pity on me trying to show 2 Coloured Ryeland shearling ewes, while Gill was in the next door ring with the Ryeland classes. Her solution was to allocate her 12 year old son as my handler, and a very competent job he made of it (though his mum didn't give him a place or rosette!) Mine got a 4th place, which out of a class of 12 mixed breeds was very pleasing. Gill did well with the rest of the sheep, even getting a first for a ewe lamb.

I can thoroughly recommend an outing to the Staffordshire Show; we will certainly be entering again next year, and might even stay over, camping in the car park like many others. The on site shop and bar looked well stocked, and there are even shower facilities in the main building! I have never before come across a cow shed with a mezzanine floor, let alone one you can drive a van round to set up your trade stand.

Tony & Gill Moore.



Gill and Ryelands at Staffordshire Show

Nature Watch -The frog spawn are now frogs and have disappeared from the pond, I expect the fish ate most of them although we have seen some small ones so at least a few have survived. We have also seen a couple of young fish we will have to see if they live long enough to grow larger.

The buzzards, which were a feature of our sky locally for the last couple of years, appear to have disappeared with only the odd appearance of one or two. Lots of magpies and pigeons though.

Kevin

Electrical Safety on Smallholdings

As you may know in recent years there have been a number of changes to the requirements for electrical installations to meet the new legislation under Part P of the Building Regulations for domestic premises and the 17th edition of the IEE Wiring Regulations. While existing installations do not need to be changed to meet the new standards, new work does. The changes that have been made are generally to improve the safety of the installation so we should consider some of the new requirements for our existing installations. While Part P covers domestic buildings the rules are quite complex on shared premises and it may apply to smallholdings depending on how they are constructed and used. However we should always be very careful when using electricity outside or in outbuildings where physical damage due to accident or animals is more likely and damp can cause increased risk of electrocution.

NOTE: Only an electrician qualified and registered under Part P of the Building Regulations should be employed to work on any electrical installation unless the work is covered by a very limited number of exemptions. If an unregistered person is used you have to get separate building regulations approval which requires inspection of the new installation.

While it requires an electrician with appropriate test equipment to properly test an installation there are some basic checks we can do ourselves. If you find any of the following get an electrician in to test and inspect your installation:

- If your wiring has lead sheathing (prior to about 1948, don't laugh I have seen this recently) or has a tough rubber sheathing (black sheathing often installed prior to mid 60's) or round pin plugs then it should be replaced as soon as possible. While these installations are not inherently dangerous they are beyond their safe working life and should never be disturbed.
- If your fuse box still has the old rewirable fuse then you should get it replaced with a modern consumer unit using Miniature Circuit Breakers (MCBs) and Residual Current Devices (RCDs) which trip on earth leakage, e.g. someone getting an electric shock. The old rewirable fuses can be easily rewired with the wrong wire which is a major safety risk. You will probably need new wiring as well.
- If PVC (normally grey) cable is attached to any woodwork that is painted with creosote it may damage the cable. Also if older PVC cable is exposed to sunlight then the insulation can be damaged over a long period, modern cables are far more resistant to UV damage.
- If any cables or fittings have physical damage then they should be replaced. Also electrical equipment needs to be to a **MINIMUM** of IP44 for agricultural and horticultural premises. This provides protection against penetration of small objects greater than 1mm and is splash proof from all directions. You

can provide housings to the required standard if the equipment does not meet the standard.

- If livestock can get access to any wiring or equipment it should be moved so that they can't. Cattle can be electrocuted by voltages as low as 25V.
- Any fannies - lights flickering or dimming, intermittent operation, audible arching or burning smells are all urgent hints that you need to get an electrician in.

One of the major changes in the modern regulations is that all agricultural premises, as well as domestic premises use Residual Current Devices (RCDs) to break the circuit in the event of an earth fault (someone being electrocuted or an earthed installation (piece of metal) becoming live due to a fault). RCDs typically cut the circuit in less than 300ms (milliseconds) if a fault current of greater than 30mA (milliamp) is detected. This limited current and time should not kill a healthy person. If you do not have RCDs in your wiring (they have a test button that you should press every few months to ensure they work) then you should consider getting them fitted. If a fixed RCD is not protecting any sockets used to supply external extensions, this could be on your consumer unit or may be built into the socket and these are mandatory for new installations, then you should use a plug in RCD (available for less than £10) when using electrical equipment outside. I can testify that RCDs work, having tested them a few times without using the button.

Under the old and new regulations, earthing (supplementary bonding to mains earth connection) of exposed conductive parts (metal work or pipes) that can be touched by livestock or humans is essential. This ensures that if any metal part becomes live due to a fault, and therefore potentially dangerous, it will trip the RCD or blow a fuse due to a fault current flowing to earth. This earthing even includes any metal reinforcing grid in the floor. There are also a lot of tests that need to be done as part of any inspection to ensure that the earth cables are properly connected and are of adequate size for any fault current due to the importance of earthing to safety.

If you employ anyone on your premises then the Health and Safety regulations and Electricity at Work Regulations will probably apply which may require that you get your installation inspected on a regular basis. Get professional advice if this applies.

Caution - electricity can kill so if you have any doubts please get an electrician to look at your installation unless you really, really know what you are doing and know what you can and can't do under Part P in which case you do not need to have read this.

The above is not a complete description of the requirements under Part P and the 17th edition regulations. You will need a suitably qualified electrician to tell you that as there are a lot of different requirements depending on your particular circumstances and the type of earth provided on your electricity supply.

Sheep Netting Clamp

When erecting a fence to contain sheep it is always necessary to put some tension into the netting to stop sagging between posts. I have found a clamp shown in the drawing to work well. Assemble with a rope from the top of the clamp to a winch and then back to the bottom of the clamp.

The main components are the two wooden sections just over a metre long. One half has a projecting radius and the other a hollow radius. Three 10mm coach bolts hold the two halves together and are tightened by nuts onto which I have welded convenient handles.

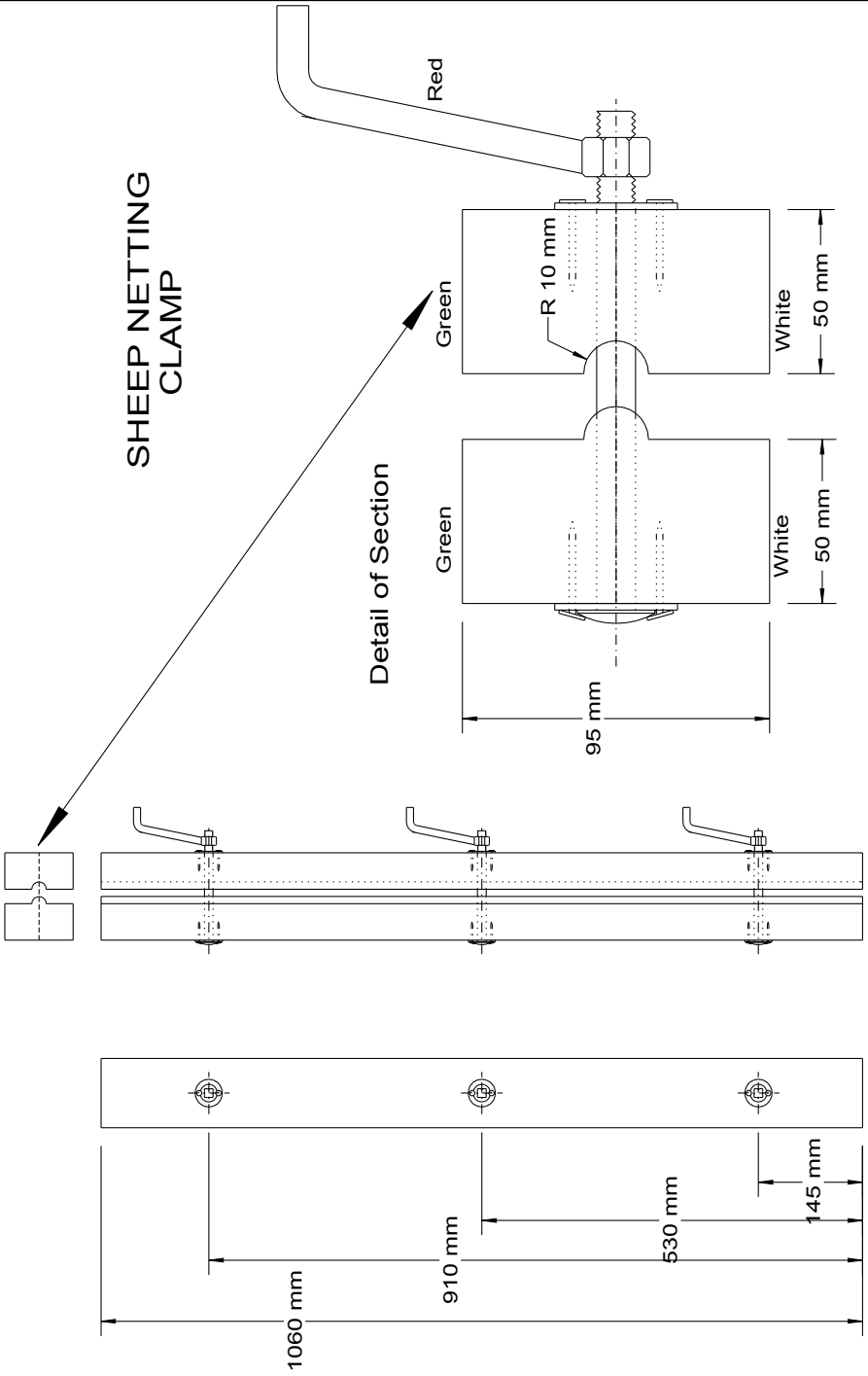
There are captive washers to spread the load onto the wood. The washers are held in place by galvanised nails. The spacing of the bolts was chosen some time ago for particular netting. I think there are various netting dimensions and I have had no problems with the several versions I have had to use.

I have found it helpful to paint one side of the clamp white and the other side green. Since it is necessary to take the clamp apart to fit it over the netting, the colour coding helps to assemble it the same way each time. The bolts stay with the male half of the clamp. Even if the bolts had been arranged symmetrically top to bottom I have found that when I had drilled the holes they did not all go exactly through the middle of the wood. (Just poor workmanship hence the colour coding!) Additionally it has been useful to paint the handles red since they get dropped in the grass and have to be found again!

Use the clamp to tension each straight section of fencing, stapling the netting loose to the intermediate posts to let it “breathe” and finishing at a braced post before releasing the load on the winch. Use a bowline for the loops at each end of the rope so the knots can be undone easily.

L E B Heyshead Farm 2009

SHEEP NETTING CLAMP



Single Payments Scheme- DEFRA Consultation

DEFRA have launched a public consultation on the Single Payments Scheme resulting from a change in the EU rules on SFP payments. The public being consulted include the Ramblers Association, National Trust, Oxfam, Tesco, J Sainsburys, Transport And General Workers Union amongst a number of more farming relevant organisations of which there are only a couple remotely related to smallholding.

The consultation is to determine if the:

1. Minimum size of holding eligible for SFP should be left alone or increased to 1, 3 or 5 Hectares
2. There should be an Objective Farmer Test for payment of SFP
3. Decoupling of Nuts and Protein payments and adding to flat scheme.

The closing date for the consultation is the 22 July 2009. You can see the full details at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/sps/.

I have contacted DEFRA about who can respond to the consultation and they have replied "This consultation is open to any member of the public who has an interest in The Single Payment Scheme and the Health Check. If you send in your comments we will be pleased to accept them"

A notable exception to the list of consultees was the Rare Breeds Trust.

The consultation document gives the savings that can be achieved by increasing the minimum size of holding but it is notable that this does not include any reduction in DEFRA staff, who will be redeployed to help process the remaining applications!

The consultation document also does not say what will happen if the minimum size is increased to those whose land is no longer eligible for SPS payments. The points that occurred to me are:

- Will their land be eligible if incorporated into a larger holding in the future, given we were told when SPS first started that it was a one off opportunity to register?
- Will NVZ restrictions still apply, is so how will they be enforced?
- Will there be an impact on the environmental benefits of SPS?
- If the Objective Farmer test is implemented what is the impact on Rare Breeds as they are not usually commercially farmed?

So get reading and responding.

Cheshire Show

As usual we were in the Rare Breeds Trust marquee. As we did not have any volunteers for either day the stand was unmanned for much of the time. Despite this we did get a lot of interest and signed up three new members. Copies of the flyer we distribute at the shows are enclosed.

Gill and Tony managed a second place with their Ryelands, well done.

Mike and Maggie were doing their usual excellent job of feeding the officials. Thank you for the excellent sausage bap and the many cups of tea.

Leaving the site on Thursday was a bit of a problem due to the two accidents on the M6 adding to the difficulties with the high volume of show traffic but we all got off eventually.

Nantwich Show

Arthur will be setting up our stand in the Rare Breeds Marquee at the Nantwich Show. He would appreciate any help you can give as I will be away on the 29 July.

Kevin

Consultation on a new independent body for animal health: A modern governance and funding structure for tackling animal diseases

I hope you have had chance to respond to the above DEFRA consultation which closed on the 30 June. It relates to the proposals to take the responsibility for the costs of exotic animal disease out of DEFRA and into a separate body to be funded by a tax on animals. This will leave responsibility for animal welfare in DEFRA, who will then have no responsibility for the outcome or cost of any poor policy or government laboratories causing a foot and mouth outbreak for instance. Let us hope that a reasonable proposal comes from the consultation.

Bovine TB

Cheshire has seen the number of animals slaughtered for bovine TB more than double to 602 between 2007 to 2008. This includes animals that were reactors, inconclusive reactors and direct links. Given the impact on the farmers (952 tested) that are affected and the length of time we have been trying to find a solution (I can remember Badger culling trials in the 60's) one wonders if there will be a conclusion before farmers all give up dairy production. At least we are not as bad as Staffordshire where over 1,800 animals were culled. For the first quarter of 2009 there have only been 72 animals culled in Cheshire and 128 in Staffordshire but there is probably a significant seasonal variation.

Other Stuff

Gate

The next Gate will be produced in September. Please send me any articles, pictures, adverts etc for the next issue by the end of August 2009. (phone 07773780722 for email address).

Web Site

(www.cheshiresmallholders.org.uk)
If you have any articles or adverts for the web site let me know, pictures of your activities always welcome. I will continue updating the web site so keep on looking at it for latest news.

Dead Chicken

We recently had a hen, 5 years old, with all the symptoms of being egg bound, but I could not feel anything hard in her bloated abdomen. She was eating and drinking but was obviously not well. After bathing and gently massaging her in a bowl of warm water which seemed to comfort her, she gave a shudder when I put her in a nest box and dropped dead. I opened her abdomen and a large quantity of clearish fluid came out with what looked like a bit of egg yolk. From the Web I suspect non septic peritonitis. Anyone any alternatives or suggested cures if it happens again?

Kevin

Committee Contacts

Arthur Green (President/ Chairman)
Tel: 01270 841288

Kevin Holmes (Web & Gate Editor)
Tel: 077 737 807 22

Gill Lawson (Secretary)
Tel: 01928 788289

Lesley Gallagher (Membership)
Tel 01928 740212

Lawrence Beard (Treasurer)
Tel: 01625 572324

Margaret Holmes
Tel: 01928 722365

Jane Hulse
Tel: 01829 781343

Tony Moore
Tel 01925 730530

Linda Buckle
Tel 01782 502030

Gillian & Gordon Murty
Tel 01928 788380

Selected Charity

Our charity is Send A Cow which provides training, animals, trees and seeds for families in Africa. This enables them to become self sufficient. Have a look at what they do at www.sendacow.org.uk to see where they spend our contributions.