



**Better Returns
Programme**

Recording Lambing Ease and Birth Weight



Lambing Ease and Birth Weight

The ease with which a lamb is born has a big impact on lamb survival.

Traits influencing lambing ease have a genetic component and Signet breeders now have the opportunity to record both lambing ease and birth weight.



Recording Lambing Ease

Lambing Ease scores are a subjective assessment undertaken by the breeder.

Scores are as follows:

1 = no assistance

2 = slight assistance by hand

3 = severe assistance

4 = non-surgical veterinary assistance

5 = veterinary assistance, surgery required

6 = elective caesarian

Scores relate to each lamb – so two lambs can have different scores. If you are unsure as to whether a lambing event has been assisted, leave the record blank. Blank scores are interpreted as “no score” rather than “no difficulty”. Score as many lambs as possible, including dead lambs.

Some level of lambing difficulty needs to be detected in the flock for the scores to be beneficial in evaluations.

Scoring all lambing events in a flock as 1 will not identify any genetic differences in ease of lambing (and not lead to high, positive lambing ease EBVs in due course).



Recording Birth Weight

The birth weight of a lamb will influence how easily it is born.

Lambs should be weighed with 48 hours of birth. Weights should be measured, not estimated. The easiest way to weigh lambs is to place them in a bucket hung from a spring balance.

Breeders should indicate whether weights are taken in metric or imperial units. The recording of this trait is optional, but is required if lambing ease scores are to be used in future analyses.

Estimated Breeding Values for Lambing Ease

Lambing Ease and Birth Weight EBVs are available for Texel sheep and other breeds may obtain EBVs in the future.

The Lambing Ease EBV predicts the genetic variation that exists in a ram's (or ewe's) ability to produce lambs that are born without assistance. It is not intended as a measure of the ewe's ability to give birth.

The EBV is expressed as the proportion of extra unassisted lambing events that are expected to arise from a particular sheep. High, more positive, Lambing Ease EBVs are more favorable.

Estimated Breeding Values for Birth Weight

The Birth Weight EBV predicts the genetic variation that exists in birth weight. Low, negative values indicate the genetic potential to produce smaller than average lambs; high positive values indicate the genetic potential to produce larger lambs.

The use of this EBV must be made with care, as lamb survival is compromised most in both very small and very large lambs. This EBV is a guide to help breeders avoid sires known to throw very large lambs, particularly where they are being mated to ewe lambs.

For more information call Signet Breeding Services 0247 647 8829
or email signet@eblex.ahdb.org.uk

Signet
Signet Breeding Services