

BULLetin & RAMble

NEWSLETTER FROM INCHEOCH FARMS

Hello from Incheoch,

We hope this finds you well and that your stock is growing and winter stores filling up.

As the politicians dither about building a policy to blend food production with biodiversity and carbon benefits, we find that most farmers are finding their own way towards these goals. Farming efficiently in a way that isn't fighting against nature is lesson number 1 from the school of the bloomin' obvious. We just need policies that don't stand in our way and help us invest in the right changes.

Less waste is going to be key. Food waste for a start, but inside the farm gate it looks like:

- better conception rates (fertility);
- improved lamb survival,
- longer-lasting 'robust' cows and ewes;
- less time wasted dealing with problems and individuals and more time on herd/flock management;
- targeted, efficient use of inputs (feed/fert/diesel), and for us that looks like better use of, and performance from, forage.

Functional, Efficient and Robust breeding stock, performance tested on forage has been our goal since long before we knew what a carbon footprint was.

If our breeding goals fit your system and you are in need of a bull or ram, we hope you can find something in our annual production sale that suits. We look forward to welcoming people on sale day, on viewing days or if you are in the area before hand.

Sale format is similar to the last few years with the ability to bid from home or at the sale.

Look forward to seeing you there.

Kind regards

The McGowan family.



WORKING GENES

Tues 5th Sept '23

TEXEL, LLEYN
SHEARLING RAMS

SIMMENTAL, Luing
& ANGUS BULLS

Hope to see you then



New sale date, same flexible bidding format.

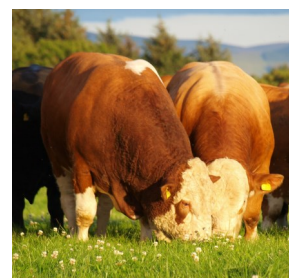
This years' Working Genes sale will be on Tuesday evening, on the week of the Kelso Ram Sales. It will be the regular '1st Pick' of all our bull and ram production.

A record number of rams will be on offer, to try to ensure plenty to go around. They were wintered on bale-grazed red clover silage and will be presented from a grass only diet. These rams will find adjusting to working life very easy, and tend to come in from ewes bigger and heavier than they are on sale day.

Bulls are paddock reared, where grazed grass is most of their diet and they keep fit and active, but also haltered and handled. Mostly at 17 months, they are well developed to either use straight away, or spend an easy winter learning their new surroundings and may be checking breeding soundness with some cull cows.

A reliable 2yo bull in good working condition come springtime brings peace of mind.

- Preview videos of all lots and a full catalogue of performance information will be coming pre-sale.
- Bulls in paddocks on sale day and rams penned up. Parade of rams through the ring at 3pm which we recommend viewing if you have time.
- If you can't make preview days, give us a ring to arrange another time.
- Bidding is by Yourbid, you can bid on a device at home or at the sale, or in person through a bidding station at the sale.
- We will try to assist with delivery where we can if this is helpful.



Viewing Days
27th & 31st Aug
3pm—8pm
Shealwalls Farm
PH11 8HJ



If we can help, please get in touch

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Breeding for Balance

There is a tug of war between genetic potential and resource allocation. Stock with high genetic potential that consume loads and loads of resources don't work. Neither do the animals that tread lightly in terms of inputs but don't do anything.

Efficient livestock production is based around good health and welfare and excellent nutrition management, but genetics is the tip of the wedge. Nothing can be achieved beyond genetic potential.

The Incheoch program is based on getting the balance right for upland grazed animals on a fairly low input system. Although we believe that performance recording is an excellent tool to help sort the wheat from the chaff—we recognise the failings when an open door to the feed-trough is involved. That is why we haven't always followed the highest index sires, but tried to maintain a good balance of relevant traits.

Knowing your genetics are coming from a system similar to that which their offspring need to perform in (and performance recorded to help weed out the under-achievers), allows you to focus on getting your health, welfare and nutrition right - the stockmanship skills needed to get the most from your stock.

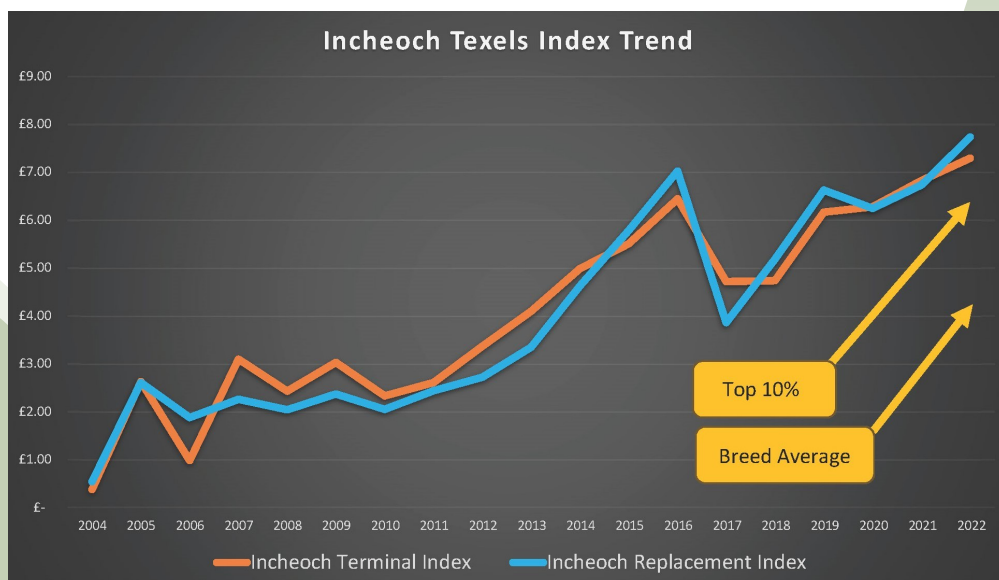
iTexel refines Texel Index:

Texel buyers will notice a difference in the Index values this year. Although the individual EBVs have remained the same, the way the index (or summary figure) is calculated has changed.

Firstly, there are 2 separate indexes: Terminal Index for when lambs are all slaughtered, and Replacement Index designed for when replacements are retained.

Secondly, the figure is represented in £, indicating potential profit per lamb.

With our emphasis on Lambing Ease and retaining Fat, the Incheoch flock has fared well out of the re-shuffle, but other than a change in the actual number, I don't expect many of you need notice any difference.





What's exciting us about 2023?

- Out of 21 Simmental bull calves born, 15 have made the cut for the sale, of which 8 are homozygous polled, and only 2 horned.
- We have a large and even selection of Lleyn rams which has allowed us to cull heavily on performance—especially worm tolerance.
- The cull cow trade—makes it good sense to turn over any mature cow not pulling her weight and replace her with a heifer, often pocketing some change in the deal. Of course, you need to have some heifers by a good maternal bull coming forward. A carefully planned high replacement rate is really helping us drive forward our cattle breeding program.
- We have more grass sown, replacing cereals and are finding that one early cut of clover-rich silage makes for a cheap winter for cattle and lots of good aftermath grazing for lambs.
- Luing sale bulls include a son of one of only a handful of cows in the breed who have scored a perfect 10 for udder, teats, feet and locomotion by the Luing Society Fieldsman.
- Texel rams are looking a picture with the long-necked, alert look and wedge shape holding a strong loin and wide hips that we have been striving for.



Joker P herd sire at Incheoch, sire of 8 sale bulls.



Easton Dunsyre, stock sire—his first crop of Texel rams sell.



Incheoch Knave—top selling lleyn '22 and sire of a good pen for this year.

Do you buy a bull on looks or figures?

The figures are telling you what he is capable of breeding, and giving a benchmark to compare with others.

The looks show structural soundness, but also equally important things like masculinity and character. Muscularity for meat yield needs to be analysed alongside the level of condition on the bull.

Then there's the pedigree—we get nervous about what is described as 'fire and ice matings', rather trying to stack pedigrees full of what we think are the right type. A knowledge of pedigrees and a good memory for stock can help avoid skeletons in the cupboard.

It's when everything comes together that we get excited,it's a jigsaw puzzle, because perfection doesn't really happen and there is always some flaw needing rectified.

Steve Radakovich is a cattle breeder from Iowa with a great vision and a good way with words—he told me his breeding goal was 'to avoid making mistakes' - he said breeders all over the world spent a lot of time and effort correcting one extreme with another.

He is also quoted as saying 'at no time in history have cattle breeders been able to make mistakes more accurately or propagate them further'. We see the kind of thing he is referring to in chasing indexes without taking the animal along with the numbers, ET from ewe lambs and heavy use of extreme sires.



Judy McGowan 1943-2022

This will be the first Working Genes sale without the meticulous planning, hard-working preparation and warm welcome of Judy (known as Granny or Mum to some of us).

She died very suddenly and without any pain or distress last November, just a few months before she could celebrate her 80th birthday and Golden wedding anniversary with Finlay.

Judy thrived on the organisational challenge of the Working Genes sale and took to it armed with clip board, rolling pin, watering can, string and a sharp pencil. She enjoyed it greatly because it involved all of her favourite things—family, local community, feeding people, and the characters involved in livestock. Hill shepherds, auctioneers, reputed breeders and youngsters making a start—all make for a grand mix of people and she loved working out who everyone was, where they were from and their connections to one another.

We especially miss her level-headed support and guidance, her family mealtime gatherings and her shortbread.



QUOTES & JOKES

"If you chase TWO rabbits, BOTH will get away."

"When you are going in the wrong direction, progress is the last thing you need." ~ Christopher Ryan

"If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." ~ Henry Ford

"Smart people do stupid things. Stupid people don't learn from them." ~ Frank Sonnenberg

"The secret to getting ahead is getting started." ~ Mark Twain

"The secret of happiness is to count your blessings while others are adding up their troubles."
~ William Penn

Breed for CH4nge

The Incheoch Lleyn flock are part of a DEFRA funded project designed to help breed sheep with a naturally low carbon-footprint. As well as measuring ewe lambs for methane output, the project will help drive forward some of our 'robustness' traits such as worm tolerance and body condition score by opening the door to genomic selection in our breeding program.

A Norwegian project modeling selection of sheep for reduced methane recently concluded that it was possible, but highlighted that more significant methane mitigation was to be made through improved lamb survival and longevity—more efficiency in what we are doing.

This project should allow us to get an understanding of what is going on with methane output alongside faster progress on these profit-driving traits.

We are pleased to be part of the Performance Recorded Lleyn Breeders group, who are a big player in the project, alongside others including Innovis, Exlana and Centurian Dorsets.

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