

Lambing 2018

Steve Waters and his family are now farming Rushall Farm in partnership with the owner, William Cumber. The farmer has to maximise the margins on each lamb sold and also the crops grown. The partnership means that the owner and farmer share the variable costs for the flock, which are the feed, silage, hay, grass seed, bedding, medicines, shearing and transport. The difference between the sale price and these costs is split between the farmer and the landowner.

The sheep are split into two flocks for lambing. The first will lamb from mid-February onwards. These will be our commercial flock of Lleyn ewes crossed with Texel rams to produce a stocky lamb. We'll be using teaser tups. These are vasectomised rams that get the ewes synchronising in their menstrual cycles so that when the ewes meet the intact rams (tups) most should get pregnant on their first cycle. This results in a tighter lambing period giving better opportunities for fostering, and reducing the amount of time the lambing shed needs to be staffed. The early lambing gives us the potential to sell the lambs early, meaning that each lamb achieves a better price. In the organic market prices remain high until early July as there are few organic flocks doing early lambing.

For school visits the main lambing period will be after the February half term to the end of term. The second flock will lamb from April 10th to the first week in May. These will be a Lleyn ewe crossed with a Lleyn ram. The wether lambs in this flock will also go to market but many of the ewe lambs will be kept as replacements. We'll also use teasers tups with this flock.

The start of the Summer term should be a good time for pre-schools and nurseries to visit the farm as there will be many small lambs to hold and the weather should be much milder.

Evening groups will also find this a good time to visit, with plenty of little lambs around, but also lighter evenings enabling walks in the woods and safer trailer rides.

The split lambing period maximises prices for lambs and also allows us the opportunity to plough and then drill our spring crops at what should be the optimum time. It also gives a good long season for children to enjoy the lambs.