



**Harper Adams
University**

University Farm Sheep Unit

The Sheep Unit at Harper Adams has three functions:

- as a research and development facility
- for education/demonstration
- to be commercially viable

The flock currently consists of 200 early lambing ewes. These are Suffolk x North of England Mules that are mated to Texel rams. The flock graze on the Chetwynd Deer Park, home of the Newport Agricultural Show Society. The ewes are mated in September/October and are housed in December following ultrasound scanning.

The lambing period is in late January/early February. Non trial ewes and lambs are turned out to grass as soon as possible. Lambs are weaned at 12-16 weeks old and finished off grass. Trial lambs remain indoors and are weaned at 8 weeks old and are finished off concentrate / trial diet.

Recent trial work has included the following:

- Effect of forage source and level and source of protein supply on the performance of ewes during pregnancy and early lactation.
- The effect of supplemental Vitamin E on the performance of ewes and lambs.
- The effects of sire breed on lamb performance and carcass quality.
- The effect of the source of supplemental zinc on the performance of ewes and lambs.

The sheep unit is used to demonstrate principles of sheep production to the majority of first year students as well as teaching in other modules. As well as explaining the principles of health, welfare, nutrition and management, some students also have the opportunity to carry out routine tasks such as condition scoring, foot trimming, dosing and selecting lambs for slaughter, as part of their classes or voluntarily in their own personal time.

The physical and financial performance figures for the flock are used by students to become familiar with carrying out enterprise appraisals.

Around six BSc students per year will use the sheep flock to carry out their final year investigational project. Projects can be nutrition based (e.g. late pregnancy nutrition of the ewe, diets for finishing lambs) or health based (e.g. prevention of foot rot). In some cases the results of this work have been presented at conferences or published as research papers in scientific journals. A number of PhD students have utilised the sheep flock for their research work, in particular with relation to nutrition of the ewe in late pregnancy and early lactation. The flock are also used to carry out commercial trials.

The sheep flock is used to demonstrate recent research findings at open days. The flock also plays host to farmer groups interested in sheep production systems.