

MEADOWOOD FARMS DAIRY SHEEP GENETICS

In 2017 we will offer 10 replacement ram lambs for sale; all will be sold on a first-deposit-first-choice basis. We may also offer a limited number of replacement ewe lambs.

Our 19 years of selection for milk production began in 1998 as we “bred up” our non-dairy sheep flock with, first, a single purebred East Friesian ram, and then over the years with the addition of high-production EF genetics from Everona Dairy (VA), Swiss EF genetics via Valley Shepherd (NJ), and Lacauene x EF genetics from Spooner Station (WI).

In 2008, as we realized the financial impact of poor udder conformation, we added udder conformation as a selection criteria in our dairy flock. In 2015 we were able to identify a ram, #13350, who throws consistently strong udders; we have used him extensively in our flock over the past two years, as we continue to improve our flock’s udder conformation.



How we identify quality genetics in our dairy sheep flock:

- Ewes are metered for milk production every three weeks with our Waikato meters
- Udders are graded mid-season for conformation (teat placement, suspensory ligament strength)
- Ewes are graded for their ability to milk out without machine stripping
- Ewes are then scored based on three traits:
 - Overall milk production (total for the season)
 - Udder conformation, including the ability to milk out without assistance
 - Late-season persistency (the ability to continue milking strongly after Labor Day)
- Scores are then weighted according to the selection pressure we would like to put on each of the three above traits, creating an “index” – a single number that accounts for all of our desired production traits.

Example: Our top 7 indexing mature ewes in the 2016 season

Ewe#	Lamb g.Dt	M 5/11 (cL)	5/11 lb/d	DIM 5/11	M 6/3 (cL)	6/3 lb/d	DIM 6/3	M 6/24 (cL)	6/24 lb/d	DIM 6/24	M 7/15 (cL)	7/15 lb/d	DIM 7/15	M 8/5 (cL)	8/5 lb/d	DIM 8/5	M 8/22 (cL)	8/22 lb/d	DIM 8/22	M 9/5 (cL)	9/5 lb/d	DIM 9/5	M 9/27 (cL)	9/27 lb/d	DIM 9/27
1434	3-Apr	165	5.6	38	160	6.3	61	155	6.3	82	135	4.7	103	140	4.1	124	120	3.5	141	205	4.2	155	140	2.6	177
1435	3-Apr	215	7.3	32	185	7.3	55	160	6.5	76	125	4.4	97	120	3.5	118	120	3.5	135	160	3.3	149	140	2.6	171
1453	4-Apr	210	7.2	37	195	7.7	60	160	6.5	81	140	4.9	102	180	5.2	123	100	2.9	140	200	4.1	154	110	2.1	176
1460	16-Apr	150	5.1	25	180	7.1	48	200	8.1	69	160	5.6	90	165	4.8	111	140	4.0	128	160	3.3	142	160	3.0	164
1477	16-Apr	185	6.3	25	180	7.1	48	180	7.3	69	125	4.4	90	170	4.9	111	100	2.9	128	240	4.9	142	140	2.6	164
1481	7-Apr	200	6.8	34	180	7.1	57	155	6.3	78	115	4.0	99	150	4.4	120	115	3.3	137	150	3.1	151	90	1.7	173
1493	18-Apr	160	5.5	22	190	7.5	45	160	6.5	66	180	6.3	87	130	3.8	108	120	3.5	125	220	4.5	139	180	3.4	161

9/5 lb/d	DIM 9/5	M 9/27 (cL)	9/27 lb/d	DIM 9/27	1st mtr to 6/0	Est. D3: mtr	Total milk to D60	Milk to D60 x M Factor	Mtr su. n. to 9/27	Est. D3: 5/11	Total milk to 9/27	Total Milk x M Factor	Late Last (8/22-9/27)	Late lact. M Factor	Teats down	Pipar. bits	Teats fwd	Udd. Scores	Udder. som. ment. June	MO. rating Sept. 12	Comment metering	DrgOff	MAE. Prod. scores	MAE. Late. Lact. Scores	MAE. Udder. Scores	MAE. Gold. Stat. milk. est	MAE. Final. Index. scores
4.2	155	140	2.6	177	138	144	281	349	670	144	814	1,009	192	239	5	10	15	15	MO				2	2	1	0	80
3.3	149	140	2.6	171	169	154	323	400	681	154	835	1,035	171	212	9	10	19	19	3				2	1	2	2	80
4.1	154	110	2.1	176	171	177	349	432	732	177	909	1,127	185	230	7	10	17	17	MO				2	2	1	0	80
3.3	142	160	3.0	164	141	81	222	275	749	81	829	1,028	195	242	2	8	10	10					2	2	1	0	80
4.9	142	140	2.6	164	155	99	254	315	730	99	829	1,028	204	253	10	10	5	15	slow	do?			2	2	1	0	80
3.1	151	90	1.7	173	161	154	314	390	660	154	813	1,008	162	201	8	10	18	18	MO	4			2	1	2	2	80
4.5	139	180	3.4	161	149	74	223	277	740	74	814	1,009	204	253	5	5	10	10	MO				2	2	1	0	80

This index is then used to determine which ewes will be bred to dairy rams to produce replacement ewe lambs and ram lambs, and which ewes will be bred to Texel and Dorper terminal sires.

Replacement ram lambs

At fall breeding, we identify the very few ewes from whom we will retain intact dairy ram lambs, and decide which of our breeding ram’s genetics will pair up best with each of those top ewes (rams are selected based on the production records and udder conformation of their daughters, granddaughters, etc). Those potential replacement ram lambs are born the following spring and raised with all other dairy and market lambs until late July, when they are separated and assessed for any obvious physical weaknesses (poor mouths, poor structural soundness, poor growth rate). The final cut for replacement ram lambs is made in late August, based on breeding soundness criteria – fully-descended and freely-moving testicles, testicle circumference, freely-moving pizzles – and any additional information from their dam’s or related female’s production for that season.

Replacement ewe lambs

The number of replacement ewe lambs available for sale is not known until mid-summer, when we have a good idea of the number of production ewes we will be culling. If you would like to be on our notification list for replacement females, please email Bee Tolman at tolmansheep@hotmail.com.

Flock health notes

The Meadowood dairy flock is tested annually for OPP and Johne’s, and is free of both. There is no foot rot on the farm. The flock is vaccinated annually for the control of CL.

Receiving information on available animals

Any prospective buyer of Meadowood Farms breeding stock will receive very thorough descriptions of all animals offered, including dams’ production histories, udder pictures, and lineages; and ram lambs’ or ewe lambs’ physical information and pictures thereof. If you would like to see the information that was made available for the animals sold in the 2016 season (*note: all have been sold*), please email Bee Tolman at tolmansheep@hotmail.com.