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 purchased 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 Lacaune 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, which 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.

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 (not all have been sold), please email Bee Tolman at jolmambeen@hotmail.com.

Sample pics of #13350 daughters, all pics taken June 2016

1436 (2-yr-old)
1481 (2-yr-old)
1513 (1-yr-old)

How we identify quality genetics in our dairy sheep flock:

1. Ewes are metered for milk production every three weeks with our Waikato meters
2. Udders are graded mid-season for conformation (teat placement, suspensory ligament strength)
3. Ewes are graded for their ability to milk out without machine stripping
4. Ewes are then scored based on three traits:
   a. Overall milk production (total for the season)
   b. Udder conformation, including the ability to milk out without assistance
   c. Late-season persistency (the ability to continue milking strongly after Labor Day)
5. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ewe Number</th>
<th>Milk Production</th>
<th>Udder Conformation</th>
<th>Late Season Persistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 mid-September, when they are separated and assessed for any obvious physical weaknesses (poor udders, 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 jolmambeen@hotmail.com.

Flock health notes

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

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