

Steven Duff runs a mixed farm in Co.Tyrone where the main enterprises are beef, sheep & poultry.

His father first tried the Bleu du Maine when they first came to Ireland more than twenty years ago & whilst they were not well suited to the farm as a terminal sire, Steven remembered that some really good ewe replacements were produced, so decided to purchase another Bleu ram from Sam Small at Randalstown. Steven wanted to produce his own replacement ewes & increase his lambing percentage, still producing a quality lamb for the prime lamb market.

Initially he put the Bleu X lambs to the ram to speed up the replacement process, but found he had better performance results with shearlings. Lambing percentages increased from 163% to 182% & based on the prices at the time saw an increase of £1300 for every 100 ewes kept.

163 lambs at £65 = £10595. 183 lambs at £65 = £11895.



While Steven was happy with the increased lambing percentage, he felt that the Bleu X had more to offer, but he was very keen to keep the ease of lambing whilst increasing the grading of the lambs. He was confident with the Bleu X ewe producing plenty of milk to cope with the increased number of lambs could produce a better carcass lamb when crossed to the Dutch Texel, so once more it was back to Sam Small for another ram!

The Dutch Texel x lambs have been a tremendous success, good sized lambs & a further rise in lambing percentages (1%) with a time reduction in birth to killing of 11 days. Good percentage of lambs now achieve E & U grade & R grades have virtually disappeared. Steven receives a bonus for E's & U's averaging about £3.82 per lamb.

Steven has achieved an increase of more than £2000 per 100 ewes, using the Bleu x ewe & selecting a sire to produce what his customers require. He has retained the great qualities of the Bleu, prolificacy, milking ability & ease of lambing & with the Dutch Texel x lambs he is achieving top grades & more importantly – top prices!