

Gordon & Yvonne Johnston, Ireland



Gordon & Yvonne Johnston keep a flock of about 500 Lleyn x Texel commercial ewes bred to Vendéen rams and a flock of 50 pedigree Vendéen ewes in Co Westmeath, Ireland. They started using Select Sheepware in 2007 as a desktop program only, keying in all the information as it happened and now use a Psion handheld reader for entering all information.



The reader allows for very simple recording to meet the requirement of the Department of Agriculture. The Johnstons find the Flock Register facility indispensable. All events are logged and instantly available for inspection by any official. The feed and medicine log makes recording for Quality Assurance schemes effortless.

There is a comprehensive array of reports generated covering the whole sheep year from mating to scanning, feeding, lambing, health treatments, batching, culling and (unfortunately) deaths.

Gordon and Yvonne operate a closed flock, retaining their own replacement ewes. Good record keeping is essential for this to identify the best producing ewes. They record the lambing ease and all health events of the ewe as well as days to slaughter and carcass quality of her progeny before keeping her lambs for further breeding. Until they discovered the Select Sheepware software, this was a very cumbersome, time consuming task.

The introduction of compulsory EID in 2010 presented a challenge but also an opportunity and with the Select Sheepware software program the challenge is minimised and the opportunity maximised. All ewe lambs from the replacement flock are tagged at birth with a farm tag and if the lambs are retained for further breeding, they are tagged with the Department of Agriculture EID tag and the Psion Workabout Pro

is used to read and correlate the tags. These new tags are easily read with the Psion Workabout Pro and all the procedures can be logged onto the sheep program.



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Yvonne said

“The pedigree recording features in the program are very impressive. Such a level of recorded detail and the comprehensive software program of Select Sheepware produces reports that shows the detailed ancestry and genetic potential of animals. This leads to steady genetic gain.

I knew that to make our flock more efficient I had to make decisions based on detailed, accurate and up to date data and I needed software to do this. I've been impressed with the how well Select Sheepware has met our needs. It has allowed us to identify the best performing ewes to decide on replacements for the flock and make sound culling decisions. It really has helped us to improve efficiencies and the program is always evolving with useful features being added regularly.

Our meat processor sends the kill weights of every animal and I scan it into an excel spreadsheet and this data is imported into the Select Sheepware program, giving a complete picture for every animal - right through from birth to slaughter. The ability to track weight gain over time for me is essential. We can identify the most productive team of rams. We analyse the days to slaughter and the carcass quality produced by three different teams of rams. We use only genetically recorded rams from the Sheep Ireland program. One team comprises of three rams with high maternal attributes to produce replacement ewes. There are two teams of Vendéen rams to produce quality meat carcasses.

Initially I used a PDA and now I use a Psion reader which I find to be a real benefit. Using it, data can be entered quickly especially at lambing time and it's also useful to be able to look up the details for an animal when working with it. “

