

'Exceptional' trade at Suffolk Premier Sale in Blessington

The 137th Annual Show & Sale of the Suffolk Sheep Society South of Ireland took place in Blessington Mart on Saturday August 5th where auctioneer Mr John Doyle described trade as 'a very strong trade with exceptional demand from Commercial Breeders. Breeding rams were of excellent quality with stock presented on the day up on 2022'

Judging got underway on Friday afternoon under the experienced eye of Judge, Mr Alastair Barclay of the renowned Blackbrae Flock in Northern Ireland while Commercial breeders Michael & Ger Murphy were on hand to step in to judge the Gigot Ram class.

In a Championship of exceptional quality, the judge tapped out a superb ram lamb from the Annakisha flock of Arthur and Patrick O'Keefe. He was sired by the Reserve Champion from the NI Premier in 2022 Blackbrae AB President out of an Annakisha ewe. This stylish lamb had previously won the Open Ram Class and the Male Championship before claiming the title of Supreme Champion. 2023 has proved to be a very successful year for this lamb as he had previously won the Champion Ram Lamb spot at the National Suffolk Championships in Gurteen in June. The quality of this lamb came to the fore when he was eventually knocked down under John Doyle's hammer for €20,000 and sold to the Cairness Flock of Jimmy Douglas in Scotland.



Taking Reserve Champion was Andrew & Jonathan Lucas's lamb from the Finnvale Flock. Their lamb Finnvale BFG had been sired by last year's Champion, Finnvale Am the Man whom they had retained. The ram had won the Best lamb sired by a South of Ireland Ram earlier in the day before claiming Reserve Male and Reserve Champion of the Show. He went on to sell in the ring to the Burnview Flock of William & Stephanie Tait, Northern Ireland for €2600 while the Finnvale pen overall, averaged €1695 with Am the Man lambs selling to an average of €2067.

A Cairnton Chaos sired lamb out of a Solwaybank Ewe, owned by Alan Kilpatrick of the Convoy flock in Donegal claimed the second highest price of the day for a strong, stylish lamb which also found a home in

Northern Ireland. Other top prices on the day included a Crewelands Dancing Brave ET lamb from the pen of JJ & Martin Doherty, Malinhead. This was a SIS eligible lamb which sold to a fellow South of Ireland Breeder for €2300. Also selling well on the day was another of the Doherty's lambs which had placed 1st in the Pen of Three Class and was knocked down at €2100.

The winner of the Novice class was a very correct lamb from the Cronebane pen of local man, Gus Doyle. He had beaten off stiff competition from PJ McMonagle's Forkins Masterplan lamb which sold at €2200. This Novice winner, sired by Donbraid Assassin went on to sell to a Donegal pedigree breeder also for €2200. There were a number of other lambs sold at the €2200 mark which included a Kells T-rex sired lamb from the Ballygarris pen of Michael & Marie Jennings in Mayo and two rams from the Finnvale pen sired by Salopian Pure Gold and Finnvale Am the Man.

The Shearling Ram class was won by Philip Byrne of the Limepark Flock with his Muirton One Direction Ram which later went on to sell to a commercial buyer for €900.

The Female classes commenced with the Shearling Ewe Class, which saw local breeder John & Esther Gahan claim the top spot with a stylish Lakeview Del Boy sired Gimmer. She had fought off stiff competition from two Cairness Our Bucks sired gimmers from the Lismurtagh and Loughrynn Flocks who had been placed 2nd and 3rd respectively. While these two females remained unsold the Champion Shearling was knocked down at €1200 in the ring. The ewe lamb class was a very stylish affair and was tightly contended. Taking top honours from the judge was the Mountford flock of Oliver and Adrienne Deane's January born lamb, sired by Ballinatone Al Capone from a Mountford Ewe. This breedy lamb was eventually sold to a Pedigree Breeder in the West. Placed 2nd in her class, Philip Lynch's Clyda Awesome bred lamb sold for €820 while the 3rd placed, January born lamb from the Milldam Flock of Shane Brady and sired by Cairnton Chaos also sold for €820.

In the final lineup in the Female Championship, it was the Mountford Ewe Lamb which proved to be the judge's favourite as she claimed the top honours as Female Champion with Philip Lynch's Glyde Ewe Lamb claiming the Reserve Female Champion spot.



Overall, there was a great buzz about the sale with much interest being shown in the lots on offer both prior to the sale and ringside. With a clearance rate of 85% - well increased from the 2022 figures, it was clear to see that the excellent quality of stock on offer, encouraged buyers to purchase. The pedigree Average came in at €2628 with the Commercial average hitting €804 – up 16% on the previous year's trade. While there was no export to Europe from the sale, there were a significant number of animals exported to Northern Ireland directly from the sale.

The sale was described by Auctioneer John Doyle as **'overall a very good trade with exceptional demand from Commercial Breeders, with some leaving disappointed at being unable to secure a purchase. Breeding rams presented were of an exceptionally good quality and the commercial end of the sale was on fire.'**

Despite the huge demand, there were prices to suit all pockets with SIS eligible rams being purchased from €500, which made for an extremely brisk trade. With an overall clearance rate of 85% on ram lambs, 70% of the lambs sold headed into the Commercial sector – up 20 percentage points on 2022. Demand was high and the Society attribute this high demand from the commercial sector on the confidence held in the Suffolk Breed for its ability to finish faster from a grass based system. In a climate of rising input costs this ability to finish 'Fast from Grass' is an important factor when trying to maximise farm profitability. Early finishing lambs always command premium prices – a major plus in this current difficult climate. Breeders are optimistic that this demand for the Suffolk breed will be evident throughout the breeding season and beyond.

It was very encouraging to see so many of the newer breeders taking part in the sale for the first time and also to see the Young Handler Class so well supported with 1st place going to Isabella Taylor, Ballynacannon Flock, 2nd place, Paddy McMonagle with his own Beltanyview flock, recently founded with his brother Tommy and 3rd place to Millie Donald from Donbraid Suffolks.

The remaining Society Sales for 2023 will take place on the following dates: Cahir on Friday 1st Sept (Eve), Carnew on Wednesday 6th September (eve), Ballina on Tuesday 3rd October (day) and Raphoe on Friday 6th October (eve).