

IRISH VENDÉEN SHEEP SOCIETY LIMITED

Registered under Industrial & Provident Societies Acts 1893 – 1978



Approved: 26th November 2022

Breeding Programme

in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1012

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The Irish Vendéen Sheep Society Limited is recognised as a breed society and to operate an approved breeding programme by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1012.

Background to the Vendéen Breed

The breed has been well established in the Vendée region of France for many hundreds of years and is said to owe some of its blood from sheep saved from the wrecks of Spanish Galleons at the time of the Armada. More definite links were seen to be established with an importation to the Vendée of British Southdown sheep a little over a century ago.

More recently, Vendéen sheep have been selected to satisfy the typical French demand for lean meat. They have also been chosen for their hardiness in the wet and windy conditions on the Atlantic coast of France and even for their prolificacy. The impression formed has been that these are very practical sheep which appeal to practical sheep farmers who are seeking the best possible results from sheep which do not make excessive demands in terms of management and labour. They are of a quiet temperament and are easy to handle. They adapt well to being housed, particularly at lambing, and they are good mothers.

Breed Qualities

The Vendéen breed is hardy and has proved to adapt well to most conditions in Ireland. The fleece remains close and so sheds water easily and does not open along the back, even in heavy rain. Vendéen lambs are fine to medium in bone and this contributes to the easy births, which are a feature of the breed. The lambs are born brisk and lively.

Growth rates of Vendéen cross lambs are similar to those for the majority of Continental terminal sires. It is possible to send top quality lambs for slaughter from 84 days to receive the highest quality of grading. Because the carcass has a high lean content, heavier carcasses of 21kg or above will grade consistently well. They are well suited to both the home butcher's market and the French market.

Since the Vendéen breed have been in this country, we have seen the sheep become established because of their quality and it is our aim to provide continuing, effective development of this very appealing breed.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement and breeding objective of the Irish Vendéen Sheep Society Limited is:

“To promote and increase usage of Vendéen rams as a terminal sire among commercial sheep farmers”

Aim of the Breeding Programme

The aim of the Irish Vendéen Sheep Society’s breeding programme is to support breeders of purebred, registered Vendéen sheep in the improvement of genetic lines of the core stock. This is to be achieved by strict adherence to the “Breed Standard” combined with close consideration of the genetic evaluations of the Sheep Ireland LambPlus® Programme.

Breeders are rigorously encouraged to participate in the Sheep Ireland LambPlus® Programme and to use the results of the Eurostar evaluations when making selections of breeding stock.

An overview of the Sheep Ireland genetic improvement programme can be found on their website: www.sheep.ie

Breed Name

Vendéen

Breed Standard

Head

- ❖ The head shows much character and presence
- ❖ The head and cheeks carry wool
- ❖ The ears are fine and of medium length

Face

- ❖ The face is grey/brown and there is no wool on the face
- ❖ The nose is reasonably long and the muzzle broad

Body

- ❖ The body is long with a broad back, well sprung ribs, strong loin and deep gigot
- ❖ The ewe is similar to the ram except the head is feminine and stylish
- ❖ The adult male will weigh between 110 and 140kg
- ❖ The adult female will weigh between 80 and 110kg
- ❖ The legs are of medium bone and lightly covered
- ❖ The Vendéen is not a long-legged breed but it should not be too close to the ground

Wool

- ❖ The fleece is of excellent quality being of fine down type and very uniform in fibre length with no coarse, kempy wool on the lower part of the hindquarters
- ❖ The staple length is typically 5 to 7cm and the average fleece weight is 3.5kg per sheep
- ❖ There shall be no black pigment within the fleece on the body

Geographical Territory

It is intended that the breed improvement programme will be carried out in the Republic of Ireland.

Identification of Purebred Breeding Animals

The identification scheme adopted by the Society is that of tagging with National Sheep Identification Scheme (NSIS) electronic identification system. In addition, the blank female section of the conventional left ear tag and / or the blank male section of the right ear electronic tag must have the pedigree number permanently printed on it.

A flockbook number is also provided to each animal in the Society's Flock Book. It comprises the 3 letter Flock Code followed by a 2 digit year and a 3 digit individual identifier.

Example:

Joseph Sheepbreeder nominates **Hill** as his first choice of Prefix and it is accepted by the Society. This means that **SJH** is his Flock Code if it is not already in use in the Society Flock Book.

The **flockbook number** of his first-born lamb in the 2021 breeding season is **SJH21001**

System for Recording Purebred Breeding Animals

The current, up to date Flock Book is hosted and maintained by Sheep Ireland. An electronic copy is provided to the Registrar of the Society to track and record all purebred, registered Vendéen sheep in Ireland at any given time. This includes information on the number of breeders. This information can be obtained by contacting the Registrar.

The annual Flock Book extract is published in December each year and includes all the new registrations from 1st December the previous year up to 30th November of that year.

A hard copy of the Flock Book extract is held in the registered office and is available for inspection to any paid-up member of the IVSS on request.

The records maintained on each animal entering the Flock Book is as follows:

- Breeder name and address
- Owner name and address
- Flock book number
- NSIS number

- Animal name
- Sex
- Date of Birth
- Born as (single/twin/triplet etc.)
- Sire
- Dam

Division of the Flock Book

The Vendéen Flock Book is composed of a main section only. To qualify for entry into the Flock Book an animal must: -

- Be descended from parents and grandparents entered in the main section of an approved Flock Book of the Vendéen breed
- Be identified at birth according to Union animal health law and the rules set out in this breeding programme
- Have a pedigree established according to the rules set out in this breeding programme
- Be accompanied by a zootechnical certificate in the case of trade in or entry into the Union of an animal and where that animal is intended to be entered in the Flock Book.
- Be accompanied by a zootechnical certificate where an animal is produced from a germinal product which is traded, or which entered into the Union and where that animal is intended to be entered in the Flock Book.

The main section is not divided into classes according to merit, age or gender.

Procedure and Rules of Entry to the Flock Book

- Sheep must be positively identified at birth. The sire and dam of all lambs should be identified and recorded. All lambs born on or between 1st December and 30th April should be birth notified via the breeder's Sheep Ireland homepage. Lambs born on or between 1st May and 30th November should be birth notified by contacting the registrar of the IVSS. Lambs should be birth notified in order to be eligible to be entered into the Flock Book. Where a breeder fails to birth notify a lamb, they must contact the society registrar in order to apply for the lamb to be entered in the Flock Book. Sheep that have not been birth notified, cannot be registered until birth notification has taken place. Breeders should birth notify all lambs at birth. A

breeder may then decide at a later date which animals are suitable for entry into the Flock Book and submit an application for entry of those animals to the Flock Book.

- ii. Where a lamb is born as a result of an embryo transfer (ET) breeding event. The recipient/surrogate ewe, as well as the genetic sire and dam, should all be identified and recorded at the birth notification of the lamb.
- iii. Sheep should be tagged according to society rules as soon as feasible but before 1st May at the latest
- iv. Dams should be registered in the name of the breeder applying for registration of a sheep. Where this is not the position the dam may be registered in the main section of an approved Flock Book of the Vendéen breed in the name of another Vendéen breeder.
- v. Sires to be DNA genotyped prior to registration of their progeny. Rams whose germinal products (eg. semen/sperm) are to be used in artificial insemination, ET or any other assisted reproductive technology (ART) programmes should be DNA genotyped prior to the start of the ART programme and have undergone performance testing or genetic evaluation (Ref Article 21 (1)(c)). This is to facilitate future genomic confirmation of progeny ancestry.
- vi. Ewes whose germinal products (eg. oocytes or embryos) are used for ET programmes such as *in-vitro* fertilisation and embryo transfer (IVF-ET) or multiple ovulation embryo transfer (MOET)), or any other ART programmes excluding AI, should be DNA genotyped and have undergone performance testing or genetic evaluation (Ref Article 21 (1)(e)) prior to the commencement of the programme in order to facilitate the parentage verification of the resulting progeny.
- vii. ET derived lambs shall be parentage DNA verified and a copy of the “Certificate of Embryo Recovery and Transfer to Recipients” should be submitted along with the application for entry into the Flock Book (via Sheep Ireland website) in order to be eligible for entry to the Flock Book.
- viii. Any sheep that are to be registered after 30th November in their year of birth (ie a sheep that is 1 year of age or older) must be DNA parentage verified to be eligible for entry to the Flock Book.
- ix. All male lambs shall be named with the Flock Prefix followed by a name chosen by the breeder or auto-selected by the Sheep Ireland programme. This name should not exceed the ICBF maximum of 30 characters including spaces. The name must begin with the letter for the year as designated by the Society. (Female lambs may also be named but it is not a requirement of registration). The name of ET lambs should end with ET eg. Joseph Sheepbreeder’s ram: “Hill Name ET”.
- x. Breed Society members must have paid their membership fee for the current year in order to benefit from reduced registration fees. Non-payment of the annual

membership fee will result in the non-member registration fee being applied. See appendix for registration fees.

- xi. Registration requests shall be completed online using the Sheep Ireland website in accordance with instructions issued from time to time. Until the appropriate fee is submitted the sheep cannot be entered into the Flock Book.
- xii. Lambs born after 1st December into a breeder's flock are eligible for entry in the Flock Book of the next year.
- xiii. An inspection team, nominated by the Council of the Society, may perform spot checks to confirm, by DNA analysis, parentage of any sheep registered in the Society Flock Book
- xiv. Where there is a query or doubt regarding the parentage of an animal, the Council reserves the right to request that an animal be DNA typed to prove the parentage (sire and dam). The cost of the DNA typing will be borne by the owner
- xv. 2% of new registrations are randomly selected for DNA testing to verify parentage. Where a sheep that has been DNA genotyped is found (by DNA parentage testing) not to be the offspring of the sire and/or dam that was recorded at birth, and no other sire or dam can be predicted by DNA genotype, then the animal no longer fits the requirements for entry to the Flock Book and will be removed from the Flock Book.

Imported Sheep

1. Imported sheep must be entered in a Vendéen Flock Book and be accompanied by a zootechnical certificate issued by a recognised breed society or breeding body for the breed.
2. The French system does not include a naming regime so the Irish importer and breeder nominate a name for rams as for home bred stock.

Transfers

The owner of a purebred sheep is responsible for entering the transfer of ownership of that animal into their own inventory on the Sheep Ireland database. This will ensure that the integrity of the flock book is maintained. A reprinted zootechnical certificate may be issued in the name of the new owner if requested.

Zootechnical Certificates

On successful completion of an entry into the Flock Book, and payment of the registration fee, a zootechnical certificate will be sent from Sheep Ireland to the Registrar who will issue the final certificate to the breeder of the newly entered sheep, within fourteen days following receipt of the zootechnical certificate from Sheep Ireland (excluding requests from the breeder to the registrar to withhold the certificate for a period of time and providing the registration fees have been paid in full). Certificates issued by the Irish Vendéen Sheep Society are coloured blue for males and pink for females and will be signed by the Registrar and embossed stamped.

In the context of the zootechnical certificate, the breeder is noted as the person who owned the ewe from which the lamb was born (the dam for natural mating or AI derived lambs, or the recipient/surrogate ewe for ET derived lambs) at the time of the lamb's birth.

The Society have not availed of any derogations options in relation to the issuing (Article 31(1) of the Animal Breeding Regulations) or the information on the modalities of issuing of those zootechnical certificates.

Selection & Breeding Objectives

The main objective of the breeding programme is to preserve and develop the positive physical traits of shape, conformation and fleece quality, etc. (see breed standard on page 5). whilst, at the same time, improving the genetic merit of the breed traits by selecting carefully using the Eurostar information (see below for further detail) provided for each animal by Sheep Ireland.

Breeders should use Terminal and Maternal trait information when making their selections to ensure that both improvements to terminal sires and replacement breeding stock will be achieved through careful, selective breeding.

Selection of future breeding stock should be made using this data (taking into consideration the accuracy percentage of the data) in conjunction with visual appraisal of each animal to ensure adherence to the Breed Standard and correct conformation. When purchasing a ram, a breeder should look for the highest genetic merit as well as complete adherence to the

breed standard. Where rams with EuroStars and Terminal/Replacement indices are available, breeders should use rams with higher ratings and index figures than the ewes with which they will be mated in order to improve the genetics of the future generations of their flock. When selecting females for future breeding the same parameters should be applied with particular importance placed on the evaluations covering the maternal traits. It is also important to keep the gene pool as large as the national flock will allow and to restrict close breeding if at all possible. An In-breed Checker report is available to all breeders through their flock page on the Sheep Ireland website.

Performance Testing and Genetic Evaluations

LambPlus®

LambPlus® is the national initiative to record performance data and compute evaluations within breed. Breeders are actively encouraged to participate in the LambPlus® Programme. This involves recording on-farm mating information, lambing date, weighing data, health data and muscle & fat scanning data. The resulting EuroStars (within breed) and the Index Value (across all participating breeds) figures are published on a weekly basis by Sheep Ireland to breeders and online at www.sheep.ie from May to October.

Sheep Ireland EuroStars & Genetic Evaluation

DNA parentage verification has become an important tool in pedigree breeding and all breeding males are required to be genotyped before their progeny will be accepted for registration. Breeders are also actively encouraged to genotype their ewes but this is optional at present unless requested to confirm or ascertain correct parentage to validate entry into the Vendeen Flock Book.

Samples are collected using DNA tags. These can be obtained by using the genomic management tab on your personal Flock page of the Sheep Ireland website and selecting the animals to be tested from the list supplied. Taggers can also be purchased at the same time if required. The samples obtained are then posted to the laboratory (Weatherbys Scientific, Unit F1 - M7 Business Park, Newhall, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 VX86) directly using the envelope provided.

Genomic/DNA results will be made available by Sheep Ireland on a breeder's personal flock page of the Sheep Ireland website, under reports and genomic results. They are also available

through the flockbook animal search on <https://appsh.sheep.ie/finder/flockbook/VN> and in sale catalogues.

The results from these genetic evaluations enable the breeder to make informed choices in meeting the aim of the Breeding Programme and making selections towards improving their own flock. The results from genetic/genomic evaluation are used in combination with on-farm data recording to increase the accuracy of the EuroStars and Terminal/Replacement indices.

Technical Activities Outsourced

Activities outsourced	Name, Address	Telephone
Management of Flock Book Database	Kevin McDermott, Sheep Ireland, Bandon. Co Cork Email: query@sheep.ie www.sheep.ie	023 882 0451
Genomic Evaluations	Kevin McDermott, Sheep Ireland, Bandon. Co Cork Email: query@sheep.ie www.sheep.ie	023 882 0451

Contact Details of IVSS Officers

	Name, Address	Telephone
IVSS Registered Office	Secretary: Cheryl O'Brien, Springvale, Kildorrery. Co Cork	086 852 5588
Registrar	Ann Ford, Kilnacrott, Ballyjamesduff. Co Cavan	049 8540063 086 0237721

Appendix

Details of Registration Fees

Members:

- From 1st December to 30th November in the breeding year €15.00
- From 1st December onwards in the following years €25.00

Non-Members:

- Pedigree Registration for sheep belonging to non-member breeders €70.00

All breeders:

- Reprint of Zootechnical Certificate €5.00