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## Buying a Ram - How can you purchase performance?

One of the most important decisions is selecting a ram, yet many still rely on “stockman’s” eye to choose. This is undoubtedly valuable, but genetic traits are not always reflected in a ram’s appearance, which makes selecting by eye alone a gamble.

A visual inspection may tell you...

- Mature size and body condition score
- Breed and pedigree
- Physical defects and obvious health problems

But you really need to know....

- Breeding potential for growth and carcass quality (EBV's)
- Age
- Flock health status

Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) provides you with accurate data to back up your selection and removes the element of risk. Using a recorded ram and following these few simple steps could be worth thousands to your business.

### Ram buying tips:

Decide on breeding targets for your flock and what will yield most profit:

- Faster growth rates?
- Preferred conformation?

- Heavier carcasses?
- Discuss your breeding targets with the ram breeder and select a ram with the right EBVs to fulfil the targets
- Use breed benchmark to compare the ram with the rest of the breed
- Invest in the best – the difference between an average recorded ram and one with high EBVs could be worth £££s over its lifetime
- Look after the health and nutritional requirements of your ram to ensure it has a long and productive life
- Ram MOT 12 weeks before tugging



## Strep. Uberis Mastitis Problems

Strep. Uberis is becoming a problem cause of mastitis on many dairy farms. Recent surveys have shown it was responsible for 26% of clinical mastitis with the next highest being coliforms at 14%.

Strep. Uberis causes repeat clinical cases, persistent high cell counts and problems with bactoscans.

It is spread both cow to cow at milking time and via the cow's environment. Traditionally we have found a lot of Strep. Uberis mastitis on farms using straw yards but there can also be problems with cattle picking up infections at pasture both during lactation and the dry period. There can be a build up of infection when cows camp under trees for shade or shelter from bad weather and around feed troughs.



**Strep. Uberis can survive on pasture for a long time so avoid having cows on the same field for more than two continuous weeks with a four week rest before they return.**

**This is particularly important for dry cows.**

## Recurrent cases - what should you do?

Strep. Uberis hides inside the cells of the udder to evade antibiotics. These bacteria can re-emerge after the initial antibiotic levels have fallen and become a recurrent mastitis just as the milk has gone back into the tank! Extending the treatment period will improve the cure rate. Some farmers will treat all cases of mastitis with a tube twice a day for at least 3 days and although it costs more initially they have very low recurrence rates of clinical mastitis and fewer problem high cell count cows

Please remember if you use any antibiotics "off label" then statutory withdrawal periods of 7 days for milk and 28 days for meat apply.