**RamCompare is recruiting new flocks this season**

**What is RamCompare?**

RamCompare is the national progeny test for terminal sire breeds and is a joint-levy funded project (AHDB and HCC) with Signet Breeding Services providing data collation and analysis services. The project is supported by Quality Meat Scotland and Agrisearch in Northern Ireland.

The project works with partners across the food chain to drive faster rates of genetic improvement in the UK sheep industry. RamCompare supports this goal through the provision of data from commercial farms and abattoir records which are incorporated into the genetic evaluations delivered by Signet.

Each year nominated performance-recorded rams are taken from various terminal sire breeds and used on commercial farms across the UK. The progeny produced from this breeding programme are monitored from birth through to slaughter with the data collected being fed back to Signet.

To date we have progeny tested over 468 rams from 17 different breeds, collecting data from over 44,000 lambs in one of the largest trials of its kind. For more information go to [www.ramcompare.com](http://www.ramcompare.com)

**We are recruiting new flocks**

We are looking for additional commercial sheep farms across England and Wales to join the project to support our data collection activities.

Within RamCompare there are slightly different ways that flocks can engage with the project depending on their willingness to use artificial insemination (AI) and provide access to the lamb crop for ultrasound scanning.

**What do RamCompare farms get from the project?**

* Engagement in one of the UK’s leading sheep breeding projects
* Provision of recorded rams for natural mating (with associated health/fertility tests)
* Funding to undertake AI and access to AI sires for a portion of the flock
* A farm payment (dependent on the quality and quantity of records provided)

**When can you get involved?**

New farms will join the project ahead of the 2024 mating season and will remain involved for two breeding seasons. New rams will be provided this year and next, to enable progeny testing to commence in 2025 and complete in 2026.

The application process is open now and will close on Friday 3rd May 2024.

**What do RamCompare flocks need to do?**

Ideally flocks joining RamCompare will meet the following criteria\*:

* Minimum of 300 uniform breed ewes
* Mated to performance recorded Terminal sire rams selected/approved by the project
* Experienced EID user with own equipment and at least two years’ experience to collect data, including the ability to collect lambing records and lamb weights
* Able to rear all trial lambs on the same management system
* Ability to finish lambs quickly over a defined time period
* Able to allocate ewes to single sire mating groups and undertake laparoscopic AI, if required
* Using an abattoir that reports standard kill data linked to an individual lamb ID
* Known flock health status, i.e. clear for MV, OPA, Johnes and following an active health plan

\* Some flexibility may be considered

If you are interested, contact me for more information or simply complete the application form and return to bridget@bridget-lloyd.com by the deadline Friday 3rd May 2024.

**Appendix 1. Flock application form – Please complete your details below:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name  |  |
| Address |
| Telephone |  |
| Email |  |
| Electronic identification (EID) |  |
| Full EID system already in place and fully utilised | Yes, since …………… (year) |
| EID equipment |  |
| EID software |  |
| Mating:  |  |
| Number of ewes available to project |  |
| Ewe breed |  |
| Ability to single sire mate groups of ewes with rams | Yes / No |
| Willing to use artificial insemination (AI) on a proportion of ewes | Yes / Need more information / No  |
| Lambing period (planned) |  |
| Rams:  |  |
| Ram breed(s) currently used |  |
| Do you already use recorded rams | Yes / Some / No |
| I am a pedigree, performance recorded ram breeder (breed) |  |
| Facility to hold rams in quarantine on farm | Yes / No |
| If using AI, are we able to align AI & natural service dates | Yes / No |
| Lambs:  |  |
| Lambing | Indoors / Outside |
| Willing to tag, weigh and fully record lambs at birth | Already do / Willing to start |
| Able to manage all lambs as a uniform group | Yes / No  |
| Willing to collect lamb weights at 56 (8 -weeks), 90 days (12-weeks) plus a final sale weight | Already do / Willing to start |
| Lamb finishing system (brief explanation) |  |
| Slaughter |  |
| Abattoirs report standard kill data on individual lamb EID basis | Yes already do / Possibly / No |
| Date of first slaughter batch (usually) |  |
| Date of last slaughter batch (objective)  |  |

**General flock information:**

* You would be invited to attend all project group meetings (most are online)
* You may be asked to host an open day
* You would maintain full ownership of the lambs and rams
* Lamb payments - 50% paid at pregnancy scanning and the remainder paid when the slaughter season completes

**The project would agree to provide:**

* Terminal sire performance recorded rams sourced by the project are provided free of charge, they will be fertility/health tested with all associated costs covered\*
* Artificial Insemination (AI) including all associated costs such as semen purchase, synchronisation and AI fee
* Access to veterinary advice as necessary - AI, ram health/fertility and lamb management

\*Performance recorded terminal sire rams sourced by individual farms can be put forward – in these circumstances farms take full responsibility.