

# Tales from Whyle House

## The home of Whyle House Lamb

### May 2008



A full house this year! All 44 lambs expected arrived on cue and we've (so far!) kept them all alive. Unlike last year, the weather was foul – we even brought some ewes and lambs back in again as it was so cold but it has now warmed up and they're all gambolling around the fields in the sunshine. Our friends Ian and Jill came to help us again but only two ewes decided to produce while they were here! The rest waited until we were on our own – and without Celine as well this time as she is expecting a baby later in the year. We also had our first all night session (well, until 4.30 and then back out at 6 am which is all night in my book!) with a couple of difficult ewes but all went OK in the end.

We had a good lambing overall – or perhaps we're just getting better at it? A couple of difficult presentations but all successfully delivered. We have 25 ewes this year, including 6 welsh mules as I wanted to see if their lambs would finish a little more easily off grass.

The mules are better mothers than the Suffolk crosses so it will be interesting to see if the slightly smaller mule cross lambs do better than the chunkier Suffolk cross ones.



I finally persuaded Frances to have her picture taken this year and here you can see us with two of our later born lambs – even at a week old they really get quite heavy! You can also see my latest acquisition in the background – the red box on the pole is an electric shearing machine which I bought at a recent farm sale (the ADAS Rosemaund sale for those who know it). Shearing is a bit like bricklaying – once you know how to do it, you realise that it's best left to experts – however this machine is brilliant for trimming and dagging and saves hours of messing around with hand shears.

We brought the ewes inside in January as in previous years as it's so much easier to look after them – but we struggled as we were a bit short of hay. Ewe nuts this year are over twice last year's price but we managed to save a little by buying in bulk through our neighbour. I might install a bin next year so we can have our own supply delivered rather than have to fetch it a bag or two at a time!.

We got the grass growing in some really fine weather in February – but of course it all stopped again in March. Having said that it's all looking quite good now and I've just shut up the newly sown 'shop field' for hay so fingers crossed for a warm but not too dry spring.

We have also now got an arrangement with another neighbour to bale some straw locally for an 'in field' price – so again we might just be able to make the numbers add up.

I've spent much of the winter working on the cutting room so we can prepare our own lambs next season. This means we'll be able to provide an even more personal service. Our problems with builders and cold rooms that I mentioned last time have delayed our marketing of last year's lamb which although making a dent in our cash flow, does have the advantage that we'll be offering lamb to our customers almost through the year. This later matured lamb is fuller flavoured and in many ways I prefer it to the new season ones – although they're all wonderful!

We're keen to get the freezers empty so we can finish the cutting room ready for the new season so I'm doing some great deals on this late season lamb. If you want some let me know quickly – if you take a second half I'll do that one for half price – so that's a whole lamb for £75!

We also got these clever scales now so we can sell individual joints or bags of chops if you prefer.

Finally – the nicest news of 2007 was the arrival of our first grandchild – Oliver – seen here inspecting the new lambs. I'm planning to get him some 'my first dagging shears' as he's just the right height at the moment – but I'm not sure if the early learning centre do them!



We try to look after our animals, our customers and our land, all of equal importance to us and we hope that comes across in our approach and in the quality of our product. Do let us know if you think we can do things better.

Thanks to everyone who helped us this year, especially Tomos from down the lane who has been a great assistant at busy time like scanning and tagging and drenching the lambs. We've had a great time as ever – it's now time I got out there and enjoyed the evening sunshine..

Have a great summer – Andy and Frances.