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LMC sponsors leading technical evaluation of terminal sire rams

The Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) recently provided support towards a CT scanning initiative, aiming to deliver improved technical evaluation of terminal sire rams, in a bid to further assist local sheep farmers.

CT scanning is a technique which produces images of body cross-sections using low dose X-rays without harming the animal. The detailed images produced from the CT scan, allow for accurate estimation of body composition and tissue distribution, which in turn identify the best animals in flock.

Pedigree breeders from Northern Ireland, committed to the AHDB Signet Recording Scheme, were recently invited to send ram lambs to Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) in Edinburgh for CT scanning with LMC contributing to a share of the costs.

Kevin McCarthy, a local pedigree breeder, who availed of the LMC funded initiative commented: "CT scanning is a service that has been readily available to Scottish, English and Welsh breeders who are all sponsored by local bodies but until now, it has been too costly for Northern Ireland breeders to use. Now thanks to this support from LMC, local breeders were able to send rams for scanning."

Elsewhere, LMC's Industry Development Manager, Colin Smith claims that access to this technology would greatly aid sheep farmers in Northern Ireland.

Mr Smith said: "Within the GB market the use of genetically proven superior rams has seen a major increase in popularity. LMC has been working alongside other industry bodies in Northern Ireland for many years to communicate the importance of making informed breeding decisions using Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs). This latest initiative will help breeders to improve the quality of rams they produce by enabling access to the latest technology for technical evaluation.

"The sheep industry is facing uncertain times and therefore technical efficiency will be a key factor in improving the resilience of local sheep producers going forward. This initiative will allow breeders to give commercial buyers additional information on the quality of rams prior to purchasing. It is critical that buyers make these types of informed decisions to help improve efficiency and to help improve their bottom line."

The initiative was open to all recording flocks in Northern Ireland regardless of breed.

ENDS