



The Portland Sheep Breeders Group



SUMMER 2007 NEWSLETTER

www.portlandsheep.org.uk

The wettest summer on record!

Send me your experiences and stories

for the next edition!



Contents	page
Chairman's letter	1
New Forest and Hampshire Show report	2
Portlands win prizes at NSA South West again	3
Extracts from 'The wools of Britain'	4
Lambing tales from Hogchester farm in Dorset	5
For sale	6
Topical Tips	7
Woolly snippets	7
Agricultural shows	7
Deborah William's Portlands, at Armscote Manor, Warwickshire	8
Regional representatives	9
Committee details	9
Summer event at Hogchester Farm	10
Portland National Flock surveys	10/11

The Portland Sheep Breeder's Group newsletter is published three times a year.

Any Portland Sheep related articles welcomed e.g. history, spinning, dyeing, weaving, meat production etc.

Closing date for contributions for the Christmas edition is 25th Nov. 2007

The Editor is: Sheila Wellman, Maple Lodge, 43, May Lane, Dursley, Gloucestershire GL11 4JN. Tel 01453 546519

e-mail: Sheila @wellman.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

What a summer we are having! I do hope that you are 'keeping your heads above water' if you will excuse the metaphor. We were extraordinarily lucky with shearing. All day we were certain that our shearer would cry off because the sheep were too wet from the previous day's rain. Fortunately a breeze sprang up, and by 6 o'clock they were quite dry and under cover – practically the only day they had been dry in the whole of May! We entered a fleece at Heathfield Show, and were pleased that it won second prize in the class for 'any pure bred British short wool'. Interestingly, we have no idea what breed beat us, or what other breeds we beat; we were the only

exhibitors who put a label on their exhibits and in the programme, and we did overhear one member of the public say "ooh look, that one's a Portland". Were the other exhibitors really not interested in promoting their wool? To date we have sold 22 of this year's fleeces to spinners and rug makers, and there is more interest in the pipeline.

We were also fortunate to snatch our silage in a short window of half-decent weather which would not have been good enough for hay making. The grass in the hay fields is still standing, and beginning to spoil. It's no use worrying, but it is hard not to! We notched up a first for us this morning when our straw was delivered before the hay has been cut; it is a poor colour, but at least it is dry, and had been loaded and covered before the torrential thunder storm in the night.

With this Newsletter you will receive notice of the AGM on September 7th at Melton Mowbray. Your Committee very much hope for a good turnout, so please do your best to come. I would like to draw your attention to the proposed revised Constitution, which we will vote to adopt at the AGM. The need for change arises because the existing Constitution gives the Group some responsibilities which in fact lie with the RBST, and we need to clarify the situation. If you are unable to come to the meeting, you are entitled to vote by proxy, and the Agenda carries a form of Proxy which you should complete and return to the Secretary.

I would also like to remind you that this year the RBST will be conducting their triennial survey of breeds in the Combined Flock Book. Your Committee believe that this survey is very important in providing us with a clear picture of the status of the Portland breed. We keep a close eye on these surveys, which provide us with early warning of possible problems. Please would you all spend the few minutes needed to check and return the survey form. If you do it as soon as it arrives you are less likely to misplace it in the heap of papers on your desk or breakfast table or wherever else you store your post, 'till there is time to deal with it.

Finally, I look forward to seeing a number of you at Hogchester Farm on August 10th. Norman and Michelle Jones have planned a really interesting programme, and we are assured of a warm welcome. All being well, this Newsletter will arrive in time for you still to register.

Best wishes to you all, John Garratt

NEW FOREST AND HAMPSHIRE SHOW REPORT



The day started dull and overcast but it was dry! We arrived a little late due to heavy mud at the show ground and less than helpful stewards who thought it was good idea directing us to where the horse lorries were! Never mind, after negotiating a stuck car and trailer we managed to park quite close to the sheep tent.

Nearly all the classes were held before the deluged came, only the Portland 'wool on the hoof' to go and the wool judge had a brainwave. 'Move those hurdles over there' he shouted, and we all managed to squeeze in the back of the sheep tent and held the 'wool on the hoof' under cover. Just the job! After the judging was completed for all the sheep classes, normal procedure was to retire to the beer tent and talk, yes you guessed it - Sheep!! but the weather started to worsen and though many of us

tried to walk around the show (which if you have not been, is a very big show with stands containing all sorts of things such as cars, farm machinery, all weather clothes, antiques, crafts - the list goes on and on) it just kept throwing it down.

At about 3 p.m. a message came over the p.a. system saying that there would be no Grand Parade because of the state of the main ring, and we could leave earlier than we are normally allowed to do. Most people decided this would be a good idea as the driving conditions were very poor due to all the mud. Giving a hand where needed, most had left the sheep parking area by 4.30 to join the long and very muddy road to exist the showground, and guess what? The sun came out and blue sky appeared! What a day!

Written in haste, by Tessa Hucklesby on the evening of the show, ready, to catch my deadline (editor)

Despite the rain, this year's Premier Show saw a good number of intrepid regulars showing their stock. They were joined by Tony and Vicky Henri who brought their shearling rams to the show for the first time following their success at the Royal Norfolk. It's always good to welcome new faces, especially when they have made the effort to travel so far. We were also joined by Elsa Hart and her daughter Alex, who helped to show the Marsden & Waterman sheep as a prelude to showing their own next year.

The Ewe Lamb class was won by Waterman Minette, shown by Verity Ockenden. The Shearling Ewe class went to the Furzley flock, and the Older Ewe class was also won by Leona Shaughnessy's entry. After much deliberation from our judge Norma Sanders, the Ram Lamb class was eventually taken by Marsden 324 (perhaps he deserves a name now!). Congratulations to Mike Johnston whose superb senior ram Fontmell Suetam topped a long line-up in the Ram Class and went on to take the Portland Championship with Leona's Furzley ewe as Reserve Champion.

The Group of Three was won by Leona and Denis Shaughnessy's team. Wool on the Hoof went to Rashley & Toozes' ram. Young Handlers Chloe Sherman and Alex Hart showed Portlands in the 'Junior' class, and the 'Senior' Young Handler was won by Verity Ockenden with Waterman Impala.

Written by Fiona Mackenzie in even more haste, post deadline (editor)

PORTLANDS WIN PRIZES AT NSA SOUTH WEST AGAIN

This year the show was in Launceston, Cornwall

At five in the morning the prospect of the NSA Show (any show) was not very inviting. However, the weather was dry, but misty and having loaded the display and articles the night before there wasn't much thinking to do. The ewe and the lamb had been housed overnight so loading was without any hassle. We set off wondering what we had forgotten, but not the banana we shared for breakfast!

Driving at that time of the morning is a pleasure and the Devon and Cornwall country was looking its best. The venue for the show was at a farm hidden away down country lanes. We were fortunate to be one of the early arrivals, so had a relatively

unload. At the time the barn for the stands appeared bare and uninviting, but the bustle of the new arrivals with their stands and animals it took on a new life. A feature of shows, which make such events special, is the goodwill, help and enthusiasm of the people involved.

Having set up the stand we were joined by John and Norma Sanders and later Don and Diana Mason, who kindly 'manned' the stand to enable us to walk around the other displays.

Every breed of sheep appeared to be represented and countless stands of sheep equipment, animal medicine, agricultural firms and sheep dog demonstrations. There was a fleece competition, in which the Portland came third in the fine wool class. There was also judging of the stands, in which, to our great surprise and delight our stand was awarded second prize. This consisted of a beautiful engraved, cut glass rose bowl. It was an even more flattering result when we saw the winning Charolais stand, which was about 40' long compared to our 10'. We have always said about our Portlands – small is beautiful.

Although the show focused mainly on the commercial breeds there was considerable interest in our stand and its products. There is the possibility of two new breeders and undoubtedly the Portland breed made its presence felt. A good day.

Norman Jones

EXTRACTS FROM 'THE WOOLS OF BRITAIN' on folding fleece , BY H. HAIGH AND B A NEWTON, 1952

The fleece when shorn is sometimes referred to as a "clipping" or a "clip," but these old terms are now becoming obsolete. The "wapping" of the fleece or the "folding" or the "rolling" – all these expressions are used – is generally done as follows.

The fleece is placed flat on the floor flesh side down, the britch is turned in, and then the belly is turned in at either side. Rolling commences from the britch, any irregularity being turned in, in order to obtain a uniform and compact "parcel".

In order to tie the rolled fleece a "tail" is made by twisting the neck portion and then pulling it round the rolled up fleece and tucking the end under, so securing the "parcel"; note however, that the tail is only a traditional term and has no connexion with the animal's caudal appendage. The twisting should not be tight, otherwise in a subsequent operation a sorter will have difficulty in opening out the wool. Twine, especially binder twine, should never be used for tying a fleece, for it is often difficult to find the knot and undo the string and there is always the danger that some of the fibres from the string may mix with the wool, with dire results should it find its way into the fabric. Dags should be taken off the fleece by the farmer and sent along in a separate bag; they should never be stuffed in the fleece. Similarly, locks and pieces should never be stuffed inside the fleece but packed separately. There is still a law against stuffing fleeces and we quote below the details which are still on the Statute Book –

Extract from the Statute Book 23 Henry VIII Cap. 17

"No person shall wind or cause to be wound in any fleece any wool not being sufficient rivered or washed, nor wind nor cause to be wound within any fleece, clay,

lead, stones, sand, tails, deceitful locks, cots, lambs wool, nor any other deceitful thing, whereby the fleece may be more weighty, to the deceit and loss of the buyer.”

The remark under this CAUTION NOTICE to growers and winders of wool is as follows – “Sixpence per fleece only was the penalty under the above Statute, but this was found an insufficient preventative and it was enacted by –

28 Geo. III Cap. 38

That every person offending as above shall in lieu of every sixpence forfeit and pay two shillings for every fleece, and the whole thereof to go to the finder or discoverer of the deceit, to be heard and be determined by one or more Magistrates in a summary way. Fleeces also bound up with cord, etc., or found wetted inside are subject to the same penalty”.

Sent in by Kate Kershaw

LAMBING TALES FROM HOGCHESTER FARM IN DORSET

St Mary to the rescue

In early March, on a clean, bright, sunny morning with a spring yellow backdrop of daffodils, primroses and forsythia, I was communing with my Guinea Fowl in their run, when I heard gentle footsteps on the gravel drive close by. They belonged to our delightful Irish Vicar, Sister Isobel, bringing a letter of apology from her for missing a meeting neither of us had attended. While you are here I said, you must come and see our little foxy brown lambs in our barn. We walked to the barn where several ewes were in single pens with their recently born offspring. I picked up one for her to examine. They are really lovely, she said. Yes, I agreed they are strong and healthy, but mostly seem to be ram lambs! Oh! She said, with a twinkle in her eye, “St Mary was the saint to call on for little girls”. “Could you do that for me?” I asked. In her delightful Irish voice she said “Now, come along, come along it’s the little ewe lambs we are wanting”. Thanks I said, and she left.

Later I returned to my lambing duties and, yes, you’ve guessed, the next three ewes gave birth to lovely ewe lambs.

Bit of a squeeze

One misty morning at about 6.00am an expectant ewe had her face very close to the hay. She remained thus for some minutes before I realised she was standing and giving birth. We discovered a large and rather swollen head under her tail. We do always crutch all wool from the tail prior to lambing to make ‘viewing’ much easier. With much hot water, disinfectant and gel, we managed to get the lamb slowly and gently out – and bless her, it was a ewe lamb!. The lamb was given her mother’s colostrums by tube as the little head was so swollen she could not drink from a teat. So all was well, but should anyone wonder, it was nearly two days before the little head became the normal size. Now she is fine, as is her dam.

Roast lamb?

On my 1am watch I was tending a recent birth at the end of our long barn. All seemed well. I was returning to my bed checking other waiting ladies as I passed. I saw that one young ewe had produced her lamb ‘just like that’ – no problems, I thought, so I returned to the kitchen to make a hot drink, while I waited for her to complete her duties before single penning her.

I returned about 15 minutes later, to deal with her and iodine the navel, to find a very confused mother who couldn’t find her lamb. I could hardly believe it, but I found the

newborn in the water trough! However, I grabbed the lamb, swinging it around hoping to clean the water from his lungs. I found a large warm bath towel, wrapped him in it and went to the warmth of the kitchen. I rubbed and rubbed him to dry him and hopefully to get some circulation going in his cold stiff little body. I then wrapped him in a clean dry towel and put him in a roasting tin on the lowest rung of the bottom oven of the Aga, half in, half out with the door open. I turned him every so often – his temperature was off the radar. I gave him 30mls of his mother's colostrums by tube (normally this is not done to an unconscious lamb, but I hoped it would give him some inner warmth). Some time later, I could hardly believe it, I thought I hadn't a chance of saving him, but had to try, he made a long low cry!

To cut a very, very long period shorter, I eventually got his temperature up to 39.6 degrees and I felt he was strong enough to return to his bewildered mother. I returned to my bed at 5.30, and several mugs more of Horlicks later, you would not know which one he is, now that the lambs are out in the field together.

Message:

- Make sure the water trough is much higher above the height of the bedding straw.
- Have a thermometer in your box.
- Have a syringe and tube for feeding, and know how to use it.
- Have time and patience

From Michelle Jones

FOR SALE
Southover Flock For sale traditional breeding stock, good clean fleeces. Meat of exceptional flavour. All usually available. Tel. Michelle Jones in Dorset on 01297 561072
Ram for sale : Marsden Myrmidon d.o.b 17/02/03, a bunch of nice shearling rams and ewes for breeding, and a plentiful supply of Portland lamb, and later mutton for sale. Contact Jo Taylor 01842 862702 or email christmashill@btconnect.com . (Suffolk)
The Waterman & Marsden Flocks A selection of quality rams for sale Scrapie genotyped Contact Fiona MacKenzie 01258 451013 verifie@supanet.com
Croppertop Flock Ram for sale: Croppertop Carlin Flock: 03037 Born: April 2006 Reg: P10464 Sire: Dunford Victor Dam: Nic of Yewtree Scrapie tested: ARR/AHQ I have had a nice crop of lambs from him this year but he has to go to prevent in-breeding. I am also going to be putting some ewe's up for sale, once I have sorted out which one's I will be selling. Phone: 01283-734221 (Derby) Mobile: 07772882867 Ask for Sam Crowe E-mail: yew_tree_farm@hotmail.co.uk or csmaintenance1@aol.com
Ewe tegs for sale from the Southacre flock , in West Kent. Also some older ewes available. Contact Kate Kershaw on 01622 831636 e-mail: katharine.kershaw@constructionplus.net
Tonford Flock in Canterbury, Kent Shearling rams and ewes of all ages for sale. Scrapie test results available. Please contact biddy Roach on 01227 768220

TOPICAL TIPS

Although the Portland lambs are quite adorable at this time of year, it is thoroughly recommended that ram lambs are NOT fed from your hand or even a bucket. When they are grown they will continue to expect to be fed by hand (rather than in a trough) and can become quite aggressive or even dangerous. If sold to a new breeder they may not be aware of this habit.

As a further precaution, I also do not allow my grand children in the ram field by themselves.

WOOLLY SNIPPETS

It is hoped to repeat the wool-on-the-hoof assessment of all Portlands at Melton Mowbray this year; the sixth set of information from a sample of the national flock for our long-term wool characteristics research. As usual, if you don't want your animals included in the assessment please tell Kate Kershaw at least a week before the Show & Sale. Also, as usual, a summary will be prepared for the newsletter and information can be made available to vendors, on request, after the weekend.

P.S. Unfortunately the National Flock Survey 2006 results in the last newsletter were incomplete, with the birth-notified males and flock totals falling off the edge of the page. If you noticed and would like a copy, please contact Kate (see Committee list for contact details).



AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AND EVENTS FOR 2007

Events shown in bold lettering have Portland Sheep Classes
'M' identifies Events holding mixed Primitive Breed Classes only

M AUG 15	GILLINGHAM AND SHAFTESBURY SHOW	01747 823955
AUG 23	MELPASH AGRICULTURAL SHOW, BRIDPORT	01308 423337
SEPT 1 – 2	DORCHESTER SHOW, DORSET	01305 264249
SEPT 7 – 8	TRADITIONAL NATIVE BREEDS NATIONAL SHOW AND SALE (INCLUDING WOOL) , MELTON MOWBRAY	01664 562971

The above listed shows holding Primitive/Rare and or Portland classes can only be a fraction of countrywide events that have similar classes.

Do you have a local show that may be interested in including a class for Portlands etc? If so please let me know and I will contact them. One of the best ways of 'showing off' our delightful breed to members of the public (and potential new owners) is at events like these.

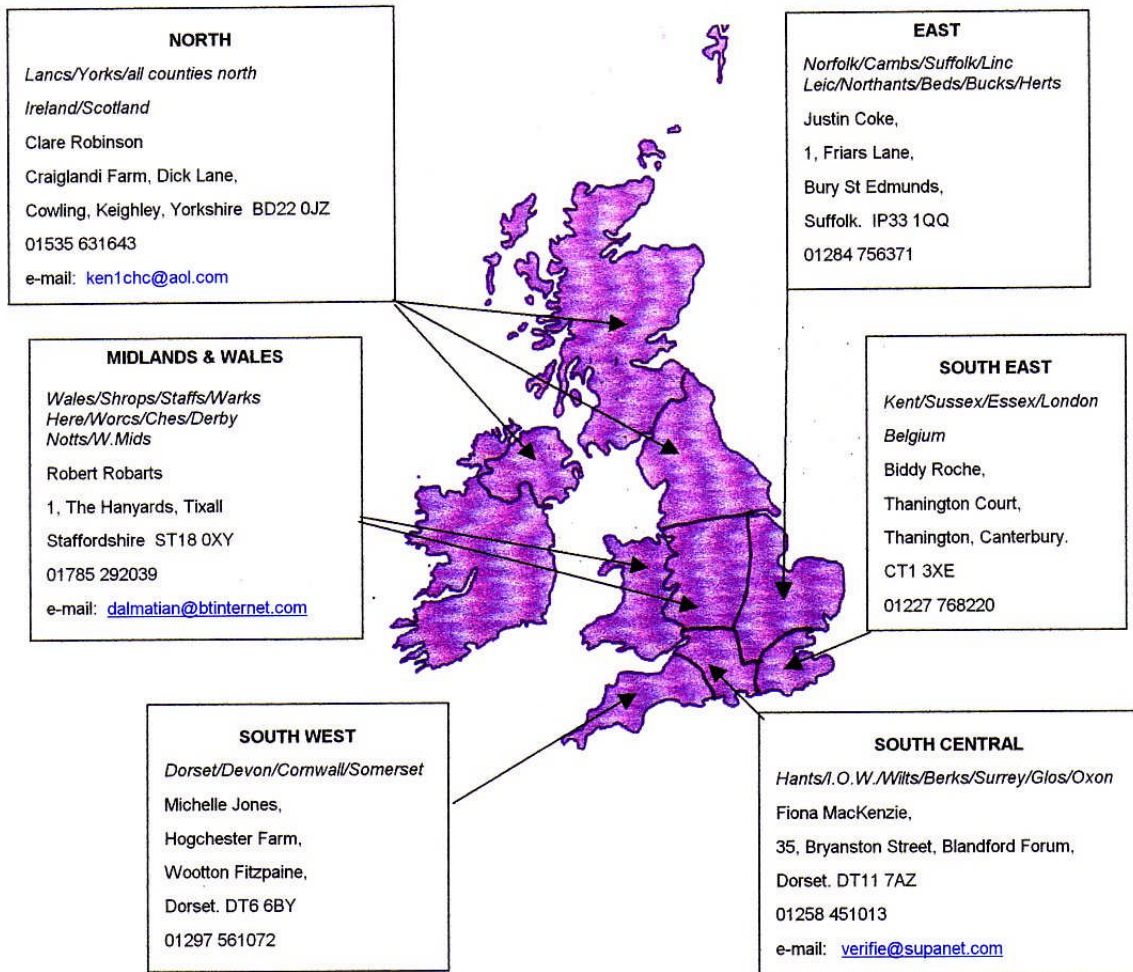
Tessa Hucklesby, Secretary PSBG



**DEBORAH WILLIAM'S PORTLANDS,
AT ARMSCOTE MANOR, WARWICKSHIRE**



YOUR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES



The Committee

Chairman		
John Garratt	01444 831841	cjg@york.ac.uk
Secretary		
Tessa Hucklesby	01929 459082	baacode.13@btopenworld.com
Treasurer		
Jim Gardner	01327 842325	gardnerwhilton@aol.com
Elected Members		
Biddy Roche	01227 768220	
Robert Robarts	01785 292039	dalmatian@btinternet.com
Fiona MacKenzie	01258 451013 / 07947 020130	verifie@supanet.com
Justin Coke	01284 756371	
Kate Kershaw	01622 831636	katharine.kershaw@constructionplus.net
Kevin Frost	01364 644250	thezoo@crossfurzes.wanadoo.co.uk
Co-opted Members		
Tony Wicks	01308 488457	office@wicksj.fsnet.co.uk
Norman Jones	01297 561072	
Membership secretary		
Michelle Jones	01297 561072	
Newsletter Editor		
Sheila Wellman	01453 546519 Maple Lodge, 43, May Lane, Dursley, Glos GL11 4JN	sheila@wellman.org.uk

You could save the Portland Sheep Breeders Group £3 a year.

It is easy to do this – opt to have your newsletter by e-mail rather than post. Send your e-mail address to Sheila Wellman today
sheila@wellman.org.uk

Please note editor's change of e-mail address:

sheila@wellman.org.uk

Next batch of sheep super stars needed

Michelle Jones would like photographs for next year's calendar, 2008.

You can send them direct to her at Hogchester Farm, Wootton Fitzpaine, Nr. Charmouth, Dorset, DT6 6BY or e-mail them to the editor at Sheila@wellman.org.uk

Important news from DEFRA

DEFRA has classified wool as a category 3 animal by-product. It is therefore not for animal, or human consumption. So, remember do not eat your fleeces!

**SUMMER EVENT AT HOGCHESTER FARM DORSET
11th-12th August 2007**

Ram selection, lamb finishing, cross breeding for the meat market and marketing Portland products.

Annual Dinner

Contact Norman and Michelle Jones to book:-
Hogchester Farm, nr. Charmouth, Dorset DT6 6BY Tel. 01297 561072

Programme for Saturday

10.30	Coffee on arrival
11.00	Introduction - Chairman
11.10	'Southover' Flock management Breeding policy - ewe selection -ram selection -cross breeding for meat
12.20	Inspect animals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ram selection ▪ Inspect and grade hoggets ▪ Inspect and grade cross bred lambs
13.00 –14.00	Lunch (bring your own)
14.00	Butchery demonstration
15.00	Marketing meat
15.30	Discussion at products stand Meat, fleece wool, skins, cloth, woollen articles, horns, sticks, buttons, cheese
19.00	Dinner at Wootton Fitzpaine village hall

Programme for Sunday

10.30 –11.00	Coffee – Hogchester Farm
11.00	Farm walk
12.30	BBQ – Pond area/barn
pm	disperse

ATTENTION ALL PORTLAND BREEDERS

WANTED - YOUR Flock in the RBST 2007 National Survey

Make this year's census the most accurate ever,

EVERYONE COUNTS

**The results from the previous recent annual surveys are shown in the table,
as reported in the Combined Flock Books**

PORTLAND NATIONAL FLOCK SURVEYS

YEAR Oct. 31st	Number of FLOCKS replying	TOTAL Reg. females + Reg. males + BN ram lambs	Registered FEMALES			All MALES		
			Ewes all ages	Yearlings	Lambs	Reg. Rams all ages	Yearlings	Reg. Lambs + BN Lambs
1974	11	98	47		26		12	13
1988	42	570	365		124		50	31
1989	55	756	475		174		59	48
1990	62	1127	744		252		85	46
1991	55	769	499		154		76	54
1992	72	1181	795		247		88	75
1993	62	1195	824		226		98	73
1994	44	833	568		179		59	63
1995	59	1195	808		249		82	62
1996	66	1412	981		284		72	94
1997	67	1409	992		246		82	90
1998	61	1337	935		260		73	69
01.01.00 to 31.12.2000	52	1131	784		200		69	78
		TOTAL REG ANIMALS	Registered FEMALES			Registered MALES only		
Oct. 31st			Ewes	Yearlings	Lambs	Rams	Yearlings	Reg. Lambs
2001	118	2029	1339	280	242	116	55	17
2002	101	1870	1203	325	183	112	45	13
2003	101	1934	1300	236	233	105	38	22
2004	122	2079	1325	342	230	119	51	16
* 2005	104	1829	1205	264	195	119	34	12
* 2006	95	1575	1013	198	213	95	24	32

Key : BN = Birth Notified

* survey carried out by PSBG

Note In 2001 the format of the survey changed and the cost of registering males increased by 50%.