



the perfect partner

COMBI CLAMP

USER TESTIMONIAL



Sheep Shearing Champion endorses the health benefits of the RITCHIE Combi Clamp



When asked, "How many sheep do you manage?" the Jones family unanimously agree, "TOO MANY! But ... they are our sole livelihood so we have to look after them and ourselves," they add.

Farming as a family unit where the total land acreage includes land belonging to uncle, mum and dad, their own and a rented land block, Gary and Sharon Jones constantly have sheep on the move as the land they farm covers 650 acres of Welsh hill moors close to the Royal Welsh Showground at Builth Wells. Stocking 2,000, mainly Welsh ewes and breeding their own replacements, lambs are sold off the farm for fattening; although Gary has a specific interest in the Welsh Mule Society, with its HQ in Builth Wells, and aims to breed/sell 200 mule lambs at its annual sale.

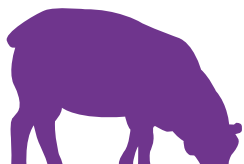
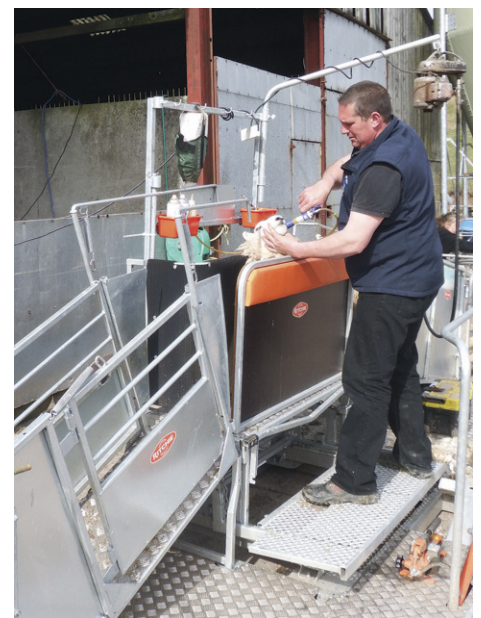
Situated at the end of a 3-mile farm track, the home farm enjoys peaceful solitude but

like most Welsh hill farms, quad bikes, dogs and willing family members are essential for its survival and success. Gary learnt his shepherding the hard way and unfortunately hard years of intensive sheep handling have taken their toll and worn out his hips, arms and shoulders. At eighteen years of age Gary was UK Junior Sheep Shearing Champion, spending his early farming years contract sheep shearing throughout the UK, with a spell in New Zealand to widen his experience. For 25 years, 8 months per year, 3 times a week, sheep were his focus, but at the age of 40 Gary had to give up his contract sheep shearing business as his body was no longer 'fit for purpose.' His hip joints needed re-surfacing and shearing was out of health bounds.

New Business Partner Required

Fortunately for him and his extended family, a new 'business partner' was found at the 2016 Welsh Winter Fair when Gary purchased a RITCHIE Combi Clamp to enable him to handle the sheep more easily. This was immediately put to work convincing his father and uncle that this new partner could deliver the help he

needed. Lambing starts around the 10th March with 100 mule ewes who have been served from a Charollais ram to catch the early market. Welsh ewes served by a Blue-faced Leicester ram start lambing 18th March and his uncle's ewes start lambing 28th March. In all the lambing period of 2,000 ewes cover a six-week hectic period. Twin lamb ewes are housed in early January and the Blue-faced ewes housed 1st February with a tight management system to maintain good health and lambing. "The theory looks good," explains Gary, "but in practice it means that the ewes are handled and moved around the farms with their condition and welfare being of prime importance. Like many businesses 'the customers come first' and in this particular instance my own personal health took a low second place. Sheep races were second rate, handling was slow and conditions difficult which in practice meant I used to be kicked and knocked around by sheep trying to jump out of the race. Dagging, foot treatment and injecting were slow, back breaking experiences. My new Ritchie business partner has put all those experiences into the history book. I just wish we had found the RITCHIE Combi Clamp earlier in our sheep contracting life."





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The Family Sheep Farmer Future

It's a known fact that with sheep husbandry up to 40% of the time is taken moving sheep to and from the handling system. Sheep become stressed during the operation, which in turn, can cause them to bunch up and bruise themselves in a poorly designed handling system. Equally as important is the constant human need for the shepherd to be stooping,



bending, lifting and often running to manage the flock! Sheep handling days are often noisy, busy, mucky days that need a hot bath and medicinal reviver for the shepherd come the end. Fortunately for the modern shepherd the Ritchie Combi Clamp has changed much of this – but probably not the stockman's medicinal pick-me-up! Minimal physical effort is required to hold each sheep in a RITCHIE Combi Clamp compared to traditional methods. Operated by a foot sprung plate on the side of the unit, a padded side wall within the sheep race gently, but firmly holds the ewe still, enabling the shepherd to carry out the necessary tasks, be it

drenching, dagging, injecting, foot treatment, weighing and health condition checks.

The innovative product helps improve the general welfare of both the operator and sheep by reducing stress. Sheep run through the enclosed sided race and are held firmly mid-way through the unit by the shepherd who just operates the sprung foot plate. This hands-free operation enables time to be spent safely managing each task whilst the ewe stands still. Previous back aching and health damaging tasks are quickly and easily accomplished with the Ritchie Combi Clamp as there is no need to catch or handle the sheep.

Early Days

Gary's family based on a lifetime of handling sheep themselves were dubious that the sheep would run through this new shiny piece of kit or that they would not be held securely by the clamp and chaos would occur. Not so. "Amazing and Unbelievable," were words Gary used to describe the first days of operation, "Dad and uncle were totally gob smacked at how quiet the sheep were, how quickly they adapted to the system and how many sheep we could handle quietly and quickly with much reduced effort on our part. We should have had it years ago!" exclaimed Gary.

Operating from four different sites, it was necessary to move the RITCHIE Combi Clamp from farm to farm. Neighbours were also intrigued to see how many sheep Gary was able to handle in a day without injury to himself or the sheep and showed interest in the new system. Hogs fresh off the Welsh hills were doubtful at first about running through the unit, but once handled they showed no fear and seemed to welcome the experience. Gary's farming neighbours immediately saw the benefits of the RITCHIE Combi Clamp.

To operate the unit used to require a "family day out", visiting the various farming sites and although the unit was quick and easy to set-up, a faster method was looked for. Enter the

RITCHIE Combi Clamp Trailer to the Jones Family business set-up.

"Dad would buy a new grass mower at the drop of a hat if he thought it would be beneficial to the farm operation," commented Gary, "so seeing that Ritchie make and supply a fully type-approved road legal trailer for the RITCHIE Combi Clamp to operate from, I recommended we threw our hats at it!"

The trailer unit incorporates a standard RITCHIE Combi Clamp unit and up to 12 aluminium hurdles which can be easily towed from farm to farm. Individual hand operated hydraulic rams lift and lower each road wheel so that the ramp, RITCHIE Combi Clamp and three-way shedding unit stay in line ready to use once the trailer body is lowered to the ground. With a 12-volt portable battery, the unit can incorporate electronic weighing, ear tag flock management and shearing out in the fields or in a building. The family days now only require two people to move, set-up and operate the flock management of 2,000+ sheep plus a growing band of neighbours' sheep.



From Gary's own shearing experiences, he strongly recommends any young sheep farmer to seriously consider a RITCHIE Combi Clamp if they are intending to make a lasting happy and healthy living from sheep. Gary's wife Sharon and his mother recommend a RITCHIE Combi Clamp for a happier, quieter, more relaxed marriage!!

