



Working on behalf of our Members





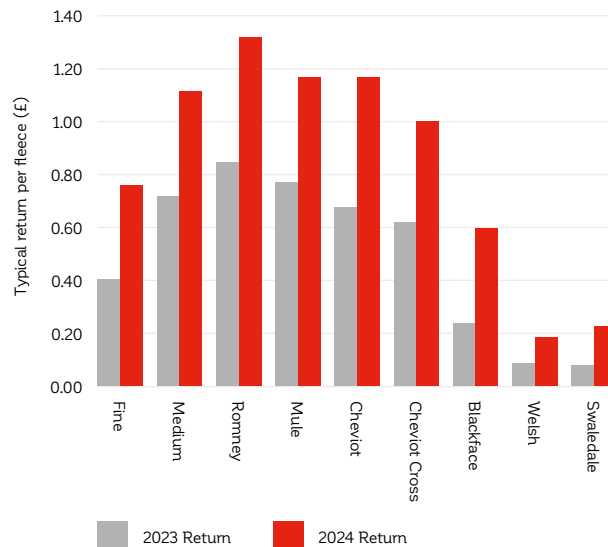
With wool prices at their highest for six years, and consistent demand from our customers and licensee partners, there is a welcome air of positivity within Ulster Wool.

Prices have improved for all our core types over the past year. Cheviot, Medium, Mule, and Cheviot Cross types each achieved average selling prices of more than £1.20 per kg this season. Blackface types have also seen better prices, reaching around 75p per kg in recent sales. This is almost 50% more than we were achieving for these types twelve months ago.

Member returns for 2024 are around 70% higher than last year. Core grades of Medium, Mule, Romney and Cheviot will return between £1.15 and £1.35 for a typical fleece, an improvement of around 50p. We know there is still a lot

to be done to deliver sustainable wool prices, that add value beyond the cost of shearing, particularly for mountain wools, but with improved demand price trends are heading in the right direction. Based on current market prices, the outlook for the 2025 season is that returns should further increase.

Interest from buyers has been strong. Ulster Wool's partner British Wool now has more than 170 licensee partners, and this has been translated into healthy competition in the British Wool auctions.



Member returns up
70%

Highest prices since
2018

As of the end of April 2025, almost 90% of the 2024 clip had been sold and we expect to have very little wool from last year left to market when new season supplies start to come through the depots in July. This puts us in a strong position as we go into the 2025 season.

The volume of wool handled on behalf of Ulster Wool members was around 14% lower in 2024 than in 2023. In order to maintain efficiency at our depot in Muckamore we also took in around 500 tonnes of contract grading work from the Rol this year.

Given the strong demand from buyers and improved returns, we want to work with all Irish sheep farmers to assist them in bringing their wool to market this year.

A highlight of our marketing strategy this year has been the launch of a three-year collaboration between British Wool, The Campaign for Wool and Shaun the Sheep. The 'Shaun Loves Wool' message is being used to promote wool carpets to consumers. The eye-catching point-of-sale promotion can be found in more than 1,500 retailers across the UK.



This year, we celebrate 75 years of Ulster Wool partners British Wool collectively marketing your wool clip. Established in 1950 to achieve the best possible net return for farmers, British Wool is the only organisation in the world that collects, grades, sells and promotes fleece wool on behalf of sheep farmers. We are proud of our heritage and hope that you can celebrate this milestone with us at one of our anniversary events around the country this autumn.

By building on this unique legacy of co-operation and working together as sheep farmers we can continue the progress we have made over the last year. Together we can create a sustainable future for wool produced in Northern Ireland with improved returns that recognise the real value wool delivers to consumers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support and hope to catch up with you over the summer.

Brendan Kelly, Chairman

3,000+
members.

26
drop off sites.

British Wool's AGM will be held on Wednesday 12th November 2025 at 1pm at British Wool's head office, Wool House, Bradford.



Q&A with Billy Hewitson

With over 38 years of experience in the wool industry, Billy Hewitson who heads up our Depot Operations explains the importance of grading.

Describe what happens to the wool once it arrives at the depot?

After delivery to our grading depots, wool is either graded immediately or stored for later in the season.

Each fleece is meticulously graded by hand by one of our expert graders, who undergo an extensive three-year training programme. The grader carefully assesses the wool's style, staple length, crimp, fineness, handle, and lustre to determine its appropriate grade.

How important is grading the wool, and how does this add value to our members?

Wool grading is essential for our members, as it directly impacts quality and price. Key reasons for grading wool include:

- Maximises value
- Ensures consistent quality for manufacturers
- Meets market demand with different types suited for different products

Why do we core test the wool, what happens in this process?

A core sample of wool is taken from the centre of each bale before being sold at auction. Core testing wool ensures an accurate, objective measurement of its quality, which benefits both our members and buyers. Core testing is crucial because it provides quantitative data on key wool characteristics that impact processing and the performance of end products.

What improvements have we seen in recent years to the process at the depot?

We've improved the depot process for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Using a forklift for intake has saved time, reduced costs, and improved safety. The 2023 rollout of the Ulster Wool Traceable Scheme supports growing demand for traceable wool, benefiting members, buyers, and the supply chain with transparency, quality assurance, and sustainability.

Our Depot Managers



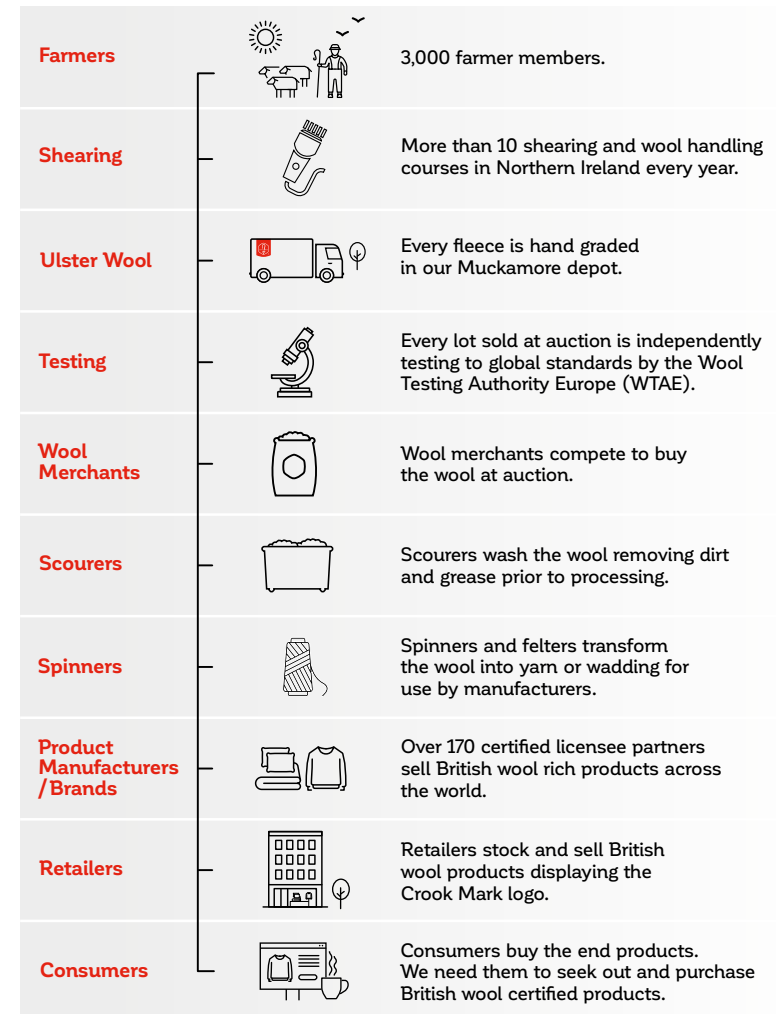
Stephen Preston



Jayne Harkness-Bones

What happens to your wool

At Ulster Wool we handle over 1.5 million kilos every year. This wool goes through many processes before finally being converted into an end-product for the consumer or contract market, this process is illustrated below.



Ulster Wool Scholarship

Earlier this year, the 'Ulster Wool Scholarship' was launched – an industry first for the wool sector. Jessica Wilson from Co. Donegal was the successful recipient. The scholarship involved a 12-week placement, funded by Ulster Wool Growers (UWG) and facilitated by Ulster Wool. Jessica became the first-ever CAFRE research student to complete the placement, which began in January 2025.

Where are you from?

I'm from Castlefin, Co. Donegal, where we run a mixed livestock farm with beef cattle, store lambs, and a small number of breeding ewes. Our commercial flock consists of Suffolk X Texel ewes, and we also keep a selection of pedigree Blue Texels.

What are studying in college?

I am currently studying a Foundation Degree in Agriculture and Technology at Greenmount College, which I began in September 2023.

What are your hopes for the future?

I plan to further my education by pursuing a degree in Sustainable Agriculture, with pathways in Agri-Business and Land Management, starting in September 2025. Looking ahead, my ambition is to build a career in agriculture – ideally working with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Tell us more about your research during the placement.

I developed and conducted a survey for farmers to deepen my understanding of their knowledge of wool, the challenges they encounter, and potential areas for improvement within the industry. To support this, I visited livestock marts, engaged with key industry bodies, and collaborated closely with Ulster Wool.

What would be your key findings from your placement?

During my 12-week placement, I gained a much deeper understanding of the sector through insights gathered from a survey completed by 250 farmers. The survey explored various aspects, including awareness of wool products, current market prices, perceptions of wool prices, and suggestions for improving wool prices and marketing strategies. It also assessed knowledge of sustainable wool production and considered wool quality throughout the farming calendar. Participants were asked about the fate of the fleece post-shearing and shared innovative ideas for utilising wool as a recyclable, biodegradable, and renewable resource. Additionally, the survey examined fluctuations in wool prices over the years and the impact of Covid-19 on the industry.



06 Ulster Wool

Training the next generation of shearers

Ulster Wool has shearing courses available across Northern Ireland, catering for all abilities whether you have never shorn a sheep before or are looking to refine your technique. The courses are globally recognised and give you two days of expert tuition with a low student to instructor ratio. To book on a course, scan the QR code or visit ulsterwool.com/book-online



SCAN HERE
TO BOOK A
SHEARING
COURSE.

When attending a course it is crucial to bring the following with you:

Clothing

- ✓ Shearing trousers, work trousers or jeans.
- ✓ A change of clothes.
- ✓ Sweatshirt to wear when not shearing.
- ✓ Shearing mocs or flat-soled trainer-type shoes.
- ✗ No shorts or skirts.
- ✗ No steel toe caps.

Handpiece

- ✓ Serviceable handpiece with worm/spline drive.
- ✓ Solid ferrule for the handpiece.
- ✓ 2-6 clean sharp combs (no broken teeth).
- ✓ Short bevel 88 – 94mm and 4-12 cutters or a couple of sets of 93mm short bevel combs or equivalent and cutters.

If you are unable to obtain a handpiece you should contact the course instructor to discuss loan options. Your Instructors details will be on your booking confirmation email.

! Other things you'll need

- All food and drink for the duration of the course.
- Identification.



World Recognised Certification.

Silver and Gold level Seals are certified by Highfield Training.



Working on behalf of our Members 07

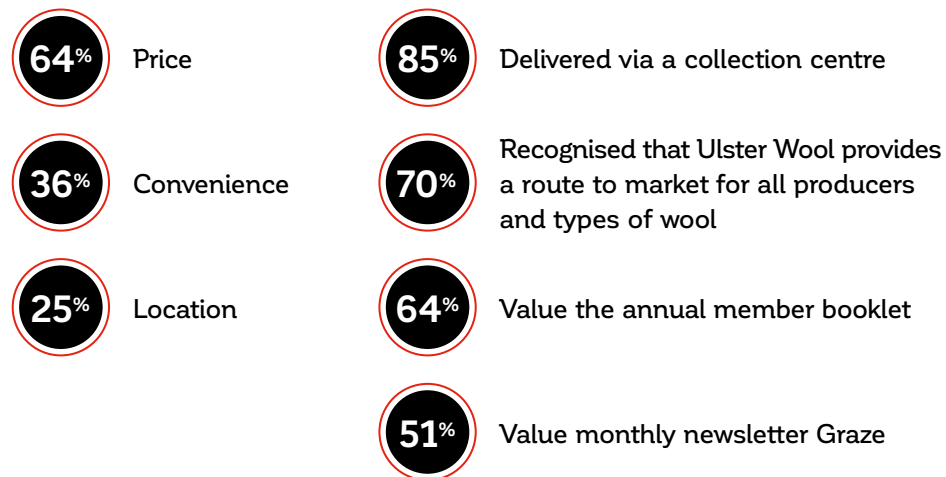
Our member survey

In December, we distributed an online survey to all our members, Gareth Jones, Head of Member Engagement explains more:



“Ulster Wool really values the feedback received from our members as we shape the future strategy of the business. This valuable input is already helping us identify areas for improvement and guiding service enhancements. As a farmer owned organisation the member surveys we conduct are crucial to ensure we are adding value to our members.”

What's important



Ulster Wool Ambassadors

The Ulster Wool Ambassador programme was launched in 2024 to promote Ulster Wool as an organisation and wool produced in Northern Ireland to a wider audience.

Some highlights include:



Jack Robinson



Rachel Murphy

42 
pieces of press coverage
(including Farmers Guardian
and Scottish Farmer).

400,000+ 
press circulation.

200,000+ 
people reached via social media.

80 
shows attended.

The above coverage is from the Ulster Wool and British Wool Ambassador programme.

Q&A with Crosby Cleland

Crosby Cleland farms 700 ewes in Saintfield, County Down, focusing on Lleyn, Highlander, and Aberfield breeds, with Primera, Aberblack, and Charolais as his terminal sires. He runs the farm primarily on his own and also manages an agricultural contract fencing business alongside part-time farmers. In addition, he has served as County Representative for Ulster Wool for over 32 years.

What's changed during your 32 years involved with Ulster Wool?

Over the past 30 years, one of the most notable shifts has been the fluctuations in wool prices. However, there have been major advancements in both British and Ulster Wool, with increased focus on quality and marketing. Encouragingly, this year has seen more positive movement in wool prices, reflecting the ongoing efforts across the industry both locally and internationally.



What do you enjoy about being an Ulster Wool County Representative?

I have great admiration for the training and development of shearers, and for over 30 years, our farm has proudly served as a host site for shearing courses. It's both inspiring and rewarding to see people of all ages eager to learn how to shear sheep correctly. I also really value the connections with shearers across Northern Ireland, the UK, and beyond – the international reach of Ulster Wool and its link to global developments in the industry is truly exceptional.

Why should farmers support Ulster Wool?

Because it remains the most genuine and effective way to secure the best possible return for our wool. Ulster Wool operates with a high level of professionalism, and their continued efforts are making steady progress as time and circumstances allow.




It's both inspiring and rewarding to see people of all ages eager to learn how to shear sheep correctly.



Maximising the value of your wool

- ✓ We are a farmers co-operative **owned by you.**
- ✓ Our mission is to **drive sustainable demand.**
- ✓ Efficiently **collect, grade** and **sell** your wool.
- ✓ **Maximising** your return.

 @UlsterWool

 @ulsterwool



SCAN TO FIND
OUT MORE



Targeting the fashion sector

Haldi Kranich-Wood is the Business Development Manager at Ulster Wool. Here she explains her role and projects she is working on.

What does your role entail?

Driving demand, firstly through working with existing licensees to encourage them to use more wool produced in Northern Ireland in their ranges (much of this comes from product development) and secondly to find new users for our wool. These could be in the UK or further afield. This is all geared up to increasing demand at the auction (via the supply chain).

What challenges does the role entail?

One of the major challenges we have faced over the past 3-5 years is that many brands wrongly assume that our wool can only be used in carpets. Due to the diverse nature of the wool we produce, nothing could be further from the truth (although it does make a great carpet!). This is one of the key reasons we developed our yarn and cloth sourcing guides. These guides showcase the possibilities available to brands when they consider our wool in the apparel sector.



What has the reception been to the sourcing guides?

Excellent! We have shown them to brands at numerous European trade shows over the past couple of years and manufacturers have launched new yarn and cloth ranges on the back of our work. This is a long-term approach as fashion buying is a long process, but we have already seen some good new demand for our wool. We expect this to grow over next few years. It has also opened the door for us to have some meaningful conversations about the high standards we farm to in the UK, something brands are increasingly interested in.



Vivienne Westwood

Targeting the consumer

Over the past 12 months, British and Ulster Wool have strengthened direct communication with consumers, leading to a 7% increase in consumer brand awareness. In practical terms, this means more people recognise the brand and are actively seeking it out when purchasing products.

Some highlights include:

Shaun the Sheep

In collaboration with the Campaign for Wool and eight leading UK carpet brands, British Wool launched the "Shaun Loves Wool" campaign featuring Shaun the Sheep. Primarily aimed at retailers through point-of-sale materials, the campaign has been rolled out in 1,500 carpet stores. It has also gained strong media coverage, with social media posts reaching nearly half a million views.



7% 

increase in consumer brand awareness.



Patrick Grant

A campaign featuring Great British Sewing Bee judge Patrick Grant was launched, driven by research showing that consumers are experiencing fast fashion fatigue. The campaign highlighted how British wool offers a sustainable alternative. This initiative generated extensive press and radio coverage, further promoting the benefits of British wool.

163 
pieces of
press coverage.

952 
pieces of
radio coverage.

Do you know your Board Member and Regional Chairman?

Ulster Wool prides itself on being a farmer-led organisation. Ulster Wool Chairman Brendan Kelly also serves as Vice Chair of British Wool which markets our wool. Ulster Wool also has a network of county representatives across Northern Ireland who support the organisations mission to drive sustainable demand, maximise returns and represent the best interests of members.



Brendan Kelly

Chairman, Ulster Wool and
Northern Ireland Board Member

Email: brendankelly@ulsterwool.com

Tel: 07831 669669



Alwyn McFarland

Regional Chairman and
County Representative for
County Londonderry/Derry

Email: alwynmcfarlane@live.co.uk

Tel: 07715 322808



Scan here to
find out more.

Depot network

Ulster Wool offers an extensive range of drop off points across Northern Ireland where members can drop their wool with no onward haulage cost. This is designed to make it as easy and cost-effective as possible for members to send their wool.


When you drop off your wool, please let us know by using the QR code displayed, and we will release any payments due on your account.

Working together to gather your wool – free haulage for full loads

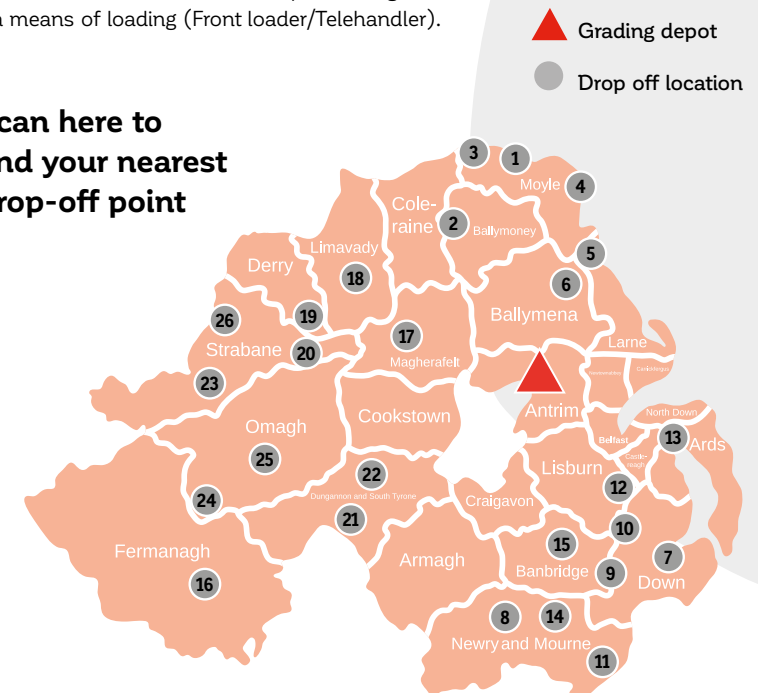
- Members who work together to collect a full load of wool at a single location will receive **free haulage** to their local grading depot.
- If members can gather a load of 100 wool sheets (approximately six tonnes) at a single location, Ulster Wool will arrange transport.
- Members who can gather a full load together should contact their local Ulster Wool depot to arrange for the wool to be collected.
- We ask that all sheets are clearly labelled, that any relevant paperwork is provided to the haulier and that the collection point has good HGV access and a means of loading (Front loader/Telehandler).



Scan here to
find your nearest
drop-off point

1 
grading depot.

26 
drop off sites.






Stronger together


- ✓ **Representing 3,000** sheep farmers.
- ✓ **Working together** to promote wool as a fibre.
- ✓ **75 years** supporting the farming industry.
- ✓ **Collectively marketing** the Northern Ireland clip.



SCAN TO FIND
OUT MORE

To find out more, contact the Ulster Wool team
pressoffice@ulsterwool.com

 @UlsterWool

 @ulsterwool

ulsterwool.com



THE CAMPAIGN FOR WOOL
Patron: HM King Charles III