

RURAL MATTERS by Rachael Moore

It's Topping Time!

Have you seen those sheep in the fields with coloured bottoms? Green, blue, red, yellow? This is a sign that the ewe (female sheep) has been "topped" or mated.

It all starts at the end of summer when the 'Top Sales' commence. The farmer looks for a fit, healthy tup (entire male sheep) with good confirmation and good breed traits such as fullness of flesh in gigot (hind quarter) and a wide and well filled out loin. If you've come across such a fine animal, they stand proud to be head of the flock.

Popular breeds of tup in the Aire and Worth Valleys tend to be Texels. An all rounded breed with plenty of length and stature and has a white face. Its cousin, the Beltex, tends to be smaller, with a more prominent gigot. Then there's the Suffolk; a tight fleece, lengthy body and

dark brown face and legs.

These lads are primed up for a week or so, then they get on their "Party Outfit", as my mum calls it. This is a harness that clips around their shoulders and chest, with a coloured crayon the size of a mobile phone fastened to it. The idea being that the farmer will be able to tell whoever he's been dating, as they will be marked with the crayon.

One lucky tup will have around 30 females to himself to serve in the next few weeks. We used to have one who's pedigree name was "Busy Boy" - quite appropriate wouldn't



Spot the Ewes

you say?

The gestation period of a sheep is approximately 145 days / 4 3/4 months. So, if the tups are "put to the sheep" on 1st November 09, lambs will be due around 25th March 2010. So, at present, we're in mid topping season for the lambs to be due end of March.

HEALING SOUND

by Andy Wood

The Ancient Greeks knew a thing or two about treating illness; doctors today still sign the Hypocratic oath, but Hypocrates would hardly recognise their techniques. Modern drugs; spare part surgery; diagnostic machines, we have come a long way; but what Hypocrates would recognise is the use of sound and music as a healing aid and the concept of treating the person not the illness.

Music is known to have been used to treat people with mental illness in Ancient Greece and there is evidence from around the world that sound was used for healing in even earlier times. The Neolithic chamber Maeshowe on Orkney and the Egyptian pyramids seem to have been built with sound in mind; Australian aborigines may have been playing didgeridoos for over 40,000 years; the ancient Chinese developed a system of sounds for every part of the body. There is evidence that healing, or promoting wellbeing has been a motive for the development of music in these and other cultures.

We are all made up of vibrating particles so it makes sense that vibrations will have a profound effect on our bodies and minds. We know from personal experience that music has the capacity to calm or excite. But can simple sounds be used in a healing way?

I have been studying and experimenting with therapeutic sound for several years and the people who have experienced my sound treatment are usually very positive about how it makes them feel. Mainly using didgeridoos, but also with metal "singing" bowls and gongs, vocal chanting and harmonics, I place people in a soundscape - surround them with sound. The treatment lasts up to half an hour and usually results in a deeply relaxed state.

Most of this is quite easily explained scientifically and accepted by many people; more controversial is the idea of intuitive healing. I cannot make any claims, I am not clairvoyant, I don't hear voices or see lights or colours, but many people have



asked after a sound session how I knew to go straight to where their pain was or why I lingered over a spot where they had had an operation. Based on their feedback I believe that sound does indeed have the power to improve health.

For anyone who wants to experience healing sound I am running a workshop at The Hope Centre in Hebden Bridge on 11th January 2010 with chakra toning and sacred song expert Susan Askey. Other workshops will follow in Haworth later in the year. For individual sessions phone 01535 647133 or email andy@pied-piper-pianos.co.uk



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