

# Jenny Shepherd

## **Sheep farmer with Manx Loaghtan Sheep on a 200 acres farm**

Manx Loaghtan Sheep were left on the Isle of Man by the Vikings over a thousand years ago. They thrived on the hills for several hundreds of years until the introduction in the early 1800s of the “new” modern sheep that were bigger, faster maturing and the lambs could go for meat without having to be over wintered. Loaghtans need to be at least 2 before going for meat. By 1895 there were only 4 ewes left that were fit enough for breeding so we are lucky to still have these sheep. Post WW2 numbers were about 80 -100 and by 1970 still only about 200. The numbers did increase but recently have been falling again. A survey (Isle of Man, UK and N Europe) by myself in 2022 showed there only about 5000 breeding ewes worldwide. In the last year there is hope on the isle of Man that their future is brighter as there is more interest in their meat with some interesting new products being produced and their wool last year commanded a higher price at the British Wool Board. We have to show there is a commercial value for these sheep to ensure more people will keep them and safeguard their future. The last 160 years they have been hanging on by a thread.