WEDNESDAY
31st MAY 2017
Kinnahaird Farm, Contin, Strathpeffer, Ross-shire, IV14 9EB
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featuring
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NEW AND REVISED

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An emerging champion of the sheep industry in Scotland, Joyce Campbell, from Armadale, Sutherland, will officially open NSA Highland Sheep 2017 at an opening ceremony scheduled for 10.00am.

Visitors will be welcomed by NSA Scotland chairman, John Fyall, and event chair, Brenda Macintyre, who will introduce Ms Campbell, who was Scotland’s Sheep Farmer of the Year in 2015 and runs a flock of 780 Lairg-type North Country Cheviot ewes on her 5600 acres hill farm.

“We are delighted that Joyce has accepted our invitation to perform the official opening ceremony,” said Ms Macintyre. “Joyce has emerged as an inspiring champion of the Scottish sheep industry since becoming the first winner of the Sheep Farmer of the Year title and her strong advocacy of the industry through social media is an example to us all.”

On behalf of the local organising committee, it is my pleasure to welcome you here to Kinnahaird Farm, Contin, for NSA Highland Sheep 2017.

We are most grateful to our hosts, Dorothy Clark, and her daughter, Amy Grant, for providing a venue not only in a stunning location but one which lends itself well for an event such as this. Together we have tried to provide you with a varied, interesting and enjoyable day out following the rigours, for most, of a spring lambing, not to mention the politics of Brexit!

The sheep industry will be here in force, sharing with us the latest information and technology available through the many educational, advisory and commercial companies attending, along with a variety of general agricultural trade stands and breed exhibits.

You are welcome to take a trip on the farm tour which will be ongoing for most of the day, as will the sheep dog trials. Other highlights include stock judging, NSA’s Next Generation Shepherd of the Year competition and a Junior Shepherd of the Year contest, seminars, and a show and sale of ewe hoggs, plus various technical demonstrations. There will be something of interest for everyone.

We will not manage to escape the election with a special hustings to give sheep farmers a unique opportunity to get the industry’s message across to representatives from all the political parties.

We are also delighted to have local businesses involved with the supply of fresh food which will be available to the public to savour throughout the day, as well as a number of craft stalls.

“We are currently engaged with Harbro in a number of innovative projects to improve the performance of the flock through both better genetics and nutrition,” said Ms Grant.
We have heard many times lately that the sheep industry is the one most exposed to Brexit, we have most to lose from likely changes to the subsidy regime and that we need exports because Brits don’t eat lamb any more. Primary producers are small in the context of the greater economy.

I grew up in the Lothians where coal was a major industry. There were miners in my mother’s family and my father had a tipper which worked on coal runs. I remember as a boy in the early 1980s the frustration and hardship that the miners’ strikes and pit closures caused in the mining towns, with pits often supporting whole communities. Dad’s business suffered but many closed. Local suppliers, shops, hauliers and tradesmen went bankrupt with no redundancy pay.

At the same time, John Clark’s coal merchant business had no coal to deliver. The Clark’s took an enormous calculated gamble and staked all they had - and more - on bringing coal in from Poland by boat to serve their customers who, through no fault of their own, had no supply of fuel.

Controversial

It was a controversial move not without resistance, but one that ultimately saved their own business and kept product flowing to Highland households. This not only saved their own business but allowed John and his wife, Dorothy, to put the deposit down for the purchase of Kinnahaird.

Sheena.

It is a team effort with Amy taking on the management role, three young sons behind her and a good team in place. The family is looking to the future and again facing tough decisions. After enjoying success in the show and sale ring with their pedigree Limousin herd, profit was put before pride and it was decided a better return could be generated from commercial stock.

We will see more at NSA Highland Sheep about the programmes in place on breeding, grazing and feeding to get stock off the farm profitably. The aim from the sheep is to get all lambs finished on grass hitting spec. So far, all is going to plan with just a few stores sold off in recent years in the autumn.

But producing good quality product is not enough to protect our industry. I was told by a miner that there was no better coal in the world than Bliston Glen coal - low sulphur and high calorific value. Millions were invested to create an efficient pit with no pollution to the locality. Within two years of renovation, the pit shut.

It is not enough to have a great product or efficient production. Somebody has to want the product you are producing above alternatives and imports. There were protests and heated demands when Bliston Glen closed but to no avail.

The trouble with a protest is it creates a “them” and “us” and places the onus on “them” to fix the problem. I do detect a mood for protest in the sheep industry at the moment, whether at supermarkets, government, our own stakeholders and, worryingly, the general public.

Great product

Yet we have a brand, a great product and a public mood to support local farmers. We should not give away our opportunity to drive our own change and hand our future to others to determine.

Farmers still get up early every morning and work hard but it can feel a little purposeless. We need purpose.

We’re not just here to keep sheep, no matter how efficient or pleasing. We are producers of quality lamb and that is the message we need to remind ourselves of every day. If we don’t believe it, no-one else will.

One person who does believe in what she does is Joyce Campbell, who will be opening NSA Highland Sheep. Joyce came home to Armadale having worked off the farm for a period and has built a reputation for quality stock.

With her attention to detail and exceptional care in what she does, Joyce would find herself in the top trade anyway.

Joyce and her team have embraced social media and built up a following on Facebook and Twitter which is way beyond farming circles, with thousands of followers keen to see, question and even get involved in the day-to-day activities of the farm.

I have no doubt the whole industry will feel the benefit from Joyce’s efforts. Every one of us can take a few small steps to help promote lamb and mutton, whether it’s taking the time to tell a non-farming neighbour about our job, or simply buying lamb ourselves a bit more.

The NSA Scottish Region will have to fight hard at all levels in the coming years on many fronts, but we will need to do this with positive engagement with decision makers and strong public support.

But to succeed we must - like the Clark family - take brave decisions on our own and together we must get out a positive message about what we do.

John Fyall
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Programme

9.00am Event open to public.

9.00am Judging of Best Sheep Breed Society Stand and Best Indoor and Outdoor Trade Stands.

9.00am - 3.00pm NSA Next Generation Shepherd and Junior Shepherd of the Year Competitions.

9.00am Show of Pair of Ewe Hoggs in pens.

9.00am - 5.00pm Sheep Breed, Commercial, Educational stands open to the public.

9.00am - 5.00pm Demonstrations – Lamb carcass specification, sheep shearing, wool grading and packing, spinning, crook making, sheep dressing, fencing and CT scanning.

9.00am - 5.00pm Watson Seeds - Castle mixture grass seed demonstration plots and Wox Agri Guttler Greenmaster grassland management system for all year round grassland overseeding and rejuvenating demonstration.

9.00am - 3.00pm Stockjudging Competition.

9.00am - 3.00pm Sheepdog Trial.

9.00am - 3.00pm Farm Tour.

10.00am Official Opening (Seminar Building)
Introduction by John Fyall, NSA Scotland Chairman,
Welcome by Brenda Macintyre NSA Highlandsheep 2017 Chairman,
Official Opening by Joyce Campbell, Sheep Farmer, Armadale, Sutherland.
Presentation of NSA Scotland Silver Salver and Best Trade Stand award ceremony.

10.30am - 11.30am Lamb butchery and cooking demonstration and tasting by award winning chef Alan Craigie.

11.00am - 11.45am Seminars –
(See separate timetable on page xx).

12 Noon - 12.20pm Update on the NSA Complimentary Role of Sheep on the hills report & Scottish Sheep Sector Review (In seminar building).

12.30pm - 1.15pm What our political parties can do for “ewe” the sheep industry (In seminar building).

2.00pm - 3.00pm Lamb butchery and cooking demonstration and tasting by award winning chef Alan Craigie.

2.30pm - 3.15pm Seminars –
(See separate timetable).

4.00pm - 4.20pm Presentation of prizes for Stockjudging, NSA Next Generation Shepherd of The Year and Sheep Dog Trial competitions (Seminar building).

4.30pm Sale of Pair of Ewe Hoggs (Seminar building).

5.00pm Event closes to public.
**General Information**

**Venue**
Kinnahaird Farm, Contin, Strathpeffer, Ross-shire, IV14 9EB

**Date**
Wednesday 31st May 2017
Opening time - 9am to 5pm

**Where to Stay**
Website www.visitscotland.com

**How to find Kinnahaird Farm**
From the North or South - using the A9, use the A835 from the Tore roundabout towards Ullapool. Follow the signs to NSA Highlandsheep from the Maryburgh roundabout.

**Dogs**
Only assistance dogs will be permitted

**Disabled Facilities**
Car parking and toilets available on site

**First Aid**
Qualified first aid staff are available at the event

**Food**
Local produce from various outlets and ice cream will be available, along with a licensed bar

**Information Point**
Please ask at the event office

**Cash Machine**
Not available

**Public Telephone**
Not available

**Toilets**
Ladies and gents toilets, including disabled facilities, are available.

**Admission**
Adults £12
NSA members & Agricultural students £6 (on production of 2017 membership card, one card, one reduced entry)
Children under 16 free
International visitors free on production of passport
Group Bookings of more than 10 booked and paid for in advance with the organiser £7.20

**Event Organisers**
National Sheep Association – Scotland

**Organiser**
Euan Emmsie, 3 Briar Close, Newport, Brough, East Yorkshire, HU15 2QY
Tel: 01430 441870, Mobile: 07718 908523
Email: euan@nsascotland.org

**Website**
www.nsascotland.org

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**Seminar programme**

11.00am - 11.45 am **Marketing, Health & Nutrition Seminar**
Chairman: George Milne,
NSA Scotland Development Officer

**Panel:**
"Marketing sheep meat from a buyers perspective" - John Errington, Sheep farmer, buyer and director of West Scottish Lamb.

"Planning for a Healthy Flock" – Sinead Sullivan MVB MRCVS
Cert DHH, MSD Vet Advisor for Scotland

"Innovation through Nutrition" - Hugh Thomson, Resident Vet with Harbro.

12 Noon - 12.20pm **Sheep Update**
Chairman: Sybil MacPherson, Sheep farmer and Immediate past Chairman of NSA Scotland

**Panel:**
"NSA Complimentary Role of Sheep on the hills report" - Jennifer Craig, Hill sheep farmer and NSA Scotland Committee Member.

"Scottish Sheep Sector Review" – John Scott, Sheep farmer and Chairman of the review group.

12.30pm - 1.15pm What our political parties can do for "ewe" the sheep industry
Chairman: John Fyall, Sheep farmer and Chairman of NSA Scotland

**Panel:**
Representatives from the various political parties.

2.30pm - 3.15pm **Marketing, Health & Nutrition Seminar**
Chairman: George Milne,
NSA Scotland Development Officer

**Panel:**
"Marketing sheep meat from a buyers perspective" - John Errington, Sheep farmer, buyer and director of West Scottish Lamb.

"Planning for a Healthy Flock" – Sinead Sullivan MVB MRCVS
Cert DHH, MSD Vet Advisor for Scotland

"Innovation through Nutrition" - Hugh Thomson, Resident Vet with Harbro.
For someone who readily admits to a self-confessed aversion to cattle and sheep as a teenager, NSA Highland Sheep host, Amy Grant, is a remarkably enthusiastic, dedicated and committed farmer with a passion for the species she once despised.

Amy will be hosting NSA Scotland’s third biennial event for sheep farmers in the north along with her mother, Dorothy Clark, and sister, Sheena, who works in London, and looks forward to welcoming a huge gathering of sheep farmers from the Highlands and Islands – and further afield – to the family farm on Wednesday, May 31.

Her early fear of the farm livestock led her to study Russian and marketing with a view to joining the family coal merchant’s business, which included importing coal from Russia. But following the sudden and unexpected death of her father, she came home to help her mother on the farm and has never looked back.

“I absolutely love it and wouldn’t dream of doing anything else,” she says.

It’s a busy life running the farm, which extends to just under 1000 acres, with a flock of 450 ewes and suckler herd of 160 cows, as well as “doing the books” for her husband’s livestock haulage business and all the domestic chores of a busy housewife and mother and two children still at school.

**Questioning**

Perhaps because of her lack of involvement in the farm in earlier days, she approaches the business of farming with an open mind. “We’ve aye din it this way,” is not her mantra. She is continually questioning what she’s doing on the farm and looking at how the performance of the cattle and sheep can be improved.

The pedigree Limousin herd, which was the pride and joy of both Amy and her mother, has gone because it wasn’t paying it’s way and Kinnahaird is currently one of several farms conducting a feeding trial with Harbro designed to identify ways of boosting ewe health and lamb vitality through improved nutrition.

The trial involves three groups of ewes being fed slightly different rations for three weeks before lambing and the ewes blood tested and lambs weighed to monitor performance. It’s hoped to announce the results of the trial at Highland Sheep.

The opportunity of touring Kinnahaird by tractor and trailer to view the sheep and cattle will be one of the major attractions for visitors attending the event.

**Maternal traits**

The flock is closed, apart from bought-in rams, and the emphasis is on maternal traits. The ewes are Cheviot Mule and Texel cross with North Country Cheviots crossed with the Bluefaced Leicester to produce replacement Mules with plenty of milk and mothering instincts.

A strict culling policy is followed for lameness, particularly for Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD), which is highly contagious.

Interestingly, the terminal sires used are crossbred – Charolais x Texel and Charolais x Beltex – with the aim of producing lambs with length and good conformation. Lambing starts the third week of March and last year the first finished lambs were away by June 23.

Most are finished off grass without supplementary feeding with the aim of producing a 21kg carcase.

**Lambing going well**

Scanning percentage this year was 197% and Amy is hopeful, with the good weather pre and post lambing, that the final lambing percentage will be close to the scanning figure. Lambing has been going well with ewes in good condition and very few prolapses. Touch wood, twin lamb disease has never been a problem in the flock.

Triplets are not welcome, because of the work involved in cross-fostering, which is why Amy has opted for the

**Ram performance**

She is conscious of ram performance trials where lambs by the rams with the lowest performance score were considered best on visual inspection while the lambs by the high performance ram killed out better.

(continued on page 8)

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(continued on page 8)
Amy attended the Kelso ram sales last year for the first time and found it a fascinating experience with 16 rings all operating simultaneously. She admits to getting carried away by the atmosphere and finished up buying two rams – a Charolais x Texel from Northern Ireland and Texel x Beltex from a Lanark flock.

Cows in the suckler herd are mostly Simmental cross and are mostly put to the Simmental bull, with the Limousin being used on heifers. However, this year a Salers bull has been bought privately from Alastair MacKenzie, Whitebog, Fortrose, because of the Salers reputation for having the largest pelvic area of any beef breed. The bull has put 19 of the 20 heifers he ran with safely in calf.

**High health status**

A high health status has been maintained over the years and the herd is accredited for BVD and leptospirosis. It is 20 years since the last case of Johne’s disease on the farm and the herd has screened negative for IBR.

Conscious that many commercial suckler herds don’t want to calve bought in heifers, 30 additional Simmental cross heifers are being retained this year for serving and are likely to be calved and sold with calves at foot.

Heifers are normally sold as bulging heifers at Dingwall at 12-15 months of age and steers as stores. Some are sold at weaning when price per kilo is generally higher. All calves are weighed regularly to monitor performance.

Around 160 acres of spring barley is grown each year for malting and 50 acres of winter barley for feeding on the farm. Around 150 acres is cut once for silage with the emphasis being on high quality rather than bulk.

Efforts are being made to improve the grassland on the farm, much of which hasn’t been touched for 30 years, and last year 32 acres were reseeded.

The first two Highland Sheep events at Dingwall Mart in 2013 and Fearn Farm in 2015 were a great success and attracted a large attendance of interested sheep farmers. With the reputation of Kinnahaird for high quality stock, and the excellent facilities on the farm, this year’s Highland Sheep is set to be equally successful.
EXHIBITORS

Breed Societies

75 Beltex Sheep Society
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Plan Farm, Kingarth, Isle of Bute, PA20 9LX.
Tel: 01700 831652
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www.hampshiresheep.com
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(continued on page 12)
(continued from page 11)

Agricultural and forestry engineers. Sales and Service, selling trailers, tractors, ATVs, etc.

19 Farm North-East Magazine

11 Sunnyside Gardens, Drumoak, Banchory, Aberdeenshire, AB31 5EZ.
Tel: 01303 811616
Email: eddie@farmnortheast.co.uk

Agricultural Communications Ltd publishes Farm North-East every two months. It carries news of political issues affecting agriculture in Scotland, and reports on business topics, as well as shows, sales and markets with a strong focus on beef and sheep.

38 Forestry Commission Scotland

231 Constorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7AT. Tel 0300 067 6156
fscscotlandenquiries@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

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47 NFU Scotland

The Rural Centre, West Mains, Inglinton, Newbridge, Midlothian, EH29 8LT.
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96 Niall Bowser - Livestock Equipment

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Suppliers of Flapra mobile sheep yards, Vetmarker lamb tailing chutes, Perkinz.
Youngsters will have the opportunity at NSA Highland Sheep to compete for a place in the finals of the National Sheep Association’s Next Generation Shepherd of the Year competition.

**Free to enter**

The competition is free to enter and is open to youngsters under the age of 26 who have qualified for the minimum BVMB Blue Seal Certificate for sheep shearing and wool handling.

Competitors will be required to carry out eight tasks and the winner will receive the NSA Highland Sheep Rose Bowl and a cash prize of £300 with £200 going to the runner-up and £100 for third place. The highest placed competitor under the age of 21 will also receive a prize of £100.

The competition is designed to test competitors’ skills and practical knowledge used in every-day work with sheep, as well as demonstrating a broader knowledge of the sheep industry.

Youngsters under the age of 16 will also have the opportunity of a similar competition being organised by NSA Highland Sheep which will involve carrying six of the tasks in the senior competition but not sheep shearing and ATV work.

Further information available from the event organiser, Euan Emslie, at euan@nsascotland.org

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The day’s events at NSA Highland Sheep will finish with a sale of pairs of ewe hoggs to be conducted by Dingwall and Highland Marts starting at 4.30pm.

The show of hoggs will be judged earlier in the day by Robert Paterson, Jun, Upper Auchenley, Dunblane.

The sale of hoggs was introduced at the first NSA Highland Sheep at Dingwall Mart in 2013 and repeated at the 2015 event at Fearn Farm, Tain, as well as at the national NSA Scotsheep events in 2014 and 2016.

“The show and sale provides an opportunity for breeders to showcase their top ewe hoggs,” said Sybil Macpherson, immediate past chair of NSA Scotland. “The sale has attracted strong buying interest at the two previous NSA Highland Sheep events and four-figure prices have been achieved.”

The sale is open to ewe hoggs born in 2016 with either MV or non-MV accreditation and will feature nine classifications - Highland Mules, North Country Cheviot (Hill), North Country Cheviot (Park), Scottish Blackface, Suffolk, Texel, any other native breed, any other Continental breed and any cross-bred.

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**Invitation sheep dog trial**

An invitation sheep dog trial featuring 30 top dogs from Caithness, Sutherland, Ross-shire, Inverness-shire, Lochaber and Aberdeenshire will be a major attraction for sheep dog enthusiasts at NSA Highland Sheep.

The trial has been organised by committee member, Scott Renwick, Clachan Farm House, Loch Broom, and will be judged by Peter Martin, Glenlyon.

The trial will start at 8.00am and will continue through the morning. After lunch, the top five dogs will compete in a novel “double lift” contest which is usually only included in international finals.

The winner will receive a cash prize of £100, with prizes of £75, £50, £40 and £30 for the runners-up.
**Wham Bam lamb campaign delivers strongly for sheep industry**

by **Suzie Carlaw**, Marketing Controller, Quality Meat Scotland

The 2016 Scotch Lamb PGI advertising campaign undertaken for the Scottish industry by Quality Meat Scotland again delivered strong results for the industry.

The ‘Wham Bam Lamb’ campaign was delivered during the autumn months when Scotch Lamb supply is most plentiful. The campaign started last August and focused on how simple and quick Scotch Lamb is to cook – with the digital campaign running until the end of October.

It built on the success of previous campaigns to increase awareness of Scotch Lamb PGI. Targeting almost 90% of Scottish adults, the main message of the campaign was that Scotch Lamb is ‘produced to a higher standard’ and 60% agreed it is ‘the best available’.

**Best available**

This strong Scottish-origin performance was set against a declining GB market in general, with overall sales of lamb decreasing by 10.7% in GB. Research from IGD has also found that 70% of the target shoppers agreed that Scotch Lamb PGI is ‘produced to a higher standard’ and 60% agreed it is ‘the best available’.

The primary focus of the campaign was to change shoppers’ perceptions about lamb and establish lamb’s credentials as a simple, versatile and ideal ingredient for the weekly shopping lists.

It is therefore encouraging that the figures from Kantar Worldpanel reveal that during the campaign, chops and steaks drove growth in Scottish origin lamb by 28% in value, demonstrating that consumers are now viewing Scotch Lamb as a mid-week meal, not just for a Sunday roast.

The GMS campaign promoted Scotch Lamb PGI to a Scotland-wide audience through billboard and press and radio advertising as well as on-line and in-store activities.

**Versatile message**

Fifty per cent of the budget was spent on billboard advertising, 20% on radio, 10% on press and 20% on digital marketing. Ads on commercial radio stations communicated the versatile Scotch Lamb message to consumers on their busy commute, at a time when they may be thinking about what they would like for dinner. This was then backed up by visual marketing outside stores, which encourages consumers to buy the product.

On-line marketing, including Facebook and Twitter, have become important tools for the marketing team at QMS, especially among the target audience of young professionals and busy working parents as the trend now is for people to search for on-line recipes when looking for inspiration for their evening meal.

Another part of the 2016 campaign was “Love Lamb Week” which ran from September 1 – 7 on the back of the successful “Love Lamb Weekend” in 2015. It kicked off at the Dundee Flower and Food Festival where celebrity chefs such as Jean Christophe Novelli used Scotch Lamb as one of their main ingredients in demonstrations.

**Sampling**

Over 95 instore sampling activities took place in selected supermarkets across Scotland, often supported by local farmers.

Butchers have a huge part to play in promoting Scotch Lamb and point of sale leaflets and recipe cards were available in all QMS’ Scotch Butcher Club shops throughout the campaign.

We are currently working with the industry to develop plans for the 2017 Wham Bam Lamb campaign and build on the success of last year’s campaign.

For more Scotch Lamb information and recipe inspiration, visit www.whambamlamb.com or visit the Scotch Kitchen on Facebook and Twitter.

**Meat cutting demonstration**

The importance of meeting specification when marketing lambs will be highlighted in a demonstration by meat wholesalers, John Munro and Son Ltd of Dingwall.

Three lamb carcases will be on display to demonstrate the difference in meat yield of over-lean and over-fat carcases compared with a carcase meeting specification for weight and lean meat yield.

Visitors will also be able to taste succulent Scotch lamb in a lamb cookery demonstration by leading award-winning chef, Alan Craigie, formerly of the Creel Inn, St Margaret’s Hope, Orkney. Lambs are being kindly provided by Cockburn Butchers and Fraser Bros of Dingwall.
SRUC’s mobile CT scanning service to be launched at NSA Highland Sheep

SRUC’s new mobile CT scanner, which uses low dose x-rays to measure the composition of live sheep, will be on display at NSA Highland Sheep on May 31.

A number of pedigree sheep breeders are already using the technology to accurately identify the best animals for breeding.

**More accurate**

CT (or computer tomography) is a medical imaging technique which produces images of body cross-sections and provides a more accurate method of identifying characteristics which cannot be measured by ultrasound.

These include muscle shape, muscularity, muscle volume, bone density, internal fat and pelvic dimensions. The scan results can be used to predict carcass tissue weights and percentages, killing-out percentage, muscle-to-bone ratio, muscle-to-fat ratio, gigot shape and eye muscle area.

“CT scanning can benefit your breed, improve your product quality and ultimately increase your profits which are all vital to ensure business success,” said college sheep geneticist, Nicola Lambe.

“Scanning will help the breeding of rams for the commercial sector that will make a real difference to product quality and profitability.”

The project is a joint venture with the Centre for Innovation Excellence (CIEL) which is one of four Agri Tech Innovation Centres supported by the UK government.

“The primary benefit to the college is its ability to support our work on genomics and breeding research by providing physical measurements of traits that are hard to measure or predict by other means,” said Ms Lambe.

**Sustainable**

“This will lead to a better understanding of how genetics drive improvement in food products and help guide developments in sustainable agriculture worldwide.”

The technique has helped the Ingram family, owners of Logie Durno Hybrids at Pitcaple, to identify a Charollais ram in the top 5% of the breed for total lean meat yield.

**Castle Mixtures**

Five key grass seed mixtures from the Castle Mixtures range used for grazing sheep are being measured for quality characteristics in trial plots sown last year by Watson Seeds at Kinnahaird - Greenan Castle Mixture, Duart CAST clover Castle Mixture, Fyvie Castle Mixture, Dundas Castle Mixture and Mingary with Extra Clover Castle Mixture.

The mixtures differ in a number of important ways:

- The intermediate/pasture perennial ryegrass ratio
- The tetraploid/diploid ratio
- The inclusion of Timothy
- The amount of white clover

All these factors influence the role and subsequent performance of the mixture. With ever increasing pressure on the sheep sector, the need to maximise the performance of sheep from grass has never been more important.

Mixtures with the top varieties selected from the SAC Independent Recommended List will create swards capable of delivering 300gm of liveweight gain per day.

There is a correlation between energy levels in the grass and potential liveweight gain. The grazing D value of individual varieties varies and that influences mixture composition.

The graph highlights the benefit of a high grazing D value in a sward. A tired old field full of fescues and bents, etc, is more likely to be in the region of 62, whereas the potential of Watson Seeds Castle Mixture is in the region of 72 which is more than capable of fattening lambs.

Samples of the mixtures have been taken for analysis. The variation in nutritional value will be discussed at NSA Highland Sheep. It is hoped to study the plots over a number of years.

A highly specialist system from USA is being used to analyse the nutritional value of the grass/clover mixtures. The system was originally designed to measure grass-to-milk for the dairy sector but has been adapted to relate to sheep performance.

Watson Seeds, with their distributor, Harbro, and the host farmers, look forward to welcoming farmers to view and discuss this important demonstration trial site at NSA Highland Sheep.