

Sheep Farmer

MAY/JUNE 2012

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION

NSA SHEEP 2012

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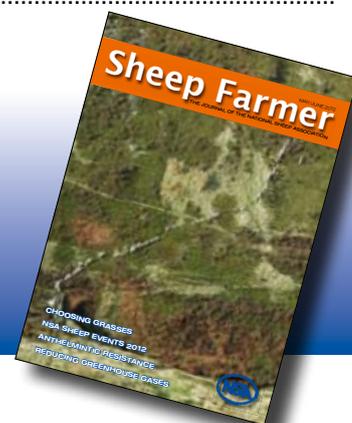
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Front cover:

Sheep in the Landscape.
Photo © Kath Birkinshaw

- See "Sheep in Less Favoured Areas"
page 8



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Phil Stocker Writes...

Membership Matters

Having attended the NSA Sheep Event on many occasions, for me this year will be very different and I have now had first-hand experience of all the hard work and organisation that leads to its success – not to mention the effort and involvement of so many exhibitors, demonstrators, competitors, and others who are involved. The 4th of July is creeping closer and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on what promises to be a great event at the Three Counties Showground.

While the 2012 Sheep Event will include all the usual activities and will be the ultimate meeting ground for anyone interested in sheep it also has an underlying 'theme' which will frame the seminars and the general message of the event. The theme is simply 'Sustainable Intensification – what this means for the sheep industry'.

Sir John Beddington, Govt Chief Scientist who was behind the Foresight Report, will formally open the event and it was his work that coined the phrase 'sustainable intensification' in response to the challenges of feeding a rising global population amidst declining resource availability and climate change.

These 'global comments' are all very well but what is needed is interpretation so that businesses and policies can adapt in a responsible and effective way – and it's all very well adapting but changes need to make economic sense at a farm level.

Feeding a global population, dealing with food poverty, human health, resource protection, climate change, renewable energies – all are undoubtedly complex issues and it is easy for things to get over complicated and lost on the ground.

Efficiency

On an individual level what we can do is simply make the most of what we have – make our production more efficient through good grassland management and nutrition and by ensuring better health and welfare of our flocks, to waste less and maximise output within the boundaries of the resources we have available, to maximise our market

opportunities. To use the fertility that sheep provide, and to constantly select our sheep to become stronger and of more use.

For generations this has been done within the limits of our own farms be they high hill, or low cropping farms. If all we do as individual farmers is produce more and use less, then we will have gone some way to addressing the event theme, and I am confident that the content of the event will help anyone who attends.

Some of the more complex answers will go back to the domain of the policy makers and regulators because it is here that we need further clarity and direction. As an example I was invited to one of a number of National Trust meetings in the Derbyshire Peak District where they are contemplating the future of the High Peak Moors (referred to later in the Central region report).

Conservation

Sadly, except a passing mention of livestock as a 'tool to achieve conservation objectives', farming got very little mention, and food production even less, yet all of our land has a natural production capacity that should be recognised - with consideration given to the fact that it is largely traditional farming activities that created these special places in the first place.

I have often thought that what is going on here is confusion between conservation delivered by design or delivered by default, or maybe more accurately differences of opinion on which is the best way forward.

And what helps even less are the 'camps' that different people dwell in. In the red corner (or maybe the green corner?) we have the conservationists, and in the blue corner (or maybe the green corner?) the farmers. The result is generally entrenchment and battle rather than a coming together to resolve issues.

Policy objectives

This is where we need some progress with identifying key and holistic policy objectives that are practical and can be shared by and throughout organisations



with influence.

It's at this point that I have to mention our new report that you will have found enclosed with your Sheep Farmer magazine. Focussing on sheep in LFA type regions specifically it outlines the many benefits that a healthy and viable sheep sector brings. Not sheep as a management tool to create a manufactured habitat but traditional sheep farming being socially, economically, and environmentally central to LFA areas to achieve the sorts of outcomes the public value.

Of course the arguments may be similar across the entire countryside and I hope the information the report contains will be used as widely as possible. This report draws on the support of many organisations, all of which are credited on the inside cover page. We would have struggled to produce this work without their input and undoubtedly the report is stronger because of it.

So finally and back to the 4th July, I hope you can make it to the 2012 Sheep Event at the Three Counties Showground at Malvern and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Phil Stocker □

Social Media Update

New Web Site, Facebook and Twitter

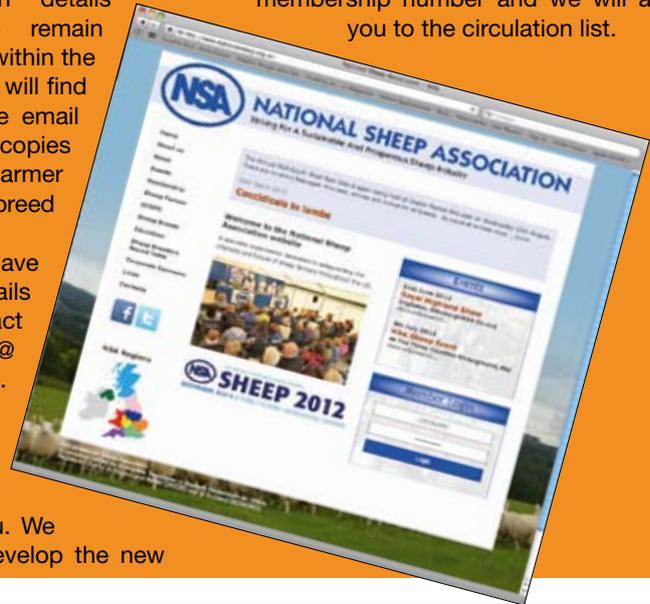
NSA's new website has now gone live, www.nationalsheep.org.uk, along with facebook and twitter (www.facebook.com/natsheep and www.twitter.com/natsheep). Posts very welcome on the Facebook page.

Members log-in details for the website remain exactly the same; within the members area you will find back issues of the email update, archive copies of the Sheep Farmer magazine, and a breed society news area.

If you don't have your log in details please contact membership@nationalsheep.org.uk quoting your membership number, and log-in details will be sent to you. We will continue to develop the new

website in the coming weeks.

Don't forget, the members email update is sent out weekly – if you don't currently receive a copy and would like to, please email membership@nationalsheep.org.uk quoting your membership number and we will add you to the circulation list.



SAC Health Scheme

New web site

A new website www.psghs.co.uk has been launched by SAC for sheep and goat producers.

Accessing the web pages will show the health status of flocks and herds for MV, CAE, EAE and also see if they are in the Scrapie Monitoring Scheme (SMS).

An added advantage is being able to find animals in an area close to your home. The diseases listed can cause huge losses to farm businesses and these web pages make it much easier to track down stock of a given health status.

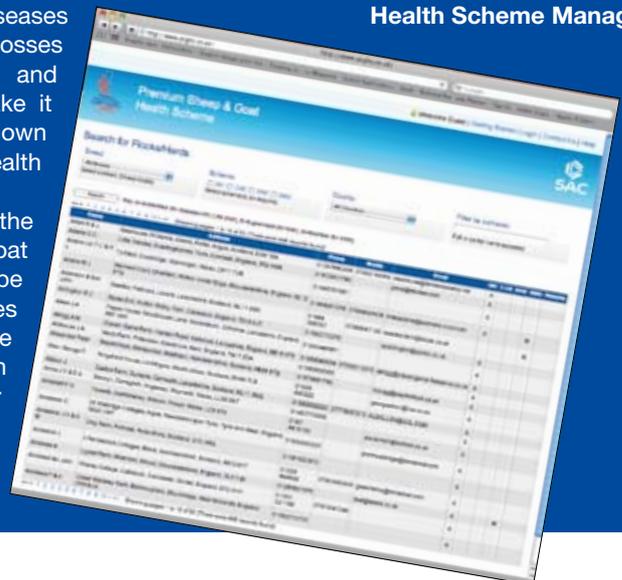
All members of the Premium Sheep & Goat Health Scheme will be listed on the web pages provided that they have given written permission to SAC allowing their information to be displayed.

Individual scheme members can also

access their own page on the site and are able to click on their current status and to print health declarations.

The UK industry embraces animal health and welfare and this new website is of immense value to sheep and goat keepers be they breeders, sellers or purchasers of stock.

Ian Pritchard
Health Scheme Manager





REGIONAL REPORTS

Northern

The date for NSA North Sheep 2013 has been confirmed as Wednesday 5th June 2013. Our venue is Crimplehead Farm, Beckwithshaw, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The Wilson family farming team is made up of David, David's son Richard, his brother Martin and his father, Michael. The family came to Crimplehead in the early 1900's. The farm is owned by the Yorkshire Water Authority. The farm carries about 1000 horned Dalesbred ewes and 300 Masham and Mule crossbred ewes. There are also about 100 mostly Limousin cross suckler cows put to Limousin bulls with the calves sold as stores. Planning for the event will start in the autumn. – www.northsheep.org.uk

The region will be having a stand at the Great Yorkshire Show again this year. We provide catering and bar facilities for NSA members and sheep exhibitors, but again this year we are having to close the facility at 7.30 pm every night of the Show. This is to try and stop the rowdy behaviour that appears to have taken over the Great Yorkshire Show over the last two to three years. We attended a meeting with the YAS to discuss the anti social behaviour of a small minority and were informed that this year the show would be taking a positive approach to try and improve things for the exhibitors and their stock. All of the bars on the



Carl Stephenson, NSA northern region committee member presenting Arthur Yeats, Haltwhistle, Northumberland with the NSA Northern Region Lifetime Achievement Award

showground, except a few pedigree cattle society bars will also close at 7.30 pm. We have been informed that a new security firm have been taken on to closely monitor the stock gates and only allow those exhibitors with wristbands onto the showground in the evening. We all hope that a solution is found to this problem soon.

Julie Sedgewick, Secretary

Marches

As I write this we are in full swing in the lambing shed where I'm lambing this year on the Welsh borders, a tremendous crop of lambs leaving the shed to 4cm of grass combined with some unprecedented good weather this week.

Having said that we were met with a drop in temperature of 20 degrees in 48 hours and a covering of snow this morning, this really shows how vulnerable we are at this time of the year.

Wouldn't it be nice at times to have control over the elements that effect our production!

What this does show is how important it is to use quality feed and roughage to get the very best colostrum, give the lamb's quality nutrition to build the strength to stand the pastoral challenges to come. Price over quality, what's going to impact more?

As I penned the ewes and listened to the snow melting through the drain pipes you start to think about the shortage of water in parts of the UK; so why is it that many of us fail to harvest and utilise millions of litres that are free every year?

I have been asked to also say a few words regarding "big lambs" from a member of the committee - well what would Billy Musset say?

He said "Communication is the key, know your market place, talk to the buyers, processors, auctioneers and if that market requires heavy lambs then you have hit your target, made money (hopefully!) and have a sustainable future."

On the other hand if no market place and strategy is formulated and met then could the lambs have been finished earlier, less fodder used, less creep used, less vet/med, more grass available for the ewes and so on, ultimately with less cost with the same return weeks before!

Many were chasing the magic £100 in March which wasn't reality given the current economic constraints on the average consumers purse, reality if you have a look at the lamb shelf space in your local shops. Consistency and reduced variability of product to fit into price sensitive packs is key to consumers

wanting to purchase lamb.

As we are nearing the biennial NSA Sheep Event on the 4th July 2012 at Malvern I would like to encourage any Marches region members to get involved, it is a great organising team, real humour; the buzz of being part of such a massive, successful technical event is great. You never know the sun cream may even come out again!

Finally many congratulations to Charles Sercombe, he has recently been appointed as Chairman to the NFU National Livestock Board, he has a great ability to look at aspects of industry with a selfless view and will represent the industry very well.

Nick Davies, Chairman

Scotland

The Scottish Region website, www.nsasscotland.org.uk has had a revamp. Its new format is designed to make it easy for visitors to use and aims to be keep the members up-to-date with all things Scottish. Can members please send in their news, successes and any photographs that they would like to feature on the website to carolineorr1@hotmail.co.uk.

Scotland's Young Shepherd Final is taking place at Scotsheep on the 6th June. Good luck to any young shepherds out there that are taking part in the heats throughout Scotland; we will be looking forward to crowning the Scottish Champion in June.

The show season is fast approaching and the NSA Scottish regions climax this year will be in their marquee at the Royal Highland Show, 21st -24th June. The theme for this year's event is 'Rediscover the wonders of wool', the marquee will feature sheep breed society displays, live demonstrations, competitions and fashion shows throughout the duration of the show.

We are lucky to have the support from Scottish Enterprise, Textiles Scotland, British Wool Marketing Board and the Campaign for Wool, as well as clothes designer Jigsaw. It is definitely going to be a hive of activity, so don't miss out.

Development Officer George Milne recently visited Brussels to attend a meeting with the commission on EID and sheep movements. The meeting was organised by George Lyon MEP and he was joined by NFUS President, Nigel Millar and NSA Scotland President John Cameron.

During his time in the European Parliament George also had meetings to discuss the on-going revision of the CAP with three of the Euro MP's. He met with Richard Ashworth from South-east

England, Jim Nicholson, from Northern Ireland and Mairead McGuinness, from the Republic of Ireland. This proved to be a constructive day and very informative and regular ongoing meetings will take place leading up to reform.

Caroline Orr, Secretary

Central

At the beginning of February, about 80 people crowded into Calver Village Hall for a very entertaining and informative antiques quiz evening, with over 100 agricultural and domestic by-gones laid out on tables and supplied by David Dowkes, who has amassed an amazing collection of fascinating – if not wince-making! – items. (Some of them seemed to involve removing various parts of the anatomy of cattle, sheep and pigs without benefit of anaesthetic!) With the bar open, a raffle, and pie and peas to follow, it proved to be an enjoyable pre-lambing social event.

During March, the National Trust held a series of consultation seminars, two of which took place in Glossop, one in Bamford and another in Totley, Sheffield, with the stated intention of planning for the future of the moors over the next 25 years. These meetings were very well attended by National Trust tenants and other livestock farmers, together with game-keepers, shooting tenants, and a variety of other “stake-holders”, such as Ramblers Association, British Mountaineering Council, RSPB, etc.

The NT owns thousands of hectares of peat moorlands above the moorland line, with the land rising to over 2000 ft. on Kinder and Bleaklow. Surrounding this upland area are a number of tenanted farms, who depend on this upland area for grazing. The NT officers gave a power-point presentation and it became abundantly clear that conservation, access, carbon-storage, and water quality were their key objectives, and food production was not even mentioned. Given that the whole process had raised the levels of anxiety amongst the farming community about their future, this did nothing to allay their fears.

From talking to a number of farmers who attended those meetings, the overwhelming impressions that they came away with were as follows:-

- It was less of a consultation and more of a declaration of intent, which we could either take or leave.
- Not only did they not include food production as sufficiently significant to be part of their key objectives, but they also failed to recognise that farmers and game-keepers have had the experience of managing these

moors for generations and are the people who continue to earn their living by working these moors 24-7; yet they are not seen as a valuable source of knowledge, nor are they seen as more than a limited part of the conservation process.

- From their presentations, the impression was given that the countryside as it is now, has been largely created by the National Trust, whereas in fact it has been largely created by the farming community. If farming was removed or reduced, the best aspects of this area which attracts so many visitors would be diminished, both in its aesthetic value and in its levels of functioning. To safe-guard all these valuable elements, people need to be encouraged in their commitment to working the moors, by ensuring that family members can be allowed to take on the family farm when older members retire or die. Once the numbers of farmers and their families diminish, there is also a knock-on effect on the life of the rural communities to which they belong.
- Farmers and game-keepers have been largely responsible for increasing the numbers of ground-nesting birds through skilful management of the moors, and their numbers would decrease rapidly if these personnel are reduced. It is also the game-keepers who have made the moors safe with regular

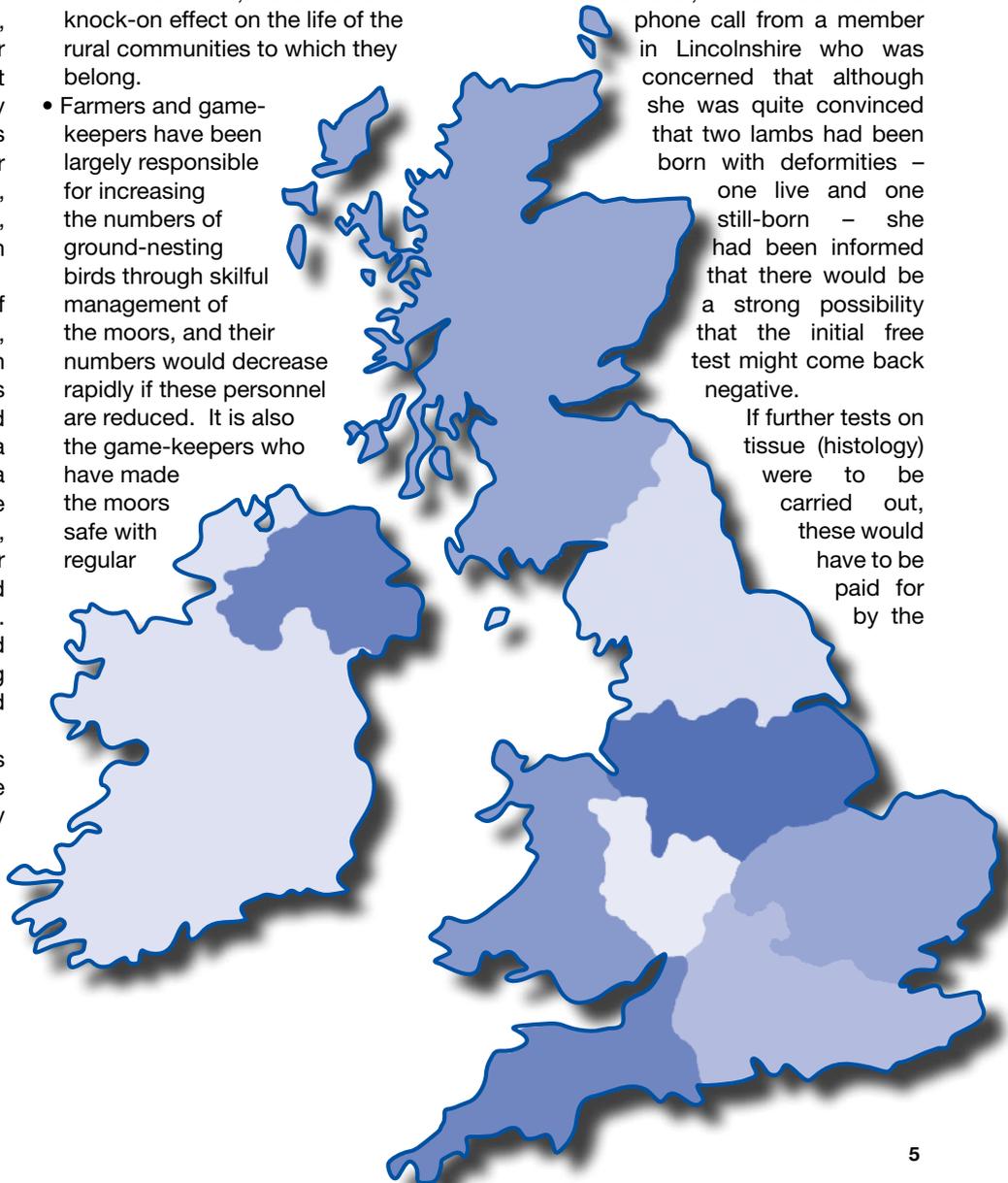
and controlled burning. The numbers of ground-nesting birds are also likely to decrease if access is increased, especially if people bring dogs with them onto the moors. There is an inherent contradiction in aiming to increase access while at the same time wanting to improve wild-life and bio-diversity.

- The consultation process itself needed to be more “user-friendly” than it was. Post-it notes do not really work with country/practical people, and lead to suspicions that these could be thrown away. Nor is it enough to rely on an internet feed-back system when many of the farmers in remote rural areas do not have access to broadband. Discussion groups following the presentations would have enabled people to feel their views had been heard, at least.

According to the AHVLA web-site today (2.4.12) there is just one confirmed case of Schmallenberg Virus in Leicestershire and one further case in Lincolnshire.

However, we received a phone call from a member in Lincolnshire who was concerned that although she was quite convinced that two lambs had been born with deformities – one live and one still-born – she had been informed that there would be a strong possibility that the initial free test might come back negative.

If further tests on tissue (histology) were to be carried out, these would have to be paid for by the





Shepherd Finals held in New Zealand. 'Inspirational' was how one person described the presentation.

Finally Phil Stocker spoke on his hopes for the future of the NSA and the sheep industry.

Sue Martyn, Secretary

South East

At the time of writing, once again the region is now very much to the forefront for a disease outbreak, this time in the form of Schmallenberg virus, previously Blue Tongue.

Geographically, together with the Eastern Region, we have the greatest risk from midge borne diseases from the Continent when prevailing winds bring plumes of the midges over the Channel.

Although, in most cases, it appears that there have only been a very small percentage of ewes affected within a flock, some farmers have not been so lucky and our sympathy goes out to them.

One farmer has told me that he has been very disappointed by the time that it has taken his VI centre to confirm an outbreak. Is this the reason for the relatively low number of outbreaks that have been confirmed or is it a case of people not reporting it? I hope it is not the latter, and perhaps by next month we might have very different figures to hand.

We intend to have a Seminar session on SBV at our South Sheep 2012 Event where hopefully we will be advised as to how to prepare for next season without a vaccine available.

Sheep worrying by dogs has been highlighted by NSA in the farming media just recently. This has been a high priority for our Region for more than a year and it has now been confirmed by Sussex being classed as one of the most affected counties.

The NSA now have a database available for recording incidents which will help us to build a comprehensive picture of the extent of the problem. Please phone Malvern with details if you, or your neighbours, have suffered an attack.

The Region is now fully focused on NSA South Sheep 2012 which is featured in much more detail elsewhere in this issue of the Sheep Farmer. We have a dedicated committee guided by Sue Martyn, our Event Organiser, but we will always be grateful for any offers of help from Members who can perhaps spare an hour or two, before, during or even after the Event.

A programme of meetings/farm walks, etc. for 2012 is being put together at the moment and will be posted out to members as soon as possible.

farmer. Being in the middle of lambing and taking into account that it would be an hour and a half round trip to the VLA centre, plus the cost of travel and possible tests, they decided not to bother but to make their own diagnosis instead from the photographs widely publicised. They also know of other farmers who have responded in the same way.

This is of concern because it may indicate that the official figures are not accurate in assessing the extent of the disease. Also, because it is not a notifiable disease, there is no funding available to encourage its reporting and investigation. This could be a serious obstacle to the information gathering process, resulting in impaired understanding and therefore, possible delays in finding a treatment for this disease.

Having recently taken up his post as English Committee rep. for NSA Central Region, Charles Sercombe has now been appointed Chairman of the NFU Livestock Board for England and Wales.

Soon afterwards, Charles told us he was "delighted to take on the role of chairman, along with the challenges of the livestock industry. I am looking forward to working in conjunction with other organizations for the benefit of livestock farmers, and in particular, through NSA, for sheep farmers."

We send many congratulations to Charles and look forward to working with him in his new capacity.

**Bob and Anne Payne.
Chairman & Secretary.**

South West

At the regional AGM it was time for change. Our regional Chairman David Gregory felt that with the reorganisation of the NSA and the new board coming into being, it was a suitable time for him to retire. The new Chairman is Robert Jordan. He is a member of the well-

respected Jordan family and farms in partnership with his parents and brother.

This is a mixed hill farm on the east side of Dartmoor, with 500 acres in bye and 2000 acres of common grazing. Stock consists of 200 pedigree South Devon and Galloway suckler cows and 1000 ewes, mainly Scotch Blackfaces, also North Country Cheviots, Scotch Mules, Herdwicks and Texels. They also have one of the oldest herds of Dartmoor ponies. Robert is a well-known face at shows and sales throughout the country.

The new Vice Chairman is Bryan Griffiths from Umlerleigh in North Devon. He farms 320 acres in partnership with his wife Liz. They run 850 ewes and 70 cattle and anyone who attended the farm walk the NSA held there will know the high standards of stockmanship on the farm. Bryan is a past Chairman and current member of South Molton Sheep Group so meets large numbers of sheep farmers and gets their views on the current state of the industry.

Our first speaker for the rest of the evening was a member of Devon & Cornwall Constabulary Crime Prevention Unit. He gave useful tips on ways we can help to protect our property (I'm sure the sale of trackers for quads/tractors has rocketed) and how we can help the police to help us.

Second up was Philip Derryman who was runner up in the World Young

NSA South West Ram Sale

Exeter Market - Wed 15th Aug 2012

Entries must be pure bred pedigree registered. No entry fees

Entry forms from Peter Farnsworth,
Secretary, Rendells, Stonepark,
Ashburton, TQ13 7RH,

Tel: 01364 654670, Fax 01364 654251,
or email: ashburton@rendells.co.uk

Looking forward to seeing you at South Sheep on 13th June at Nugent Farms, Lambourn, Berkshire.

Bob Blanden, Secretary

Eastern

Schmallenberg virus has certainly affected our region. It has been terrible for those individuals who have experienced the appalling problems the infection can cause at lambing time. You all have our sympathies, but much more than that, I am afraid it is watch and wait.

At the time of writing the disease has been reported on 243 holding in England of which 215 were in sheep. It is expected that we will continue to see cases in cattle, with the incidence in sheep hopefully drawing to an end.

The concerns over lack of water have lessened in the last few days as there has been a little rain. This has turned the grass and arable fields into more spring-like green growth, but the ground water levels are still perilously low.

New season lamb prices prior to Easter were good and are continuing at the same level, which helps cover costs and leave a reasonable margin. 20kg lambs have averaged £112 locally, so far.

We had a very good meeting with Jim Paice, our Minister of Agriculture at Darley Stud, by kind invitation of Liam O'Rourke and Dan Phipps. Jim was keen to hear first hand from members who had experienced Schmallenberg in their flocks and what the effects had been.

We were pleased to have a positive, open discussion with Jim on many issues affecting our sector, certainly which not all were negative! The hospitality at



Charles Sercombe and John Maxwell at a recent meeting



John Maxwell, Dan Phipps, Phil Stocker and Jim Paice in the lambing shed at Darley Stud.

Darley is second to none and our thanks to Liam and Dan and the team at Darley for hosting the meeting.

Our congratulations go to Charles Sercombe on being elected National Chairman of the NFU Livestock Board. Charles is an NSA member, who actually lives outside our region but is on our Eastern Region Ram Sale committee and a long standing friend.

Charles's hard work and dedication to the sheep sector, through NSA and NFU, sheep breed societies and many organisations, puts him in a great position to understand the good, the bad and the ugly and what needs to happen. Good luck Charles – you have a lot of friends supporting you.

Jonathan Barber, Secretary

Cymru/Wales

The Region has had a number of Stakeholder meetings with some taking positive action and others leading to immense frustration. The Sheep Scab Task and Finish group is making positive headway with a redraft of the current Order underway.

However, the issue of the proposed Livestock Movements database is already causing concern. By the time you read this we will have along with other industry organisations tried to secure a meeting with the Deputy Minister Alun Davies to see if he will change his mind on a Wales only database, we will update you in the next report and via the email updates.

The British Wool Marketing Board had contacted us to become part of a stakeholder group to meet and have a better understanding of how the Board works and the opportunities it has to offer via training etc. Our Chairman is a loyal supporter of the Wool Board and welcomes this move along with urging all NSA members to support the valuable work that they do.

The FSA has granted the lifting of the Chernobyl restrictions. This has been welcomed by NSA Cymru/Wales.

NSA Cymru/Wales will be taking a stand at the Wales Grassland event on 8th June to be held at John Davies' Pentre, Merthyr Cynog. We hope to see you there.

Date for your 2013 diary - A young West Wales farming family will host the NSA Welsh Sheep 2013, to be held on Tuesday 21 May 2013 at Beili Ficer Farm, Llansawel near Llandeilo.

Hosts Sion & Claire Williams took on the 10 year tenancy of the 255 acre farm in 2010, they rent another 150 acres, and own a further 20 acres. They have no Single Farm Payment, but have taken advantage of grant aid, IT and relevant industry schemes and initiatives.

Their goal is to produce what the market wants from their mixed flock of 1200 Mule, Texel Mule and Aberdale ewes, by maximising lamb production off grass and kilograms of lamb sold per ewe.

They are delighted with the farm business tenancy granted by the two brothers who own the farm and are committed to helping other aspiring young farmers realise their dreams to farm in their own right.

Helen Davies, Secretary

Northern Ireland

As I pen this article at the end of a March which has been one of the mildest on record, ground conditions have finally improved after a horrendously wet winter. Those lambing in late March must be feeling relieved as ewes and lambs got a good start. When reading this you will know if April has delivered as well.

I attended a Red Meat Prospects Conference organised by The Livestock and Meat Commission which turned out to be very interesting with a multitude of information as several speakers were economists. Fortunately all presentations are available on LMC website www.lmni.com for those who want to digest it all at their leisure.

The good news is that global sheep meat production and supply is expected to stay tight due to drought and past low prices. There may be a slight upturn in production in 2012 after a steady decline since 2000.

China always seems to get a mention whenever we talk about world trade and global economics and I will have to do the same. I did know that China was the world's largest sheep producing country but did you know that they have over three times as many ewes as New Zealand and Australia put together, isn't it a good job they can eat all their sheep meat themselves!!

Prices are expected to stay reasonable which means lamb will be a high priced meat for the consumer. If we are to satisfy the consumer our product must be marketed as niche, high quality and a highly differentiated product albeit at a high price. As producers along with the processors we must always be aware of quality and making lamb a desirable eating experience.

As a region which, to date has not experienced Schmallenberg Virus, we sympathise with those who have been unfortunate and hope that it does not become the threat we fear.

**Edward Adamson
Development Officer**

Sheep in Less Favoured Areas

The report that accompanies this issue of your Sheep Farmer magazine, 'The complimentary role of sheep in LFAs' has been produced by the NSA but with major contributions and information from a range of environmental and land management organisations, all of which are listed inside the reports front cover.

The accompanying photographs and design make it all very readable and attractive and the acknowledgements in the report give some reward for the hard work done by the production team.

The aim of producing this report is to provide reasoning and evidence to policy and decision makers to support the case for sheep farming being core to LFA land management – and to inform you as NSA members so that you can help to spread the messages too.

Where sufficient evidence may still not exist the report draws on 'emerging science' and practical common sense. One example of this is in the area of soil carbon where it is now widely accepted that upland grazings add to carbon stores and stabilise that carbon as one solution to climate change even though the science doesn't yet allow it to be quantified.

This process is known as carbon sequestration where essentially organic matter, made up from decaying roots, plant material, and reproductive soil biology, builds up to an optimum state, effectively locking carbon into the soil in a stable form.

Accepting this is one thing, measuring it another, and it's one of the reasons why the carbon picture relating to upland and lowland lamb production is distorted, with upland production looking worse but in practice not necessarily being so.

The debate regarding sheep farming and sheep numbers in upland and marginal areas is far from over. There are still many reports of sheep numbers in the upland being incentivised to fall – with a similar number of claims that habitats and biodiversity are suffering from undergrazing and that scrub and bracken are getting further out of control.

Upland pastures are sensitive, and getting the right balance of grazing comes from experience and practical knowledge, knowledge that is often only within the heads of farmers and stockpersons used to farming in these environments. Damage can easily be done but any good farmer will know that serious overstocking will only have a detrimental effect for future years and that is not in the interest of anyone.

For the bigger picture there are still big debates to be had about the objectives some of the bigger 'public' land owners in LFA areas and whether they want a farm centric landscape or whether they are more interested in 'rewilding'.

A series of recent meetings held by the National Trust in the Peak District is mentioned in the Central region report and in my opening piece, and these meetings cut to the core of some of the challenges we have.

What our report does is to paint the picture of an attractive, and desirable upland scenario with sheep farming at its very core, and identifies some key

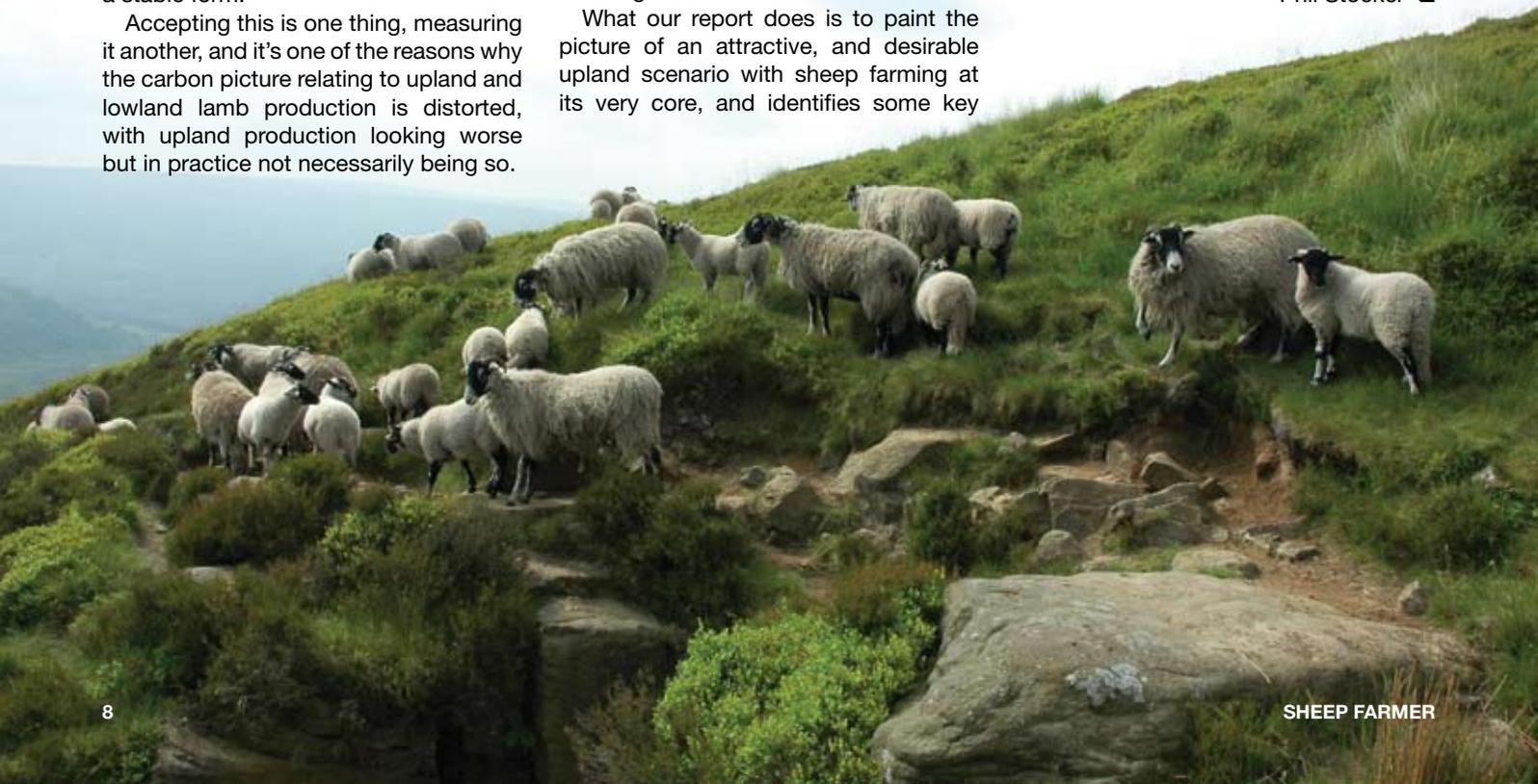
policy demands to ensure that sheep farming thrives and is able to keep delivering a wide range of



environmental social and economic benefits.

I hope you both enjoy the report and make optimum use of it. Finally, if you think your MP/MEP/Local Authority or local conservation body or land management body would benefit from receiving a copy please let us know and we will ensure they receive one.

Phil Stocker □



Schmallenberg and Showing Sheep

NSA guidance for breed societies and farmers

The Schmallenberg virus outbreaks seen over the winter of 2011/12 have given rise to concern over the movement of sheep for shows and sales, and the potential spread of the virus. Concerns are whether there are risks of sheep to sheep contact, risks of moving infected midges around the country, and risks of infected sheep passing on infection to midge populations.

The virus is relatively new and not well understood. All recommendations, veterinary and otherwise, are based on assumptions and best knowledge available. The guidance included in this paper draws on discussions with veterinarians and offers options to reduce risks but can give no guarantees.

General statements

- We live, and run our sheep businesses in, a natural world where human activity, farming activity, ecology, and weather patterns and climate all interrelate. We cannot expect to control any of these factors fully but can aim to understand lifecycles and relationships and reduce risks based on this understanding.
- Sheep farmers have varying interests and objectives relating to their sheep enterprises – while some may be prepared to reduce their own risk by not showing or selling direct from farm, for others showing and selling collectively is essential to the way they operate. It is important that sheep farmers consider the effect of their actions on others and the industry at large; however it is also important that individuals have

the freedom of decision making. Regulation and statutory controls come into play when risks are clear cut and the interests of the industry are clearly best served by industry acting as one.

Key facts

- The best scientific evidence suggests that Schmallenberg virus is transmitted by biting insects; midges and mosquitoes in particular. The risk of sheep to sheep transmission appears negligible, and clearly less when sheep are not coming into physical contact with each other.
- The period when sheep show clinical signs of the virus, and when they may be potentially infective appears to be short, around four to five days after being infected. Once this clinical period is over then the sheep are likely to carry antibodies in their blood and it is unknown whether they could transmit infection to midges that may then bite them.
- The period when the virus has a serious effect on sheep is during the first 30 days of pregnancy. If infected at this time the virus may result in dead or unviable lambs. Infected at other times, sheep appear to show mild symptoms (likely to be unnoticed) and recover within four to five days.

So, for shows and sales NSA recommends that sheep producers consider their situations, evaluate any risks, and take measures to reduce risks where necessary. We would encourage farmers showing and selling sheep in this period

when Schmallenberg is evident to:

- Avoid presenting stock in the early stages of pregnancy
- Farmers who have experienced Schmallenberg virus on their farms this year should consider the risks of moving their sheep to central locations and speak to their vets for advice
- Watch out for the availability of serum tests to detect antibodies. This should identify sheep that have come into contact with the virus and could be used as part of a decision making process
- Only present stock showing clear signs of good health. Any sheep appearing unwell should be kept away from other stock. The use of a thermometer to check body temperature in adult sheep is unusual but temperature increase is associated with Schmallenberg virus, and thermometers are cheap and easy to use!
- Use products that may help repel biting insects from sheep. These may include approved dips, sprays, and natural repelling agents such as garlic and citronella. Natural products may be fed or used regularly and farmers may consider spraying areas showing skin several times during a day whilst at shows if they feel the risk makes it worthwhile
- Insect traps used at shows, around pens and buildings could be considered
- As always, report any unusual signs or suspicions to your vet

Phil Stocker



Schmallenberg Test

A HVLA is currently validating a blood test that could be used to pick up signs of new infection. This could be used to test fetuses and their dams, in addition to the current PCR test which detects the virus in brain samples.

This test could also be used to screen adult animals, to determine whether they have been previously infected and to gauge the degree of immunity that might be provided."

Additional guidance notes for farmers available from: http://vla.defra.gov.uk/science/docs/sci_schmallenberg.pdf

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NSA South Sheep

June 13th is the day that all roads in the South East Region of the NSA lead to Iveagh Farm, Upper Lambourn for the NSA South Sheep 2012 event, kindly hosted by Nugent Farms Ltd. The event organising committee have been working extremely hard with their plans to provide a day that will interest all sheep farmers.

As previously announced, Novartis Animal Health and Randall Parker Foods are the major sponsors of the day. As part of their stand Novartis will be staging pour-on demonstrations throughout the day.

All lambs from the host farm are sold to Randall Parker Foods, who are holding a carcass competition, details of which can be obtained from RPF.

The Main Sponsors are EBLEX, who

are kindly supporting the Seminar Area and the Shepherd of the Future competition. They are joined by Mole Valley Farmers (Scats) who once again are showing their support for the future of the sheep industry, providing a £1,000 prize fund for the Shepherd of the Future competition.

This competition is restricted to those under 26 on the day of the event, who have to complete various sheep related tasks. Volac is kindly supporting a new competition for The Student Shepherd of the Year. Shearwell Data Ltd complete these sponsors, they will be supporting the Lamb selection competition.

The organisers are grateful for the support from the industry and would like to thank those mentioned above, along with Rappa Fencing, Intervet Schering-

Plough and JG Animal Health.

The event will have a comprehensive range of breed and trade stands designed to inspire visitors to take away ideas to improve their business.

A programme of seminars is being arranged, with the topics covering Breeding and Animal Health to include an update on the threat of the Schmallenberg Virus.

There will also be a presentation by Philip Derryman who was runner up in the World Young Shepherds competition in New Zealand, on his experience in the competition and the rest of his trip. 'Inspirational' was how this presentation has been described, by someone who has already heard it. We should be in for a treat.

Farm tour

The farm tour this year is guaranteed to be something a little different with a flock of 600 Hartline ewes who have lambed to Hartline, Southdown and Suffolk tups. Also on view will be the 25ha of reversion to chalk grassland containing wildflowers that should be flowering at the time of the event. The shepherd, Ewan Kershaw is passionate about the environment and is proud to list the rare species of plants and butterflies that inhabit Iveagh Farm.

New this year is a 'Safe Handling of Quads' competition with entries being taken on the day. There will be a small entry fee for this competition and the lamb selection competition. All entry money will be donated to the Berks, Oxon & Bucks Air Ambulance. Ewan owes his life to their speedy response last autumn when he suffered a severe allergic reaction to 25 wasp stings.

All shepherds need at least one good dog and there will be an opportunity to purchase one on the day. A sale is being held and to enter a dog or to receive a catalogue please contact Gareth Griffiths of Clee, Tomkinson and Francis. Tel: 01874 622488. Email: Brecon@ctf-uk.com

The South East region of the NSA look forward to welcoming everyone to this event. For more details of exhibitors, tickets, competition rules and entry forms, please go to www.nationalsheep.org.uk and follow the link to the event website. For those who do not use the internet, please ring Sue Martyn – 01409 271385 or 07967 512660.



NSA English Committee

Mike Credland reports

The encouraging feature of the first meetings of the English Committee was the spread of knowledge throughout the members and the emergence of several bright young men to balance the age and experience of the remaining BOFs! It was particularly good to have representation from the Livestock Auctioneers in the shape of Alastair Sneddon and also from the NFU with their new livestock Chairman Charles Sercombe.

There is also a healthy balance between pedigree breeders and commercial sheep producers. It was agreed that there should be as conscious effort to attract more members so that the NSA should reflect the views of all producers within the industry.

The committee identified a number of key issues which it was felt would affect the future development of the sheep industry:

Centralised database

It was felt that the new database as projected by Defra should work in conjunction with that set up in Scotland and that proposed by the Welsh Assembly. Allied to this was the need to see movement recording standardised and the recognition by Defra that EID as presently constituted was not functioning properly.

The announcement by the three regional bodies that there would be zero tolerance as regards movement recording

is to be regarded as most unfair and impractical given the circumstances and the NSA is committed to working towards a more practical approach by Defra and RPA in the hope that a sensible form of risk assessment might be applied.

Farm Assurance

Lifetime assurance is regarded for the most part as unhelpful within the sheep industry and it is felt to be more appropriate to encourage the smaller producers to become assured. The standards need to be more husbandry based rather than a box ticking exercise for assessors. Everybody accepts the need for Farm Assurance and as producers we only question the relevance of some of the standards.

Six Day Rule

The industry accepts the reasons for movement control following the two major FMD outbreaks. If a movement database with EID functions properly then there should be no need for a movement standstill. It may be better to suffer the six day rule for a little longer than to have a system of Separation Units imposed upon us. This can only be regarded as another piece of administrative mumbo jumbo which may inflict more cost on the industry without providing any safeguard in disease control.

Disease Control

In many respects this overlaps with the

other issues. Only time will tell whether or not Schmollenberg will be a long term threat, but the implications of movement controls and vaccination are dark clouds on the horizon. The continuing presence of sheep scab continues to be a blight on the industry and the NSA is pledged to continue to work towards its long term control.

Other issues

There are a number of other issues which affect individuals to varying degrees in different areas. Dog worrying and predators are serious problems in certain areas, but there is no definitive solution and we are aware of the problems and aim to give assistance wherever we can.

Finally we must as an industry work together with the Scottish and Welsh regions to encourage more young entrants to the industry. It is also important to make Government and the EU aware of the damage that environmental schemes and forestry can do in certain areas with particular regard to removing sheep from the hills and LFA.

The livestock industry can do more to assist the economy and the environment than the politicians perhaps realise. It is one of the main functions of NSA to ensure that the voice of the sheep producer (large or small) is heard in Westminster, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Brussels as well as the offices of the civil service. □



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NSA Scotsheep

Wool takes centre stage

Wool will take centre stage at NSA Scotsheep 2012 which is expected to attract thousands of sheep farmers from throughout the UK and Ireland – and further afield – to Dumfries House, Cumnock, Ayrshire, on Wednesday, June 6. Up-to-the-minute information can be found on the event website – www.scotsheep.org.uk

Organised by NSA Scotland with Bank of Scotland as main sponsor, NSA Scotsheep is being hosted on the 960-acre Home Farm at Dumfries House which is run as a joint venture by the Dumfries House Trust and the UK's fourth largest food retailer, Morrisons.

Enterprises on the farm, where a £2 million investment programme is underway to develop the farming enterprise, includes a commercial flock of 730 Scotch Mule ewes and a small flock of 20 pedigree Suffolk ewes.

The farm is one of three taking part in the Quality Meat Scotland Sheep Strategy Group's Focus Farm project to gauge the effectiveness of using estimated breeding values (EBVs) to improve the performance of commercial flocks.

Phase one of the project has already demonstrated that the value of using high index Suffolk rams could be worth as much as £11 more per ewe compared with low index rams and £5 more per ewe compared with rams selected solely by eye. The results of the first year of the phase two trials at Dumfries and the other two farms will be announced by QMS at NSA Scotsheep.

Campaign for Wool

It is highly appropriate that wool should be a major feature of the event as historic Dumfries House, with its priceless collection of 18th century Chippendale furniture, was saved for the nation in 2007 by the Prince of Wales (who is known in Scotland as the Duke of Rothesay) and his Royal Highness has been the inspiration for the Campaign for Wool (CfW) which was launched in the UK two years ago and has now taken off world-wide.

It is encouraging that wool prices have improved considerably from the low ebb which motivated Prince Charles to

bring all sectors of the industry together, including the NSA and the British Wool Marketing Board (BWMB), to instigate plans for the campaign. A further increase of over 30p/kg, taking the average price paid to producers for wool up to over 130p/kg, is due to be announced before NSA Scotsheep which should put a spring into the step of farmers attending the event.

"The Wool Centre – Rediscover the Wonders of Wool" at NSA Scotsheep will build on a similar promotion last year at the Royal Highland Show, which drew warm praise, and will tell the wool story from "fleece to fashion", including carpets (the market for 85% of British wool), knitwear and apparel. The main static display will come straight from the BWMB/CfW stand at the Ideal Homes Exhibition in London.

Other features will include a demonstration portraying different aspects of the ancient craft of handmade felt using wool from native sheep breeds and highlighting contemporary artistic applications.

The Scottish Storytelling Yurt – a woolly home constructed as a millennium project for storytelling and teaching tactile skills with local wool – will be featured and there will be demonstrations of hand spinning using a spindle and spinning wheels. Colourful yarns and a selection of knitted, woven and embroidered articles, made from natural fleece colours and plant dyes, will be on display.

Young shepherds

Another feature of NSA Scotsheep likely to attract great interest is the Scottish Young Shepherd of the Year competition which has been stepped up a gear this year with three regional eliminations to stimulate competition. The four top competitors from each of three qualifying events will qualify which should make the competition between the 12 finalists at NSA Scotsheep a real contest of skill and knowledge.

The 10 speakers for three seminars to be held during the day have also been announced, led by Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, and will cover a range of contentious issues of concern to sheep farmers, including CAP reform, cross compliance and marketing



Photo © the Scottish Farmer

All ready for NSA Scotsheep at Dumfries House on June 6 (l-r) joint organisers, Julie Sedgewick and Euan Emslie and farm manager, Andrew Robinson (Scottish Farmer)

opportunities.

There will be a lot to pack in during the day-long programme which will also incorporate trade stands, breed society displays, a farm tour, practical and technical demonstrations, advisory and educational exhibits, sheepdog trial, stockjudging, ATV competition, sheep shearing and farmers' market.

Trade stand bookings are set to hit a record level of more than 150 and there will be 30 exhibits of all the different breeds of sheep in the sheep breed societies' area.

Exciting venue

"We have a really exciting venue for NSA Scotsheep which has captured the imagination of the whole sheep industry in Scotland," said event chairman, Neale McQuistin, vice-chairman of NSA Scotland.

"The event provides sheep farmers with a unique opportunity to catch up on all the latest technical, marketing and political developments in the industry. There will be so much to see and do that visitors should aim to get there early to make the most of the day."

One last point - visitors should note that the venue of Dumfries House is nowhere near the town of Dumfries. It lies on the A70 between Ayr and Cumnock and will be well signposted by the AA.

Entry to NSA Scotsheep costs £12 for adults, NSA members £6 on production of a 2012 membership (one card, one reduced entry), agricultural students and under 16 free of charge, overseas visitors free on production of passport.





Technical Events

This June and July NSA members will have the opportunity to visit some of the very best technical events for sheep producers. These events are organised by NSA's various regional and event committees, on behalf of all members – so please support their efforts and make sure you attend at least one.

If there isn't an event in your area, don't worry, the majority of NSA regions organise events, which are biennial occasions, so there is bound to be an event near to you next year.

NSA's events are invaluable business days for any sheep producer and will give you access to the best possible technical advice on all areas of your business – including flock health planning, the latest technical advancements across the sector, nutrition and veterinary advice, and not forgetting the big policy issues of the day, which will be debated through the seminars and debate panels at each event.

Make sure you get the opportunity to ask the questions that are important to your business – check out the seminar programmes for each event and go along to join in the debates.

NSA continues to champion the future of our industry by encouraging youngsters through competitions such as the Young Shepherds competition, a major feature at each event, and the Young Entrants Initiative (launched at NSA Sheep 2012).

NSA events are not only the flagship events for the Association, but are also perfect one-stop-shops for all your sheep farming business needs. They are a perfect demonstration of NSA's ability to work with all aspects of the sheep sector.

As a member, your support of the Association is appreciated very much, but please bring friends and colleagues who aren't NSA members with you to these events and show them what we can do.

NSA SHEEP 2012

NSA

The essential technical event for sheep producers organised by the National Sheep Association

Wednesday 4th July 2012

Three Counties Showground
Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 6NW

www.sheepevent.org.uk
Contact Helen Davies on 01938 590535
or email helen@nationalsheep.org.uk

Further detail for NSA South Sheep, NSA Scotsheep and NSA Sheep 2012 can be found elsewhere in this issue of Sheep Farmer, and also on their respective event websites. □

South Sheep 2012

Organised by NSA South East Region

Wednesday 13th June
9am - 5pm

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www.scotsheep.org.uk

Auctions Maintain Wool Prices

By Jonathan Long

As the shearing season approaches BWMB is still busy trading last year's clip through its regular wool auctions at its Bradford headquarters.

Happily, with demand still strong from across the world, prices have been maintained at decent levels. Although, there have been occasions when clearance levels have dropped to between 50 per cent and 60 per cent.

But that is a result of BWMB's strong reserve policy which means it does not sell wool at values which depress the market, explains BWMB Chairman and Northumberland sheep farmer Malcolm Corbett.

"This where the BWMB's competitive auction system really comes in to its own. The competitive environment leaves buyers in no doubt that they have to bid well if they want to secure wool from the BWMB."

"Because of BWMB's positive cash flow situation it can afford to have lower clearances where prices don't meet its expectations. This is particularly valuable when the market tries to depress prices and reduce the value of the clip."

Prices, which dipped a little in December and January have risen again, with good averages and clearances at all the sales in February and March, he adds.

"Once again the trend is set fair for the new season and we fully expect all sheep farmers supplying their wool to BWMB to see an increase in the value of their wool clip this year."

Events

And with a number of specialist sheep farming events coming up this year Mr Corbett says those farmers who want to know how to improve the value of their clip should take the time to visit the BWMB stand at either Scot Sheep on 6 June at Dumfries House, South Sheep on 13 June at Nugent Farms, Lambourne, and at the Sheep Event, Malvern, on 4 July.

"These events, while primarily a good opportunity for producers to learn a little from BWMB, are also a great opportunity for BWMB staff and Board Members to listen to the concerns of producers and explain what BWMB is doing to address these issues.

"BWMB is a member organisation



and we always want to listen to what our members have to say to ensure we deliver improved services and value to the membership."

Recent years have seen some turbulent times for the wool market, but the current trend for improving prices is one which shouldn't lull BWMB in to a false sense of security, he added. "There is of course ongoing work being done to ensure BWMB is an organisation fit for purpose and fit for the future.

"The recent relocation of the BWMB's headquarters to a new site in Bradford, within the same building as the Northern England Wools depot is a significant step forward and one which should deliver cost savings in the coming years."

Elections

Recent BWMB elections for Board representative from the English Northern and Northern Irish regions have resulted in Board Chairman Malcolm Corbett being re-elected to serve as the Northern English Board Member, while Ian Buchanan retained his seat as the Northern Irish Board Member. Nigel Williams was unchallenged for his seat representing the English central region.

Welcoming the three Board Members back to their current roles BWMB Chief

Executive Officer Ian Hartley said all three had given good service to the organisation during their previous tenures and he looked forward to working with them in future.

"With wool prices on the rise and much good work being done by BWMB, having these three Board Members returning to their positions gives the Board stability and means their experience can once again be put to good use in managing BWMB for the future."

YFC fundraising

On the lighter side BWMB has also recently supported a novel fundraising effort by Yorkshire YFC members.

Eight Yorkshire YFC members travelled to the annual YFC National AGM Weekend at Torquay on mobility scooters over a seven day period, towing behind them a supersize sheep and a giant potato, explains BWMB Producer Relations Manager Gareth Jones.

"The trip, which had a top speed of 8mph, was undertaken to raise funds for the Sue Ryder healthcare charity and the YFC members chose to showcase two of Yorkshire's most important agricultural exports, wool and potatoes, during the journey."

Date for Your Diary...



Sheep 2012

4th July - The Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire

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If you are farming yourself, or work in an industry associated to agriculture and rural industry, then take the opportunity to explore the Nuffield website and find out what Nuffield has to offer. <http://www.nuffieldscholar.org/>

Below are some thoughts from individuals who have been awarded 2012 scholarships, Joanne Nash and Robert Hodgkins – you can follow their progress via their blog on the Nuffield website. Catherine Nakielny was awarded a scholarship in 2011, and she highlights below her experiences and the benefits of undertaking a scholarship.

Expanding horizons

Catherine Nakielny

Through my work in the sheep industry over the last 15 years I had already been fortunate to have met many UK and International Nuffield



Scholars, writes Catherine Nakielny. The warm welcome I received on attending the annual Nuffield Farming conference in Edinburgh in November of 2010 convinced me that I should apply myself and two months later I was awarded a 2011 Scholarship.

The next step was to select a topic to study. Through my involvement in both the National Sheep Association and the Farmers Union of Wales I had been made aware of some of the issues on the horizon for the UK sheep industry. In particular I was concerned about pressure on the sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without resorting to the calls from some non-farming organisations to reduce livestock numbers.

Working as a sheep consultant and



Visiting an on-farm sale of performance recorded Romney rams in the South Island of New Zealand



High performance composite ewes grazing Lucerne in Australia



One of the highest ranked White Suffolk rams in Australia

also running an 800 ewe crossbred flock means that I was interested in promoting the role of increasing efficiency of production as a means of reducing the amount of emissions generated per kg of lamb produced. In particular I wanted to focus on reducing the amount of methane produced from lamb production through increases in efficiency and I therefore selected my topic as “Maximising returns through reducing Methane emissions – an opportunity for the UK Sheep Sector”.

For my eight weeks of travelling I looked to countries which were also facing the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture. I therefore selected to visit Ireland, New Zealand and Australia focusing on the research

work being carried out into reducing emissions and also looking at how the sheep industry in each country was increasing its efficiency of production.

Wherever I went I received a warm welcome and it became obvious that the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust was held in high regard. I met many interesting and inspiring people on my travels and my next challenge will be to consider everything I learnt and translate this knowledge into practical solutions for the UK sheep sector.

Fortunately the Nuffield experience further reinforced my view that the UK is able to offer sustainably produced lamb which adds value to the environment and

continued on page 18

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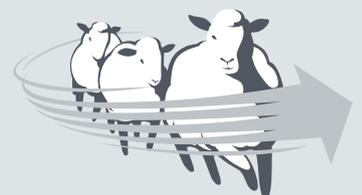
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protecting the future of your flock

Continued from page 16

also fulfils the need for sheep farming to be a financially viable sector of UK agriculture.

Catherine Nakielny works as an Independent Sheep Consultant and sits on the NSA Welsh regional committee. Catherine's Nuffield Scholarship is sponsored by the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society and Innovis Ltd. Catherine can be contacted at catherine@knconsulting.co.uk or on 01558 685 808.

"Being awarded a Nuffield Scholarship has been a fantastic experience and I recommend that anyone considering applying to do so. It is an inspiring organisation and the opportunities available upon being awarded a scholarship are invaluable"

Welfare of the stock-and the farmer

Joanne Nash

I was fortunate enough to spend my childhood living and working on the family dairy farm. I saw first-hand the daily triumphs



and traumas of farming; the miracle of birth; devastation of disease; celebration of good harvest and despair over finances!

But I have remained enthusiastic and committed to the future of livestock farming, focussing on welfare of the stock-and the farmer, writes Joanne Nash.

I have been inspecting livestock premises for the last six years, in a proactive and reactive manner. It is becoming increasingly obvious that due to a rise in Farm Assurance Schemes, created largely because of growing consumer awareness, that farmers are receiving more and more inspection visits.

Are all of these visits necessary? Could they be combined/information shared? What real benefit are they to farmer and consumer if little more than tick-box exercises?

Farm Inspections are vital to the integrity of the human food chain, disease control, the farmer, the livestock and the consumer but only if done in an



informed, experienced, competent and consistent manner.

I believe Inspectors should not just accept the bare minimum for standards but actually be able to give advice that will encourage and inspire farmers to aim higher and gain the recognition they deserve for good stockmanship and high welfare standards.

I believe shared information and trust could not only highlight the problematic farms tainting industry reputation, but importantly benefit the better ones by reducing the burden of unnecessary visits.

The welfare codes of practice need improving and updating and could then be a useful resource in self-regulation and therefore assisting both farmer and inspector.

Being awarded this wonderful Scholarship is a huge honour. It is enabling me to pursue my passion, better my understanding and increase my knowledge enabling me to support and assist the farming community to the

best of my ability.

I am already in meetings with Farm Assurance Schemes about the best way forward to bettering communication and building relationships with farmers.

I am travelling to Poland at the end of April to visit farms and see for myself what welfare standards are like, what laws are being enforced and by whom, and the value of their inspections.

I then travel to Estonia in May for a Dairy in loose housing conference. In July, I will be heading off to New Zealand to work with government inspectors and assess their codes of practice and how beneficial they are.

This is my opportunity to change things for the better, to ensure that each farm visit is of value to all concerned.

Genomic selection

Robert Hodgkins

Using Genomic selection technology to advance the development of a ovine maternal breeding line is the subject of Robert Hodgkins study tour.



Rob farms in conjunction with his parents - we are large commercial family run sheep farm running 3000 plus NZ Romney ewes. The farm is a spread out unit (25 miles round trip to visit every flock) on good to mediocre grassland, land class 3-5.

We operate a single breed, closed flock and take great care and interest in selecting future progeny to make shepherding as enjoyable and stress free as possible. We are one of the largest Signet recorded flocks in the country, single sire mating and recording over 1500 ewes and their progeny per year.

We sell high quality, NZ Romney rams and females, this year we have sold around 110 two tooth rams, and all of the breeding females (800+) we had for sale.

I believe the NZ Romney has a huge part to play in the future of British farming and my ambition is to push the NZ Romney as a possible solution to the

**New application deadline
for 2013 Nuffield Awards 31 July 2012**

two biggest problems effecting British farming today:

The average age of a British farming is 55 and rising if we were to look at the sheep sector it would probably be even higher. As an industry we are dying, we are failing to attract enough high quality new entrants who will be needed to drive forward the industry over the next 50 years. You will only make the sheep industry more attractive by providing it with a maternal ewe with the capacity to look after herself including lambing outside (cold weather tolerance genes) with high disease resistance (e.g. Foot root resistance genes) and minimal shepherding requirements. Sheep farming has to allow a work/life balance, the old model of working 70 hour weeks with your only reward being to turn a large subsidy cheque into a small subsidy cheque is not sustainable!

Educating people that the single most important part of their farm is "cost of production and margin." The markets price per kilo is a figure you have no control over at all. The way your support payments are calculated in the future with an emphasis on environmental protection or food production or even if there is a payment at all, is something you have little control over. The one controlling factor you have is producing your product for the lowest possible price. In my eyes that is a forage based animal requiring low levels of shepherding and minimal interference. Robust selection of stock with the right genetics to address these problems is key to a viable sheep farming sector.

I passionately believe I have something to offer the British farming industry, in terms of the animals I sell - through importing the best genetics from the stud flock of NZ largest ram seller, combined with our own large numbers of sheep, rigorously Signet recording and high selection pressure, I am confident I already supply some of the lowest cost of production sheep.

A Nuffield Scholarship will enable me to offer the industry stock not only selected on the Signet EBV's (Estimated Breeding Values) but also selected using their MBV's (Molecular Breeding Values) using genomic selection to identify difficult to measure traits or traits that aren't apparent until much later in life leading to much higher performing sheep that are available to be utilized in a seriously compressed time scale through being able to select rams as soon as a blood sample is available, and then being able to dispense those genetics in a large population of sheep through AI, and traditional mating.

Australia and New Zealand are already embarking on DNA testing for MBV's and have been for a few years now, but you cannot simply just take their research. To take proper advantage of this technology within Europe you would need a few major points in your favour, the major one being New Zealand / Australian ovine genetics.

Because each breed of sheep has a slightly different DNA make up you can only make predictions using this method if you have a large data group from which to compare it to, the minimum number of sheep is recommended is somewhere between 2500-4000 animals with more animals giving increasingly more accurate results.

For example, because 70 per cent of the NZ flock is Romney to use this technology commercially (for example through Pfizer Sheep50K analysis) you need a NZ Romney, Coopworth or Perindale (Romney crosses now separate breeds in their own right) with NZ genetic material.

My plan is to travel to these countries, learn what they are doing and build on their experience/learn from their mistakes and then bring back this technology and use it not only to benchmark our flock against the very best NZ has to offer but also utilise this new technology and use it to help refine my own selection criteria for our and our clients rams. I am very grateful to be sponsored by the South of England Agricultural society.

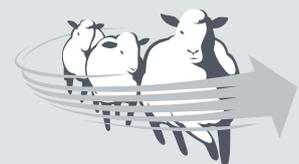
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NSA Sheep 2012

When: Wednesday 4 July

Where: The Three Countries Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire

The Chairman writes.....

I am looking forward to welcoming you to NSA's biennial national event, the largest specialist event for the sector in the country this year. Here's five reasons why this is a 'must attend' event.

- Come and do business among the trade stands - there'll be over 250 trade stands representing all aspects of the sheep sector
- Find out about the latest technical innovations
- Discover the latest genetics among the 50 breed associations and societies
- Discuss this coming season's marketing opportunities
- Catch up with colleagues and friends

Equally important, the event provides you with the opportunity to spend a day away from the farm challenging yourself to think outside the box and how your business will be looking in five years' time. While we're currently enjoying a very buoyant marketplace, now is the time sit back and consider the how CAP Reform could impact on your sheep enterprise following a revision of the current payment system coupled with new environmental challenges.

NSA is taking on board very seriously these challenges and has chosen sustainable intensification as the theme of this year's event. Making more from less is something the entire sector will have to get to grips with in future and we're staging a series of debates to enable us all discover beneficial solutions.

The challenges and choices of sustainability were highlighted by government's chief scientific advisor, Sir John Beddington in his Foresight report on the Future Challenges of Food and Farming. We are delighted Sir John has accepted our invitation to officially open the event.

I am also pleased to announce NSA will be demonstrating its firm commitment towards the next generation with the official launch of the NSA Young Entrants Initiative, designed to demonstrate that there are exciting opportunities for skilled and motivated individuals who wish to enter the industry, and to improve communication and engagement between young entrants and all other aspects of the sheep sector.

Finally, NSA has organised a comprehensive array of activities which will be on going throughout the event. Listen, learn and enjoy.

John Geldard, NSA Chairman

NSA Young Shepherd of the Year

Twenty six youngsters from throughout the UK are lined up to compete for the prestigious NSA Young Shepherd of the Year award. Sponsored by MSD Footvax and with £2,000 at stake, the award is open to college students and under 26 year olds and features a pentathlon of practical sheep management activities, all of which are designed to test their shepherding skills. Come and watch entrants sorting finished lambs, demonstrating handling, vaccinating and dosing techniques, shearing and putting an ATV through its paces. They will also be questioned on flock management and health issues.

European Young Shepherd of the Year

NSA is delighted to host the European Young Shepherd of the Year award sponsored by Rumenco. Entrants, 26 years and under, will be travelling to

Malvern from France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain to join our own UK representatives in a pentathlon of activities.

NFYFC ATV Safety and Handling Competition Final

NSA is also pleased to host the finals of the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC) All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety and Handling final. This competition attracting 12 teams will showcase safety knowledge and ATV handling skills and promises to be a battle of knowledge and skills. Please do visit the NFYFC Arena ring and lend your support.

NSA Young Entrants Initiative forum

If you are planning a career within the sheep sector, whether it be shepherd, farmer, farm manager, consultant or vet, then visit our forum located on

the NSA stand in Wye Hall 3 and meet with representatives from throughout the sector who will be able to provide advice and guidance. There will also be an opportunity to meet with some of the six UK representatives who travelled to New Zealand last year to compete for the inaugural World Young Shepherd Challenge. Find out what they learnt from New Zealand sheep farming systems, how they're planning to introduce some of those ideas to their flocks back home.

BWMB fleece awards

Come and see some of the finest fleeces in Wye Hall 4. You'll find tables heaving with wool from a huge varieties of sheep



Crosby Cleland

Ballynahinch

Co Down

750 breeding ewes

The Malvern event is well worth travelling to because literally all sectors are represented and you have the opportunity to explore the sheep industry from a much wider perspective. It's great not only to have the chance to learn from the seminars and find about new technology and equipment, but to actually discuss with representatives, in detail face to face. This year, I'll be coming to find out more about the market place – opportunities UK wide and beyond and exploring the respective pricing schedules.

Major Sponsors



breeds and split in to seven sections - fine, medium, cross, lustre, hill, mountain and natural coloured fleeces.

BWMB wool clinic

If you would like to increase the value of your wool clip this season, then visit the British Wool Marketing Board's wool clinic on its stand in Wye Hall 4 Hall. Demonstrations will be staged throughout the day on improving presentation and quality. There'll also be an opportunity to catch up on the improved wool price trends and shearing training, as well as the successful Campaign for Wool (CfW) which is promoting the huge versatility and durability of wool in both fashion and interior furnishings.

Carcase selection

New for the 2012 event, Dunbia will be staging a display of carcasses for retail, foodservice and export to demonstrate how they differ and subsequently how important for farmers to forward in-spec lambs to enable the processor to satisfy its customers' needs and requirements. Dunbia staff will be available throughout the day to discuss with producers the potential benefits of targeting specific markets.

Farm Shop and Butchery Display Award

Sit back and watch some of Britain's best farm shop butchers at work in the Avon Hall competing for the Best Farm Shop Award and the Best English Farm Shop Award. NSA and EBLEX are once again staging these two prestigious awards designed to test the skills of farm shop owners located throughout the UK selling lamb, together with those of their managers and butchers. Each entrant has been provided with one hour to prepare and display a variety of cuts from a whole carcass and making up lamb burgers in an initiative designed by the NSA working with EBLEX. Judges will be searching out the entrants

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demonstrating the best set of butchery skills, together with innovation and appealing presentation.

Flock Health Planning

Find out how to adopt a proactive approach to managing your flock's health and improving its long term returns at a series of demonstrations and workshops staged in Avon Hall and near to the Young Shepherds of the Year competition. The industry's leading specialists will be on hand throughout the day to offer advice on introducing a whole flock package which will incorporate areas including reducing lambs losses, lameness and mastitis along with the dependency on wormers by adopting the SCOPS approach.

National Lamb Selection

Test your stock judging skills in an open competition staged on the EBLEX stand

Mainline Sponsors



in the Avon Hall. The winner will receive £150 and the highest placed entry from 21 years and under will be awarded £75.

Ready, Steady, Cook

Put your feet up for 20 minutes to watch this hugely popular spectacle styled on the popular TV series and customised by NSA. Staged twice during the day in the Avon Hall, it will feature two well known NSA members and two NFYFC members. The audience will be invited to vote for which chef they rate the best.

Seminars and debates

We are planning a schedule to challenge, inspire and learn. The seminars will feature a mix of the latest technical information and how to put in to practice back home, while we are organising three debates focused on the sustainable



Gregor Ingram, Inverurie

**Aberdeenshire
2,000 breeding ewes**

I'll be traveling with my family to this event for a first time experience, both as a visitor looking for the latest technical developments to take back home, as an entrant to the NSA Young Shepherd

of the Year and exhibiting homebred Charollais, Texel and Hybrid sheep on our Logie Durno stand. We went to NSA North Sheep for the first time in 2011 and the response was unbelievable. We anticipate that Malvern will be its big brother and it should be great; its NSA's national event and there's a big buzz for sheep in the region.



Dafydd & John Parry Jones,
Machynlleth, Powys
2,000 ewes

This event is one that opens your mind to the latest in the industry and you can learn a lot – at the seminars and looking at new developments from

intensification. Each debate will feature farmers and industry influencers providing down to earth practical information on increasing production, producing more from less and maximising sheep as a resource. These debates provide you with an opportunity to have your say, as well start thinking outside the box about

animal health to fencing equipment. For example, when I attended the event in 2010, with my brother, John who was introduced to a different sheep breed and he decided to invest in two tups for his sheep farming enterprise which was a significant business decision.

how your sheep enterprise is going to respond to the latest challenges.

Shearing competitions

Watch experienced sheep shearers and sharpen your own skills in front of our open competition scheduled to attract entrants from throughout the UK. This

prestigious award with £750 prize fund in the Open and £250 in the NFYFC including trophies at stake will also provide all farmers with the opportunity to catch up on the BWMB's requirements when it comes to fleece preparation, handling and wrapping. We are also hosting a new YFC shearing competition designed to offer younger operators the opportunity to hone their evolving skills and progress to higher levels.

Sheep dog sale

Searching for a new dog? Then where better to consider purchasing than at the event which will be hosting its 14th biennial sale of working sheep dogs. An entry of more than 40 Border Collies is expected from novice, to trial dogs, including those registered with the International Sheep Dog Society. Prior to coming under the hammer, each dog will be put through its working paces on the sale site.

Tornado Wire Fencer of the Year

Watch over a dozen professional fencing contractors test their skills against their fellow competitors and demonstrate the advantages of good quality fence erection. This competition provides the two man teams with three hours to erect 70 linear metres of Tornado High Tensile stock fence.

Thank you to our major sponsors, EBLEX, Novartis, Shearwell and SAI Global. □



Philip Derryman,
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450 pedigree breeding females

If you are involved in sheep, this is one occasion you do not want to miss simply because being a specialist event you can explore every facet of the sector on one site in one day, and network with industry suppliers and farmers

from all parts of the UK you don't see from one year to the next. As well as representing the south west in the NSA Young Shepherd of the Year, the event will provide me with an opportunity to explore new ideas with 'an outside the box' approach, searching out ideas that will take me away from the traditional thinking.

The NSA
Sheep 2012
Pre-event industry dinner

You are invited to join our pre-event dinner to be staged on the eve of the event, Tuesday 3 July at the Three Counties Show Ground. Cotswolds based sheep farmer and BBC Countryfile presenter, Adam Henson is our guest speaker. The dinner is kindly sponsored by Bayer Animal Health and HSBC, with lamb generously supplied by Randall Parker Foods. Tickets are available for more than 200 guests.

For further NSA Sheep 2012 details contact Helen Davies on 01938 590535 / 07976 803066; email: helen@nationalsheep.org.uk or see www.sheepvent.org.uk

Timetable of Events

Time	Activity	Location
0830	NSA Young Entrants Initiative breakfast launch	Seminar marquee
0900	Gates open	
0900	Judging commences of best outdoor and indoor trade stands and best sheep breed society stands	
0900 – 1400	NSA Young Shepherd of the Year Competition	By Severn Hall
0900 - 1400	European Young Shepherd of the Year Competition	By Severn Hall
1100 – 1400	Open and YFC shearing competitions	TACS Shearing Shed
1000	BWMB fleece competition judging	Wye Hall 4
1000 – 1500	National Lamb Selection	EBLEX stand, Avon Hall
1000 - 1500	Farm Shop and Butchery Competition	Avon Hall
1000 - 1630	Flock Health Planning and demonstrations, incorporating Novartis workshops	Avon Hall and demonstration area
1000 – 1630	Carcase selection displays and demonstrations	Avon Hall
1000 – 1630	BWMB Clinic	Wye Hall 4
1000 – 1630	EID demonstrations	Shearwell stand, Wye Hall 4
1030	Official opening, Sir John Beddington	NSA stand, Wye Hall 3
1030 – 1500	Working sheep dog sale	Adjacent to fencing arena
1030 – 1345	Tornado Wire Fencer of the Year competition	Below Shearing Shed
1100	Stand competition winners presentation	Winning stands
1100	Seminar	Seminar marquee
1100	Ready, Steady, Cook	Outside Avon Hall
1130	Seminar	Seminar marquee
1200 1300 1400	Sustainability debate	Seminar marquee
1400	Ready, Steady, Cook	Outside Avon Hall
1500	Seminar	Seminar marquee
1500	Tornado Wire Fencer of the Year presentation	Tornado stand
1530	Seminar	Seminar marquee
1530	BWMB fleece competition awards presentation	Organisers office
1530	Open and YFC shearing competition awards presentation	Shearing shed
1530	National Lamb award presentation	EBLEX stand
1600	NSA Young Shepherd of the Year and European Young Shepherd of the Year awards presentations	MSD Footvax and Rumenco stands
1615	NFYFC ATV Safety and Handling Competition	Main Ring
1700	Event closes	

See NSA Sheep 2012 seminars. Please note the above information is subject to change prior to the event

Preparing for Drought

Practical tips from Chris Lloyd, EBLEX Industry Development Manager

“ Livestock producers can be taking action now to mitigate the effects of the drought which is already affecting the whole of the South East and East Anglia”, according to EBLEX Industry Development Manager Chris Lloyd.

With the Environment Agency's Drought Prospects report warning that the drought could spread as far north as East Yorkshire and as far west as the Hampshire-Wiltshire border if the dry weather continues through spring, EBLEX advises farmers who have concerns about the situation in their own area to consider the following management options:

- Monitor sward heights every two weeks to understand if demand is outstripping supply so decisions can be made early. Do not let sward heights go below 3cm as animal performance will be low and grass recovery time will be significantly increased
- Consider using electric fences to manage grazing and avoid allowing animals to range over a number of fields, giving the sward chance to recover and preventing over-grazing
- Rotational grazing can help give grass the rest it needs. Using buffer feeding to reduce the speed of the rotation will ensure that the grass has the best opportunity to re-grow
- Maximise first cut silage area by



Chris Lloyd

controlling grazing in the spring (don't be too generous and waste early season grass)

- Consider planting a catch crop such as kale, rape or turnips prior to any proposed reseed to extend grazing later in the season
- Conserve water supplies by harvesting rainwater from buildings where possible
- Think about supplementing spring-born lambs with concentrate to finish them before the summer shortfall hits, allowing available grass to be used to



Lamb in chicory



Lambs in chicory and red clover

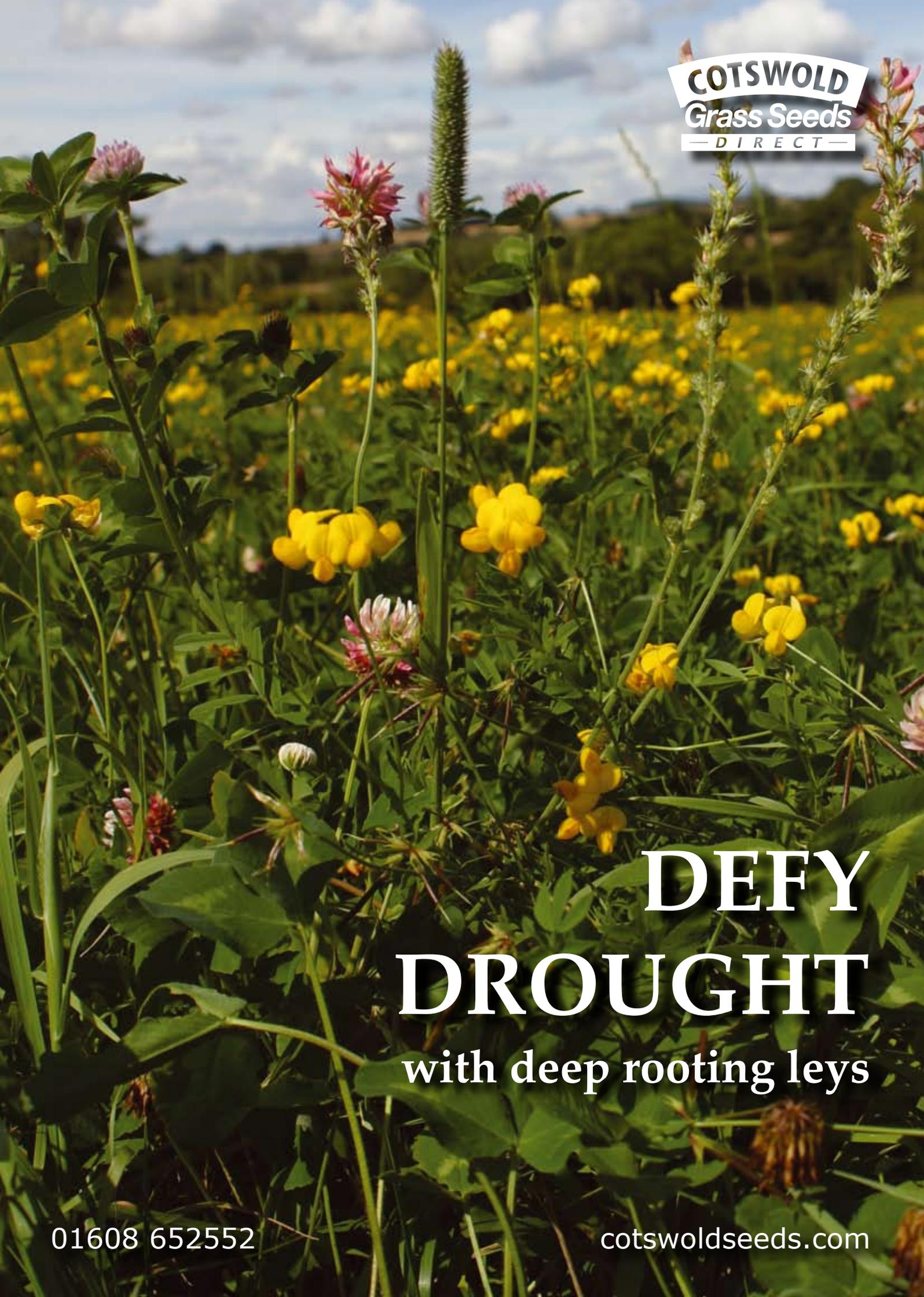
- put condition back on to ewes
- Reduce the demand for grass from cows and calves by creep feeding suckled calves
- Consider scanning spring calved cows early to identify empty cows that can be culled swiftly and therefore not eat scarce feed resources

With drought becoming an increasing threat in certain areas, livestock producers are advised to consider alternative forage crops such as summer brassicas, chicory or red clover, which may be more productive in drier periods. However, be mindful that these crops still need moisture during the establishment and growth phases. □

Information sheets giving further practical advice for producers on dealing with drought conditions relating are available at www.eblex.org.uk/returns



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Flock Health Planning

for Hill and Upland Sheep Systems

Over 2.2 million Ha of the UK land mass can be classified as upland and hill ground, which is ideally and sometimes uniquely suited to sheep production. The sheep produced in these areas are the parent and grandparent stock for much of the national flock; the effects of their productivity resonate throughout the whole industry. Yet still, the performance of these animals is probably the least well recorded of all livestock production systems in the country.

Historically, this is because of practical and logistical limitations of recording group and certainly individual performance parameters in such extensive systems. However, now might be the time to consider changing this. With the date for compulsory double tagging and individual movement recording of sheep born before 2010 being set back to Dec 31st 2014, we now have time to implement the new rules effectively and to make the most of any hidden benefits they may bring.

The set up costs for EID, tag reading and computer software are considerable but as of Dec 2014, necessary so we need to put in place plans to recover these costs as soon as possible. The system as a whole can be used to record and quantify the flock's productivity, make year on year comparisons and allow management and husbandry decisions to be made on quantified facts rather than general inclinations.

Sheep production in the upland and hill areas of the UK has been subject to relatively few changes in the last 30yrs, when compared to low land systems, whose capacity to increase productivity is not so limited by environmental factors.

Consider the massive weather variations during the last three years; the prolonged snow cover through the winter of 2009/10 and 2010/11, and this year heavily pregnant hill sheep suffering from heat stress in March (and then buried by snow in April)! So why do we wonder why something that we've done one year, doesn't work the next?

Health status

One of the most important functions of flock health planning is to make timely assessment of the productivity and health status of the flock and adapt the husbandry to fit the situation at the time. There are some key points, which are particularly relevant to health planning for hill and upland flocks.

The variable growing conditions mean that the nutritional content of the forage produced on farm will change greatly year on year. Traditionally, many farms feed the same type and quantity of hard feeds each year. Some years, when the nutritional content of the forage happens to complement that of the hard feed, this will work well. In other years, this diet will not meet the ewe's requirements, causing a huge range of problems including twin lamb disease, hypocalcaemia, poor milk yields, mastitis, low birth weights and subsequent lamb ill thrift.

Forage testing in January/February allows time to match any hard feed to the forage available. A metabolic profile of pregnant ewes within the last month of pregnancy is a great way of assessing the nutritional status of the flock. A few blood samples taken from twin and triplet scanned ewes indicate the adequacy of protein intake in mid and late pregnancy, and the energy status of the ewes running up to lambing. This allows any necessary changes in the energy content of the diet to be made before the ill effects to ewes or unborn lambs are felt. If it prevents one pregnant ewe death from twin lamb disease, it has covered the cost of the testing!

Environmental schemes

Perhaps the single biggest impact on flock husbandry in these areas over the past thirty years has been the need to meet criteria set by Countryside Stewardship and other environmental schemes.

In some cases these have made drastic changes to the traditional stocking and grazing patterns on these farms. Ewes de-stocked from traditional winter grazing are now often over wintered on in-bye or allotment ground or on a completely separate holding.

Reduced winter stocking on moorland often leads to higher stocking rates on overwintering ground. This may have both disease and nutritional implications



Hill ewes in April 2012, three days after temperatures of 23°C were recorded!

which should be considered in the flock health plan, for example, the trace element status of the ewes.

Micronutrients

The micronutrients available on the winter grazing may be very different from those on summer grazing or where sheep used to be wintered. Talk to your vets about testing in different groups of ewes at different times of year, as both may significantly affect the need to supplement.

Historically, there has been an understandable reluctance for neighbours, especially on unfenced common grazing, to openly discuss health problems in their own flocks. But cooperation in these production systems particularly, is very important and will help save time and money in the long term.

Although many hill flocks would consider themselves 'closed' with all replacements being homebred, mixing with sheep on fells and commons, from other flocks represents a significant disease threat. The spread of sheep scab illustrates this most obviously, but other infections such as Enzootic Abortion are also spread in this manner and will wreak havoc in an unvaccinated flock with no previous exposure.

Improved record keeping and accurate measures of flock productivity will add weight to any health plan developed for your flock.

Rachael Ridley, BSc(Hons), BVM&S, MRCVS. Bishopton Veterinary Group, Ripon, North Yorkshire. Bishopton Veterinary Group are Corporate Supporters of NSA

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1. Schmahl et al, Parasitol Res (2009) 104:809-813

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Tapeworm in Sheep

Tapeworms are flat, segmented, parasitic worms and an adult tapeworm can be several meters in length, consisting of a head, neck and a chain of segments. The mature, terminal segments (containing large numbers of eggs) are cast-off regularly and are passed out in the host faeces.

Tapeworms have complex, indirect, life-cycles including an intermediate host infected with larvae and a final host infected with the adult tapeworms.

Sheep are the final host of one species tapeworm, *Monezia expansa*, the adult 'sheep' tapeworm which attaches to the intestine of the sheep.

The intermediate host is a soil mite. *M.expansa* is considered to be non-pathogenic to sheep and is more of a worry to flock owners through the obvious presence of expelled tapeworm segments in sheep faeces.

However, sheep are also the intermediate host to several other species of tapeworm – the major four being *Taenia hydatigena* - the thin necked bladder worm, *Taenia ovis* - the sheep bladder worm, *Taenia multiceps* - the tapeworm that causes gid and *Echinococcus granulosus* - the tapeworm that causes hydatidosis.

All of these tapeworms have the domestic dog as the final host. Sheep are infected by the larvae of these tapeworms and as the larvae must be ingested by dogs in order to complete its lifecycle the larvae travel to the muscle and major organs of the sheep they infect, causing considerable damage in some cases.

Production Losses

Although the sheep tapeworm *M. expansa* is not thought to result in any economic losses to sheep producers, there is no doubt that the dog tapeworm larvae can cause considerable losses to the sheep industry. Most sheep farmers are unaware of the economic damage caused by these infections as a large proportion of these losses occur after slaughter. At present detected infestations are rarely traced back to source. Consequently, all sheep producers should be aware of these problems and how they can be avoided.

Production losses in sheep include:-

- **Mortality.** Severe infestation of the

Tapeworm and Tapeworm Larvae Control in sheep		
Common name	Treatment	Control and Prevention
Adult Sheep Tapeworm	Benzimidazole drench ¹	Seek guidance from vet or animal health advisor for drenching strategy.
Larvae of Thin Necked Bladder Worm	None	Dispose of sheep carcasses promptly and worm farm dogs regularly
Larvae of Sheep Bladder Worm	None	As above
Larvae of Gid Worm	None	As above
Larvae of Tapeworm that causes Hydatidosis	Surgery is possible to extract cysts from brain of infected sheep	As above

¹ Other effective anthelmintics are available but their use should be reserved for the control of benzimidazole resistant parasitic roundworms.

Tapeworm Control in dogs		
Common name	Treatment	Control and Prevention
Adult Thin Necked Bladder Worm	Treat with Praziquantel every 6 weeks	Do not allow dogs to stray, particularly where they can scavenge on sheep carcasses
Adult Sheep Bladder Worm	As above	As above
Adult Gid Worm	As above	As above
Adult Tapeworm that causes Hydatidosis	As above	As above

larvae of the Thin Necked Bladder Worm occasionally causes death from traumatic hepatitis as larvae migrate through the liver of lambs or goat kids before forming cysts.

- **Poorer livestock performance.** Heavy infestations of dog tapeworm larvae in lambs can cause haemorrhages and peritonitis. Moderate to heavy infestations can cause loss of appetite leading to longer finishing periods, increased feed costs and the risk of failure to reach target specifications. Infested sheep may also become weak leaving them open other infections.
- **Losses from carcase and offal condemnations in slaughterhouses and cutting plants.** Carcasses only lightly infected with the larvae of the Sheep Bladder Worm can be trimmed and passed for human consumption. Heavily infected carcasses are

condemned. Sheep livers infected with the larvae of the Thin Necked Bladder Worm have cysts and scars and are condemned at slaughter. In 2009 it was calculated that over £7 million was lost to English sheep industry due to the sheep bladder worm and another £500,000 due to 9 per cent of livers lost to the larvae of



the thin necked bladder worm.
 • **Increased disposal costs** of infected tissue at the slaughterhouse or cutting plant.

Control and Treatment

Treating an animal infected with adult tapeworms is very simple. A benzimidazole drench is very effective at treating sheep infected with the adult sheep tapeworm *M. expansa*, and Praziquantel can be used to successfully treat dogs that may be infected with

adults of any of the four common dog tapeworms.

However, there is no treatment available for sheep infected with the larvae of the dog tapeworms. Effective control of these tapeworms and their larvae depends on an integrated control programme involving both dog owners and sheep farmers (see table below).

It should be noted that most tapeworms and tapeworm larvae found in sheep pose no health risk to humans. Humans can however become infected

with the larvae of the tapeworm that causes Hydatidosis through contact with infected dogs or dog faeces. This can result in serious disease in humans, particularly children.

Dr Peter Bates is an independent parasitology consultant. If you would more information about controlling tapeworm and tapeworm larvae in sheep, including a free 12 page newsheet, please contact Maggie Bennett at The Moredun Foundation, phone 0131 445 5111 or email info@moredun.org.uk □



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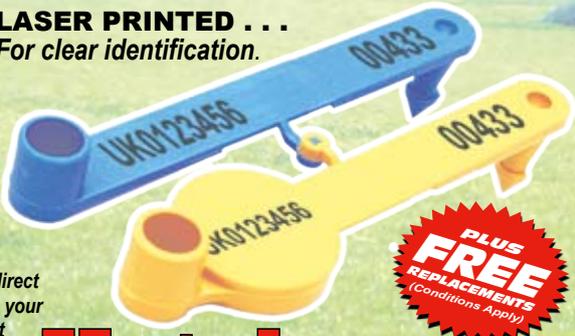
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Trade Outlook

The following are views from members around the regions regarding the current market situation and what it means for grass-roots producers. If you have views that you would like to contribute for the next issue please let us know – contact dy@nationalsheep.org.uk Views from across the entire UK are welcome – whether you are a producer, processors, buying or selling, all contributions are welcomed.

Mike Credland

Mike Credland is Chairman of NSA English Region, Partner in May Hill Lamb Producers and a former Livestock Auctioneer

For most people in the sheep industry the past year has been a generally pleasant experience. Last year's spring lambs reached record levels and the demand for lamb remained very strong throughout the year on the back of a consistent export market.

Lambs throughout the summer were marketed at handy weights because the high prices produced good returns at lighter weights and the dry summer encouraged flockmasters to get the lambs off the ground to conserve grass.

The autumn produced a similar picture with excellent returns for store lambs and breeding sheep alike so that for the first time in many years lowland and hill producers could all think that they had a fair deal.

In the late autumn it became apparent that the situation was changing slightly. There was definite consumer resistance on the home market to the price of lamb due to the worsening economic situation. The housewife looked at alternative meat dishes which were more affordable to the average family and decided that lamb was starting to become a luxury.

At the same time the export market tightened up quite sharply due to changes in the exchange rate. The result

Mike Credland's wish list for this year:

- Sell your lambs when they are fit.
- EID for all lambs except those going direct off farm for slaughter.
- Do not buy overfat, overpriced breeding stock.
- Think about your outlet before buying store lambs.
- Watch the market and take a profit rather than dreaming what might be.



Mike Credland

was more lamb onto the home market which was already under pressure and it was surprising that the demand held up so well and that prices remained stable. Prices would not have held up so well if it had not been for good value supermarket promotions over the Christmas period.

The first cracks started to appear in mid-January when it became apparent that prices were not going to reach the dizzy heights of the previous year. Due to the exceptional late autumn growth of grass seeds and stubble turnips, the store trade had risen sharply and expensive lambs were held back in the hope of a late spring price rise.

Unfortunately this produced a glut of overweight and over-fat hoggs which were not wanted in February, less so in March and definitely not in April. Throughout March and April there were as many lambs presented for sale that were overweight as there were that were suitable for the retail and export markets.

This is definitely not efficient marketing. Similarly because so many hoggs were held back there have been a large number of sheep presented that have been heavy in lamb creating a welfare issue that should not have arisen.

At the present time (mid April) the first spring lambs are coming forward. The spring has been very kind to us in the West Country and we expect to see more lambs out a week or two earlier this year.

Although the scanning percentage was not as high this year the losses have been much less and so we expect to see more lambs out this year and much earlier. I hope that the present demand is maintained throughout the summer and that our antipodean cousins do not have

too many lambs to send to Europe in June as they have done in the past.

Fifth quarter income may not be so high this year as the Asian economies slow down and shipping container costs have risen sharply. The important thing is that the lambs are sold at the right weight and the right level of finish. This is definitely not the year to chase big prices and big weights. Returns will be acceptable if lambs are what your customer requires rather than what you want to produce.

Bryan Griffiths

Bryan Griffiths, South West Region Vice Chairman & member of the NSA English Committee

In recent years producers have enjoyed an entirely justifiable year on year increase in prices but several factors suggest that it might be difficult to better 2011.

The general tightening of purse strings at home and in Europe must make the finished product harder to sell, and the sharp dip in hogget prices in January this year may dampen winter finishers' enthusiasm for stores this coming autumn.

That said supplies must surely remain tight. Here in North Devon we are unlikely to improve on last years' bumper crop even with the help of some idyllic March sunshine and a good early bite of grass.

A solid trade for cull ewes throughout the year would make a repeat of last years' breeding ewe prices seem realistic, but the old adage that a ewe should pay for herself in the first year is worth bearing in mind.

In the longer term the problems of EID, draconian rules on movement recording



Bryan Griffiths

and disease threats give little incentive for beef and arable farmers to convert to sheep production.

Bob Blanden

Bob Blanden, Secretary South East Region & member of the NSA English Committee

There has been a larger percentage of heavyweight hoggets this year according to Elwyn Davies of Hobbs Parker Auctioneers at Ashford Market: "58 per cent have been 46 kg or over compared to 40 kg last year, despite there being a big premium for handy weights for export in the 38 – 44 kg range."

Roger Waters of South East Marts at Hailsham says this is due to there having been an open winter with no shortage of feed, they have not cost a lot to carry on through and that store lambs bought in the back end have shown a sensible

return.

Iain Soutar of Southern Counties Auctioneers at Salisbury says that there have been a few too many heavyweights and many of these would have been bought against exporters out of the finished lamb pens, for further finishing and some had probably cost too much for a good return. Everyone has been having a flying trade of cull ewes with Salisbury averaging £93 early April.

Roger Waters also has had an exceptional trade and says: "The longer it persists, the more we will consider it will remain." With returns that are being shown, the prices for replacement breeding sheep should remain the same as last year. Iain Soutar is concerned that there are still a few flocks changing to running dry sheep and that they are not being replaced. □



Bob Blanden

NSA AGM 2012

Coffee and tea available from 9.30am

Notice is hereby given that the 119th Annual General Meeting of the National Sheep Association is to be held at The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, at 10 am on the 22nd August

By Order of the Trustees

Agenda

- To receive apologies for absence.
- To confirm the Minutes of the 118th Annual General Meeting.
- To receive:
 - The Trustees Report to year ended 31st December 2010.
 - The Statement of Accounts to year ended 31st December 2010.
 - The adoption of (a) and (b).
- To elect:
 - Officers for the ensuing year; President and Honorary Treasurer
 - Vice-President(s)
 - Auditors.
- Presentation of current NSA activities

12am Lunch at Duchy Home farm, by kind permission of Duchy Home Farm, Broadfield Farm, Tetbury, Glos GL8 8SE
1.30 Farm tour
4pm Close

Duchy Home Farm

The Highgrove Estate was bought by the Duchy of Cornwall in 1980, consisting then of three blocks of land, totalling 340 acres immediately around the House. Broadfield Farm (420 acres) was added in 1985 and David Wilson appointed manager.

Conversion to an organic farming system began in 1986. Stock and machinery were bought, a grain store erected and more land added in 1989, 1991 and 2005, to make up the current in-hand total of 1,120 acres.

Over the last 13 years a further 800 acres of share farmed land in five separate agreements have also been added bringing the total area farmed to over 1900 acres.

The initial approach to conversion was cautious and gradual, but in 1990 His Royal Highness Prince Charles decided the whole farm should be converted.

The sheep flock was converted to organic management by 1991 and the dairy stock by 1993. Milk yields improved and economic performance was acceptable even before premium prices became available.

The whole farm obtained organic symbol status in 1996. The estate now comprises three areas of land around Tetbury; Broadfield Farm to the north east, land at Doughton to the southwest and a small block at Westonbirt.

Stocking includes 180 Ayrshire cows with followers, a 140 cow beef suckler herd including pedigree Angus cows and seven pedigree Angus bulls, plus 120

Lleyn ewes and four Lleyn rams.

HRH Prince Charles' well-known interest in rare breeds is represented by British White, Irish Moiled, Gloucester and Shetland cows, Suffolk Punch horses, Hebridean, Cotswold and Ryeland sheep, and Tamworth and Large Black pigs.

Cropping on the home farms includes 735 acres in grass and arable rotations, 320 acres of permanent pasture, 40 acres of woodland, all farmed organically to Soil Association standards. Another 800 acres on five neighbouring farms are share-farmed organically bringing the total to more than 1,900 acres.

Agronomic and environmental research has been carried out on the farm since 1986 involving Elm Farm Organic Research Centre, Arable Research Centre, the University of East Anglia, Oxford University WILDCRU, North Wyke, Rothamsted, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Northmoor Trust.

The Home Farm also has links with The Soil Association, the Henry Doubleday Association (HDRA) and other education and research establishments and is one of the Elm Farm Research Centre's network of 12 Demonstration farms for those interested in converting to the organic system, countrywide.

Visits, literature and workshops are being used to promote understanding of the links between food, farming, health and environment through the work of the Duchy Home Farm. □

Regulatory Review

An update from Phil Stocker

Following the recommendations of the Richard MacDonald led task force into reviewing regulatory burdens in England, and a similar review led in Wales by Gareth Williams, Phil Stocker takes the opportunity to update members on the latest plans surrounding sheep movements and recording.

The situation is on-going so do please keep an eye out for our weekly e newsletter and web site where immediate developments can be communicated. As a quick update of where things are as I write this:

Bluetongue Vaccines

NSA recently responded to the Welsh Governments consultation on the use of inactivated blue tongue vaccines now that the UK is officially a Blue Tongue disease free zone. It is currently against the EU Council Directive to vaccinate in regions that are Blue Tongue free because the

only vaccines that were available were live vaccines. Once inactivated vaccines became available (and a number of different serotypes are available and have marketing authorisations) it has become necessary to change the EU Directive to allow for vaccination. If this all goes through successfully it will mean that farmers will have the freedom of choice to vaccinate for Blue Tongue if they wish.

Movements database

Defra are to put out their out their ITT (invitation to tender) for a sheep movements database at the end of April. The ITT was delayed slightly, at the request of industry bodies including NSA, due the decision of Alun Davies in Wales to work independently in terms of a movements database, the aim being to see if the Welsh decision could be reversed.

At the time of writing all attempts to

reverse Alun Davies's decision appear to have been unsuccessful even though I have not met anyone who thinks there is any benefit in having separate movements databases.

The new database in England could be available (maybe in part) by May 2013 although there is a possibility that it could be as late as May 2014. Wales are planning to start their process by looking at the Scot EID system to see if it could serve their needs and their next steps will be based on their findings.

NSA has made its views very clear to Deputy Minister Alun Davies, that it is in the interests of farming businesses to have one database only – there is no industry support for different systems.

Six day standstill

NSA continues to work with Defra on future plans for alternatives to the six day standstill.

□



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Firstly, we need to distinguish this product from our existing 'combination products' which contain two actives addressing different parasite types, for example fluke and roundworms or roundworms and tapeworms. This is why the product is known as a 'dual active' so you can make the distinction between the types of product, minimising any confusion.

Secondly, dual active wormers have the potential to delay the development of resistance to the component chemical groups. This is maximised when certain conditions are met in terms of the activity,

duration and modes of action of the actives, all of which this product meets. However, there are two very important SCOPS principles that are also vital prerequisites to ensure you gain maximum benefits from the resistance-delaying potential of a dual-active. These are:

You need to know the resistance (AR) status on your farm, in particular to the 3-ML group because pre-existing resistance must be low to if you are to maximise the potential to delay further resistance. Recent surveys confirm that there are a growing number of farms with detectable levels of AR to the 3-ML group. If it is present on your farm then you need to proceed with care, in line

with current SCOPS advice. Of course SCOPS encourages sheep farmers to carry out drench tests on a routine basis for all groups to make sure an effective anthelmintic is always used.

Ensure that you leave a proportion of the worm population unexposed to the anthelmintic (in refugia). This is quite a difficult concept to grasp but it is becoming very clear that of all the SCOPS recommendations, this is the one we have to work at most because of its huge impact on the speed that resistance (AR) develops. In essence it means you need to think carefully about the key issues such as how to handle low contamination pastures (not doing a straight 'drench and move' for example), integrating partial or delayed move after treatment and not unnecessarily treating adults.

Visit www.scops.org.uk for more information and news. Please also let us have your feedback on the new website – we would really appreciate your ideas so we can develop this resource to help you with sustainable parasite control. □



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