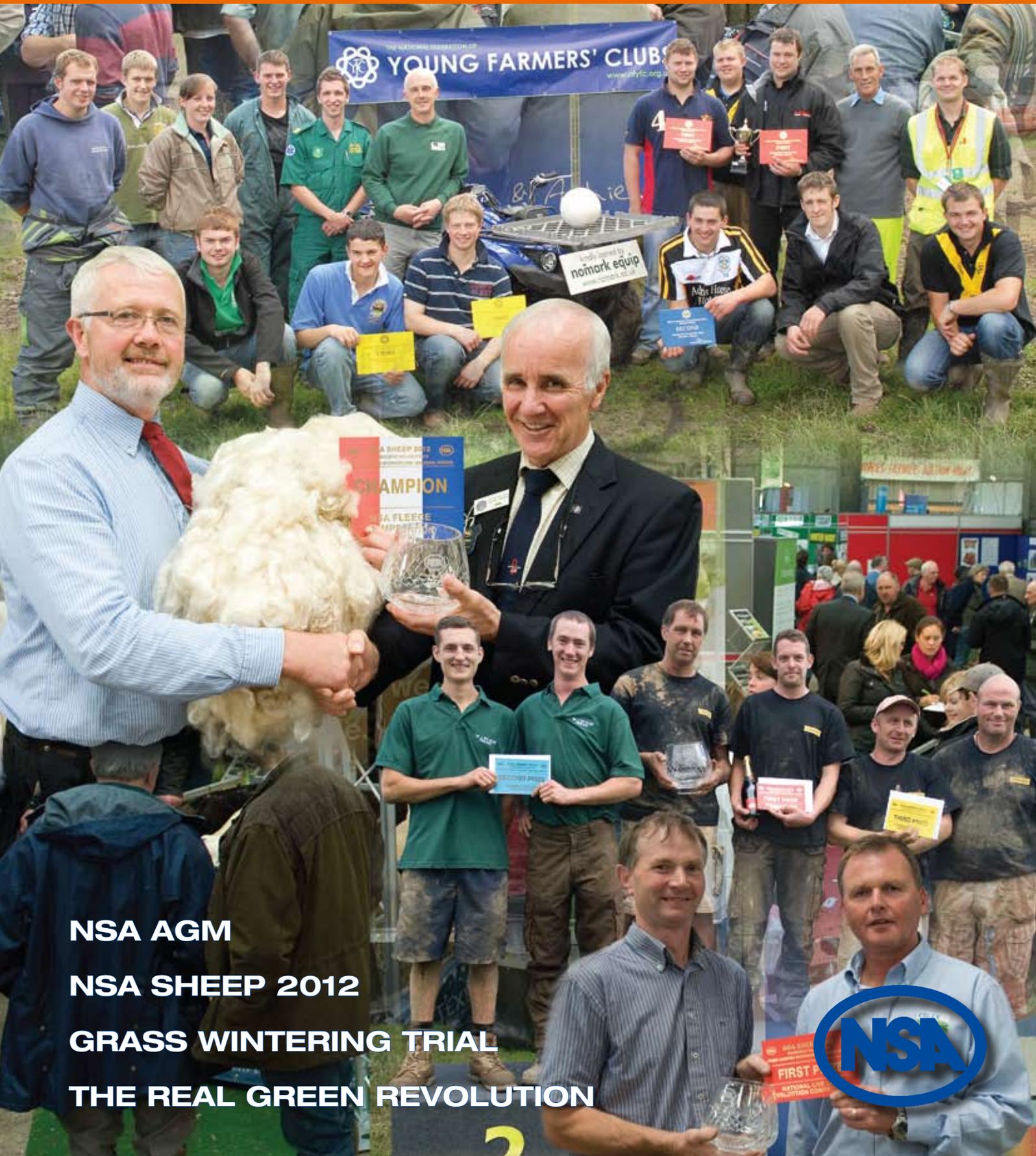




SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012

Sheep Farmer

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION



NSA AGM

NSA SHEEP 2012

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References: 1. NAH Study Y08/16; Y08/70. 2. Kaminsky R et al. Parasitology Research 2010. 3. George SD et al. Veterinary Parasitology 2010.

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Front cover:

Sheep Event 2012. Top to Bottom:

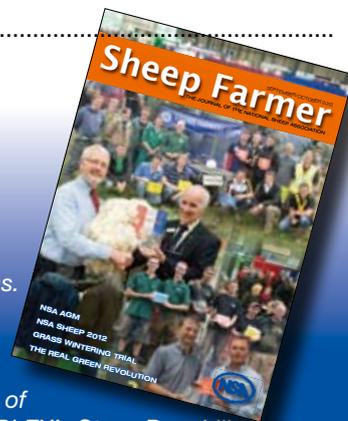
An excellent turnout at the event.

The NYFYFC ATV Safety & Handling top teams.

Elfyn Owen, Llanddoged, Llanrwst won the champion fleece award.

The top The Tornado Wire Fencing teams.

National Lamb Selection winner, Simon Ayres of Middleton, Ludlow receives his award from EBLEX's Steve Powdrill



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Phil Stocker Writes...

Membership Matters

In my last Membership Matters I mentioned our 3 major NSA sheep events of the 'summer' just past (Scotsheep, South Sheep, and Sheep 2012 at Malvern). By now they are all behind us and what a success every one of them has been. Scotsheep was reported on in the last magazine and here we report on Southsheep and Sheep 2012. All events were possibly helped by the weather, at least in that when it just rains all day there is not much hay making that can be done! Southsheep at Lambourn was slightly different in that the day was one of rare warm sunshine - which kept a few people away but the atmosphere was relaxed, friendly and one of 'quality not quantity'. With the show season largely behind us the next phase in the calendar is the autumn sales followed by the winter conferences and evening meetings. As an early indicator of the seasons sales Thame Sheep Fair often sets the scene, with the early NSA ram sale at Builth Wells following a few days later. Both sales offer some market indicators in this issue although by the time of reading many more sales will have taken place.

Having hardly experienced a summer this year, whether the swallows stay late or simply give up and get out will be interesting but one departure of the summer that will not have gone unnoticed is that of Dy Webb who left the NSA after 16 years of steadfast service. We wish Dy well in the future and extend our sincere appreciation for all she has done over the years. Our search for a replacement for Dy is complete and I am sure most of you will have heard by now that Jo Pugh will be joining us on the 10th September. Jo has extensive experience in livestock journalism and communications generally and everyone here is looking forward to welcoming her into the fold.

There have been other staffing additions and some of you will already have met Charlotte Underwood who joined us as Membership Recruitment Officer in July. The NSA Board

agreed earlier in the year that we should increase our efforts to build membership - the NSA does a phenomenal amount of work that benefits the entire industry and it is important that those who benefit move closer to 'collective responsibility' to cover the costs of this work. But also it seems clear that there are many out there who are not members simply because they don't know what we do or they haven't been asked. Charlotte has her work cut out but the responsibility for growing membership is one that needs to be shared and I would ask all of you to help by spreading the message of the NSAs work and encouraging NSA membership wherever you can.

On the political front, did anyone notice the launch of Defras Green Food Project report, work that is seen as the next step on from the Foresight report? It is likely to affect policy decisions in all UK nations and will frame some of the UK positions in CAP negotiations. I have to say I don't quite get it. I would be the first to accept that climate change will bring opportunities to grow other crops and will challenge some of the things we may currently be doing, but when the main recommendations highlight herb production and improved efficiency bread toasters you really have to wonder. It is puzzling that grassland and sheep farming hardly get a mention, yet they are such a big part of UK agriculture and opportunities now exist, both in the market and in terms of sustainable farm management, for an increased sheep flock. CAP reform really should be plugged in to the current day needs of society with policy makers recognising the urgency to re-incentivise more efficiency and productivity from our grasslands. I can't accept a conflict

between this and our environmental needs, in fact quite the opposite, and at the same time create an attractive future for young people to enter the industry.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Sheep Farmer and that all your hopes for tuppings are realised.

Phil Stocker □



Liver Fluke Alert!

- Liver flukes can kill animals and cause serious economic loss.
- The wet summer has increased the risk of disease due to liver fluke this year.
- Sheep and cattle farmers need to assess the risk on their farms and take appropriate action now.
- This could include avoiding grazing high risk pasture and using specific liver fluke treatments where necessary.
- Planning ahead will reduce the losses due to liver fluke next year.

For more information visit www.scops.org.uk. More detailed advice will be in the next issue of Sheep Farmer

Out & About

with George Milne

Travelling out to Brussels George Milne presented the 'The Complementary role of sheep in the LFA' report to the full agricultural committee. This was kindly hosted by Alyn Smith MEP.

The report was welcomed by members of the European Parliament and other officials that were present. There was good backing from countries to support all the points within the paper. Copies of the report were distributed to every member of the Agricultural Committee who represent all the European member states.

George Milne also attended a second meeting whilst out in Brussels, the 'Interparliamentary committee meeting on the CAP Reform, European Parliament'. The debate was opened by Paolo De Castro, Chairman of the

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, European Parliament. Other speakers included Mr René Christensen, Chairman of the Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Committee of the Danish Parliament. In addition there were several other papers presented from European countries at this meeting.

George Milne said: "Being present at this meeting proved to be very worthwhile and informative to get up to date information on CAP proposals that can be used to further the discussion at CAP meetings held with the Scottish Government."

George Milne was asked to speak at a Scottish Agriculture College (SAC) Open Day in Ellon, which was attended by 100 or so local sheep farmers.

Lambing Assistance

For NSA Members

Each year NSA receives requests from students and others, for lists of farms that require temporary help during lambing where they can gain valuable work experience.

If you would like some help during lambing please let us have your full name, NSA membership number, address, contact telephone numbers and likely requirements and we can pass this information to those looking for lambing experience.

The list is circulated to all NSA student members, to agricultural and vet colleges.

If you would like some help, details to send us include:

- Name and contact telephone numbers
- Date when you require help to and from
- Whether or not you will provide accommodation
- Whether or not you require experienced help
- No of ewes to lamb, indoors/outdoors etc
- No of students/helpers required

Please send your details for inclusion on the NSA Lambing List to: NSA, The Sheep Centre, Malvern, Worcs. WR13 6PH or email gill@nationalsheep.org.uk

Myself and a fellow first year vet student from liverpool vet school arranged and went to a farm in Exmoor, whose contact details I obtained via your list. We spent two weeks with their 900 ewes and our time spent was invaluable. We could not have learnt any more, gained any more hands on experience, or forwarded our knowledge further than we did with the owners. They kindly put us up, fed us and shared as much of their knowledge with us as possible in those two weeks. Comparing our experience with fellow vet students highlights how much experience we gained and the trust the owners put in us to help with their sheep.

We are both therefore very grateful to both the owners and also to the NSA for putting us in contact, it's very difficult sometimes for vet students to make new contacts and find people willing to help us gain experience in as many areas as possible that are part of the veterinary animal world

Georgina Ferguson



REGIONAL REPORTS

South East

Firstly, may I start by thanking everyone who contributed to making the 2012 NSA South Sheep Event such a resounding success in so many ways. Thanks to our hosts, Nugent Farms, all our generous sponsors, exhibitors, competitors and everyone who attended the event. Last, but most definitely not least, our region owes a big thank you to Sue Martyn for organising South Sheep for the second time, again most successfully.

Sue has written a full report on South Sheep that appears elsewhere in this issue, but two of the highlights for me, personally, was the 'team' on the gate who managed to sign up 41 new members and then went on to the national event to help sign up 82 new members. Well done to all those involved. The other highlight was raising £263 for the Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Air Ambulance who had saved the life of Ewan Kershaw, shepherd at Nugent Farms, the previous autumn.

The Committee will not be resting on its laurels as planning for the 2014 event has already started. We are looking for a venue in the 'true' South East as one member pointed out to me when they learned it was to be in Berkshire in 2012. Possibly East Sussex would be more 'central' to our very geographically spread region, so if you can suggest anywhere suitable, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

The SE Region has drawn the short straw by now having to hold its Event in the same year as the National Event at Malvern as it used to be in the alternate



Ewan meets the team who saved him

years, but got changed when the World Sheep & Wool Congress came to the UK in 1992. However with an increase in the distance from Malvern and the return of the National Event to its normal slot at the end of July, we would hope for an increase in visitor numbers.

Now please reach for your diaries and mark 11th October for a joint meeting that the SE Region is holding with EBLEX. After all the very positive feedback from the very successful Sheep Handling Workshop with Miriam Parker that we had last year at Chilbolton Down, we are repeating this and holding another Workshop at Helen & Robert Langrish's Pickney Bush Farm, Newchurch, Romney Marsh, TN29 OBZ.

Miriam is a specialist in animal behaviour and is in much demand from various organisations for her expertise and forward thinking on how to make handling easier and more efficient. We will meet up at 10.30 am for tea & coffee and the workshop starts promptly at 11 am. A light lunch will be provided for everyone, so you must contact me to register for a place if you are coming. Because this workshop is being held jointly with EBLEX, it is open to non-members so if you would like to invite friends and neighbours to come along that will be fine as long as you let me know numbers beforehand.

Finally, the NSA South East Region's AGM will be held on Thursday, 15th November at The Swan Hotel, 11 West Street, Alresford, Hants. SO24 9AD. The AGM will be held at 6 pm which will include an update from Phil Stocker and be followed by Alan Wight from the VLA Centre at Winchester giving a talk – "A Vet's View on Current Disease Threats". Then we will have "Guess Their Use" - a fun quiz on some items from Jim Cook's unique collection of shepherding and shearing memorabilia. The evening will be rounded off with supper. Obviously we will need to know numbers for the supper, so if you are coming along, please let me know by the end of October.

Bob Blanden, Secretary

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland sheep and lamb trade has been hindered this year by the fall in the value of the Euro which has curtailed the number of lambs going to the South of Ireland. Small numbers are starting to move South but the absence of those extra buyers has meant less competition with the obvious result. At the start of breeding sales hoggets were down £40-£50 and store lambs by about £20.

The wet and cold summer has left grass in short supply in some places and

as a result some farmers have been slow to purchase store lambs. Maybe when you are reading this the weather will have improved and grass is growing over the hedges (I wish).

The NI Region has reluctantly had to cancel their Performance Recorded Ram Sale due to small numbers of stock being presented for sale, but we will still try to support and encourage performance recording and the use of high EBV stock where possible.

We had a successful launch of the report on The Role of Sheep in the LFA's – please see page 20.

After the success of the worm resistance meetings held in conjunction with Parklands Vet Group, CAFRE and supported by Pfizer Animal Health we ran a series of similar format meetings highlighting the dangers and costs of abortion in sheep, once again with Parklands and CAFRE but sponsored by MSD.

NI Region organised a bus trip along with another group of local farmers to Scotsheep at Dumfries House. Heavy showers did not stop our group from having an enjoyable day out.

**Edward Adamson,
Development Officer**

Marches

The region had a massive input in to the National Event this year which was once again a huge success. It was great to see so many young people walking around the show ground looking for the latest up to date technologies which will put them in a good position to deal with business needs and demands. I believe we have many innovative youngsters coming forward in the region and want to grow their career in the sheep industry. With this in mind the region is proud to support in any way the Young Entrants launch, this is an opportunity to inspire, improve and factually inform the way the next generation think about how they operate in not just the UK sheep sector but how they are part of a global protein supply.

We must continue to be positive and present opportunities to our shepherds and shepherdesses when possible, include them in the business planning, selling and purchasing. We must encourage them to be aware of their importance within the business to be successful and profitable. Many Marches members are pleased with the positive returns and have reinvested into the infrastructure this year, maybe this is the time to encourage your staff or family to be part of the new initiative!

We have been seeing unprecedented weather changes over the season and

across the region which has proved to be challenging. What is apparent is the resilience of the sheep sector and the long hours needed to get the job done. A word of caution with wet weather, variable temperatures be aware of the potential increase in parasite challenges, especially as many members I have spoken to say the lambs have been slow to gain growth.

The hay, silage and straw is coming into the yards around me thick and fast, one of the silage pits being covered at 4.00 am to beat the rain. We are already seeing potential issues for the winter regarding quality. One company had taken 37+ mycotoxin analyses so far, all have (100%) come back with mycotoxins and more importantly 80 per cent have come back contaminated with Penicillium mycotoxins.

This means that the majority of farms are at risk of a mycotoxin challenge, resulting in reduced performance at a time when rumen health will be key to making most of the farm inputs. It is vital you speak to your nutritionist to get all forages tested.

Feeding over the winter is already in our mind across the region Hi Pro Soya spot price as of 30.07.12 was £440, last month 22.06.12 £374 and twelve months ago was £277, remember when the eager sales rep is looking to secure your feed needs for the winter to ask what the quality is over price first, there might be some surprises if the right questions are not asked, you will get what you pay for!

The NSA Marches region AGM will be held at The Ludlow Food Centre on Friday 14th September, we will be sending you direct the Agenda titled "The need to keep focused on Local and Global Sheep Meat requirements." Please attend as the evening will prove to be very useful, informative and a chance for you to contribute to the region.

Nick Davies, Chairman

South West

As I write this at the beginning of August, the summer has so far been a washout. We had a stand at the Royal Cornwall Show, where we have been fortunate enough to be situated right opposite the sheep marquee. The stand looked extremely professional and we were fortunate to have Bob Blanden to man it for us.

The first day was busy, with new members being signed up and existing ones visiting the stand. However, during the day gale force winds played havoc with the huge sheep marquee and by mid-afternoon it was deemed unsafe so all the sheep were sent home.

The knock on effect of this was that although reasonable crowds flocked

through the gates, sheep farmers did not venture to that end of the showground.

We had intended to hold two farm walks this summer, however the terrible weather forced a rethink, hopefully we will be able to have some next year.

Our next regional event is to be held on Monday 3rd December at the Waie Inn, Zeal Monachorum. As we arrange this meeting largely for the benefit of our members who are unable to attend the AGM in February due to lambing commitments, we hope to see as many as possible on this evening.

We hope Phil Stocker will be able to attend to give an update on the many issues the NSA is involved with at this time. Please see the NSA website for details of another speaker, or for those of you without internet then ring Sue Martyn - 01409 271385.

Sue Martyn, Secretary

Central

Like many other regions, we are experiencing weather conditions that are the polar opposite from last year, when many parts of the region were desperate for rain and where farmers were concerned that their winter resources would be diminished by crop failure. This year we have been deluged by rainfall that has resulted in reservoirs overflowing repeatedly, land being water-logged, silage and hay lying uncut and flat in the fields, and the quality going down by the day.

During the brief weather window last week, there has been a frenzy of activity in the fields while folk have tried to catch up on the foraging, but the shearing timetable has been delayed even further for many, as a result. As for harvesting, a start has been made on the winter barley, but we already know that cereal and soya prices are climbing now, as the markets react to the drought in USA. Feeding pregnant ewes this winter could be tricky with poor quality forage coupled with expensive cereals and proteins.

The weather has also had its effect on the show season, with many shows – both local and regional – being cancelled, and often at the last minute. Gt. Yorks. Show managed one out of three days, and the place looked like the Retreat from Moscow by the Tuesday evening!

On a more positive note, one of our English Committee members, Matt Bagley, is involved in a new initiative called "Farmers Apprentice". This is a joint venture between Farmers Weekly, McDonald's and Reaseheath College to encourage young entrants into the agricultural industry www.farmersapprentice.co.uk.

It is sponsored by McDonald's, who are donating the £10K first prize, and anyone between 18 and 25 is eligible to apply (closing date 14.9.12). It is an opportunity for young entrants – whether they have already set up an enterprise of their own, or are wanting to do so – to show-case their agricultural skills in all areas: practical/hands on; business; entrepreneurial; plus team-work.

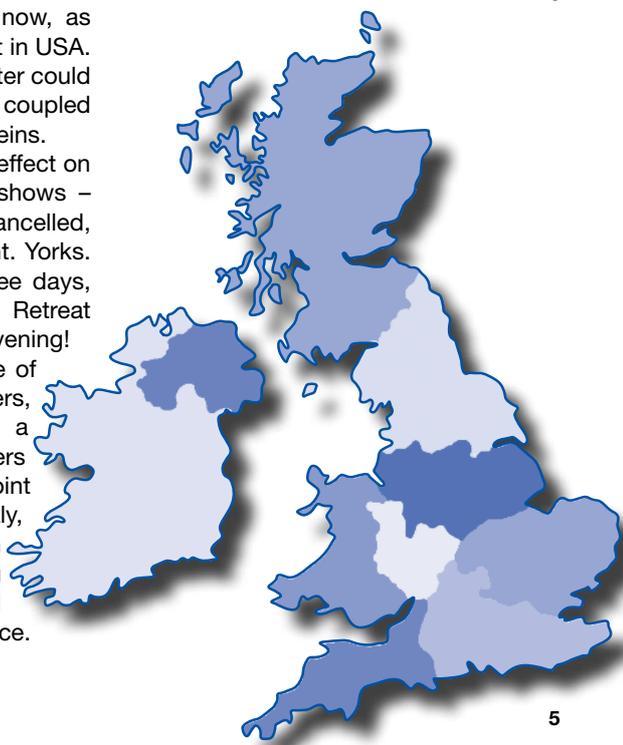
The competition will take a similar format to "The Apprentice" and 10 candidates will be selected to go forward to an agricultural "boot camp" for one week to be held at Reaseheath at the end of October during half term week. The whole process will be filmed by The Co-operative British Youth Film Academy (BYFA) - a young film company who will make it into six "webisodes" which will go out on the inter-net rather than TV.

The judges are Christine Tacon (Former head of Co-operative Farms), Charlie Russell (FW Farm Manager of the Year in 2011, and who runs the Glenapp Estate in Ayrshire), and Matt Bagley (the Agricultural Programme Leader / Sheep Unit Manager at Reaseheath College).

By the time you read this, we will have had the early breeding sales and ram sales, which will indicate whether the confidence shown in the lamb trade – which seems to have held up well despite the poor conditions – will also have extended to the breeding stock.

For those who have cheered themselves up by watching some Olympic day-time tele when work on the tractor has been out of the question, what we want to know is "Whatever happened to those sheep that appeared in the green and pleasant land of the Olympic Arena, after the opening ceremony?"

**Bob & Anne Payne,
Chairman & Secretary**



Cymru/Wales

NSA Cymru/Wales is seeking entries for the award which it presents at the Winter Fair. The award will be made at the Welsh Winter Fair later this year. Competitors will need to be under 35 at the time of the Winter Fair and will have already made an outstanding contribution to the sheep industry. Candidates will be nominated via the Royal Welsh County committees or the YFC; they must be resident in Wales. Further information will be available on the National Sheep Association website.

NSA had a good Royal Welsh. NSA Cymru/Wales officials met with Alun Davies AM the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes at the Royal Welsh Show and also had a meeting with Chief Veterinary Officer Christianne Glossop where various issues including the six day standstill were discussed. If you did not come to see us there please do make the time to come and see us this autumn when we will be at the Ram Sales and the Winter Fair.

NSA held a very successful Sheep Event at Malvern in July. Many thanks to the Regional Committee members who

gave up their time to help. It was very much appreciated.

Date for your 2013 diary - A young West Wales farming family, Sion & Claire Williams, will host the NSA Welsh Sheep 2013, to be held on Tuesday 21 May 2013 at Beili Ficer Farm, Llansawel near Llandeilo. Congratulations also go to Sion on winning the Brynle Williams Memorial Award at the Royal Welsh Show.

The planned farm walk in Pwllheli has been postponed until next spring.

Helen Davies, Secretary

Scotland

Forty sheep farmers from Estonia travelled to the Scottish region for their annual trip to see sheep and cattle breeds native to Scotland. As well as visiting three Scottish farms, Crookston, Incheoch and Glen Nevis they also visited iconic Scottish locations and attended Turriff Show.

During the visit George Milne, Development Officer for the Scottish region had time to speak to the visitors. One gentleman who sits on a sheep committee in Brussels spoke to George about a particular concern. In Estonia they are not allowed to tail and castrate

lambs. This is an issue that has been raised here before and a major concern for us that an EU member state has made that decision.

When talking to the Estonian sheep farmers it became clear that sheep farming out there was on a much smaller scale to the flock sizes we see over here. An average flock size is around 50 breeding ewes and these are kept on small holdings. Another interesting fact discovered was that most of the farmers had full time jobs, ranging from a school teacher to a doctor.

Pictures show them enjoying the visit to our Chairman Jimmy Sinclair's Crookston farm, Heriot. The Estonians were transported in trailers where they travelled around parts of the 2000 acre farm to see the cattle and sheep (see photos).

The NSA Scottish Region took a stand to the Border Union Show. Thanks must go to Jack Clark from John Swans who made the NSA welcome in his marquee. The marquee also hosted the North Country Cheviots stand, who celebrated their National NCC show there with a BBQ.

Caroline Orr, Secretary □



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A Flexible System – A Fair Price

Livestock auction markets offer transparency, openness and are the perfect 'shop window' according to some of the country's leading sheep producers.

Sheep producers are favouring livestock markets over selling deadweight for a variety of reasons – not least due to the satisfaction they get from selling stock in a flexible, open and transparent market place.

"I like to see the job through to the very end – taking lambs to market is the end of the process for me and it's when I get rewarded for all the hard work that's gone into rearing them," says Worcestershire-based producer Geoff Probert.

He runs a 1,300-ewe flock at Northingtown Farm, near Holt Heath, and sells between 1,800 and 2,000 lambs, as well as breeding stock and rams, each year. "And I like to do it locally at Worcester market – and out in the open. I know that I'm getting a fair price for my lambs at that moment in time. The market pays what they're worth," he says, adding that he sells lambs from April through to August.

Prices do vary. Geoff says that prices were a little disappointing in April and May, but reached a good level in June. "And they've been exceptional in July and that's expected to continue throughout August. So it all balances out.

"I knew prices would be down a little in late spring because there was a back log of big lambs on the market at that time. It's all about supply and demand and when you can see that with your own eyes you don't mind the 'lows'. Transparency is one of the key reasons

why I sell at auction," he adds.

His lambs are averaging £91/head at the moment, for Texel Charollais cross lambs between 38kgLW and 42kgLW.

Breeding stock

Because Geoff also sells breeding stock, there's the added benefit that the market is also his 'shop window'. "Buyers get to know me and to see my stock – lambs, rams and breeding ewes. Selling deadweight or direct just wouldn't allow my flock and the high quality of my stock to be on show like that."

He says that using the market isn't difficult either – it's just a short distance down the road from his unit. "And I know that the market staff and auctioneers will always do their best to help ensure that lambs reach their potential on the day. Some producers even go as far as to leave their lambs there to be sold, such is the level of trust.

"But I like to stay and see how they – and other lambs – sell. To me it's one of the most satisfying aspects of the job and it's a welcome break from the day-to-day routine."

Mark Chapman's 285-strong mule flock is based just a few miles away in Pershore and he too is a keen advocate of the livestock auction system. "It's the flexibility that suits my business," he says. "I can sell fat and thin lambs at any weight and in any group size – and I can be assured of a fair price.

"Once I get the lambs to market it's a case of 'job done' really and I can rest assured that the auctioneers and market staff will do their utmost to ensure that I realise the very best price possible for me

stock," he says, adding that he typically sells around 500 Charollais cross lambs between May and August each year.

He sold a group of 24 lambs in mid July at Worcester Market for an average of £93/head. "They all sold for more than £2/kgLW, so I was very pleased with that."

He says that sometimes he does leave his lambs 'unsupervised' at the market: "But I always go back to watch how they do in the sale ring – that's the end of the process really and it's also the most satisfying.

"That said, I do know producers who trust the auction market and staff enough to leave their stock there and not oversee the sale. I share their peace of mind that they will get a fair price for their stock on the day."

Richard Francis runs a 350-ewe flock at Abbotts Morton and he sells his lambs – between 500 and 1,000 each year – through the livestock auction market due to the transparency of the system. "And I wouldn't do it any other way. It's all out in the open – you can see what's going on and you know you've got a fair price on the day. Selling deadweight just doesn't offer that. It's all behind closed doors, so to speak, and you have to take what you're given."

Again, he likes to stay at market with his stock until it's sold. "It's good to see the whole process through to the end – producing good saleable lambs is the whole aim of the business. It's the best way to get some feedback from the market so we can make breeding and rearing decisions for the following year too," he adds. □



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NSA South Sheep 2012

Sue Martyn reports

NSA South Sheep was opened by Lady Eliza Mays-Smith from Nugent Farms Ltd., who was delighted to welcome everyone to Lambourn on the first sunny day for some time. Lady Eliza said: "... although there may be farmers who will stay at home today to try and catch up on work, at least everyone here has a smile on their face..."

The event was well supported by sheep producers, who found a wealth of information available to them on the numerous trade and breed society stands, and many of the trade stand exhibitors reported that they had done very good business. The collection of photographs of the Event in the July/August edition of the Sheep Farmer gave a very good overall picture of a busy day.

The full programme of seminars were well attended, with particular interest in 'Modern Flock Replacement' with Dr John Vipond, who stressed that various factors would affect replacement policy, not least the farmer's aims and ambitions, that would largely dictate the type of sheep they keep. Other topics covered were making best use of grass, a market update, wool prices and an update on Schmallenberg.

Seminars

One of the best attended seminars was the presentation by Philip Derryman on his experience competing in the World Young Shepherds Competition in New Zealand. Phil Hart from Plumpton College said that his students were particularly inspired by Philip's talk and slide show

as was everyone present. This preceded the presentation to the winners in the Mole Valley Farmers Young Shepherds competition. Although the results were in the previous issue of the Sheep Farmer, mention should be made that the winner, George Fraser had also won in 2010, quite an achievement.

The introduction of a class for full time students, sponsored by Volac, was well received by the colleges who supported it wholeheartedly. There were students from Hadlow College in Kent, Lackham College in Wiltshire, Plumpton College in Sussex, and Sparsholt College in Hampshire. All the colleges vowed to return in two years' time with even more competitors.

The winner was William Hinton from Lackham College. It is very encouraging to meet future young shepherds who are so enthusiastic about the sheep industry, and it is even more encouraging that Hadlow College are finding sufficient interest to be able to now re-introduce a Diploma Course in Sheep Management this year.

Sponsors

The major Sponsors, Novartis and Randall Parker Foods had practical demonstrations on their stands and these were enormously popular, as was the farm tour. Farm manager David Barratt who was suffering from flu at the time heroically manned the farm tours all day and explained how being in the 'Valley of the Racehorse' affected the way the farm was managed, from the areas certain crops were grown, to



Rob Morris judging Marie Prebble who came 2nd in the Young Shepherds Competition

avoiding moving large machinery at the times the horses were being exercised along the bridleways.

The Event attracted people from far and wide. Gareth Griffiths of Clew Tompkins Auctioneers from Sennybridge reported that the two top dogs in the Sheepdog Sale sold for £2000 each. One dog had come all the way from Co. Donegal and has a new home close to the Event location and the other came from Devon and went to a new home near Ashford in Kent.

Once again the South East region would like to thank Nugent Farms for hosting the event, David Barratt and Ewan Kershaw (shepherd) for all their help, all the sponsors, everyone who loaned equipment for the day and the numerous people who helped in a hundred different ways to make the day run smoothly. We truly appreciate you all. □

Below: Lady Eliza Mays-Smith welcomes everyone to the Event



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A Year of Substantial Change

Phil Stocker reports on the NSA 2012 AGM

NSA held its AGM on the 22nd August at the Royal Agricultural College on the outskirts of Cirencester. The AGM was attended by 45 people who listened to a summary of the association's work and development during 2011, and then a presentation on the associations current and on-going priorities.

The AGM was followed by a fantastic lunch at HRH's Duchy Home Farm at Tetbury where we were treated to a mutton hotpot with ingredients mostly sourced from the farm itself. David Wilson, the farm manager, then introduced the farm and led a very interesting farm tour where we saw an incredible variety of enterprises – the flock of Lleyn ewes being one...

Our thanks go to HRH Prince Charles, David, and the team at Duchy Home Farm for hosting NSA in such a kind way.

Below is the Executive Summary of the Annual Report that will give readers a quick overview of the key happenings in 2011. To see complete versions of the report please see the members section of the NSA web site.

Executive summary

2011 was a year of significant change within the NSA. During the year the association agreed a new constitution that was then implemented on 1st January 2012. The NSA is a charitable company and is now registered with the charity commissions in England and Scotland, and with Companies House.

A new set of Memorandums and Articles resulted in the end of the old NSA Council and Executive, and the introduction of a new Board of Trustees/Directors, elected from all the NSA regions. In addition a new English Committee was formed and a UK Technical and Policy Committee, giving all the UK nations/regions a fair and representative voice within the association.

In addition to this substantial change the association's Chief Executive resigned and was replaced, and there was also a change in the NSA Chairman with Jonathan Barber standing down and John Geldard taking up this important non-executive position. The Duke of Montrose continued in his second year as President of the NSA.

The key objective of the NSA remains to 'encourage and improve breeding,

management and promotion of the sheep as a species and as an industry in the United Kingdom and elsewhere'.

This objective results in extensive dialogue with those with interests in sheep health, welfare, genetic development, conservation and the environment and supply chains. It also requires regular communication with Government and non-Governmental organisations, in all parts of the UK, Europe and beyond, on practical issues affecting the sheep industry.

The main strategies employed to achieve the charity's objectives are:

- To disseminate information to sheep farmers;
- To consult with members to gain a broad view of opinion;
- To compile a considered view to convey

sheep industry views to appropriate bodies and the public.

This is done through many different membership targeted mediums; The NSA web site, a weekly e newsletter, six editions per year of the Sheep Farmer magazine, five major regional sheep events and fairs, numerous farm walks and meetings, and the various regional and national committees, and affiliated breed societies.

Membership

At the start of the year NSA individual membership stood at 6139 and the year ended with 6174 members. In addition there are over 70 breed societies affiliated to NSA and these affiliations create many more membership relations with sheep farmers.

Schmallenberg Vaccine

It could be available by the end of 2012

NSA is working closely with the Sheep Veterinary Society in urging the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) to act as quickly as possible in licensing and approving recent applications for a vaccine to protect sheep against Schmallenberg virus.

With the tupping season now underway, and knowledge that the critical time for infection is the first 30 days of pregnancy, we could do with the vaccine available at the soonest opportunity.

There is still much not known about Schmallenberg and because of this predicting what is likely to happen over the next season or two is very difficult. There is a serum test now available so at least that gives farmers the chance to assess the level of challenge experienced, and therefore immunity that may be seen.

It is being suggested that flocks that saw even a low level of clinical symptoms last year are showing good whole flock evidence of a challenge, and consequently we might assume that there could be good flock immunity rather than simply single sheep.

Veterinary advice

Veterinary advice suggests that the

main risk could come from an infected indigenous population of midges here in the UK that would lead to a spread of infection beyond the range of midges coming across the channel and if this proves to be the case then a vaccination approach to combat spread and avoid losses seems sensible.

With tupping time approaching and a three to six week period between vaccination and immunity, it is important that this vaccine is made available as early as possible.

Paul Roger of the SVS commented: "SBV has been declared to be a 'low impact disease' but we are not convinced this is a true reflection of its impact across the whole continent, particularly around the boundaries of known infection spread such as the UK.

"We fear that we may face further disease next year. The UK is in a special situation as we occupy the border between infected and non-infected flocks/herds and this area is particularly needful of protective vaccination in advance of the breeding season. At present the potential disease catastrophe that awaits this region desperately requires a vaccine to prevent this occurrence."

Phil Stocker □

Many members and elected officers of the association give their time and knowledge free of charge to contribute to the aims of their association. This is done in a variety of ways including involvement in committees and forums, organisation and delivery of local and national events and meetings.

The NSA continues to work well in partnership with many other organisations who share interests that influence and affect the sheep industry. SCOPS, the Sheep Health and Welfare Group, The Sheep Veterinary Society, and the various devolved farming unions and levy bodies, to name a few.

- During 2011 EID and movement recording at a regulatory/policy level required substantial time and effort by NSA, and moving towards implementation of red tape reduction and responsibility and cost sharing also gained momentum. These areas of policy are considered vitally important to ensure the UK sheep industry has a reasonable and not overburdened foundation.
- On a technical and market related level sheep health, disease control, and sheep welfare all emerged as highly important in order to reduce costs,

increase efficiency, maintain trade and keep export markets open, and to create a positive image in the eyes of the public.

- In terms of sheep and the environment the NSAs main focus has been the role of sheep in the uplands, and the fact that sheep numbers have been under pressure from some of the conservation organisations. NSA embarked on the production of a new report that highlighted the positive public interest outcomes that come from a vibrant and successful upland sheep sector, this report being launched early in 2012.
- The market for sheep meat and resulting store and breeding stock was exceptionally strong in 2011 with global supplies being tight. Domestic markets struggled to compete with such strong demand leading to high prices compared to other meats. Over the year lamb consumption in the UK decreased by about 22 per cent and emerged as a high quality premium product. Wool values continued an upward trend with some specialist wool breeds seeing strong interest from an increasing number of artisan users.

In 2011 the finances of the NSA saw a net increase in cash reserves, due, amongst other things, to successful sheep events and ram sales. This enabled the association to contribute significant funds to regional activities. With the exception of professional fees (which were higher in 2011 due to re-structuring), operating and governance costs reduced as further changes were made to increase the overall efficiency of the organisation. Total staff numbers reduced during the year and with the absence of a CEO for 3 months this contributed to a significant fall in employment costs. With lower costs overall, a greater proportion of income can be directed to the charitable activities of NSA.

The constitutional changes made during 2011 create a sound foundation for a unique UK umbrella organisation for anyone with interests in sheep and sheep farming. The outlook for the sheep sector in the UK is optimistic and its ability to produce quality food and fibre from a renewable and sustainable resource – grass – aligns it well with current policy and public interest priorities. The NSA is well placed to support the sheep sector in making the very most of its potential.

Phil Stocker □

Sheep Health & Welfare Conference

**21st November 2012,
Sixways Stadium,
Worcester.**

Good sheep health and welfare goes hand in hand with improved output, efficiency, and profitability. With real potential for the sheep sector very evident, now is the time to focus on health improvements to ensure that potential is met. This conference is being organized by the Sheep Health and Welfare Group for England. Booking forms available on the NSA website, or by contacting the office on 01684 892661. □

Programme

- 09:30 Registration & Coffee.**
- 10:00 Welcome & Introduction.**
Peter Baber - Conference Chairman.
- 10:10 The Real Cost of Endemic Disease to the Business - The Need to Act!**
Phil Stocker - Chief Executive, National Sheep Association.
- 10:45 Combating the Real Threats to the Sheep Farming Business.**
Professor Neil Sargison - Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies.
- 11:20 Coffee**
- 11:40 The Wider Sheep Health Issue, How to Detect Early, Design and Implement Prevention Strategies.**
Chris Lewis - Independent sheep veterinary consultant.
- 12:15 Internal Parasites - Making Practical Sense of the Latest Science.**
Lesley Stubbings - Independent sheep consultant and farmer.
- 12:45 Lunch**
- 14:00 Schmallenberg Virus - Where are We Now?**
Alasdair Cook - Animal Health Veterinary Laboratories Agency - Schmallenberg Specialist.
Piet Vellema - GD Deventer
- 14:30 The Research Pipeline Where are We at With the Science Behind Flock Health and Welfare.**
Professor Julie Fitzpatrick - Chief Executive, Moredun Research Institute.
- 15:05 Collaborating to Address the SCAB Challenge.**
Panel: Neil Sargison, Lesley Stubbings, Chris Dodds, Alick Simmons.
Facilitator: Chris Lloyd - English Beef & Lamb Executive.
- 15:50 Summary of the day and next steps.**
Peter Baber.
- 16:00 Conference close.**

Campaign for Wool

Promoting wool across the world

The Campaign for Wool (CfW), now a major force in the promotion of wool across the world is once again shaping up for its major autumn activities, including events both at home here in the UK and further afield.

Central to the UK activities will once again be Wool Week, being held this year from 15th – 21st October and featuring a number of high profile events to help excel the profile of wool products in consumers' minds, explains BWMB Chief Executive and CfW Executive Director Ian Hartley.

As well as normal Wool Week retailer activities, there are two special events:

CfW's 'Wool School' initiative which shows fashion, textiles and design students from all across Great Britain competing to design wool jumpers which will be sold in some UK top retail stores, ie, M&S, Pringle, Daks, John Lewis etc.

It is also planned to commemorate the first wool coming into the UK from Australia and New Zealand by taking bales on the canal from Liverpool to Saltaire, Bradford, collecting British Wool on the way and producing a commonwealth cloth.

There also will be a major wool

event in March 2013 in London, where the CfW will take over a prime central location and create a 'Wool House' which will showcase wool products in approximately 10 rooms.

Wool Week

"For the third year in a row, the CfW's Wool Week activities will be creating a spectacle in London, this time with a traffic-stopping, outdoor wool display.

"Central to this year's event will be an audacious stunt which will see the historic London store Harvey Nichols wrapped with brightly coloured yarn for the duration of Wool Week."

The yarn for this project is being produced from wool donated to the CfW by wool producers from around the world, explains Mr Hartley.

Wool Week 2012 will see Harvey Nichols partner with The Woolmark Company to wrap the store in over-sized, brightly coloured wool yarn. Weaving in and out of windows and around the landmark building on the busy Knightsbridge, the yarn will be joined by a pair of huge knitting needles to create an eye-catching display. It will be in place for two weeks starting October 15th and lit up at night in London's most fashionable

and exclusive shopping district.

The yarn will be treated and dyed to ensure it remains waterproof and looks stunning throughout the entire week - no matter what the weather.

Overseas activity

This year will also see Wool Week activities take place in the USA and China, with the American Wool Week taking place in late September, focussing on the interiors market, he explains.

"This is being done in conjunction with a number of major USA and UK carpet manufacturers and upholstery and bedding manufacturers. The Chinese Wool Week will feature the fashion and apparel markets.

"A major feature of the Chinese Wool Week will be Shanghai playing host to the exceptionally popular Wool Modern exhibition which proved a hit in London last autumn and has since been seen by people across the world, including in Germany and Australia."

And helping to raise the profile of CfW both at home and abroad is the Countess of Wessex who is now lending her support to the CfW having been impressed by the depth and breadth of work being done by CfW when she visited Bradford recently to open the BWMB's new offices.

Sales

Closer to home, BWMB Chairman Malcolm Corbett says sales of the 2012 season wool clip have started slower

Middle is Mark Powell BWMB Chief Wool Marketing Officer accepting a trade stand award at NSA Scotsheep 2012

The Countess of Wessex officially opening "Wool House"



than the previous year. We are hopeful that the sales will improve as we move through the autumn and deeper in to the sales of new season wool. We are confident this improvement in sales will uphold the 2011/2012 prices.

“What is important to remember is that while auction prices may have eased a little they are still a long way ahead of where they were as little as three years ago and farmers supplying their wool to BWMB continue to benefit from the marketing power it has in both the UK and global wool markets.

“It is a collective strength no single farmer or trader could achieve on their

own as has been demonstrated through recent activities in the milk sector,” adds Mr Corbett.

Shows

And to help wool producers gain a greater understanding of how BWMB works to promote and market their wool it has been present at a number of leading shows and specialist events this year, including Scot Sheep, South Sheep, Sheep 2012, the Royal Highland

Show and the Royal Welsh Show, as well as numerous regional events too, says BWMB Producer Relations Manager Gareth Jones.

“It’s been a busy season and BWMB’s presence at these leading events has helped reinforce producers’ understanding of its work and how they can get the best from their wool.

“Over the summer BWMB has also hosted a number of farmer groups at its Bradford headquarters and any group wanting to visit Bradford and see at first-hand what happens to their wool once it’s left the farm is very welcome to do so,” he adds. □



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Nick Allen - EBLEX Sector Director
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Jane Ritchie-Smith - EBLEX Consumer Marketing Manager
Chris Lloyd - EBLEX Industry Development Manager.



Find out more at www.eblex.org.uk



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Controlling Sheep Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs caused by infection with one or more infectious agents. The disease is extremely common in sheep and can be responsible for enormous financial losses both here in the UK and worldwide.

There are a number of infective agents that can cause pneumonia in sheep

- Bacterial infections: Pasteurellosis (*Mannheimia haemolytica*)
- Mycoplasma infections: Mycoplasmosis (*M.ovipneumoniae*)
- Viral Infections: Maedi Visna; Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma (OPA or jaagsiekte); Parainfluenza type 3 (PI3) virus; Adenoviruses; Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)
- Parasitic infections: Lungworm

Knowing which infective agent is causing the pneumonia helps farmers and their vets control the disease.

Pneumonic Pasteurellosis

The most common type of pneumonia in sheep is caused by the bacterium *M.haemolytica*. As this is frequently found in association with almost all of the other agents mentioned above, controlling *M.haemolytica* can go a long way to ensuring that you reduce the incidence of pneumonia in your sheep flock.

Most outbreaks of pneumonic pasteurellosis occur in May, June and July and many involve both ewes and lambs. Flock outbreaks usually start suddenly with deaths, often in young lambs in which the disease is develops rapidly and is septicaemic rather than pneumonic. As lambs get older the disease is more often seen as pneumonia although sudden deaths with septicaemia may still occur.

Clinical diagnosis of pneumonia in



sheep is remarkably difficult as there are wide variations in the usual signs of respiratory distress such as respiratory rate and temperature. In the first few days of an outbreak in a flock of older lambs and sheep a number of animals will show apparent clinical signs of pneumonia.

Close inspection of the flock will show that some sheep have an occasional cough and slight eye and nasal discharges. Morbidity and mortality vary but up to 10 per cent of the flock may be affected. Pneumonic pasteurellosis also occurs in individual sheep sporadically rather than as part of a clearly defined flock outbreak.

Predisposing factors

It is generally assumed that environmental factors are important predisposing causes of pneumonic pasteurellosis; some outbreaks can be linked to previous stressful situations such as warm or cold temperatures, wet weather and dipping, castration or dosing. In general any extremes or rapid changes in climatic conditions are often associated with outbreaks of pneumonia.

There is also strong evidence that infection with parainfluenza virus type 3 (PI3), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

and sheep pulmonary adenocarcinoma (OPA) are factors that can predispose sheep to pneumonic pasteurellosis.

Infection with PI3 virus alone generally produces a mild respiratory illness. However this infection damages lung tissues and can create an ideal micro-environment in the lung which will favour *M.haemolytica* growth and lead to cases of pneumonic pasteurellosis.

Some other bacterial infections also increase the susceptibility of sheep to pneumonia. *Mycoplasma* spp. are common in the respiratory tract of sheep and combined infection with *M.ovipneumonia* and *M.haemolytica* induces chronic “atypical” pneumonia in lambs.

Treating Pasteurellosis

Managing your flock to reduce the trigger factors is crucial to the prevention and control of pasteurellosis. As *M.haemolytica* is often found in the upper respiratory tract of apparently healthy animals, eradicating the organism is not an option and biosecurity will be limited in preventing its spread. If pasteurellosis does occur it can be treated with long acting antibiotics. Treatment of all the lambs in a flock as soon as possible

Type of stock	Product	Number of doses	When to vaccinate
Lambs	Combined Pasteurella and Clostridial vaccine	2 doses 4-6 weeks apart	From 3 weeks of age
Lambs at high risk of pasteurellosis*	Pasteurella vaccine	2 doses 4-6 weeks apart	From 2 weeks of age or 2 weeks before period of stress
Bought in breeding replacements and lambs kept as replacements	Combined Pasteurella and Clostridial vaccine	2 doses 4-6 weeks apart	2-3 months before tupping
	Then Then	1 dose 1 dose	4-6 weeks before lambing 4-6 weeks before subsequent lambings
Ewes at high risk of pasteurellosis*	Pasteurella vaccine	1 dose	Before tupping or 2 weeks before period of stress

*Discuss with your own vet whether your stock is considered to be at high risk of pasteurellosis. In extreme cases, three Pasteurella vaccinations may be required; one pretupping, one mid pregnancy and one at weaning.

after the start of an outbreak can prevent a significant number of further cases and be economically justified but usually still results in some stunted lambs.

Protection

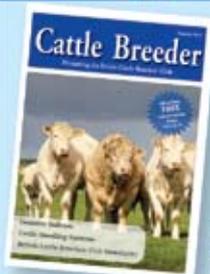
Prevention of disease is best achieved by the use of specific Pasteurella vaccines. Remember that to make the most effective use of any vaccine it must be used in the correct way, at the right time. Circumstances and systems of management vary from farm to farm and you should consult your vet about a

suitable programme for your flock.

Table 1 shows a suggested vaccination programme using combined clostridial and Pasteurella vaccines which can be used to give cover against these two groups of diseases. It is of course possible to use separate clostridial and Pasteurella vaccines at the same time but it would be wise to give them at separate sites e.g. on the opposite sides of the sheep. The table is intended to be used as a guide only. Please talk to your own vet about an appropriate vaccination programme on your own farm.

Professor Willie Donachie is the Managing Director of Moredun Scientific, Edinburgh. Moredun runs a membership scheme which aims to keep farmers and their vets up to date with the latest developments in animal health research. If you would like a free 12 page newssheet on controlling sheep pneumonia or are interested in becoming a member of Moredun, please contact Maggie Bennett at The Moredun Foundation, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, EH26 0PZ, phone 0131 445 5111 or visit their website at www.moredun.org.uk □

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British Cattle Conference

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Quality Pays

Phil Stocker and Gaina Morgan talk about some early indications of this seasons breeding and store sales

Early signs at the store and breeding sheep sales were that quality pays, despite a slow start. Traditionally the first price indicators, Thame Sheep Fair on the 3rd August and the NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale on 6th August saw a reasonable trade.

Caution was in the air in a season tellingly dubbed by one Builth Wells vendor as being 'out of sync'. The thinking was that with lambs not weaned for lack of aftermath and with many farmers still waiting to finish hay and silage, thoughts hadn't turned to tugging.

The message from both sales remained that flockmasters were prepared to pay for quality and that the sheep trade is in good heart, despite seasonal difficulties. It was more important than ever to think hard about the right market to ensure demand and good money.

Thame Sheep Fair

Trade at Thame Sheep Fair got off to a reasonable start with Continental X and Lley X theaves around £120 – £135. These were followed by a run of Cheviot x Texels that pushed prices well beyond £150.

A small number of Scotch Half Breds knocked on the door of £195/hd before large numbers of Suffolk Mules started



Top: Crowds at Thame.

Bottom: Sheep going through race reader

their way through with top prices up to £205 and averaging £128. An equally large number of Mule theaves saw trade starting at around £135 – £155 and averaging £139, down £5 on the year.

Across the board, and bringing average prices down were a small number of sheep that probably should not have been kept as breeders.

Store lambs were strong averaging £63 and this surely indicates some confidence in both the market and autumn/winter keep.

The message was clear – good sheep made good money, ordinary sheep made less than ordinary prices. Buyers, sellers, and observers seemed cautious but overall the sale rate was 96.6 per cent with few sheep being taken back home.

One farmer from King Lynn commented that female trade was nearly as good as last year – he was here to pick up some rams and would be filling his trailer up with females to make the trip worthwhile. Ordinary sheep – ordinary prices was a common comment from others.

Speaking to one or two who were selling theaves purchased as ewe lambs last year was more worrying. 'There will be a few tears tonight' commented one, before admitting that his trade had to be looked at over a longer period.

Race reader

Spending some time watching the huge numbers of sheep going through the race reader was interesting, with two out of every three pens showing one or two sheep that didn't read. The result was that these 'non read pens' had to be gone through again with a stick reader.

The ones I watched soon found they also had quite a few sheep that wouldn't read at all and overall nearly 400 sheep had to have numbers entered manually. There was a successful automatic first read rate of only 96.4 per cent and the cost of reading at the sale must have been substantial. How this fits with zero tolerance expectations is baffling.

Builth Wells

The early NSA Wales and Borders Ram sale at Builth Wells saw more than 400 rams sold. Trade was described as 'fair', with a top price of 1280 guineas for a Charollais, compared to last year's



Top: Charollais rams at the NSA sale

Middle: Prize Winner!

Bottom: Checking the goods at the NSA ram sale

overall top price of 1500 guineas and a 2011 breed high of 1050 guineas.

The three shear ram sold by the Quick family of Loosebeare Manor, Crediton, Devon, was breed champion at the Royal Cornwall Show and also reserve interbreed champion. He sold well for a three year old according to Paul Quick, who added that it had been an 'OK trade', affected by the weather, rising costs and lamb prices lower than last year.

A Suffolk ram lamb sold for 1200 guineas from Myfyr Evans, Tan yr Accur, Llantheadr, Denbigh. The breed champion, it was purchased by Aled Williams of Amlwch, Anglesey, who

stressed the importance of investing in the best to get a good return on the stock produced.

The top priced Texel, Corriecrave Sea the Stars sired by Brookhill Rambo, was sold for 1000 guineas. Paul and Anna Johnson who topped the sale last year with a 1500 guinea ram said trade was fairly steady, reflecting lamb prices.

Buyer Ryan Davies of Cefn Coch, Heyhope, Knighton, runs a commercial flock of 400 ewes. He believes in investing in a good tup to introduce quality to the flock, and that would be reflected in returns at slaughter.

John Pryce of Meifod, achieved 890 guineas for a suffolk yearling ram. The tup sold to Aled Williams of Cwmcamlais, Brecon.

John Pryce commented: "It's been very hard going today. The whole season is out of sync and no-one has got their head around tugging yet."

NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Chairman Gwynne Davies said that although averages were down, top quality tups had sold at a good price. It reflected buyers' confidence in the quality rams offered at the early sale.

The sale grossed £203,802, with 419 rams sold. Hampshire Downs, Dorsets, and Charmoise were among the breeds whose average prices were up on last year. Charollais shearling and ram lamb averages were down £59.73 at £573.24 and £94.46 at £374.63 respectively on the year.

Texel ram aged ram averages were

£144.38 down on last year at £441, shearling ram averages were £102.14 down at £478.80 and shearling ewes were down £169.17 at £303.33.

Suffolk MV WS & S ram averages were £61.25 up on the year at £707, and Suffolk MV rams £70.24 down on the year at an average £540, however taking an average of all the Suffolk Rams in the MV Section would mean overall the Suffolk rams were only down by £4.49 on the year, with Suffolk MV WS & S ram lambs averaging £8.69 more than last year at £584.

The top price was the same as last year at 1200 guineas. Non MV Suffolks were £266.88 down on last year at an average £525, with a top price of 820 guineas.



All Grass Wintering Trial

By John Vipond, SAC Sheep Specialist

Farmers faced with excess grass due to the wet summer and a shortage of well-made silage may be considering deferred grazing to extend the grazing season this autumn. But results from cell grazing on a long rotation as practiced by Cornish sheep farmer Dave Sanders last winter throw up an interesting alternative.

Monitoring of this novel grazing practice by SAC sheep specialist John Vipond with support from EBLEX had the objective of determining if all sheep winter feed requirements could be sourced from grass and still have enough regrowth to lamb on. This is certainly not possible with deferred grazing practices.

Grass was set aside as a wedge with a cover of about 2000 kg.dm/ha of dry matter prior to tugging for the start of the winter rotation. Grazing started 25 days after tugging on 1st December and was based on allocating just enough grass to meet maintenance requirements based on daily shifts.

- 1000 ewes will graze a 3 ha paddock with a cover of 2100kg.dm/ha in two days and have to be fed 4kg silage / head on the third.
- They only need 0.85 kg.dm/day but waste over half of it if stocked for three days and soil pugging is severe by day three
- On daily shifts of 1ha with grazing to a residual of 900 kg.dm/ha they have 1.2kg available and waste only about a third eating about 0.85kg, enough

for maintenance.

So the 950 NZ type Romney ewes were rotated around over 100 paddocks of on average 1ha each. To account for varying covers on different fields sward height was measured with a falling plate meter calibrated in kg.dm/ha and the area adjusted accordingly using an electric fencing system.

Following grazing, winter grass growth of 10kg/ha was measured and this, together with the grazing wedge maintained 950 ewes on 110 ha.

Silage

Supplementary silage of only 11kg/head, was used, mainly to supplement pastures with less than 1200kg dm/ha. Thus the 'all -grass wintering' objective was largely achieved.

There were significant reductions in labour use and major savings in feed costs. Dave Sanders now intends to continue with the system and extend it to all of his flock. His comments were:

- Soon found daily shifts allowed more days per paddock
- Sheep adjusted to shifts well, more calm
- Ex 950 took out 45 not keeping up with mob on condition score - will go to terminal sire next year
- Dad and I can set up one weeks' fences in half a day - feed 950 ewes in 15 minutes
- Fields grazed in the first week have as much grass as I'd expect if we hadn't grazed them

- Farm's looking real tidy
- Saved a lot in money and time

The problem areas to be addressed before this can be more widely adopted include whether other farm soils are capable of withstanding the high stocking rates without significant pollution risk and pasture damage. Whether other ewe breeds can cope without feet and teeth problems and how to manage the increased parasite challenge.

These risks were addressed on Norton farm by producing a health plan, a Fecpak kit was used to regularly monitor worm egg counts and sheep removed from the rotation on the basis of condition scoring at scanning (70 days) and when vaccinating at four weeks pre-lambing for Clostridial disease.

Two tooth replacements were run separately and trace element monitoring of forage is in place. But the major question of course is whether, outside of exceptional grass growing areas like Cornwall, there is a role for this system

To address this issue SAC with funding from EBLEX hope to extend monitoring to further English farms this winter and start a producer group to take the system forward, extending it to other regions and ewe genotypes.

Commercial company support for trace element supplementation, the development of new grass varieties (Festuloliums) with the potential to extend the grazing season and electric fencing will enhance the project reach.



NSA Sheep 2012

NSA Sheep 2012, the sector's biennial premier business to business event staged at Malvern on Wednesday 4 July was hailed a resounding success attracting a record turnout of over 11,000 visitors doing business with 270 exhibitors. In addition to Government chief scientist, Sir John Beddington who officially opened the event, it attracted some of the industry's key decision makers including Government chief veterinary officer, Nigel Gibbens and members of the Animal Health and Welfare Board, all present to learn more about the industry.

With 270 exhibitors present there was something for all interests – from breeders and breed societies, training and education, feed and supplement suppliers, health and welfare products, equipment manufacturers, and much, much more. NSA's work with SCOPS was highlighted in an interactive display that attracted enormous attention, demonstrating drenching techniques, gun calibration, and discussion over strategies to avoid anthelmintic resistance.

Seminars

The marquee was busy all day with good numbers of interested people taking the weight off their feet and listening to presentations and discussion



NSA Young Shepherd of the Year – the top entrants

on topics that included; maximising forage, parasite control, lameness, new feeding opportunities, and young entrants. These subjects surrounded the big debate topics of 'what sustainable intensification means for sheep', 'ways to produce more from less', and 'balancing food production and the environment'. Debates like this usually are, and should be, controversial and thought provoking, and these were no exception.

The seminar outcomes made it clear that recognition of the importance of

food production needed to be higher up the agenda and clearer in policies and incentives, but that there should not be a conflict between increasing production and environmental objectives – a healthy sheep industry and healthy environments can go hand in hand. There is much we can do to improve our productivity in beyond simply increasing flock numbers - healthy sheep with good nutrition will reduce losses and increase output, and at the same time reduce the carbon footprint of the industry.



Finally while there will always be fine balances between ideal upland stocking rates there should be a new approach of identifying 'optimal land use' in these areas, and in lowland areas far more could be done to re-integrate sheep into rotational cropping situations. These debates will inform much of the NSAs policy work particularly in the current round of CAP reform.

Young shepherds

The last issue of Sheep Farmer carried the top two results from the NSA Young Shepherd of the Year our prestigious flagship award sponsored by MSD Footvax and with a total of £2,000 at stake. Top place went to Simon Turkington, while runner up was Scottish team mate, Kenneth O'Connor. Simon also secured the Rumenco sponsored European NSA Young Shepherd Award after fending off stiff competition from 22 entrants from throughout the UK, Southern Ireland and France battling through a pentathlon of practical sheep management activities, all of which were designed to test their shepherding skills.

The top six places went to: 1, Simon Turkington, Caithness; 2, Kenneth O'Connor, Lanark; 3, Jonathan McKelvey, Castlederg, Co Tyrone; 4, Adam Garthwaite, Torrington, Devon; 5, Alistair Graham, Morpeth, Northumberland; 6, George Fraser, Warminster, Wiltshire; highest placed under 21 year old, Adam Garthwaite, Torrington, Devon.

NSA European Young Shepherd Individual: 1, Simon Turkington, Caithness; 2, Kenneth O'Connor, Lanark; 3, Jonathan McKelvey, Castlederg, Co Tyrone; 4, Alistair Graham, Morpeth, Northumberland; 5, George Fraser, Warminster, Wiltshire; 6, Dafydd Roberts, Corwen, Conwy.

NSA European Young Shepherd Team: 1, Scotland (Turkington and O'Connor); 2, England (Graham and Fraser).

ATV safety

NSA also hosted the finals of the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC) All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety and Handling. Herefordshire headed up the 12 teams showcasing safety knowledge and ATV handling skills and as promised it proved to be a battle of knowledge and skills. The other top places were as follows 2, Ceredigion; 3 Cornwall; 4, Lancashire; 5, Derbyshire; 6, Durham; 7, Bedfordshire; 8, Gloucestershire

BWMB fleece awards

Elfyfyn Owen of Llanddoged, Llanrwst cleaned up the top fleece awards. The championship silverware went to his entry from the cross section with a Welsh Mule fleece and in reserve, his first prize lustre entry a Bluefaced Leicester fleece.

Farm shop butchery

Best butchery skills, together with innovation and appealing presentation were to the fore in this NSA and EBLEX organised award designed to test the skills of farm shop owners located throughout the UK selling lamb, together with those of their managers and butchers.

Shropshire based John Brererton, from the Ludlow Food Centre, Ludlow was voted the winner of this one hour marathon in which contestants had to prepare and display a variety of cuts from a whole carcase and make up lamb burgers. The runner up was Joe Webster, Taylor's Farm Shop, Ormskirk, Lancashire, and in third place, Matthew Gothard, Greenfield Farm Shop, Atherstone, Leicestershire.

National lamb selection

Simon Ayres, Middleton, Ludlow came up trumps and was declared the winner of this award which was on the EBLEX stand and designed to put visitors stock judging skills to the test.

Ready, Steady, Cook

Ready, Steady Cook once again proved to be a hugely popular spectacle styled on the popular TV series and customised by NSA, naturally with lamb! Charles Sercombe our NSA representative was narrowly pipped at the post by Helen Evans, NFYFC.

Sheep dog sale

Farmers searching for a new dog turned out in force to the ring side auction and were able to watch each entry put

through its working paces before coming under the hammer of auctioneers, Clee, Tompkinson and Francis.

Prices peaked at 2,400gns for Sky, an 18 month old unregistered bitch from Breconshire farmer Trevor Morgans to Lyn Williams, Llandeilo. Five bitches sold for 2,000gns or more. They included a registered two and half year old homebred entry from Huw Watkins, Llanfyllin at 2,250gns to T and L Powell, Abergavenny. Next at 2,100gns was another registered bitch, Derwen Floss from Kevin Evans, Libanus to B Pike, East Garston.

Fencing

Tornado Wire Fencer of the Year - over a dozen, two man teams of professional fencing contractors tested their skills against their fellow competitors to demonstrate the advantages of good quality fence erection - to be precise erecting 70 linear metres of Tornado High Tensile stock fence within three hours.

The winners of this hotly contested marathon were Mike Ford Fencing, Chumleigh, Devon, followed by Mark Evans, Leominster, Herefordshire and in third place, J Hubbard & Son, Balsall Common, Coventry.

Stand Competitions

Outdoor: 1, David Ritchie (Implements); 2 Tornado Wire; 3, P & D Engineering

Indoor: 1, The Moredun; 2, Bentham & District Farmers' Auction Mart; 3, Logie Durno Sheep

Breed: 1, Meatline; 2, Lleyn Sheep Society; 3, Rough Fell Sheep Society
Event organiser, Helen Davies would like to thank all those involved in NSA Sheep 2012, and in particular those rising to the many challenges brought about by the unpredictable weather which were successfully overcome. The sponsors, showground staff, exhibitors, judges, stewards, organising committee and others too numerous to mention all deserve a huge pat on the back. NSA Sheep 2012 was the most successful to date with many exhibitors looking forward to returning in 2014. This event is firmly established as the premier event in the sheep farmer's calendar.

Photos left

Top: Sheep dogs come under the hammer...

Right: The Ready Steady Cook championship went to NFYFC's Helen Evans, with Charles Sercombe, representing NSA, runner-up

Bottom: The Big Debate: sustainable intensification - can sheep deliver? EBLEX's Dr Liz Genever introduces the panel



LFA Report Launched in N. Ireland

The Northern Ireland Region recently held a launch for the NSA Less Favoured Areas Report in Greenmount Campus. The invited audience included MP's, DARD Policy makers, Countryside Management Officers, Representatives of all the N.I. Farming Bodies and members of the press.

Chairman Maurice McHenry introduced Samuel Wharry who was the NI representative on the group tasked with putting this report together. Samuel, who farms on the picturesque Glens of Antrim above seaside town Carnlough, was very able to talk about LFA areas as his farm rises steeply from green hill land to heather hill.

He explained the background as to why NSA thought it was important to produce this report. In the past when headage payments drove the numbers of sheep on the hills up and created a situation of overgrazing on some hill land to the present when some hills are in danger of being abandoned. At a time when we are in debate over CAP and LFA reform NSA thought it was important that sheep farmers were not forgotten.

Samuel stated: "In our opinion it is time to move on, for too long sheep farming has been seen as part of the problem with our upland management, we believe that it is part of the solution.

"Maintaining hill sheep farming, with appropriate stocking densities and managed hefted flocks is vital to allow for a species rich environment, which also provides other environmental benefits, such as clean water and carbon storage. To put it simply we need the right number of the right type of sheep grazing the right areas of our hills, and to do that we need the right shepherds looking after them.

"We should always remember that our upland habitats have been created by agriculture, and not necessarily by design. The landscapes which so many lobby groups are anxious to preserve are often a by-product of traditional hill farming.



the pyramid of sheep production, at the start of the "sheep food chain", providing not only the majority of our store lambs for lowland finishers, but also providing the seed stock for lowland sheep farms in the form of crossbred breeding ewes, which have inherited hardiness and maternal ability from their hill bred mothers, and the sheep stocks, simply by grazing there, have contributed to improvements in Public access, Biodiversity, Water management, and Carbon sequestration and Climate change."

Samuel asked: "Why is sheep farming in Less Favoured Areas important, and should it be supported? The LFA areas are a massive natural asset, they have the capacity to produce a substantial contribution to our food security, both in the form of store lambs, and perhaps even more importantly breeding stock, whilst helping to maintain the landscapes so valued by tourists and environmentalists, which as we have already said were largely created by farming activities.

"Farming, and sheep farming in particular also helps to retain people in our upland areas. Whether it is full or part time farming, agriculture and land management is still one of the most important economic drivers in our remotest areas, and also has numerous spin off benefits for the entire local community. Often the production of lamb from the hills is dismissed as an irrelevance.

"We are told that lowland sheep systems with higher stocking rates, more prolific sheep and faster growth rates are much a more efficient way of producing

sheep meat. Whilst it is true that hill lamb output may be lower, what is often forgotten is that ewes on rough grazing and heather moorland are converting what is basically low quality forage, growing on land which is unusable for any other form of agriculture, into high quality protein for human consumption, in the form of lamb and mutton.

Carbon sequestration

"Sheep are one of the few animals capable of doing this, and a consequence of the diet of grazing sheep is that the meat produced is higher in Omega 3 fatty acids, which have well recorded human health benefits. It is this utilisation of moorland pastures by hill sheep, which also has huge benefits from a carbon sequestration viewpoint, which is often overlooked in their comparison with lowland systems which may be using land which could be used to grow crops for human consumption.

"Looking to the future, with the increase in world population, and climate change making agriculture in Southern European states more marginal can we really afford to ignore the contribution our upland areas can make, not only to national food security, but also to the opportunities for export of lamb to the EU which is a huge importer of lamb and sheepmeat.

Breeding stock

Of course the other major product from our hill sheep flock is breeding stock. The traditional stratified sheep farming system practised in the UK relied on hill ewes being crossed with a longwool breed of tup, and the resulting progeny provided the basis of the lowland breeding



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EBLEX is a division of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).

Continued from page 20

flock, with the crossbred ewe inheriting mothering ability and hardiness from her mother and growth and prolificacy from her father.

“Over the last number of years there has been a move away from this system, with a number of farmers introducing terminal sire genetics into their ewe flocks, but many are now starting to question the extra labour needed with ewes of this type, and again Agrisearch funded research by AFBI, Hillsborough has shown that the traditional Mule ewe, bred out of Blackface ewes is the most profitable and productive lowland ewe.

“Whilst sheep grazing has always had environmental benefits in the last few years a new buzz word has crept into our vocabulary. It is not so long ago that none of us had even heard of carbon sequestration, let alone understood what it entailed. Whether or not you agree with all the theories around climate change, there is no doubt that the level of carbon in our atmosphere is rising, and government policy is to try and control it.

Carbon storage

“The fact is that massive amounts of carbon are stored in our peatlands, and that it is essential that these areas are managed to conserve this carbon sink. Grazing with sheep at appropriate levels is one of the best and simplest ways of doing this, without adequate grazing vegetation on these areas builds up until it starts to decay, leading to the release of carbon.

“Ungrazed areas can also become a fire hazard, with dead and decaying material acting as a fuel load in dry weather. Witness the wildfires in the Mountains of Mourne area just last year where the fires spread over areas which had not been grazed, releasing tonnes of carbon. Without grazing it is not a question of if you will have a wildfire, but when?

“Not only grass and heather proliferate without grazing, colonisation of areas by bracken and gorse can make some areas almost impassable for tourists and walkers, and with no control bracken becomes a host for ticks which are becoming an increasing problem, transmitting Lyme disease in their bites, which can cause severe disabilities and even death. Properly treated sheep

grazing, effectively control tick numbers by hoovering up ticks which are then destroyed when the sheep is treated with insecticide.

Skills and traditions

“There is a need to recognise the role of the family in the training of young farmers in traditional hill farming skills. Managing hill sheep requires hardworking knowledgeable people who are committed to maintaining the skills and traditions of their elders whilst making use of the best advice from modern science.

“Young farmers traditionally learned these skills from their parents, but especially in Ireland, both North and South, we are now often faced with the problem of a lost generation of hill farmers. Throughout the building boom many young people saw little future in a life of hard work for little return on small upland farms, preferring to look for work away from home.

“This is thankfully now changing, with the upturn in farming fortunes there is more interest in taking over the family farm, but in many cases there is no experienced older generation to pass on their knowledge. There is a real need here for agricultural colleges to play a role in offering practical land management and shepherding courses for young people wishing to get involved in hill sheep farming.”

Samuel concluded: “That in brief is the N.I. Region NSA opinion of the benefits of sheep farming in the Less Favoured Areas, and our recommendations to encourage a vibrant and healthy hill sheep sector are:

- A recognition of the multiple benefits of traditional hill sheep farming to the LFA, That farming activities have for generations provided “Conservation by Default, not Design, and that these activities such as good shepherding, heather management, and appropriate grazing should be recognised and encouraged.
- There needs to be an understanding and of the role of LFA areas in primary food production, both as producers of store lambs and of breeding stock for other areas, and their benefits in utilising poor quality extensive pasture to produce high quality meat for human consumption.

- Proportionate and risk related regulation. The sort of young people we need to attract into hill farming are by nature practical hands on workers, who are often at odds with the culture of bureaucracy which seems to pervade our whole industry these days. Whilst we accept that regulation is necessary we believe that a more common sense, outcome based system would be more acceptable and effective than the current system.

- Policies to integrate sheep farming and tree planting. Not a major issue in Northern Ireland, although we would like to see more emphasis on the benefits of shelter to livestock when planting grants are being considered.
- Incentives and rewards to stimulate viable traditional sheep farming systems in LFAs that deliver wide public goods.

“NSA accept that hill sheep farming is always going to struggle to be profitable without public support, but we believe that this report shows the massive benefit well managed hill sheep farms are to the entire nation.

“Whether it is as food and fibre producers, enhancing landscape to encourage tourism, encouraging biodiversity, or carbon storage in upland peat soils, we believe that hill and upland sheep producers have a pivotal role in managing our upland areas for the benefit of the entire population.

“As I said at the start, there is an on-going debate about the future management of our LFAs, we hope that this report will help to take that debate forward, and contribute to it. As NSA both at a national and regional level we are very happy to engage in that debate.”

After Samuel’s presentation our Chairman invited questions from the audience which encouraged a very lively debate and discussion about NSA views for future funding and countryside management issues which will hopefully lead to NSA engagement in the development of future policy decisions.

Since the launch further developments may mean that Samuel and Northern Ireland NSA officers will be asked to deliver another presentation to The Agriculture Committee at Stormont.

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Getting the Most from Vaccinations

By Iain Richards, XLVets

Sheep vaccines have been available since the 1930's, and it could be assumed that we are using them routinely and well. However, there is evidence that their correct use has become neglected. The production of immunity in any animal is a complex process that requires a healthy animal and correct timing of primary courses and boosters.

At its simplest, immunity is the result of the body producing antibodies that will counter the infection (or toxin produced by the infection). Repeated exposure is required to maintain natural immunity and boosters (typically yearly) mimic this natural exposure. Some diseases, for example *Pasteurella* or Footrot, can require boosters immediately before the risk period. There are many aspects to consider for successful vaccination, which are discussed in more detail below:

Storage

Most vaccines are sensitive to temperature so when you are collecting vaccine, use a coolbox and take it home directly to maintain the "cold chain". Even a few minutes at a warm temperature may inactivate your vaccine. Using the vaccine

within the specified timeframe is equally important – particularly the stated time to use within, from when first opened. This should be remembered when planning any vaccination sessions.

Case example: a flock was being vaccinated on a dull, cool day, but the sun broke through whilst vaccinating the last group. In this short time the vaccine warmed up, became inactive, which resulted in most of ewes in the last group to be vaccinated aborting.

Injection Technique

A good technique, with clean functioning equipment is vital to avoid infection at the inoculation site. Multi-dose guns save a lot of effort and automatic sterilising systems, such as Sterimatic™ are simple to use and inexpensive compared with the damage that can result from an infection.

Health

Good sheep health, along with adequate nutrition and a fully functioning liver are vital for vaccines to be effective. Fluke can be a particular problem; as well as direct liver damage as a result of fluke infection; fluke can also affect a sheep's ability to create a response to a vaccine.

Vaccines produce a 'Type 1' immunity and Fluke a 'Type 2', so if there is a Type 2 response, then the Type 1 response is reduced, or absent. Therefore, with a moderate to heavy fluke burden, the vaccine will not work as well as it should. With the rise in fluke, this has to be considered in any vaccination programme.

Stress

Stress triggers a rise in the body's own steroids, which can depress the immune system. Vaccinating at weaning is convenient for us, but it causes great stress to the sheep. So although it requires extra handling, vaccinating a week before or a week after weaning will be of benefit.

Timing

Precise timing is important and will vary according to the product used and this information should form part of your regularly updated health plan.

Ewes: pregnant ewes should be given a booster for Clostridial disease and *Pasteurella* just prior to lambing. Ideally, this needs to be about four weeks before lambing so that enough antibodies are available in the colostrum to protect the



Iain Richards

lamb. However, if you have an extended lambing period, it might be wiser to split the timing of this dose, otherwise some ewes will be vaccinated too early and some too late.

Lambs: typically vaccinations should be done at 12 weeks of age, followed by a second dose 4-6 weeks later. However, if *Pasteurella* is a problem, lambs may need vaccinating from about four weeks old. The timing of these doses relates to how long the antibodies from the colostrum last in the lamb. Death from pulpy kidney is common in lambs that had no vaccination at about 10-12 weeks of age.

Boosters: if fat lambs are sold before October, they are not likely to need a booster. However, if they are kept and particularly if they are either housed or moved to winter grazing, then using a booster for *Pasteurella* prior to this is a sensible plan. There is a regular rise in pneumonia caused by *Biberstenia trehalosi* in these months, so it is worth discussing this with your vet.

Replacements: for sheep put to the tup in the year they are born; they should get a booster with the rest of the ewes prior to lambing. This will be within 12 months of their first course and all is well. However, if they breed the following

season, they will need a booster dose a year after their last injection.

It is not uncommon for these replacements to miss this dose in the late summer/early autumn, but be included with the ewes before lambing. However, this means that there has been a gap in their immunity, so they will not produce a good response and their colostrum will contain fewer antibodies. Therefore it is probably easier to give these lambs a booster at the same time as the ewe flock even though they are not lambing themselves that year.

Tups: don't forget the big lads! This is especially true if they are kept away from the main holding.

Bought-in sheep: it is common for farmers to refer to bought-in sheep as being "in the system" for the clostridial vaccines. This can be misleading so if in any doubt, it's always best to start again; the "extra" boosters will do no harm.

Other vaccines

Abortion vaccines must be given at least four weeks before mating as they can cause a high temperature that suppresses ovulation. There is some evidence of the *Chlamydomphila* vaccine causing abortions, but these cases are unusual and the vaccines still offer the

best protection against the commonest form of abortion.

The louping ill vaccine is still effective against this disease, although its availability can be a bit of a problem. Finally, footrot vaccines; they have been around for a while and are getting more attention as our understanding of footrot improves. Their use should form part of a specific lameness plan.

Planning

The variety of diseases that can be vaccinated for means that several vaccines can be in use during the year. It's vital that the timing of vaccination is planned carefully if the best use is to be made of these valuable and cost effective medicines.

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North of England Mules in Wales

'A winning combination' with Beltex rams

Some members will be aware of the press coverage north of the border following The Sheep Event where the role of the Mule was being brought into question. The NSA are keen to show that the Mule still very much has its place and breed choice is very much 'horses for courses'. The Mule is a well-established and thoroughly tried and tested sheep that works for many farms, including the one profiled here.'

North Wales isn't the first place which springs to mind when thinking about North of England Mules, but Deio and Margaret Hughes from near Caernarfon have been fitting the mule into their system since moving there in 2006, working in a shared contract farming agreement with the owner, Lord Newborough, who decided to take the farm into hand after it had been previously let out to several local farmers for grass.



Initially the farm they took over ran to 600 acres, but with more of the Glynllifon Estate coming into hand it now runs to around 1200 acres, a lot of which has been reseeded. The farm carries around 1250 breeding ewes, split between the North of England Mules and Beulah ewes too, as well as 220 Aberdeen Angus suckler cattle, including followers.

The farm, which is set on the coast just south of Caernarfon, is fully organic, and interestingly is run on a New Zealand system, which is proving rather topical at the moment in light of some recent comments.

Organic farming does tend to lend

itself to a preconceived view of beardy townies with a few acres of land telling the rest of the agricultural world how to do things, but make no mistake, Ty-Mawr totally shuns this image, and really shows the true potential of a winning combination, the North of England Mule and the Beltex as a terminal sire.

They run the Beulah ewes with the Texel and Suffolk tups but found that they couldn't get the conformation and quality they were looking for, and had noticed the North of England mules seemed to be doing a good job elsewhere so thought he would try some. It turned out to be an inspired decision.



Deio settled on using the Beltex rams over the North of England mules a few years ago as they are sharp from birth, and provide a great carcass. “We lamb everything outside, so they have to be up quickly. The Beltex lambs are easily born and suckle straight away. The mule ewe is very motherly and milks really well, in fact any triplets are kept on the sheep as they can handle them, and the ewes last well too, which is ideal for our system” he says.

The mules scan at around 190 per cent and lamb in late February / early March. They receive no supplementary feeding on the whole, with just two tonnes of Organic feed blocks supplied for the flock last year, and the lambs are finished off grass, receiving no creep feed at all, and many sold fat straight off their mothers.

Profitability

“We saw a big jump in the profitability of the flock when we started using the North of England mule and Beltex cross” notes Deio, “it’s the ideal combination that suits our system down to the ground!”

Around 50 acres a year are reseeded, using a clover ley with chicory, which is big baled whole crop the first year and used for winter feeding for the cattle, but this also provides excellent grazing for the sheep in the following years, and provides grass all year round for the ewes and lambs.

The ewes are dosed two or three times a year against Fluke and dosed after lambing with a combined fluke & worm drench.

Most lambs are sold fat from the farm on a deadweight basis with 50 lambs a week being sold through Lord Newborough’s Rhug Estate shop in Corwen which has its own cutting plant and supplies Michelin Star restaurants around the world with its organic lamb, and a 20p/kg premium is paid for the Mule/Beltex cross lambs.

Lambs start being sold from mid-May onwards, aiming for a carcass weight of around 20kg and last year were making around £5/kg or £100 a head, and with most of the mules lambing twins this leaves £200 per sheep.

Prime lambs are also sold through the local auction mart, and they are in demand with local butchers and retailers, the last batch through, late last season, were making 215p/kg for 45kg lambs not bad on a New Zealand system with low inputs, and grass finishing, which just goes to show that the Mule ewe can hold her own in any system, and combined with the Beltex sire provide a carcass and quality of meat which is sought after all around the world, not just locally!

Threat to Cobalt Feed Supplements

The European Food Safety Authority is proposing to reduce the amounts of cobalt that can be fed, through feedstuffs, to sheep. In particular it is proposed to:

- Restrict the use of cobalt compounds as additives to feed for ruminants (except milk replacer), horses and rabbits;
- Reduce the authorised total maximum cobalt content from 2 to 1 mg/kg complete feed for all species except fish
- Limit cobalt supplementation in feed for ruminants (except milk replacer), horses and rabbits to a maximum of 0.3 mg Co/kg complete feed.

This proposal has highlighted the crucial role that cobalt plays in supporting healthy and productive sheep, and while it does not look to be restricting cobalt supplementation by bolus or injection it is concerning that cobalt use is under the spotlight.

NSA would always recommend veterinary involvement, blood and forage testing, and a knowledge of mineral and trace element status of the farm and the stock – followed by correct supplementation levels, but it is clear that cobalt is a trace element that is essential for health in livestock.

Rumen function

Cobalt is converted, by rumen bacteria, to vitamin B12 in the rumen and is one of a mix of essential elements in the diet that leads to effective rumen function, appetite, internal organic function, and immune response.

Cobalt/vitamin B12 affects the production of amino acids and the ability to utilize glucose in the rumen, and Cobalt is one of a range of trace elements that are central to good health, feed utilization, parasite resistance and immunity, growth rates, productivity, and viability.

With policies and public interest focused on food security, climate change, resource use, and environment it is crucial that farmers optimize production, avoid waste, and ‘produce more from less’.

At a sheep farm level this means managing sheep to increase productivity, use less feed but more efficiently, and promote health to optimize production. In terms of climate change, as a principle, we know that greater efficiency and reduction of waste leads to a reduced

carbon footprint. These factors mean that sheep keepers need the tools available to maximize the health and performance of their sheep.

UK soils are extremely diverse in structure and base material. While the UK has regional differences in soils we also experience very localized differences with even individual farms having several different soil types.

Generally soils derived from acidic igneous rock are naturally low in cobalt, and incidences of cobalt deficiency are routinely found in parts of Scotland, Northumbria, Devon and North Wales. However, imbalances and lock ups between minerals and trace elements result in many more regions suffering from cobalt deficiency in sheep and cattle.

Clinical symptoms

Sheep diets are largely based on grass and forage and if plants cannot access cobalt then deficiencies in livestock will occur. Clinical symptoms may be observed as classical ‘pine’ where the affected lamb will lose condition, the wool will dry out and in extreme cases the lamb will die if not treated.

However, sub-acute cases will affect health and nutrition leading to inefficient use of feed and resources, an inability to maximize productivity, and a negative impact on carbon and climate change.

Farmers are often aware of local and regional cobalt deficiencies and many also routinely blood test and analyse forage to assess cobalt levels. Farmers are encouraged to take veterinary advice on supplementation levels and are very aware of the costs and risks of ‘over dosing’.

Treating the soil with cobalt salts can be effective but not all land is accessible by vehicles and there are risks of further soil mineral lock ups. The use of swards with greater plant diversity, clovers and herbs, can help through the ability of deeper rooting plants, and those with different characteristics making cobalt more available – but soil deficiencies still exist and insufficient cobalt intake is resulting in sub optimal health and performance on many UK farms that are not supplementing.

Supplementation can take the form of drenches, injections, boluses, and feed/feed blocks and it is important that farmers have a choice of solutions to a potentially serious problem.

Phil Stocker □

The Real Green Revolution

By Graham Harvey

Over the past 30 years western governments – especially those in Europe and the US – have heaped farm support into high-yield grain production. One early result was the appearance of the notorious grain mountains of the 1970s and 80s which, far from alleviating hunger, did much to undermine the development of food production in poor countries.

Today the flaws in this system have become even more apparent. A World Bank-funded investigation into global agriculture – known as IAASTD – concluded that the benefits have been unevenly distributed, with some regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, hardly benefiting at all.

Equally disturbing, it has led to widespread environmental damage that may reduce the planet's capacity to feed future generations. Growing annual grain crops like wheat over lengthy periods inevitably leads to soil damage. The land must be cultivated each year, and for long periods is left bare.

Stripped of vegetation cover, the soil's organic matter starts to burn up or oxidise, releasing carbon into the atmosphere and adding to the greenhouse gas burden. With the loss of organic matter the soil's structure is weakened so it becomes unstable and subject to erosion, either by wind or rainfall.

The world's soils are now eroding at a faster rate than at any time in history. Each year, the weight of soil washing downstream in rivers is estimated at four tonnes for every man, woman and child on the planet. For all our technology civilization continues to depend on a few centimetres of topsoil.

Ecology

Among the recommendations of the World Bank report were for agricultural technologies to be targeted – not just at high crop yields – but at protecting soils, water and forest. New food production methods will need to take more account of ecology and biodiversity. They'll also need to provide for the greater involvement of women and be more accessible to small farms.

Co-author of the IAASTD report – Professor Hans Herren – says that with current knowledge it's perfectly possible for developing countries to increase their food production by two or three times,

We now know that the real “green revolution” will be based on grazing ruminant animals, including sheep

using ecological methods. It makes no sense for western countries to further damage their soils and waste nutrients by growing grains for export.

Instead countries like Britain should develop ways of producing healthier, nutrient-rich foods by sustainable methods. This will almost certainly mean putting grassland and grazing back into arable rotations, and making better use of permanent pasture.

In many parts of the world – including Britain – grasslands and grazing animals once provided a secure and sustainable supply of meat and dairy foods. Most grassland plants are perennials – they keep growing year after year, despite being “harvested” through grazing or cutting.

The evidence is stacking up that ruminant animals – cattle and sheep mainly – grazing fresh, green pasture produce foods with less fat and more vitamins than animals shut up in yards and fed chiefly on cereals. And when the pasture happens to include herbs and indigenous plants vitamin levels rise even higher.

The same is true of healthy fats such as omega-3 that protect against many modern diseases. Cattle and sheep fed on fresh grass produce meat with up to two-thirds more omega-3s than animals on grain-based diets. Milk, too, is higher on omega-3s when cows are grazed on fresh pasture.

Perhaps the greatest benefit concerns an omega-6 fatty acid known by the initials CLA. This compound is a powerful anti-cancer agent which also protects against heart disease. It's plentiful in the meat and milk of animals grazing grass. But when even small amounts of grain are introduced into the animals' diet, it drops away rapidly in the foods they produce.

Grass fed foods

All of which adds up to a pretty open-

and-shut case in favour of grass-fed foods.

There's another, equally pressing reason for turning away from high-input grains and putting grazing pastures back into crop rotations. The shift to mass grain production has added hugely to the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Properly managed grassland could reverse the process.

Grasslands that are grazed rotationally are able to capture large amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide and lock it up safely in soil organic matter. Australian researchers estimate if the world's pasture farmers managed their grazing in this way, the amount of carbon captured could easily exceed total annual emissions.

Grassland sequesters carbon – through the growth cycles of pasture plants carbon is taken from the atmosphere and locked away in the organic matter of soil. American research over the last 20 years has shown that a great deal of carbon is stored as a material called glomalin produced by thread-like fungi in the soil called arbuscular mycorrhiza.

These fungi form intimate relations with plant roots and are extensive in grassland. They dramatically increase the plant's ability to take up moisture and many minerals and trace elements from the soil. In return grass plants supply the fungi with sugars and other compounds produced through photosynthesis.

Mixed farming

When Britain practised mixed farming far more carbon was held in the soil but over the past 30 years soil organic matter levels have dropped releasing extra carbon into the atmosphere.

It used to be thought that soil was a diminishing resource and that new soil took centuries to create. But over the past decade an Australian soil scientist called Christine Jones has shown that by using pasture and the correct grazing methods

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Mixed Trends for the Autumn

David Pritchard, Operations Director of Livestock Auctioneer's Harrison & Hetherington comments on what the sheep and lamb markets have in store for the next 12 months.

Coming out of a warmer and dryer than average winter, farmers and councils alike were both living in fear of drought through the summer months. That threat diminished quickly as the rain began to pour, and across the country rainfall has been well in excess of our expected summer averages.

This has certainly been one of the very worst springs and summers I have ever known. From April onwards, the months have been drastic for farmers who have had to battle with the weather constantly. As a result of this we have seen some detrimental effects on prime lamb growth rates, harvesting and crop yields.

At the time of writing this I am pleased to say that at least lamb prices are almost in line with last year's and the pedigree sector is still a picture of health.

However, there are twelve per cent less lambs here in the North of England coming onto the market due to the weather. Lambs are actually losing condition and are in dire need of some warmth on their backs, as is the grass. Farmers are seeing lamb weights about a month off from where they should be at normal trading time.

Year ahead

In looking at the year ahead things are still relatively uncertain due to a number of factors.

The poor hogget market seen in the spring has resulted in a distinct over supply of shearlings for this autumn. In turn this may see suppression in the value of breeding sheep.

Threatening the next year's livestock trading and profitability are the export



markets and increasing feed costs. Traditional export markets such as France and Spain appear uneasy as the Euro remains unstable. Over the last 12 months we have seen the exchange rate change dramatically. The pound is approximately 25 per cent stronger against the euro than this time last year and this has resulted in decreased value of the export carcass, so when looking down the line there may be a considerably weaker export market.

The strength of the Euro plays a much larger role in the UK's Agricultural Economy than most people perhaps realise. Machinery, fertilisers and even some grains are imported from the European Union. The strength of the Euro depicts the cost and availability of these commodities to UK farmers and it is completely out of our hands.

Supermarkets

English supermarkets are continuing to import New Zealand Lamb and at present it makes up around 30 per cent of lamb

on supermarket shelves. It certainly leads me to question why our restaurants and supermarkets can demand such a high price for a commodity that can be more easily sourced from our own land.

It certainly takes the shine of trying to sell end of year hoggets into the meat market. There does appear to be a slight reduction in imported carcasses though, which means British lamb is nudging its way across the supermarket counter more frequently.

Feed costs

Early indications suggest that feed costs are going to be significantly higher than last year, again this is weather related. Worldwide there are reports of lower than average yields for grain. This applies the same for hay and silage with low yields and poor quality.

Despite these woes we are seeing some silver linings among all of those clouds.

The pedigree sector is holding up and we recently held the largest ever sale of Beltex sheep in the UK. On a whole most pedigree sales have seen more entries. Early breeding ewe sale prices are almost in line with last year and cast ewe values is still holding up.

To conclude my advice for farmers is to ensure that they keep to their breeding patterns, and make certain that their lambs are in prime condition for marketing purposes. It is also very important to keep in contact with your auctioneer to ensure that they are aware of your stock availability and that you keep yourself up to date with market trends.

More information from: David Pritchard, Operations Director, Harrison & Hetherington, Tel: 01228 406230 Email: david.pritchard@borderway.com www.harrisonandhetherington.co.uk

Continued from page 28

you can build up several centimetres of topsoil in a very short time, even on the weathered and fragile soils of Australia.

Maintaining Britain's permanent grasslands should also be considered part of the solution, not the problem. Britain has some of the most suitable land for grazing livestock anywhere in the world and should be a net exporter of beef and sheep meat, not the major importer it has become.

The net benefit of keeping beef cattle or sheep on grassland farms compared with ploughing the land to grow grain is equivalent to about one tonne of carbon dioxide per hectare every year for the next 100 years.

The high-input grain systems developed in the Sixties were once thought to be the answer to the world's food problems. We now know that the real "green revolution" will be based

on grazing ruminant animals, including sheep. It could restore, not just our food supply, but the health of the planet.

Graham Harvey is a scriptwriter and former agricultural editor for the long running BBC Radio 4 series The Archers. He has also authored several farming and food related books, and is co-founder of Pasture Promise TV. Find out more at www.pasturepromise.tv

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Sheep Scab

Protect your flock from Sheep Scab, Lice and Other Winter Ectoparasites

This is the second in a series of two articles on blowfly control by leading parasitologist Dr Peter Bates and Lesley Stubbings of SCOPS.

Sheep can be attacked by a number of parasites that live and feed on their skin (ectoparasites) throughout the year, causing serious health problems and production losses. During the winter, scab and lice are the major culprits, but the threat posed by others such as ticks and biting midges should not be ignored. In this article we will discuss these parasites and give advice on how to keep them under control.

Sheep Scab

Sheep scab is caused by mites (*Psoroptes ovis*) and is much more common in the winter months. Sheep have a longer fleece, which, as well as protecting from the cold and wet, also provides scab mites with their optimum temperature and humidity on the skin of the sheep causing them to breed and increase in number.

While scab may be endemic in some flocks, for most an outbreak is the result of contact with scabby sheep from elsewhere. The two main culprits of mite transmission, accounting for over 70 per cent of cases, are sheep movements and contact with infected neighbouring flocks or strays.

As it can take up to six months for clinical scab to show itself, it is therefore impossible to tell whether in-coming sheep have scab or not. By the time you see the first clinical signs it will be too late as between 8 per cent and 60 per cent of the flock will already be affected.

Stopping scab mites getting into the flock is therefore the key to prevention and that means quarantining all in-coming sheep and treating them appropriately.

Which sheep are a risk to bringing in disease? All in-coming sheep are a risk; ewes, ewe lambs, rams and stores and any returning from keep. They may have subclinical infestation or simply pick mites up while in a market or on a lorry. Replacement rams are a particular worry because they are often bought and turned out almost immediately after transport or returning from market.

What treatment should be given? Against scab you can dip in an OP (which will also deal with lice) or give an injection of a 3-ML product (which will

Sheep Ectoparasiticides							
Active Ingredient	Administration	Chemical Group	Meat Withdrawal (Days)	Scab	Lice	Ticks	Strike
Diazinon 60%	Plunge Dip	OP	70	C/P	C/P	C/P	C/P
Diazinon 62%	Plunge Dip	OP	70	C/P	C/P	C/P	C/P
Dicyclanil 5%	Pour-on	IGR	40	-	-	-	P
Dicyclanil 1.25%	Pour-on	IGR	7	-	-	-	P
Cypermethrin 1.25%	Pour-on	SP	8	-	C/P	C/P	C/P
Alphacypermethrin 12.5%	Pour-on	SP	49	-	C/P	C/P	C/P
Deltamethrin 1%	Spot-On	SP	35	-	C	C	C
Cyromazine 6%	Pour-on	IGR	28	-	-	-	P
Moxidectin 1%	Injection	ML	70	C/P	-	-	-
Moxidectin 2%	Injection	ML	104	C/P	-	-	-
Doramectin 1%	Injection	ML	63	C	-	-	-
Ivermectin 1%	Injection	ML	37	C	-	-	-

<http://www.noahcompendium.co.uk> 20th April 2012

OP = organophosphate, IGR = Insect Growth Regulator, SP = Synthetic Pyrethroid, ML = Macrocytic Lactone, C = Curative, P = Protective

not cover lice). SCOPS advice is to give an injection of 1% moxidectin to treat for scab and also quarantine drench with monepantel (ZOLVIX®) to kill all worms and prevent resistance being brought in. For further information on quarantine recommendations visit www.scops.org.uk

How long should quarantine be for?

A minimum of three weeks in quarantine will allow time to check out a number of possible threats, including sheep scab. It should also be borne in mind that the first 48 hours they need to be yarded while they are treated, and then turned out onto pasture which keeps them isolated from the flock but has also carried sheep this season; this will slow down the build-up of resistant worms.

What else can be done to reduce the risk? The risk from neighbours and strays can be minimised by making sure that fencing is in good condition and adding double fences on particularly vulnerable boundaries. Good padlocks on roadside gates are the best way to stop well meaning people opening them to put strays in off the road.

Chewing Lice

Chewing lice (*Bovicola ovis*) also thrive in the winter with their numbers increasing from September and peaking in January and February. They feed on loose skin scurf and bacteria on the skin surface and can survive for over 17 days off the sheep. Numbers decline (but do not disappear) during the summer, with



Sheep with scab are rarely this obvious shearing only removing up to 66 per cent of the active lice.

Transmission is through direct (and prolonged) contact with infested sheep, e.g. at lambing time, in housed sheep or when closely packed in transport over long distances, and it takes 5-6 months for newly infested sheep to develop clinical symptoms. Infestations will spread slowly throughout flocks and lice are not normally a problem for fit, healthy sheep. However, sick animals or those in poor condition can carry large numbers of lice so louse numbers can be an indicator of other, more serious, health issues.

Diagnosis and treatment

In the face of a suspected outbreak the most important thing to do first is to get a diagnosis from your vet. The symptoms of sheep scab and lice infestation are very similar; intense itching and rubbing

at the coat, with hair loss when severe, can be tell-tale signs of either parasite. As a result the two are often confused, leading to ineffective treatment as the common choice of synthetic pyrethroid (SP) pour-on products will only effectively treat lice.

The risk of over-use of these chemical products could also increase the risk of resistance developing to all parasites they treat so a correct diagnosis is essential.

The table opposite shows the various product choices available for the treatment and control of scab and lice.

Ticks

Unlike scab mites and lice, which are permanent ectoparasites living within the fleece, ticks spend much of their life off the sheep living in undergrowth; the thicker the vegetation the greater the tick burden. This also makes them vulnerable to the weather.

The main tick seen on sheep in the UK is *Ixodes ricinus*. When the relative humidity falls below 80 per cent for a prolonged period, or if there is flooding or a harsh winter their numbers will fall, however conversely, significant numbers of adult ticks can still be active well into November if the weather is cool and humid. In mild winters, large numbers of *Ixodes* sp. ticks can survive, causing problems for ewes and lambs the following spring.

Another species of tick, *Dermacentor reticulatus*, is also spreading in England and Wales. These ticks are notably active during the winter, feeding in the woolled areas of the sheep and their bite can be very irritating, resulting in the sheep rubbing and scratching which can also be confused with sheep scab or lice.

Ticks can spread a variety of diseases in sheep such as Tick-borne fever, Louping ill or Tick pyaemia; these can lead to high flock morbidity or even death in severe cases, so it is important to employ measures to reduce the chance of disease spread. 2012 has been a high challenge year to date with ticks being seen in many previously unpopulated areas, so as the winter months approach, farmers should remain vigilant to the risk and treat appropriately. The SP Crovect® (cypermethrin) is a good choice, and has a persistent kill effect on ticks for 10 weeks making it useful to aid in the prevention of tick borne disease.

Biting midges

Another ectoparasite of importance are biting midges (*Culicoides* sp.). These are the vectors for **Schmallenberg**

Virus (SBV), the newly emerged disease affecting sheep and cattle in the UK which causes serious deformities in lambs and calves.

Midges are active throughout the summer period and can be active as late as December with activity peaking in May to October. While winter conditions generally kill adult midges, some larvae can survive in protected breeding sites, continuing to develop, particularly in warmer winters in the south of the UK. The occasional female midge may even actively feed during the winter months.

It has been suggested that treating ewes with an SP pour-on, at tugging with repeated treatments in early pregnancy could reduce the transmission of SBV. While laboratory studies have shown that SP products can repel and kill up to 100 per cent of midges for seven days, efficacy then declines quickly with longer times taken to kill meaning midges may still feed and transmit SBV before they die.

So, while they may be one tool in the box, these products should not be relied upon to prevent spread. There is also a risk that blanket treatments with SP pour-ons could lead to populations of lice and ticks

Engorged female Ixodes ricinus tick

that are resistant, so they should be used judiciously. The level of risk will depend on where you are. In areas that were affected in 2011 many ewes will have a degree of immunity and the risk for infection in these areas may be reduced. Conversely, areas on the border of the infected areas, and those in previously unaffected areas are at higher risk and measures should be considered to reduce the chance of infection.

Options for control measures focus on avoiding midge bites during the main risk period, (between 25 and 63 days of pregnancy for ewes). Delaying tugging may be an option and/or splitting tugging so not all ewes are in the at risk period at the same stage. For further information you can visit <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/a-z/schmallenberg-virus/>

What is Sheep Scab?

The scabby lesion seen on scab infested sheep is not caused directly by the feeding of the mite, but is the result of an allergic reaction by the sheep to the mite faeces. The exudate resulting from the allergic reaction provides food for the mites. There is a pronounced sub-clinical



All in-coming sheep are a threat

period as the allergic reaction develops and mite numbers (and their faeces) slowly increase, during which time the sheep can appear completely normal, with no overt signs of disease. This sub-clinical phase can be as short as three weeks or as long as six months. Many factors influence its duration and the net result is that apparently normal sheep are purchased, sold and/or moved around the country that are actually infested with scab mites.

Scab mites can only survive for about 16 days off the sheep but *Psoroptes* mites can also inhabit the ear canal (close to the ear drum), with no obvious signs of infestation. There is strong evidence that, given the right "triggers", ear mites are the cause of spontaneous outbreaks of scab within closed flocks.

Key points

- Assume all incoming sheep have sheep scab and resistant worms – remember you cannot tell by looking at them
- Quarantine and treat all sheep according to SCOPS guidance
- Ensure fencing is effective and well maintained. Add padlocks to road side gates.
- Get a diagnosis – ask your vet to examine any suspected cases. Treat with the correct product - according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- If lice is diagnosed then treat with an SP pour-on (try to wait until the sheep have been shorn for maximum efficacy if possible), or dip in an OP
- Be vigilant for ticks this Autumn and treat appropriately

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Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep

Getting Flock Priorities Right

Better safe than sorry says Lesley Stubbings

Late summer and autumn is when a large number of sheep movements take place around the country. Breeding ewes and rams, ewe lambs and store lambs are moved in their thousands and with them comes the risk that they are carrying hidden disease, including parasites such as sheep scab, lice, fluke and resistant roundworms.

It is at this stage of the year that flocks are at their most vulnerable yet survey after survey shows that very few sheep farmers quarantine in-coming sheep and even fewer treat them to make sure that they are clear of these problems before they are allowed to come into contact with the rest of the flock.

For example sheep scab can take up to six months to show itself as clinical scab lesions, by which time up to 60 per cent of the sheep that have been in contact can be affected. In heavily pregnant or lactating ewes the net result can be devastating.

To prevent the risks posed by in-coming sheep there are three steps sheep farmers need to follow:

- Yard / house on arrival for 24-48 hours
- Treat them all* against scab and resistant worms – see options in the table below
- Turn them out to dirty (carried sheep this season) pasture, but keep them separate from the rest of the flock for at least three weeks, longer if possible.

The principle the SCOPS recommendation is based on is that giving two broad spectrum anthelmintics

Table - Quarantine treatment options

Monepantel -4-AD group (Zolvix™) + an injection of 1% moxidectin*	Dual Active - 3-ML + 5 SI groups (Startect™) + OP dip*
<i>*If Footvax is used then the moxidectin 1% can be replaced by either 2% moxidectin or Doramectin OR moxidectin drench + OP dip.</i>	<i>*An endectocide is currently not recommended if the dual active is used. The OP must be a plunge dip.</i>

Download the new SCOPS 'Know Your Anthelmintics' leaflet at www.scops.org.uk
 # In the case of store lambs withdrawal periods can be an issue and the only option is to make sure they are kept away from any breeding ewes, including avoiding any contact with vehicles, equipment etc.

which have the least chance of resistant worms in the population will ensure the proportion of worms killed will be as close to 100 per cent as possible avoiding bringing resistant worms on to the farm. SCOPS also strongly recommends that all# sheep are treated against sheep scab in quarantine.

Offsetting costs

The treatments above are not cheap and take a little time to plan properly, which probably explains why many sheep farmers don't bother and then run into problems later in the year. In reality, the cost and effort can be largely offset if they minimise their treatment of the flock pre-tupping.

For many years, it was standard practice to worm ewes in the run up to tupping. The rationale behind this is vague, but it was probably linked to the days when we had clean grazing (new leys or cattle/conservation) and farmers wanted to keep the worm burden low for the following spring.

Nowadays such pastures are rare and of course we now also recognise that such practices accelerate the development of anthelmintic resistance (AR) because the 'clean' grazing is populated with resistant worms only. The fact is that there is no evidence to suggest that worming fit, healthy ewes pre-tupping has any positive effect on lambing performance.

Mature ewes in good condition do not

benefit from treatment and we may even be doing them a disservice by removing the small number of worms they are carrying, because they need these to keep their immune system tuned.

The response in terms of fertility is due to the increase in the plane of nutrition achieved by putting them on the flushing grass rather than any reduction in worm burden.

The only ewes that may benefit from worming are those whose immune status may be less than 100 per cent. For example, immature ewes (shearlings or ewe lambs) or those that are in low body condition.

The exception to this is on farms with a history of Haemonchosis. These farms should be monitoring carefully and may need to consider a treatment for these worms. If so, they can use closantel (which is also a flukicide) as a narrow spectrum product, avoiding over-use of the broad spectrum groups.

It is also worth remembering that the full quarantine treatment would also remove *Haemonchus contortus* which it itself is a major bonus in addition to protection against resistant worms and scab.

In the next issue SCOPS will provide an update of the latest advice on fluke following a workshop which took place on 8/9th August. Check the website www.scops.org.uk meanwhile for information





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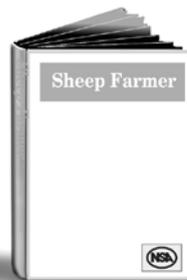
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