

Ewbol

Productive
Healthy
Profitable

Make sure your ewes and lambs
get the best start by feeding
BOCM PAULS Ewbol range.



the **total** feed business

08457 22 88 53
www.bocmpauls.co.uk
info@bocmpauls.co.uk

A ForFarmers Company



Grow your future now

The **BENEFITS** of feeding **BOCM PAULS Ewbol** range:

- High energy** → Reduce twin lamb disease
- Quality protein** → Improve lamb growth rates
- ExtraGuard** → Improve lamb survival & vigour
-  → Increase fibre digestibility



Premier Sheep Drench

Not all mineral drenches are the same

For the best start in life, drench 4 - 6 weeks prior to lambing



For more information please contact Jonathan Guy

T : 01886 880482 M : 07866 607466 E : jganimalhealth@aol.com W : www.jganimalhealth.com

Sheep Farmer

Vol. 32, No 1

January/February 2013

ISSN 0141-2434

A Shepherd Publication

Published by

Shepherd Publishing Ltd
The Sheep Centre, Malvern,
Worcestershire WR13 6PH
Tel: 01684 565533
Fax: 01684 565577
e-mail: info@shepherdpublishing.co.uk



Editor:

Peter Reynolds

Editorial Assistant:

Jill Smith

Consultant Editor:

Phil Stocker, NSA CEO

Designer:

Hannah Thorley BA (Hons)

Publisher:

Howard Venters



An independent body representing the interests of UK sheep producers.

Chairman John Geldard FRAGS
Chief Executive Phil Stocker

NSA, The Sheep Centre, Malvern,
Worcs WR13 6PH.

Tel: 01684 892661 Fax: 01684 892663
e-mail: enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk
website: www.nationalsheep.org.uk

A Company Limited by Guarantee.
Registered in England No. 37818.
Registered Charity No: 249255
Charity registered in Scotland SC042853.
VAT No: 273 3469 44

Shepherd Publishing Ltd gives notice that no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior consent of the publishers.

Every care is taken when compiling editorial and advertisements and the publishers can accept no responsibility for errors and omissions arising from publication. Views expressed and information contained in Sheep Farmer are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the National Sheep Association who cannot therefore be held responsible for any reason arising therefrom. Neither the Association, the Publisher nor the Editor endorses any services or products advertised in this issue.

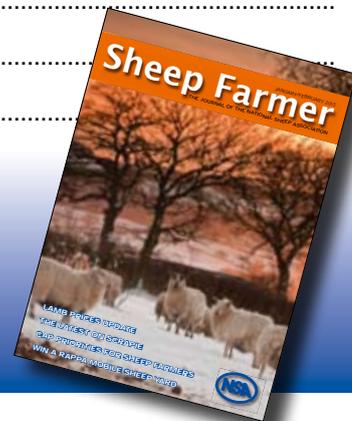
Paper is FSC® certified. It is sourced from responsibly managed forests.



MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C017177

CONTENTS

Phil Stocker Writes...	2
Chairman's Update	3
Regional Reports	4
Sheep Health & Welfare Conference	7
New Competition for NSA Members	8
NSA Promotes New Health Scheme	9
CAP: A European Perspective	10
Where is the Lamb Price Going?	12
Competition Vital for Lamb Price	13
Update on Electronic Eartags	14
More Transport Advice	15
100 Years of Knowledge Transfer	16
New Zealand Genetics in Northern Ireland	17
The Cost of Orf	18
Scrapie - It's Down But Not Out	20
Sheep Research Goes Global	22
Veterinary Matters: Infectious Abortion in Sheep	24
Cultural Control of Liver Fluke	25
British Wool Marketing Board	26
Breed Society Directory	27
Classifieds	28



Board Chairman

John Geldard FRAgS
The Sheep Centre
Malvern
Worcestershire
WR13 6PH
Tel: 01684 892661
Fax: 01684 892663

Central region

Chairman Bob Payne - Sheffield
Tel: 01142 883241
bobandanne@handbanktexels.wanadoo.co.uk

Secretary Anne Payne - Sheffield
Tel: 01142 883241
bobandanne@handbanktexels.wanadoo.co.uk

Cymru Wales region

Chairman David Pittendreigh
Carmarthenshire
Tel: 01559 395372
monica.pittendreigh8@gmail.com

Secretary Mrs Helen Davies - Powys
Tel/Fax: 01938 590535
helen@nationalsheep.org.uk

Eastern region

Chairman Andrew Foulds - Norfolk
Tel: 01842 890828
andrew.foulds@elveden.com

Secretary Jonathan Barber - Norfolk
Tel: 01953 607860
Fax: 01953 607626

Marches region

Chairman Nick Davies
Tel: 07818 096647
marches@nationalsheep.org

Secretary Angela Weston - Gloucestershire
Tel: 01454 260220
angelaweston1@o2.co.uk

Northern region

Chairman Geoff Lawn
Tel: 01756 793165
booking.nonegobye@virgin.net

Secretary Mrs Julie A Sedgewick - Co. Durham
Tel: 01325 314650
Mob: 07836 773888
jas@nationalsheep.org.uk

Northern Ireland region

Chairman Maurice McHenry
Tel: 02820 762093
mauricemhenry@hotmail.com

Secretary Edward Adamson - Co. Antrim
Tel/Fax: 028 9336 6225
edward.adamson1@virgin.net

Scottish region

Chairman Jim Sinclair - Midlothian
Tel: 01875 835232
jamessinclair20@tiscali.co.uk

Secretary George Milne - Fife
Tel: 01334 472403
Fax: 01334 475406

South East region

Chairman Andrew Barr
Tel: 01273 858544
Mob: 07768 867124
a.baabaa@hotmail.co.uk

Secretary Bob Blanden
Tel: 01666 860308
Mob: 07860689391
blanden@btinternet.com

South West region

Chairman Robert Jordan
Tel: 01647 433912
robertjordan756@btinternet.com

Secretary Sue Martyn - Cornwall
Tel: 01409 271385
suem@nationalsheep.org.uk

Phil Stocker Writes...

Membership Matters

Welcome to the first Sheep Farmer magazine of 2013 – and ideal opportunity for me to wish all members a very happy and prosperous year ahead. Let's hope the year in front is better than the one behind and, as usual, we will need a mix of good fortune and good farming to see us through.

Farmers are better than most at thinking long term – the old saying 'live as though you will die tomorrow and farm as though you'll live forever' probably comes from a feeling of permanent association with the land and the understanding that we are just one small part of a huge ecological event.

But even farmers are pushed towards short term thinking and actions – shorter term land lets don't help, and our need to operate in a modern high tech and economically driven world doesn't either.

Sheep farming, like other land based enterprises, is a cyclical activity. It's not mechanical or predictable in terms of inputs and outputs – we might like it to be but working in an unpredictable environment and almost as unpredictable a market place means that we have to look at success over long periods of time rather than simply a one-year basis.

To use the good years to enable us to cover the worse ones is essential, and to stomach months of low lamb prices when we know winter costs are going to be high and reports of high losses to Schmallenberg (SBV) in many early lambing flocks are sobering examples of this.

To counter this we have to be working on many fronts. As a few examples:-

- We have to press the market to support viable returns. And we have to defend food inflation as simply getting back to a realistic situation – and one that will be seen more and more if our UK administration gets what it wants in relation to CAP budget cutbacks.
- We have to strive for efficiency in flock management, feeding, health management and disease control.

- We have to create the right policy framework, to reduce the burdens of bureaucracy, to incentivise good practice and good outcomes, and to make the case for the delivery of wide public goods from good farming that includes the positive biodiversity outcomes from sheep farming.



In terms of the last two points above, good sheep health and avoiding disease are arguably

the most important fronts we should be concentrating on. This is why NSA invests heavily in this area of work, why our partnership with Moredun and others in the sheep veterinary world is so important, why we were delighted to support SHAWG in delivering the sheep health and welfare conference in November, and why we are intent on supporting SCOPS and the essential messages it is offering to ensure long term effective parasite control (a visit to the SCOPS web site should be compulsory for all sheep farmers).

Agri-health scheme

It is also why we have developed our proposals for an 'Agri-health Scheme' to incentivise and reward good health and disease control management. This scheme would bring many public benefits and, over time, significantly change attitudes to positive sheep health management. Find out more on page 9.

Finally I want to mention the English sheep movements database and a little more on SBV. Both situations are fast-moving and likely to change between me writing this and you reading it. If you can, keep an eye on the NSA website and make sure you are on the list to receive our weekly e-news update (email membership@nationalsheep.org.uk if you're not currently getting it).

Movements database

For the movements database we are desperately disappointed that the tender process turned out in the way it did with Defra being forced to restart proceedings. But that is where we are and all we can

Chairman's Update

John Geldard Writes ...

It is now 12 months since we started with a new structure for the NSA, which has been both a challenge and an opportunity for the organisation.

Chief Executive Phil Stocker had been in post for only five weeks before we started and he and his team have done an incredible job in dealing with and implementing the structure according to plan. It came into being on 1st January 2012, when I was elected as Chairman and chairmen of the other committees were also put into place.

We don't claim to have got everything perfect, and we're fully aware that one or two items need tweaking, however we are always pleased to hear from anybody who had any suggestions or concerns.

Away from NSA concerns, the start of the year saw a rather turbulent trade for spring lambs and late season lambs, which was different to 2011. The over-enthusiasm of people from the previous year's store trade created rather an over-supply, and then an over-supply of overweight late season lambs that were out of spec, which without doubt resulted in a rather depressed trade in their first two or three months of the spring lamb trade.

However, as we progressed through the summer things were extremely stable and very much in line with the previous year's prices, which was quite encouraging considering the reduction in skin prices and the exchange rate that we were dealing with.

Lamb prices

Prices were possibly kept in positive mode because of the fact of the weather and that lambs were not coming forward throughout the year as fast as they had in 2011, which undoubtedly caught up with us as we got into the autumn months,

where the desperation of the weather in many parts of the country drove people to put lambs onto the market in massive numbers. A lot of store lambs came forward, and under-finished lambs went through the prime markets, which certainly put considerable pressure on the trade and unfortunately caused it to dip below the previous year's prices.

This was inevitable with people facing a winter with high feed prices; in many cases low forage stocks, and real concerns as to what the winter ahead had in mind. As we are currently not half way through the winter, we still have a lot to experience. However early spring comes it will be none too early for many.

Whilst writing this in the latter weeks of 2012, I am optimistic that we will see considerable improvement in our lamb and cull ewe trade and that the results of this winter, in my mind, will be the opposite to what we saw 12 months ago. Some people sometimes criticise me for being optimistic but the day I'm not optimist, I hope somebody shoots me!

Breeding sheep

The positive part of our industry must, without doubt, be our breeding sheep sales. Breeding sheep started off very similar to the trade in August 2011, but quickly gained momentum and generally the prices for ewes, shearing and ewe lambs were equal to the previous year's trade and, in many cases, even better. This undoubtedly gave a boost of enthusiasm and optimism to our industry. The national flock has come to such a low ebb that demand now clearly rules.

What we now need to do is get our politicians in tune with what is happening to our food supply base in all sectors of

the industry. They must recognise that shortage of supply is quite possible and some sort of financial incentive is needed to encourage farmers to keep livestock – more on this elsewhere in the magazine, but I strongly believe there is an opportunity for us to influence the direction of CAP reform and do something to try and get something back from the modulation money taken away for us for environmental fantasies, get it back to grass roots and farm production, who that has always been the best way to produce real environmental benefits.

In the NSA office we were delighted to welcome Joanne Pugh (Senior Communications Officer) and Charlotte Underwood (Membership Recruitment Officer) to the team in autumn 2012. Charlotte's role is a new position and the result of a vision, shared by myself and Phil and other NSA members, to try and reach out to people who are not yet NSA members – quite possibly, simply because they'd never been asked before.

Look out for information on our new Rappa campaign, which is a great opportunity for new and existing members alike.

The whole team in the office is worked together well under Phil, and together with the various committees and regional secretaries, are all making a tremendous contribution to drive NSA forward for the future.

The work of Head Office and the regions saw four outstanding events held in 2012 and I am looking forward to a similar level of quality this year too. I look forward to seeing many of you at the first event of the year, the Central Regional Winter Fair on 24th January, and in the meantime wish you all the very best for 2013

John Geldard □

do is look forward. My view, expressed to Defra and Ministers, is that to simply re-launch the tender now is wrong – we should take this opportunity to go back, recheck where we are and agree how best to proceed. It is clear to me that opinions and views understandably changed during the tendering process and industry and officials should do more to understand the long term implications of any decisions taken now.

On SBV, all our thoughts are with many early lambers who experienced

a far higher impact than expected or predicted. With losses as high as 60 per cent in extreme cases, and 30 per cent not uncommon, this will not be a low impact disease for those affected.

It is too early to know what will happen in the main lambing season, especially as low scanning results could also have been caused by liver fluke and less than ideal nutrition. All we can hope is that midge activity reduced as the tupping season progressed.

Developments with a vaccine could also

change quickly, but the approval process was still underway at the time of writing, with the manufacturers responding to VMDs requests for further information.

What we see this lambing season will undoubtedly influence future vaccine use decisions for next season, but in the knowledge that the vaccine won't help sheep farmers for this lambing crop, cattle farmers will still be keen to see the vaccine available as soon as possible.

Phil Stocker □



REGIONAL REPORTS

Cymru/Wales

A recent highlight came at the Welsh Winter Fair in November, when the NSACymru/Wales Achievement Award went to Catherine Nakielny, for her achievements as a farming representative (for NSA and FUW), farmer and Nuffield Scholar. Catherine thoroughly deserves the award for her hard work and positive attitude.

On accepting it she said: "It is a good time for sheep because they are very good at turning forage into meat, which underlines the whole argument with regard to food production and the environment. I think they can be a relatively low cost system of production and they obviously add lots to biodiversity and the environment."

Other activity including attending the launch of the Wales Upland Forum's report early in December, where we welcomed comments Deputy Minister Alun Davies made in support of Welsh upland areas and the vital role they play in the economy and make-up of Wales.

The recommendations in the report will be taken into consideration when responding to the next round of CAP and RDP consultations, which will come out early in the New Year. The Minister hinted that he would appreciate responses being evidence-based, so please bear this in mind when responding!

NSA Cymru/Wales will hold a series of Road Shows at the end of January in conjunction with the British Wool Marketing Board and Dunbia. A flyer has been enclosed for Welsh members, but



Chairman David Pittendreich presents Catherine Nakielny with her award

Upcoming AGM dates

- NSA Cymru/Wales. 18th February. 2pm. Royal Welsh Showground.
- NSA Scotland AGM and Dinner. 2nd March. Dunblane Hydro, Stirling. £30+VAT.
- NSA SW. 20th February. 7.30pm. Exeter Livestock Centre.

Details at www.nationalsheep.org.uk, or contact your regional chairman/secretary. Dates of events later in the year, including the autumn ram sales, can also be found on the website.

details are also on the NSA website.

I think 2012 has been a year we will all like to forget, as trade has been depressed of late and not helped by increased input costs, bad weather and the impact of Schmallerberg, all of which may take their toll on the season ahead. However, we have to look forward with optimism. Surely the weather can't be as bad, there will be a vaccine for Schmallerberg, trade will improve and with increased innovation input costs will be lowered – and in Wales we have NSA Welsh Sheep on 21st May 2013 to look forward to. Please put the date in your diary.

Helen Davies, Secretary

Scotland

Many stakeholder meetings have been attended over the last couple of months, which include CAP reform, animal health and welfare and climate change. George Milne also recently attended a CAP reform conference 'Next steps and future of the UK farming industry' in London. The morning session was opened and chaired by Tim Farron MP, who is chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on hill farming. Then greening issues and ensuring the best deal for the UK was debated by a panel including Julie Girlning MEP (Conservative spokesman on agriculture and rural affairs) and William Bain MP (Shadow Minister for the environment)

A presentation was also given by Martin Nesbit (director of the EU and international department for environment and rural affairs) before Neil Parish MP chaired a debate on the challenges for the reform processes under CAP.

The most important point to come out of the afternoon debate was that the livestock sector in England and Wales would not be profitable without the current support levels paid out in pillar one. George Milne took the opportunity to emphasise this during question time at the end.

Chairman Jimmy Sinclair and George Milne have also met with Alex Fergusson

MEP to discuss a number of pressing issues concerning the sheep sector, from the current abysmal lamb price to what influence Alex Fergusson may have within the coalition government to assist in securing the current level of SFP through pillar one.

In other regional news, NSA Scotland can confirm a sheep event will take place in the North of Scotland – NSA Highland Sheep – on Thursday 30th May. This event has been specifically arranged to allow the NSA Scottish region to communicate with their members and other sheep breeders in the more northern areas of Scotland. The Scottish region also intends to hold Road Show meetings in February (dates TBC) and plans are well underway for the NSA Royal Highland Show marquee 2013, with a full timetable taking shape to keep everyone entertained.

Caroline Orr, Regional Secretary.

Central

Without wanting to dwell on the extremes of wet weather and the appalling consequences for farmers (we're now resigned to the likelihood of developing webbed feet and attaching floats to tractors!) our AGM took place in November on a – thankfully – dry night.

There was a good turnout and a lively atmosphere, which was a fitting occasion for honouring Geoff Henson, our respected and long-serving (or should I say, long-suffering!) treasurer of 22 years. To mark his retirement he was presented with a shepherd's crook, decorated with an NSA tie and a fluffy sheep, to remind him of his years of service with NSA. Thank you Geoff for everything.

Our new treasurer is Helen Battye, daughter of a local farmer, who is also treasurer for Hope Valley Young Farmers. Chairperson and Secretary remain the same – Bob and Anne Payne – but for the first time in many years we now have a Deputy Chair – Matt Bagley.

Bob was re-appointed to the Board of Directors and Trustees, and our English Committee reps remain the same – Alastair Sneddon, Matt Bagley and Charles Sercombe. Once again the meeting voted for an open committee, which any members from Central Region are welcome to attend.

Following the AGM, our newest members of the NSA Malvern team, Charlotte Underwood and Joanne Pugh, outlined their new roles – both speakers were well received.

There has been a good deal of work going on in the background for the past few months in preparation for Central Region's second Winter Fair, due to take



Geoff Henson, retiring Treasurer, Central Region

place on Thursday 24th January 2013 at Bakewell Market once more.

Please put it in your diary and join us for what promises to be another interesting mix of trade stands, breed society stands, seminars on topical issues and an assortment of competitions, in particular those for young people. Members and our organisers, Helen Davies and Dy Webb, have done a sterling job but even they can't order the weather – so come in your thermal underwear, or even better, wear wool! We look forward to seeing you there.

Anne Payne, Regional Manager

Northern Ireland

Now 2013 is up and running may I wish you all a prosperous new year – if you're prosperous you are likely to be happy as well! When we look back at our 2012 weather in NI then 2013 can only get better.

We tagged our AGM onto the Centenary Sheep Conference in December, which has some very good speakers being positive about the future if we focus on doing the sheep job a bit better and use all the advice and data we can find (report on page 16).

At the AGM itself, all office bearers and committee remained the same as last year. We also heard from Parklands Vet Group, who offering the chance to win a free Lantra-approved lambing course to six NSA NI members. Winners will be announced very soon.

We have been advising DARD officials of the NSA proposals regarding an animal health plan where sheep farmers should be rewarded under pillar two RDP for taking positive steps to ensure

a more healthy flock. Let's hope they see the sense and reasoning behind the proposals. (More on page 9).

The end of January sees a series of meetings held in conjunction with AFBI/ Agrisearch on the subject of winter feeding ewes, quality of forage and comparing value of purchased feeds. The 2012 summer is responsible for a lot of the failings in our winter forage quality and quantity this winter and these meetings will be relevant to most of us.

As lambing approaches so too does the possibility of Schmallenburg having infected some of our flocks in late summer. Any suspicions or malformed lambs should be reported to your local DVO, as this will help plot and monitor the virus.

**Edward Adamson,
Regional Manager**

South East

Firstly, a very Happy New Year to all members. Secondly, looking back to 2012, we held our AGM in November with Chris Hodgkins in the Chair for the last time. Our new Chairman is Andrew Barr from near Lewes, East Sussex. We also welcomed two new committee members – Marie Prebble (runner-up in the Young Shepherds Competition at South Sheep) from near Dover and Phil Hart from Plumpton College.

Although she wasn't there to receive it, we recognised Sue Martyn's hard work for South Sheep 2010 and 2012 by presenting her with a painting of a Border Leicester, which is her breed of choice. We are saddened Sue is retiring from being our event organiser, but the 2014 event will be further east in our Region, which is just too far away for Sue.

After the formal side of the AGM we had two presentations. Alan Wight, Veterinary Investigation Officer from AHVLA Winchester, spoke on new and emerging diseases and explained AHVLA's role in disease surveillance, which now involves less laboratories and more co-operation with private veterinary surgeons. He said, like it or not, farms are going to have to take on board more biosecurity to try to prevent introducing diseases and resistance problems. Everyone found his presentation very interesting and he was concerned not to frighten his audience, but to increase their awareness. In this he succeeded.

Phil Stocker then gave us an update on present issues NSA were working on, as well as explained the re-organisation of the NSA, in place for nearly 12 months, was working well. He also gave further information on a new entrant initiative and the membership recruitment campaign taking place in 2013.

We then enjoyed a hot meal, which allowed everyone to socialise and talk about the display of all the 'weird, wonderful and intriguing' items Jim Cook, a local retired policeman, had brought along for us to guess their use. Jim has an absolutely amazing collection of shepherding and shearing memorabilia and he brought along a handpiece dating from 1885 and handshears from 1769.

Bob Blanden, Regional Secretary

Marches

As you plan for a prosperous, less challenging 2013 remember it is not too late to make sure your planned ration is fit for purpose, that there are legal tolerances in feed content and it rarely a good idea to buy on price alone!

If you require a 18% protein feed then make sure it is, as low quality forage combines with a lower quality concentrate is a recipe for disaster. Remember to get random forage samples analysed from different parts of the clamp, as a few pounds spent on preparation now could potentially result in less cost, higher birth weights, better ewe condition and less mastitis in 2013.

Some in the region had reason for festive cheer with good scanning results, but some have reported higher barren rates and huge uncertainty if the cause was Schmallenburg or the lack of quality feed and weather conditions over tupping time. Please help us in the region by getting any suspected Schmallenburg cases investigated and let Head Office know the results.

The challenge of being a regional chairman was emphasised to me last week, as I don't mind admitting it was hard to absorb the sheer frustration of a friend who simply could not see the benefit of legislation that causes incredible stress when moving sheep. The member was moving ewes to additional keep but daylight was fading fast, the conditions were wet, people were tired and the equipment to read the electronic tags was playing up – something had to give! It was impossible to read the tags and the risk of not complying with legislation meant those ewes were subjected to increased transport times, additional loading stresses and additional diesel costs, not to mention the stress to the farmer!

It is so frustrating that our members are complying with legislation yet Defra have caused another blunder in the tendering process for an English movement database. We will keep working with Defra to protect our members and, believe me, your views have been vented from your region!

On an upbeat note we are looking

to hold a meeting this July called 'Innovation, diversification and supply chain cooperation in the NSA Marches Region', involving a tour for a political guest and finishing with a dinner. The committee is meeting soon to finalise the event, and in the meantime I wish you all a very peaceful, fruitful and prosperous New Year.

Nick Davies, Regional Chairman

South West

I'm sure we will all be pleased to see the back of 2012! The weather has curtailed most of the region's plans for the year, although we have recently held an open evening for members and non-members.

We had three excellent speakers – Bill Harper of Harpers Home Mix and Brian Dallyn of BWMB, and also Phil Stocker giving us a résumé of the work of the NSA in his first year as CEO, including

the new set-up of the various committees and how they work, along with all the issues NSA is involved in.

Our thanks to the speakers for their insights. It was unfortunate our members who bemoan the fact that they cannot get to the AGM because of lambing did not attend this evening either.

Here, as everywhere else, the main topic of conversation is Schmallenberg. Although classified as 'low impact' it is in fact 'extremely high impact' for those unfortunate enough to have already discovered they have it. For those of us not lambing until later it is a case of 'wait and see' but is not much fun when we can do nothing about it and there seems to be a lack of coordinated information available. The NSA weekly email updates provide as much information as they can and I would urge anyone who does not get it every Friday to email membership@nationalsheep.org.uk and ask to be

added to the distribution list.

As well as our AGM in February, we are planning to have a stand at the Royal Cornwall Show in June and this will be followed by NSA Sheep South West 2013 on June 11th at Moortown Barton, Knowstone, South Molton, by kind permission of Michael and David Snell and family. The organising committee are working hard on the plans for the day and more details will be in the next issue of the Sheep Farmer or on the website – www.sheepsouthwest.org.uk.

One of the important features of the day will be the Shepherd of the Future competition, so please encourage any young shepherds to contact me for more details. We are planning a pre-competition day for those who would like to find out what will be expected of them on the day.

Sue Martyn, Regional Secretary □

NSA Welsh Sheep – Tuesday 21st May at Beili Ficer Farm, Llansawel, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 7JT. See www.welshsheep.org.uk.

NSA Highland Sheep – Thursday 30th May at Dingwall Mart, Dingwall, Ross-shire, IV15 9TP. See www.nsascotland.org.uk.

NSA North Sheep – Wednesday 5th June at Crimple Head Farm, Beckwithshaw, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG3 1QT. See www.northsheep.org.uk.

NSA Sheep South West – Tuesday 11th June at Moortown Barton, Knowstone, South Molton, Devon, EX36 4RZ. See www.sheepsouthwest.org.uk.

NSA Sheep NI – Monday 1st July at Ballymena Market.

As usual, there will be also be a NSA Sheep Centre at the Royal Highland Show (20th-23rd June) and the Royal Welsh Show (22nd-25th July). And for the first time this year, there will also be one at Balmoral Show (15th-17th May). □

Are You Getting the NSA Weekly Update?

Every Friday we send out an email full of news, information and forthcoming events. If you have an email address but are not currently getting the Weekly Update, please email membership@nationalsheep.org.uk. □

Plans Progressing for Young Entrants Project

You may remember that NSA launched a new project at the Sheep Event in July 2012, offering support to young people wanting to be involved in the sheep industry.

Due to a commitment from NSA to sustain the project, and also overwhelming support from a wide range of individuals and companies, a steering group has been created and grant funding applied for. This will enable a number of activities to continue, helping any number of young people who approach NSA for support and information, but also allow a 'core group' to undertake a concentrated training and advancement course.

There will be more about this in the March/April edition of Sheep Farmer, but essentially individuals will be invited to go through a selection process to become part of this core group, which will aim to encourage the sheep sector ambassadors of the future.

We are currently collating information on people with an interest in the Supporting the Future of the Sheep Industry through Young People project. This includes young people who want to know more about future events and activities, but also other people in the sheep sector who want to help NSA deliver this project and play their part in shaping a positive future for the industry. If you fall into either camp, please email youngentrants@nationalsheep.org.uk. □



DUAL TAG

- **E-TRACK + TRACK-BACK . . .**
Linked together for maximum security and traceability.
- **USE OF SAME PLIER . . .**
For faster tagging of both ears.
- **LASER PRINTED . . .**
For clear identification.

Order direct or from your stockist

Ketchum
British tags you can trust

KETCHUM MANUFACTURING COMPANY
Tadworth, Surrey, KT20 5RE Tel: (01737) 812218 Fax: (01737) 814372
E-mail: enquiries@ketchums.co.uk www.ketchums.co.uk

Sheep Health & Welfare Conference

Inaugural conference attracts more than 220 delegates

There was a good mix of farmers, vets and industry advisors at the first ever Sheep Health and Welfare Conference in late November, organised by the Sheep Health and Welfare Group (SHAWG) in conjunction with NSA, and held in Worcester.

SHAWG, which brings together sheep farmers and stakeholder groups, including NSA, went away with a clear impression from attendees that they should dedicate time and effort to looking at an industry-ran sheep scab control programme.

Sheep scab

Speakers and attendees agreed the Government did not have the time, money or desire to legislate on scab in England and Wales and that the industry had to take action itself, moving things forward to a point where Government could be called upon to just 'mop up the laggards' once the vast majority of farmers had proven they were taking responsibility.

Taking responsibility was a theme of the day, with Chris Lewis, an independent veterinary sheep consultant, and Neil Sargison of the Royal (Dick) Vet School, both urging farmers to quarantine incoming stock and think more about keeping flocks bio-secure.

Accusing producers of sometimes being too trusting, Mr Lewis recommended buying shearers new moccasins (to stop them introducing scab), chaining roadside gates shut (to prevent do-gooders returning stray sheep to the wrong field, double-fencing farm perimeters (especially if you've got 'dodgy neighbours') and quarantining incoming stock for at least 21 days.

"Even if it comes from your best friend, quarantine it," Mr Lewis said. "21 days is essential for quarantine – and it's far cheaper and convenient than a disease outbreak."

Quarantine

He said the priorities were sheep scab, resistant parasites, fluke and footrot. For the later he recommended foot bathing three times at five-day intervals, but suggesting getting the vet to inject instead provided an ideal opportunity to test for maedi visna, give rams a MOT and update the farm's health plan.

"The biggest key for profitability, after quarantining, is getting a farm health plan," he said.

Professor Sargison, who is also the current president of the Sheep Veterinary Society, echoed these sentiments, but looked to the future too, saying new tests and new tools to help with animal health would have a far greater impact that any advance in genetics or technology.

Julie Fitzpatrick of the Moredun Research Institute provided some answers to this, describing a penside test for scab, vaccines for the haemonchus contortus and brown stomach worms, and vaccines for enzootic abortion and caseous lymphadenitis (CLA), all in various stages of development. However, the biggest challenge was not developing new tools, but getting commercial companies to take them to market.

Resistant worms

Additional weapons in the armoury would certainly be useful in the combat against drug-resistant worms, something independent consultant and SCOPS director Lesley Stubbings urged farmers to take more seriously.

"We have a big problem and we need to take action on every single farm," she said, repeating earlier support for Farm Health Plans and urging producers to find out what worms and what level of resistance they had on their farm, at the very least.

"You have to do it for yourself – your health plan is your health plan, no one else's. It has to be based on solving problems for you and not be a tick list of diseases. Start with what you want to improve, such as lamb growth rates, and work backwards. The health plan is the challenge and the solution."

The best advert for adopting SCOPS

principles came via Gloucestershire sheep farmer Hillary Mann, who started thinking about wormer resistance in 2007 and immediately found a benefit (in terms of time, money, lamb performance and worm management) by identifying what suited her farm best and implementing an effect plan for all stages of stock:-

Ewes:

- Quarantine incoming stock with a new group of wormer, to kill all worms (resistant and susceptible)
- Blanket worm only once a year, at lambing, and leave singles and fit ewes (about 10% of flock) untreated, to maintain a population of wormer-susceptible worms.
- Use dry ewes to 'clean up' pasture later in the season.

Rams:

- Buy rams with low faecal egg count EBVs to reduce worm-susceptibility in offspring.
- Buy rams with high growth rate EBVs, so offspring are finished before they face a high worm challenge.

Lambs:

- Only treated if faecal egg counts/seasonable information deem it necessary; chose product accordingly.
- Conduct faecal egg reduction tests after treating, to monitor effectiveness of products used.
- Group lambs according to age, to make dosing easier.

Mrs Mann said: "SCOPS must be cost effective for my time, and it is. I'm saving time and money from drenching less often and still have high performance levels." (See table)



Performance in Hillary Mann's flock		
	2010	2011
Number of times ewes drenched	1	1
Number of times retained lambs & stores drenched	1	2
Number of times lambs drenched	2	1
Scanning rate	201%	200%
Rearing rate	170%	175%
	(11.5% lambs lost)	(12.5% lambs lost)
Average carcase weight	20.38kg	19.25kg*
Lambs sold finished by end of September	79%	90%

* Fertility problem with new ram, used smaller ram more extensively

New Competition for NSA Members

Win a sheep handling system

We are delighted to have been able to team up with Rappa this year, to offer a 10ft mobile sheep yard to one lucky winner in a free prize draw that is open to all existing members and new members of NSA.

Existing members simply have to recommend a friend, neighbour or acquaintance to join the NSA – and make sure they mention you when signing up. If you look at the membership application form on the inside back cover of this magazine you will see a “Rappa Competition” area in the bottom right hand corner. As long as your name is included here, with your NSA membership number or postcode, you will be in the free prize draw.

And the best thing is there is no limit to the number of times you can enter the competition – the more people you encourage to join the NSA, the more chances you have.

New members are automatically entered into the draw when they sign up, and once they are on the NSA database, can refer other new members and get entered into the draw more than once too.

A growing NSA

John Geldard, NSA Chairman, is completely behind this new membership campaign. He says: “I’m sure there are some farmers who are not members of the NSA simply because they’ve never been asked. Here is a great opportunity to ask them and get in the draw at the same time.

“Many grassroots farmers do not want to get involved in politics or the work NSA does to promote sheep farming and work with Defra, Welsh Government, Scottish Government and DARD. But we still need their support to do that work on their behalf, to be the voice of reason when new or different laws and rules are dreamt up, and protect the sheep sector.

“The best way to promote the work NSA does for all sheep farmers is for existing members to explain to others why they pay their subscription each year. I really hope you’ll all get on board with this and recommend at least one person to sign up. You never know, by October 2013 you could be the lucky owner of a brand new sheep handling

The Rappa 10ft Standard Sheep Yard

The yard’s high-tensile heat-treated aluminium gates combine great strength with exceptionally light weight and flexibility, meaning they “go with the blow” where other materials would bend or break.

The uprights in the gate design avoid leg breakages and the gates are linked together with a ‘loose’ coupling and are simply pulled out to form the pen in crocodile fashion. The ‘floating’ design discourages stock from pushing against it, minimising wear and tear.

The seven-foot and five-foot hurdles are available in both normal and extra high versions. All components, which are available separately, are fully compatible with other makes.

Race: Front end shedding gates allow for quicker three-way drafting, which can be used without removing all the gates for small jobs. The matt plastic coated drenching race is height adjustable and can be easily washed down and kept bio-secure, whilst remaining non-reflective in sunlight.

Winch : The highly geared winch takes the strain out of setting up the yard and returning it to the transport position. The winch is easily operated and accessible from the ground for user safety. Heavy duty strops are fitted as standard.

Trailer: The exceptionally strong trailer design has excellent drafting options, but is still light to handle. The draw bar is designed to detach quickly and easily by simply sliding in or out the trailer. The tough 13-inch wheels will carry the yard over the roughest terrain. Extra ground clearance allows



towing by any vehicle.

Rappa says: “The concept of this yard is to take the job to the sheep rather than the other way round. However, that only works if the product is simple and fast to set up, use and pack up. In addition, it has to be strong enough to deal with proper, hard use. We think we succeeded in addressing these issues, and think you won’t look back once you’ve used a Rappa Yard

“It is wholly made in our own factory, here in the UK. As a result, customers can be assured of a really timely and efficient back up and after sales service. After all, that’s what Rappa customers have come to expect of us.

With 25 years’ experience in selling livestock systems, we know exactly what works and what doesn’t. So when it came to making our own, we used all that feedback from customers to design what we believe to be the strongest, most versatile and user-friendly mobile yard on the market. Simple, robust and quick to set up, it makes short work of drafting, vaccinating, drenching, moulting, tagging, dehorning and ringing.”

system.”

Terms and conditions

By entering the prize draw all entrants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions, a full version of which can be found at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/rappadraw.

But a few things you need to know are:-

- Anyone over 16 years old can enter the competition, as long as they are not employees of NSA and Rappa, their families, agents or anyone else

connected to the promotion.

- All eligible entries must reach NSA Head Office by 23rd September 2013, with the draw taking place within a week of that date. If the first person drawn proves not to be an active NSA member (i.e. fully paid up) the second drawn entry will be the winner. □

If you have any queries about the competition, or would like posters and literature to help promote it, please call NSA Head Office or email charlotte@nationalsheep.org.uk

NSA Promotes New Scheme

Suggestion of new Pillar Two agri-health scheme under new CAP reform

Having officially launched the idea at the Sheep Health and Welfare Conference in November, NSA is working hard to take forward proposals to restructure Pillar Two schemes to include incentives for animal health and disease prevention.

Knowing the state of Government and EU finances at the present time, NSA is not suggesting an increase in funding, but is proposing a redirection of support to meet the current and future needs of society.

Phil Stocker explains: "Priorities now include an urgent need for economic growth and to ensure food security and public health, whilst improving our carbon balances relating to climate change. It is shocking to think there is virtually no element of the CAP that focusses on these real priorities – the first pillar does nothing to incentivise food security or economic growth, and the second pillar (with the small exception of some rural enterprise schemes and the processing and marketing schemes) simply deals with the environment and biodiversity.

Agri-health scheme

"Our proposal for a new agri-health scheme as part of Pillar Two would raise the health status of farmed livestock and protect stock against both endemic and exotic disease. It would incentivise efficient productivity through optimising resource use, and provide carbon and climate change benefits."

The NSA's proposal is that an agri-health scheme would work along the same lines as existing agri-environment schemes, in that farmers who volunteer to participate would score points for specific activities in order to qualify for a payment. These might include:-

- Effective animal health planning and animal recording
- Genotyping and health improvement developments
- Advisory input from trained sheep vets
- Involvement in voluntary health monitoring and accreditation schemes (such as faecal egg counting, maedi visna accreditation, scrapie monitoring and new emerging disease when necessary)
- Optional biosecurity measures
- Quarantine measures

"The scheme must include incentives that are sufficient to encourage take up, the structure has to be simple to implement and administer, and of course the measures must make a difference," Mr Stocker says.

Range of benefits

The NSA believes such a scheme would offer a wide range of benefits:-

- Good animal health and effective disease control is vital to maintain trade. The net contribution of red meat production in England alone has been valued at £1.67 billion. Its contribution to our economy is clear and protecting this trade by avoiding disruptive diseases hugely beneficial.
- Reducing the incidence of endemic disease also has clear benefits to climate change and carbon. This relates to efficient

BOOST PROFIT PRE-LAMBING

PACKED WITH NUTRITION

- Vitamin B12 for better feed efficiency
- High levels of vitamin E for healthy lambs
- Chelated zinc to support foot and udder health
- PLUS cobalt, iodine and selenium to enhance lamb survivability and vigour

PROVEN ABSORPTION

- Collate technology ensures nutrients are absorbed rapidly into the bloodstream
- Passes easily through all drenching guns



NET TEX

T: 01634 257150 F: 01634 257165

E: info@net-tex.co.uk www.net-tex.co.uk



Incentivising farmers to tackle endemic disease would address concerns about economic growth, food security, public health and climate change.

use of resources, optimising growth rates and reducing methane outputs per kg of meat produced. With UK targets for agriculture of 11% carbon reductions by 2020 and 80% by 2050, incentives to control endemic disease

would be a very wise investment.

- The Treasury has set a further 18% budget reductions in the area of expenditure on animal health. The total reductions already seen and expected will have an impact on the support that can be provided for the farmed livestock sector. This relates to the cost and responsibility sharing agenda which, combined with budget reductions will push more costs back on industry. The animal health scheme we are proposing would provide incentives targeted towards reducing the impact of reduced Treasury budgets in the area of animal health.

Funding options

Mr Stocker says: “The high proportion of Pillar Two funding that has gone towards agri-environment schemes over the last two decades may have been right at the time, but things have changed, as have farmers’ attitudes to the environment.

“We need to find ways to incentivise improved animal health practises so that they become a normal and standard part of husbandry. It could be argued that a more balanced share of funds between agri-environment and enhanced animal

health with associated climate change and food security benefits would relate better to our current needs.

“It is our view that CAP money needs to be targeted more towards land management that is involved in production agriculture and this change in policy would ease funding constraints. In addition, although the NSA is firmly opposed to further modulation of funds, if this is a decision that our UK administration chooses then ensuring that modulated money is used for the scheme we propose with its ensuing benefits would be critical.”

NSA has already consulted with a range of other farming organisations over the principle of redirecting funds in the way we are proposing, and has invited a range of representatives to a meeting in early January to progress things further. We have already had many positive comments from members and would welcome more.



Please email any comments, or ideas on what activities should score points under a agri-health scheme, to pstocker@nationalsheep.org.uk.

CAP

A European Perspective

How many different ideas are there about CAP reform in the UK? If you take just three groups (farmers, politicians and environmentalists) there are very different perspectives and a myriad of ideas on what the final policy should look like. So how many different ideas are there about CAP reform in the 27 EU Members States put together?!

In December I travelled to Brussels to join journalists from most the 27 Member States and saw first-hand how vastly priorities vary from country to country.

European disagreement

The Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) want to know why they have to wait five years until they get the same payment per hectare as older Member States, while farmers in Holland (where the average payment per hectare is more than a third higher than the average) want far more than five years to adjust their system.

The Germans think an alternative to syphoning off money for new entrants would be to ban farmers from claiming their state pension until they have signed over their farm business to the next

generation. (If this is a real incentive, you have to wonder how much bigger German state pensions must be than in the UK!)

The wine growing countries of the EU wanted to know what support would remain for vineyards, while those with large areas of forestry saw that as important instead. The difference in priorities was quite incredible, but for each and every country in attendance, greening seemed to be a massive concern.

This came out in the debate, where Mr Baecke and Mr Pesonen (see panel) both argued for a ‘menu’ approach where Member States could offer more options than just the three proposals on the table – maintenance of permanent pasture, ecological focus areas and three-crop diversification. They were particularly opposed to the 7% ecological focus areas, saying it would hamper farm businesses, distort the marketplace and make EU farmers less competitive.

Environment and production

“You can have production and greening,” Mr Pesonen says, suggesting the 7%

ecological focus area could instead be used to grow protein and/or nitrogen-fixing crops, and not just be set-aside.

When presented with the NSA proposal of having a agri-health scheme under Pillar Two (see facing page) both Mr Baecke and Mr Pesonen were in favour, saying food security should definitely be seen as a public good and having a scheme that incentivised more efficient livestock production would have a number of other knock-on benefits too. Mr Pesonen even suggested farmers participating in such a scheme could sell their meat for more money, as the public would be willing to pay a premium for it.

But the uphill battle we have with all CAP issues, not just greening or an agri-health scheme, was emphasised by Mr Long. He claimed a greening menu would ‘water down’ the greening benefits and be impossible to administer or monitor. He also suggesting the second pillar should pay for nothing apart from agri-environment schemes and rural development, and that WWF was encouraging its members to eat less meat, due to the negative environmental impact of livestock production systems.

Debating the Future of the CAP

The farmer's view

Pekka Pesonen, secretary general of COPA (the EU farmers' lobbying organisation), said it was time the EU recognised the CAP represented good value for money, as it benefitted more than 40m people across Europe. Also that more flexibility was needed at Member State level, e.g. to define what an active farmer was.

The economist's view

Aurélie Trouve, a university lecturer in France, said payments should be linked to production cycles and provide aid only when it was needed, so the money would go to sheep farmers when the lamb price was down but arable farmers when the cereal price was down. This was the direction the USA was moving in, which meant it was important for the EU to follow suit, to aid competition.

The young farmer's view

Joris Baecke, president of the umbrella organisation for all EU YFC movements, said it had been hard work to get a young farmers scheme under Pillar One and Pillar Two and it was vital that remained in the final version of the policy. And it was vital this final version was agreed by the end of 2013, even though the absence of a confirmed budget meant it could not be implemented until later.

The environmentalist's view

Tony Long of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) said the current CAP was 'extremely costly and regressive' and not good for farmers, the public or the environment. He supported the current proposals and did not want the 'weakened by bargaining'.

Mr Pesonen firmly disagreed, saying extensification of CAP in 2000 was a 'major error' as resources were now being wasted by European farmers being encouraged to produce less food from the same amount of land.

"What statement are we giving to a hungry Africa if we are telling our farmers to produce less food," he said. "We have to be serious with these matters in Europe, but also because of the message we give to the rest of the world. We need to carry our weight."

EU budget

Later in the day there was no suggestion from Dacian Ciolos, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, that his original CAP reform proposal could not be changed, but he did say that if flexibility was granted to Member States the structure could not allow them to use it against each other or in a way that was 'against the community spirit'.

He also spoke very firmly about not cutting the CAP budget (something England politicians are in favour of).

"A cut would endanger the reform – the budget must acknowledge that we have already made a commitment to fund CAP," he said. "We cannot scrimp and save, as it will put more pressure on national budgets and then it will not work." □

Joanne Pugh is the Senior Communications Officer for NSA. She won a place at the CAP event in Brussels through the British Guild of Agricultural Journalists.

NEW PRO MARK

RRP: £4.57 (ex VAT)

Buy 5
get 1
FREE!



PROFESSIONAL SHEEP MARKER

- No blockages - guaranteed!
- Long lasting colour
- Fully scourable
- Use on wet or dry fleeces
- Available in 7 vibrant colours (Black, Red, Blue, Green, Purple, Yellow, Orange)
- Excellent marking definition
- Made in the UK

NET TEX
IDENTIFICATION

T: 01634 257150 F: 01634 257165
E: info@net-tex.co.uk www.net-tex.co.uk