

Sheep Farmer

JULY/AUGUST 2013

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION



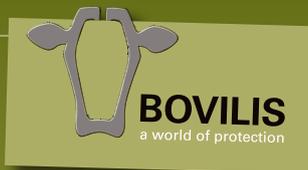
SHEEP FARMING LESSONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

REPORTS FROM NSA SUMMER SHEEP EVENTS

TAKING ACTION ON NEW ZEALAND IMPORTS

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References:

1. SBV Information for farmers and vets in GB, AHVLA (AG-SBV-01 May 2013).
2. I. Davies, P. Vellema and P. Rogers, Schmallenberg virus – an emerging novel pathogen. In Practice, 2012.34 (10): p. 598-604.



Sheep Farmer

Vol. 32, No 4

July/August 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

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A Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered in England No. 37818.

Registered Charity No: 249255

Charity registered in Scotland SC042853.

VAT No: 273 3469 44

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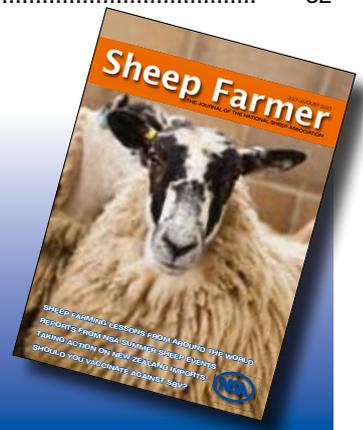
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Front cover

The Mule ewe on our front cover is from the Darley flock, managed by NSA Eastern Region Vice Chairman Dan Phipps. It was taken by James Barber, who took all the photographs at the NSA Youthful Shepherds Event (pages 10-11).



Phil Stocker Writes...

Membership Matters



Membership of the NSA is a two-way process. Members expect direct benefits, things like this magazine, our Weekly Email Update, an informed website, reduced cost entry to events, to name a few. But members are also contributing to supporting their organisation, giving us the resources we need to work on their behalf and that of the wider UK sheep industry.

Before I move on to where I am intending to get to, I also need to mention the role that the NSA plays in bringing people together and the incredible input that so many members give. This has been clear during the recent successful NSA regional sheep events – NSA Welsh Sheep, Highland Sheep, North Sheep, Sheep South West and Sheep NI. The event organisers and their teams of volunteers setting things up, manning the events during the day, and then clearing up afterwards – not to mention the contributions of the host farms – is humbling and a sure sign that the NSA is a grass roots organisation.

So, in terms of the representational work we do, probably the most important is to be making the case that sheep farming is a positive and desirable activity that provides many by products that are in the interests of society. The argument still rages, in the uplands in particular, and most NSA members will be well versed in the host of public goods delivered by sheep farming in the hills and uplands (these are outlined in our 'Complimentary Role of Sheep in LFAs' report and any member not in possession of a copy should contact the office).

Two major incidents came about in early June that made me realise that our work in the area is a number one priority. Firstly the press coverage around George Monbiot's re-wilding proposals (no cynicism, but carefully planned to coincide with the launch of his new book), and secondly the launch of a report by the House of Commons' Select Committee on International Development on global food security.

While Mr Monbiot's work was a pretty direct attack against 'the white plague' of sheep in the hills and uplands, the main recommendations of the global food security report were largely skewed

by mischievous and inaccurate press headlines that gave a platform for the anti-meat brigade. On both incidents NSA worked to get across a reasonable and balanced point of view, both by briefing reporters and commentators, and via national press and media.

Assuming that we are all well informed of the practical benefits that sheep farming brings there are one or two additional and fundamental points that that we can constantly inform people of:-

- Virtually none of our UK landscape is 'natural'. Even in the remotest of areas it has been shaped by human activity, usually involving farming managed, grazing animals. It is this activity that led to the landscape and environment that the public love.
- The vast majority of the UK's biodiversity is farmland/farming dependant. Our rich farmland ecology and wildlife has evolved alongside human farming activity.
- We have already seen some 'land abandonment' where sheep and farming activities have been excluded, and rather than an improvement, the result has often been a loss in biodiversity, a less valued landscape and reduced access, not to mention no contribution to food production.
- Ecology and environment cannot be preserved as a museum. It always has been and always will be a living and changing entity.
- Human beings are not separate from ecology, they are part of it. All species on earth interrelate with each other and we are only different in that we are at the top of the chain and have a supposed higher level of intelligence.

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• Most of the criticism targeted at the environmental impact of upland farming was a result of policies that farmers were responding to. While we now know that much of this was misguided, it was justified at the time and farmers were simply doing what they were being encouraged to do.

The vast majority of sheep farmers are as passionate about their environments as they are about their sheep. We may have a different view to George Monbiot as to what those environments should consist of (and certainly not agree with him about the reintroduction of wolves) but our view is just as relevant. We are the ones who are working the landscape, and to be honest, even though we should always be open to ways to improve further, the majority of the public like our upland landscapes pretty much the way we have shaped them.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive

Are You in the NSA/Rappa Prize Draw Yet?

The NSA 2013 membership recruitment campaign means we will be giving away a Rappa 10ft mobile sheep yard to one lucky member this September. Could it be you? Anyone joining NSA since the launch of the campaign in January is automatically entered into the draw. But existing members can also benefit from the campaign, by referring a friend or neighbour to become a NSA member themselves. You get one entry in the draw for every person you recommend who signs up – and there is no limit to the number of entries. Find out more on pages 16-17. □



Are You a Contractor?

NSA is interested to hear from any member who is a sheep contractor, whether you are working full-time as a farm service provider, work seasonally as a scanner or shearer, or doing piecemeal work here and there. This is purely an exercise to collect information at this stage, although we may be able to offer you additional benefits in the future. Please drop an email to joanne@nationalsheep.org.uk or call 01684 892661 with a very brief description of your activity. □

Exciting Two Days Planned in Scotland Around AGM

With the NSA AGM being held in Scotland this year (see notice below) we are looking forward to an action-packed two days with our hosts at Moredun.

Day one (Wednesday 21st August) will be dominated by the NSA Breed Society Forum with a series of presentations and discussions laid on for all the breed societies that are affiliated to NSA, taking advantage of the world-class facilities at Moredun and the wealth of expertise they have there. The Breed Society Forum is vital to the two-way communication between NSA and breed societies and we are looking forward to what will be the second forum in 2013, the first being held in April at Malvern.

Day two (Thursday 22nd August) will commence with the AGM and be followed by an update on some of the NSA's work

this year. Given our surroundings we will then have the opportunity to focus on the importance of sheep health, take a look at Moredun's activities and have a tour of their facilities. □

Notice is hereby given that the 120th Annual General Meeting of the National Sheep Association will be held at Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland, EH26 0PZ at 10am on Thursday 22nd August 2013.

Members are entitled to appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf at the AGM and the Proxy Notice will be available at www.nationalsheep.org.uk ahead of the meeting. Any member wishing to have a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2012 should contact NSA Head Office at Malvern.

Action Continuing on Sheep Worrying by Dogs

Following our report on sheep worrying by dogs (as per the article in the May/June edition of Sheep Farmer), NSA has gained a great deal of media coverage on the topic and continues to take enquiries, particularly from regional newspapers. Please let us know if you would like us to approach your local newspaper specifically, as we have a great deal of information they can use and the attention we can draw to the topic the better. Just drop



an email to Joanne Pugh, NSA Senior Communications Officers, on joanne@nationalsheep.org.uk or call 07807 237982.

And don't forget we have plastic signs (pictured) that you can place around your farm and fields reminding walkers to keep their dog on a lead. These are free to NSA members and also be obtained by emailing Joanne at the address above or calling the NSA Head Office on 01684 892661. □

Tachographs and Drivers

Following reports of farmers getting picked up by the police for not having tachographs in their vehicles, particularly in South West England, NSA has created a factsheet on tachographs and drivers hours'. Both this factsheet and information about the law on animal transport and towing trailers, is available in the members' area of the NSA website. If you do not have a password for the members' area please email membership@nationalsheep.org.uk to request one. If you are a NSA member but do not have internet access please call the NSA office on 01684 892661 and we will post you a copy. □

Shorter Withdrawal Period on Dip - but product not available for now

Members may have heard by now that the meat withdrawal period for Osmonds Gold Fleece Sheep Dip has been reduced from 70 days to 49 days, which is a real bonus for producers, particularly in the fight against sheep scab. HOWEVER, we urge you to be aware that the shorter withdrawal period is for a newly formulated product that will not be available until next season. Any Gold Fleece bought this season will be the old formulation and still carry the 70-day withdrawal requirement. □



REGIONAL REPORTS

Cymru/Wales

The Region hosted its best ever NSA Welsh Sheep Event with a huge crowd attending. It was such a relief to have a dry day, as the last two events have either been wet in the build up or wet on the day. My thanks must go to all those involved, including sponsors, exhibitors, stewards, the hosts (without whom the event would not have been possible), the general public for supporting the event and my Chairman David Pittendreigh.

I would just like to note that I have had many favorable comments about the stewards; the help you gave the exhibitors was second to none and made my job so much easier, so a big thank you to you all.

The next big event for the Region is the Royal Welsh Show where many committee members are involved either exhibiting, judging, stewarding or contributing in other ways. I wish them luck with whatever task they are doing. The Region will hold a reception on the NSA stand on the Monday late afternoon (Monday 22nd July) so please call by, or visit at anytime during the show.

Helen Davies, Secretary

Northern Ireland

The decision by the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society to move to the new site at the Maze allowed the NSA to have a presence at Balmoral Show this year. The new site attracted a large crowd over the three days and, with the support of the breed societies and some trade, the NSA Sheep Centre proved to be very busy. A big thank you to all those who supported and helped with our first appearance at Balmoral. We will be talking to the organisers in late summer about how we can improve for next year and welcome any suggestions.

At time of writing this the weather has finally warmed up a bit and the 'early boys' are at their silage. I wonder now that we are in July is it summer or is the weather still messing about? We all need to make sure enough fodder is available to get us through next winter, as there is no spare left over.

We are involved in the organisation

of two upland farm visits with CAFRE and other industry bodies to be held in September – watch this space!

Hopefully the framework for the new CAP will have been agreed by now and the work of putting our region's wishes will be possible within the options allowed. We are also in consultation with DARD on the ANCs (Areas of Natural Constraint) which will replace the old LFA scheme.

At this stage it is too soon for me to report on SheepNI, but I hope you enjoyed a visit to the event. The organising committee are probably still in recovery mode!

**Edward Adamson,
Regional Development Officer**



Also at Balmoral Show, NSA NI Chairman Maurice McHenry (centre) received a Highly Commended award from RSPB (picture courtesy of RSPB).

Central Region

Like many other upland areas, winter has lingered in Derbyshire rather longer than it should have done and has outstayed its welcome by a considerable margin. The result of this is that less than a month before the nights start to draw in again we have seen a few days of decent weather for the first time this year.

The consequence of the long cold spell is that 'spring' lambs, if that is the best description, have been in short supply. The only small compensation is that as a result prices are considerably above the levels at this time last year. A quick trawl through the archives at Bakewell Market reveals the following facts, which most people would probably fail to recall if asked.

On 21st May 2012 559 lambs averaged 220.6p/kg, meaning the average value of a 39-45kg lamb was £88.10/head. On 20th May 2013 210 lambs averaged 285p/kg, meaning the average value of a finished lamb was £119.45/head. If we move on a week or so, and avoid last year's royal wedding, on 28th May 2012 649 lambs averaged 199.2p/kg (approx £79.82/head) – and on 3rd June 2013 488 lambs averaged 256p/kg (approx £104.30/head).

I have been observing the lamb trade for far too long to risk offering any profound

interpretation of this information and definitely no prognostications of what might happen next. It just goes to show how quickly memories fade and that with prices as volatile as they clearly are it pays to use a marketing method which reacts quickly.

Other news from our region involves congratulations to our NSA English Committee Member Charles Sercombe, who I am certain you will already know is Chairman of the NFU Livestock Board. He has, we are delighted to learn, become of international importance, having been made Chairman of the European Commission Advisory Group for sheep and goat meat. The NSA and the Central Region in particular are delighted to have a member with such far-reaching connections amongst its ranks. I am certain that with Charles' sound and practical knowledge of the industry all organisations will benefit from his involvement.

**Alastair Sneddon,
Auctioneer and Committee Member**

Marches

Since I last wrote, NSA Marches Region Committee Members have been busy representing the views of the membership and feeding them into the NSA English Committee. We strive to get the most broad and informed views and opinion so would welcome your thoughts; please don't be frightened of giving us a call or attending a committee meeting!

Issues debated in recent months include NZ lamb imports, CAP reform, the movements database, live exports, farm assurance and TSEs – to name a few.

On CAP reform, it is no surprise to see the EU budget for Pillar One (direct payments) cut by nearly 2% and Pillar 2 (rural development) cut by 7.6. Support from the EU will get increasingly tight, so we have to monitor, measure and manage elements of production that are in our gift to reduce the risk to our businesses. This is not always easy, but what is in life? The Government is clear they want industry to take responsibility and actively seek solutions and not expect Government to always be the leader.

New season lamb numbers began increasing dramatically in early June and quickly came within 7.5% of last year's numbers, compared to a deficit of more than over 34% in the final week of May. But old season lamb numbers were nearly three times the availability, due to the poor winter conditions and difficulty in finishing. Price has also helped maintain numbers, whereas last year when price decreased members held females back which were then presented as yearlings in breeding sales. There has been a delay

to the start of the season as springer's struggled to come forward given the weather challenge and a reluctance of the supply chain to switch over when the volumes were not available.

We are always being advised to make the best of grass – which is right, isn't it? Well what do we do in the region when we have a season like we have? We have seen members feed bills increase by £15,000, labour costs increase, ewe condition challenged, and to top it off one members' flock hit by further loss by yet another dog attack. This is why we must look at how we operate. Do we need to worm every four weeks? Are we dosing with the correct product and giving the correct dose with correctly calibrated equipment? Are we using the correct vaccination technique, or should we start using an additional vaccine to increase our flock's defence? All these simple points can impact on health.

Our next two committee meetings will be on Monday September and Monday 9th December, both at The Stables, Lower House Farm, Cannon Frome, Ledbury, HR8 2TG at 7.30pm. Please do come along in order to have the opportunity to respond to agenda items before NSA English Committee Meetings; we will be pleased to see you.

Nick Davies, Chairman

South East

I am delighted to report not one but two successes of Young Shepherds from our region. Firstly Andrew Flake, who has been studying at Plumpton College, won the student section at NSA Sheep South West. And secondly NSA South East Committee Member Marie Prebble won the Young Shepherd Competition at the NSA Youthful Sheep Event – congratulations to both of them.

We have had a very successful farm walk, hosted by our chairman Andrew Barr, who farms on the Firle Place Estate of Lord Gage. It is not possible for Andrew to improve the grasses on the park itself, but he has certainly improved the grasses on the adjoining ground with some of it awaiting a cut for haylage when we visited. Andrew also farms Sussex and Angus beef cattle and arranged for us to enjoy the product in the local pub afterwards.

Whilst down at Andrew's farm I took the opportunity to visit a couple of potential hosts for our NSA South Sheep 2014 and the region should be in a position to make an announcement in the next issue of Sheep Farmer. Also at that time we will have more details about a series of evening meetings we are planning (focusing on nutritional supplementation and involving Jonathan Guy from JG Animal Health) and a potential visit to the

Isle of Wight for our members.

At this time I can confirm the South East Region is sponsoring the junior class at the Southern Shears (formerly the Romney Shears), which will be taking place on 21st July at Holmbush Farm Visitors Centre, Faygate, Crawley, Sussex, RH12 4SE. Competitions start at 9am.

We are also pleased the region is prepared to sponsor two young people to attend the Sheep Breeders Roundtable in November. Anyone below the age of 27 years who would like to be considered needs to send a 200-word email to blanden@btinternet.com before 30th September explaining why they would benefit from attending the conference.

Finally, we will be having a NSA stand at Thame, Wilton and Dolphin Sheep Fairs. Please come along and say hello, as it is good to 'chew the fat' and you can find out the full details of any forthcoming meetings.

Bob Blanden, Secretary



A farm walk around the farm of NSA SE Chairman Andrew Barr included the parkland around Firle Place Estate. Andrew grazes sheep in the grounds but does not occupy the house!

Northern

Well the metrologists have just made official when we already knew – this was the worst spring for over 50 years. The region, like most other regions, was badly affected by the atrocious weather we had this spring, with certain areas of the region faring worse than others. However, the sun is now shining, temperatures are rising and the grass is growing.

The Northern region's efforts have been focused on NSA North Sheep 2013, held at Crimple Head Farm, Beckwithshaw, Harrogate. This was a very successful event with a great attendance and a fantastic entry of trade stands and sheep breed societies and associations. Thanks must go to the Wilson family on hosting a successful event after such a challenging spring; both the farm and livestock looked very well. Thanks must also go to our sponsors and exhibitors, also our stewards and committee, and our event organisers Julie Sedgewick and Heather Stoney. Everyone put in a lot of work and our thanks go to all involved for making it such a successful

event.

We are now looking forward to the Great Yorkshire Show, and you are all very welcome on the NSA Stand at the event, which will be located in its normal spot near the sheep show rings. Let's hope the weather is kinder to the Great Yorkshire than it was last year! All these shows, big or small, need our support.

Adam Watson, Chairman

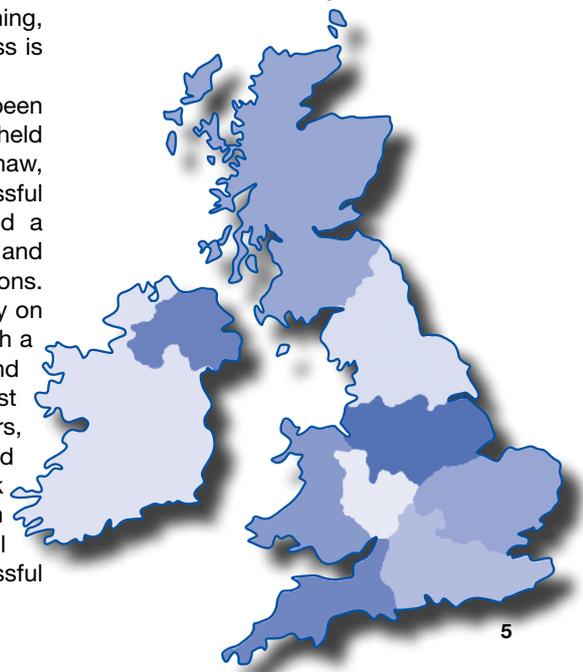
Scotland

CAP stakeholder meetings have continued on a regular basis. One of the main factors affecting the sheep industry going forward will be to trying to set a minimum stocking density to trigger activity. With this in mind, NSA and NFUS recently held a farm visit for Government officials, hosted by John McLennan at Glenferriate. Also present were representatives from RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage. It was a very worthwhile and constructive day and will help make decisions about 'active farmers' in future discussions.

Another on-going CAP issue is whether or not we return to coupled payments in the sheep sector in Scotland. There is a lot to be discussed here and it's not just as simple as saying we will have a headage payment, as we first need to know how much money could be available, how it could be paid out (on ewes, lambs or ewe hoggs), would we have a retention period and would we need a print-out of individual EIDs in order to receive payment. Meetings will continue to be held in order for us to come to a final decision.

The recent NSA Highland Sheep event at Dingwall was a very successful day and thanks must go to Rod McKenzie and everyone who sat on the Organised Committee that Rod chaired, for all their work, effort and support.

George Milne, Regional Development Officer □



NSA Welsh Sheep Report

Young entrants mean the future is bright

With an inspirational young farming family hosting NSA Welsh Sheep, there was a real emphasis on the future of the sheep sector and opportunities for the next generation at the event.

This was fully explored during three afternoon seminar sessions, which all focused on 'getting started' and reflected the achievement of event hosts Sion and Claire Williams and their example as new entrants. Tony Evans of Andersons gave a frank and realistic picture of the realities of getting started, as well as presenting some very innovative and sensible solutions in terms of partnerships. There was also discussion about the example set by the owners of the host farm, Alfor and Elwyn Thomas, which was seen by many as a template for successful regeneration of the farming industry.

NSA's Jonathan Barber led a session on NSA's Young People and Sheep initiative, focussing very much on the wealth of experience that NSA draws together via its network of regions. And Nick Davies of Dunbia added his own experiences of getting started from scratch, including running 2,000-head of sheep and now playing a key role within the meat supply chain.

Dyana Webb, chair of the 'getting started' sessions, says: "It was apparent from all the afternoon's discussions that there are exciting opportunities available for young people within the sector. Couple this with the wealth of support available and the obvious willingness of the industry as a whole to help youngsters, and it is clear that the industry is in a very positive position to face the challenges ahead. It was extremely encouraging to see so many youngsters at the event, who took the time to attend the seminars and ask some very detailed and demanding questions of the speakers."

Other topics also demanded attention at the event, including Schmallenberg, given that the vaccine announcement came that day, and liver fluke, with the fluke seminar drawing around 140 people and meaning there was standing room only to hear experts and affected farmers speak.

The wet autumn and winter created huge problems for farmers, not just because of liver fluke, and was quickly followed by the terrible snow in the spring, so it was heartening to see so



Hosts Sion and Claire Williams.

many people come to NSA Welsh Sheep, keen for refreshment and reinvigoration after the worst twelve months most can remember. It effectively marked the end of a dreadful period in Welsh and UK farming, with producers determined to look to a bright future.

Event Organiser Helen Davies said: "It's the best ever Welsh Sheep and shows the event is going from strength to strength. There was a real community spirit and the atmosphere was absolutely brilliant. Everyone pulled together and was ready for a great day out. Welsh Sheep has established itself as a must for anyone to do with the sheep industry."

The Young Shepherd of the Year competition was won by Rhydian Thomas of Rhydycymerau, Lampeter.



Winning Young Shepherd Rhydian Thomas (centre) receives his award from Nia James of Dunbia, surrounded by the runners-up.

Welsh Sheep 2013 Fact File

Venue: Beili Ficer Farm near Llandeilo, by kind permission of Sion and Claire Williams.

Date: Tuesday 21st May.

Attendance: in the region of 9,000 people.

Young Shepherd of the Year: Rhydian Thomas. Best under 21 (and 2nd place): Gwion Richard Parry.

Speed Shearing: Open: Owen Morgan. Senior: Owain Lewis. **Team:** Trawscoed.

Gents stockjudging winner: Kevin Llewellyn, Welshpool.

Ladies stockjudging winner: Gill Watkins, Herefordshire.

YFC stockjudging winner: Dafydd Lewis, Carmarthenshire.

Best indoor trade stand: Allflex.

Best outdoor trade stand: Arwel Argi.

Best breed society stand: Blue Faced Leicesters.

Best wool-on-the-hoof: North Country Cheviot – David Pittendreigh.

BWMB's guess the breed comp: Andrew Meredith and Sarah Bruce, Llanbadarn Fynydd.

Ready Steady Cook: S4C present Dai Jones.

Sheepdog trial: Morning: Kevin Evans and Caleb. **Afternoon:** Ian Jones and Tom.

He is a former Gelli Aur and Aberystwyth student and works on a neighbouring beef and sheep unit as well as helping his parents on the family farm.

It was also a great day for David Pittendreigh, NSA Cymru/Wales Chairman, who was not only able to glory in the success of the event, but also topped the wool-on-the-hoof awards with a North Country Cheviot hogg from his farm at Llanllwni, just over the hill from the event. Another highlight of the day was the Ready Steady Cook competition, where TV personality Dai Llanilar beat the engaging Meinir Jones of Ffermio in the final heat with his lamb-inspired dish. ▣

NSA Highland Sheep

New event for the Highlands and Islands

A new event organised by NSA Scotland for sheep farmers in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland has been hailed a great success, attracting more than 100 trade stands, 20 breed society exhibits and an attendance of 2,000 sheep farmers from throughout the northern half of Scotland to Dingwall Mart, Ross-shire.

Reflecting on the inaugural NSA Highland Sheep, which had animal feed company Harbro Ltd as its main sponsor, Organising Committee Chairman Rod McKenzie says: "This is the first time the NSA has brought such an event to the Highlands and Islands and it was an unqualified success. The aim was to give sheep farmers the opportunity of accessing all the latest developments, both political and practical, in the sheep industry without having to travel south to an event in central Scotland."

Visitors enjoyed a packed programme of practical demonstrations, sheepdog trials and seminars throughout the day.

Performing the official opening ceremony, well-known cookery writer and Scottish food ambassador, Lady Claire Macdonald of the Kinloch Lodge Hotel, Isle of Skye, made an impassioned plea to the Scottish Government for more support to encourage young farmers into sheep breeding and reverse the decline in the Scottish sheep flock.

"There are too few young farmers taking up sheep breeding," she said. "Lamb is the most versatile of all red meats and is a culinary delight for visitors to Scotland. Lamb makes an ideal meal in both summer and winter, but we are not producing enough to meet demand both



In the feature show and sale of ewe hoggs pairs it was a day for the Suffolks with Mr and Mrs Fowlie of Adziel, Aberdeenshire, taking the top two spots in both the show and the sale.

at home and abroad. It is also important for the environment, as when the sheep go the bracken moves in. Sheep farming is an essential part of life and culture in the Highlands and Islands."

Richard Lochhead, Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, also called for sheep farmers to step up production to meet an increasing demand in emerging markets in Russia, USA and China.

He said: "Processors have to plan ahead to make sure they have enough product to supply the market, but you have to play your part too by making sure you increase production. You have to embrace modern technology for the 21st century and take advantage of every tool available to increase margins and production."

The need for producers to finish lambs better to meet carcass specification was

Highland Sheep 2013 Fact File

Venue: Dingwall Mart, Ross-shire, by kind permission of Dingwall and Highland Marts.

Date: Thursday 30th May.

Attendance: in the region of 2,000 people.

Young Shepherd of the Year: David Colthart, Pitlochry.

Sheepdog trial: Individual: 1, Hamish McLean; 2, Jock Sutherland; 3, John McKillop. Team: Lochaber, captained by John McKillop.

Young handlers: 1, Joe MacKenzie; 2, Rachael Urquhart; 3, Greg Meikle and Farquhar Renwick.

Best indoor trade stand: Allflex.

Best outdoor trade stand: Allans of Gillock.

Best breed society stand: Blackface Sheep Breeders Association.

emphasised by Kathy Peebles, Livestock Development Manager with Quality Meat Scotland, who said many lambs were too lean when marketed. Only 70% of hoggets slaughtered from mid-March to the end of May this year had met specification, and would have benefitted from feeding to achieve the right degree of finish. "There is a need for reasonable fat cover on carcasses, as it prevents the meat from drying out and adds flavour," she said.

Willie Thomson, Harbro Technical Director, said lambs were 'incredibly efficient' at converting feed and conversion rates of 4:1 could be achieved, provided lambs were in good health. Even with feed at £300/tonne, the cost of feed worked out at only £1.20/kg of weight gain if a high conversion rate was achieved. But he also gave a warning and said: "If your lambs are having problems with fluke or worms, the best feed in the world can see conversion rates drop to nearer 20:1."

Professor Julie Fitzpatrick, Director of the Moredun Research Institute, said the Moredun had developed a diagnostic test for sheep scab which picked up infection before clinical signs appear. "We are now exploring how we will use this test in eradication and control strategies," she said.

A 'pen-side' test was also being developed, which would work like a human pregnancy test and help producers confirm suspected cases of scab in their sheep. However, a vaccine for sheep scab was much further away.

The winner of the Young Shepherd of the Year competition was David Colthart, Pitlochry, with Ian Christie, Ballater, in reserve.

And a huge audience attended a special sale of pairs of ewe hoggs conducted by Dingwall and Highland Marts, which saw a top price of £550 each for a pair of Suffolk from Mrs Irene Fowlie, Adziel, Strichen, Aberdeenshire.



The top placed Young Shepherds were (l-r) David Colthart in first place, Ian Christie in second and Martin Scott and Gavin MacDonald sharing third.

North Sheep 2013 Fact File

Venue: Crimple Head Farm near Harrogate, by kind permission of J.M. Wilson and Sons.

Date: Wednesday 5th June.

Attendance: in the region of 7,000 people.

Young Shepherd of the Year winner: Josh Ryder.

Sheep shearing winner: Adam Berry.

Gents stockjudging winner: Cecil Hutchinson.

Ladies stockjudging winner: Margaret Iveson.

Under 26s stockjudging winner: Eddie Heard.

Under 19s stockjudging winner: Henry Forsett.

Best indoor trade stand: Logie Durno Sheep.

Best outdoor trade stand: Ripon Farm Supplies.

Best breed society stand: Lleyn Sheep Society.

Best wool-on-the-hoof: North of England Mule Sheep Association.

Ready, Steady, Cook winner: Andrew Atkinson

Across the day, whether in opening speeches or seminars, speaker after speaker at NSA North Sheep 2013 emphasised the role sheep farmers play in British food production and the protection of rural life and landscape, and how vital these roles are for the future.

Speaking during the official opening ceremony, NSA Northern Region Chairman Adam Watson said: "NSA North Sheep provides people with a one-stop-shop showing everything that is good about the sheep farming industry. It is a great opportunity to focus on the future."

Martin Redfearn, Head of Agriculture for Barclays Bank, continued on this theme saying: "Sheep farming is vital to all parts of the agriculture industry and

NSA North Sheep Report

Family farms are the backbone of Britain



Josh Ryder, winner of the Young Shepherd of the Year competition.

the strength of that industry is its people. The role of the stockman is almost indescribable – what he or she can see in the pen, shed or field of livestock today, is maybe what any blind fool can see tomorrow. You can improve it from what it is but it has to be there to start with. He or she has to have instinct for livestock."

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, added his belief that farmers 'are the foundation of all land management in the country, and family farming units are the backbone of agriculture'.

NSA North Sheep was a tremendous industry forum and was used as a platform for the British Wool Marketing Board to announce their 2013 wool prices. Farmers also saw the latest developments in flock management and

healthcare, as well as the commercial aspects of their business. The seminar programme looked in detail at the challenges and opportunities the industry faces in the future.

Hugely popular during the day were the sponsored farm tours, especially as participants were offered Yorkshire tasters of real ale, pork pies and flapjacks! The trailer rides offered an oversight of activity at Crimple Head Farm, which is ran by three generations in the name of J.M. Wilson and Sons. The 1,000-acre farm runs flocks of 1,000 horned Dalesbred, 300 Masham and 50 Mule ewes, along with 30 pure-bred Texels and 100 head of breeding cattle. The Wilson family are very keen supporters of the NSA and the sheep industry, with David Wilson currently serving as Chairman of the Dalesbred Sheep Breeders' Association.

As the trade stand packed up at the end of the day, David said afterwards how grateful he was to the teams of people who had helped to set up and make the farm smart. "I couldn't be happier and prouder," he said. "North Sheep hasn't been to this county for 10 years and the event was a triumph and a showcase for Yorkshire farming and produce."

For the third time in NSA North Sheep's history there was a Young Shepherd of the Year competition – which was won by a neighbour to the farm – Josh Ryder of Central House Farm, Haverah Park, Harrogate. Receiving trophy his said NSA North Sheep was a flagship in farming and that, given the venue, couldn't be a better event to win at.

Josh works at CCM auction and on the 300-acre family home farm where they run 1,200 Dalesbred and Swaledale ewes and a small herd of sucklers. He will go on to represent the NSA Northern Region at the final of the UK Young Shepherd of the Year to be held at NSA Sheep 2014 in Malvern, Worcestershire.

Summing up the day, event organiser Julie Sedgewick said: "We were delighted with the high number of visitors that turned out and this demonstrates yet again how the sheep farming industry continues to be such an important part of British agriculture. We had a record number of trade stands, sheep breed societies and support from sponsors, and I would like to thank them all. Their attendance and support helped us to produce what was a tremendous event."



Three generations of the Wilson family made North Sheep 2013 possible l-r; Richard, David, Kathryn, Mandy, Michael and Martin.

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NSA Youthful Shepherds Report

Fantastic day for sheep enthusiasts of all ages

With more than 250 people of all ages attending, the first ever Youthful Shepherds Event was a huge success – and hopefully created a format that can be used again and again in the years to come.

The event was organised as part of NSA's Young People in Sheep initiative, a multi-dimensional project that pledges to support the future of the sheep industry through young people. It was hosted by the NSA Eastern Region at Newmarket, Suffolk, but was open to youngsters all over the UK with an interest in sheep, whether they were already working in the sheep sector or wanted to in the future. A unique opportunity was provided for new and potential new entrants to have access to industry leaders and influencers, gain information and advice, and have a say about what the industry could do to better support them.

The NSA Youthful Shepherds Event was opened by Sir Jim Paice and started with an Open Forum that allowed attendees



to quiz a range of people on every aspect of working in the sheep sector. The panel was chaired by Chris Lloyd of Eblex and included Sir Jim Paice, who has worked as a farm manager and contractor as well as leading a life in politics. Other experts included Phil Stocker (NSA Chief Executive), Dan Phipps (sheep farmer and event host), Charles Sercombe (sheep farmer and NFU Livestock Board Chairman), Mike Credland (sheep farmer and founding member of the May Hill Lamb Group), Catherine Nakielny (sheep farmer and Nuffield Scholar), Matthew Smart (of Eastern Counties Finance and Agribank Plc), Nick Davies (of Dunbia), and Andrew Blenkiron (Estate Director at Euston Estates).

There followed practical demonstrations and also the Young Shepherd of the Year Competition, which was won by 25-year-old Marie Prebble. Marie Prebble farms 230 acres with her parents, who are Ministry of



The electric fencing competition saw teams of mixed ages showing their skills.

Defence tenants near Canterbury. She is a member of Canterbury YFC and a NSA South East Region Committee Member.

The NSA Youthful Shepherds Event was held at Rutland Yard, Newmarket, Suffolk, by kind permission of Darley Stud Management Co Ltd. Dan Phipps, Head Shepherd at Darley and NSA



Marie Prebble, winner of the Young Shepherd of the Year Competition, receives her award from Lady Paice.





Young Shepherd of the Year competitors were put through their paces in several activities.

Eastern Region Vice Chairman, was part of the Organising Committee that was instrumental to the event getting off the ground. He says: "I was very pleased with how many young people came along to the day, as I was with the number of people from all sections of the sheep industry who joined us to impart information and demonstrate the wide and varied opportunities the industry has to offer. The sheep sector is reliant on the people involved – and going forward it is reliant on the people it can attract – so to see people of all ages interacting was great.

"A special thanks to Sir Jim and Lady Paice for Sir Jim's opening remarks and Lady Paice's involvement in the prize presentation.



Sir Jim Paice (centre) opened the event, which kicked off with an Open Forum, allowing young people to quiz people already working in the sheep sector.

They were there through to the day's completion, which ended on a high with some less serious elements, including a 'shear-a-sheep- eat-a-pie-drink-a-pint competition'. There was a surge of late entries for this and a highlight of the day was seeing local farmer John O Dell compete alongside one of our prize-winning Young Shepherds, George Hartley Webb, with an age gap of some 50 years!

"Thank you to everyone who attended the first ever NSA Youthful Shepherds Event and making the work of Andrew Foulds, NSA Eastern Region Chairman, and the rest of organising committee so worthwhile." □



George Hartley-Webb collecting his certificate from Lady Paice for being the second placed Young Shepherd.



Youthful Shepherd Competition Winners

- Young Shepherd of the Year:-
- Marie Prebble (Canterbury).
- George Hartley-Webb (Thetford).
- Sarah Turner (Northants).
- William Mawer (Peterborough).
- Harry Lombardi (Lincolnshire).
- Matthew Phipps (Newmarket).
- Shear a sheep, eat a pie, drink a pint: Ed O Dell.
- Sheep counting: Paul Moore, with his young son William Moore coming a very close second.
- Electric fencing: Tom and Mattie Phipps.
- Children's quiz: Jordan Paddock.
- Guess the name of the lamb: Tilly Davies.



Dan Phipps, NSA Eastern Region Vice Chairman and event host, oversees the sheep counting competition.

NSA Sheep SW Report

Excellent location draws big crowds

A damp start to the day soon gave way to a breeze and sunshine, providing perfect conditions for NSA Sheep South West. Over the preceding weeks the Snell family had proved to be enthusiastic hosts, with nothing too much trouble for them.

The excellent location, high up on the edge of Exmoor, attracted 3,000 visitors who were all eager to do business. The record number of trade and breed society had been buoyed up by several new exhibitors, and some who had not taken the plunge this year but came to look have already expressed serious interest in attending in the future. Trade and breed society stands were pleased to report high levels of interest from new and existing customers.

The region was delighted that the Duke of Montrose was able to make his first visit to a regional event and carried out the opening ceremony. This included a presentation to Mary Snell, who was celebrating her birthday.

This year saw a programme of seminars, and first up was Gareth Jones from BWMB who provided an insight into the state of the wool industry and said, although wool prices had fallen they are still higher than the average level over the last 10 years, so should still provide a reasonable return. Novartis Animal Health provided an excellent presentation on how we can best prevent blowfly strike in what is becoming an increasingly longer season, and Terry Gurnhill from Defra gave an update on the plans to reduce the amount of paperwork facing sheep producers when moving livestock. This would be via electronic reporting, with



NSA President the Duke of Montrose (centre) thanks host Michael Snell and his wife Mary, who was celebrating her birthday that day.

a paper option for those who wish, and is on track to start in April 2014, with meetings being planned later in the year to keep producers informed of the changes. Other issues such as standstill requirements and the way movements between linked properties within a 10 mile radius are reported, are still under review.

The farm tours proved popular with the trailers kept busy all day taking over 1,000 people on the trip to learn more about the issues affecting the farm. The first tour of the day was for children from Rackenford Primary School, who arrived bright and early and were enthralled by everything they saw. Their highlight was watching the shearing in the Shepherd of the Future competition, sponsored by



A highlight for students from Rackenford Primary School was watching the Young Shepherd of the Future competition.

Sheep SW 2013 Fact File

Venue: Moortown Barton, Knowstone, South Molton, by kind permission of Michael and David Snell and family

Date: Tuesday 11th June.

Attendance: in the region of 3,000 people.

Young Shepherd of the Future: Sam Bullingham, Okehampton.

Student Shepherd of the Future: Andrew Flake, Plumpton College.

Carcase competitions: Waitrose producer, sired by a native breed: 1, R. Vosper; 2, P. Hutton; 3, M. Hutchings. Waitrose producer, sired by a continental breed: 1, W.A. Grigg (also overall champion); 2, R. Vosper; 3, G.N. Harding. Jaspers producers, sired by a native breed: 1, D. Bosley; 2, Haye Farm; 3, P. Ede. Jaspers producers, sired by a continental breed: 1, P. Collett; 2, S. McKinley; 3, A. Parsons.

Fleece competitions: Fine: 1&3, R.D. & A.E. Molyneux; 2, Mrs Huxter. Medium: 1, D. Cox; 2, R. Harding; 3, T. Elston. Cross: 1&2, Mr & Mrs Franklyn; 3, D. Bawden. Lustre: 1, T. Elston; 2&3, Mr & Mrs Franklyn. Hill/Mountain: 1&2, R. Harding (also overall champion); 3, D. Bawden. Natural Coloured: 1&2, Mr & Mrs Franklyn; 3, Mrs Huxter.

Open Lamb Selection: M. Slade.

Best indoor trade stand: Eblex.

Best outdoor trade stand: Mole Avon.

Best breed society stand: Welsh Mules.

Mole Valley Farmers. Sam Bullingham from Okehampton won the open section and will represent the South West Region in the national final at NSA Sheep 2014. Andrew Flake from Plumpton College won the student section, which was sponsored by Eblex. The standard was extremely high and the questions in the written section were testing even for sheep keepers with many years of experience!

Once again the sale of sheepdogs proved to be a big attraction with 38 dogs going under the hammer. Top price for the day was £2,100 for Bracken, a three-year-old bitch from Ray Edwards of Chumbleigh. She went to a new home in West Somerset. Kivells auctioneer James Morrish was delighted with the trade, which saw working dogs average £1,679, untrained dogs £744 and puppies at £161.

After the event David Gregory, NSA Sheep South West Event Chairman, said: "This has been our most successful event to date, owed in no small part to the Snell family and all their hard work, and I would like to thank them, the event organising committee, the regional committee, the sponsors for their continued support, exhibitors and anyone else who had contributed in any way. This is going to be a difficult act to follow, but we will relish the challenge and look forward to seeing everyone again in 2015."

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² Maes L, Vanparijs O, Lauwers H. (1990) Activité doucicide du closantel contre Fasciola hepatica: approche pharmacodynamique. Revue Méd. Vet., 141, 12, 991-995.

³ Res Vet Sci, 1988 Mar;44(2):229-32. Flukicidal action of closantel against immature and mature Fasciola hepatica in experimentally infected rats and sheep. Maes L, Lauwers H, Deckers W, Vanparijs O.

⁴ Coles, G. C., Rhodes, A. C., Stafford, K. A. (2000) Activity of closantel against adult triclabendazole-resistant Fasciola hepatica. Veterinary Record 146, 504.

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Making New Relationships in NZ

Working together on lamb prices

The free-fall in lamb prices in late 2012 and early 2013 really knocked profitability for farms selling then, and also severely dented the confidence that had been growing steadily.

Fortunately prices climbed back well – faster and higher than many had predicted – but we said then that the NSA, along with other interested organisations, must work hard to avoid this situation happening again.

Working to get the best from our markets is a shared responsibility. Farmers have a responsibility to drive for greater efficiency and productivity – but there are boundaries beyond which there can be unforeseen consequences, such as challenging genetics that are particularly suitable to their environments or squeezing out the family farm that has such social benefits.

Responsibilities

And while farmers themselves bear plenty of responsibility, the NSA and other membership organisations also the responsibility of working on an industry level and allowing our many disparate member businesses to act/speak/communicate as one. We can bring about change that few individual businesses could achieve alone.

Then our levy bodies, using our levy funds, are responsible for promoting our products, collecting and analysing information and statistics for our use, and promoting efficiency and best

practice through research and knowledge exchange. Farmers, membership organisations and levy bodies together can be a powerful force – as long as we work together, complement each other and pull in a common direction, accepting that while we are on one journey there will be different pathways.

Lamb prices

The reasons for the price falls were well communicated – the weather delaying finishing and forced many producers to sell unfinished stock and/or store stock when they would not normally choose to; store lambs in the hands of specialist finishers all hit the market within a short window; the exchange rate put our export trade was on the floor; and then of course this all coincided with NZ lamb imports. With all this coming together at the same time there is little surprise that prices fell – but we said at the time that we must do what we can to stop this happening again and there are undoubtedly things that can be done.

Long term planning: We can do little about the weather but better use of statistics and data, and more reasoned analysis, well communicated to farmers by organisations like NSA, has to help with some of the day-to-day decisions made on farm.

Market specifications: Selling from the farm must be about meeting market specifications, but this doesn't mean all one spec. We have many market outlets that cater for most of our product

types, so it's about finding the right one, understanding its requirements and hitting that spec.

Export markets: Exchange rates are largely out of our hands, but Eblex, HCC, QMS and LMC are all working hard to build relationships with existing trading partners and open new markets, such as in Asia and the Eastern-bloc countries. Maximising carcass value and making the most of fifth quarter products is an essential part of this work. In addition Eblex, supported by NSA and our partners in the NFU, facilitated a meeting with similar French organisations in May 2013 to share experiences and discuss what more we can do to ensure our markets complement each other. This was a very effective meeting that will be repeated routinely.

New Zealand

NZ came in for a lot of criticism for driving our market down, and there is no doubt this was the case. But what is crystal clear is the prices they received did not work for Kiwi farmers or processors. Most of their farmers lost money and four of their large-scale processors posted end of year financial losses.

The problem is NZ sees the UK (and France) as their most important high-value export market and has increasingly targeted us with specific products. Therefore 2012 saw a similar tonnage of NZ lamb arrive as previous years, but consignments were mainly loins and legs, which had a disproportionate impact on our domestic supply.

Some supermarkets, sometimes in partnership with our processors, put in place Christmas/New Year and Easter price promotions with shelf prices at times below import prices. Once one retailer leads with such an offer many competitors find it impossible to do anything else but follow suit.

We have to continue to work with our supermarkets and processors to encourage them to stop taking decisions that have such an impact on our sector, and to be honest they all know that it makes no long term sense to destroy their domestic supply.

We will continue to keep challenging their statement (or excuse) that UK lamb is out of season. With our many different sheep systems and some out-of-season lamb flocks, lamb is in season all year



A trip to New Zealand is planned for later this year, with the aim of stopping aggressive NZ marketing making life difficult for Kiwi and UK farmers.

round. There is nothing wrong with hogget apart from the name (as once we call lamb 'hogget', supermarkets are even more likely to say 'lamb' is out of season). It doesn't change overnight, although the taste does mature as the year progresses. NSA will continue to work with supermarket representatives and others to explain this and make it a virtue rather than a problem.

Global community

As sheep farmers most of us would like to see sheep farming globally succeed. It is in our nature to want the UK to survive and thrive foremost, but we are a 'global community' of sheep producers and work with relationships and friendships across the globe. NSA, NFU and Eblex met with Beef and Lamb New Zealand in the spring (one of an on-going programme of meetings) to explain the situation and discuss solutions.

This was a tough meeting where all organisations stood up firmly for their farming stakeholders and was followed by a strategic discussion between NSA, NFU and Eblex to plan a trip to NZ to build alliances with NZ sheep farmers. If last year didn't work for them and didn't work for us, there must be a better way.

This trip is planned for August, in advance of negotiations between UK retailers and NZ operators, and we have met with Kiwi farmer who is leading a movement of NZ producers who are seeking greater empowerment and involvement. It looks as though there are many Kiwi farmers that want exactly what we want here.

The NZ trip is a major investment both in costs and time and, along with some key Eblex staff and myself, we have three

Getting Closer to a CAP Deal?

As *Sheep Farmer* was going to press, ministers from the European Member States (Owen Paterson included) were involved in the final trilogue meetings with MEPs to try and agree a 'final' version of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the Council of Ministers to approve.

The final tweaks and compromises made at this stage could have a far-reaching impact, but while NSA and other stakeholder groups have worked hard up to this stage to influence where we can, to some extent the real challenge starts as soon as the ink dries on the paper and Member States start making decisions on how to implement the policy in their home countries.

As we know, this will be different in England, Wales, Scotland and NI, so NSA will be active across the board. There's plenty to do in terms of making sure flexibility within the CAP is taken advantage of – but also areas where taking that flexibility too far could work against farmers on the ground – so continual discussion and thorough responses to all consultations will be vital.

The priority for NSA continues to be discouraging modulation of funds from

Pillar One (Single Farm Payment) to Pillar Two (RDP), as Defra in particular appears keen to use the whole 15% permitted in the new policy, as well as the compulsory 10%. This would see quarter of the Pillar One pot moved, which NSA remains opposed to.

Other key areas are deciding on definitions for 'active' farmers, ensuring there is support for new entrants and finding a greening system that offers enough choice for vastly different farms to select options that suits them best.

NSA also remains committed to ensuring Pillar Two funds get into farmers' pockets. With the overall budget shrinking and modulation more than likely and little interest in co-financing Pillar Two money we feel it is vital for farmers to have the option to volunteer for schemes that allow them to 'top up' their Single Farm Payment with money from Pillar Two. While agri-environment schemes are one way to do this, we remain convinced that a similar scheme incentivising best practice animal health is the best way forward. Work will continue and we look forward to updating you in the next edition of *Sheep Farmer*.

well-known sheep farmers travelling who will do a great job in representing farmers here.

- Charles Sercombe – NFU Livestock Board Chair and NSA English Committee.
- David Raine – NSA Vice President and NFU Livestock Board.

- Jonathan Barber – NSA Vice President and Eblex Board member.

Our markets will never be perfect but I hope it is clear that everyone is pulling together to avoid the sort of crisis that we saw last year.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive



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The Right Kit Makes Life Easier

Joanne Pugh meets a sheep farmer who wishes he invested in the right equipment years ago

Supplying a local butcher with 20 finished lambs a week for nine months of the year means Surrey-based farmer Trevor Telling is handling sheep on a very regular basis.

And be it selecting in-spec lambs or checking over breeding ewes, he has come to believe in trying to make life easy for himself.

Last year he invested in a Rappa 20ft Mobile Sheep Yard and weigh system, plus a Ritchie Combi Clamp to bring sheep up to chest height for basic husbandry tasks. He says the kit has 'changed his working life' at Lower Bonhurst Farm, Bramley, Guildford, and is happy to share his experience with Sheep Farmer readers, given that NSA is offering the chance for one lucky member to win the same Rappa model that he has on his farm – see panel for details.

Trevor was one of the first people to ever own the Rappa Mobile Sheep Yard. He says the company's 'helpfulness and professionalism' is one of the reasons he chose them when considering which of four different sheep handling systems to buy, to replace his previous method of moving a 'stationary' handling system from field to field using a tractor, loader and trailer.

"It's the most I've ever spent on sheep kit – but I wish I'd done it years ago," he says. "The combi-clamp is phenomenal and takes out all the backbreaking work, and I can honestly say I love the Rappa. I wanted to buy something that would last a long time; it needed to be a one-off purchase. It's very strong but it's also got plenty of 'give' in it for when sheep push



against the sides. I've never had a sheep break out or push the hurdles over, yet I've never used the supports that were supplied."

Trevor runs 600 Lleyn ewes on a 140ha (350-acre) tenanted unit, complimented by another 50ha (120 acres) rented from a different landlord just up the road. He buys in 50 Aberdeen-Angus cross Friesian calves each autumn to rear on a bucket, graze through the summer and sell as stores in the following October. Given his location on the urban fringe of Guildford, Trevor also grows silage/haylage for local equestrian businesses and runs livery stables for 20 horses.

The location of the farm, just minutes from the town centre and less than 30 miles from central London, has also been a massive help in finding a local butcher able to take virtually all the lambs he

produces each year.

Trevor enjoys an excellent working relationship with Robert Rawlings of Rawlings of Cranleigh (10 miles from Guildford) and has been supplying him with 20 lambs a week from June to February/March for four years. Supplying local restaurants as well as regular domestic customers, Rawlings of Cranleigh is able to take the vast majority of lambs from Lower Bonhurst Farm, with Trevor and his wife selling

Lower Bonhurst Farm

- 140ha (350-acre) tenanted unit, plus 50ha (120 acres) rented a short distance away.
- 600 Lleyn ewes, ran as a closed flock.
- Everything lambed outside in March and April.
- Nearly all finished lambs sold to a local butcher.
- Hay and haylage made each year for home-use and to sell to local equestrian businesses.
- Stubble turnips also grown to finish lambs on.
- 50 beef calves bought each year and reared on the farm for 12 months.
- Livery business for 20 horses also ran on the farm.

around 30 a year themselves (boxed and sold under the Bramley Lamb brand) and occasionally selling a small number through Ashford Market.

Having only ran sheep on the farm for five years, his relationship with the butcher means Trevor was able to 'cut out the middleman' very soon after going into lamb production. He took on the farm more than 30 years ago, milking cows until the threat of losing the tenancy led him to sell the herd. The renewal of the tenancy under a new landlord (who Trevor says is a pleasure to work with) saw a brief flirtation with a suckler herd before a change of tack and the development of a real enthusiasm for sheep.

"I was deeply passionate about dairy farming and saw it as the most disciplined, business-like sector in farming, with a regular cash flow," Trevor says. "Sheep farming is the closest thing to it. If you are regimented in the way you run a sheep unit it can be very good business. In fact, I'm almost as passionate about sheep farming now as I was with dairying."

Trevor says he has carried over many of the 'disciplines' from his dairying days, such as tight lambing patterns, good grassland management and balanced nutrition, but despite achieving a 'pretty respectable' 1.8 lambs sold per ewe put to the tup, still sees lots of opportunities to 'perfect things and trim them up'.

The farm employs just one full-time workman, who Trevor values very highly and describes as a vital part of the tightly-ran business, given the size of the sheep and forage enterprises, as well as the cattle and livery stables.

The land away from home is mainly used for forage production, but also provides additional grazing in the late summer and early autumn to relieve pressure on the main unit. Moving lambs to stubble turnips from August also allows pasture to be put aside to flush the ewes on and enough grass to be available through to November-time, when the Lleyms are supplemented with haylage/silage.

Trevor says he used selenium and cobalt boluses for the first time last autumn and, impressed by their positive impact, particularly in preventing retained cleansings, plans to use them twice this year, administering them to ewes pre-lambing as well as pre-tupping.

In order to maintain a closed flock, Trevor keeps 250 Lleyms pure (they lamb from 1st March) and puts the rest to a Charollais tup (lambing from 1st April). Concentrate feeding is limited to one month before lambing, with a 'value for money' cake selected based on the haylage/silage analysis. This is

introduced at 0.25kg/head and built up to 0.75kg at point of lambing, and is usually withdrawn when the ewes are turned out, as the farm is 'early' enough to provide plenty of grass from March onwards in an average year.

"We feed a limited amount of concentrate to the ewes, but we keep an eye on it and if we have haylage analysed and feed accordingly we can watch the cost at every point, because there's not much in it really," he says.

Although he doubts he will ever reach his ultimate aim of running the system without any bought-in feed at all, Trevor is a big fan of the smaller Lleyn ewe and says her lower nutrition maintenance level is one of the reasons he switched to the breed, having initially stocked the farm with Mules.

"I used to be a North Country Mule man but I liked the look of the Lleyn and built up a flock from 50 bought-in ewes," he says. "What I was so impressed with was what good mothers they are and the cheapness of keeping them. I just really like them; they're a marvellous sheep."

Describing two years of indoor lambing as 'nonsense', Trevor now lambs outside and has developed a system that 'runs like clockwork'. He lambs in a 4ha (10-acre) field with two smaller paddocks to run sheep onto at night-time, and takes freshly lambed ewes indoors to pen for 24 hours.

Ewes and lambs then run in batches of 80-100, to suit the farm's field sizes, with finished lambs drafted from early to mid-June. Weaning is in mid-July and stubble turnips (with a grassy run-back area) able to support around 100-head from August onwards.

Trevor sends 20 finished lambs to the abattoir every Tuesday, killing out at 18-22kg, and receives a weight-based payment from his butcher every week.

"It works really well, but I have to get it right," he says. "If there are only 18 finished lambs in one field I can't just make up the load with a couple of lighter lambs, I have to go into the next field and find two lambs that are right. That's why having the right kit is so vital."

Lucky NSA Member To Win Rappa Worth £6,800

The free prize draw to win a Rappa 10ft Mobile Sheep Yard is part of the NSA's 2013 Membership Recruitment campaign. Anyone joining NSA since the launch of the campaign in January is automatically entered into the draw. But existing members can also benefit from the campaign, by referring a friend or neighbour to become a NSA member themselves. You get one entry in the draw for every person you recommend who signs up – there is no limit to the

number of entries – so just make sure that whenever a new member signs up they include your NSA membership details in the special box on the application form. There is a membership application form on the inside back cover of this magazine, so cut it out and pass it to a non-member today for your chance to get entered into the draw. Full terms and conditions at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/rappadraw.



Lessons from Around the World

Experiences of Nuffield Scholars benefit the sector

Ahead of the deadline for 2014 Nuffield Farming Scholarship applications, two NSA members who won scholarships in 2011 and 2012 look at what they learnt about sheep genomics from their worldwide travels and how they hope it might encourage the implementation of new technology back at home in the UK.

Catherine Nakielny

Catherine Nakielny is a 2011 Nuffield Scholar. She farms in Carmarthenshire and runs her own sheep consultancy business. Catherine also represents NSA Cymru/Wales on the NSA UK Policy and Technical Committee.

The main focus of my scholarship was to look at role of improving production efficiency in reducing methane emissions from lamb production – and my findings provided good news on this front. Looking at international government policy showed that improving production ‘efficiency’ is being increasingly recognised as the most sustainable approach to reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. This concept of ‘making more from less’ replaces previous calls which simply looked to reduce the number of farmed livestock.



Of further interest to myself was the high level of investment being made into research. While the main aim of this research work is to reduce emissions from livestock production, encouragingly many of the research findings also improve flock efficiency and profitability.

Genetic improvement within the sheep sector was highlighted as one of the main areas for improvement in all the countries I visited – New Zealand, Australia and Ireland. Both New Zealand and Australia are making significant investments in genomic technology as part of a programme to improve the genetic merit of the national flock. In NZ this has led to the development of a commercially available ‘Sheep50k’ test which itself represents a DNA-marker panel of more than 50,000 markers that have been identified in the sheep genome.

The Sheep50k test generates a



molecular breeding value (mBV) that predicts the animal's genetic merit based purely on its DNA – but the optimum value is obtained by blending this with more traditional estimated breeding values (EBVs) based on parentage and trait measurements of the individual animal. This combination is known as a genomic breeding value and represents a more accurate estimate of an individual's true genetic value.

The ultimate goal is to analyse a DNA sample collected from an animal at a young age, apply the prediction equation and then decide which animals would be best to select for the trait or range of traits. This process could speed up genetic improvement in two ways – by reducing the generation interval and by making analysis more accurate.

The technology is also generic, so it can be used for any trait upon which the necessary initial research has been carried out. It is especially useful for traits that show up late in life or those that can only be measured by killing or challenging the animal so, for example, resistance to disease or carcass traits.

On initial release in 2010 the Sheep50k test was available for parasite resistance, carcass weight, weaning weight and number of lambs born. It now includes analysis of 15 traits, including lean meat yield and fleece attributes, as well as production and disease traits, and is available for animals containing at least 50% Romney, Coopworth and Perendale genetics.

This genomic technology is equally applicable to the UK sheep industry – but it is by no means an ‘easy fix’ to speed-up genetic improvement in the

UK population, as our national flock presents some unique challenges for this area of science. The initial application of molecular breeding values requires a great deal of research into the relationship between the markers and the physical performance of individual animals for each of the traits of interest. Variation existing between different breeds also adds an additional requirement for research and development, with each population potentially requiring its own validation process.

With an impressive range of breeds contained within the UK sheep industry, should the application of the technology be considered, there may in the first instance be a need for a targeted approach focused on the most numerous genetics represented in the sector. In turn, the production of genomic breeding values which combine molecular breeding values with the more traditional estimated breeding values will require further uptake of the current performance recording system within the pedigree sector.

Regardless of the application of genomic technology within the UK sheep sector, I feel there is a clear message derived from my Nuffield Scholarship – in order to meet the future challenges of lamb production all sheep producers must embrace genetic improvement and base breeding decisions on objective analysis as well as visual assessment and practical experience. Technology such as the Sheep50k test will not replace the role of the stockman, but can instead enhance the quality of decisions made when it comes to improving the underlying genetics of a flock.

Rob Hodgkins

Rob Hodgkins is a 2012 Nuffield Scholar. He works within his family's sheep breeding operation and also sees an opportunity for sheep as the ‘golden hoof’ on arable farms. Rob is a keen supporter of the NSA Young People in Sheep initiative.



My parents Chris and Caroline, my brother Andrew and I are all equal partners in our large, family-run commercial sheep farm. We run over 3,000 New Zealand Romney ewes on a spread out unit (a



Both Catherine and Rob were impressed by the application of DNA sampling in the southern hemisphere

25-mile round trip to visit every flock!) on good to mediocre grassland in the south of England.

We operate a single breed, closed flock policy and take great care and interest in selecting future progeny to make shepherding as enjoyable and stress free as possible. In a typical year we sell around 110 two-tooth NZ Romney rams and all of the breeding females (800+) we have for sale.

Our farm management is largely dictated to us by HLS/ELS requirements so our ability to influence performance through improved forage management is limited. Instead our focus must be on improving the genetics within the flock.

My interest in genetics led me to my Nuffield Scholarship looking at genomic selection in maternal sheep breeds; it saw me travel half way across the world, spending eight weeks in the southern hemisphere investigating the genomic selection and its current applications within lamb production. The Nuffield network opened doors into some of the worlds most advanced research labs and I got to talk to some of the world leaders in this field.

In New Zealand I saw an Illumini I-Scan read DNA from several hundred sheep

on a single chip, as well as a breeder introducing Myomax genes into Romneys and how genomics can help speed up his breeding program. And in Australia I spent a day doing a lambing round on a Merino stud, where we discussed the gains genomics will make in the owners work to breed more maternal ewes.

For 10 years my family has been importing New Zealand genetics from Wairere (NZ's largest Romney breeder) and we based the nucleus of our entire breeding programme on 18 NZ-born rams. Those 18 rams were DNA sampled in 2012 – and so part of my reason for selecting this topic for my Nuffield was to see to what extent we are able to use the same genomic technology as the Kiwis use. I found that, as every animal in our recorded flocked was sired by those 18 NZ rams, we have been able to derive genomic breeding values for the whole of our flock.

Requirements for using genomics in the UK are:-

- Needs to be combined with a performance recording system. In New Zealand this is Sheep Improvement Ltd (SIL).
- Needs a continuous updating of gene locations. In practice this means a highly recorded 'nucleus flock' to keep test 'calibrated'.

We have also made the decision to test our top ranked ram lambs from the 2012 crop. One of these home-bred rams has achieved our highest ever SIL ranking and is also the top ranked ram within our flock on the Signet system. With this potential identified from traditional breeding values this ram will be analysed for his genomic breeding value for possible retention as one our own flock rams. He will be the first sheep born outside NZ to ever be given a genomic breeding value on the Sheep50k system,



A ewe lamb from Rob's Wairere flock, with her twin lambs.

and the results will form the basis of our future breeding programmes.

I see the benefits of using genomics as:-

- Increased genetic gain.
- Improved accuracy.
- Ability to select on difficult-to-measure traits.

While the genomic test is still somewhat in its infancy, having only been commercially available in New Zealand for around three years, I believe it will have a valuable part to play in increasing the genetic progress which we can make within our own breeding programme in the UK.

The full reports from Catherine's Nuffield Scholarship (sponsored by the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society and Innovis) and Rob's Nuffield Scholarship (sponsored by the South of England Agricultural Society) can be found at www.nuffieldinternational.org/reports. Catherine (catherine@knconsulting.co.uk and 07875 521 324) and Rob (07747 623124 or via www.wairereuk.com) are happy for readers to contact them directly. □

Could You Be A Nuffield Scholar?

The Nuffield Scholarship Programme offers an incredible and life-changing opportunity for young people to travel overseas and study a specific farming topic. The article shows just two examples of how the sheep sector has benefitted from discoveries made by previous scholars, and as part of our Young People and Sheep initiative, which is committed to the next generation of sheep sector workers, NSA encourages anyone under the age of 45 to consider applying.

You have until Wednesday 31st July

to decide on a topic and complete an application. You must be three year or more post tertiary education and have been engaged in farming, rural land-based industries, food industries or agriculturally associated industries for at least two years, and intend to remain in

these industries.

Scholars are required to travel for at least eight weeks anywhere in the world over an 18-month period, visiting one or more countries in order to further knowledge and understanding with a view to advancing your respective industry. The cost is funded by a variety of agricultural and food organisations, charities and trusts with agricultural objectives, as well as past scholars themselves, and in return scholars are expected to write a paper on their chosen topic and present their findings at the annual conference. Around 20 awards are available annually and applications are via an online process at www.nuffieldscholar.org. □



Grass and Clover Update

Forage breeders keep an eye on a sustainable future

A wealth of grass and clover breeding progress was put before visitors to the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) Aberystwyth University last month at an open day organised by Farming Connect.

Sustainable livestock farming was very much the focus, and for sheep farmers amongst the 100 in attendance there was much to be positive about in terms of new varieties already available as well as an enticing glimpse into the future.

The opportunity for higher quality grazing with the scope to produce more lamb per hectare – with greater production efficiency and a lower environmental impact – was most clearly put across with an update on the breeding of high sugar grasses. As IBERS ryegrass breeder Dr Richard Hayes explained, significant progress in this area is continuing more than a decade after the first variety, AberDart, became commercially available.

Ready energy

“Ruminants are poor converters of grass protein into milk or meat, with about 80% of feed protein being excreted in faeces and urine,” he said. “This inefficiency is costly in terms of wasted feed value and also means a lot of nitrogen is potentially contributing to environmental pollution by the livestock industry.

“The key difference with high sugar grasses is that they provide more readily available energy in the rumen than conventional ryegrasses. This fuels the rumen microbes and results in more grass protein being converted into animal protein, which for sheep farmers means higher lamb growth rates and faster finishing. With more grass protein going into meat production, less is excreted and hence there is a benefit for the environment too.

“The on-going breeding programme at IBERS has continued to produce Aber HSG ryegrasses that are not only higher in sugar but also rank very high on the Recommended List for dry matter yield and quality (D-value), whilst also being robust in all the other required agronomic traits.

“As an indication of still better things to come, the next expected variety, AberWolf, is 10% higher in water soluble carbohydrate (sugar) than current control



Grass and clover varieties are tested by grazing sheep on trial plots

varieties and excels most attributes when compared with the average of all other comparable new varieties. This intermediate heading perennial ryegrass is currently in National List trials and is scheduled for a commercial launch in 2014.”

Improving the balance of protein and energy in grazed forages is also being addressed by the clover breeders at IBERS, with white clover varieties with lower crude protein content now being tested in field trials. Early results show that white clovers with 5-10% lower crude protein than normal varieties have the potential to be comparable in their dry matter production and their ability to fix nitrogen and – as they have a lower requirement for nitrogen due to their lower leaf protein content – more may be available to the companion ryegrass in the sward.

Drought tolerance

For sheep farmers who can remember the last drought year in 2010 – and rest assured another will be around the corner – reports of white clover hybrids being developed to perform in water-restricted conditions will have been of interest. AberLasting is the first white clover variety to be developed at IBERS with rhizomatous root characteristics, transferred from the more drought-tolerant Caucasian clover species. Developed through conventional crossing techniques, AberLasting is a small leaved white clover suitable for long term sheep grazing, but with added value where water limitation might be a concern.

For those with an interest in red clover, a breeding programme now focused on greater persistency and disease resistance will have been noted. As Forage Legume Breeder Dr David Lloyd explained, there is now real impetus in the red clover breeding programmes at IBERS, with progress rivalling the innovations emerging with white clovers.

Red clover

“With new varieties like the longer lasting red clover AberClaret now commercially available and with better still to come on this front, we are certainly seeing a resurgence of interest in this species,” he says. “With four to five years persistency, red clover is a better fit for many farmers’ rotations and offers a very good source of quality forage.

“We are now making progress in developing varieties with resistance to key diseases such as stem eelworm, and we are also seeing some encouraging results from work on reduced nitrate leaching. We are also in the process of screening wild populations for new traits that we see having value for farmers in the future.”

While we must wait for some of these new varieties to become available, the message from IBERS and Grassland Development Centre staff at this Farming Connect event was that there is a lot farmers can do right away to maximise efficiency. This includes reseeding, selecting the best varieties on the NIAB Recommended List, and insisting on seeds mixtures that contain the right species and varieties for their systems. □

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To Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate?

Protecting your flock from Schmallenberg

Schmallenberg virus (SBV) was first discovered in Germany in late 2011, in herds of cows with otherwise unexplainable fever, diarrhoea and milk drop. A couple of months after these initial signs, further devastating consequences of the virus became apparent as deformed lambs and calves started to be born.

We know that the virus is spread to sheep as they are bitten by *Culicoides* midges and that, once bitten, there is active virus in the blood stream for up to a week. An infected sheep will rapidly produce neutralising antibodies but, if she is in the first half of pregnancy, the virus may replicate in the nerve cells of the developing lambs causing deformities and potentially brain damage. We know SBV can be detected in semen from a low proportion of bulls for at least 40 days after infection and it is not unreasonable to suspect something similar for ram semen. Although it is not yet known whether semen can transmit infection at service, there is a widespread belief that SBV adversely affects fertility.

Native Midges

Some flocks in south east England suffered losses in the 2012 lambing season following midge incursions from the continent and, since then, native midges have continued to spread the virus up the country – but there is patchy information as to the extent of losses in the 2013 lambing season.

Controversially SBV was described as a ‘low impact’ disease when the European Food Safety Authority estimated that, in an infected area, 7.6% of flocks and 1.7% of herds were affected in the 2011/12

SBV Vaccination Decision Table	
Consider vaccination ←	→ Less need to vaccinate
My vet has blood-sampled ewes from this group and the majority are sero-negative	My vet has blood sampled ewes from this group and the majority are sero-positive
The lambs produced by this ewe will be of high genetic and/or economic value	The lambs produced by this ewe will be of low genetic and/or economic value
This ewe is going to the ram in August	This ewe is going to the ram in December
This ewe is going to the ram for the first time this year	This ewe lambed last year within a flock in a SBV area
My flock is in an area of Britain where there was no SBV last year	My flock is in an area of Britain where there was widespread SBV last year
There was no evidence of SBV on this farm last year	There was confirmed SBV on this farm last year
The SBV bulk milk test from the cows is negative	The bulk milk test from the cows is positive

season. However, experiences on some farms in England suggested that SBV can be very ‘high impact’ on individual farms, with some farmers reporting lamb losses of up to 50% last season, particularly in early lambing flocks.

When deformed lambs appear we know the flock was bitten by infected midges between three and four months previously. Midges have been shown to be capable of carrying 10 times more SBV than bluetongue virus and it does not seem practically possible to prevent them biting sheep. There does not appear to be a ‘vector-free period’, as there have been confirmed reports of acute cases in winter and deformed lambs born in May, suggesting that some midges were biting even in the coldest months of winter, though arguably the risk may be lower due to smaller numbers of midges at this time.

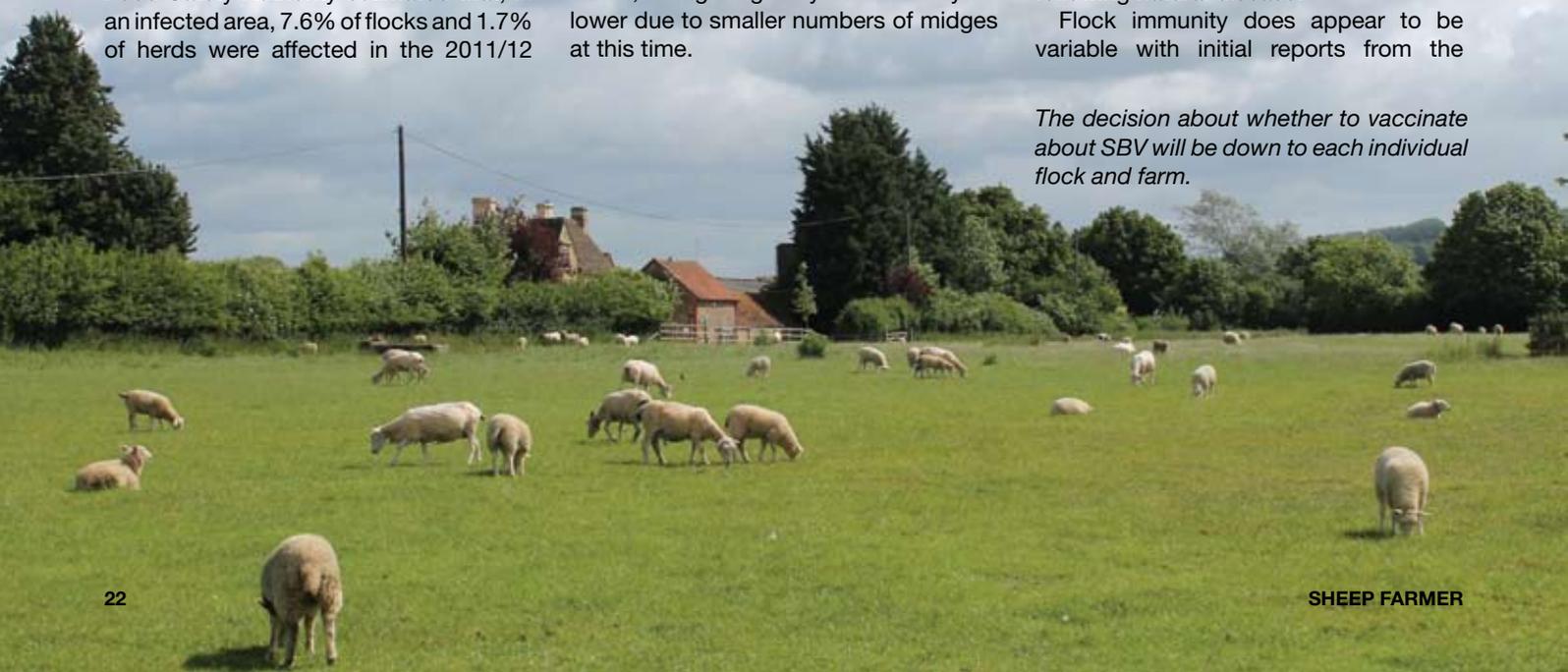
We believe that once a ewe has been bitten by an infected midge she will develop immunity, which will protect subsequent pregnancies. However it seems the chance of an individual getting bitten and developing immunity is sporadic and there have been reports of flocks having deformed lambs born in consecutive years, though presumably from different ewes.

Vaccination

In late May MSD Animal Health launched a vaccine – Bovilis SBV – and the availability of this vaccine is a tremendous tool to ensure flock immunity. However, its necessity in mature sheep from previously SBV-affected areas depends on the completeness of flock immunity following natural disease.

Flock immunity does appear to be variable with initial reports from the

The decision about whether to vaccinate about SBV will be down to each individual flock and farm.



Netherlands and Germany suggesting that 60-90% of sheep would be immune (sero-positive) following natural exposure. These two countries were at the epicentre of the outbreak perhaps suggesting high numbers of infected midges. Arguably the UK has a different topography and climate, which may affect the number and type of midges and, crucially, we straddle the edge of the current outbreak. These reasons may explain why both within-flock and between-flock immunity may be less complete. Flock serology screens in regions with high numbers of SBV cases have shown some flocks with less than 30% immune sheep, despite the confirmation of SBV in abnormal young, and some flocks have tested negative despite grazing in close proximity to bulk-milk SBV antibody-positive cattle. In most studies ewe lambs and heifers less than a year old show lower immunity than adults in the same flock.

As a completely new virus, there is still much that we don't yet know about SBV and the answer to the 'Should I vaccinate my flock this year?' question is not a simple one. Each farmer must make the

decision with their vet, based on their perception of the risk for each group of ewes. The table opposite is intended as an aid to that decision.

There are matching statements for you to decide which most closely describes each group of ewes and space on the red to green range for you to mark your answers. Using the table as a rough tool, I would suggest that vaccination should be considered for a ewe with any red answers.

Traffic Lights

If all your answers are green then it is questionable whether vaccination would be cost-effective for that ewe. However the table is only a simple tool: there are exceptions to each of the pale green statements, such as the flocks with poor immunity despite having had confirmed SBV last year. Also bulk milk tests from most of England and Wales are unhelpful as virtually all were positive by the end of 2012, despite variable immunity in local sheep.

This risk assessment tool will be refined as we understand more about how SBV affects the UK in coming years. Certainly,

if we look to Australia and Japan where there is a similar virus called Akabane, farms at the epicentre of the disease area have extensive natural immunity and thus have no need to vaccinate, but there is a continual risk to farms on the periphery.

Current guidance is that vaccination should be undertaken at least three weeks before the tups are introduced, so it is important that you contact your vets to discuss your options without delay.



Dr Fiona Lovatt (www.flockhealth.co.uk) advises farmers on sheep flock health matters and is involved in various sheep health research projects as well as teaching veterinary students at the University of Nottingham. She is vice-president of the Sheep Veterinary Society. For this article, she would like to acknowledge suggestions from Ian Nanjani (Westpoint Veterinary Group), Rachael Tarlinton (University of Nottingham), Peers Davies (Pro-Ovine) and John Fishwick (Royal Veterinary College).

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Know Your Enemy!

Understanding and treating parasitic roundworms

There are a variety of worm species that can cause disease in sheep. Anthelmintics (wormers) are the major control option available for the treatment of worms, but resistance to some of the wormers used is an increasing problem.

In the UK there are four roundworm genera that are most often recorded in cases of parasitic gastroenteritis, two of these live in the stomach and two in the small intestine.

- Teladorsagia: the brown worm: stomach
- Haemonchus: the barber's pole worm: stomach
- Trichostrongylus: the black scour worm: intestine
- Nematodirus: the thread necked worm: intestine

All of these roundworms have simple direct lifecycles. Eggs that pass out of the sheep in faeces develop into infective larvae. Infective larvae migrate up to the top of the herbage to increase the chances of being ingested by sheep with herbage. Once ingested the larvae start the parasitic phase of their life-cycle, developing from larvae to sexually mature adults in as little as 10-14 days from being eaten (but can be as long as 42 days depending on the roundworm involved).

Timing of problems

- Nematodirus often causes disease in very young lambs from six to eight weeks of age, usually in late April-May.
- Teladorsagia tends to cause problems during the early to mid-summer months, often around the time of weaning.
- Outbreaks of haemonchosis tend to be commoner when the weather is warmer and wetter, as these conditions suit egg and larval development. For these reasons, haemonchosis tends to occur in the mid summer-autumn period.
- Blackscour disease (trichostrongylosis) tends to be a problem in late autumn and particularly in winter.

It should be noted that in recent years there have been a series of warmer wetter winters and springs which have tended to favour parasite development



Sheep of all ages can be affected by roundworms with Nematodirus (insert) affecting young lambs in particular.

and survival and as a consequence there have been increased reports of worm disease in sheep throughout the year.

Treatment options

Gastrointestinal roundworms are largely managed through the therapeutic and prophylactic use of a limited supply of broad-spectrum anthelmintic classes. At present there are five classes registered for use in sheep (classes 1-5) and three classes in cattle (classes 1-3).

- Benzimidazoles: 1-BZ: white
- Levamisoles: 2-LV: yellow
- Macrocyclic lactones: 3-ML: clear
- Amino-acetonitrile derivatives: 4-AD: orange
- Spiroindoles: 5-SI: purple

Treatment failures

Anthelmintic treatments may not always be effective and there can be a range of reasons for this. Some questions to consider could be:-

- Was the correct dosage given e.g. to the weight of the heaviest animal in the group?
- Was the drench administered correctly i.e. over the back of the tongue?
- Had the anthelmintic been stored correctly, for example not exposed to extremes of temperature which may affect its stability?
- Was the correct formulation used for

your host species?

If all of these factors have been dealt with correctly and the drug still appears to have been ineffective then it may be that the nematodes present on your farm are resistant the drug family used. To help reduce the risk of developing and/or introducing anthelmintic resistance MoreDun has developed the ACME checklist:-

- Adopt an effective quarantine strategy
- Check efficacy of treatment
- Monitor the need for treatment
- Ensure best practise is followed

In addition the Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) website offers excellent information regarding worm control www.scops.org.uk. It is important to also talk to your vet and include wormer management within your flock health plan. □

David Bartley and Dr Fiona Kenyon are research scientists at MoreDun Research Institute. MoreDun runs a membership scheme which aims to keep farmers and vets up to date with the latest developments in animal health research. If you would like a free copy of the 16-page factsheet on worm control in sheep, or are interested in becoming a member of MoreDun, please contact Joanne Watts on 01314 455111 or via www.moredun.org.uk.

Nematodirus image © Dave Bartley

Action Needed in Resistance Fight

Survey shows good understanding but limited action

Led by the Farming Against Wormer Resistance (FAWR) campaign and supported by NSA and SCOPS, a survey of sheep farmers has revealed growing concern about wormer resistance but suggests there is still confusion about the best course of action.

FAWR's panel of experts has analysed data from the survey, which was completed by almost 400 farmers across all regions and age ranges, to provide the sheep sector with information on where understanding is good and where it falls down.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says: "The most stark finding from the survey for me was that nearly 60% of farmers are aware of anthelmintic resistance occurring in their area, but 75% of this group are still not putting in place the correct actions needed to tackle the problem. This suggests a relatively high level of awareness, but low implementation of the necessary strategies and tools to avoid resistance.

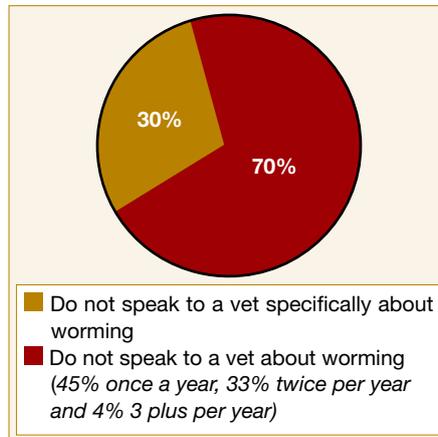
Fiona Anderson agrees: "The fact that awareness and understanding of wormer resistance is growing is good – but there is clearly still confusion about the best course of action and a gap between concern and action."

Sheep farmer Charles Sercombe echoes this: "On my own farm we have carried out faecal egg counting and resistance testing to try and isolate the resistant worms. We have then integrated the new wormer groups (orange drench or purple drench) depending on advice from our vet. However this action is not being carried out extensively enough across the UK sheep flock, as the survey showed less than 30% of farmers had actually tested to find out their resistance status."

FAWR

Farming Against Worming Resistance is a campaign created by Novartis Animal Health and led by a panel of experts:-

- Lesley Stubbings – SCOPS representative and independent sheep consultant
- Phil Stocker – NSA Chief Executive
- Mike Glover – Torch Farm Vets
- Charles Sercombe – Sheep Farmer and NFU Livestock Board Chairman
- Matt Blyth – Sheep Farmer
- Fiona Anderson, Novartis Animal Health Veterinary Manager



Results from the FAWR survey reveal a great deal about the current anthelmintic resistance situation

Vet Mike Glover says: "Resistance testing in partnership with a vet is always the first step, and putting in place an individual wormer management programme as an integral part of your flock health plan. Ideally testing should be done more than once a year to account for the seasonal variation in worm species and resistance to wormers."

White drench use

The survey showed that 75% of farmers used a white drench (1-BZ) in 2012 and 90% had used one in the last five years, which Lesley Stubbings says is a worry.

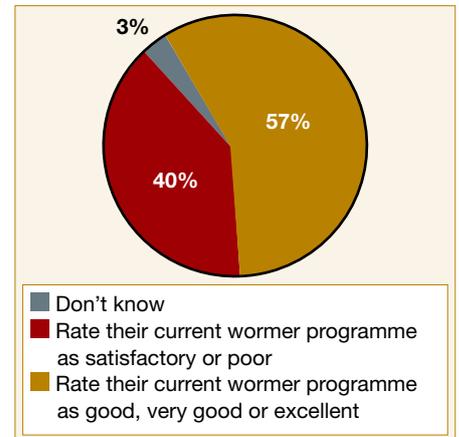
She says: "This is a concern, especially if farmers are using 1-BZ as a single active. However, we must not forget that the treatment of choice for nematodirus is a 1-BZ drench, so the important message here is for farmers to be testing for resistance in all flock groups and putting in place the right worming strategies to suit their individual farm's anthelmintic resistance status."

Of those farmers that carried out a resistance test, around two thirds were positive for anthelmintic resistance, and over half of those had white drench resistance.

New wormer groups

Ms Stubbings continues: "The encouraging news is that of those farms that confirmed wormer resistance, over 85% have subsequently incorporated a new active into their worming programme, the majority incorporating the fourth (orange 4-AD) class and a smaller number using the fifth (purple 5-SI).

Mr Stocker adds: "Using the new groups, in association with existing



wormers, can help extend the useful life of the older wormer classes and farmers should see benefits in terms of lamb performance. While it is easy to see the value of doing this when you already have the problem, what would be much more useful would be to integrate them into wormer programmes at an earlier stage to prevent the problem from occurring."

Quarantine advice

"Farmers should never underestimate the importance of quarantine," says Mr Glover. "At the moment, as an industry, we do not take quarantine seriously enough. The survey showed a lack of understanding about how to quarantine stock correctly and that 32% of farmers are not drenching incoming stock, even though this is the time that flocks are most vulnerable."

Mrs Anderson adds: "If you haven't got AR you don't want to bring it on farm through incoming stock. Using the correct products for quarantine is essential if farmers want to prevent importing other farms' resistance problems and reduce the risk to next year's lambs on contaminated pastures."

Looking to the future and the ideal strategy for each farm, Ms Stubbings said: "I would like to see worming strategies in place as part of an overall health planning and flock management package. So it isn't just about worming sheep with anthelmintics, it is about pasture maintenance, general flock management, close monitoring and setting production targets. We need to monitor flock performance closely and ensure all procedures are in place to maximise productivity."

Scab, Lice and Blowflies

Protecting sheep and profit lines from external parasites

Scab is caused by a parasitic mite *Psoroptes ovis*. They have piercing and chewing mouthparts which cause severe damage to the skin. Since deregulation of scab control in 1992 the disease has become endemic and represents a massive economic and welfare problem to the sheep industry.

Sheep with scab are incredibly itchy – this is due to an allergic reaction to the faeces of the scab mite. Early cases only have small numbers of mites and may not show scratching behaviour. As the disease advances sheep become restless and start rubbing on any available object. The wool develops greyish discolouration and eventually falls out, revealing typical scabby and raw areas, most frequently on the sides of the body. Sheep rapidly lose condition and may progress to fits and death.

Scab

Scab is contracted via contact with live mites. This is usually by direct contact with infected sheep, but mites can survive off the host for up to 17 days, so can be spread on scratching posts, shearing equipment, contaminated clothing, transport etc.

Disease is most common in winter months but can occur all year round. Sub-clinically affected sheep act as a



Scab and lice can present with similar symptoms, so it's vital to seek veterinary advice.

Table 1: Treatment options for scab

Product	Trade names	Treatment	Length of protection	Withdrawal
Organophosphate dip	Paracide 62 Osmond's Gold Fleece	Dip once Dip once	21-28 days	70 days
Ivermectin injection	Ivomec Panomec Qualimec	2 injections, 7 days apart	No claim	Min 37 days from 2 nd injection
Moxidectin injection	Cyductin 1%	2 injections, 7 days apart	28 days	70 days
	Cyductin 2% LA	10 days apart	60 days	104 days
Doramectin injection	Dectomax	Single injection	No claim	63 days

Table 2: Treatment options for lice and blowfly strike

Produce	Trade name	Withdrawal
Cypermethrin pour on	Crovect	8 days
Deltamethrin pour on	Spot On	35 days
Alphacypermethrin pour on	Dysect	49 days
Organophosphate dip	Paracide 62, Osmond's Gold Fleece	70 days

reservoir of infection within the flock and can be a source of infection from bought-in sheep.

Early stage scab can easily be mistaken for louse infestation, so if you have itchy sheep a proper diagnosis from your vet is important to make sure you use the correct treatment. Definitive diagnosis requires skin scrapes that your vet will examine under the microscope to look for live mites.

Treatment options can be challenging (especially if you have scab in fattening lambs) as the shortest possible



withdrawal time from first treatment is 44 days – see table 1. Remember, the injectable treatments will also worm the sheep – whether they need it at the time or not!

As there is no longer compulsory annual treatment of scab in the UK it is very difficult to eradicate scab from an area. Control can be helped by:-

- Letting your neighbours know if you have scab in your flock, as this will allow them to be extra vigilant and treat their own sheep if necessary.
- Ensuring a stock-proof boundary between your flock and any neighbouring sheep. Consider double fencing in problem areas.
- Treating all in-contact sheep if you have an outbreak of scab. Treating only obviously affected animals is false economy as there will be others in the group that are in the early stages of infection, and it will take much longer to clear infection from the group.
- Remembering scab mites can survive for up to 17 days off the host, so beware the potential for reinfection if sheep are returned to the same area after treatment.
- Carefully managing bought-in stock to avoid introducing infection into your flock. New sheep should ideally be treated on arrival, or at least kept isolated for at least 3-4 weeks.

In Scotland the Sheep Scab (Scotland) Order 2010 requires anyone who knows or suspects that sheep or carcasses in their charge have sheep scab to notify the Divisional Veterinary Manager as

Avoid Scab Control Pitfalls

The Stamp Out Scab campaign shares some top tips



- 1. Talk to your vet** – it will save you money in the long run getting some good advice to ensure you are treating correctly.
- 2. Get a veterinary diagnosis** – this will also save money, as lice and scab are easily confused.
- 3. Use the right product for your flock** – talk to your vet and SQP about choosing an injectable or OP dip. N.B. OP dips are harmful to human health and are not licensed for use in jetties and showers. And remember that pour-ons are not effective against scab.
- 4. Weigh the sheep** if you are using an injectable – estimating weight

accurately is very difficult and weights can vary enormously across a group of ewes/lambs. Always dose to the heaviest.

- 5. Correct treatment** – check the data sheet of the medicine i.e. is it a sub-cutaneous or intra-muscular injection? Should the sheep be moved to 'fresh' scab-free pasture (fields that have not had scab infested sheep for the last 18 days) after treatment?
- 6. Calibrate your injecting gun.**
- 7. Make sure every single sheep is treated**, mark them as you treat them – missing just one sheep means scab will remain on your farm, costing you money for more treatments.

- 8. Keep scab out** – remember good biosecurity and quarantine treatments for bought-in sheep and those returning from tack. Maintain good fences and work out a co-ordinated approach with your neighbours to help keep scab out of your flock.

Remember, quick and effective treatment is much cheaper than delayed diagnosis and treatment – see table. □

The Stamp Out Scab training and awareness campaign is supported by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for which Defra is the managing authority, part-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. For further details contact Kate Phillips or Dyana Webb at ADAS – stampoutscab@adas.co.uk or 01432 820444.

Quick and effective treatment	Delayed diagnosis and treatment
	Two unsuccessful treatments
Diagnosis – vet fee	Diagnosis – vet fee
Treatment – £1-£1.40/ewe (depending on product and including labour)	Further treatment
Loss of production – negligible	Loss of production – around £20/ewe
Cost of treating 500 ewes = approximately £600	Cost of having 500 ewes affected = £10,000+

soon as possible.

Lice

There are two types of lice that affect sheep – biting lice and sucking lice. Sucking lice are usually restricted to the head and legs and are not considered to cause a big problem, but the biting louse (*Damalinia ovis*) is very active in the wool over the whole body and causes great irritation. Sheep are restless and scratch and rub against any available objects. In severe cases, wool loss will occur. This is easily confused with the early stages of sheep scab.

Lice can be seen with the naked eye, appearing as slender dark red/brown specks 1-2mm long in parted wool. Close body contact is usually required for transmission between sheep, as lice do not seem to survive for long on scratching posts etc.

Louse infestations are easily treated with pour on synthetic pyrethroids – see table 2 – but it is important to rule out sheep scab if you have itchy sheep.

Blowfly strike

Fly strike (*Myiasis*) is a major welfare issue for the sheep farmer, causing severe suffering and losses during the summer months. The major species

Table 3: Preventative treatment options for blowflies

Product type	Drug	Trade name	Duration of protection	Withdrawal
Organophosphate dip	Diazinon	Paracide 62, Osmond's Gold Fleece	Around 2-3 months	70 days
Synthetic pyrethroid pour on	Cypermethrin	Crovect	6-8 weeks	8 days
	Alphacypermethrin	Dysect	8-10 weeks	49 days
	Dicyclanil 5%	Clik	16 weeks	40 days
Insect growth regulators pour on	Dicyclanil 1.25%	ClikZin	8 weeks	7 days
	Cyromazine	Vetrazin	10 weeks	28 days

causing strike in the UK are greenbottles (*Lucilia*) and bluebottles (*Calliphora*). Pregnant female flies are attracted to wounds, soiled fleece or dead animals and lay clusters of yellow-cream eggs. In warm weather the eggs will hatch within 12 hours and the maggots will feed on the skin and tissue of the animal, rapidly creating a large wound.

Affected sheep are dull, stop feeding and stand away from the flock. The fleece may be discoloured, but the problem may not be visible until you part the fleece to reveal a foul oozing wound with maggots. Strike causes severe debilitating distress and irritation, and death may result due to secondary bacterial infection.

Treatment of struck sheep requires application of insecticide directly on to the affected area to kill the maggots – see table 2. Healing of the area will take

some time and antibiotics may well be required against secondary infection.

Prevention is better than cure, so all sheep should have protective products applied during the high risk time of year (June-September). There are three groups of preventative drugs – see table 3 – and choice of product depends on a number of factors including withdrawal time, length of protection required, facilities on the farm and if control of other parasites (e.g. lice or scab) is required.

Laura Smith is a vet with the Cain Veterinary Centre in Powys, part of the XL Vet group. She prepared this article using literature from Moredun, the SCOPS website, Veterinary Parasitology and the NOAH Compendium. Trade names and withdrawal periods were correct at the time of writing.

Top 10 Fluke Actions

Tackling the threat from liver fluke



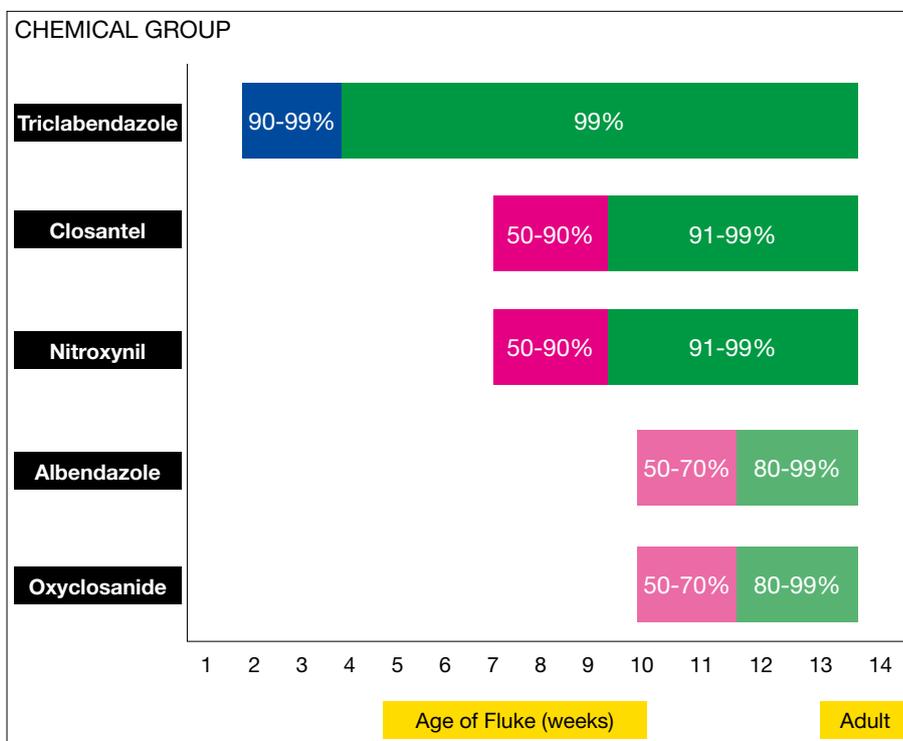
Weather conditions that favour liver fluke have continued and this looks likely to result in high numbers of the parasites on many livestock farms again this year.

Last season this caught out a number of producers, causing many losses but also leading to an even larger number of sheep (and cattle) being in poor condition. While some of these cases have involved resistance to one of the main products used (triclabendazole – TCBZ) many more have been due to under-dosing or misunderstanding of the risk of re-infection following treatment.

The bottom line is that with the challenge from liver fluke so high, sticking to traditional treatment programmes will fail to prevent them causing havoc. If we are going to minimise the impact of liver fluke this coming season it must involve some careful forward-planning.

So, with early indications suggesting we are in for another year with high levels of liver fluke, we asked Lesley Stubbings of SCOPS to outline her 'top 10' key actions:-

1. Reduce contamination levels in spring/summer by using an adulticide (see table) to kill egg-laying parasites, reducing the numbers infecting the snails and subsequently on pasture for sheep and cattle to ingest.
2. Identify high risk areas and see if you can reduce the risk and/or avoid grazing these pastures in the late summer/autumn. Practical steps include fencing off wet areas, attending to leaking troughs and pipes, drainage or even considering housing early.
3. Don't just assume any problems you had last year were due to resistance to the flukicide. Simply changing the product you use could make things worse if you don't get to grips with the cause of the problem. If you suspect resistance arrange to do a drench test, preferably a faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT), with your vet.
4. Plan to re-treat animals if they are put back on to infected pastures. Remember that none of the flukicide products are persistent so animals will pick fluke up again immediately and may need to be treated again



within six weeks.

5. Make sure you understand the product choices available to you in terms of the age of liver fluke they kill because there are big differences (see table). Don't use a combination 'fluke and worm' unless it is absolutely necessary – the chances are the correct timing of treatment required for liver fluke and worms is not the same, resulting in a compromised effectiveness for one or the other parasite.
6. Always treat effectively. Under-dosing is a major issue, leaving parasites alive in the animal, which will cause damage to the liver and encourage resistance to develop. Weigh, don't guess, and be prepared to split groups if there is a wide variation in liveweight to ensure the dose rate used is accurate. Calibrate equipment regularly and get the drench over the back of the tongue.
7. Ask for abattoir feedback on any liver rejections. This is invaluable in getting an early warning that there may be fluke around on the farm. Early action will also minimise the loss in performance caused by sub-clinical liver fluke infections.
8. Investigate losses. Acute liver fluke

disease strikes with little if any warning, because it is caused by the migration of large numbers of immature flukes to the liver, long before there are any egg-laying adults around. A post mortem examination will establish whether liver fluke are involved. Watch out for other signs, such as loss in body condition or poor growth rates in lambs.

9. Quarantine all incoming stock from potentially flukey areas for liver fluke, as well as worms and sheep scab. This will take considerable planning, but failure to do it could result in you importing resistant liver fluke from another farm as well as losses and/or reduced performance in the animals themselves. See options on the SCOPS website and discuss with your vet/adviser.
10. Get help; don't wait until the losses are mounting up. Sit down with your vet or adviser and plan ahead in terms of actions, treatments and any monitoring that you can put in place.

For more information and updates go to www.scops.org.uk and link to our anthelmintics leaflet PDF.

Maximising Wool Quality

Your questions answered about shearing and wool deliveries

Why has the colder spring meant a later than usual shearing season this year?

Colin MacGregor (CMcG), British Wool Marketing Board Shearing Manager, says: The cold spring and slow start to summer has had a two-fold effect on delaying the shearing season. Firstly, many ewes are in much poorer condition than they normally would be at this time of year and ewes need to be in good condition for shearing or the fleece quality suffers. Secondly, because of the cold spring and poorer nutrition as a result there was a lack of 'rise' in ewes earlier in the season. This rise is essential for easy shearing and for minimising the number of second blows required, which can severely impact on fleece quality.

But with wool prices dipping from the highs of two years ago, would it really make a difference if fleeces weren't as good as they could be?

CMcG: While prices may be back on where they were in 2010-11, they are still higher than they have been historically and everything you can do to maintain fleece quality at and after shearing, has a beneficial effect on the price you receive for it.

What else could happen if ewes were shorn before they were ready?

CMcG: Shearing before ewes are in good enough condition could also have an impact on animal welfare and mean

ewes are exposed to a higher risk of pneumonia or suffer a slower return to their optimum condition.

What is BWMB doing to help the sheep industry improve wool quality?

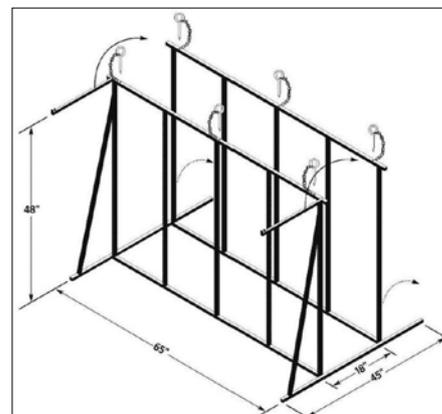
CMcG: BWMB runs a large number of shearing courses every year all over the UK and in 2012 these courses trained more than 1,100 people. Training shearers is one of the most important things BWMB does and it helps ensure there are plenty of shearers available to shear sheep when farmers need them. Good shearing technique, as taught at BWMB courses, is essential to maximise the value of a fleece.

Is there anything farmers can do once the wool is shorn to help maintain quality?

Gareth Jones (GJ), BWMB Producer Communications Manager, says: There is plenty farmers can do to help maintain fleece quality and hence maximise its value. The first thing is to ensure only wool enters the wool sheet rather than any contamination such as vegetation, straw or string.

Why are evenly packed wool sheets important?

GJ: Evenly packed wool sheets are important as they mean wool has been well packed and are easier to handle. This is particularly important where wool is delivered to intermediate depots where



Packing frames help wool sheets to be packed evenly, making handling easier.

sheets are compacted into bundles for onward transport. Unevenly packed wool sheets with bulges are harder to compact and thus increase transport costs. Once sheets are full they should be stored in a dry, pest free environment to minimise the chance of contamination by rodents or other pests and keep fleeces dry and mould free.

How can you ensure sheets are packed evenly?

GJ: One of the best ways is to use a wool sheet packing frame to hold the sheet while packing wool, as this will help to ensure fleeces are packed in to the sheet evenly and without unnecessary bulges or protrusions.

If I deliver to an intermediate depot am I charged more for haulage to the main depot?

GJ: No, those producers delivering wool into one of BWMB's intermediate depots have the added benefit of no haulage charges for the onward movement of their wool to a grading depot.

How am I charged if a haulier takes my wool straight to the grading depot?

GJ: Anyone using hauliers to deliver their wool will be aware that the haulage charges have altered in recent years. BWMB now charge per approved container of wool delivered rather than on a per kilo basis. This is the fairest way for producers and an incentive to ensure wool sheets are packed evenly. Packing wool into fewer containers brings financial benefits to producers and operational benefits to us as an organisation.



Evenly packed sheets facilitate compaction for onward transport.

Untapped Potential of British Wool

The Wool Room explains how they're making the most of your wool

The Wool Room's sister company, who have been involved in the wool industry since 1888, created the Wool Room after almost a decade of investigation into the amazing natural properties of British Wool.

Looking at the list of natural attributes of sheep's wool it is easy to see why, throughout history, it has been such a valuable commodity. It is stronger than steel and yet is antibacterial, flame resistant, insulative, flexible and comes in a wide variety of crimp, thicknesses and coarseness. Not surprisingly with the number of breeds we have, the UK produces more varieties of wool than any other country.

Clothing is the most obvious use for wool but there is a greater variety of other uses for this fibre today than ever before, from cleaning up oil spills to making bullet proof clothing and sound insulation. The application that the Wool Room specialises in is using the wool from your sheep to help people stop 'counting sheep' at night!

The Wool Room promotes British wool bedding as the secret to a great night's sleep, as scientific studies have shown you will be more comfortable, remain in deep sleep for longer, wake less and even have a reduced heart rate. The positive feedback from customers is phenomenal, including from customers with asthma, insomnia, fibromyalgia, night sweats, arthritis, Parkinsons and problems keeping a steady temperature at night. The word is getting out there with major highstreet retailers following suit, and it's likely that you will see more and more wool bedding on the shelves in the future.

Many common myths regarding wool have been disproven scientifically in recent years too, although public education still has a long way to catch up. For example, many people believe



The Wool House uses only British wool in its range of bedding items.



Using wool inside pillows and other bedding provides a range of benefits.

they are allergic to wool due to memories of cheap, coarse woollen jumpers they wore as children. This type of reaction is simply caused by using the wrong wool types for clothing. Genuine wool allergies are actually extremely rare, and for the most part related to lanolin, not the actual wool fibres.

Another key area that has come to light in recent years is how beneficial wool is for asthmatics and those who suffer from dust mite allergies. Wool fibres are very good at wicking away moisture and, as a result, wool bedding cannot sustain the household dust mite. As well as that, wool fibres being very long are less easily inhaled, making the bedding ideal for asthmatics. People in the medical profession are gradually becoming aware of these great properties.

Despite this growing appreciation, wool bedding still counts for less than 1% of the bedding market, whereas in countries such as Australia and New Zealand, where wool bedding is more well established, it represents closer to 50% of the bedding market. Therefore, this is a great un-tapped potential for British wool.

Many retailers are importing cheaper products containing Australian, New Zealand or Chinese wools into the UK,

but the Wool Room is committed to using 100% British wool in its products. This not only supports British farmers but actually produces a superior product, as the loftier British wool types actually produce lighter weight bedding with a higher insulation factor.

Each year roughly 150 tonnes of British wool goes into bedding sold in the UK, but if wool bedding accounted for 50% of the market instead of 1%, the Wool House estimates 7,500 tonnes of British wool could be used instead. This would generate a significant rise in wool prices for wool growers and ensure more British wool was used in the UK. □

Farmer Discount Code

As part of its founding aim to offer ongoing support to UK wool producers, the Wool Room offers a 10% discount for all farmers making purchases in-store or online at www.thewoolroom.com. NSA members can access this scheme by simply using the voucher code MFARM10NSA when they make a purchase; any farmers who are not NSA members (and anyone wanting additional information) can register for their own voucher code at www.thewoolroom.com/farmerspen.irs.



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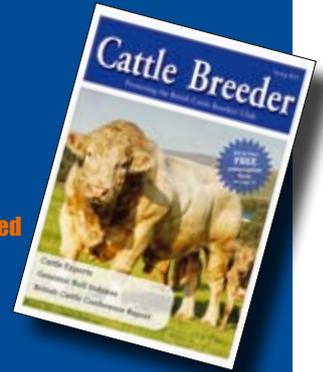
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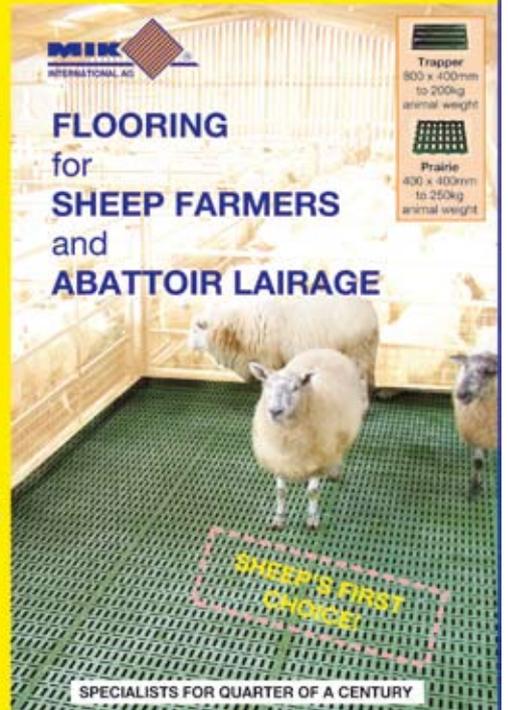


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References: 1. SCOPS Manual V3. 2. NAH study Y08/16; Y08/70. 3. "The production costs of anthelmintic resistance in sheep managed within a monthly preventive drench programme." Sutherland, I.A. 1, Bailey, J. 2 and Shaw, R.S.1 1 AgResearch Ltd., The Hopkirk Research Institute and 2 Novartis Animal Health Australasia. 4. Boost productivity – ZOLVIX will boost productivity where worm burdens are reducing productivity – the use of a fully effective wormer will improve productivity. ZOLVIX is known to kill all productivity limiting roundworms, even those that are resistant to other classes of wormer.

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