

Sheep Farmer

MAY/JUNE 2014



A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

**PREVIEWS OF THREE
NSA SUMMER SHEEP EVENTS**

**WILL YOU MEET CAP
GREENING REQUIREMENTS?**

**LATEST ACTION ON SHEEP
WORRYING BY DOGS**

**TACKLING CODD IN
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**HITTING BACK AT ANTI-FARMING
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Front Cover

The photograph on the front page features a Lleyn ewe and March-born Charollais-sired lambs from a small flock ran by George and Tom Whalley at Samlesbury, Lancashire. NSA is always on the lookout for front page pictures for the magazine, so if you would like a photograph to be considered for use please get in touch with Joanne Briggs using the contact details to the left.



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Policy focus for NSA so members can optimise own farming businesses

By Phil Stocker,
NSA Chief Executive

As you emerge from a busy lambing season I hope you notice we have been busy here at NSA too, working in areas that intend to help set the scene for the best possible future and allowing you to concentrate on what's important on the farm.

With CAP and Rural Development Programme consultations across the UK closing in March and April it has been difficult for many farmers to find the time or space to respond and understandably, although our farming and rural development policy framework

is so influential in framing agricultural futures, many farmers feel it is beyond their influence and even wonder whether submitting views have any effect. I have to say, having spent many hours poring over consultation documents recently, there are times when I have felt the same and wished the language used was simpler with more practical evidence of the impact of the options. But getting our voice heard, and our knowledge considered, is essential and there are plenty of examples that show that failing to do this leads to policy decisions that do little more than get in our way for many years.

Carcase splitting/TSEs and EID are examples of where, once a regulation is in place, it can take years to review or achieve changes. This is a huge area of our work and, put most simply, is about explaining sheep farming, how it functions and all its attendant benefits to policy and decision makers, and to the public too. NSA cannot and should not attempt to do all this alone and we value our good relationships with similar minded organisations and the farming unions – working collectively, while recognising differences, means we can share the load and pull together for the benefit of all our members and the wider farming community.

Sheep worrying by dogs

With our new TSE report now being circulated among politicians and decision makers, calling for a relaxation in sheep controls based on zero evidence of a human health risk, we returned our attention in early April to a subject closely linked to the public, that of sheep worrying by dogs (see page 18). To maximise publicity we partnered with the Farmers Guardian and stepped up our use of social media to get messages out as wide as possible and promote an incredible new web-based information resource at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/dog-owners.

With potential links to this topic, but to wider legal issues too, we have also been busy securing a fantastic new offer of support for NSA members in the form of 30 minutes of no charge/no obligation legal advice from Clarke Wilmott, specialists in agricultural legal matters (see page 3).

BBC Lambing Live

Returning to engaging the public on sheep farming matters, I thought BBC



Lambing Live gave an excellent portrayal of life as a sheep farmer, and also explained sheep farming in the uplands and how the sheep stratification system works. The Dyke family were great ambassadors for the sheep industry and I would like to thank them for their efforts and hard work in being the focus for a brilliantly presented programme that can only help to spread positive messages to the public. The success of Lambing Live just shows what a good story we have to tell and NSA will continue to build our activities in this area.

As always there are challenges too, and BBC Countryfile has recently covered a number of issues that we should be prepared to face with transparency rather than shy away from. One was the ongoing Monbiot agenda of re-wilding which I feel we are already well placed to tackle (see pages 20-21), and the other was non-stun slaughter, featured in some depth with Rizvan Khalid from Euro Quality Lamb doing a fine job explaining the situation with openness and honesty. The recent welfare prosecution of Channel Livestock relating to the Ramsgate live export fiasco in 2012 is another area where we might not agree with the legal decision (which lacked practicality and realism) but it shows we have to be prepared to discuss and debate the merits and risks of the trade and to push for consistent regulatory enforcement and best practice throughout the EU.

If your lambing is behind you, I hope it went well and that the remainder of this season is kind. If you're still in the throws of it, I wish you well. Whichever category you fall into I hope you enjoy this issue of Sheep Farmer.

Contacting NSA

Phil and the team at NSA are always available to members and interested to hear opinions, concerns and areas of interest. You can call NSA Head Office (Monday-Friday 9am-5.30pm) on 01684 892661 or direct an email to one of the addresses below. NSA is also pleased to announce the arrival of a new face to the team, Helen Breakwell, who is providing additional administrative support to members.

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News Update

New NSA legal helpline

NSA is delighted to offer a new legal helpline for members, at no extra cost over the existing membership fee. Members can call Clarke Willmott LPP, a national law firm, for up to 30 minutes of free advice on the telephone, after which the member can instruct the law firm or use an alternative company. When you call the hotline number of 08719 193505 and give your NSA membership number you will be directed to the best person to deal with the enquiry in Clarke Willmott's agricultural team. There is no limit to the number of times you can use the service, so you can access additional 30-minute sessions if you have more than one legal issue over a year.

Date of NSA AGM

Notice is hereby given that the 121st Annual General Meeting of the National Sheep Association will be held at the Westmorland Room, Westmorland County Agricultural Society, Lane Farm, Crooklands, Milnthorpe, Cumbria. LA7 7NH, at 10.30am on Thursday August 14th 2014.

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. Any member wishing to have a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2013 please contact NSA Head Office.

The AGM will be followed by a farm walk at Low Foulshaw Farm, Kendal, Cumbria, LA8 8ET, by kind permission of NSA Chairman John Geldard and his family.

Share your local dialect

NSA is supporting the Foundation for Common Land in an attempt to document all the regional variations for sheep terminology that exist in different areas. The information will be used to inform organisations who engage with farmers (particularly in the uplands) of particular regional language. This initial survey is a pilot for England, with the intention to invite inputs from Scotland and Wales to extend coverage across the hills and uplands of Britain. Complete the survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/hillfarmingterms or, if you do not have internet access, contact NSA Head Office for a hard copy.



Competition deadlines!

Don't forget the deadline for entering the NSA Sheep Event video competition (with a prize fund of £700) is Friday 16th May. Visit www.sheepevent.org.uk/media.php for details – and remember, you don't need to submit a full edited video as help is on hand. If you think a stationary image is more your thing, NSA South Sheep is running a photographic competition at its event with a closing date of Saturday 31st May. Details at www.southsheep.org.uk/competitions.

Nematodirus warning map

The SCOPS warning map for the nematodirus threat to lambs can be found at www.scops.org.uk. The map was already red for the Midlands, southern England and all of Wales in the middle of April; the threat commonly lasts into early June. Remember, no anthelmintic product has any persistent activity against nematodirus so treatment based on risk of disease on the individual farm is essential. Speak to your vet or animal health advisor.

Product information

Bimeda has confirmed supplies of its new formulation Gold Fleece Sheep Dip are now available, with a 49-day meat withdrawal period instead of 70 days. The 60% w/v diazinon dip is effective against blowfly strike, lice, ticks, sheep scab and keds.

Merial Animal Health has also announced the release of a Schmallenberg vaccine, SBVvax. As with Bovilis SBV, the vaccine release by MSD Animal Health last year, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) has granted SBVvax a provisional licence in order to get the product to market without many years of lengthy testing. For this reason it is permitted for use in non-pregnant sheep and cattle but it is not yet known if it protects stock for life or needs an annual booster. The licence for SBVvax states it prevents viraemia in sheep and cattle, whereas the licence for Bovilis SBV states it reduces viraemia in sheep and cattle. NSA understands the cost of both vaccines is now lower than Bovilis SBV was in 2013.

Save the date

After the success of the inaugural conference in November 2012, the Sheep Health and Welfare Group (SHAWG) is running another sheep-focused event on Wednesday 26th November 2014 at Yarnfield Park Conference Centre, Yarnfield, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 0NL. There is a great line-up of speakers planned and bookings (at £30+VAT per person) will be accepted in the near future. Details will be added to www.nationalsheep.org.uk/shawg over the coming weeks.

New NSA representatives

NSA Marches Region Chairman Kevin Harrison has been elected to the NSA UK Policy and Technical Committee. He joins Dan Phipps (Eastern Region) as the second English representative on the committee and replaces Geoff Lawn (Northern Region), who NSA thanks for his excellent work in the position. There are also two new English reps on the NSA Finance and General Purposes – Matt Bagley (Central Region) and Bob Blanden (South East Region). They replace David Prosser (South East) and David Gregory (South West) who contributed a great deal during their terms.

Sad passing

It is with great sadness that NSA reports the passing of Philip Bolam, a former NSA President (1982-1994) and ardent supporter of this organisation over many years. Philip was hugely passionate about the NSA and remained in regular contact and abreast of activity right up until his death on 12th April 2014. An obituary for Philip can be found in the news section of the NSA website.



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Regional News

Cymru/Wales

By Helen Davies,
Development Officer



What a difference a year makes. This spring has seen excellent weather for lambing, the grass is growing well and if this continues then we hope the industry should have far less input costs compared with last year and help towards putting some confidence back into sheep.

As a region we have again working on your behalf submitting responses regarding Glastir, the Rural Development Programme, the new animal health framework in Wales and EID Cymru. All of these consultations have a great bearing on the future of the Welsh sheep industry and NSA Cymru can only hope that the Minister does take heed of the responses made by our organisation and others.

Wales is hosting the NSA Breed Society Forum on Thursday 8th May, when we hope to see a large turnout of breed society representatives at the event. The Breed Society Forum has taken its turn to be hosted in England and Scotland so we are pleased to see it coming to Wales this time.

Congratulations go to Margaret Dalton OBE, a NSA Cymru Trustee, on winning the prestigious George Hedley Memorial Award; she is a most worthy winner of this accolade (see page 7). And well done to Rhydian Thomas, our Welsh NSA Next Generation Ambassador, for attending the first of many training days organised for the group (see page 8).

Meet NSA Cymru Chairman Paul Wozencraft on pages 16-17.

Central

By Bob and Anne Payne,
Chairman and Manager



In contrast to last year, when many of us were digging out sheep from under snow-drifts, we are blessed with plenty of grass and are hearing reports of sheep producing good numbers of lively lambs with higher birth weights, their mums being in surprisingly good condition considering the wet winter. Nevertheless our 'resident vet' has issued a word of warning that there is a lot of fluke about due to the wet conditions.

In March a packed audience (around 200 people) attended the NSA sheep movements database roadshow at Bakewell Market to hear presentations from RPA and database provider

SouthWestern. Since then we are learning that the launch of the new system is having 'teething problems' as there is a lot of confusion not only for farmers but also for trading standards, markets and different software companies. One member emphasised that ultimate responsibility lies with the owner of the sheep and to protect ourselves we should be reading numbers, manually or electronically, at home before they leave the holding.

Dog worrying continues to be a problem in the region and one regional member was interviewed by BBC East Midlands Today about a catalogue of incidents affecting many farmers in and around the Derwent Valley and Ladybower Dams in Derbyshire. The increasing numbers of visitors to this area – encouraged by extended access for the public – has resulted in escalating incidents, including groups of sheep stampeded across cattle grids onto the main road and killed; sheep found in fields across the valley, having swum the reservoir in desperation (and some drowning in the process); ewes separated from their lambs; and numerous incidents of sheep being killed or maimed. What upset her most were dog owners not reporting what has happened but quietly putting their dogs on leads and departing, leaving the sheep to die in agony. Let's hope NSA activity in this area helps to raise the levels of awareness in the general public (see page 18).

Eastern

By Jonathan Barber,
Manager



We are looking ahead to our regional farm walk on Wednesday 11th June at 2pm at Ickworth Park, Horringer, Bury St Edmunds, IP29 5QE, which promises to be an interesting afternoon.

Ickworth Park is owned by National Trust with the grazing farmed by the Seabrook family for over 40 years.

It is a family partnership between Paul Seabrook, sister Gillian and mother Daphne. Another sister, Jenny, also



NSA's sheep worrying signs are free to members – call NSA Head Office or email enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk.

manages the farm office. There are 500 Suffolk cross Mule ewes put to a Texel and 500 Mules mated by Suffolks and Texels. All this in the beautiful surroundings of Ickworth park. We look forward to seeing you there.

Marches

By Kevin Harrison, Chairman
By the time you read this I

imagine most of us will have finished lambing. All our lambing took place in March and it was nice to have one less thing to worry about with the weather behaving itself. If you were lambing this year I hope it's all gone well for you – now the hard work starts with keeping them going!

Planning is in full swing for the NSA Marches Region Young Shepherd's Competition on Saturday 7th June (see page 8 or www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events). It would be great to see all you young budding shepherds out there showing off your skills, whether it is just for fun or to get to the national finals at the NSA Sheep Event in July. I think you might even make me feel old to boot!

Another new NSA member from the Marches region has managed to scoop the prize of the 3in1 feeder again. We must either be a lucky region or a popular one for people to be joining at the minute! Don't forget to get yourself into the draw by recommending a new



NSA Northern Region Chairman Adam Watson (right) presents Peter Lee (left) with the T.I. Allinson Memorial Award for outstanding achievement in the northern farming industry.

member to join up.

We are also in the process of planning the Marches Region AGM, so if you fancy hosting or know a member who you think would be good as a host contact one of us and let us know.

Finally I have had some interesting conversations with members over the last few months with regard to rams being fit for purpose. One of the problems that seems to be bubbling to the top is CLA. I was fortunate enough to be able to take part in an NSA discussion group about CLA which was really useful, and it would seem that a UK vaccine is very close if we wanted it. If you have any views on this it will be great to hear from you so we can take the right action.

Northern

By Julie Sedgewick

The Northern Region AGM was held at the end of February at a new venue, Hexham Auction Mart's function room. We had a good turnout to see Adam Watson, Greg Dalton and Eddie Eastham all re-elected as Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer respectively. Peter Lee from Morley Hill, Allendale, Northumberland, was awarded the T.I. Allinson Memorial Award, presented by NSA Northern Region for outstanding achievement in the northern farming industry.

After the AGM there was a talk by David Raine and Phil Stocker on an industry-led visit to New Zealand in 2013, plus a very informative report from our two sponsored young farmers on their attendance at the Northern Farming Conference.

NSA Northern Region also hosted two meetings at the beginning of March with SouthWestern, the Irish-based company that won a three-year contract from Defra to provide the ARAMS database. The meetings offered farmers the chance to ask the systems provider questions and find out more about the service, which is which is based in Milton Keynes. Over 160 attended the first meeting at J36 Rural Auction Centre

Continued on page 6

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Wessex Animal Health

► in Cumbria and more than 80 attended the evening meeting at Hexham.

The region is proud to announce that NSA North Sheep 2015 will be held on Wednesday 3rd June 2015 at Millstone Moor Farm, Cockermouth, Cumbria, by very kind permission of Neil and Sally Marston. The family-run 350-acre farm is home to the Highberries crossing Bluefaced Leicester flock, producing some of the most sought after North of England Mule ewe lambs sold in the north.

Northern Ireland

By Edward Adamson,
Development Officer



May is going to be a very busy month for NSA NI Region. We have our NSA Sheep Centre, which has increased in size, to man at Balmoral Show (14th-16th May) where everyone interested in sheep and related trade must visit. Encourage someone to join NSA at Balmoral and have the chance to win the revolutionary Advantage 3in1 Feeder.

Then we have our Study Trip to Wales (19th-21st May) when we will visit several excellent farms, Dunbia's lamb plant at Llanbydder and the plant breeding and Innovis sheep breed centres at Aberystwyth. Anyone interested should check with me if there are any available places on the trip.

Then on 26th May the Norbrook Closamectin Sheepdog Sale will be held at Ballymena Livestock Market. We always enjoy a good turnout of dogs, customers and spectators for this event.

At the time of writing, Northern Ireland is still patiently waiting to hear the announcement of how CAP reform will be implemented here. This has proved to be one of the most divisive and sad periods we have had in NI farming circles for many years. There have been many reactions to the

consultations and proposals suggested, including greed, self-interest, apathy and total confusion.

Last year we had the devastating snow blizzards and before that several tragic slurry accidents, which united the farming community as one and we stood shoulder to shoulder. The flexibility of this CAP reform has turned farmer against farmer, neighbour against neighbour, so let's hope as you read this it has been resolved and we can once again unite.

If only a vibrant agricultural industry could survive without the need for payments, which in essence means cheaper food for the general public. Post war 50% of wages were needed to buy the food for the family, today it's less than 10%. But at least spring is in the air. Let's hope it's followed by a super summer!

Scotland

By George Milne,
Development Officer



CAP reform will certainly result in change for many sheep farmers, and it is no wonder that sheep farmers are unsure of what lies ahead when NSA and other stakeholder groups have had to respond to a Government consultation based on rules which changed almost on a weekly basis.

It is totally unsatisfactory that our sheep industry has been dragged and pulled from one idea to another based on hearsay and second hand information. In particular I refer to coupled support in the sheep sector, where different views came from Scotland, UK and Brussels. One minute we were being told yes, 5% extra would be available, then suddenly no, not available. The reality is that we are

moving to area-based payments, therefore it would seem reasonable to expect that we must make that change and get the area payment regions set correctly for the way forward, not jump about from one idea to the next on a weekly basis trying to make our industry fit in with what comes along.

NSA was very

concerned about coupled support, where it would take our sheep industry and what exactly we were trying to achieve apart from adding additional inspections, retention periods and possible individual identification of sheep tied to counts. At 5% of €27m it became difficult to say no, but as it transpired that 5% was not available we are back to getting the regional payments set accordingly instead. At least as a result of this we are now clear that minimum stocking levels can be used to trigger activity, which is vitally important to ensure money does not go to 'slipper farmers'. Remember to join us at NSA Scot Sheep on Wednesday 4th June for a debate on the new area payments and rules (full details of the event on page 9).

South East

By Bob Blenden,
Manager



I cannot help but think back a year to how much this spring differs to last – but I have an admission as I was actually in the heat of Australia visiting my daughter and her family then! This year they will be over here, visiting England in late June when I hope we can reciprocate with good weather at NSA South Sheep at Black Cap Farm in Sussex (see page 10 for details).

Planning for the event is going well and we are expecting a great day, especially as we have made it FREE to members when you present a valid membership card on entry (one entry per card). If you are unable to attend NSA South Sheep you can still participate by entering the photography competition online at www.southsheep.org.uk. We are only using digital submissions, to keep costs low and convenience high.

Please contact me if you might be interested in joining a coach party to the event from either Thame, Cirencester or Salisbury markets. Cost will be dependent on numbers and we cannot guarantee running a coach if there is not enough support. The coaches will be available to members and non-members alike.

South West

By Bryan Griffiths,
Chairman



Following a mild if persistently wet winter, with few frosty mornings, most of the region's flocks were turned out post-lambing to a good bite of early grass. In my experience grass only grows so much per year and nature may want to balance the books at a later date. We are pleased to see stock returning to the Somerset Levels

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and hope the recovery is not too prolonged.

By the time you read this, the new sheep movements database will have been operational for a month. It is difficult to see why even the most computer literate farmer would choose to report a movement electronically when the familiar quadruplicate ARAMS1 form is available and doubles as a movement licence. It is vitally important that farmers keep their home records as accurate as possible, as the database will certainly include errors and non-reads sent automatically from CPRCs. The number one priority for the NSA is to drive home the fact that sheep identification is not an exact science and a realistic level of tolerance is needed when the RPA come calling.

NSA South West Region has arranged a visit for members to the North Wyke Research Farm on 8th July. North Wyke is engaged in extensive long-term trials of different grass varieties and management systems in a high rainfall area. The project involves monitoring the nutritional quality of different swards, drainage water and the effects on the environment.

NSA honours outstanding contributions to industry

For only the second time in the 53-year history of the George Medley Memorial Award, two people won the accolade jointly.

Margaret Dalton OBE and sheep consultant Dr John Vipond (pictured), were named as joint winners of the prize, which NSA presents each year in recognition of outstanding contribution to the sheep sector, at a celebratory dinner in London in late March.

Margaret Dalton worked tirelessly to make a success of her Welsh hill farm and raise two sons following the death of her husband, Don, just 12 years after they bought the farm in 1963. Regardless, she still found time to hold numerous positions within the sheep industry, including NSA Cymru/Wales Chairman, roles within her county NFU branch, agricultural discussion group and show society, and the Women's Food and Farming Union. She has won NFU and NFU Cymru Woman Farmer of the Year awards and received the OBE in 2001. Margaret continues to take the lead on



her home farm and campaigns for the legalisation of smokies, which she believes could open up a multi-million pound market for UK sheep producers.

Dr John Vipond, Senior Sheep Consultant for SAC Consulting, SRUC, has been dedicated to the practical use of science for the benefit of the UK sheep industry throughout his career. Dr Vipond's PhD was in

nutrition and he has driven improvements in lamb feeding regimes and production and wintering systems. More recently, he has supported the development of 'easy care' sheep breeding schemes. John has contributed to professional organisations including the Highland Mule Breeders Association and the British Grassland Society, where he recently

served as President. He has collaborated with the Scottish Quality Beef and Lamb Association and Quality Meat Scotland on the development of farm assurance schemes for the sheep industry.

The presentation in March was for the 2013 award. Nominations for the 2014 recipient will be invited from industry organisations, unions and committees towards the end of the year.

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NSA Ambassadors meet for first time

Having been selected via a highly competitive process at the beginning of this year, the 11 individuals appointed to the inaugural NSA Next Generation Ambassador Group met for the first time in March.

Having travelled from every corner of the UK, it was hugely valuable for the Ambassadors to share information about their own sheep flocks as well as participate in the training provided. The

NSA Next Generation Ambassadors

- Jennifer Craig, Lanarkshire
- James Davison, County Antrim
- James Drummond, Northumberland
- Thomas Gibson, County Antrim
- James Hamilton, East Sussex
- Sara Jones-Richards, Cornwall
- John Kirkpatrick, Derbyshire
- Marie Prebble, Kent
- Andrew Prentice, Iona
- Kate Robinson, Gloucestershire
- Rhydian Thomas, Carmarthenshire

first delivery session was supported by Eblex and saw its team of in-house experts provide best practice information on a wide range of topics including assessment of soil and grass, using EBVS, body condition scoring and minimising lambing losses. There were also sessions on the make-up of the UK sheep industry and how consumers perceive lamb.

Eblex sponsored Wyn Owen, an organisational development consultant, to deliver some personal development training too, looking at issues such as time management, achieving targets and negotiating skills.

Joanne Briggs, NSA Communications Manager, says: "This first ever Ambassador Group is a very impressive collection of ambitious, forward-thinking sheep farmers who are most definitely the future leaders of our industry. The first delivery session was a perfect mix of practical business skills and challenging concepts, with plenty of opportunities for the Ambassadors to compare their different sheep enterprises and make targets for improvement over the coming years.



The NSA Next Generation Ambassadors at the first delivery day in March.

"The Ambassadors are now looking forward to the second delivery session in early June, looking at the lamb supply chain from farm, to market/abattoir and onto the shop shelf. This will be followed by a financial planning day on 29th July before the Ambassadors represent NSA at the Sheep Event on 30th July."

Find out more about the NSA Next Generation project and meet the Ambassador Group at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk.

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**Farmers
Guardian**

Still chance to qualify for Young Shepherd of the Year final

With the national Young Shepherd of the Year competition fast approaching, there are just three regional qualifiers remaining before the big final.

Each NSA region can put two competitors forward for the national final at the NSA Sheep Event in Worcestershire on Wednesday 30th July. Most have already got their two representatives but three competitions still remain:-

- NSA Scotland qualifier at NSA Scot Sheep on Wednesday 4th June (see page 9 for details).
- NSA Marches qualifier on Saturday 7th June (see below).
- NSA South East qualifier at NSA South Sheep on Saturday 28th June (see page 10 for details).

NSA Marches Region is holding its first ever Young Shepherd of the Year competition and combining it with an on-farm open day on Saturday 7th June at Upleadon Court, Newent, Gloucestershire, by kind invitation of Henry and Carol Dunn and family, sponsored by Randall Parker Foods.

The Young Shepherd of the Year competition is open to anyone under the age of 26 and carries a prize fund of £600, including a category for highest placed under 21-year-old. Download an application form at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events or contact Event Organiser Dyana Webb on 07971 409259 or djwebb@gmail.com.

Upleadon Court will be open all day (11am-4.30pm) for anyone who would like to look around the farm and specially arranged demonstrations and trade stands. The family-run farm has 600 ewes, a beef unit and some arable, and is also home of the Mayhill Lamb Producer Group and collection centre for its members.

Perfect location and record trade stand bookings for NSA Scot Sheep

This year's NSA Scot Sheep, organised by NSA Scottish Region with Bank of Scotland as major sponsor, is set to be bigger than ever. Everything is gearing up for the event on Wednesday 4th June at Quixwood, Duns, Berwickshire, TD11 3RS, by kind permission of John and Iain Macfarlane.

There is a record number of 34 sheep breeds booked to be represented in the sheep breeds' area, plus seven individual flocks of various breeds. Other trade stands and sponsorship are also well ahead of expectations with very strong numbers booked in. Several thousand sheep farmers from all over Scotland, northern England and further afield are expected to attend, which is ideally situated just off the A1 at Grantshouse.

David Leggat, United Auctions Executive Chairman and NSA Scot Sheep Organising Committee Chairman, says: "We have an excellent committee of local farmers and NSA office bearers planning this large-scale on-farm event and we can look forward to a first-class day of interest to sheep farmers and everyone in the supply chain. It is an event which no one with an interest in sheep farming can afford to miss."

Quixwood, and the adjoining farms of Ferneylea and Drakemyre, is a typical Border upland farm rising to 850ft and extending to 2,500 acres, with another 200 acres farmed on a contract basis. There are 1,500 ewes and 700 suckler cows, plus arable cropping comprising of 600 acres of winter wheat, winter and spring barley, winter and spring oats and beans, most of which is fed to the stock. The area of trees providing useful shelter belts for the stock extends to 300 acres.

High output focus

The business is geared to high output from feed grown on the farm, with a minimum of bought-in concentrates. The sheep flock comprises 300 Blackface ewes crossed with the Bluefaced Leicester to produce replacement females for the 500-strong Mule ewe flock which is crossed with Texel tups. The Texel Mule ewes are then put to the Suffolk to produce the slaughter generation. The beef herd is closed and, with plans to produce home-bred Blackies, the sheep flock will be in the future too. All lambs and calves not selected as replacements are finished through to slaughter and sold deadweight to Scotbeef.

Lambing starts indoors in late February, followed by the hogs in mid-March and the Blackface ewes in April. Ewes are fed on a TMR when housed and lambs creep fed with the aim of catching the early lamb market.

With all this going on, the farm tours are expected to be very popular on the day of Scot Sheep. Visitors will be transported by tractor and trailer to view the farm and stock, with stop-off points where experts from Watson Seeds and SRUC will be on hand to discuss various aspects grass and soil management.

Other attractions on the day will include the Young Shepherd of the Year competition (sponsored by Rumenco), sheep shearing challenge (sponsored by Nettek), stockjudging (sponsored by



NSA Scot Sheep always proves popular with farmers from Scotland and further afield.



Hosts John and Ian Macfarlane (far right and right) with Event Organiser Euan Emslie (far left) and Chairman David Leggat.

Galloway & MacLeod), sheepdog trial (sponsored by McCaskies Farm Supplies), a comprehensive seminar programme (sponsored by SRUC), show and sale of pair of ewe hoggs (sponsored by Banks Renewables), working demonstrations and a farmers market.

In addition to Bank of Scotland as major sponsor, the event is supported by Quality Meat Scotland with the following mainline sponsors – AgriLloyd, British Wool Marketing Board, Caltech Crystalyx, Campaign for Wool, CKD Galbraith, Harbro, MSD Animal Health, Novartis Animal Health, Scotbeef, Scotmin Nutrition, Shearwell Data, Texel Sheep Society and United Auctions.



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- YOUNG SHEPHERD OF YEAR COMPETITIONS •
- STOCKJUDGING •
- SHEARING •

**FURTHER INFORMATION
FROM THE WEBSITE OR
EVENT ORGANISER:**
Euan Emslie: T: 01430 441870
E: euan@appliedremedies.co.uk

ADMISSION
Adults - £12
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on production of 2014 membership cards
Under 16 - Free
International Visitors - Free
on production of passport



www.nsascotland.org.uk

Convenience of weekend date to draw crowds to NSA South Sheep

The NSA South East Region's biennial event is being held at Blackcap Farm, Firle, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 6LR, on Saturday 28th June from 9am to 5pm by kind permission of Tony Monnington and family.

Blackcap Farm is rented from the Glynde Estate, where over 200 years ago John Ellman developed the Southdown breed. While host farmer Tony does not use Southdowns today, he does have Hampshire and Suffolk rams, whose early development as breeds would have been from Southdowns.

Tony also uses Texel rams on his 550-ewe Mule and Suffolk cross Mule flock, which is so important in maintaining fertility on this light chalk farm within the Southdown National Park, enabling him to grow wheat, spring barley and oil seed rape. There is also a 90-cow suckler herd.

The farm tours will be a highlight of the event as the farm is high up on the Southdown hills affording magnificent views south to the English Channel and north to the High Weald.

South Sheep 2014 is very grateful to our major sponsors, Novartis Animal Health with Ritchey and lamb processors Randall Parker Foods, for once again supporting our event and showing their confidence in us providing an extremely useful occasion for sheep farmers to come and benefit from all the technical information available at an on-farm event.

There will be indoor and outdoor trade stands providing the latest information, plus breed societies and individual breeders. Check out the website for details.



The butchery demonstration, sponsored by Randall Parker Foods, was a popular feature at the 2012 event.

There will be a number of demonstrations and workshops throughout the day. Eblex are highlighting the importance of lamb selection, as well as overseeing the full seminar programme and sponsoring Miriam Parker of Livestockwise to run a sheep handling workshop. There will be butchery demonstrations on the Randall Parker stand, which was very popular at our 2012 event. Also there will be shearing demonstrations organised by Phil Hart from Plumpton College, crook-making with Reg Marshall, spinning and weaving in the area by the fleece competitions (which are sponsored by British Wool Marketing Board), as well as cooking demonstrations by a chef from Dunbia, who will be overseeing a Ready 'Welly' Cook competition.

For the first time our event has some trial plots with different grasses, clovers and forage crops that has been kindly sponsored and managed by Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd. Another first will be a sheepdog trial. With open and novice sections it is being organised by John Marsh of the Sussex Sheepdog Society, who has said that it will be a great venue and is expecting up to 70 dogs to be running.

Shepherd of the Future competition

The Shepherd of the Future competition has two sections – the open sponsored by Mole Valley Farmers with a prize fund of £1,000 and the student section sponsored by Volac/Lamlac with a £500 prize fund.

Something that anyone can participate in, even if they will not be there on the day, is a photography competition sponsored by our programme publisher South East Farmer magazine. Details are on the website.

Event Organiser and Regional Manager Bob Blanden says: "With free entry for members, a move to a more densely sheep populated area and a change to a Saturday date, we are expecting a big turnout. A weekend compared to midweek also means less commercial traffic, commuters and school runs. In addition to all the important business and technical knowledge that you will gain from coming, there will also be a chance to relax and socialise with local beers and quality local food on site – after all, it is a Saturday! We are looking to arrange coaches from Salisbury, Cirencester and Thame Markets so get in touch if you are interested in travelling that way."



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ADMISSION

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FURTHER INFORMATION FROM:
 Bob Blanden: T: 01666 860308 M: 07860 689391 E: bob@nationalsheep.org.uk

www.southsheep.org.uk

* ON PRODUCTION OF A CURRENT MEMBERSHIP CARD ** ON PRODUCTION OF PASSPORT

Packed programme for visitors to NSA Sheep Event 2014

Plans are well advanced for NSA Sheep Event 2014, the flagship technical event for the sheep sector held at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, on Wednesday 30th July.

As well as technical and best practice advice being offered by a number of organisations and commercial companies, a world class seminar programme will be running. Topics will cover liver fluke control, the NSA Next Generation project, finding the balance between food production and the environment, visions for the sheep sector of the future, reporting sheep movements and tackling sheep scab.

Other attractions will include a series of clinics covering topics as diverse as sheep lameness and integrating trees into farming systems. Demonstrations will also be scattered throughout the event and include a whole area of demos and workshops encouraging a proactive approach to flock health.

Martin Eccles from the Eblex butchery team will be doing a cutting demonstration to show how lamb finishing specs influence the carcass. Linked to this will be a carcass classification competition staged by Eblex and sponsored by ABP; be in with the chance of winning £200 for correctly linking four lambs to their ideal market. Then watch the carcasses put to their intended use as four well known faces in the sheep sector compete against each other in the Ready, Steady, Cook competition.

If judging live lambs is more your thing, donate £1 to RABI to enter the Texel Youth Development's stockjudging challenge. The top prize is Ritchie Farm Implements lamb scales.

Demonstrations

British Wool Marketing Board will be running demonstrations on improving presentation and quality of fleeces to increase the value of your wool clip, while also running its regular fleece competition and supporting the open shearing competition and England Shearer of the Year Final. There's a prize fund of £750 for the open competition.

Things to remember before the event

- If you want to enter the NSA Sheep Event Video Competition make sure you get your footage to us by Friday 16th May. See page 3 for details.
- Aged under 26 and want to qualify for the Young Shepherd of the Year final at NSA Sheep Event? There are still three regional qualifiers to be held in Scotland, South East and Marches regions. See page 8 for details.
- Don't miss the Sheep Industry Dinner the night before the main event, attracting around 300 people from every part of the sector. Contact Event Organiser Helen Davies to book individual tickets or tables of 10.
- Hunt out your NSA membership card! You will need it on the gate for £6 entry, compared to £15 for non-members; one discounted entry per card.
- If you're not in the NSA/3in1 Feeder free prize draw yet, get a friend or neighbour to sign up as a NSA member so you'll both be entered into the draw and be eligible for £6 entry. Fill in the form on page 15 and either post it off now or bring it to the event.
- Non NSA-members can buy tickets at the 'early bird' rate of £10. Find out more at www.sheepevent.org.uk.



The technical seminar programme attracted large crowds in 2012.

Searching for a new dog? Then don't miss our 15th biennial sale of around 40 working sheepdogs. Also watch over a dozen professional fencing contractors compete in two-man teams to erect 70m of Tornado high tensile stock fence in three hours.

Don't miss the July edition of Sheep Farmer magazine, packed full of information about the event. In the meantime, direct any enquiries to Event Organiser Helen Davies (contact details below). Our thanks to all event sponsors, listed below, and Farmers Guardian as media partner.



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- DEMONSTRATIONS
- SHEEP DOG SALE
- TRADE STANDS



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FURTHER INFORMATION AND TICKETS CONTACT: HELEN DAVIES
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One stop shop at Built ram sales

A one stop shop system is being introduced by the NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Committee to speed up the system of paying for rams at the August and September sales.

It means customers will only have to queue once to pay for rams bought from one auctioneer, rather than having to pay at different ring cash desks for individual purchases.

The NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Committee has also introduced measures to make the individual auctioneer rings and cash desks more readily identifiable. The layout of the auctioneers' area in the Glamorgan Hall will also be modified to allow staff to maximise their own efficiency.

The Tup Taxi service will be free this year and also a lot more efficient, with improved traffic control

introduced to ensure a free-flow of traffic. Stewards will ensure only traffic not carrying stock can access from Horse Hill out onto the Llandrindod road.

In addition, NSA has absorbed rising costs and held entry prices as a gesture of goodwill to loyal vendors. Queries, including from anyone interested in supplying a quad and driving for the Tup Taxi service, should contact Jane Smith (see panel for contact details).



NSA Ram Sales 2014

NSA Wales & Borders: Early Sale on Monday 4th August and Main Sale on Monday 22nd September, both at the Royal Welsh Showground. Contact Jane Smith on 01291 673939 or jane@nsaramsales.co.uk.

NSA South West Region: Sale on Wednesday 20th August at Exeter Livestock Centre. Contact Sue Martyn on 01409 271385, 07967 512660 or suem@nationalsheep.org.uk.

NSA Eastern Region: Early Sale on Friday 22nd August at Rugby Farmers Mart and Late Sale on Friday 19th September at Melton Mowbray Market. Contact Jonathan Barber on 01953 607860 or carroll@ceressolutions.co.uk.

Entry closing dates are 2nd July and 6th August for the early and mail Built sales respectively

SureRam scheme in operation at NSA South West sale

The NSA South West Region Ram Sale Organising Committee is pleased to announce that, following talks with Zoetis Animal Health, rams will be on offer at the sale as guaranteed SureRams.

These sheep will have undergone a quarantine treatment for sheep scab and nematode worms, giving the purchaser confidence he is buying healthy stock and can put his rams to work immediately if necessary (although NSA still recommends a quarantine treatment period as best practice).

To be eligible for SureRam status all

rams must be treated with a licensed scab control product (2% moxidectin subcutaneous injection or organophosphate plunge dipping) no more than 14 days before sale and also receive a dose of Startect dual-active wormer, administered on arrival at the livestock centre by a vet. Qualifying stock will receive a SureRam certificate to display in their pen.

The Organising Committee hopes vendors will take part in this scheme, which will be used as a marketing tool to encourage more purchasers to attend the sale. Entry forms will be sent out in

mid-May to vendors from the last three years, along with more details of the SureRam scheme. Any other prospective vendors (who must be members of NSA) will be able to download a form from www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events or contact Sue Martyn (details above). Entries close on Monday 30th June with ballot (to which all vendors are invited) taking place on Monday 7th July.

Please note that as in previous years, sheep will have to pass an inspection before being allowed into the sale ring. Kivells will act as auctioneers.

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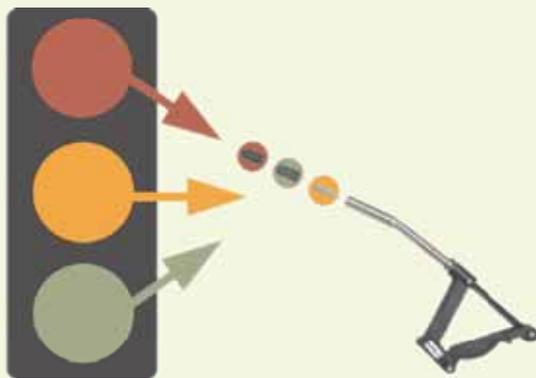


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Second 3in1 Feeder given away

The second of six 3in1 Advantage Feeders has been given away in the NSA 2014 membership recruitment campaign, this time to Worcestershire farmer Andrew Baxter.

A draw for the feeder is held every two months, with all new members eligible plus existing members who recommend a friend or neighbour. Simply cut out the application form opposite, write your membership number and/or postcode in the space provided and pass it onto a non-NSA member to get them to sign up. The more people you recommend, the more entries you get into the draw.

"I joined up because Charlotte Underwood, the NSA Membership Recruitment Officer, is a near neighbour and had been badgering me!" says Mr Baxter. "I find the regular email updates really helpful in keeping up with the latest news in the sheep industry. The ability to access the Lambing List was another reason for joining."

Farm facts

Mr Baxter is a tenant on the Croome Estate, farming 670 acres in partnership with his wife. They run 350 ewes and 100 sucklers, as well as growing 450 acres of combinable crops. The North Country Mule ewes are put to Suffolk rams and the finished lambs sold through Worcester Market. The sheep and cattle are primarily grazed on HLS grassland that makes up part of the National Trust's Croome Landscape Park.



Andrew Baxter (centre) is presented with his prize by NSA Marches Region Chairman Kevin Harrison (left) and Robert Ball from Advantage Feeders (right).

"The 3in1 feeder I am sure will be a very useful acquisition," says Mr Baxter, who paid to upgrade from the 800 model (holds 500kg of feed) to the 1800 (1,150kg). "The principle of controlling feed rates and stopping gorging by the greedy ones will be of great benefit and make creep feeding more cost efficient. The ability to be able to feed our own cereals through the feeder in a controlled way will be really useful too."

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NSA membership subscriptions are vital to us, as they fund our work providing a voice for sheep farmers and enable us to offer a wide range of benefits to members, including this magazine. Help us to help you by encouraging friends and neighbours to become NSA members too – and get entered into the free prize draw to win a 3in1 Feeder 800 from Advantage Feeders with the ability to offer creep, rationing and ad lib feeding with no waste and a capacity of 500kg of feed. We are giving away six feeders in 2014 and the more people you recommend to become NSA members the more chances you have to win. Just make sure your details are in the referral box below.

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Fax: 01684 892 663 Email: membership@nationalsheep.org.uk

your business your future

Family focus on Welsh hill farm

By Joanne Briggs, NSA

Having been raised with his sister on a Welsh hill farm at Rhayader, Powys, and now with his own young children to show the ropes to, Paul Wozencraft knows the value of family in running a sheep farming business.

As well as supporting his parents Eurfyl and Phylis on the family farm, Paul and wife Nicola have invested in their own land over the last couple of years to establish a sheep flock that their three children – Chloe (13), Oliver (9) and Jasmine (7) – all love to help out with.

“The children are all mad about farming,” Paul says. “The girls are especially keen on feeding the orphans at lambing time and Oliver is always with me at every opportunity and fast becoming my advisor! I feel lambing time is the season when all the family pulls together as a unit and we pitch in with the day-to-day tasks that we are faced with.”

Preserving the family farm in its role of producing food while also sustaining rural communities and protecting the environment is a message that Paul is keen to promote in his new role as NSA Cymru/Wales Chairman. He took on the two-year office in February and has already been vocal about the need for



Brecknock Hill/Welsh ewes with their twin lambs.

Welsh Government to direct payments to upland farms that need support to continue in their vital role, which includes providing genetics and stock for lowland units.

His parent’s farm is typical of a traditional family hill farm in that part of Wales, with roughly 80 hectares (200 acres) of grassland and enclosed mountain plus common grazing rights on a second mountain. They took on the farm as a rented unit in 1967 and purchased it as sitting tenants in 1975. The farmstead is situated where the rivers Wye and Elan converge, placing it at edge of the Cambrian Mountains and at the foot of the Elan Valley dams, built around 100 years ago to create reservoirs and pipe water to the rapidly expanding urban population in Birmingham.

Eppynt Speckles

It was traditionally a beef and sheep farm but with Paul now running his own stock and working off the farm part-time for Powys County Council, Eurfyl and Phylis have scaled back to sheep only. These are 300 Eppynt Hardy Speckled Face ewes, mainly kept pure but with a Texel cross ram used on the older females for the first time last year.

Separate to the family farm, the land owned and rented by Paul and Nicola is more typical of new entrants finding their way into farming, taking whatever land they can wherever it comes up. They own 40ha (100 acres), split between one block next to the family farm and another nine miles away near the village of Llangurig, and also rent 12ha (30 acres) in various blocks with a lot of time and money spent travelling in between.

“We would love to expand the size of the business but opportunities to acquire land are very much restricted in our area, mainly due to a lack of supply

that comes onto the market and the inflated price when it does,” says Paul, acknowledging that for the time being at least he must use his available land as efficiently as possible.

The bulk of Paul’s 300 own ewes are Brecknock Hill Cheviots, accompanied by some Eppynt Hill and Beulah Speckled Faces, Balwen Welsh Mountains, Torwen and Torddu Badger Face Welsh Mountains, and a couple of newly arrived Herwicks.

“I think we will soon be challenging Adam Henson,” jokes Paul as he lists his collection of traditional breeds. “I have always had a passion for native breeds and think the taste of this meat cannot be rivalled. You lose the conformation, which is what the supermarket wants, but the eating experience seems to have been forgotten; mountain lambs do taste sweeter.

“The market for small lambs seems to be shrinking as the big European customers in Spain, Italy and Greece struggle with financial troubles, so I congratulate HCC for trying to open up new markets for these lambs. We do now put a Texel cross ram across some of our ewes, as the market dictates that type of lamb, but that overlooks the fact

“I have always had a passion for native breeds and think the taste of this meat cannot be rivalled ... mountain lambs do taste sweeter.”

Paul Wozencraft

Farm facts

- Three generations of the Wozencraft family – Eurfyl and Phylis own the family farm, Paul and Nicola own and rent additional land nearby, and children Chloe, Oliver and Jasmine help out wherever they can.
- 300 ewes on the family farm, all Eppynt Hardy Speckled Face.
- 300 ewes owned by Paul and Nicola, mainly Brecknock Hill Cheviots lambed in early March, plus a small suckler herd and heifer calves purchased annually to rear on the bucket.
- High rainfall area but fairly free draining land and only a couple of fields liable to flooding.
- Paul is a longstanding NSA member, joining the NSA Cymru/Wales Committee a number of years ago to represent the Balwen Welsh Mountain Sheep Society and now serving as Regional Chairman for two years.



Eppynt Hardy Speckled Face ewes with Beulah lambs.

the hill lamb is the nucleus of the breeding flock.

“I thought Lambing Live was its best ever this year and the host farmer was absolutely right when he looked over his flock of hill ewes and said ‘If you get it wrong here it follows all the way down the line’. We often forget this. You can never stop improving your flock, but it always comes back to them being tough enough to live in this environment.”

Paul would like to sell breeding males in the future but knows the blood lines and marketing have to be right to rival the breeders already well known in the show and sale rings. He started showing his Balwens around five years ago at the Royal Welsh Show – and this has firmly become a family affair.

“The children live for Royal Welsh week, when my son takes charge of us all and my wife gets the clippers out to get the sheep (and me) looking their best!” he says. “The Balwen classes simply get stronger and bigger every year so I tell the children that a rosette of any colour is a real achievement. Mind you, I’m still waiting for the red colour.”

Balwen breed

“The Balwen breed has progressed so much it is simply unrecognisable from when they first came to the show. I am proud to be involved with the breed society and have been Chairman in the past. Belonging to a sheep society is vital for any enthusiastic breeder. It is how I started out and for any young child it is such an education they can never experience anywhere else and has a sense of belonging to them.”

Once home from the Royal Welsh, focus turns to the following season with rams turned out in early October. The ewes are scanned around Christmas time and usually come in at around 150%, which Paul says is ‘really pleasing’ for the type of breeds. Ewes scanned as empty are sold immediately, singles turned back outside and twins/triplets housed ahead of early March lambing. From March through to weaning as many lambs as possible are



Paul Wozencraft (back left) with his family – Jasmine and Oliver are behind with Nicola, Chloe and Eurfyl in front. They are pictured on the family farm near where the Elan and Wye rivers converge.

sold directly off the ewe at around 28-32kg.

“This seems a small weight but the majority are native breeds and to get them up and over 38kg would be post-Christmas when everything comes out of a bag,” says Paul, adding that he is always looking to reduce production costs and would like to produce more home-grown feed for this reason.

“With the cost of feed and straw bedding continuing to rise, I feel the time will come back when more farmers decide to do their own crops on their own land again. When these products were cheaper it made economic sense to buy it in and keep your own land in pasture but fuel, fertiliser and feed are killing modern day profits.”

Low input systems

“Grass is the biggest contributor in low input systems but we have a short grass-growing period here compared to other parts of Wales and are lucky to get one crop of silage, let alone two or three. If we are able to join Glastir [the Welsh countryside stewardship scheme] we plan to grow swedes or roots to help finish lambs in the autumn. My grandfather once told me that young stock need young leys and I can see that for myself now.

“I think we all need to accept that

CAP payments are going to reduce over time and will be more environmental based, but the issue I feel has been completely overlooked is different tier payments being applied in Wales. Our type of land is

restricted by what it can grow without applying artificial fertiliser. The soil is not rich enough to grow potatoes and the like, but it appears that payments have been steered in that direction. The costs of production are so much higher in the uplands but that has not been recognised by Welsh Government.”

This appreciation of the wider farming situation as well as his own business puts Paul in an excellent position as NSA Cymru Chairman, providing a voice for Welsh sheep farmers while also ensuring his own business faces the challenges of the future.



March-born pure Balwen lambs. [Find more pictures and an archive of farm features in the members-only area of the NSA website.]

New sheep worrying website launched

Following the call to action in the last edition of *Sheep Farmer* magazine, plus lots of publicity on social media and in the local and regional farming press, an incredible 580 sheep farmers filled in the NSA sheep worrying survey in the month of March.

This provided NSA with the perfect base to create and launch a new area of the NSA website aimed at encouraging dog walkers to be responsible when walking in the countryside. The new website at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/ dog-owners includes information about



The NSA campaign asks walkers to always use a lead around sheep. Picture courtesy of Bayer Animal Health, who also helped with the online worming information.

keeping dogs on leads around livestock and also worming dogs to protect sheep from faecal-transmitted diseases. It has sections for both dog walkers and farmers on the legal situation covering dog worrying and also encourages owners not to leave dogs attended outside and to seek professional help in training unruly dogs.

Spreading the word

As in previous years when NSA has drawn attention to the issue of sheep

Sheep Worrying Facts

Information from police forces in the UK obtained under the Freedom of Information Act shows a worrying upward trend, with 691 dog attacks reported in 2011, 738 in 2012 and 1,074 in 2013.

Headline figures from the NSA survey of 580 sheep farmers

- 60% of attacks occurred on private, enclosed fields with no footpath.
- 63% of attacks involved just one dog.
- 96% of attacks led to at least one sheep being stressed/injured and 63% to invisible injuries (stress and abortion). Dog bites requiring a vet occurred in 40% of attacks and at least one sheep was killed in 35% of attacks.
- The most frequent associated cost of a single attack (24% of respondents) was £200-£399, but 21% of single cases cost more than £1,000.

Headline figures from the FG survey of 1,379 dog walkers

- 28% of walkers always let their dog off the lead in the countryside; 57% do sometimes.
- 82% of walkers feel they are in control of their dog when it is off the lead.



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Activity continues on TSEs

Following the publication of the NSA report calling for relaxation of the current TSE controls and the unjustified cost of carcass splitting placed on the industry, NSA has been working hard to get it seen in the right places.

The first step was targeting people in powerful positions in Europe, including the European Food Safety Authority and DG Sanco, the European directorate for health and consumer protection. Next is raising the issue with MEPs and MPs, which will be a two-stage process due to the MEP election on 22nd May that may see some MEPs lose their position and new faces come in. Work and publicity will be ongoing over the coming months to ensure momentum on the issue is not lost.

Five recommendations

The NSA report, which can be read at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/hot-topics, makes five recommendations. The first, which can be acted upon in Europe without waiting for any changes to the law, is for the European Commission to immediately action recommendations made by the European Food Safety Authority in 2010 to improve data collection and risk assessments linked to TSEs, with a view to relaxing regulations.

The second recommendation is that the requirement to split carcasses is removed from animals of all ages, with a third recommendation to reduce the number of carcasses being split in the shorter-term. This would involve only splitting carcasses from the end of June following the year of birth (i.e. lambs born in 2014 would only be split if sent to slaughter from 1st July 2015) or changing the requirement to the eruption of the second pair of incisors instead of the first.

The fourth recommendation is another one that can make an immediate difference without a law change. That is the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) putting an end to its current 'gold plating' of the EU regulation and (in line with other European countries) no longer insisting on 100% of specified risk material being removed when carcasses are split.

In all this NSA is asking for scrapie testing in sheep to continue, as while the disease does not pose a human health risk it does challenge sheep productivity; that is the fifth and final recommendation.

Continued from page 18

worrying, the challenge is getting the message to the general public via the non-farming press. By teaming up with Farmers Guardian to lend weight to the campaign, there has been a very positive response and a good level of activity from local newspapers, radio stations, regional news programmes and even dog magazines. Social media has been invaluable in this, with Twitter particularly helping to spread the word.

The website address is included on the new batch of NSA dog worrying signs (see what they look like on page 4) and the online resource will continue to be expanded to keep the general public engaged. In particular, case studies of affected farmers will be added to help walkers understand how much damage their dog can cause.



Twitter has been invaluable in spreading the word, especially to dog magazines and other typically difficult audiences.

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Commoners explain sheep farming reality to 'sensationalist' Monbiot

By Joanne Briggs, NSA

Given that George Monbiot has turned down an invitation to speak at the NSA Sheep Event in July, it was very interesting to see the reception he was given when he agreed to attend the Federation of Cumbria Commoners' AGM in March.

Mr Monbiot is fast becoming a household name with his frequent television appearances and newspaper articles blaming farming for every environment problem from loss of diversity to flooding. Yet the Cumbria Commoners were incredibly polite to the political campaigner and conservationist, listening patiently to his presentation before he was joined on stage by local farmers for a question and answer session.

Mr Monbiot did not hold back on his comments to the Cumbria Commoners, many of whom manage sheep in the world-renowned beauty of the Lake

District. His description of the area included phrases such as 'ecological disaster area', 'aftermath of a nuclear winter' and 'extraordinary barren', arguing there were more birds in urban gardens than the UK uplands and comparing farmers (and the conservationists who fail to stop them) to loggers and ranchers in the Amazon who are internationally condemned for destroying the rainforest.

Continuing on the theme of deforestation, Mr Monbiot said the uplands used to be covered in trees but now grassland and moorland, which damage wildlife rather than encourage diversity, is protected in 'a very strange set of priorities'.

Tree planting

"The UK spends millions overseas telling countries to plant and protect trees, but farmers are paid here to keep land in

GAEC," Mr Monbiot said, referring to Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition requirements under cross-compliance.

He argues trees prevent flooding by holding water in the uplands and slowing its descent downhill, and therefore it is wrong to pay farmers subsidies when they are doing 'social harm' not delivering social goods. His solution is a 'super HLS' where land owners who are willing and able will be paid to plant trees and encourage rank vegetation.

"Fair play if you don't want to take the financial incentive, but absentee landlords will do it if there's



The Federation of Cumbria Commoners defended the role of sheep farming in the Lake District to political campaigner George Monbiot.

economic sense," he said, adding that such activity would also draw in money via high value eco-tourism with tourists spending more than they currently do when they visit the Lake District.

"You cannot oppose people consenting to change activity. I don't want complete cessation of livestock farming but I don't want it to be as universal as it is. I want trees not bare, barren hills. Our national parks have no specific nature value. People are paying for farming so let's give them something more interesting to see than these desert environments."

Different views

The panel of Will Rawlings and Will Benson, two local farmers, and Julia Aglionby of the Foundation for Common Land, did an excellent job fighting back at Mr Monbiot's claims, saying farmers are already fully engaged and delivering environmental management. They have been offered a choice, just as Mr Monbiot is suggesting, and have chosen a compromise between trees and sheep rather than one or the other. This compromise is also delivering high quality food from low quality land, encouraging wildlife and biodiversity, preserving genetic diversity in livestock and sustaining a skilled community.

"We are already doing tree planting at a strategic level," said Mrs Aglionby said. "If we do it on the scale you're suggesting we will lose people and skills."

Mr Rawlings agreed: "We have made massive strides in recent years and sensational comments by you have regenerated mistrust and uncertainty from the farming community. We had very good working relationship and it's a great shame we are now here, shouting at your sensationalist statements."

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No sense in re-wilding message

By Keith McDougal, NSA Vice President and Song Bird Survival Trust Founder Member

Within George Monbiot's declarations that 're-wilding' the British uplands and hills by planting trees will increase wildlife he needs to spell out his target species.

If we are considering fauna in the uplands it is surely true that birdlife has adapted to and flourished where hills and moors are managed by hefted sheep flocks, carefully managed in-by land and with native breeds skilfully shepherded and bred to suit the local conditions. Heather moors add the further opportunity for grouse shooting and blanket bogs for rare plants.

A balance of grazing, tourism, sporting enterprises and family-run farms has served wildlife for generations. So where does the planting of forests come in as a preferable way to enhance wildlife?

If we look at commercial block planting of conifer the answer is most certainly a big negative. The Forestry Commission has a disastrous ecological inheritance – acidification of water courses, a reservoir of harmful predators (and in some cases scabby sheep), bracken, fire risk and plain ugliness.

There is a case for small acres of native scrub in gills and ravines to encourage biodiversity (black grouse come to mind) but open moor and in-by

pastures are the favoured habitats for curlew, lapwing, ring ouzels, wheatears, meadow pipits, eagles, merlin, whinchats and golden plover, while mountain hares, adders and hosts of vertebrates flourish in the high hills. Other rare species adapted to our systems of hill livestock farming are too numerous to mention. English Nature has spent 50 years gathering this data, as also in Scotland and Wales by the equivalent organisations, so why do they hanker for change?

Somehow, somewhere, this world of armchair conservationists think the association between extensive hill farming and wildlife is flawed, that we can do better by planting trees, getting rid of traditional hill sheep and, in some magic way, biodiversity will burst forth with more vigour. Of course it won't! Our wildlife had adapted to our farming systems over hundreds of years, and it will continue to do so unless the likes of Mr Monbiot get control and meddling politicians adopt his heresies.

Everyone should realise that extensive sheep and cattle farming in the hills of the UK is a precious national asset. Our native breeds are almost unique to Europe, adapted to their local harsh conditions and producing meat and wool under a system of natural



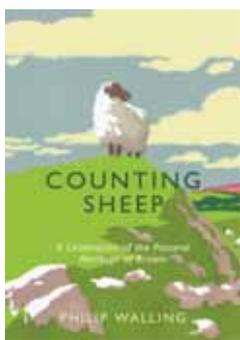
Lapwings are one of several bird species that thrive in open moor and in-by pasture.

solar-powered grazed ground full of wildlife and beauty. We throw away this priceless heritage at our peril. Governments come and go but hill farming in England, Scotland and Wales is deserving of fierce protection and, where necessary, carefully targeted financial support.

The alternatives are impoverished wildlife, fewer family farms and the loss of one of Europe's most natural sources of food and wool, not to mention the loss of landscapes beloved by tourists and generating valuable income to supplement the farm's main activity.

New books provides authoritative view

Philip Walling's new Counting Sheep book is an excellent antidote to some of the messages coming from the Monbiot camp, and its recent appearance in the Sunday Times bestseller list hopefully means it is attracting a diverse audience.



The author (who has agreed to speak at the NSA Sheep Event in July) started out in life as a sheep farmer, took a change of direction to become a London-based barrister for 25 years, and then returned to his roots on a sheep farm in northern England.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker says: "Philip has undoubtedly started from a position of knowledge and understanding of practical sheep farming but has clearly done a substantial amount of research too, into the history

of sheep, the evolution of breeds and some of the great innovators of sheep farming. I found the book a compelling read, packed with historical information but feeding right through to current times and discussing topical issues.

"The chapter on 'The modern and the

future' provides real common sense about the negative environmental effects of abandonment due to environmental schemes, while what is supposed to be being protected has

been created by sheep farming in the first place. If a wider audience read it then it will do our cause the power of good."

'Counting Sheep: A celebration of the pastoral heritage of Britain' is published by Profile Books.

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The importance of the halal market for the sheep industry



By Jo Biggs, Eblex Communications Manager

Following several years of contraction, 2013 saw a welcome rise in consumption of lamb on the domestic market. Kantar Worldpanel data shows that in the 52 weeks to 5th January 2014, lamb retail sales increased in volume by 11.5% year-on-year and rose in value by 7.7%.

A significant contributor to the growth of the market was undoubtedly the halal sector, with the Muslim population of England and Wales now amounting to 4.8% of the population according to 2011 census data published by the Office for National Statistics. The figures showed an increase in the Muslim population of nearly 2% (1.2 million) over the 10-year period since the last census, which was the largest rise in any religious group after those who declared themselves to have no religion.

Growth in the Muslim population has implications on meat consumption patterns in the UK, with a likely increase in demand for halal products focused in areas with higher Muslim populations. London was registered as having the highest proportion of Muslims (12% of its population), followed by the West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber. In addition, halal sheepmeat is eaten by non-Muslims in the ethnic restaurant sector, which further drives up demand.

Muslims eat a significant amount of meat per head. It is estimated that they



Muslim festivals can significantly drive sheepmeat sales at key times of the year.

consume 20-30% of all the lamb sold in England, illustrating the importance of this market to sheep producers. In the absence of alcohol, food plays a major role in all social functions and Muslim religious festivals often result in a period of increased demand for English lamb.

Muslim calendar

Key dates in the Muslim calendar include the fasting month of Ramadan, which this year begins on 28th June and ends on the 28th July with the festival of Eid-al-Fitr. This celebrates the end of fasting and is marked by celebrations, family get-togethers and the first day-time meal for a month. The other important date is the Festival of Sacrifice, Eid-al-Adha (Qurbani), which takes place around 4th October this year. This is an important period for sheepmeat consumption, as the celebrations involve the slaughter of animals as thanks to God, leading to significant procurement of animals in the run-up to the festival.

As well as the halal market being a significant driver for domestic consumption, the English lamb market is underpinned by a thriving export trade and two of our main European markets are also influenced by demand within the halal sector. France, where there are estimated to be between five and six million Muslims, making up 10% of the population, is our biggest export market for lamb. In Germany, another key outlet, Muslims are believed to account for 5% of the population at four million.

With the increasing significance of the halal sector both at home and abroad, it's important that the English sheep meat industry works to better understand the demands of this market.

As part of its ongoing work to support

this sector, Eblex recently conducted an industry consultation on proposals for a voluntary halal assurance scheme for sheep meat, which could feature clear on-pack labelling to aid consumer choice. The consultation generated a positive response from the industry, with over 60 submissions being received during the three-month consultation period. Eblex is now exploring in detail further questions raised by these responses before any further announcements are made.

2014 Religious Festivals

- 27th May** – Muslim festival of Lailat al Miraj
- 14th June** – Muslim festival of Laylat al Bara'th
- 28th June** – Beginning of Ramadan
- 23rd June** – Muslim festival of Laylat al Qadr
- 28th June** – End of Ramadan; Eid-al-Fitr
- 3rd October** – Muslim festival of Waqf al Arafat
- 4th October** – Muslim festival of Eid-al-Adha
- 23rd October** – Hindu festival of Diwali
- 24th October** – Islamic New Year (Hijri)
- 3rd November** – Muslim Day of Ashura
- 6th December** – St Nicholas Day (celebrated by many Christians in mainland Europe)
- 25th December** – Christmas Day

Dates provided by QMS

Find out more

- Eblex has a range of resources available for sheep producers and processors regarding the halal market at www.eblextrade.co.uk/halal.
- The issue of stun and non-stun halal is a contentious one that has received some press coverage in recent months. Rizvan Khalid, processor and Eblex board member, explained the situation exceptionally well on Countryfile. An interesting and illuminating presentation on halal given by Rizvan at the Eblex annual conference can also be found at www.eblex.org.uk/events/conference-news/annual-conference-2013.



Conor McGuigan

HOW TO SECURE WEATHERPROOF GUARANTEED FARMING INCOME

According to a recent survey carried out by the National Farmers Union, this year's extreme weather and soaring costs have seriously hit farmers' confidence to invest in their businesses in the short term. Some 42 per cent of farmers told the NFU that their farm businesses were in for a tougher year, up from 30 per cent in 2012.

However, in spite of the gloom and uncertainty, increasing numbers of farmers have been discovering a way to reap a weatherproof, guaranteed income over a 25 year period – with zero set up costs to themselves. They have achieved this by renting out land or roof space to the UK's leading solar energy generator, Lightsource Renewable Energy.

Lightsource Renewable Energy, the UK's leading solar energy generator is currently assessing land areas in the UK to establish their suitability for a solar farm installation. Lightsource has already developed over 80 solar farms, across 2,200 acres which currently provide clean, secure electricity to over 100,000 UK homes, and aims to double this capacity by December 2014. The company is confident that its solar farms will boost rural business providing options to landowners across the country to diversify their income



Sheep graze happily in the sunshine at Marley Thatch Solar Farm, Devon

with a solar installation on their property. Conor McGuigan, Business Development Director for Lightsource comments, "Contrary to the unfounded opinions of some, solar farms do not harm the land they are installed upon. In fact they safeguard it for future generations and provide further options for farmland diversification like grazing small livestock or providing an ecological habitat for rare birds like the English Grey Partridge. If you are a farmer with land available for rent, it is best to come straight to us because we prefer to cut out any 'third parties' or 'middlemen' who will sometimes have their own agenda. We like to deal directly with the person who is potentially going to be our landlord

"Solar farms safeguard land for future generations."

for the next 25 years. It's very important that we get to meet face to face and build a strong, comfortable relationship because of the length of the commitment and contract we would be entering into. The same applies to the relationship we foster with the local community around the site – they are going to be our neighbours for a long time."

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The farmer or landowner enters into a fixed-term 25 year lease with Lightsource, at which point rental payments begin and are then paid quarterly in advance. Rent is priced per acre and is increased annually in line with inflation. There is no risk of any default on rental payments as Lightsource projects are backed by a long term government sponsored incentive schemes, making the company and payments guaranteed and secure.

The solar farm panels and infrastructure only occupy less than 30 per cent of the rented area. This allows both landowner and Lightsource to work together to ensure the land allocated to the solar farm is managed responsibly and sustainably. The gaps between rows usually range from 4 meters to 8 meters and as the panels are mounted above the ground, the land is ideal for grazing small livestock like sheep or chickens.

GUARANTEED INCOME FOR 25 YEARS

Conor continues: "Solar power is a dependable source of energy, and farming it creates a great opportunity to establish a sustainable local supply chain. The land owners we work with currently have used the stable income the solar farm provides to diversify their business and even invest in new equipment to continue farming. If the farmer can spare that land, he is in a win-win situation because not only will he be able to continue doing what he does best – farming the land, he will also have the benefit of a reliable long-term revenue stream to back him up. Some farmers even see this as part of their future retirement plan."

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THE UK'S LEADING SOLAR ENERGY GENERATOR

Prepare for new greening rules now

By Jeremy Moody, Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) Secretary and Advisor

It is always remarkable how the farming world adapts to the complexities of each new CAP regime. Those skills are about to be tested again with the 2014 end of the Single Payment Scheme and the start of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and 'greening'.

While the first applications for BPS will be made next spring, the cropping and land use issues involved in greening need attention this summer for farmers to get them right – and they affect 30% of the money.

Greening imposes three basic measures on all Basic Payment Scheme claimants:-

- Maintaining existing 'permanent grassland'
- Crop diversification on arable land
- Ecological Focus Area (EFA)

All Basic Payment Scheme claimants must meet these greening requirements across their whole agricultural area (not just the land being used for claims) unless they meet one of the exemptions discussed on the next page.

So farmers planning for greening need to assess how much 'permanent grassland' and 'arable' land they will have in 2015. Each of these has a specific meaning discussed below but ploughing out permanent grassland may simply increase liability to crop diversification and EFAs. Fodder crops will mean that many livestock farmers have more 'arable' land than they might think and so more greening to think about.

It is also worth considering that EFAs and crop diversification are likely to require careful mapping to show the features and any fields that are split to meet cropping rules.

Let's start by being sure exactly what 'greening' is. In the EU regulation 'greening' is shorthand for 'payment for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment'. The Commissioner was very anxious that direct payments should be linked across Europe to standard agri-environment measures to help justify them politically, in addition to cross compliance. This leads to particular issues in countries such as the UK where agri-environment schemes were development several years ago.

Governments can chose alternatives to the three greening criteria but, with good arguments against doing so, England and Wales have said they will not. Northern Ireland is not minded to



While there are many exemptions to greening rules for livestock farmer, care must be taken to understand what 'permanent' grassland is and where forage crops fit.

either, and the Scottish preference is awaited.

Because 30% of the money for direct payments is allocated to greening, a lot turns on meeting its standards each year. It could either be paid as a proportionate addition to the farmer's Basic Payment or at a standard rate per hectare in each payment region.

Double funding

One critical point for many is the bar on 'double funding', which means that where something is required by greening it cannot then be paid for under an agri-environment agreement. That is most likely to be an issue for EFA measures, on which many decisions are awaited.

When we look at the detail it is important to understand the definition of 'permanent grassland' and 'arable land'. In practice it seems likely that maintaining permanent grassland will feel like the present cross compliance rule, monitored at national not farm level. 'Permanent grassland' is not permanent pasture but simply land in grass or other herbaceous forage that has not had another crop on it in the previous five years. It may in general include land that has become grass under arable reversion measures. Immediately re-seeded pastures (without an intervening crop) would be treated as continuing grass. If the national proportion of this land drops by 5% farmers can be required to re-convert land but that has not been needed under the present rule.

Arable land

When it comes to arable land, this is the basis for assessing liability to crop diversification and EFA measures. The more arable land, the more liability. 'Arable' land is agricultural land that is neither 'permanent grassland' nor under 'permanent crops'. As such it includes any grass that has had a crop on it in

the previous five years, whether or not that crop was on a Single Payment Scheme claim form. Livestock farmers should look back over the last five years to see how much 'arable' land they actually have – whether maize, fodder crops, wholecrop or anything else.

The table over the page summarises a farmer's liability to crop diversification and EFAs. Of course, many farmers may well already have rotations that meet the requirements and find it possible to meet EFA rules. Registered organic land is anyway exempt from greening but there are then significant possible exemptions for which many livestock farmers may qualify.

As the table shows, this is more complex than a 'three crop rule' and will require care in planning. Where a farmer has more than 30 hectares of arable land and is not released by one of the exemptions, he must have:-

- No more than 75% of his land in any one crop.
- No more than 95% of his land in any two crops.

He can then grow as many different crops as he wishes. In practice, unless those further crops are being grown to feed the farmer's animals or may be useful as game cover, it may be that the minimum scale is a lorry load for sale.

We do not know when the test has to be met, but we are perhaps looking at late spring.

What is a 'crop'?

The EU rules here can be complex but for the main crops (such as wheat, barley, oats, oil seed rape and maize) the answer is straightforward – each will be a crop with the additional point that winter and spring crops will count as different crops. Temporary grass and fallow (as defined) will each count as crops. The problems arise where there are several species within one genus or with brassicas one species

may cover several crops – cabbage, cauliflower, kale and broccoli are all one species and so one crop.

In principle, once a farmer has at least 15ha of arable land he must manage the equivalent of 5% with EFA measures. None of the four UK Governments have yet to choose these from fallow, landscape features, buffer strips, Rural Development-funded agro-forestry, eligible land strips alongside edges of ‘forest’, short rotation coppice, Rural Development forestry scheme areas, catch crops and nitrogen fixing crops.

Many pose problems, making the choice of measures difficult. The bar on double funding creates an issue for agri-environment agreements that is yet to be resolved. As an example, if buffer strips are adopted as an EFA measure those strips cannot be paid for under an agri-environment agreement. Governments may not want to assess this each year on a farm-by-farm basis and so might just not allow buffer strips for EFAs or exclude all buffer strips from agreements, requiring change in many. It is a difficult practical problem created by the rules.

Crop diversification and EFA exemptions

Arable Area	Crop Diversification	EFA
10ha or less	Exempt	Exempt
More than 10ha up to 15ha	Two crops (main crop no more than 75% coverage) – consider other exemptions	Exempt
More than 15ha up to 30ha	Two crops (main crop no more than 75% coverage) – consider other exemptions	5% of arable area – consider other exemptions
More than 30ha	Three crops (two main crops no more than 95% coverage) – consider other exemptions	5% of arable area – consider other exemptions

Some measures will count for less than their true area. Under ‘weighting’, each acre of beans will only count as 0.7 acre. Thus, if a farmer wanted to meet his EFA (and his crop diversification) by growing beans he would need to put more than 7% of his arable land to them to meet the policy’s ‘5%’. Governments can choose that other features, such as hedges, can count for more than their area (i.e. be weighted the other way).

As a disclaimer, please can readers note that much practical detail for the new CAP will vary between the four countries of the UK. Even where decision making is well advanced, as with England, many decisions on greening remain to be made because they are complex for governments as well as for farmers. Some EU rules are still to be agreed. Major issues have to be decided by 1st August.

Understand greening exemptions

As the table shows, there are several exemptions from these rules that may particularly help livestock farmers. It is wise to work each case through to avoid being caught, so here is a quick initial guide to two of the exemptions for a livestock farmer who has been rotating a crop to feed his animals.

Example 1: A livestock farmer with 50ha of eligible agricultural area grows 5ha of spring barley each year (and has done so for at least the last five years) but as part of his grassland management he uses that as a break between leys and so rotates it around his better land. Looking over the last five years, he will have had 25ha of arable land – 20ha temporary grass and 5ha cropped land – and 25ha of permanent grassland.

Initial assessment: With the 10ha threshold for crop diversification and the 15ha threshold for EFAs he is potentially caught by both of these regimes.

Crop diversification: He does have two crops (the requirement where he has between 10ha and 30ha of arable land). Crop one is 20ha of temporary grass and crop two is 5ha of this year’s spring barley. However, his main crop cannot cover more than 75% of his arable area and in this example his main crop (temporary grass) covers 80% of the arable area. He needs to

consider alternative approaches. Can he qualify for any of the exemptions?

The Crop Coverage Exemption: There is an exemption from the 75% main crop coverage rule where over 75% of the arable area is covered by grass, herbaceous forage or fallow. In practical terms that means the 75% main crop coverage rule does not apply where the main crop is, as here, temporary grass. (If the grass were permanent grass, the land would not have been arable in the first place.) He is still subject to an EFA obligation of at least 1.25ha (5% of his arable area) though.

Main Exemption 1: The first exemption from both crop diversification and EFA obligations applies where more than 75% of the farmer’s *arable area* is ‘temporary grass’ and/or ‘fallow’ (also leguminous crops if just considering EFA rules but not crop diversification) *AND* the remaining other arable ‘cropped’ land (so not temporary grass or ‘fallow’) is no more than 30ha. In this example the livestock farmer has more than 75% of his arable area down to temporary grass and his cropped land is 5ha (so not more than 30ha). He is therefore exempt from EFA obligations.

Example 2: If in 2016 the same livestock farmer lost 8ha of temporary grass that he had on a tenancy and, assuming no other facts changed, he

would now have 25ha of permanent grassland, 12ha of temporary grass and 5ha of spring barley.

Crop coverage: He would now be able to comply with his main crop (temporary grass) not being more than 75% of his arable area, as his temporary grass area would now be 71% of his arable area.

Main Exemption 1 and EFA: This would not help him as he would have less than 75% of his arable area down to temporary grass, requiring him to meet EFA obligations.

Main Exemption 2: This second exemption from both crop diversification and EFA obligations applies where more than 75% of the eligible *agricultural area* is either ‘permanent grassland’ and/or ‘temporary grass’ *AND* the remaining other arable land (so cropped or fallow, but not temporary grass) is not more than 30ha. On the basis of his original facts – 25ha permanent grass, 20ha temporary grass and 5ha cropped land he can use this exemption as: his total agricultural area is 50ha; the area taken up by permanent and temporary grass is 45ha (so more than 75%); and his remaining other arable land is 5ha. This would still be the case even if he hadn’t lost the 8ha of temporary grassland he had under a tenancy.

CODD presents highly contagious lameness challenge



By Sophie Prichard, ProStock Vets, Carmarthen, West Wales.

Lameness continues to be major problem for the industry, with prevalence estimated to be in the region of 10% of the national flock. An ambitious, but achievable, target for well managed flocks would be 2%.

In achieving that target it is important to acknowledge that contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) has joined scald and footrot as a common cause of lameness in sheep in the UK.

CODD has only been recognised in the last 20 years but is considered to be endemic in the UK. It is a highly contagious bacterial disease with reports of it affecting up to 40% of newly infected flocks. The severity of lameness and the high risk of rapid spread make this a serious welfare issue for the UK sheep industry. In addition, it is also a cause of significant production losses as lame sheep are likely to have lower body condition scores and decreased fertility.

Current knowledge points to a link with spirochete bacteria responsible for bovine digital dermatitis, but the disease



Advanced CODD will cause separation of the horn and eventually detachment of the hoof capsule from the foot.

remains poorly understood. A recent study has demonstrated that sheep infected with footrot are at increased risk of developing CODD. Research is ongoing at Liverpool University.

Correct identification

Being able to identify CODD is essential as treatment for other common causes of foot lameness (scald and footrot) will not be effective. One study found that 36% of farmers could correctly identify CODD, meaning almost two thirds of CODD-affected sheep would be misdiagnosed and incorrectly treated.

In common with virulent forms of footrot, sheep are often non-weightbearing on the affected foot/feet. CODD most commonly affects one digit in one foot, and is seen more often in hind feet. However, in severe cases it can affect up to all four feet. Any age of animal can be affected.

With CODD, the primary lesion is an ulcer found at the outer wall of the coronary band (the junction between hair covered skin and the hoof capsule). In contrast to scald and footrot, two other common causes of foot lameness in sheep, there is no involvement of the interdigital skin.

From the initial lesion, the infection progresses underneath the hoof capsule towards the toe, causing separation of the horn and eventually detachment of the hoof capsule from the foot. Damage to the horn-reducing corium may be so extensive that the horn fails to re-grow and the foot is permanently affected.

The best control of CODD is to keep it off your farm and, for this, good biosecurity is key. CODD is a highly contagious disease so preventing it from entering the flock is easier than curing it-



Sophie Prichard

entering the flock is easier than curing it-

- **Isolate** incoming sheep (including rams) whether bought in, on hire or returning from tack for 30 days.
- **Inspect** for lameness regularly; prompt identification, isolation and treatment will limit spread.
- In high risk groups, consider **footbathing** animals as they come off the lorry onto the farm.

If you are unfortunate enough to get CODD on the farm, using a combination of both topical and systemic (injectable) treatment gives the best recovery rates and, if administered to unaffected members of the group, has been shown to reduce new infection rates.

- **Injectable:** Two injectable antibiotics have been used to successfully treat CODD (see table) but no trials comparing the results have been done and no treatments are specifically licensed for the condition. Long acting amoxicillin has the advantage of a shorter withdrawal period, making it more suitable for finishing lambs, and can also be administered by farmers. Tilmicosin is reportedly more effective in the acute

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The primary CODD lesion is an ulcer found at the outer wall of the coronary band (the junction between hair covered skin and the hoof capsule).



This picture shows normal interdigital skin; this area is not affected by CODD.

stage of CODD but is more expensive and must be administered by a vet. If tilmicosin is used, accurate weighing is important due to potential toxicity (and expense!) if overdosed. This product is not suitable for lambs weighing less than 15kg.

- **Topical:** No antibiotic footbath solutions are licensed for use in sheep, so are therefore subject to a statutory 28 day meat withdrawal. Both lincomycin and tylosin have been used to treat CODD and the treatment can be repeated after 48 hours.

When footbathing remember the effectiveness is dependent on the depth and concentration of the solution, contact time with feet, cleanliness of the feet and drying time. The footbath should contain enough solution

to cover the accessory digits at the back of the leg and the concentration should be 100g powder per 200 litres of water. Feet should be as clean as possible before entering the footbath so, if practical, walk them through a plain water bath first to remove obvious dirt. For small numbers of sheep the solution can be made up in a garden spray bottle and applied. Stand sheep on clean concrete for 30 minutes after footbathing to allow the product to dry and ideally turn sheep onto clean pasture that has been rested for two weeks or put onto clean bedding if housed.

Comparison of injectable CODD treatments

	Amoxicillin	Tilmicosin
Meat withdrawal	25 days	42 days
Administration	Farmer or vet	Vet only
Relative cost		2x amoxicillin

Permanent damage

Two important things to remember with CODD is that any cases that fail to resolve despite treatment may have suffered permanent damage and should be culled. And foot trimming should be avoided where possible. If absolutely necessary remove only loose horn. Overparing will create more problems than it solves and is painful. Remember to disinfect trimming equipment to prevent spread of bacteria.

CORRECTION: The article on *Sheep-focused vets tackle big topics* in the March/April edition of *Sheep Farmer* incorrectly stated that an adverse reaction occurs when Cydectin 1% and Footvax are administered at the same time. Problems can occur even if there is considerable time between the injections so please consult your vet or animal health advisor for more information if these are products you use in your flock.

Coccidiosis remains a threat to young lambs

Planning ahead and understanding how coccidiosis affects your farm can help avoid clinical problems and production losses both this year and in subsequent years, says Dr Fiona Lovatt, independent sheep consultant and Sheep Veterinary Society President.

Coccidial oocysts survive year on year so by monitoring where and when problems appeared in previous years it is possible to monitor coccidian levels on your farm and identify fields where pressure points persist.

“By talking to your vet, carrying out a risk assessment specific to each batch of lambs and getting the treatment timing right, it is possible to reduce the likelihood of clinical symptoms appearing,” says Dr Lovatt. “This should help ensure suckling lambs continue to grow at a rate in excess of 300g per day.”

A single coccidial oocyst can multiply millions of times in the right conditions

so it is important to stop early lambs multiplying the burden on the land, posing a threat to others in the group and specifically to later-born lambs with no immunity. If the risk hasn't been limited, younger lambs should not be turned onto fields where older lambs have been.

“The key to the control of coccidiosis is to allow lambs to gradually build immunity but to carefully target appropriate treatment at the correct time and where necessary,” says Dr Lovatt. “I have seen disappointment with the inappropriate use of medicated feed or when a short acting product has been given either too late or too early with repeated retreatments. The precise treatment timing is less critical with toltrazuril [Baycox] and treatment of tightly batched lambs about a week after exposure to a coccidiosis risk is ideal.”

Used to treat lambs at the right time, toltrazuril can considerably reduce the

amount of faecal oocysts that were excreted back into the lambs' environment, reducing the disease pressure for other following batches of lambs. The advice is to group lambs by age for treatment purposes.

Dr Lovatt gives the example of susceptible lambs of four to eight weeks old grazing a field with a history of problem: “In this instance I would advise treatment about a week before you would normally expect to see disease symptoms. With this treatment protocol the lambs will have been exposed to a low level of disease allowing them to develop a natural immunity, but before any damage is done.

“By being better informed and discussing the right questions with your vet when carrying out a risk assessment on batches of lambs, it is possible to achieve the gold standard in coccidiosis control.”

Cryptosporidium – a common cause of lamb diarrhoea

By Sarah Thomson, Moredun Research Institute

Cryptosporidium is one of the most commonly diagnosed causes of diarrhoea in neonatal lambs and can be transmitted by other lambs, ewes, animal handlers, other animals and their environment.

The disease – called cryptosporidiosis – is caused by infection with a small protozoan (single celled) parasite called *Cryptosporidium parvum*. The parasite can infect a wide range of animal species, including humans, and in sheep generally causes disease in lambs between four days and three weeks of age.

Cryptosporidium parasites primarily infect the small intestine and are transmitted directly between hosts by the faecal-oral route. Infection occurs as a result of ingestion of oocysts (the environmentally resistant egg form of the



Good hygiene in the lambing shed is essential to cryptosporidium control.

parasite) which are shed in the faeces of infected individuals. Oocysts are very small (150,000 would just cover the head of a pin) and are shed in very large numbers; a young lamb can shed up to ten thousand million oocysts in the space of seven to 10 days. An infectious dose can be as few as five oocysts, so a single infected individual has a huge potential to infect other livestock and people.

Signs of infection

Clinical signs of cryptosporidium infection include profuse watery diarrhoea, loss of appetite, gastrointestinal discomfort, nausea and a mild fever. These signs usually occur three to seven days after infection. Although older livestock do not show clinical signs of infection, they can nevertheless act as a reservoir of infection. Lambs tend to survive infection somewhat better than the young of other susceptible animals, but losses can be high if the animals become stressed, for example from hypothermia if the infection coincides with turnout during a cold or wet spell.

The single most important risk factor is poor hygiene, which exposes lambs to a high level of faecal contamination and a high infection rate. This favours a progressive build up of cryptosporidium oocysts in the farm environment and can produce overwhelming infection in susceptible animals, so optimal hygiene during the lambing season is fundamental.

Steam cleaning can be an effective way of sterilising buildings, pens and feeding troughs as the heat will kill the oocysts. Chemical disinfection of contaminated premises, pens and feeding utensils can however be problematic, as cryptosporidium oocysts are resistant to commercial agricultural disinfectants and detergents will wash away contamination but not kill the parasite. Disinfectants which are known to be effective in the control of cryptosporidium include KenoCox (2-3%), Neopredisan (2-4%), Oxvirin (10%) and hydrogen peroxide (6%).

Cryptosporidium is easily spread from livestock to people so it is important to observe good occupational hygiene and wash hands thoroughly before eating to help prevent transmission of infection.

If lambs become infected, supportive therapy consists of oral rehydration, use of electrolyte solutions offered frequently, and housing of affected animals in warm conditions as infected neonates are very susceptible to chilling. Affected animals may require considerable encouragement to drink for several days, after which appetite should return.

It is important to note that although infection with cryptosporidium is not in itself lethal to the lamb, deaths may result from severe dehydration and acidosis from the loss of fluids and salts due to diarrhoea. Advice from your vet should always be sought over any lamb diarrhoea problem especially as diarrhoea in neonates may be due to other infective causes.

Other news from Moredun

AGM: Notice is hereby given that the Moredun Foundation AGM will be held on Thursday 4th September, 3.30pm at Pentlands Science Park, Edinburgh. All NSA members are automatically associate Moredun members so are welcome to attend the AGM but cannot vote. To upgrade to full Moredun membership please contact Moredun on 01314 455111.

Scholarships: Three scholarships of up to £1,000 each will be granted by the Moredun Foundation again this year, to provide an opportunity for individuals in the UK to pursue a short-term project to broaden their education and experience in areas relating to livestock health and welfare and the agricultural industry. Projects may involve travel, work experience, science or the arts and are open to individuals over the age of 18. Applicants must be received by 30th June. Find out more at www.moredun.org.uk/scholarship.

Newsheets: To request free newsheets on cryptosporidiosis and/or other cause of lambs diarrhoea please contact Moredun on 01314 455111 or visit www.moredun.org.uk for further information.

Top tips for exhibiting show fleeces

By British Wool
Marketing Board



With the show season gearing up and soon hitting full speed many wool producers will be entering fleece and wool-on-the-hoof competitions the length and breadth of the country.

It's important with both of these competitions to select the best possible fleece and ensure it is well presented, explains BWMB's Wool Marketing Manager Stephen Spencer (*pictured right*).

"For fleece competitions, good wool presentation starts with shearing. Fleeces should be shorn from the sheep in one piece and then rolled and presented correctly, taking care to avoid contamination from other materials including other fleeces, particularly those from different breeds," he says.

"Fleeces should be wrapped the correct way, which is skin side out for all breeds except Scottish Blackface, Rough Fell and Herdwick, which are wrapped staple side out. Having removed any daggings, fold the sides of the fleece in and roll from the britch end up to the neck. Keep the fleece as tight as possible and make a couple of twists with the neck wool to tuck inside the fleece to hold it together."

Advice on wrapping

Fleeces should always be rolled on a clean, dry surface and then the best fleeces selected for competition. Mr Spencer says most shows limit entries to two per class, so be sure to pick the very best fleeces and bear in mind what the judge will be looking for. This includes ensuring the fleece matches up to the characteristics of the breed or cross it is from.

"Fleeces should be from that season's clip and should never be tied with any form of string or nylon baler twine, which can cause untold damage if it gets through to the manufacturing process undetected," he says.

"Judges have the right to disqualify tied fleeces and I myself have done so on previous occasions. Additionally, fleeces should not be washed between shearing and the show. I have seen examples where exhibitors have washed fleeces post shearing and immediately prior to the show to make them look white and fluffy. This does not gain marks and washes the grease and natural oils out.

"Fleeces should also be of a uniform quality throughout, being of even length, quality, colour and style at all points in the fleece. The fleece should also have an even, strong staple. When a sheep has been ill or stressed, possibly by a harsh winter or at lambing, this will result in a check in fibre growth,

causing a break in the staple."

For wool-on-the-hoof competitions Mr Spencer says judges are largely looking for the same criteria as for fleece competitions, seeking an even, clean fleece throughout, which best represents the relevant breed.

"Competitors entering wool-on-the-hoof competitions should look for a high quality, uniform fleece which should be clean and free from contamination," he says. "Try to keep marking to a minimum and always use a BWMB approved marker. Also, any artificially dip tinted fleeces will be significantly penalised."

Producers wanting to improve the quality of wool from their sheep can take advantage of the BWMB's free ram fleece assessment, which is available at all grading depots, explains Mr Spencer.

"This is a free service for fleeces delivered to the grading depot," he says. "Each ram's fleece should be individually labelled and ram fleeces for assessment should be packed in a separate sheet. Also ensure depot staff are advised in advance into which sheet the fleeces for assessment are packed. The depot manager will then contact the regional manager who will carry out the assessment on their next visit. On the hoof assessments are also available and can be carried out for a small fee."



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You can find out more about British wool and the work of the British Wool Marketing Board at:
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THE CAMPAIGN FOR WOOL
REVEALING THE VALUE OF WOOL

Planning permission made easier?

By Rupert Harrison, Andrew Granger & Co Rural Land Specialists

In a radical change aimed at increasing the speed and amount of new housing provision, the Government is allowing the change of agricultural buildings to residential use as 'permitted development'.

The new rules, which came into force on 6th April 2014, offer a great opportunity to convert redundant or under-used buildings to residential use, potentially in situations where planning consent would have been previously refused. However, there are a number of obstacles to be aware of.

The buildings must have been used solely for agricultural purposes on an agricultural unit on or before 20th March 2013. Listed buildings, scheduled monuments and buildings within National Parks, AONBs, conservation areas, SSSIs and World Heritage Sites, however, are excluded from the change following concerns over the impact on these sensitive areas.

Permitted development can be for up to three dwellings subject to the cumulative change of use not being

greater than 450 sq metres.

The change of use will cover not only the building but also the land within its curtilage and building work necessary for the conversion is also permitted.

The Local Planning Authority must be notified before you begin work on certain aspects of the development. LPA's prior approval may also be required on matters such as highway impact, contamination risks and the design of the dwellings.

Permitted development rights

If you have permitted development rights to erect a farm building from 20th March 2013, you are unable to make use of the new right of change of use for dwellings for 10 years. Conversely, if you do use the new rights to change a farm building to a dwelling, you lose your permitted development rights to erect new farm buildings for 10 years!

To protect tenants with either Agricultural Holdings Act or Farm Business Tenancies the change of use to a dwelling is not allowed unless either



New rules mean barn conversions can be carried out in some circumstances without planning permission.

both the landlord and the tenant agree or more than 12 months have elapsed since the termination of the tenancy.

As with any business decision, it is important that you consider this 'in the round'. Apart from the practical issues such as accessibility, water and power supplies, also consider the tax implications, particularly the potential loss of Agricultural Property Relief for IHT on the converted buildings.

As with any development, take professional advice before you commit yourself to the project.

The April budget and sheep farming

By Richard Haines of Old Mill Accountancy Group

Chancellor George Osborne largely delivered on his promise to deliver a 'budget for business' but what exactly was in his announcement when it comes to sheep farmers?

The proposed reform of withdrawing pensions could certainly provide a cash boost to the older generation still actively farming. Under the old rules it was possible upon reaching the age of 55 to withdraw 25% of any private pensions tax free. The proposed changes from 6th April 2015 see an individual able to not only continue to take 25% tax free but any balance of funds be taken either within the same tax year (or over a period of years) subject to tax at an individual's prevailing rate.

Where this extraction is combined with either a difficult year or indeed significant machinery investment, greater value will be able to be taken and see only 20% tax payable. Where funds do exceed basic rate tax levels any surplus will be subject to 40%

income tax, reducing the benefit of taking the entire pot in one go.

This provides a good opportunity for many to access funds in the early years of retirement, enabling the next generation to step into the farm without the need to continue to fund parents where they have appropriate pension provisions.

Other highlights include:-

■ The doubling of **Annual Investment Allowance (AIA)** to £500,000 until 31st December 2015 extends the opportunity for immediate tax reliefs when investing in new plant and machinery as the reduction of AIA to £25,000 (which was expected on 1st January 2015) will now not take place until 1st January 2016. This is a massive number for any sheep farms and will see all relevant expenditure relieved in full against profits. Sadly buildings continue to receive no tax relief in their raw form.

■ **Business asset roll-over relief**, allowing you to defer capital gains tax and corporation tax on asset disposal providing the proceeds are used to

purchase new assets, has been extended to include Basic Payment Scheme entitlements. It will have effect in relation to acquisitions and disposals of BPS payment entitlements on and after 20th December 2013.

However, new legislation will be introduced which will prevent companies claiming roll-over relief when disposing tangible assets and purchasing intangible assets.

■ **Property** worth more than £500,000 will now be subject to the same 28% Capital Gains Tax and 15% Stamp Duty Land Tax as properties valued at over £2 million. And high value properties with a corporate owner are also subject to annual tax on enveloped dwellings (ATED). This will be £7,000 per year for properties valued at £1-£2m from 1st April 2015 and £3,500 per year for £0.5-£1m properties from 1st April 2016. The good news is exemptions still apply if the property is occupied by a farm worker or a retired farmer, but this exemption must be claimed for each year.

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On My Farm – The Next Generation

James Drummond from Alnwick, Northumberland, is the third person to contribute to this NSA series focusing on young people active in the sheep sector. James (30) is an NSA Next Generation Ambassador and also a Nuffield Scholar. He is balancing his commitment to both projects with the family farming business at home.

Northumberland is rather gloomy this lambing period, with plenty of thick fog and rain. But the ewes and lambs are looking fit and the grass is starting to grow nicely, which is a vast improvement on last year.

As I write this we are 10 days in and going at a steady pace (70-80 ewes per day) and the ewe lambs will be coming in to lamb in a few days' time, all of which are put to a Charollais ram. I find lambing our ewe lambs not only gives us an extra crop of lambs but improves the ewes' production in later life, makes them a lot better mothers when they start lambing outside as gimmers and a lot easier to handle.

As a result of the previous years' late spring and poorer growth rates, their scanning was back to 83% from 101% last year, but our main cross Suffolk flock was up to 197% whilst our half-breds were around average performance at 186%.

Minimising losses

Hopefully spring will kick in properly soon but not quite as abruptly as last year, which resulted in a large onslaught of nematodirus. We began dosing as soon as the problem was detected but with our stocking level it took a few weeks to get round all the fields and was a little disheartening seeing losses after all the hard work put in during lambing. Coccidiosis buckets are out in the fields and we seldom have a problem, although we are careful to monitor the situation.

Ewes and lambs will be set stocked for another five weeks before being combined with lambs of similar weight and then we start rotational grazing until weaning, with lambs starting to be weighed for sale towards the end of June. At weaning remaining lambs will go on to red clover and silage fields, which will have had a month's rest, then kale and Swift for the tail end.

We bought a few Aberfield rams this year to try over our North County Cheviot



James Drummond with his new assistant Spud.

resistance and resilience, grazing strategies, grassland management and seed selection, as well as improvements to maternal breed lines and terminal sires both within breed and composites being developed globally.

In February I attended the Nuffield Contemporary Scholars Conference in London followed by two weeks in Australia with fellow scholars from

flock and the lambs are looking good so far with plenty of vigour and lambing ease. I look forward to seeing how the resulting ewes perform from this cross and expect an improved finished lamb in comparison to our previous half-bred wethers.



Lambing assistant Jess turns out newborns from the lambing shed at Lemington Hill Head Farm.

The pedigree Texel flock is lambing well with no assistances and the rams are used over our cross Suffolk flock with great emphasis placed on growth rates, conformation and lambing ease. This year we have also put a Charollais ram over some of our Texels to produce a composite terminal sire.

I am expecting a busy year both on and off the farm this year, as I returned from Australia just before lambing and will be fitting trips to Ireland, France and Holland around silage and harvest, with New Zealand and the USA planned later in the year. I am travelling as part of my Nuffield Farming Scholarship for which my study topic is 'optimising ewe performance for a productive sheep enterprise and a high quality finished lamb' and will be investigating increasing efficiency in lamb production through improved genetics, increased

around the world. It was a tremendous opportunity to spend time among people with such enthusiasm and drive to develop agriculture globally.

After the conference I spent a week investigating the research being carried out within the Australian sheep sector, meeting a wide range of organisations. I was amazed by the collaboration in agricultural research and particularly the role of the Sheep Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) in governing and overseeing collaboration. Projects are determined by the farmer-run Sheepmeat Council so research is driven by producers' needs and delivered to them through Sheep CRC's various facilitating organisations.

Eating quality

The trip was very beneficial and I learnt a lot regarding meat eating quality, which is a part of my research I thought could prove difficult to quantify. My aim is to develop the lamb carcass to improve the yield of high value cuts and the taste of our produce while achieving consistent grades and also tailoring our ram selection closely to the finishing time of our lambs (i.e. quicker finishing lambs contain high intra muscular fat for eating quality while slower finishing crosses have low carcass fat).

I look forward to developing our sheep enterprise over the years alongside the development of their new dictator, Spud, an eight-month-old border collie who has been through intensive training this lambing period and getting on well!



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Farm Trial

I had been looking for bunker feeds suitable for ewes for some time when I came across 3IN1FEEDERS. All our ewes are at grass for flushing and tugging, but we generally supplement this as we've found it increases our scanning levels by an average of 15%. While this increase in scanning percentage generally more than repays the investment as with every sheep system the need to keep a tight control of costs is paramount.

With no experience of the feeders, I set up a trial to assess how ewes supplemented with the feeders compared to ewes fed on the usual block system for flushing and tugging. It was surprising how quickly they adapted, with average intakes of 0.3kg/ewe/day after just the first day on ewe nuts. Once ewes were used to the system I shut the groove down and intakes on straight barley settled out at an average 0.18kg/ewe/day."

After 53 days of flushing, 44 days of which included supplementation with either barley or feed blocks, the group on feed blocks had increased their body condition score (BCS) by 0.2 from 2.9 to 3.1, however, the group on barley managed to increase BCS by 0.63, rising from 2.7 to 3.33.

In the barley fed group 10% of the ewes had a BCS of less than 3.0, whereas, with the block fed group, there was much more variation in BCS with more than 20% scoring below 3.0.

Crucially, on a cost basis, feeding whole barley has been nearly twice as cheap - £1.20/ewe with barley at £150/t compared to supplementing ewes with feed blocks - £2.38/ewe with blocks at £840/t.

There was little or no impact on scanning percentage in the flock, with the group fed on feed blocks scanning at 177% and the group on the feeder scanning at 175%.

The single ewes are now on the feeders instead of blocks so the feed saving will continue right through to lambing. We may add a bit of soya into the barley if the ewes look like they need it nearer lambing but probably not.

The feeders are doing everything I hoped.

Jamie Leslie, Scholland, Virkie, Shetland

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