

Sheep Farmer

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2014

A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION



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Sheep Farmer

August/September 2014

Vol. 33, No 5

ISSN 0141-2434

A National Sheep Association Publication

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Sheep Farmer magazine is published by National Sheep Association with design and production services provided by Ladies in Print.

Ladies in Print

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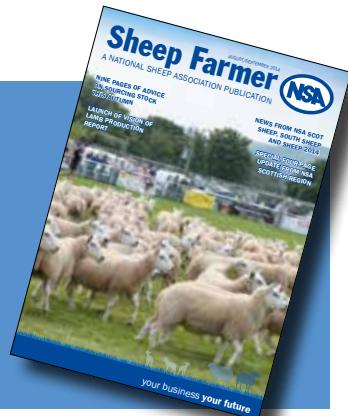
Contents

Message from NSA Head Office	2
News round-up	3
NSA regional news	4-5
NSA South Sheep report	6
NSA Sheep 2014 report	7-8
Refreshed standards for Red Tractor	10
Engaging with the Secretary of State	12
On-farm realities of greening of the CAP	13
Farm Feature: NSA NI Chairman John Blaney	14-15
Integrating woodland onto sheep farms	16
Tips on flushing ewes	18
Sourcing the right breeding stock	20
Effective quarantine treatments	21
Can we vaccinate against worms in sheep?	22
Industry sheep lameness initiative	23
Informed breeding decisions using performance recording	24
NSA ram sales update	25
MV, can you afford to turn a blind eye?	26
Shetland biosecurity sets the standard	28
Latest from the wool industry	30
On My Farm Series: James Hamilton from East Sussex	32

**Don't miss the NSA Scottish Region Focus
in the centre of this magazine**

Front Cover

The photograph on the front page was taken at the sheepdog sale at NSA Sheep 2014 where all dogs entered were put through their paces before going under the hammer. Full report from the NSA Sheep Event on pages 8 and 9.



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Sheep sector quality underpins existing and future success

by Phil Stocker,
NSA Chief Executive

Thankfully the good weather has continued through the summer with, for most, a good mix of sunshine and some rain keeping the grass growing and the sheep happy.

I'm sure that opening comment will enrage a few, and the hosts of NSA Scot Sheep, the MacFarlane family, and all who ventured there for the event, may well be amongst them as it rained and rained all day long. However NSA Scot Sheep, NSA South Sheep a few weeks later and NSA Sheep 2014 last week were all great events capped with a general enthusiasm and optimism for the future. All are well reported within this magazine.

These events work with the incredible voluntary help of many NSA members, and they work because they are of interest and value to all that attend. Nowhere else can you go and get the breadth and depth of

Contacting NSA

Phil and the team at NSA are always available to members and interested to hear opinions, concerns and areas of interest. Call NSA Head Office (Monday-Friday 9am-5.30pm) on 01684 892661 or direct an email to one of the addresses below.

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Farming Minister George Eustice accepted a copy of the Vision Report from NSA's Phil Stocker (right) and NFU's Charles Sercombe (left) at NSA Sheep 2014.

information and answers relating to sheep farming at the same time as seeing so much of general interest and getting the chance to meet up with old acquaintances. I would like to openly thank the hosts, organisers, helpers and supporters of all NSA events – the success is down to you.

At NSA Sheep 2014 we launched a new document that sets out our future vision for lamb production. Significantly this is a vision developed and shared by NSA and NFU, with the intention of being of optimum value to UK sheep farmers and to avoid duplication or even worse, conflicting direction.

Vision for the future

The work starts with understanding the structure of our industry and market place on a UK, EU and global level. It takes a look at our strengths and weaknesses and then goes on to identify the opportunities ahead and the barriers we need to tackle if we are to make the most of them. My intention is to use this work to frame and guide many NSA activities over the next few years (not all of them because there are many aspects of sheep farming that fall outside lamb production, and of course we never quite know what is around the corner), but also to inform and convince policy and decision makers of the potential we offer and what they can do to 'clear our pathway'. We have a limited number of printed copies and I would encourage anyone who is able to download a copy to do so at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/hot-topics.

Producing our Vision Document and being involved in recent meetings has left me in no doubt that there are, and will continue to be, real opportunities that can give reasonable reward and satisfaction.

But these opportunities can't be taken for granted and will always have to be worked for, and more and more we have to recognise that our 'brand', the brand that sheep farming is based on, is one of quality.

This was highlighted during the Eblex export conference in June, in terms of global opportunities for UK lamb.

Whether it's our local market, domestic market or exports, lamb already has a reputation of being premium, high quality and associated with free range and nice environments. But the big wins in the future, in our main existing export market to France and exciting emerging Asian and Chinese markets, will be building much more on this – and ensuring that not just the product itself but all its 'by-products' are of the highest quality too. In this I include the landscape and the environment, the welfare of sheep and our management of them, the health of our national flock and our disease status, right the way down to the way we keep and treat our sheepdogs and (last but definitely not least) the happiness of the producers.

Quality message

We must communicate this quality to a discerning marketplace. We already have plenty of tools that can be added to to help with this, including farm assurance and certification schemes, quality standards, PGIs and many independent brands and claims that can be made. For a product like lamb a good eating experience is at the head of all the things that the consumer is looking for and it is this that will encourage them to buy again.

I hope the back end of the summer treats you well.

News Update

NSA AGM 2014

A reminder to all members that the NSA national AGM will be held at the Westmorland Room, Westmorland County Agricultural Society, Lane Farm, Crooklands, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7NH, on Thursday 14th August at 10am. The Annual Report and Accounts will be available at the meeting but, if you are unable to attend, you can request a copy and also appoint a proxy to vote on your behalf by contacting Julie Jennings at NSA Head Office in advance of the meeting. 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.

NSA SW farm walk

Members have an opportunity to see for themselves the ongoing situation on the Somerset Levels, as the Gillard family of Creeds Farm, Burrowbridge, TA7 0RZ, have kindly agreed to host a NSA South West Region farm walk on Thursday 25th September at 4.30pm. Half of their 800-acre mixed grass and arable farm was under water, some to a depth of 14ft, from January to April 2014. The current challenge is to reseed and repair the damage.

Neilson Gillard has been working with Natural England and Mole Valley Farmers to select grass species suitable for this challenging and sensitive environment. He will show us the pasture rejuvenation and bring us up to date with the current policies for controlling future flooding.

The farms' location makes this visit easily accessible to members from several regions and all are welcome. For further information and a guide to numbers likely to attend please contact NSA SW Chairman Bryan Griffiths on 01769 560393.

Latest on carcase splitting rules

Since the launch of the NSA report on TSEs, the association has been working hard to ensure the problem of carcase splitting remains on the political agenda and to investigate potential short-term wins.

Changing the entire regulation on TSEs will be difficult and long-term, but could a different but robust interpretation of '12 months of age' be a way of making changes that could reduce the problem of carcass splitting significantly? That was the challenge thrown down to NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker by Food Standards Agency (FSA) Chief Executive Catherine Brown, which NSA will be working with other partners to refine, including the NFU, LAA, BMPA and AIMS.

What gives a glimmer of light is sheep identification regulations that cover next January's change to tagging rules in England. The rules say lambs over 12 months of age must be fully EID tagged and cannot carry an electronic slaughter tag, but the EU is permitting a calendar date (30th June in this instance) rather than using the TSE regulation of eruption of permeant incisors. In practice this means a lamb born in February 2015 will still be assumed to be under 12 months of age until 30th June 2016 and can be sold as a slaughter lamb with a single tag.

Phil says: "Adopting the same interpretation for carcass splitting would simplify things by bringing everything in line, avoid the time and cost in checking for teeth, and be every bit as accurate as the arbitrary occurrence of teeth eruption anyway. There are a few questions still to be answered: Would this work in all UK nations? How would we differentiate this year's lambs from last year's after the 30th June cut-off? What about lambs that are fully EID tagged from birth by choice? But where there are challenges there have to be solutions and we will keep you informed of progress in following Sheep Farmer issues."



NSA Next Generation Ambassadors

The first three of five delivery sessions for the NSA Next Generation Ambassador Group have been a huge success with a great deal of practical information shared with these young sheep farmers. Read full reports from the sessions at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk and meet Ambassador James Hamilton on page 32.

SHAWG bookings open

Bookings are now being taken by NSA for the Sheep Health and Welfare conference, organised by the Sheep Health and Welfare Group (SHAWG), on Wednesday 26th November at Yarnfield Park Conference Centre, Staffordshire, ST15 0NL. Find a full line-up of speakers and a booking form at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/ SHAWG or call NSA Head Office. Places are £30+VAT per person.

Note on older ewes and rams

With rules for the historical flock (born before 2009) changing on 1st January 2015 it may be worth putting an electronic tag in older animals when handling them this summer and autumn for weaning and tupping. They must be individually identified on movement documents from January, unless moving straight to slaughter or via a red market, so it is likely that electronic tags will maximise selling options when they move off the holding.



Unsung heroes

NSA resurrected an award that has not been presented for several years, taking the opportunity at the NSA Sheep 2014 pre-event dinner to recognise the incredible contribution over many years of Bob and Anne Payne. The husband-and-wife team, who are NSA Central Region Chairman and Manager respectively, were presented with a piece of glassware to acknowledge their 'unsung hero' status both at a regional and national level for the association.

His Grace the Duke of Montrose
Honorary President

John Geldard
National Chairman

David Croston
Honorary Treasurer

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Regional Reports

Central

By Anne Payne, Manager

The big event at our end of the Central region has been the Tour de France, creating both great excitement and numerous business opportunities for farmers. Some farms offered carparking at the recommended rate of £10 per day or camping facilities for more, others leased fields to organisers providing fun fairs, live bands, local choirs, etc, and one sold buffalo burgers on the route. Fears of damaged dry stone walls appear to have been unfounded and the litter picks have been thorough. As one farmer said, "It's better than farming for returns!"

Elsewhere in the region most people seem to be getting high yields of good quality silage and hay and some are reporting using less wormer than last year. In another part of the region there are reports of lambs not growing well and fluke treatments being needed.

Shearers are finding ewes in surprisingly good condition, given the wet winter, but also finding maggots in less expected places such as backs and shoulders – possibly from spending too much time under hedges in warm moist conditions. In some low-lying fast-growing grass areas with little wind, scald in lambs is rapidly turning to footrot.

Meanwhile, we are beginning to make plans for our next NSA Winter Fair in January 2015, and also for our AGM in November. Watch this space!

Cymru/Wales

By Helen Davies, Development Officer

It was great to see a lot of positivity at the Royal Welsh Show this year, even with the lower lamb price seen in recent weeks. And with a bumper harvest to look forward to perhaps we will be buoyed up by a drop in feed costs to compensate for the loss of income with the lambs.

We held a successful reception at the Royal Welsh on the Monday and welcomed old and new members throughout the week. NSA Cymru/Wales also met with Edwina Hart (Alun Davies' replacement as Farming Minister) and put our views forward regarding the need to ensure no one is particularly disadvantaged by the changes in payment rates in the new CAP, especially those farmers hit by the low moorland rate.

We continue to sit on the EID Cymru stakeholder committee and are told that EID Cymru is still on course to be in place by January 2015. The next NSA regional committee meeting will be on 22nd August

Find our special Scottish Focus in the centre of the magazine for an update from NSA Scottish Region

at Neuadd Henllan on the Royal Welsh Showground.

Wishing you all well for the autumn shows and sales.

Eastern

By Jonathan Barber, Manager

NSA Eastern Region members were treated to a wonderful afternoon looking around Ickworth Park in Suffolk earlier in the summer. The estate is owned by the National Trust and runs to 1,800 acres, of which 850 is parkland. Since 1970 the Seabrook family have run the sheep flocks, which are such an important aspect of maintaining this ancient landscape.



Today Paul Seabrook (pictured) manages the 1,000-ewe flock of mainly North Country Mule and Suffolk cross ewes put to a Texel. Increasingly a number of Texel cross ewes are being retained and these will probably be mated to Charollais tups this year.

Paul runs a simple, outdoor March lambing flock, aiming to finish lambs to 38kg as quickly as possible without any buildings on the park and only a few mobile lambing pens dotted around. Supplementary feeding to the ewes is done with a snacker feeder, which has revolutionised the man hours required for feeding.

Looking ahead, don't forget our two regional ram sales – Friday 22nd August at Rugby Market and Friday 19th September at Melton Mowbray Market.

Marches

By Kevin Harrison, Chairman

NSA Marches region held its first ever Young Shepherd Competition and Open Day on 7th June.

It was kindly hosted by the Dunn family at Upleadon Court, Upleadon, Gloucestershire. This proved a spectacular venue and I would like to thank Henry, Carol, Rachel and Sarah Dunn for all their input. Their efforts undoubtedly lead to its huge success.

A big thank you must go out to our major sponsor, Randall Parker Foods, as well as the support received from Hartpury College, Suzuki, Nichols (Cowmills), Wynnstay, Green Farm Seeds, P&D Engineering and Eblex.

We had 11 competition entries, with three coming from as far as Norfolk. Congratulations should go to all the competitors for taking part and demonstrating their skills as young shepherds/shepherdesses. It is very encouraging to see young talent coming through in the sheep industry.



Huge congratulations to our overall winner Richard Carter (*pictured with Kevin Brown from Randall Parker*), and our under 21 winner George Scrivens. A full report of the event can be found on the NSA website, along with details of our upcoming AGM.

Northern

By Julie Sedgewick, Manager

Over 12 million lambs are slaughtered in the UK every year, producing more than 230,000 tonnes of meat, so in July the region was shocked to learn Tesco had decided to promote New Zealand lamb just when British lamb is in season. What sort of message does it send to consumers when prime British lamb is available straight off grass at no more than a few months old, compared to a product that has travelled half way around the world?

The 'grand depart' for the Tour de France did not affect the Great Yorkshire Show as badly as we all feared and exhibitors were not too badly inconvenienced by the road closures on the Saturday and Sunday. The NSA stand was busy as usual with breakfasts for sheep exhibitors, meals and bar facilities.

We are now getting used to the ruling that all catering and bar facilities must close at 7.30pm. It does seem to have helped the showground be quieter in the evenings. So quiet, in fact, the atmosphere which made the Yorkshire special appears to have disappeared.

Northern Region members are starting to plan for our main event in 2015 – NSA North Sheep on Wednesday 3rd June at Millstone Moor, Cockermouth, Cumbria.

Northern Ireland

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer

What a summer! After last's years poor attempt we would not have expected as good a summer as this for a number of years, but grass growth has been good, silage is made and grain boys are started to harvest ahead of schedule.

Now that we have the full details of our CAP package, NSA NI Region is looking at Pillar Two, rural development funding and the 'Going for Growth' strategy to find funding to benefit the sheep sector. There will be many looking for monies from these pots and the sheep sector will need to work hard to get their fair share, as history shows that this does not always happen.

Slaughter lamb prices have fallen more than we would have liked but hopefully a buoyant store lamb trade will help keep a decent bottom in the market. Higher numbers of slaughter lambs coming out at present should mean lower numbers later will help improve prices, but then all my predictions end up being wrong!

Congratulations to Bob Blanden and his team for their organisation and choice of farm for NSA South Sheep. We had a really enjoyable day and, at time of writing, are now preparing to be at 'The Big One' in Malvern!

South East

By Bob Blanden, Manager

I am pleased to report that NSA South Sheep 2014 was well attended with over 1,200 people, many of whom have told us how much they enjoyed the day and how useful they found it. Many of the exhibitors reported good trade and interest, far beyond what they were expecting. Full report on page six.

As a follow-up to one of the NSA South Sheep seminar sessions, the region has now planned two 'Fit for Purpose Rams' showcases – Tuesday 16th September at Plumpton College and Wednesday 17th September at Hadlow College, both 4pm to 6pm. Please contact me for details.

Only 120 of the 707 NSA members in NSA South East Region attended South Sheep, which leaves us with the question of just what activities NSA members want. I hope many in the west of our region will find the time to attend the NSA South West Region farm walk in Somerset – see page three for details.

South West

By Bryan Griffiths, Chairman

An early and plentiful grass harvest, together with falling grain prices, means there are few concerns in the West Country with feeding the flock next winter.

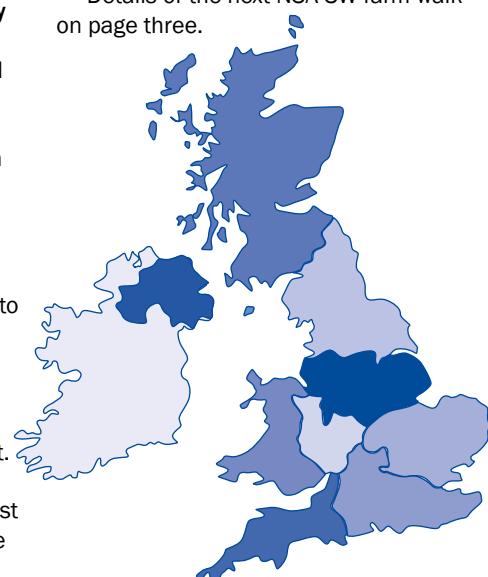
Showers post-harvest have brought on the after grass giving producers the option to wean and grow their lambs on as prices have tumbled through July. February lambing, creep-fed flocks have performed well this season. I wonder if farmers will be tempted to introduce the rams a little earlier and, if so, will next spring offer such kind growing conditions?



The NSA South West Region's visit to North Wyke Research Farm in July gave members an insight into a scientific world few knew existed. We are grateful to site manager Professor Robert Orr (*pictured*) for his guided tour of the establishment. The complexity of the technology employed to analyse drainage water was incredible. Every input and output from the three 50-acre trial farmlets is recorded and its impact on the soil and environment calculated.

Dr Jenny Dungait explained the work she is doing on deep rooted, drought and flood resistant grasses. It is encouraging to know the Government is funding such operations, but we must see the findings publicised if we are all to benefit from it.

Details of the next NSA SW farm walk on page three.



NSA South Sheep a Saturday success

In perfect weather, despite forecasts of rain which fell elsewhere, host Tony Monnington welcomed more than 1,200 people to NSA South East Region's South Sheep Event to enjoy a very full programme and a good selection of trade stands covering all aspects of the sheep industry.

Seminars, farm tours, 30 breeds of sheep, 17 young shepherds competing in the Shepherd of the Future Competitions and a sheepdog trial with over 60 competitors gave much to occupy visitors. Winning entries of our photographic competition were also on show and light entertainment and education was provided by the Sheep Show.

The Shepherd of the Future open competition, sponsored by Mole Valley Farmers, ended in a draw between Will Hinton and Alex Olphert. The student section, sponsored by Volac/Lamblac, was won by Gussie Harmer from Plumpton College.

Prime lamb focus

Randall Parker Foods provided butchery demonstrations, led by their head butcher Ian Winstone and supported by Sainsbury master butcher Julian Pursglove, and highlighted carcasses that were suitable for different markets. There was also a fun 'Ready Welly Cook' competition with heats between two lady vets, Louise Silk and Nanja Groeten from the local Cliffe Veterinary Practice, and two auctioneers, Elwyn Davies from Ashford Market and Nick Young from Hailsham Market. The final saw Nick take the title. All this was overseen by Andrew Brondon from Dunbia, who also gave cooking demonstrations throughout the day.

Miriam Parker, sponsored by Eblex, was back with us to give handling workshops and advice on how to coerce sheep through handling systems. The



Young shepherds Will Hinton and Alex Olphert tied for first place.

farm tours left the handling and shearing demonstration areas to travel down to a field of Italian ryegrass that surprised visitors to its suitability for sheep. Nick Pyle, a vet with the Cliffe Veterinary Practice, was on hand to explain his trial on wormer resistance that has been supported by Novartis. Returning to the farm, tours finished by the 16 grass trial plots established and managed by Chris Davies of Agrifactors. These plots were considered a definite highlight by many and details are still available at www.southsheep.org.uk, as is information on the event in general.

Seminar subjects covered the importance of sheep in the South Downs, which was particularly pertinent to the host's farm, with insightful contributions from Richard Harding from Procam Rutherford and Jeremy Burgess from South Down National Park. The changing profile of sheep breeds in Britain was covered by Dr Geoff Pollott and supported by *Counting Sheep* author Philip Walling. Oliver Midgley of Farmers Guardian spoke on the FG/NSA 'Take the Lead' dog worrying campaign while Paul Heyhoe from Eblex gave an update and forecast for the

South Sheep 2014

Fact File

Venue: Blackcap Farm, Firle, Lewes, East Sussex.

Date: Saturday 28th June.

Attendance: Around 1,200 people.

Shepherd of the Future: Will Hinton and Alex Olphert.

Student Shepherd of the Future: Gussie Harmer.

Photograph competition: Roly Puzey (adult) and Jonty Gallardo Petchey (junior).

Fleeces: Graham Webb, Southdown (fine), C.J. and C.J. Hodgkins, New Zealand Romney (medium), Sheila Leech, Wensleydale (cross and lustre), Margaret Brain, Llanwenog (hill and mountain) and Owena Lewis, Shetland (natural coloured).

Sheepdog trial: Andy Jackman and Trefynor Joe (open) and Paul Griffiths and Fly (novice)

Trade stands: Lleyn Sheep Society (breed societies), Stocktrace (indoor) and Advantage Feeders (outdoor).

Full results at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events.



Host Tony Monnington.

sheep industry.

Catherine Nakielny put over the message of having rams fit for purpose and Mike Fontaine from Moredun highlighted the threat of caseous lymphadenitis and what can be done about it. The final seminar of the day was our region's two NSA Next Generation Ambassadors, Marie Prebble and James Hamilton, sharing their experience of the ambassador programme and how they view the future.

There was also a 'celebration of wool' area with 35 entries in the fleece competitions, stands with various wool products, and an area with spinners and weavers who produced a shawl during the day from fleece to finish, raising £250 for the host's chosen charity, Charlie's Challenge, in the process. Bob Blanden, Event Organiser and NSA South East Regional Manager, says: "This event could not have taken place without all the support from our sponsors, the region's committee members, local helpers and trade. We are most grateful to everyone who assisted and especially to Tony and his family for allowing us to hold NSA South Sheep 2014 on their farm."

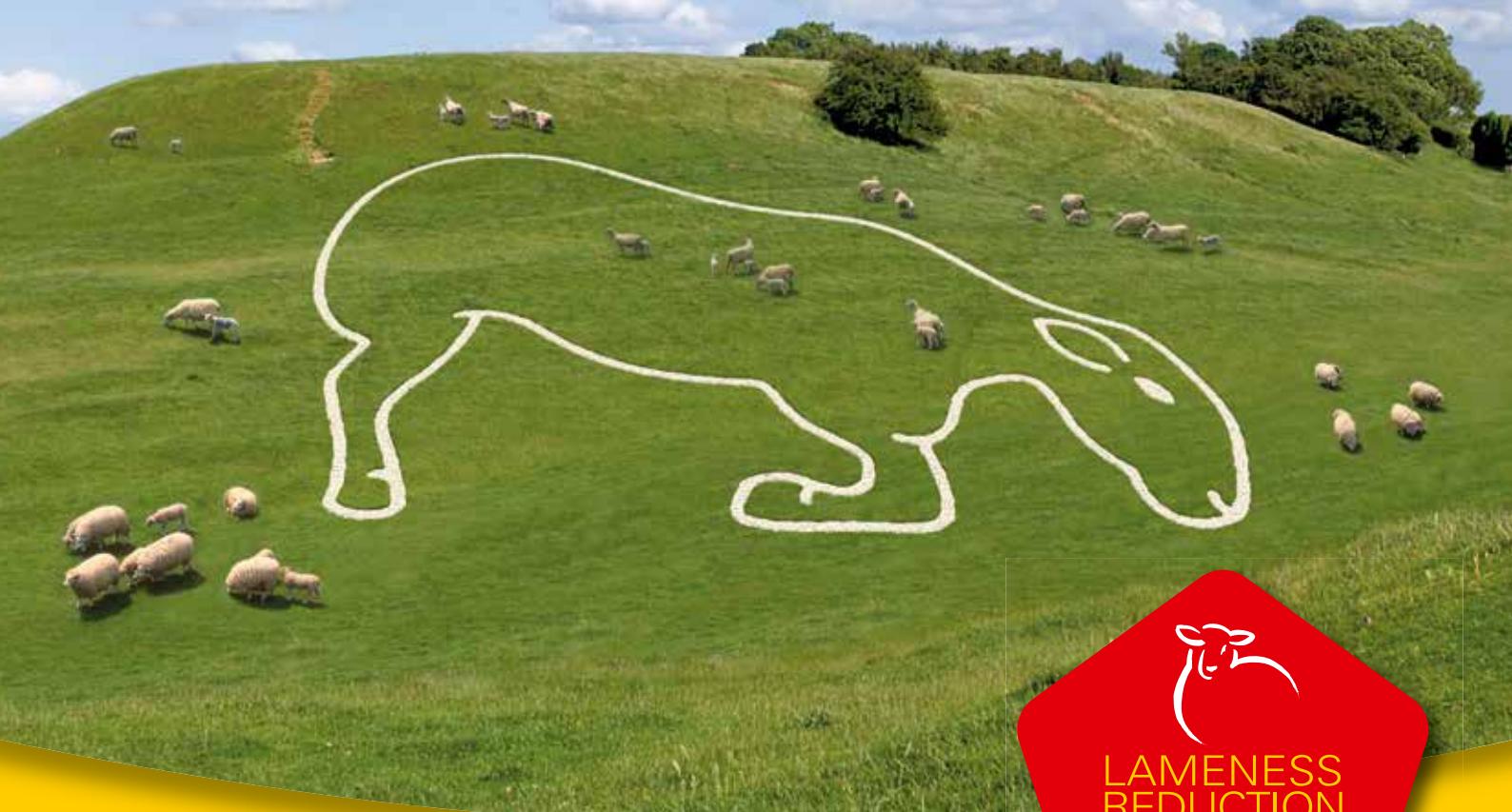


The farm tours combined technical information with views over the English Channel.

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Implement the 5 Point Plan and help stamp out lameness on your farm.

For more information contact your animal health advisor, veterinary surgeon or visit www.fwi.co.uk/livestock/lameness

References: 1. R.H.Clements, S.C.Stoye, (2014) The Five Point Plan: a successful tool for reducing lameness in sheep. Veterinary Record.

2. EBELX, (2014) Sheep industry lameness campaign leaflet.

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Optimistic outlook showcased at successful NSA Sheep 2014

A public commitment to fight European carcase splitting rules, a clear intention to secure tolerance on read rates of electronic eartags and a reiteration of Defra's promise to review the six-day standstill rule all formed a positive message from Farming Minister George Eustice when he officially opened NSA Sheep 2014 at the end of July.

All three issues are high priorities for the National Sheep Association and Chief Executive Phil Stocker says it was gratifying to hear real commitment come from Mr Eustice, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs. He says: "NSA was delighted Mr Eustice attended the event and I am sure the time he spent with our sheep farming office holders, trade exhibitors and visitors underlined how important it is that his commitments on these vital areas result in tangible progress in the near future."

Other key concerns for the sheep sector, including liver fluke, sheep scab



Manx farmer Will Qualtrough accepted the Video Competition award on behalf of Krista Magee.



The top priced sheepdog was bought from Tony Rofe, Devon, from John Porter, Leicestershire, for 2,200gns.

and encouraging the next generation of producers were all covered in the seminar area, which was packed throughout the day. The Big Debate drew the biggest crowd, where BBC Countryfile's Tom Heap steered speakers and visitors through the thorny topic of balancing red meat supply with caring for the environment.

Phil says: "The Big Debate revealed a more positive dialogue than in the past about achieving the optimum balance between farmers and conservation groups, particularly when it comes to stocking rates in the uplands. It will never be easy to make this work in practice but,

at a strategic level, there does seem to be a consensus that sheep do play an important role and that it would be helpful to recognise and reward a wider range of public goods in the uplands, rather than just focusing on environmental stewardship."

Additional highlights from the event include Euan Orr winning the Young Shepherd of the Year national final at just 18 years old. Euan comes from Tarbrax, West Calder, West Lothian, and was representing NSA Scottish Region.



George Eustice officially opened NSA Sheep 2014.



The seminar tent was packed throughout the day.



Correct application of product was one of the Young Shepherd challenges.

The inaugural NSA Sheep Event Video Competition saw Krista Magee from the Isle of Man win a cash prize of £400 for her positive message about working in the sheep sector, while another first was a competition for the pen of sheep exhibited by a breed society stand that was both true to type and provided the best commercial representation of the breed. This was won by the Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association.

Watch video clips from NSA Sheep 2014 at www.youtube.com/user/natsheepassoc.



Practical information on lamb selection was offered by Eblex.



Euan Orr, Young Shepherd of the Year national champion.



Event organiser Helen Davies with the winning fencing team.

NSA Sheep 2014

Fact File

Venue: Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire.

Date: Wednesday 30th July.

Attendance: approximately 9,000 people

Young Shepherd of the Year (sponsored by MSD Animal Health and Rumenco):

Euan Orr (West Lothian) – also highest placed 21-year-old and under.

Sheep farming promotional video (sponsored by Agri-Lloyd):

Krista Magee (Isle of Man).

Wire fencing (sponsored by Tornado):

Mark J. Evans Fencing (Herefordshire).

Fleeces (sponsored by BWMB): D. White (Northamptonshire) natural coloured.

Open shearing (sponsored by Nettex):

Matt Smith, Cornwall

National carcase selection (sponsored by ABP): A. Snow (Hampshire), M. Iveson (North Yorkshire) and V. Caine (Herefordshire) – equal points.

Trade stands: Texel Sheep Society (breed society); Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association (best pen of sheep); Eblex (indoors); Scotpen (outdoors).

Ready Steady Cook: Aubrey Andrews (representing Texel Sheep Society).

Full results at www.sheepevent.org.uk.



The Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association accepted an auctioneers gavel for best pen of sheep and third prize for trade stand appearance and content.

NSA Sheep 2014

Sponsors

NSA is indebted to all sponsors of the event. For a full list visit www.sheepevent.org.uk. We also extend a massive thank you also to all the people who volunteered and made the day such a success.



Refreshed standards for Red Tractor

By Emma Graves, Red Tractor Assurance Technical Manager

Red Tractor have completely revamped the farm assurance standards, making them significantly shorter with easy-to-read content which clearly explains what each standard is, why it is important and what the assessor will be looking for.

Every three years the standards are reviewed to ensure they are up-to-date and cover key reputational risks. This time we have had unprecedented input from across the farming and food industry and are confident the balance is right. It is important our standards meet the requirements of customers as well as being practical and achievable to deliver on-farm. The review also means some changes for assured sheep farms, which come into effect from 1st October.

Animal welfare is a core principle of Red Tractor and remains high on the consumer agenda, so has been a core focus of this review. Your health plan will now need to detail how euthanasia is carried out and by whom. You will also need to keep health and performance records including medicine records, culling/mortality records and abattoir feedback, and



Farms using prescription medicines will have to have a vet visit once year, although it does not need to be a specific visit for this purpose.

review these records annually. This review must include a tally of the incidences of health and welfare issues, identification of key issues and action plans to control/prevent them. If you produce breeding stock you must also include procedures to ensure newborn lambs receive adequate colostrum. There is a template on the Red Tractor website.

With increasing focus on human antibiotic resistance, it is important to demonstrate responsible use of medicines in livestock. The standard requires an annual vet visit where you are using prescription medicines. This does not need to be a specific visit for this purpose but the vet must have the opportunity to look over your animals and review medicine/antibiotic usage.

Other changes are for artificially reared lambs, which must have visual and tactile contact with other lambs if housed in individual pens. Alternative sources of colostrum (e.g. artificial or frozen colostrum) must be available on-farm and used as required and lambs must have access to drinking water at all times.

Having competent staff, including family members is crucial to your business. Although they look quite different, the Red Tractor changes should not be onerous and are good practice. You must:

- Introduce any new staff to the farm and explain their tasks to them. You do not need to document this induction.
- Review the competence of new and existing staff regularly. If you find any issues you should give additional training. Red Tractor recommends that you document this review, although not doing so will not affect certification.
- If you use a labour provider to provide staff (e.g. lambing help) you must protect your business by getting written confirmation that they are providing you with competent staff and have a Gangmasters Licence.

Vermin control has also seen changes, following incidents of secondary poisoning of birds of prey by rodenticides. The standards now focus more clearly on the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use code so you must use bait responsibly in conjunction with a bait plan (including a map / location of all bait points), avoid non-target species and record bait laid down, bait point inspection dates and bait point replenishment dates.

Records of delivery or Waste Transfer

Sustainable Use Directive

Red Tractor has introduced the incoming Sustainable Use Directive legal requirements as recommendations for farm assurance from this October, before they come compulsory on 26th November 2015 for everyone.

- **Sprayer Competence:** From November 2015 Grandfather Rights will be abolished and all farmers applying plant protection products will need a certificate of competence to do so.
- **Sprayer Testing:** All application equipment other than handheld or knapsack sprayers must have been NSTS tested once before 26th November 2016 and every five years after that (for six years for granular applicators and boom sprayers less than 3m wide).
- **Integrated Pest Management:** A recommendation that you consider alternative ways to manage crop weeds, pests and diseases. A template is available from www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/ipmp.

Notes must accompany any materials brought onto the farm for spreading to land. This means you can trace back to source if there are any issues with the material. You must also keep Waste Transfer Notes for any materials you dispose of, rather than just having a Waste Transfer Plan.

With other industries increasingly recycling their waste into livestock bedding materials, you must keep a record of delivery for such materials to give traceability. You must also have Environment Agency waste exemptions to use these materials.

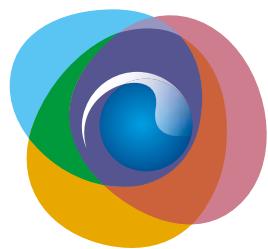
Other changes

Due to an increase in the use of collection centres i.e. the collection of livestock from different holdings onto one site for consignment to slaughter, Red Tractor now includes the legal requirements in the standards. You must either register the movements and undergo a standstill period or become a licensed and assured collection centre site.

Others changes include:-

- Bought-in minerals, mineral licks/ blocks (with the exception of rock salt), supplements and milk replacers must come from a UFAS or equivalent compounder.
- If you use a private water supply you must have a back-up supply available (e.g. mains water/ water bowser).
- Before taking on new sites, land or housing you should check them and consider the previous use.

For a copy of the Red Tractor Beef and Lamb Farm Standards visit www.redtractorassurance.org.uk/newstandards



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Informing the decision-makers... and starting from scratch, again

By Phil Stocker, NSA

In mid-July Owen Paterson, the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, was replaced by Liz Truss as part of a major Governmental reshuffle. Owen Paterson was in post for less than two years and it seems increasingly common place that these positions are far shorter term than would be ideal.

A Secretary of State is a hugely influential position that affects farming policies across the UK and NSA has a responsibility to ensure that these post holders have a good understanding of what sheep farming is delivering, and what would enable it to deliver even more. So although it may seem a bit out of date, and we need to start the whole process again, I thought it right to update members on a recent meeting with Mr Paterson – although the person may have changed the messages remain and will be continued with the new incumbent.

Sheep focus

Entirely at NSA's request, we hosted Mr Paterson and his key advisors in early May and organised a whole day of visits focused on sheep farming but also taking in topics of land management, marketing options and the food supply chain.

We started close to the home territory of NSA Chairman John Geldard in Cumbria. Our first stop was to overlook the Lythe valley where it is easy to explain in practical terms the relationship between



Owen Paterson (centre) spent the day with NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker (left) and NSA Chairman John Geldard (right) in Cumbria.

the surrounding upland fells and the valley bottoms. This was very topical because of the recent winter floods and it framed discussions about drainage and the balance of environmental management that is needed for effective food production and wildlife management.

The Secretary of State's reaction was interesting as he, along with most Government representatives, is driven by regenerating our economy and clearly sees farming, along with other rural activities, as contributing strongly to this agenda.

During a quick visit to John's Lowfoulshaw farm, we discussed the

sheep enterprises and the value of family farms with a prime example of succession with both of John and Rachel's sons, Richard and Charles, now leading the business. We then took a tour of Plumgarths Farm Shop and the nearby food hub that collects and distributes a local food offering to Asda on behalf of some 14 local food companies, before dropping into Asda to see many of these products on the shelf.

Opportunities outlined

Final stop was the new North West Auction at junction 36 on the M6, where a tour demonstrated what a new modern market could offer to the rural community. We were then joined by a larger number of individuals and organisations active in Cumbria for presentations and discussions led by NSA. The presentation outlined many of the economic, environmental and social opportunities of sheep farming, and some of the barriers that someone in his position is best placed to help remove if we are to enable UK sheep farming to: expand steadily in line with growing market opportunities; increase its productivity; improve resource efficiency; and improve its related environment and ecology.

Mr Paterson departed in the late afternoon to attend a 'squirrel summit', leaving with the words that he 'would no longer put up with RDP money being spent on trees for squirrels to kill'. We can only hope his successor equally appreciates the folly of some such environmental schemes.

Key topics discussed with the Secretary of State

- TSE controls** that require carcass splitting and the removal of specified risk material. NSA's recent TSE report estimates the controls are costing the industry at least £23.5m per annum – see update on page 3 and read the TSE report at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/hot-topics.
- Single payment penalties** based on sheep tagging and movement reporting. Any farmer relying on automated identification is almost bound to have inaccuracies and we need a level of tolerance to avoid disincentives to sheep keeping.
- Six-day standstill issues**. The rule is no longer fit for purpose and needs an urgent review.
- Reductions of sheep in the uplands.** Policies driving sheep numbers down

with the aim of improving upland ecology have reduced the viability of sheep enterprises for no apparent ecological gain – in fact often the opposite.

- Distribution of CAP funds.** NSA remains opposed to both Pillar One and Pillar Two monies being spent on projects not relating to active agricultural activity.

- Use of modulated (Pillar Two) funds.** The NSA would like to see a long term restructuring, using modulated funds to encourage active productivity, efficiency and environmental gains. At a time when Treasury expenditure has declined and is under further pressure, the RDP could be used far more effectively to ensure improvements in health, welfare and disease control.

More detail on greening of the CAP

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

Following my article on greening in the last edition of this magazine, more detail has been disclosed about how exactly this new element of the CAP will be implemented. England, Wales and Northern Ireland will stick to the three greening elements prescribed by the EU, while Scotland is developing alternative options.

I urge livestock farmers to find out if they have more 'arable' land than they realise, as this determines the extent the three elements (crop diversification, ecological focus areas (EFA) and permanent grassland) will affect your business.

'Arable' is land that has had a crop in the last five years, so includes temporary grass. If 25 acres of spring barley has been grown each year on a different field for the five years to May 2015 and a further 30ha field grew fodder beet in 2012, the 'arable' area will be 155



Stone walls are eligible as EFA in some parts of the UK.

acres (62 ha) even though only 25 acres are cropped this year. That area, which may change as land is bought, sold, let or given up, will set the liability to crop diversification and EFAs. There are exemptions for areas of arable under 30ha and that was covered in the previous article.

Crops counted under the crop diversification rules will have to be there in a period to be defined, likely to cover 15th May each year and allow inspections (perhaps May to July); crops outside that period will not be relevant.

EFAs will vary between the UK countries – see table – and, as some measures

Different types of Ecological Focus Areas

EFA Measure	England	Wales	Scotland	NI
Landscape features on or adjacent to arable land	Hedges	Hedges & traditional stone walls	Field margins inc. hedges & ditches	Cross compliance features, inc. hedges, ditches and stone walls
Fallow	x	x	x	x
Buffer strips along watercourses	x		x	
Catch crops	Also cover crops		x	
Nitrogen-fixing crops	x	x	With biodiversity management	x
Short rotation coppice		x		No mineral fertiliser or plant protection products
Afforested areas used to claim SP in 2008		x		x
Agro-forestry				x

Greening definitions

Permanent grassland: Grassland outside the crop rotation between May 2010 and May 2015, including rough grazing, permanent pasture and grass that has been re-sown with no intervening crop.

Crop diversification:

- crops like barley, oats, rye and triticale will each be a separate crop
- wheat will be one crop, whether common wheat, durum or spelt
- winter and spring crops (i.e. winter barley and spring barley) will be separate crops
- sugar beet, fodder beet and red beet will all be one crop
- field beans and broad beans will be one crop and field peas with vining peas another
- cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower and sprouts will be one crop
- temporary grass (to include outdoor pigs) will be a crop
- fallow (to be defined) will be a crop.

Scottish intentions (to be confirmed):

Required nutrient management plans for permanent grassland; offer of alternatives requiring winter soil cover or catch crops.

are thought more valuable than others, each will have its own weighting. It is not a simple matter of finding 5% of the arable land but rather an area equivalent to it. For example, the EU allows that each metre run of a qualifying hedge can count for 10sq.m but 1ha of beans will only count as 0.7ha.

Substantial failure to do either crop diversification or ecological focus areas will each cost half the greening payment on the whole arable area.

As greening is mandatory, it can affect agri-environment agreements requiring the same measures (referred to as 'double funding'). To avoid paying twice, England is changing all potentially affected payments for ELS agreements since January 2012 with the option to change or withdraw without penalty. Wales may be able to take a more individual approach.

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Northern Irish pure-bred Swales provide breeding success

By Joanne Briggs, NSA

When John Blaney took the decision to keep his Swaledale ewes pure instead of producing Mule lambs, little did he realise he was carving himself a niche market that would last for many years.

It has seen him earn a reputation for quality breeding stock (as well as a local nickname of 'The Swale Man'), make friends all over the UK and become increasingly involved with the NSA, taking on the two-year job of NSA Northern Ireland Regional Chairman late last year.

John and his wife Anne farm in the Glens of Antrim, near Cushendun in Northern Ireland. This beautiful landscape of hills and valleys provides them with 12ha (30 acres) of lowland at Mullarts Farm and 240ha (600 acres) of Glenann hill a little distance away at 240-550m above sea level (800-1,800ft).

Their first Swaledale was purchased in the mid-1970s and, despite enjoying only brief popularity in Northern Ireland during the 1980s, remained a favourite for John.

When the entire livestock population in the Antrim Glens was wiped out during foot-and-mouth in 2001 he decided to turn his back on the Cheviot ewes that previously dominated the flock and restock entirely with Swaledales.

"The Swaledale was quite popular in the mid-1980s, but we didn't always get the best quality on this side of the water so the breed gained the perception of having no body," says John. "But I had no hesitation to go back to the Swale after foot-and-mouth. They are so easy to work with. You have to manage them, but you get less lambing problems."

"It took us three years before we were back up to full stock numbers. I bought half Swaledales and half Blackfaces to tide us over, but soon sold the Blackies because the Swale is easier to lamb and to work with and is more prolific."

John initially produced Mule lambs from his Swaledales but, finding they regularly sold for £10 less than Scotch Mules, decided to keep his females pure and soon established a network of repeat



John Blaney.

buyers throughout Northern and Southern Ireland for ewe lambs and draft ewes, and later an increasing number of pedigree rams too.

A ready market for five-year-old draft ewes allows John to keep a young flock of 310 ewes and 80 replacements. He also sells all the ewe lambs not needed directly from the home farm, plus 10 ram lambs and 12-15 shearing rams a year.

Teaching career

Taking retirement in 2001 allowed John time to focus on his Swaledales, as until then he had been running the farm in the evenings and weekends while teaching in the local school, as well as being vice principle for 13 years and principle for nine. Commenting on how he managed two full-time jobs as teacher and farmer, John says: "It became that the farming was a chore. I was feeding lambs in the dark and only knew they were there because I could hear them in the trough. I was feeding sheep in 20 minutes and it now takes an hour and I can enjoy it. If you work long hours your efficiency goes down."

John says he misses the children rather than the teaching, but with one of his two daughters living on the other side of the road he and Anne are kept busy with four granddaughters (ages 4-12). The family all pitch in at lambing time in particular and John also took on a man two years ago to work two days throughout the year.

Ewes are tupped in mid-November and

"If we feed earlier we can lift light ewes, and lambs are born at a bigger weight that they never lose. They get a head start and just keep going." John Blaney



John's Glenann hill ground looks across the Irish Sea to Scotland's Kintyre peninsula and west coast.



A mix of home-bred rams and bought-in rams.

scanned in January or early February to ensure ewes carrying twins can return from Glenann to Mullarts a week before lambing and singles the day before. Lambing is outside and this year produced 1.49 live lambs per head (including the empties) with nine sets of triplets. Five of those ewes have reared all three lambs and the others were kept as pets for the grandchildren.

Nutrition

John has always fed concentrate to keep in-lamb ewes in good condition (and taken thinner ewes off the hill if necessary) but for the last two years he has introduced the feed in February instead of March and seen a marked improvement.

"We did it last year and when the snow hit on 23rd March we lost around 25 head but the other ewes, who were badly



Teeswater ewe with Dorset-sired triplet lambs.

shaken, bounced back and lambed down with lambs 1kg heavier than the year before. This year it worked a treat and they lambed down 4-5kg heavier. If we feed earlier we can lift light ewes, and lambs are born at a bigger weight that they never lose. They get a head start and just keep going."

Singles are turned back onto the hill after lambing and twins initially sent to 10ha (24 acres) of rented conacre before going to the harder land. Ewes are weaned in August and lambs kept on the lowland for two weeks to allow John to sort the ewe lambs to keep and to sell. Potential breeding males are also identified at this stage, but all ram lambs are left entire so more can be picked out later if they show promise. Anything not suitable for breeding is housed from November onwards and fattened on concentrate and homemade hay to be finished at a minimum of 47kg between December and late March. John says he spent an average of £20 per head on concentrate last year and sold them at £86 each. All are sold deadweight to stop liveweight buyers pulling out bigger lambs for breeding and affecting both John's income and reputation for pedigree males.

John has seen some demand for EBVs and thinks this will increase in the future, but his commitment to performance

Farm Facts

- Small home farm plus large amount of hill land that includes limestone, blanket bog and iron ore. Land type and Countryside Management agreements limit stocking rates, but John strongly supports change to stop environmental bodies and Government policies reducing stocking further still.
- 310 Swaledale ewes plus replacements.
- Also 10 Teeswater and Masham females for the grandchildren/ experimental breeding. Poll Dorset crosses out of both have performed very well this year.
- Replaced 15-head suckler herd after FMD but sold it in 2006 because did not have the economy of scale to make it pay.

recording is as much to aid his own flock management. It is in John's hand-kept and computer records, and the fact that even his young grandchildren know how to take down information, that you can tell he worked for so many years as a science and maths teacher. Despite lambing outside, all ewes have their eartag scanned and their lambs tagged and recorded within 24 hours. The priorities for recording are maternal traits, lamb weights and feet problems; prolapses are rare but always recorded.

Future breeding

John says the improving perception of Swaledales in Northern Ireland, in large part due to work done by the Swaledale Sheep Breeders Association, means more of his customers are keeping ewes pure. Does this mean he has become a victim of his own success and customers will no longer need to buy females from him? "Not yet," he says. "It is a niche market and has lasted longer than I thought it would. We could always go back to Mule production if we can't sell the Swales, but I was booked up in October for this year's ewe lambs and draft ewes. It's nice to have a lot of repeat buyers."

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Tree planting reduces flood risk and improves sheep welfare

Following the popularity of workshops held by the Woodland Trust at the NSA Sheep Event, the trust has provided this case study of a group of producers in Wales who have integrated trees onto their farms without restricting their livestock enterprises.

The Pontbren project started with just three neighbouring farmers who in 1997 were trying to make their farm businesses more sustainable by planting hedges and trees to provide more shelter for livestock grazing the steep, windswept land.

After seeing the positive results from the three farmers' efforts, seven neighbouring farmers then joined them, increasing the area of farmland across the project's catchment to 1,000 ha. They gave reinstated hedgerow and woodland management, developed wood chip bedding systems and improved the economic value of their land and the environment in which they live and work.

Flexibility

Roger Jukes, one of the farmers instrumental in the whole project, says: "After realising all existing schemes out there were too inflexible and not possible for us to join as a group we developed our own. With the valuable help from Mike Richards from the Woodland Trust we managed to get the funding in place and started our journey."

Woodland improvements at Pontbren were carefully designed to achieve the farmers' aims by creating tree cover that was as natural as possible and would be long-lived and easy to maintain. Hedgerow planting and management took a similar



Roger Jukes (centre) was one of the three farmers instrumental in establishing the Pontbren project in Wales.



A Pontbren tree and shelter belt.

approach and new ponds were created which benefitted both farming and biodiversity.

The farmers observed their tree planting had unexpected benefits in reducing water run-off from improved grassland and they were keen to have this confirmed by independent research. Their interest led to a major hydrological research programme at Pontbren, which has provided important new evidence of the role of trees in flood control.

Pontbren data is now being used elsewhere in the UK and overseas to develop better ways of predicting the impact of upland land use on flooding. This is important because predictive climate models suggest more frequent storms with intense rainfall, as well as an overall increase in precipitation.

Roger continues: "We looked at hardier stock and at restoring and extending the network of hedges and copses needed to provide shelter on the farms so that livestock could stay outside. We planted trees and demonstrated its effect on water run-off and flooding downstream. We have attracted the attention of scientists and in so doing attracted additional funding."

The undoubtedly success of Pontbren in agricultural, environmental, scientific and social terms has provided a well-tested new model for farmers and policy makers seeking a better way of delivering essential environmental services as part of productive upland livestock farming in the UK. It also won the top prize at the European Landowners' Organisation land and soil management awards in Brussels

earlier this year.

The key to this lies in treating woodland and water management as an integral part of the farm business and making strategic land use decisions based on practical knowledge and sound scientific evidence.

The role of the Woodland Trust was crucial to the project's success by providing advice, support and above all guidance through the administrative obstacles facing a project which did not quite fit with the prevailing top-down prescriptive model of environmental improvement.

Achievements

When the tree planting began only 1.5% of the Pontbren land was woodland, but 10 years later 120,000 new trees and shrubs have been planted, 16.5km of hedges have been created or restored and nearly 5% of the Pontbren land is now woodland. This is a major achievement in just 10 years, with no loss of agricultural productivity.

"Working together through all the trials of foot-and-mouth and TB has only strengthened our community, which extends far beyond the work described here," says Roger. "We have had fun together and enjoyed bringing people to our farms to see what has been achieved, but our one abiding frustration is that we have not been able to make it easier for other farmers to follow our lead."

To find out about the support offered to landowners and farmers contact the Woodland Trust on 08452 935689 or email plant@woodlandtrust.org.uk.

UPDATE FROM SCOTLAND

By Sybil Macpherson, NSA Scottish Region Chairman



Welcome to a snapshot of some of what's been happening in Scotland recently. As you will see, we have had a busy six months with the organising of NSA Scot Sheep, the Royal Highland Show, the introduction of our two NSA Next Generation Ambassadors, lamb promotion and numerous meetings across the country concerning CAP.

Following an exceptionally wet but relatively mild winter, came to everyone's relief, an early spring and (apart from 4th June!) an almost ideal summer. Recent weeks have seen soaring temperatures and it looks as if the snow drift on our highest hill at home may have melted before the end of July. However, the arrival of a pair of nesting sea eagles and a marked increase in the devastating condition plochteachd has impacted greatly on our lamb crop here.

Throughout Scotland lambs are finishing earlier this year and it is disappointing to see that some of the major supermarkets are choosing to promote lamb from the southern hemisphere rather

than supporting our excellent home produced lamb. NSA held a most encouraging lamb tasting at the Royal Highland Show and, along with QMS and NFUS, will be holding a promotion of Scottish Lamb across the whole of Scotland on the 23rd and 24th August.

CAP reform

Meetings concerning CAP meant many miles and much time was spent consulting with producers and Government officials in an effort to influence a fair and deliverable outcome. Scotland's unique and diverse make-up of land types, climatic conditions and farming enterprises meant this was challenging to say the least. The Scottish Government eventually decided to make use of a voluntary coupled scheme for sheep on farms that are reliant on the poorest of rough grazing for their business, recognising the likelihood of increased land abandonment and the importance of grazing livestock for environmental, economic and social benefits.

May I take this opportunity to thank most sincerely all who have given their valued and unstinting support, encouragement and time – it is greatly appreciated. I wish you all a prosperous and successful season.

BLACKFACE SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION

SALE DATES 2014

EWE LAMBS	GIMMERS AND EWES	OCTOBER cont
AUGUST		Longtown
29 Stirling (Cal)		Thainstone
29 Newcastleton		2 Hexham
SEPTEMBER		6 Stirling (UA)
1 Stirling (UA)		9 Fort William
1 Castle Douglas		11 Lanark
4 Ayr		10 Dingwall
5 Newton Stewart		10 Dumfries
5 Hexham		14 Longtown
10 Lanark		23 St Boswells
13 Dumfries		24 Hexham
16 Huntly		27 Fort William
16 Oban		RAMS
19 Hexham		OCTOBER
22 Stirling (UA)		2 Newton Stewart
27 Dalmally		4 Stirling (UA)
23 Oban		6 Ballymena
OCTOBER		10 Dingwall
1 Lanark		11 Dalmally
1 Longtown		13 Hexham
1 Thainstone		13 Castle Douglas
2 Hexham		15 Oban
6 Stirling (UA)		16 Lanark - Shearlings
10 Dingwall		17 Lanark - Lambs
14 Longtown		20 Portree
23 St Boswells		24 Stirling (UA)
		NOVEMBER
		6 Lanark
		7 Fort William

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For further information on the breed contact
Aileen McFadzean Tel: 07768 820405
aileen@scottish-blackface.co.uk



NEW INDUSTRY INITIATIVE

By George Milne, NSA Scottish Region Development Officer

Television presenter Cat Cubie joined myself and other representatives from the Scottish sheep industry at the Royal Highland to unveil an exciting new Scotch Lamb PGI initiative.

This NSA Scottish Region, QMS and NFU Scotland initiative will see an unprecedented, united PR push behind Scotch Lamb and, while specific details are being kept under wraps, I can tell you that wide-scale Scotch Lamb sampling activity by farmers at supermarkets around Scotland will form a major part of it. This will take place over one special weekend celebrating Scotch Lamb, dovetailing with QMS's major marketing campaign and building on the success of 'Wham Bam Thank You Lamb', which communicates how simple it is to cook quick, tasty mid-week dishes with Scotch Lamb.

We are looking forward to working closely with QMS and NFU Scotland on this initiative and are delighted with the response achieved from farmers around the country who are keen to get involved. Every sheep farmer in Scotland can be a fantastic brand ambassador for Scotch Lamb and, by working together, we hope to drive home the message about the quality of our natural, grass-fed product, underpinned by the industry's quality assurance schemes.

NSA SCOTTISH REGION SUMMER FARMING AT ITS VERY BEST

Incessant rain throughout the day failed to dampen enthusiasm at NSA Scot Sheep 2014, with the 200 trade and sheep breed society stands reported brisk business as visitors headed undercover to get away from the relentless downpour.

The scene was set by the Duke of Montrose, NSA President, who officially opened the event by highlighting the many challenges all sectors of the agricultural industry will have to face in the future, including sheep producers.

"We have less than 20 years to deliver 40% more food, 30% more fresh water and 50% more energy to meet the demands of a rising world population, the rapid development of emerging economies and shortages of land, water and energy," he said. "Agriculture, including the sheep industry, is going to have to grasp every innovation and opportunity on offer."

Sheep sector services

The NSA Silver Salver for services to the Scottish sheep industry was presented by Richard Lochhead, Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, to Dave Turner, former head of agriculture at Oatridge College (now part of SRUC) for his tremendous support of young people, including organising NSA Young Shepherd of the Year and shearing competitions.

The horrendous weather meant the farm tour by tractor and trailer had to be abandoned, as well as the inter-region sheepdog trial, prize money for which will be presented at the Scottish National Sheepdog Trials.

David Leggat of United Auctions, who chaired the event organising committee,

paid warm tribute to the committee and all those who helped and acted as stewards on the day, as well as trade exhibitors, breed societies and sponsors, particularly main sponsor Bank of Scotland.

He says: "Cancelling the farm tour was extremely disappointing for our host farmers, John and Iain Macfarlane, who put in a huge amount of time and effort into arranging the day, and also for those attending. It's sad that so many visitors were unable to see for themselves the tremendous job the Macfarlane's do in producing top quality commercial lambs that hit the market at the top spec, but at least some people were able to attend an open day a couple of weeks later to view the flock of 1,800 sheep and the suckler herd of 750 cows."

The farm walk saw much better weather and a crowd of 80 visitors, as George Milne, NSA Scottish Regional Development Officer, reports: "We enjoyed an excellent farm tour, where we saw the full sheep enterprise and also three groups of suckler cows with calves at foot. We also saw a range of grass plots planted and maintained by Watson Seeds and explained by Johnny Watson on the day, and SRUC were present to talk to us about the importance of soil structure in achieving a good grass sward."

Highland highlights

Not content with organising two top-notch events for sheep farmers, NSA Scottish Region also turned their attention to educating and entertaining the public at the Royal Highland Show in mid-June. The remarkable qualities of sheep and the diverse range of products that can be made with their wool were showcased, and the practical elements of sheep farming were brought together with the high-end fashion world. Scotch Lamb tastings were also on offer to the thousands of visitors passing through the marquee. Sheep breed societies and pens of top quality stock were displayed side-by-side with beautiful wool-inspired clothes and products for the home. Other attractions included spinning, weaving and upholstery demonstrations, as well as

FARM WALK



Grassland information was provided by Watson Seeds on the farm walk.



The Macfarlanes sheep showed themselves off in the better weather.

NSA SCOT SHEEP

FACT FILE

Venue: Quixwood Farm, Duns, Berwickshire.

Date: Wednesday 4th June.

Attendance: Estimated 6,500 people.

Young Shepherd of the Year: Euan Orr.

Sheep shearing: East Central (Calum Shaw and Grant Lundie).

Stockjudging: Fiona Donald (open), Jennifer McCreathe (under 27) and Philip Anderson (under 19).

Trade stands: Rough Fell Sheep Breeders Association (breed societies), Carrs Billington (indoor) and Glendale Engineering (outdoor).

an array of beautiful fleeces that had been judged on their quality and versatility.

Next Generation

As part of its commitment to the next generation of sheep farmers, NSA Scottish Region staged a lamb dressing competition in conjunction with the RHASS on Sunday afternoon, where 10 to 26-year-olds competed in two classes to show their skills at presenting a sheep for a show or sale. Euan Orr of Tarbrax, West Calder, 'won the double' by adding the senior dressing title to his Scot Sheep Young Shepherd award, while the junior dressing title went to David Moir of Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire.

R ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHT SHEEP

Models showed off the latest in wool-based fashion.



ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW



Dave Turner receives his award from Richard Lochhead.



The lamb dressing competition attracted strong entries.



George Milne encourages visitors to enjoy Scotch Lamb.



Persistent rain did not deter the crowds.



NSA Next Generation Ambassadors Andrew Prentice and Jennifer Craig meet Richard Lochhead.



Euan Orr, NSA Scot Sheep Young Shepherd of the Year Champion and NSA RHS Lamb dressing winner.

SCOT SHEEP



The Duke of Montrose opens the event.

SCOTTISH CAP DETAIL GETTING CLEARER

By George Milne, NSA Scottish Region Development Officer

Of all the CAP stakeholder meetings I have attended about CAP, the most recent one finally made it feel like we were reaching a conclusion about how the policy will be implemented in Scotland.

Not everyone will like the details of the package but at least now we know how our farms will be affected and take action where we can to protect our businesses. I think each and every livestock farmer in Scotland needs to consider that it looks increasingly unlikely that payments will reach bank accounts in December 2015 on time. The EU allows a payment window from December through until June so take this into account when drawing up cash flow forecasts.

Meanwhile, a crucial date the Scottish Government has already dealt with is the 1st August deadline for all EU member states to inform the Commission of some major CAP decisions. For Scotland it looks likely that these will have included:-

- A three-region model for area payments

- region 1 at €220, region 2 at €35 and region 3 at €10.
- A transition period from 2015-2019 to move from historical to area-based payments.
- A cap of €400,000 on payments to individual businesses.
- Basing the initial value of payment entitlements on the 2014 claim year.
- Adding sporting estates to the negative list (i.e. inactive farmers) unless they can prove they can meet three defining criteria to show they are actively involved in agricultural activities.
- Providing three Voluntary Coupled Support schemes – a mainland beef scheme of €100/head, an island beef scheme of €160/ and an upland sheep scheme (only on offer in region 3) of €100/ewe hogg – to be revisited in 2016 if required.

Roughly speaking, this coupled support for upland sheep farms equates to €25 per



The CAP package was a major talking point in the seminar area at NSA Scot Sheep earlier in the summer.

ewe (assuming one ewe hogg produced from four breeding ewes).

There is still some detail about greening to be firmed up, but this does not require to be submitted to the Commission until 1st October and 15th December. The so-called Scottish clause (which would see a minimum stocking density used to trigger activity in order to receive an area based payment) will require to be submitted to the Commission by the 31st January 2015.

SURVEILLANCE FARM A KEY PART OF SCOTTISH FLUKE ACTION GROUP

It is just over 12 months since the first tests were carried out on the Scottish Fluke Action Group's surveillance farm to help give vets and farmers more case study information on liver fluke.

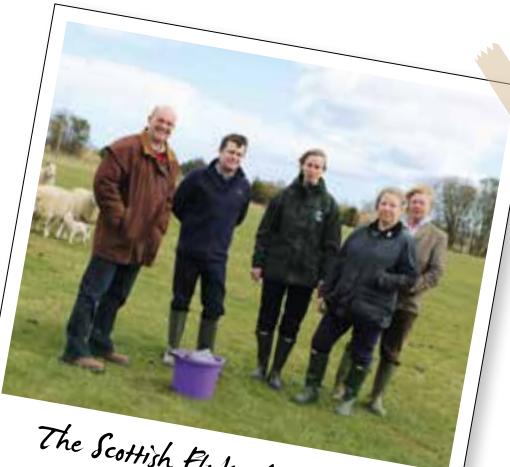
The surveillance monitor farm is run by George Milne, NSA Scotland Regional Development Officer, near St. Andrews on the east coast of Scotland. This is not a part of the world where fluke would be expected to cause major losses, but in the winter of 2012/13 that is exactly what happened.

He has been regularly tested sheep on the farm since July 2013 to provide a snapshot of what is happening on his farm, in a project funded by the Scottish Government and Novartis Animal Health and supported by Moredun Research Institute, Scottish Rural College, University of Edinburgh, Parkside Vets and NSA.

"Although fluke numbers have luckily decreased from the dreadful winter of 2012/13, the disease is still a problem

and needs attention at all times of the year if good control is to be achieved now and in the coming years," says George.

At the moment the group is monitoring this year's infection so it can build a control plan for the autumn and winter. This year's lambs are ideal to check levels of infection, as they have not encountered fluke before and a sample blood test of 12 animals will see if they have been exposed to fluke since they started grazing. This time last year the lambs were infected but this year the levels of infection are much lower. This does not mean fluke will not be an issue this autumn and winter, but it may start at a different time. Dung samples are also being tested from a group of sentinel animals to see how the level of fluke increases. This will aid decisions about when to treat and when/if to graze animals on lower risk pastures.



The Scottish Fluke Action Group surveillance farm was established in April 2013 with Sheila Voas, Scottish Chief Veterinary Officer.

George adds: "Every farm is different, as is the fluke challenge every year, so it is important to speak to your vet or prescriber to discuss a farm specific monitoring and control programme." Watch for more updates from George's farm at www.nationalsheep.org.uk.

Ewe condition exceptional in flock bolused pre-tupping

A Welsh lamb producer says flock empty rates have halved and ewe condition has been exceptional thanks to Tracesure Traffic Lights.

Neil Perkins, who runs a low-input system with a major emphasis on grass, scanned just 29 empties in a flock of 1,600 Lleyn and commercial ewes in the very first year of using the trace element bolus.

The Tracesure Traffic Lights bolus system is key to helping livestock producers make more from their grass because it can help animals maximise the energy and protein in homegrown forage.

Neil, who farms in partnership with his father, Roger, and wife, Lynda, boluses ewes twice a year, at pre-tupping and pre-lambing.

"Having such a low empty rate means we don't have to carry unproductive ewes for a year. It also keeps our replacement rate down," he says.



Neil Perkins says bolusing ewes pre-tupping produces exceptional results at Dinas Island Farm.

The farmland at Dinas Island Farm in Pembrokeshire is high in molybdenum and this causes problems with the uptake of copper.

The reduction in the ewe empty rate has been a big bonus to the business. "You need those

extra lambs to put you on top of the game. That's the top end margin," says Roger.

Ewe condition is exceptional too. "They are getting what they need on a consistent basis, getting little and often which suits them well," says Neil.



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Focus on body condition scores for successful flushing of ewes

By Richard Knight,
Westmorland Vets,
Cumbria



Moving ewes to pastures with longer, lusher grass is the traditional way to increase energy intakes and boost ovulation rates before letting the tupps in. Although this conventional wisdom has a lot of truth, more recently and because of better data recording and usage, it is not necessarily always true.

A low plane of nutrition, which sustains a low body condition or leads to a loss in body condition, reduces the secretion of gonadotrophic hormones and may thus have an effect on fertility, first at the individual animal level (one ewe either will or won't conceive) but more noticeably at the flock level (the percentage of a flock which have conceived, a figure that becomes more reliable the larger the flock is and can be fractions of a percent).

A plane of nutrition which maintains body condition at 2.5-3.5 after weaning

Other factors affecting the success of flushing

Our vet practice targets trace elements investigations at copper, cobalt and selenium, and commonly uncovers deficiencies. Supplementation of deficient animals in a timely fashion leads to a greater chance of conceiving. Copper supplementation is also important on farms where there has been a diagnosis of swayback in new born lambs.

As sheep are particularly good at storing copper, no supplementation with it should go ahead without a thorough appreciation of the farm and sheep status. Over-supplementation with copper (a common practice when feeding mineralised cattle cake) will lead to copper being stored in the liver and an acute copper crisis (illness or death) may occur many months later, often precipitated by lambing.

Chronic parasite infections such as liver fluke and worms may lead to poor health leading up to tupping. A test called the coproantigen ELISA test is available for determining fluke infection and is a great tool to have in our armoury.

Also remember the importance of checking teeth and feet are in good order and udders are all square. And although this article is about flushing ewes, don't forget the tupps!

Body condition score pre-mating and recommended grass access

Ewe body condition score	Sward height (cm)	Kg DM /ha
Low	2.5 & less	5-7
Good	3.0-3.5	4
High	4+	3

is desirable, unless ewes are excessively fat, where a reduced energy intake may be needed to slim them down a bit. Early lambing ewes that are fed hard to support milk production can have a tendency to get fat if they have access to lush grass when their peak milk production had eased back. This is something to watch out for, particularly in hill breeds and hill cross breeds such as Mules, which are incredibly efficient at energy utilisation and storing energy as fat when it is in excess.

Condition consistency

Ewes respond optimally to flushing at 2.5-3.5 body condition score, rather than at one extreme or the other. It is vital to learn and appreciate how to do body condition scoring. While we all may debate the finer points of whether an individual ewe is a fraction of a condition score higher or lower than one of our fellows thinks, the flock level is the one that is important. If the same person can condition score, the results will be consistent and trends can be spotted. At the flock level, knowing what the average condition score was, and is now, are real headline figures.

The period of several months between weaning and re-mating may allow for ewes to be on a low plane of nutrition, to maintain a body condition of 2.5-3.5 or



Ewes must be handled to correctly score them. Even recently shorn animals can look fatter than they are!

slim them down from 4-5. If ewes are thin or emaciated for whatever reason they should always be fed to improve condition. It takes about six weeks of good feeding to improve by one condition score.

Different body conditions affect flushing:-

- Fat ewes and ewes at the higher end of good are not really found to respond too well to flushing.
- Thinner ewes that are fed to be in better condition at the start of the breeding season are more likely to have multiple ovulations and bear twins or triplets.
- Thin ewes transferred from maintenance feeding to a higher level for four to six weeks, beginning two to three weeks before the tupps are let loose, can have a 10-20% higher lambing percentage.

Therefore the success, or not, of flushing is associated more with improved rather than improving body condition, and could just as well be obtained by preventing the depletion of reserves. The exception is thin ewes where improving their body condition is essential – which again shows the importance of scoring your ewes.



The field in the foreground, compared to the one behind, has been grazed by many sheep with lambs at foot, so is good for over-conditioned ewes.

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Source the right breeding stock

By Robert Addison, Hexham and Northern Marts Managing Director and LAA Chairman



Keeping sheep myself, I have suffered from sentimentality in the past. But the ewe that is given the benefit of the doubt in autumn is generally the ewe that causes problems in the spring, so I now believe in keeping your flock young. There is no place for sentimentality.

I once saw a young man buying sheep who had just taken on a tenancy. He was trying to keep to a tight budget and was consequently buying old horned ewes. He was gently tapped on the shoulder by a wise sheep dealer who said: "Young man, young sheep may die, old sheep will die, invest in youth." He changed tactics and today says it was the best advice he received as he is now a very successful sheep farmer.

Always try to keep your flock numbers up, as there is always natural wastage. The age of sheep required could be young ewes, shearlings or ewe lambs. Ask yourself, do you want to buy tupping hoggs or running hogs – what suits your system? Nowadays the number of alternative breeds is greater than ever. Think about the type for your farm and the market for your produce, but personal choice is the main factor.

There are a couple of options available when it comes to sourcing stock: farm-to-farm or from the livestock ring.

Farm-to-farm trading is now undertaken on a more regular basis. It has its merits and its disadvantages, in that descriptions

of stock can differ widely. Also people's perception of value can be open to doubt. In my capacity as chairman of the Livestock Auctioneers Association, I am firmly of the opinion that the only way to sell breeding stock to its best advantage, for both vendor and purchaser, is the livestock ring. The combination of a packed ringside, smell of the bloom dip and an enthusiastic auctioneer makes for an intoxicating mix.

The key to the livestock ring is that it provides the prospective purchasers with a choice of breed, quality, size, runner or tupping hogg, and health or farm assured status. Nearly all sales are catalogued so the prospective purchaser can be aware of any pre-sale medicines – a vital tool for future management and farm assurance status.

The purchaser will be able to select, buy at the price he bids and receive all relevant information that he requires. The live ring provides all the answers for a prospective purchaser.

Visit the source

I am aware that several people buy for a number of different purchasers but I would urge people requiring stock to venture north, take a holiday to meet people during September and October, visit the marts of Yorkshire, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland. It is nearly certain there will be a sale on.

See where your stock has been born and reared, you will be well received by both the auctioneer and the breeders alike. Enjoy listening to the enthusiasm of the breeder. It is well known that ewe lamb fever starts at lambing and continues right up till, and beyond, the fall of the hammer. A huge amount of work goes into their production and an immense amount of pride is taken in their result.

The benefits of the live ring option also applies to ram sales, the big fairs such as Kelso and Builth Wells, together with regional ram sales, are also huge social occasions as well as places of business, as a ram is 50% of your flock.

How much will replacements cost? The 'crystal ball' question no one really knows the answer to, but with recent lamb prices being £8-10 down on the year, ewe prices being up, one can anticipate breeding sales to be similar if not a little dearer on the year. But come and see for yourself; you will be made most welcome.



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Hexham and Northern Marts sell two types of Mule – one derived from the Hexham-type Blackface and one from Swaledale – and it's Bellingham and Tow Law sales are noted for top quality sheep.

Effective quarantine treatments are a sound investment

By Lesley Stubbings, SCOPS

Hundreds of thousands of breeding and store sheep will move around the country every month this autumn, taking with them a number of serious threats to the health and profitability of the flocks they join.



Yet most sheep farmers will do little if anything to minimise the risk. That's a pretty damning indictment of our industry but is sadly backed up by survey after survey. Just last year, an online survey carried out by Novartis concluded that no more than 10% of respondents got even close to an effective quarantine routine.

The problem is that the threats are rarely visible when sheep arrive and, having paid a lot of money for what appear to be healthy sheep, we shy away from spending even more on them. Unfortunately, as healthy as they look, they can be carrying some devastating diseases that may not be seen until it is too late. For example, sheep scab can take up to six months to show its hand, by which time the majority of the breeding ewes in a flock could be affected, along with young lambs.

There are 3 steps to follow for effective quarantine:-

1. **Yard** all sheep on arrival for 24-48 hours. This makes sure any worm eggs in the gut are not dropped on pasture and allows time to have a good look for other problems e.g. CODD, footrot, CLA or orf.
2. **Treat** to remove resistant worms, sheep scab and liver fluke if considered necessary – see panel.
3. **Turn** out to contaminated pasture. Putting sheep on pasture that has carried sheep this season will ensure any resistant worms surviving treatment don't populate a clean pasture. Keep them isolated from the rest of the flock for at least 3 weeks.

Liver fluke risk assessment

Where a risk is perceived that in-coming stock originated from a 'fluky' farm they will need to be treated, and treatment choice depends on the status of the receiving farm:-

1. If there is no history of liver fluke nor any snail habitats on the receiving farm, treatment is simply required to remove any liver fluke from the in-coming stock to prevent disease.
2. If there is no history of liver fluke on the receiving farm but the possibility of snail habitats that could support imported liver fluke, treatment is required to prevent disease *and* to stop the liver fluke life-cycle establishing on the farm.
3. If the receiving farm has a history of liver fluke, treatment should prevent disease in the in-coming stock *and* prevent importation of triclabendazole (TCBZ) resistant liver fluke.

There are three treatment options for in-coming stock:-

- **Triclabendazole** – but this must be followed up by a drench check to make sure it has worked effectively, and is not recommended for farms in the third category above.
- **Closantel or nitroxynil** – two treatments six weeks apart. Animals must graze low risk pasture between treatments and after the second if possible.
- **Animals housed + closantel or nitroxynil** (or clorsulon for cattle). If animals are not at risk of immediate disease, treatment can be delayed until they have been housed for at least five or six weeks, which means only one treatment is necessary.



SCOPS demonstrations at NSA Sheep 2014 proved very popular.

The SCOPS recommendation for treatment options is based on the principle that giving two broad spectrum anthelmintics, both of which have the lowest chance of there being any resistance present, will ensure the proportion of worms killed will be as close to 100% as possible. SCOPS also strongly recommends that all sheep* are treated against sheep scab. While the sheep are yarded they should be drenched with either a 4-AD or 5-SI wormer group and injected with moxidectin 1%**.

For information on products available, download the 2014

SCOPS 'Know Your Anthelmintics' leaflet at www.scops.org.uk.

* In the case of short-keep store lambs withdrawal periods can be an issue and the only option in terms of sheep scab may be to make sure they are kept away from any breeding ewes, including avoiding any contact with vehicles, equipment etc.

** If Footvax has or is to be used then the moxidectin 1% can be replaced by either 2% moxidectin, doramectin or a plunge dip in OP. If you dip add a moxidectin drench with the 4-AD option.

 **The Swaledale Sheep Breeders' Association** 

2014 ewe and ewe lamb sales

<p>19th September Middleton-in-Teesdale Ewe lambs</p> <p>26th September Ruswarp, North Yorkshire Ewes</p> <p>26th September Clitheroe, Lancashire Ewes</p> <p>26th September NWA, Junction 36, Cumbria Ewes and ewe lambs</p> <p>26th September Leyburn, North Yorkshire Ewes and ewe lambs</p> <p>27th September St. John's Chapel Ewes and ewe lambs</p> <p>29th September Middleton-in-Teesdale Ewes</p> <p>30th September Bentham, Lancashire Ewes, shearlings and ewe lambs</p> <p>2nd October Hexham, Northumberland (Hexham, Bellington & Tow Law Sales) Ewes</p> <p>3rd October Kirkby Stephen Ewes</p>	<p>4th October Kirkby Stephen Ewe lambs</p> <p>4th October Skipton, North Yorkshire Ewes</p> <p>6th October Cockermouth, Cumbria Ewes and ewe lambs</p> <p>6th October Hawes Ewes</p> <p>9th October Penrith, Cumbria Ewes</p> <p>11th October Hawes Shearlings and ewe lambs</p> <p>11th October Lazonby, Cumbria Ewes</p> <p>21st October Hawes, Ewes</p> <p>25th October Kirkby Stephen All classes of breeding sheep</p> <p>Contact John Stephenson Swaledale Sheep Breeders' Association Secretary 01833 650516 jstephenson@swaledale-sheep.com</p>
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Can we vaccinate against worms in sheep?

By Professor Julie Fitzpatrick,
Moredun Research Institute
Scientific Director

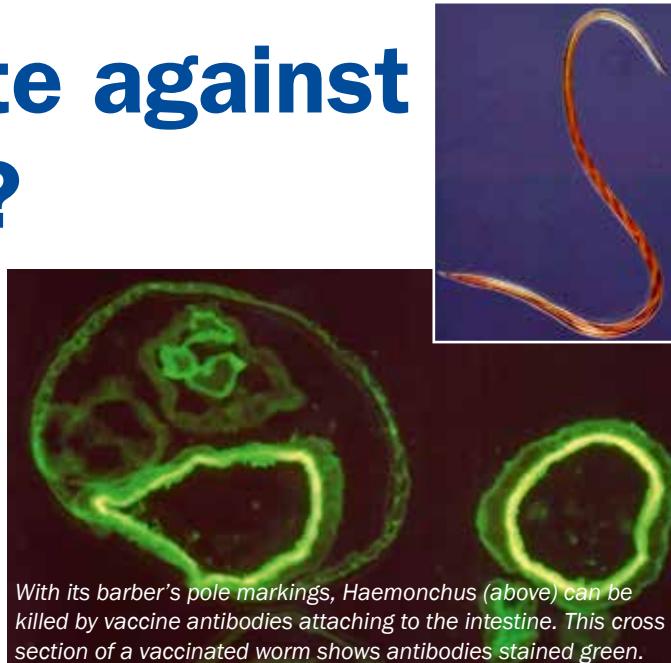


With stomach and gut worms continuing to be a major constraint to efficient and sustainable sheep farming, especially in light of drug resistance, it is encouraging to say that the answer to the question above is – nearly!

Haemonchus contortus (or the barber's pole worm) is a blood sucker and an important cause of death and disease in sheep and goats both in Australia and other tropical and sub-tropical parts of the world. 'Barbervax' is a novel vaccine to aid in the control of *Haemonchus contortus* and has been developed by Drs David Smith and George Newlands from the Moredun Research Institute, in collaboration with colleagues based at the Department of Agriculture and Food laboratory in Albany, Western Australia.

An application dossier submitted to the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) seeking permission to launch this new vaccine has had encouraging reviews, and the new product is likely to be available to Australian farmers in the next few months.

As a vaccine, Barbervax is unusual in that it is made from worms and contains tiny amounts of protein purified from the lining of barber's pole intestines. Like all vaccines, it works by stimulating the natural immune response in the animal after



*With its barber's pole markings, *Haemonchus* (above) can be killed by vaccine antibodies attaching to the intestine. This cross section of a vaccinated worm shows antibodies stained green.*

injection. The antibodies produced circulate in the sheep's blood so the parasites drink antibodies with their blood meal. These antibodies attach to the lining of the barber's pole intestine, blocking digestion and starving the worm so that it produces far fewer eggs, sucks less blood from the sheep's stomach, and then dies.

Vaccine efficacy field trials with some 240 lambs on six different farms in Australia indicated that Barbervax could reduce *Haemonchus* faecal egg counts by an average of about 80% over the summer season; with this reduction in pasture contamination then benefitting control of *Haemonchus* in subsequent grazing seasons. Barbervax works against drug resistant *Haemonchus* and, since it is considered unlikely that worms resistant to the vaccine will emerge, it offers a more sustainable approach to worm control.

There are reports of sheep farmers identifying *Haemonchus* as a growing problem in UK farms, especially those in the warmer parts of the country. In general, the disease is considered to be sporadic in nature, thus making it unlikely that a registered *Haemonchus* vaccine will be required or available in Europe. It will be important nonetheless to monitor trends as changes in management practices and weather patterns may affect the risk of this damaging worm.

Vaccines against parasitic stomach and gut worms of ruminants has been a holy grail for scientists for many years, and the success of Barbervax is likely to be followed by similar practical approaches against other parasite species, including *Teladorsagia circumcincta* (the brown stomach worm) in sheep and *Ostertagia ostertagi* (the stomach worm of cattle).

Recent work at the Moredun Research Institute, funded by a large EU project and the Scottish Government, has shown promising results and a number of commercial companies are involved in supporting this important research.

Vaccines are a vital component of the ethos that prevention is better than cure, and a major push for novel commercial products is timely indeed for sustainability and profitability of the grazing livestock sector.

More information from Moredun

All NSA members are automatically associate members of Moredun too and, as such, receive regular technical newsheets. Included with this magazine (for UK recipients) is a newsheet on Johnes disease; if it is missing please contact NSA on 01684 892661 or enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk.

To support Moredun by becoming a full member contact them on 01314 455111 or visit www.moredun.org.uk.



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Blackface
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*Net value after all operating costs have been deducted and excluding VAT. Based on last year's selling season.

You can find out more about British wool and the work of the British Wool Marketing Board at:
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Action on lameness

A sheep industry lameness campaign has been launched to provide a consistent message about tackling the problem on farms in the UK, producing a new summary of best practice information.

This summary has been inserted into Sheep Farmer magazine as an A5 leaflet and includes information about the five-point sheep lameness reduction plan developed by FAI Farms.

Vet Ruth Clements from FAI says: "The five-point plan gives sheep producers a clear lameness management strategy. With a concerted effort

you can actually make some quite rapid improvements. The plan builds a flock's resilience to disease through culling persistently lame animals, reduces the infection challenge on the farm and establishes sheep immunity through vaccination.

"This disease should not be accepted as part and parcel of sheep farming and the months of August and September are the ideal time to get started on a lameness reduction programme, sort out chronic feet and begin culling ewes that have persistent lameness problems."

Ruth says early treatment of any lame sheep is a crucial part of the five-point plan: "The feet of affected sheep should be examined closely to identify any diseases causing the lameness. If in doubt seek veterinary diagnostic advice and then treat the infectious conditions appropriately with antibiotics, even if it is only a mild case."

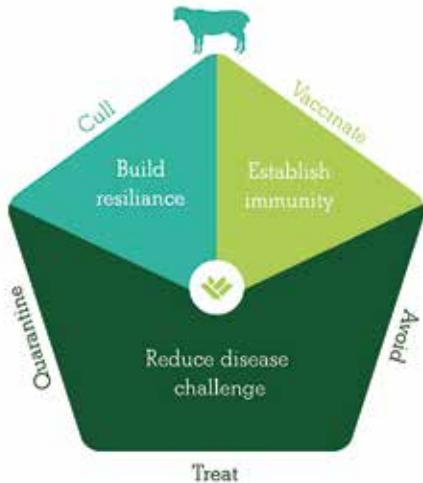
If footrot is implicated, vaccination of the whole flock with Footvax will help reduce the lesions caused by the bacteria *Dichelobacter nodosus*. On-going vaccination, timed to coincide with high disease risk times on the farm, will also help prevent future problems and reduce antibiotic usage in future years.

A recent report published in the Veterinary Record shows that in the FAI flock of 1,200 ewes lameness was reduced from 7.4% to 2.6% within a year and maintained at less than 1% for the next three years. Antibiotic usage fell from 3.8 monthly lameness treatments per 100 ewes to 1.4 within a year and 0.3 thereafter.

If your Sheep Industry Lameness Campaign leaflet is not enclosed with this magazine please contact NSA on 01684 892661 or enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk.

Top lameness tips

- **Existing flock:** Mark problem sheep and cull for being lame twice in one season; cull ewes with chronically misshapen feet.
- **Bought in sheep:** Check feet carefully before purchase; vaccinate and footbathe incoming animals; check every sheep for early footrot or CODD and treat clinical cases; quarantine for at least four weeks.
- **Farm management:** Spread lime or use gravel or woodchip in any poached or heavy traffic areas, e.g. around feed troughs.



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Informed breeding decisions using performance recording

By Sion Parry,
Signet breeding
consultant



A ram's appearance is influenced by its age, feeding regime, health and genes. However, only one of these factors is passed from one generation to the next – the ram's genetics.

These genetics will have a big impact on the productivity of the flock and they can be assessed through performance recording. Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) indicate the genetic merit of a breeding animal for commercially important traits. Buyers can utilise EBVs to make better informed breeding decisions, leading to better financial returns from the progeny of purchased animals.

Flock profitability is directly affected by flock performance, including aspects of lamb survival, ewe productivity (milking ability, prolificacy and longevity), health and lamb carcase traits. All of these may be improved by selecting sheep with the right genetics.

Signet produces a range of breeding indexes to help commercial producers identify those rams with the right genetics for their system. Terminal sire indexes indicate rams with superior EBVs for growth rate and carcase conformation. Such rams will father offspring with higher live weights and dead weights, which reach slaughter more quickly. Maternal indexes are primarily aimed



The increasing availability of online catalogues means buyers can study EBV information in advance of a sale.

at self-replacing flocks, where female replacements are retained. These indexes tend to focus on early growth rates, milking ability and prolificacy.

Trials frequently report performance recorded rams producing offspring that are worth £3/lamb more than non-performance recorded rams – this can add up to over £800 throughout the ram's lifetime.

Last year Signet produced EBVs for 32 breeds, with over 65,000 lambs being weight recorded and 40,000 being ultrasound scanned. EBVs for over 150,000 lambs were published on the

internet last year, so there is a tremendous amount of information available.

EBVs can be viewed in several ways.

- At sales, on cards and charts shown by recording breeders
- In sale catalogues, with breed societies publishing EBVs and indexes
- On the Signet website (www.signetfbc.co.uk) for individual animals and breeders.

Many of the UK's leading sheep breeds have made phenomenal genetic progress in recent years. EBVs to highlight the very best are now widely available.

Case Study: Carroll Barber, British Charollais Sheep Society Secretary

- The advent of whole breed analysis and new EBVs such as CT gigot muscularity has made it increasingly important and useful for buyers at auction sales to have easy access to figures.
- Both pedigree and commercial buyers inspect EBVs in the catalogue prior to the sale and draw up a shortlist, meaning they have more time to assess rams for structural soundness and discuss their buying requirements with the vendors on the day.
- Well presented, structurally correct rams with appropriate EBVs have been shown to command a premium and achieve a higher clearance rate. At the Charollais Premier Sale in July 60% of the ram lambs catalogues were from performance recorded flocks and a third of these had index values in the top 10% of our breed. These achieved a

clearance rate of 86%.

- EBV information is always included in Charollais sale catalogues, as well as the breed benchmark, allowing buyers to compare an individual with the whole recorded population.
- EBV charts displayed on the day are quick and simple to interpret, illustrating at a glance the strengths and weaknesses of a particular ram. Breeders can print them directly from the internet, making it easier for them to promote their stock.
- Having access to EBVs for different traits makes the selection of rams to supply different market specification much more reliable.
- As well as taking in the figures, buyers should always chat with breeders at a sale, who will provide information on their breeding policy, genetic progress

and flock health status, as well as explaining how they have been fed and managed.

- EBVs have definitely changed the breed. Rams that would have been in the top 5% of Charollais rams in 1990 would now be in the bottom 10%. The genetic potential for growth rate of recorded Charollais lambs has increased by over 7kg.
- Breeding goals have changed as market requirements have altered. Initial selection was primarily focussed on lamb growth rates but in recent years we have placed more emphasis on muscling and the optimisation of fatness in the finished lamb, ensuring the progeny of recorded rams achieve maximum conformation with optimum amounts of finish.

NSA Breed Forum

Meeting the needs of the commercial farmer was the theme of the annual NSA Breed Society Forum, which was held in May on the Royal Welsh Showground and included joint presentations from pedigree breeders and their commercial farming customers.

Debate on the topic saw heated opinions on the differences between total focus on performance recording and reliance on physical appraisals.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, reports: "The balance between visual assessment of animals and performance data is vital in the production of breeding stock, but it is clear that both are needed when we have such a complicated marketplace in the UK sheep sector. The key is knowing which market you are supplying, regardless of whether you're a pedigree breeder or commercial lamb producer, and assessing your performance on a regular basis to make sure you are meeting requirements."

Other speakers included John Richards of HCC and Lucy Webb-Wilson of Signet Breeding Services, after which the majority of the 50 delegates travelled to visit Keith Williams seven miles away for a farm walk.

Phil continues: "By starting with HCC's excellent summary of current market performance and requirements, picking up tips from Signet about targeting particular performance parameters, debating the needs of the commercial customer and finishing with a visit to a farm to see action in practice, the NSA Breed Society Forum delivered the whole package."

Main sale at Builth

A one stop shop system is being introduced to allow buyers to pay the auctioneer not the ring at the NSA Wales & Border Ram Sale on Monday 22nd September, meaning only one payment per auctioneer for multiple purchases.

As well as speeding up the payment system, measures have been introduced to make the individual auctioneer rings and cash desks more readily identifiable.

The organisers have absorbed rising costs and held entry prices as a gesture of goodwill to loyal vendors. The Tug 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. The organisers urgently need more experienced quad bikes, with trailers and drivers. The work is well paid and would particularly suit young farmers. Contact Jane Smith on 01291 673939.

There were a strong number of entries at the NSA Wales & Border Early Sale on Monday 4th August. Full report at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events.

NSA SW Ram Sale

The NSA South West Ram Sale is being held on Wednesday 20th August, 10.30am at Exeter Livestock Centre with Kivells as auctioneers.

There are a total of 638 sheep entered for the sale across 13 breeds and all the sheep will have passed a rigorous inspection before being allowed through the ring. The uptake for the SureRam scheme (outlined in the May/June issue of the Sheep Farmer) has been excellent.

For sheep to be sold with 'SureRam' status they must be treated with a product licensed for the control of sheep scab in advance of the event and receive a wormer dose on arrival at the livestock centre under the supervision of a vet. Vendors will receive a certificate to display in their pens confirming that their sheep have SureRam status.

Details from Sue Martyn (01409 271385, 07967 512660 or suem@nationalsheep.org.uk). Download a catalogue at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events or via Kivells at www.kivells.com or 01392 251261.

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MV, can you afford to turn a blind eye?

By Lynn Gibson, SAC Consulting.

Is your scanning/lambing percentage lower than you expected? Have you got a high percentage of thin ewes? Has your ewe mortality and culling rate increased in recent years? Have your lambs failed to reach expected weaning weights?

If the answer is yes, you need to ask your vet about blood sampling 12 barren/thin ewes to check for maedi visna (MV).

A recent survey found that the number of flocks infected with MV has doubled in a 15-year period to 2.8% (approximately one flock in 36). The Eblex and HCC-funded survey found the number of infected sheep increased four-fold, with the level of infection within affected flocks doubling during that time from 13% to 24%. Many breeds and crosses are affected. Only flocks that are MV-accredited are shown to

be free from the disease.

The most important route of transfer is nose-to-nose contact and aerosol transfer, but it also spreads via colostrum and infected equipment (including dose guns and needles) – so a single bought-in infected animal is enough to infect a flock.

Symptoms

Disease signs include loss of condition, pneumonia, mastitis and arthritis. Less commonly it can affect the central nervous system and cause ewes to become paralysed. Affected ewes are often thin and give birth to smaller, weaker lambs with reduced growth rates that fail to reach weaning targets. This is due to reduced milk supply from ewes. Affected sheep tend to be more susceptible to secondary infections, particularly pneumonia. Infected sheep never develop a protective immunity and there is no treatment or vaccine available.

MV Fact File

- Long incubation period; subtle and slow to develop.
- Difficult to diagnose due to long incubation period and clinical signs not often visible until at least half the flock is infected.
- Cannot be treated or vaccinated against. Often the only economic option in a heavily infected flock is to depopulate and restock.
- Can be kept out of clean flocks by only purchase breeding replacements from MV accredited flocks and avoiding contact with MV-positive stock
- Don't bury your head in the sand! The longer the disease circulates in your flock the harder it will be to eradicate or control it.

There is a cheap, simple way of identifying if MV could be causing problems in your flock. It involves target blood testing the ewes that are likely to be infected. Arrange with your vet to blood sample some of the older, thinner ewes and rams in your flock to test for MV infection. Just after scanning is a good time to collect these samples and the results will show whether MV is likely to be the cause of disease in your flock and enable you to take appropriate action to stem the losses.

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Autumn Sheep Sales 2014

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Sat 23rd Aug | Welsh Premier Texel Show & Sale |
| Wed 3rd Sep | Welsh Premier Beltex Show & Sale |
| Wed 10th Sep | Welsh Mule Sheep (Ewes) |
| Thur 11th Sep | Welsh Mule Sheep (Lambs) |
| Thur 18th Sep | Cann Office & All Breed Yearling Ewes |
| Sat 20th Sep | Welsh Hill Speckled Face Society Ram Sale |
| Sat 27th Sep | South Down Society, Oxford Down Sheep
Breeders Ass., Zwartble Sheep Ass., Lleyn
Sheep, Black Welsh Mountain, Improved
Welsh Mountain & 'Native Breed' Sheep
Sale. |
| Thur 2th Oct | Pedigree Rams |
| Mon 6th Oct | Non MV Rams |
| Thur 9th Oct | Welsh Mule Sheep (Ewes & Ewe Lambs) |
| Mon 13th Oct | MV Non-Reg Rams |
| Thur 16th Oct | Sale of Welsh Half Breed & All Breed Theave
Lambs |
| Mon 20th Oct | Supplementary Sale of Pedigree Texel Rams |
| Mon 3rd Nov | Prize Sale of Store Lambs |
| Sat 8th Nov | In-Lamb Pedigree British Berichon &
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| Mon 8th Dec | Christmas Fat Stock; to inc. Dairy Show &
Sale & In-Lamb Beltex |
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Shetland biosecurity sets the standard

By Hilary Burgess, Shetland Island Council

Shetland is well known for its small and feisty ponies, wildlife documentaries and, more recently, a TV crime drama with an incredibly high body count. What is less well known is the high health status of Shetland's sheep and cattle and it's unique Shetland Animal Health Schemes (SAHS).

The SAHS community initiative, which has been in operation for 30 years, means Shetland remains free from enzootic abortion of ewes (EAE), maedi visna and sheep scab. Cattle health is also promoted and island freedom from BVD was achieved as early as 1996. Our farmers benefit from this high health status, both through reduced costs at home and provision of a quality product for sale.

SAHS takes advantage of Shetland's geographic isolation and the fact sheep coming to the island are all breeding stock, relatively few in number and have come through Lerwick Pier. The shipping company notifies the local vets when sheep will be arriving and they meet the boat at the pier, usually early in the morning, where there is a specialised handling facility.

All sheep are inspected by a vet, blood tested for MV, CLA and (for females) EAE, and given an injection of Dectomax for scab and Zolvix as a quarantine worm drench. Tag numbers are put onto a database held by the Shetland



Gimmers in a crö (a Shetland sheep pen). Photo by Laura Sinclair.

Island Council to enable re-testing to be organised, and information on isolation and further testing required is given to the farmer on collection of the sheep at the pier.

All the testing and treatments are voluntary with the exception of the sheep scab treatment, which has been covered by a local bye-law since 2003. Farmers pay the cost of drugs administered and SAHS pays veterinary and laboratory costs. Farmers also receive a reminder from their vet when re-tests are due. Funding is through the oil reserve fund, whereby the Shetland Island Council invests income from oil-related developments in Shetland into local industries.

The financial benefits are large both to the individual farmer and to the island sheep farming community as a whole when you consider that testing and treating a small number of imported animals keeps the Isles disease-free.

Treatments and tests required for sheep brought into Shetland

Disease	On arrival	Isolation	Re-testing
Scab	Treated	14 days	None
Worms	Treated	Two days inside then onto dirty grazing	None
MV	Tested	Until clear test result	Six months
CLA	Tested	Close contact with other sheep avoided until clear test	Six weeks
EAE	Tested	First pregnancy/lambing	If empty or abort

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Grading adds value to wool

With wool cheques now arriving with producers after a busy shearing season, many will no doubt be asking why the cheque has a range of grades on it and why wool is graded.



Mark Powell, BWMB Chief Operating Officer, explains: "Grading allows us to sell wool according to type and quality, better meeting the exacting needs of our buyers and ultimately adding value for our producers. With an increasing volume of wool being delivered direct to the end customer there is a greater need to focus on quality assurance, ensuring greater traceability and high standards across the network of depots."

"It is a misnomer to think wool is graded according to specific breed. Grading to type ensures we are providing the global market with fleeces possessing the characteristics required to meet the end users requirements."

To ensure high quality is maintained throughout the grading and sale process, BWMB has this year introduced a number of quality control measures designed to

maximise the market value of British wool. These changes are to depot practice and management and recognition of care taken by producers.

"Maximising the value of wool means taking good care of it at every stage of the production chain," Mr Powell says. "The first step is to have sheep shorn well so fleeces are packed into wool sheets in good condition. After that wool should be stored carefully in damp free environments and delivered to depots in evenly packed sheets without contamination. We have therefore introduced a new 'Excellent Clip Presentation' certificate to award to producers where graders recognise their clip has been presented in an excellent condition."

Such changes will allow, where possible, to shift British wool away from the commodity market and give higher value buyers confidence that they are buying a consistently high quality product.

"There are great opportunities for our high quality wool in a number of markets. However, the market has developed in the last few years and this has required a restructuring of the BWMB grades.



BWMB graders sorting wool.

The previous grades were too wide and variable and it has become clear that certain types of wool which we previously thought were carpet grades are now being used, particularly in China, in top making. The price difference in these wools can be 20-30p/kg, so restructuring the grades will enable more wool to be marketed in high price brackets," says Mr Powell.

Fleeces solving noise problems

At first glance there is no obvious link between high-tech solutions to noise problems and wool grown in the uplands of Britain. But for a small creative company manufacturing in Somerset this relationship has led directly to the development of highly successful, woolly acoustic clouds.

Tim Simmons, Managing Director of the Woolly Shepherd, explains: "Wool was used in hi-fi speakers before spun polyester was invented because of its wonderful acoustic properties. We have simply used this knowledge to design and manufacture an acoustic absorber that soaks up unwanted noise inside a room in a technologically complex way, while still being made from all natural materials. This makes it the greenest option on the market."

Coarser wools generally absorb sound than finer ones so upland fleeces of comparatively low value are used – although precisely which fleeces is a closely guarded secret.

Wood, glass, stone and metal surfaces can all increase the amount of reverberation inside a particular space. This can sound like an echo or simply an amplification of noise, the effects of which can range from distracting to stressful or

even harmful. The Woolly Shepherd has therefore installed clouds and wool wall panels in schools, village halls, offices, restaurants and homes.

The original Woolly Shepherd acoustic cloud, a cloud-shaped absorber made from layers of felted wool and other natural materials, has been added to with a range of elliptical, rectangular and other quirky shapes popular in schools and community spaces. They can also be used to teach young people about wool, sustainability and the science of acoustics. Additional products have also been developed with partner companies and designers to widen the appeal.

British sourcing

Sally Hebelter, Woolly Shepherd Company Director, says: "It is important to us that we use only British wool as a statement of support for our farmers and for sustainability reasons. We collect wool locally and buy directly from the national market, depending on the time of year. This enables us to choose the fleeces we need while offering a service to smallholders, people with mixed flocks and those who for reasons of geography or scale cannot profitably use regular channels to sell their wool."



Clouds and wall panels made from wool can absorb unwanted noise.

To date, the Woolly Shepherd has never thrown away any wool. All offcuts are reused as padding in the products, made into bootliners sold in a range of farm shops, sold to other makers for stuffing or used as mulch.

More information on 01823 400321 or www.woollyshepherd.co.uk.

On My Farm - The Next Generation

Our series focusing on young people in the sheep sector continues with James Hamilton (26), an NSA Next Generation Ambassador. James has built up a flock from scratch on his parents' farm at Hadlow Down, East Sussex, and recently taken on additional grazing nearby.

I'm sure most farmers throughout the country would agree that grass growth has been exceptional so far this year and in complete contrast to last year's cold spring, which was followed by a dry summer here in South East England. Lambs have grown well and we have just sold our first draw of finished lambs through Ashford market.

Our flock is based on Scotch Mule ewes, which are crossed to Suffolk rams with the best ewe lambs retained. These are crossed with Charollais and Texel rams. Most lambs are sold finished through Ashford market or privately via a box scheme; surplus ewe lambs are sold for breeding and last year some lambs were sold as stores early in the season due to a lack of grass.

Closed flock

This system and the breeds we use are tried and tested, but I am considering alternatives to enable a closed flock, complete control of genetics and a lower disease risk. One option is to retain the stratified breeding system with a nucleus flock of North Country Cheviot ewes bred pure for replacements and put to the Bluefaced Leicester to breed Cheviot Mules for the crossbred flock. This would



Typical ewes in James' commercial flock.



A Suffolk stock ram purchased at Kelso.



James Hamilton.

maximise hybrid vigour but could possibly be a little complicated for a smaller flock. The other option is to establish a purebred flock of a more maternal breed, such as the Lleyn.

This said, I think that provided you make a good job of it, it doesn't matter what system or breeds you operate. Improving genetics, grassland management and husbandry are likely to have a greater effect on profitability provided your system suits your land and skills.

I have recently established performance recorded flocks of Suffolk and Charollais sheep and I have to say I am a believer in recording, as the best looking lambs also have the highest index.

Unfortunately the Suffolk has slipped down the pecking order of the terminal sire breeds used in the UK due to breeders focussing excessively on heavy boned sheep with less vigour. I am trying to breed a finer boned, vigorous and more maternal type of Suffolk and I was fortunate to be able to source this type of sheep in my foundation ewes. I have also purchased a stock ram from the Kelso tup sales. I still believe the Suffolk has a strong future in the UK, both as a terminal sire and also to breed the ever popular Suffolk cross ewe, which I have found to be prolific, milky and rear excellent lambs.

A Charollais ram was initially purchased to put over the ewe hoggs to give them an easier lambing, but I have been so impressed with the Charollais' ability to grow quickly and finish off grass that I decided to start a pure flock.

Here in the South East we seem to have two distinct periods of weather – the 'rainy

season' in winter and the 'dry season' in summer. I have tried to adapt the system around this. Ewes are away-wintered on keep and brought back prior to lambing when they are housed. This gives our fields a chance to rest and, although the kind spring helped enormously, there was plenty of grass for turnout post lambing. In May we direct drilled a mix of fodder rape and Italian ryegrass as a buffer for drought to ensure we have good quality forage to wean lambs onto. We grew a similar mix last autumn and the lambs did very well on it, grazing out the fodder rape and leaving the Italian ryegrass, which was silaged in mid-May, making excellent winter fodder for the ewes, which will hopefully reduce our concentrate costs.

The NSA Next Generation programme has been a great way to meet like minded young people within the industry from different parts of the country, all facing different climatic conditions.

I am also looking forward to NSA South East Region holding two 'fit for purpose ram showcases' this autumn at Plumpton College on 16th September and Hadlow College on 17th September. A lot of rams are pushed for sale resulting in a shorter working life. There will be some forage-reared rams on display to give buyers the confidence to buy this type of sheep either privately or through sales. I will admit I have a vested interest, as I will be supplying some Suffolk and Charollais shearlings!

My overriding ambition is to secure a tenancy where I can expand my flock. The rental market is competitive, but I am determined to succeed.

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