

# Sheep Farmer

APRIL/MAY 2015

A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION



**UK AGRICULTURE AND OUR FUTURE IN THE EU**

**LATEST ACTIVITY ON SHEEP WORRYING BY DOGS**

**NSA POLICY ACTIVITY: LYNX, LAMB CONSUMPTION AND FARM ASSURANCE**

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# Sheep Farmer

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## Front Cover

The front page picture was taken by professional photographer Robert Smith and features a Beltex cross ewe and her cross-bred lambs. The image was taken on W.R. Sparke and Son's Little Swinburne Farm near Hexham, Northumberland. NSA is always keen to hear from photographers interesting in submitting pictures for the front page of the magazine.



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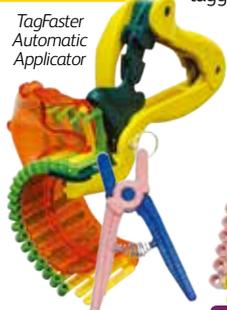
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# Sustainable intensification push will see sheep come to the fore

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive

**We are now in the Chinese year of the sheep. I had the pleasure of meeting Karen Morgan recently, the newly appointed Trade Ambassador to be based in China from April.**

Her high level post is funded largely via AHDB, by levy money, and Karen will be working to open channels for, and to promote, UK lamb on behalf of all our levy paying nations. I hope the Chinese year of the sheep shows some clear progress in allowing our sheep meat products to gain direct access into China, and in doing so, help to maintain the level of strength we have seen recently in our markets.

## Year of soil

This year is also the international year of soil and it is highly significant that soil is now being recognised (or re-recognised) for its importance in supporting life on earth. At least two of the keynote speakers at the Oxford Farming Conference earlier in the year made reference to the importance of soils. Liz Truss, Secretary

## 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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of State, and then Lord John Krebs spoke about the loss and reduced performance of soils, suggesting the UK is losing two million tonnes a year due to erosion.

Coming closer to our subject, sheep, and we all know they have played a central role in breaking grassland into arable systems and improving soil fertility and structure in decades past, and they could play an even more important role in the future as we learn how depleted our soils have become and how valuable they are, not just for crop productivity, but for water management and climate change mitigation.

Although farmers are closer to the soil than most, there is still much we don't see or recognise as happening beneath our feet. A healthy soil can contain billions of bacteria from thousands of different species, as well as earthworms, protozoa, nematodes, arthropods and literally miles of fungal strands. If you could see it, the life within the soil would make what happens above ground level look rather

tame and soil life should be recognised far more as the foundation of biological life.

Soil can be likened to the stomach of a ruminant. Fed with a good balance of the right ingredients within a healthy environment (with pH being crucial) it provides nutrients, proteins, and energy – the ultimate in renewable energy and recycling. Within reason, the more it's fed the harder it will work and the more it will produce.

The earthworm is one of the most recognisable forms of life underground and there are some 25 species that grace our soils. A healthy soil can contain 20-40 worms per square metre and these creatures are the 'engineers' of soil, creating vertical and horizontal burrows and depositing remains on the way through, breaking down coarse organic matter such as roots and leaves. Earthworms are at the start of organic matter breakdown and also carry out an incredible job improving the structure of the soil, improving drainage and also water holding capacity. Healthy soils are essential to good crop and forage growth and these in turn are essential for a profitable, healthy, and efficient sheep enterprise.

## Grazing livestock

So where does this leave sheep? It's simple; they eat grass and other forage crops and their droppings feed the soil via the worms, nematodes, bacteria and many other life forms. Just as importantly, the forage crops they graze on have a natural growth and die back of roots and herbage, and these too feed the soil. Without grass and grazing livestock there is little to naturally feed the soil and the life it harbours, and so it's no surprise that soil is depleted in mono-crop situations.

Sheep will be an increasingly important element of sustainable food production and, although it might be a buzz word, they can help us progress towards the sustainable intensification that we are told is needed.

## New text message service for NSA members

NSA plans to introduce a new service later this year for members, providing reminders for regional events, such as meetings and farm walks, via text message.

If you would like to take advantage of this service and do not think NSA has your mobile phone number please email it to

membership@nationalsheep.org.uk or call NSA Head Office. If we already have your mobile number and you would prefer not to be contacted in this way, please let us know in the same way. We plan to only send a handful of text messages each year and will not inundate members with correspondence via this route.

# News Update

## Northern Chairman

Welcome to Greg Dalton, the new Chairman of NSA Northern Region. Greg (pictured) runs a tradition mixed upland farm at Wearhead, County Durham, breeding Swaledales alongside a suckler herd. He has already served as Vice Chairman for two years and sits on the NSA English Committee and NSA North Sheep Organising Committee.



NSA South West Region and NSA Cymru/Wales Region have also had AGMs recently, with chairmen Bryan Griffiths and Paul Wozencraft both being approved for the second year of their two-year offices.

*Details of all Regional Chairman and Managers/Secretaries can be found on page 4.*

## Save the date

The NSA 2015 AGM will be held at the Rhug Estate, Corwen, Denbighshire, LL21 0EH, on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2015. The AGM will commence at 10am and be followed by a farm walk in the afternoon. We hope members will join us for an informative and enjoyable day; more details in the next edition of Sheep Farmer magazine.

## PHE thank you

Public Health England attended the NSA Sheep event in July 2014 and has asked NSA to thank everyone who contributed to the Serum Archive for Emerging Zoonoses (SAFeZ).

Dr Katherine Russell from Public Health England says: "More than 100 sheep farmers and livestock workers kindly provided blood samples and filled in a short questionnaire about their contact with animals to contribute to future research on new and emerging animal infections that could be transmitted to humans (zoonoses) – see picture. It was a fantastic day and we sincerely thank all of

## Mutton on the move

NSA's new Make More of Mutton initiative is underway and project manager Bob Kennard is asking farmers, abattoirs, processors, retailers and caterers in the quality mutton supply chain to contact him about their activity.

"Once we understand how the current supply system works, we will know where the main problems lie and do what we can to help. I'm therefore hoping that as many producers of quality mutton as possible will help us in this exciting work", says Bob. Download and complete a simple questionnaire at [www.aboutmutton.com/nsamuutton](http://www.aboutmutton.com/nsamuutton) or access an online version at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/nsamuutton](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nsamuutton).

A new Make More of Mutton website is



Picture courtesy of Bob Kennard

under development and, in the meantime, point of sale material (posters and leaflets) for quality mutton retailers and a brief selling guide are available on Bob's About Mutton website.

Regional meetings in South West England, Wales and Northern Ireland

are being planned for later in the year, and the Make Most of Mutton initiative will have a presence on the NSA stand at NSA Welsh Sheep, NSA North Sheep and NSA Sheep Northern Ireland during the year.

Contact Bob Kennard

at [mutton@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:mutton@nationalsheep.org.uk) and follow him on Twitter @aboutmutton.

*Make More of Mutton is funded by Eblex, HCC and LMCNI; the work follows on from HRH The Prince of Wales' 2004 Mutton Renaissance initiative.*

those who took a few minutes out of their day to participate. The study is setting up an archive of blood samples to help inform risk assessments that will be carried out if a new disease appears in the animal population. These investigations, using the blood samples collected from sheep farmers, will help us provide effective public health advice for those working with affected animals."



Dr Russell says Public Health England now has more than 500 blood samples from a range of different agricultural industries and wants to add to it each year to ensure the serum archive remains useful. The team will therefore attend NSA Sheep 2016 for anyone wishing to re-donate or donate for the first time. She says: "We look forward to seeing many of you next year, but if you have any questions about SAFeZ, please contact Public Health England at [zoonoses@phe.gov.uk](mailto:zoonoses@phe.gov.uk)."

## Free entry

This summer entry to NSA Welsh Sheep, NSA North Sheep, NSA Sheep South West and NSA Sheep Northern Ireland will be completely free to members – but you must remember to bring your membership

card with you to the gate!

If you know of people interesting in joining NSA in order to gain free entry, please spread the word that they can sign up in advance or at the events, but to avoid queuing, submitting a membership form in advance would be much better. And remember, if you recommend a friend or neighbour to join NSA you both gain entry into a free prize draw – see page 16 for details.

Please note that we can only offer one free/discounted entry per membership card held, even if your membership is in joint names, and you can attend a maximum of two NSA events per year at the free/discounted rate.

*Entry to NSA Highland Sheep is half price for members, and all six events are previewed within this edition of the magazine. Read on for information about the attractions you can look forward to.*



## NSA Breed Forum

A reminder to all NSA-affiliated breed societies that the 2015 NSA Breed Society Forum will be held on Wednesday 6th May near Penrith, Cumbria. The day will include a farm walk by kind invitation of Messrs Jenkinson Farms, which runs 3,000 Texel/Mule ewes in the Upper Eden Valley. More information at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events), or see the information sent to all societies individually.



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# Regional Reports

## Central

By Alastair Sneddon, Committee Member and auctioneer

**It must be lambing time because I have been asked to write the Central Region report and, having no sheep of my own, I cannot use it as an excuse.** My livestock extends to seven hens and a dog, and the hens manage to produce their eggs without my assistance.

Spring is in the air, although the Derbyshire hills have yet to start looking green. One would hope the worst of the winter is past, not forgetting that a sting in the tail is always possible. 25<sup>th</sup> March 2013 is still a vivid memory and I can well remember 25<sup>th</sup> April 1981 when I went to a wedding and the marquee fell down due to the weight of snow.

As far as the livestock trade is concerned, as I write in the week commencing 23rd March, the Bakewell hogg average has hit 204p with the best up to 251p and £112 per head.

Cull ewes are extraordinarily dear with a top price of £175 and an astounding average of £91.55 for a sample of 648, which included a good many hill bred types.

It is interesting to note that the majority of vendors have retrofitted electronic tags to their cull ewes to give them maximum appeal to buyers. We have also seen a few breeding sheep, which changed hands at buoyant prices indicating plenty of confidence.

One issue that has sparked debate at local, regional and national level is the consultation by Red Tractor Assurance to introduce lifetime assurance of beef. It is reasonable to assume that similar thoughts have been had with regard to lamb. There has been considerable coverage of these issues in the media with strong views expressed at both ends of the spectrum.

Must finish now, one of the hens is egg-bound.

## Cymru/Wales

By Helen Davies, Development Officer

**CAP again dominates the farming agenda as we wait for the next consultation on this topic, which with the General Election looming, probably means final details might not be known until after the 15<sup>th</sup> May Basic Payment Scheme application deadline.**

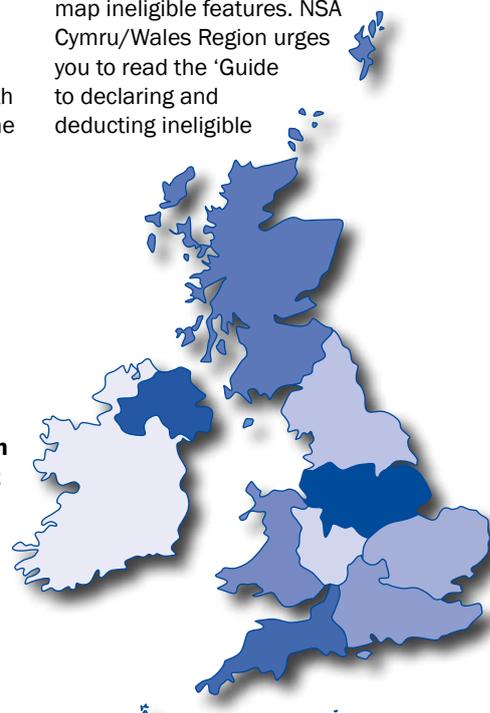
NSA Cymru/Wales understands the Welsh Government will consult on three options, the simplest of which is a flat rate across Wales of around €176/ha by 2019. The second option is 'tunnelling' to slow down the move to area payments,



The NSA Cymru/Wales Region AGM in February saw no change at the top table. Guest speakers (from left to right) were Steve Hughson (Royal Welsh Agricultural Society), Rhydian Thomas (NSA Next Generation Ambassador) and Dr Dai Morris (recent John Gittins award winner).

specifying that no entitlement should be worth less than 60% of the national or regional value in 2019, and the third is 'redistributive payments', which would use, for example, 25% of the direct payment pot to top up the first 50ha or so of all payments, boosting payments for smaller farms. Under this approach, all farms with around 125ha or less would gain, compared to a flat rate.

All this uncertainty is likely to add to the pressure on the processing of BPS payments, which is already riddled with problems, with Welsh farmers knowing they will not be receiving full payments in December. Of far greater impact may be the extra paperwork farmers will need to submit when the payment system is implemented, and one of the biggest concerns in this context is the requirement under the new regulations to map ineligible features. NSA Cymru/Wales Region urges you to read the 'Guide to declaring and deducting ineligible



# Snowfall fails to stop young sheep enthusiasts

Wintery conditions on the day of the NSA Central Region Winter Fair in late January meant the Junior Shepherd Competition could not be completed in full – but competitors and organisers refused to be put off and the contest went ahead in late February instead.

DART organised 'stage two', with thanks to Messrs A. and M. Hunter and their son Sam, who hosted the school teams at Turlowfields Farm, Hognaston, Derbyshire. The tight competition saw the final result between the nine teams of first place for Lady Manners School, Bakewell, Derbyshire, second for Thomas Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, and third for Anthony Gell School, Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

Ann Litchfield of DART says: "The students were a credit to themselves, their staff and schools. It was tremendous to see such a keen, competitive and sporting spirit. Thank you to Anne Payne, Sarah Helliwell and their colleagues at the NSA enabling us to



While the snow hindered the junior shepherds, the opposite was true for 12-year-old Louis Foster. His picture of a single ewe in the recent snowfall won him first place in the inaugural NSA Central Region Winter Fair photography competition for under 17s.

progress with this event, which gives an unique opportunity for young agriculture students to develop and display their skills and knowledge in a positive way."

Prizes were generously sponsored by NSA Central Region, DART, Griffiths Mill, M.G. Simister and Son, Mole Valley Farmers, Darley Dale and A.L. Rural.

features' to see if these issues will affect you.

Another topic that has been discussed in the region in the last few months is whole life assurance for beef; it will be interesting to see the outcome of the Red Tractor consultation on this in England.

EID Cymru is recruiting staff and says it will be up and running by the end of the year for farmers. At the next stakeholder meeting we will be looking at how the new database will operate and how movements

will be logged etc.

NSA will have a presence at the Small Holders Festival at the Royal Welsh Showground on 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> May; please come along to the stand to find out more about what we do. Finally a reminder about hogg/yearling ewe entries for NSA Welsh Sheep, to be received by 27<sup>th</sup> April. *More about NSA Welsh Sheep on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May on page 10.* A day not to be missed in your 2015 farming calendar. See [www.welshsheep.org.uk](http://www.welshsheep.org.uk).

## Eastern Region

By Jonathan Barber, Manager

**We have enjoyed some good weather, which has allowed us to get on with field work, grassland and hedge management.** Early lambing, by all reports, has gone well. I am taking new season lambs in for Easter this week (27<sup>th</sup> March) for a good price, giving me around

£120 for the top lambs.

*continued on page 6*

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▶ Andrew Foulds, our Regional Chairman, has been defending our sheep against a new potential threat – the reintroduction of the lynx. NSA's media work on the subject has been picked up well, and Andrew made it to Country Life magazine, quoted as saying 'if I wanted to go into the tourist trade, I would have done so already'. This was in response to one of the justifications for releasing lynx (which have been extinct in the UK for 1,300 years) being their potential as a tourist attraction, which no one will see!

NSA Eastern Region is preparing for our second Youthful Shepherds Event at Darley, Newmarket, Suffolk, by kind permission of Darley Stud Management, which will take place on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June. See page 15 for more details. Dan Phipps, Regional Vice Chairman and sheep manager at Darley, has been lambing successfully and is now looking forward to being host. Watch out for more information on the NSA Weekly Email Update and on the website. We look forward to seeing you there.

## Marches

By Kevin Harrison, Chairman

**I sit writing this in the middle of lambing. The weather has been kind and it all seems to be going well.** By the time you read this, I would think that lambing would be over for most of us and we will have a keen eye on SCOPS and the Nadis report, monitoring for cocci and nematodirus, while keeping the other eye on the lamb price. The SCOPS website at [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk) is a really useful resource if you're not already aware of it.

What has come to my attention this year is some of the fragilities within the sheep industry. A fragile vaccine supply that can result in the inability to vaccinate your sheep with what you want when you want and having to use an inferior product, the closure of many VLA centres causing the difficulty and complications of getting any samples away for a post mortem, and an injury to a member of the lambing team just before coming to us highlighted the fragility of the supply of skilled trained staff at a busy time.

I hope your lambing has gone well and look forward to seeing you at our events in the spring/summer.

## Northern

By Julie Sedgewick, Manager

**Following the Northern Region AGM in February at Penrith Mart, our newly elected Chairman is Greg Dalton of South Wellhope Farm, Wearhead, County Durham.**

Greg runs an upland farm (the farmhouse door is situated at 1,500ft above sea level) with a flock of 600 pure Swaledales and 40 Limousin cross suckler cows. Greg also sits on the Swaledale Council and is a Director at Middleton in Teesdale Auction Mart.

Newly elected Vice Chairman is Eddie Eastham from Carlisle, Cumbria, recently retired from Naddle Farm, Bampton, Penrith. Eddie will use his spare time to



*Adam Watson, retiring NSA Northern Region Chairman (right), presenting Andrew Humphries (left) with the T.I. Allinson Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to the northern farming industry.*

campaign for upland issues, as well as continuing as regional treasurer. Eddie is also a co-opted member of the NSA UK and Policy committee. Adam Watson, as retiring Chairman, was re-elected to represent NSA Northern Region on the NSA Board of Trustees.

Also at the AGM, the T.I. Allinson Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to the northern farming industry was presented to Andrew Humphries MBE (pictured), a past Newton Rigg College Hill Farm Director who, after retirement, became involved in many initiatives in the northern uplands and was appointed to the Government Hill Task Force. He has also lobbied and campaigned on behalf of the Cumbria Commoners to ensure accurate payments are made.

We then had three interesting presentations from J.P. Garnier of Eblex, who gave a very positive presentation on the export market for lamb, Joanne Briggs speaking on NSA issues, and James Drummond, a 2014 Next Generation Ambassador from Northern Region, who gave an informative report on his year.

A reminder that Northern Region's main event of the year – NSA North Sheep – will be held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at Millstone Moor, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0QA. More information on page 11 and also the event website at [www.northsheep.org.uk](http://www.northsheep.org.uk).

## Northern Ireland

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer

**If you are like me, you will be looking intensely at the grass and willing it to grow to help boost ewe milk and lamb growth!**

In the meantime, we are getting ready for a busy year ahead with NSA, as we have our biennial sheep event in July – NSA Sheep NI (see page 14) – and in May we have the NSA Sheep Centre at Balmoral Show. We hope you will stop in with us at Balmoral, beside the sheep judging rings, if you are attending.

After the CAP and Basic Payment Scheme decisions for NI were made we all thought it was a done deal – but what a shambles has resulted as the detail and possible scenarios appear. Last year NSA NI Region called for a single region flat rate with immediate effect, and although it was not supported by all our members, or other agricultural sectors, it would look like a much simpler and transparent option to what we have at present.

At time of writing, farmers who have relied on conacre land to increase their businesses are

in a state of limbo as to know whether they will be getting their regular land lets or if the landlords will be keeping it to become 'active farmers'. A surprisingly large number of landlords are holding on to their land this year to become active, regardless of the fact they could be worse off financially by trying to farm it themselves, with the added risk of being penalised for 'creating artificial conditions' to claim their basic payments. Arable, potato and vegetable farmers are finding it extremely difficult to source conacre land too.

There had been concerns about the young farmers' scheme and the farming qualifications required to be able to avail of it, but it has been relatively simple and sometimes very informative to attain this training from CAFRE and educational colleges. The 'big dark shadow' appearing now is the new entrants scheme, where those eligible will get €329/ha from the beginning of the new system. A 3% regional reserve is to be siphoned off the total budget to fund the two schemes (young farmers and new entrants) but if more is required for new entrants it will be taken off individual direct farmer payments, thus reducing their income.

A lot of decisions still have to come from DARD to allow farmers to meet BPS application requirements and the final date for application is 15<sup>th</sup> May. It's a mess with no apparent way of fixing it at present.

*continued on page 8*

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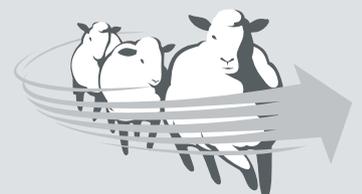


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# NSA Ambassadors



The 2015 NSA Next Generation Ambassadors met for the first time in February, taking part in a three-day delivery session getting to know each other and covering a wide range of sheep-related topics. The 12 Ambassadors travelled from the length and breadth of the UK to attend the session in Worcestershire, which went ahead with the generous support of Eblex. There was also additional assistance from Barenbrug, who hosted the Ambassadors at their grass breeding site for a day-long session on grazing management and forage crops. Other topics covered included health planning, body condition scoring and performance recording. *More from the Ambassadors on page 52.*

► Farmers, through no fault of their own, are finding it all very hard to understand and remedies difficult to find. Good luck to all in finding a resolution!

## Scotland

By George Milne, Development Officer  
**June is going to be a busy month for NSA Scottish Region, with NSA Highland Sheep at John Scott's Fearn Farm near Tain (more on page 12), as well as our usual area at the Royal Highland Show.**

We have a fantastic, enthusiastic committee for NSA Highland Sheep, which is certain to deliver an excellent event for all the visitors on the day, while our stand at the Royal Highland promises to

have more attractions than ever for both farmers and the public. Please visit our stand; we will be delighted to see you and discuss any issues. In addition, we will also have a stand at this year's Beef Event, to be held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May at Peter Alexander's farm Mains of Mause.

NSA Scottish Region office bearers met with Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead in March to discuss several issues relating to the sheep industry. The meeting was held at the request of NSA to get clear clarification on several factors that may have a significant effect on many members.

CAP and the voluntary coupled scheme were discussed in detail, specifically in connection with the land grab situation

that many sheep farmers found themselves in while trying to renew grass leys. The decision to use the 2015 rule meant many landowner's were trying to retain their land in order to receive the area payment over the next five years, which in some cases leaves the active sheep keeper with no support from the system. Voluntary coupled support in region three was also discussed at length. Clarification of the rules in order to comply was requested along with a follow up meeting with Government officials.

Other subjects covered included the current situation regarding sea eagles, with the NSA office holders asking Mr Lochhead when the Scottish Government would say there were enough of the birds. Payments in region two were discussed, to see if more funding could be made available through SRDP to support to farmers in this region wanting to apply lime or slag to their land or make infrastructure improvements. The lamb supply chain was also discussed, along with the need to have more slaughtering and processing capacity in Scotland.

Separately, the first meeting held at the request of NSA took place to identify a sheep disease for a joint industry/ Government group to look at eradicating, delivering real benefit to the industry.

## South East

By Bob Blanden, Manager  
**While everyone being busy lambing and not leaving their farms means nothing of interest is arranged during this period in our region, we hope to have an interesting programme of farm walks, visits, etc organised for later in the year.** Details will be in the next issue of the Sheep Farmer.

Scanning and lambing results so far are very mixed this year. Some flocks are



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showing larger numbers of barreners, while some were pleased to find the number of twins was up and triplets down. There is some thought that there is a link between the condition of the ewes three to four weeks after lambing to the number of eggs released in the autumn. Perhaps the bad spring last year has been a contributing factor, but it would be good if further investigation into this theory was actioned. This was first mentioned at a NSA meeting at Salisbury Market by a South African vet who worked for Endells.

A very important issue for our region at the moment is to find a suitable venue for hosting NSA South Sheep in 2016. After our successful event last year in East Sussex we would like to move the event further west in the region in 2016, as we realise that members in our region have difficulty travelling long distances on very congested roads, particularly mid-week. Ideally a venue somewhere in Wiltshire or Hampshire would be the most appropriate, especially if it is not too far from a major arterial road such as the A303, A30, M4, A34, etc. If you would be interested in hosting the event (or think you know of someone who might) please contact me.

## South West

By Bryan Griffiths, Chairman

**The region's many early lambers endured a miserable, cold and wet February. As I write in mid-March drier conditions are giving sheep**

**and shepherds a welcome respite, but as yet spring seems some way off.**

Myself and Richard Wheeldon, NSA Central Region Chairman, joined a delegation from Eblex and spent a day at the Paris Show a few weeks ago (see picture), spending time with Remi Fourier, Eblex's 'man in France' responsible for promoting UK beef and lamb under the St George brand. The St George/Eblex stand, complete with live examples of British breeds, had a prominent position and drew a steady stream of visitors. This show is attended by over 700,000 people and Eblex are doing a first class job promoting our British produce. Unfortunately even the cheery and enthusiastic Remi cannot influence the exchange rate though! When asked what producers can do to help, he stressed the need for a consistent supply of shapely, lean, on-spec lambs.



At the SIA Show, Paris (from left to right): Eblex's David Hall, NSA's Richard Wheeldon, Eblex's Remi Fourier, Eblex's Joseph Keating, and NSA's Bryan Griffiths.

In a similar vein, the NSA South West Region AGM in February concluded with a presentation from Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, on his visit to China. It is great to know that Eblex now has a permanent presence in China and is actively seeking export opportunities into this huge market.

Meet NSA South West Region Chairman Bryan Griffiths on pages 26-28.

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# Topical seminars are one of many attractions at NSA Welsh Sheep

**A call for the Government to work with farmers to incentivise a more proactive approach to biosecurity will be just one of the arguments at the NSA Welsh Sheep 2015 seminars.**

John Yeomans, a sheep farmer from mid Wales, will stress the importance of the authorities working together with farmers to enhance biosecurity. He will emphasise the benefits of efficient protection, rather than imposing a series of 'legislative hoops' for farmers to jump through.

He will join a panel chaired by Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, and alongside Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Christianne Glossop, to stress the importance of a proactive approach. Mr Yeomans stresses that more could be done to work with farmers, particularly during the busy autumn breeding sheep sale period, while protecting their businesses.

He says: "It is important to find a system that allows us to continue trading while observing biosecurity protocols. I think that a simple system of using independent assessors, such as vets, farm assurance inspectors and Government field officers, to approve a quarantine shed and/or double fenced field which on-coming stock could enter would be a way forward. This would have minimal extra cost, and the six-day standstill could then be on the on-coming stock rather than the whole farm. I also think grant-aiding the double fencing of boundaries could be a huge step in reducing the spread of many costly diseases."

Another debate will consider the sheep health benefits of tree planting, as promoted by the Woodland Trust. The organisation says tree planting can help to prevent hypothermia, liver fluke and lameness by providing natural shelter and reducing water-logged conditions.

## Highlighting issues

A seminar on sheep worrying will update farmers on their legal rights and on NSA's and Farmers Guardian's consumer campaigns. The latest on anthelmintic resistance and on the benefits of measuring and monitoring to maximise flock returns will also feature.

Meanwhile, the multi-breed pairs of breeding ewe hogg show and sale is generating strong interest. The prize money is generous at £575 per class and there has already been UK-wide interest.

Event Organiser Helen Davies says: "Entries for the show and sale at NSA Welsh Sheep will be limited and the prize money is generous and provides a real incentive to exhibitors, so please get your entries in before Monday 27th April. The show and sale will present a great opportunity for both buyers and sellers to trade high quality breeding ewe hoggs."

Other attractions include the Welsh Sheepdog Society trials, popular Welsh Young Shepherd of the Year Competition, and Ready Steady Cook, as well as wool on the hoof and trade stand competitions.

The venue in Powys is easily accessible from across Wales and beyond and offers something for everyone. It extends across two very different farming systems independently run by brothers and rising to 1,400ft above sea level, with spectacular views stretching almost from Shrewsbury to Snowdon.

A farm tour will take in the two adjoining holdings. Glanmiheli is farmed by the youngest brother, Geraint Powell, with his wife



Above: Glanmiheli Hill will afford glorious views at NSA Welsh Sheep 2015.



Left: The speaker line-up for NSA Welsh Sheep 2015 will attract strong crowds to the seminar tent, as it has in previous years.

Anabel and children Lloyd (19), Rosie (21) and Billie-Jo (16). Drefor is farmed by Morton Powell and his wife Mandy, with teenage daughters Megan and Mary and son, David.

See [www.welshsheep.org.uk](http://www.welshsheep.org.uk) for event information, plus hogg show and sale entries. To enter the sheepdog trial contact David Williams on 07811 723376 or [upperbolbro@btinternet.com](mailto:upperbolbro@btinternet.com).



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**Further information from the Organiser Helen Davies**  
**E: [helen@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:helen@nationalsheep.org.uk) T: 01938 590535 M: 07976 803066**

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# Lakeland farm provides perfect backdrop for NSA North Sheep

A wonderful venue on a renowned stock-breeding farm is the backdrop for NSA North Sheep 2015.

Event Organiser Julie Sedgewick says: "Bringing NSA North Sheep back to Cumbria is a great choice for us, as it's one of the country's most renowned sheep producing areas. The event will focus on the current challenges and opportunities in the industry, and we are expecting visitors from all over the UK to make the trip to the Marston's fantastic livestock farm for this important industry event.

"We give people the opportunity to get together, discuss the latest developments and do business. We will be featuring a series of seminars throughout the day focusing on key issues."

The five seminars will be: CAP and countryside stewardship; sheep health issues; the outlook for the sheep industry; how planting trees can benefit land and livestock; and supplementing grazing for optimum results.

Major sponsors this year are Carrs Billington, and the company's Divisional Sales Manager Ian Oliver is keen to be involved. "This is the major sheep event in the north of the country, and a very important business platform for us," he says. "It is an opportunity to highlight the range of products and services we offer to a wider



Neil Marston and his family are well known for their breeding sheep.



audience."

Mainline sponsors of the event are British Wool Marketing Board and the Campaign for Wool, Caltech and Scotmin Nutrition, Eblex,

Elanco Animal Health, Mitchell's Auction Company Ltd, Rumenco and Nettex, Scotpen, and Shearwell Data.

The event is hosting the 2015 Young Shepherd of the Year contest, supported by Newton Rigg and Askham Bryan Colleges. NSA North Sheep is also home to the North of England inter-county shearing competition.

Julie adds: "On a more light-hearted note, we will be running a Ready Steady Cook competition, which will show that our sheep-selling professionals – all local auctioneers – can turn lamb from the fell to lamb for the table. Three heats will take place, with menus revealed on the day."

## Farm tours

Tours of the Marston's 650-acre Lakeland farm, which is home to the well-known North of England Mule-producing Highberries crossing Bluefaced Leicester flock, will be an undoubted highlight.

Host Neil Marston farms with wife Sally and his parents Raymond and Frances. They have been at Millstone Moor Farm since 2008 and are well-known in sheep breeding circles, holding the record for the highest priced animals ever sold at Mitchell's Market in Cockermouth. The champion and reserve champions at the Bluefaced Leicester sales sold for £8,000 each last year, adding to successes over the years in the showing, including Royal Highland Show champion with a Mule ewe lamb.

In addition to the celebrated Highberries flock, the Marstons have a small flock of pure-bred Swaledales, North of England Mule ewes, a pure Dutch Texel/Beltex flock and some Texel cross Mule ewes.

Neil says: "We are delighted to be hosting NSA North Sheep 2015. It's a great honour to be welcoming the leading specialist sheep event in the North England once again to Cumbria.

"Visitors on the day will see a working farm on the edge of the Lake District, as well as learning about developments in the sheep sector. They'll also be able to view the unique geography of our farm – with magnificent views across to the Lakes on one side, and on the other across the Solway to Scotland."

More information at [www.northsheep.org.uk](http://www.northsheep.org.uk).



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Further information from the Organiser Julie Sedgewick  
Email: [jas@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:jas@nationalsheep.org.uk)  
Tel: 01325 314650

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# Award winning farmer hosts NSA Highland Sheep in Ross-shire

**NSA Highland Sheep host John Scott is widely recognised as one of the most progressive and innovative sheep farmers in Scotland.**

Farming 4,200 commercial and pedigree ewes with his wife Fiona, and parents James and Janet, Mr Scott lays a great deal of emphasis on genetics, husbandry and grassland management to improve the productivity and profitability of his sheep and reduce the farm's dependence on subsidy.

"We have become a generation of farmers whose aim has been to maximise subsidy," he says. "We must now focus on lifting profitability by improving the factors we can control, such as raising scanning percentages and reducing lamb losses or winter feed bills."

This will be the main focus of NSA Highland Sheep, says NSA Scottish Region Chairman Sybil Macpherson: "Staging the event on a well-known sheep farm will be a major additional attraction for sheep farmers and we are greatly indebted to the Scott family for kindly agreeing to host this important event for the sheep industry in Scotland."

The upbeat themes running through the event will include improved performance, profit from grass and the encouragement of new entrants with a view to helping reverse the decline in Scotland's national sheep flock over the past decade.

## Event attractions

Features will include trade stands, practical demonstrations, educational exhibits, seminars on practical themes, sheepdog trials and shearing and stockjudging competitions.

The event will also host Scotland's Young Shepherd of the Year competition and a major feature at the end of the day will be a show and sale of ewe hoggs of various breeds, which was such a success when held for the first time at the inaugural NSA Highland Sheep in 2013 and again last year at NSA Scot Sheep.

But the opportunity to view the UK's top sheep flock is likely to prove the main attraction and draw a large attendance of sheep farmers from all over the country. Visitors will be inspired by Mr Scott's positive approach to managing his sheep flock. Expansion over the past two years has seen a doubling of the acreage farmed and the flock has expended three-fold.

Mr Scott has searched far and wide for the best genetics to improve his sheep. The best of the Cheviot ewes are bred pure and the rest put to Aberfield rams, while cross-bred ewes go to the Suffolk.

"We are looking for a different type of Cheviot Mule which is prolific and hardy but produces a superior carcass," he says. "The New Zealand Suffolk is a breed which has been heavily selected

## Host Farm Fact File

- 1,000-acre Fearn Farm plus 300 acres rented nearby, supporting 3,300 Cheviot ewes and hoggs, 150 pure Texels, 50 New Zealand Suffolks and 80 Aberfields, plus 130 suckler cows.
- Also 2,600 acres rough grazing in Sutherland, for 900 Cheviot and Cheviot crosses, plus 60 suckler cows.
- All sheep are recorded, with the assistance of EID.
- 90% of homebred Texel shearing rams in the top 5% of the breed; mostly sold off farm under the 'Great From Grass' title.
- Mr Scott is the current Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmer of the Year, a QMS Board Member and Scottish Sheep Industry Group Chairman.



NSA Highland Sheep will include tours of John Scott's Fearn Farm, Ross-shire.

for ease of lambing and vigour. They can cover more ewes and produce more live lambs than some of the traditional breeds. Grades may not be as good as using a Texel or traditional Suffolk but I get more lambs to grade R3L faster, producing more kilos per hectare, which is what I'm after."



**NSA HIGHLAND SHEEP 2015**

**TUESDAY 9TH JUNE**  
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**TRADE STANDS.**  
**SHEEP BREED STANDS.**  
**SHOW & SALE PAIR EWE HOGGS.**  
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[www.nsascotland.org.uk](http://www.nsascotland.org.uk)

Further information from the website or organiser Euan Emslie  
E: [euana@appliedremedies.co.uk](mailto:euana@appliedremedies.co.uk) T: 01430 441870 M: 07718 908523

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# Sheep South West 2015

National Sheep Association

Organised by NSA South West Region



## Tuesday 16th June 9.30am - 5pm

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# NSA Sheep SW

NSA South West Region is preparing for a record turnout at its 25<sup>th</sup> biennial NSA Sheep South West event, held at the Quick family's Higher Nichols Nymet Farm. Bill Quick and his sons Andrew, Paul and Mark successfully produce pedigree Texel (see picture) and Charollais sheep as well as Limousin cattle and commercial lambs under the Loosebeare prefix.

New at this year's event is the Auctioneer's Competition, sponsored by Kivells and with prizes of a gavel and £100 for class winners. The Young Shepherd of the Year competitions will return, with an open section, sponsored by Mole Valley Farmers, and the student class, supported by Eblex.



"For the first time entrants need to demonstrate the correct use of EID equipment and knowledge of the current legislation regarding sheep movements," said Dave Gregory, Event Chairman. "They will also shear, select prime lambs, demonstrate the safe handling of an ATV and give correct examples of foot care technique. They must work out correct dosage rate for ewes and give examples of specific injection sites. There is also a written questionnaire on management and issues."

The success in previous years of competitions relevant to lamb selection, fleeces and trade and breed society stands have ensured these continue at this event. Potential purchasers have already indicated an interest in the sheepdog sale. Farm tours will run throughout the day, as will demonstrations by stick makers and the Devon Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers.

Further event information and entry forms at [www.sheepsouthwest.org.uk](http://www.sheepsouthwest.org.uk).

# NSA Sheep NI

This biennial event will see the return of a number of successful attractions, including a commercial stockjudging competition (run in conjunction with the YFCU), open fleece competition, and a farm tour to the CAFRE Hill Farm at Glenwherry.

The Young Shepherd competition has a top prize of £300 and all expenses paid trips to go on and represent NI at UK and European level. There is also a special prize for the best competitor under 18.

Topical seminars at the event will include presentations by experts from across the UK, while the ever-popular sale of working sheepdogs and puppies will go ahead on the field adjacent to the mart, kindly loaned by John Anderson.

Edward Adamson, Event Organiser, says: "All in all it is a day not to be missed by sheep farmers and their families, or anyone interested in sheep and their part in rural life. It is good for us all to get a day away from the farm and to meet up with friends."

"With ever increasing costs and tightening margins, NSA Sheep NI offers sheep farmers the chance to see what is new and talk with independent experts to discuss what is relevant to their business profitability. Trade stands will exhibit just about everything the sheep farmer could need, and there will be the most extensive show of sheep breeds on the island of Ireland this year."

For more information, Young Shepherd entries and trade stand applications, contact Edward Adamson on 07711 071290 or [edward.adamson1@gmail.com](mailto:edward.adamson1@gmail.com).



## NSA Sheep NI

### Monday 6th July 2015

Ballymena Livestock Mart, Woodside Road, Ballymena  
9.30am - 5.30pm

Features and activities including:-

- Farm Tour to CAFRE Hill Farm, Glenwherry
- Seminars
- Trade Stands
- First Trust Bank Young Shepherd Competition
- Norbrook Sheepdog Sale
- Fleece Competition
- Stockjudging Competition
- Cookery Demonstration



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Further details from Edward Adamson on 07711 071290 or [edward.adamson1@gmail.com](mailto:edward.adamson1@gmail.com)

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# NSA Youthful Shepherds Event

NSA Eastern Region is pleased to be running an NSA Youthful Shepherds Event again this year, building on the success of the first event in 2013.

The event is particularly for young people in the region, but people from further afield are also actively encouraged to make the trip to Suffolk.

Jonathan Barber, NSA Eastern Region Manager, says: "The aim of the day is to promote the sheep industry to young people and spread knowledge on the required skills to help these young stars become efficient and successful in their businesses and careers.



Sharing sheep farming skills will be a key part of the event.

"There will be activities, discussion forums and practical demonstrations, covering subjects including: ways of starting in sheep farming; why arable farms need sheep; the importance of integrating sheep

## Event information

- On Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June.
- At Darley Stud, Rutland Yard, Newmarket, CB8 9RS.
- From 11am, with an official opening at 12 noon.
- By kind permission of Darley Stud Management Co Ltd.
- Organised by NSA Eastern Region.
- Directions: At the clock tower in the centre of Newmarket take the Station Road exit. Continue until a crossroads and turn left at the New Wellington Public House and then turn immediately sharp right into Duchess Drive. Continue past the entrance to Dalham Hall into the village of Saxon Street and the entrance to the Rutland Stud is set back on the right hand side with two thatched pillars on either side.

into new stewardship and greening arrangements; and share farming and partnership agreements.

"There will also be time for visitors to take part in a farm walk, which is a must for this wonderful venue. Darley Stud is home to some of the most amazing racehorses in the world, alongside which runs a 2,300-ewe flock that works in harmony with the equine business."

Flock manager Dan Phipps, who is also NSA Eastern Region Vice Chairman, will be there to explain his work within the business. Also present will be the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors from NSA Eastern Region, with Ambassadors from other parts of the UK invited as well.

The Young Shepherd of the Year Competition will take place on the day, as a regional qualifier for the national final. There will also be a sheep counting competition, which is great fun, followed by a barbecue and bar.

## Early Ram Sale

The 25<sup>th</sup> NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August will focus on quality and health status, a position that has become the hallmark of the annual sale at the Royal Welsh Showground.

Jane Smith, Executive Director, says: "Our entry fees will remain the same and, although it's difficult, we are trying to keep costs down so that we don't have to increase them. We are working with consignors to continually help them improve ram health and ram management. We have flagged up several pointers about the care of rams pre and post tupping and also how to recognise and deal with conditions such as CLA."

Jane adds that there is information for breeders on the NSA Wales & Borders Ram Sale website, as well as entry forms (to be submitted by 1<sup>st</sup> July) and trade stand applications. The sale is restricted to sheep entered by NSA members, and with each vendor restricted to a maximum of 30 rams in a run and no more than 20 females per breed.

### 2015 Ram Sales

The ram sale season will kick off with the NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale in August, and information about later sales will appear in forthcoming editions of this magazine. In the meantime, please note that the NSA South West Ram Sale, to cater for the current demand for crossbred rams, has decided crossbred shearlings will be able to be sold this year. Entry forms for the SW sale will be sent to all previous vendors in early June and new vendors can contact Sue Martyn on 01409 271385, 07967 512660 or suem@nationalsheep.org.uk.

- **NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale:** Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August at the Royal Welsh Showground.
- **NSA South West Ram Sale:** Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> August at Exeter Livestock Centre.
- **NSA Eastern Region Shearling Ram Sale:** Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August at Rugby Farmers Mart.
- **NSA Eastern Region Ram Sale:** Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September at Melton Mowbray Market.
- **NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale:** Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September at the Royal Welsh Showground.



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# NSA recruitment effort rewarded

**Regular readers of Sheep Farmer magazine will know that NSA's membership recruitment prize draw is open to existing members as well as new ones. Many of you have been referring new members for a chance to win the top prize, and it is the Howells family who have been lucky enough to be drawn out of the hat.**

Will Howells, who is part of a tight-knit family business at Abdon, South Shropshire, earned a place in the draw to win a Shearwell EID stick reader kit when he encouraged his part-time workman, Josh Kirby, to become a member of NSA.

They are already putting the reader to good use, as Will and his family manage around 1,000 outdoor-lambing ewes, plus a beef enterprise, on an

*Will Howells (left) collects his prize from NSA Marches Region Secretary Dy Webb (centre) and Shearwell's Andrew Price (right).*



## Prize Draw

NSA is giving away 12 Shearwell EID stick reader kits in 2015, worth £860 each. Don't miss your chance to win one. New members are automatically entered into the draw when they join NSA, and existing members get an entry for each new member they recommend. Add your name and NSA membership number to the bottom of the membership form opposite and pass it to a friend or neighbour so they can join NSA too.

upland farm in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The 700-acre farm (part owned and part rented) is managed by brother and sister Will and Leece, alongside their mum Fran and Leece's partner Martin. Leece and Martin have a two-year-old son, Jed.

Speaking on behalf of the family, Leece says: "We were chuffed to hear we had won the Shearwell reader and, since its arrival, have found it to be robust and easy to use. We became NSA members some years ago and have found membership very worthwhile. During the snows of March 2013 we turned to NSA for advice, as much of the televised coverage was aimed towards Wales and felt very isolated. Pressure from NSA and others on Defra meant support came for those farmers hardest hit.

"Following such losses we have now altered lambing to 1<sup>st</sup> April to try to ensure most of the bad weather has hopefully passed by then. We have found this to be successful, with grass coming too and lighter nights helping outdoors. We have also been lambing some ewe lambs in order to keep our numbers up. We trialled 100 ewe lambs last spring and lambed them from 1<sup>st</sup> May onwards, the theory being that they would benefit from the warmer weather too."

*Details of all prize recipients can be found in the "Winners" section at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw), where you can also find terms and conditions for the prize draw.*

# Trip to Winter Fair proves lucky

**Sheep farmer Chris Mallaber found his trip to the NSA Central Region Winter Fair in January so enjoyable and informative that he decided to sign up as an NSA member on the day – and then went on a few weeks later to be the lucky winner of a NSA prize draw as the result.**

Chris is the third person to win one of 12 Shearwell EID stick reader kits being given away in NSA's membership recruitment campaign this year. He says: "The NSA tries to support the sheep industry in many ways, so I thought it would be beneficial to become a member and support what they do. To win such a useful piece of equipment as a result will be a great help to my business. With an increasing flock and being spilt up and spread over a fairly large area, fulfilling movement requirements will now be simpler and more manageable, enabling records to be kept up to date more easily."

The Mallaber family is based at Drakelow, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, where the main farming enterprise is a partnership between Chris's dad and his three brothers with dairy, beef and arable interests taking in 1,000 acres over three farms. The sheep flock is owned and managed separately by Chris, utilising some of the family-owned land and, as numbers grow, further rented land as well. There are currently 50 pedigree Texels under the Grovewood prefix, bred to produce shearling rams, plus 100 Scottish Blackfaces crossed to the Bluefaced Leicester to produce Scotch Mule ewe lambs, and another 200 home-bred Mules, Mashams and Texel and Suffolk crosses, put to the Texel for prime lamb production.



*Chris Mallaber (right) receives his new Shearwell stick reader kit from John Kirkpatrick, NSA Central Region Committee Member (left).*

Chris got into sheep back in 2001, when foot-and-mouth movement restrictions meant a neighbour's sheep that were over-wintering on the family farm were stranded and ended up being lambed in a polytunnel. Chris explains: "I used to go up before and after school to help John look after his sheep and, as a thank you, he gave me five cade lambs. This was the start of my flock and I've never looked back."



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# NSA membership



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NSA's 2015 membership recruitment campaign will see us give away 12 Shearwell EID Stick Reader Kits and Mobile Phone Apps through the year. New members will automatically be entered into the draw when they sign up, and existing members can get one entry each and every time someone they recommend signs up as a new member. The earlier in the year you enter the draw, the more chances you have of winning.

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your business your future

# No easy solution on sheep worrying

By Phil Stocker, NSA

**Reports of sheep worrying by dogs have jumped up in recent months – and whether that is because the problem is getting worse or increasing publicity has led to a rise in reporting – the fact remains that the problem is not going away.**

NSA South East Region members, Sam Stanisstreet and his wife Zoe, contacted me recently in despair and asked whether we could help them overcome consistent problems they are experiencing. The result was a meeting involving NSA, their landlord East Sussex County Council, the National Park, local police and the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA), which threw up some useful ideas that should help Sam and Zoe but also others countrywide.

Sam and Zoe are in an unusual and high risk situation as tenants on the Seven

Sisters Country Park in East Sussex. They farm some 400 acres of grassland, all with complete public access; the popular South Downs Way cuts through the farm; and a concrete road runs from a convenient car park through the centre of the land down to the sea. There are an estimated one million visitors annually, many with dogs.

## Major incidents

Despite there being clear signs across the farm, few months go by without major sheep worrying incidents, three once happening in a single day. There is also the less visual problem of regular chasing. Some people would simply give up, but this is Sam and Zoe's livelihood, and the delicate grassland ecology, for which the site is renowned, is dependent on sheep grazing for its survival.

TFA's advice is that the tenancy agreement (FBT) states the tenants have

## NSA activity

**After two years' of annual surveys on dog worrying, NSA is focusing this spring on collecting case studies to raise the profile of the problem.**

Case studies are essential for our media work and we require a good regional spread with people's details and photographs. Please consider volunteering by calling NSA Head Office or emailing [enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk). We are always looking for photographs, which you can supply anonymously if you would prefer not to be a case study.

Other activity includes continuation of our dialogue with police forces and also working with the Sheep Veterinary Society to encourage vet practices to display posters encouraging responsible behaviour by dog owners.

For more information see [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/dog-owners](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/dog-owners).



Sam and Zoe's farmland is very high risk.

## Ideas to help in worrying hotspots

### Education

- Use warning signs and get to understand land users so you target them with the right messages. Signs are available free of charge to NSA members – call the office or email us.
- Consider warning people in advance that sheep are in the area, and remember to take signs down when they are not.
- Ask other visitors to report cases and take photographs of incidents they see. Provide clear contact details.
- Go out of the way to make contact with your local police and wildlife crime unit.
- Consider public awareness days, working with the police. Every crime prevented is one that doesn't have to be dealt with.
- When you see cases of sheep worrying on social media refer people to [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/dog-owners](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/dog-owners) for more information.

### Enforcement

- Always report cases to the police; get a crime reference or incidence number.
- Dog owners are responsible for criminal damage if there is evidence or admission. Many police forces

try to facilitate private compensation (voluntary restorative justice) in preference to a criminal case.

- If worrying is regular it is worth doing an 'Impact Statement' that can be used time and again that states the effect that worrying causes. This should be sent to police when reporting an offence and can be used in any criminal case.
- Push for the police to take a criminal case as an example to dissuade others and attract media coverage.
- Consider mobile CCTV equipment and/or signage – there are some smart devices out there that don't cost a fortune and don't need a power supply.
- Inform RSPCA of cases dog worrying or bring them in to help resolve issues.
- Work with landlords to make dogs-on-lead a requirement for permissive access. The CROW Act requires dog to be on leads near livestock and allows for access to be closed for certain periods during the year.



exclusive rights of possession and the privilege of quiet rights of enjoyment of the holding. The landlord reserves the right for public access with or without dogs, but there is a clause that the landlord will compensate for any lawsuit or damage caused. In theory Sam and Zoe could charge the landlord for damage caused by dog worrying, and maybe they should, but they have a good working relationship with East Sussex County Council and maintaining this is important and in the forefront of their minds.

## Lack of a deterrent

The police representatives at our meeting were exceedingly supportive, but they were from the Kent force and no one from the governing force in the area – East Sussex Police – could be attracted to join us. Sam and Zoe's experience is that even when there are cut and dried cases, with the owner accepting liability, a criminal case is never taken forward and, because of this, there is never any serious warnings to local people or visitors.

Our meeting concluded that there is much that can and should be being done to avoid dog attacks and to deal with them when they occur – and that we all need to be much better at taking action. We identified a number of actions that could be considered. Some of these actions Sam and Zoe already employ, most of them fall into the category of education or enforcement (or both), and I hope they may be of benefit to sheep farmers in other parts of the UK.

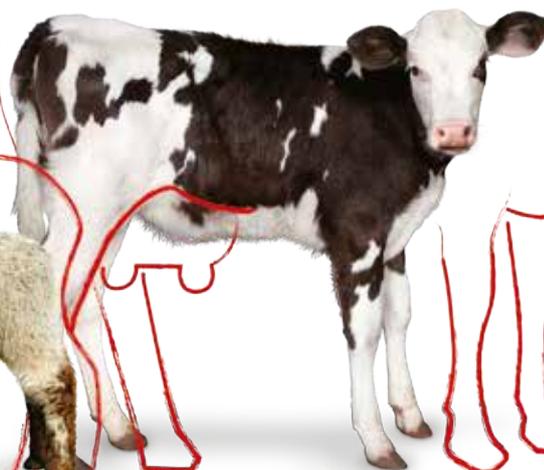
See page 20 for the legal situation when it comes to dog attacks



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<sup>1</sup>Veronesi F. *et al.*, Parasitol Res 2013 Jun;112(6):2137-42. <sup>2</sup>Scala A. *et al.*, Small Ruminant Research 120 (2014) 242-246

<sup>3</sup>Jonsson N *et al.*, Parasitol Res (2011) 109: p113-p128 <sup>4</sup>Gjerde B. and Helle O. Veterinary Parasitology, 38 ( 1991 ) 97-10

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# Dog attacks on sheep: what the law says for farms affected by the crime

By Daniel Gill, Clarke Willmott law firm

**We are hearing of more and more incidents of dogs attacking sheep, with the result that more sheep farmers are having to deal with the consequences, which often include traumatised or mutilated livestock as well as financial losses.**

One of the hurdles faced by farmers has been getting the attention and cooperation of dog owners, and while NSA and Farmers Guardian are both running high profile campaigns with a view to reducing the number of incidents, many dog owners remain in denial of the risk.

The law says that when a dog attacks sheep it potentially gives rise to:-

- Criminal liability under either the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or alternatively under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953;
- Or civil liability under the Animals Act 1971 or the law of negligence.

Where a criminal offence is committed it is usually the role of the police to investigate the incident. The decision as to whether criminal proceedings are brought is ultimately the decision of the prosecuting authority (normally the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in these type of cases). Unfortunately the police and the CPS are often reluctant to investigate/prosecute these incidents.

However, where such cases are prosecuted, recently reported cases indicate that the criminal courts are taking a more robust approach to the sentencing of owners whose dogs have attacked



**See page 18 for more information on NSA activity on sheep worrying by dogs**



*Dog attacks on sheep can be pursued as criminal or civil cases, but neither are easy say Clarke Willmott law firm.*

sheep. A recent example of this was a case in which two dogs savaged 11 sheep and had to be shot at the scene by a police marksman.

When the owner came before the Blackburn Magistrates' Court he was sentenced to 250 hours unpaid work and also to pay £1,952 in compensation to the farmer.

## NSA viewpoint

**While this article outlines the challenges we face when seeking just retribution for the crime of sheep worrying, NSA continues to work hard in this area.**

Following reports from members that police officers were not taking reported incidents as seriously as they would like, last year NSA wrote to every police force in the UK and all Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales to highlight the seriousness of the problem. We were subsequently invited to speak at police conferences and provide additional information to forces, which we hope will have educated some officers.

*Work continues in this area – see page 18 for more information and details of how you can help.*

## Civil proceedings

If criminal liability is not an option, the farmer is left with the option of bringing civil proceedings against the dog owner in the County Court to try to reclaim his/her losses, but this is not without its difficulties:-

- The burden of proof is always on the farmer to prove the case. There will almost certainly be adverse cost consequences if the farmer brings the claim but loses the case.
- There is the challenge of identifying the dog and its owner and gathering sufficient proof.
- There is always the tricky issue of precisely identifying and quantifying the farmer's losses and the linked issue of causation – did the dog cause the losses claimed by the farmer? If the animal is dead or injured this may be straight forward. The injuries may, however, be less obvious. Many people, including some courts, do not appreciate that farmers can incur losses even if the dog does not attack the sheep and only chases them. In cases such as these many dog owners often employ the defence that although they admit their dog chased or attacked the sheep, they dispute that this caused the alleged losses. The onus of proof is then on the farmer to show the chain of causation between the attack and the loss. The success of any action so often depends on the way in which matters are handled from the outset. If evidence is gathered and presented in the right manner to the police and/or the dog owner, there is a far greater chance of the matter being resolved quickly and to the satisfaction of the farmer.

*Clarke Willmott provides the NSA Legal Helpline, a free service for members offering up to 30 minutes of free legal advice on any agricultural topic. You can find details of the Helpline in the members-only area of the NSA website or by calling NSA HQ.*

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# Positive elements of assurance remain vital to the sheep sector

**Farm assurance doesn't seem to have been out of the news yet this year, making it important for NSA to reiterate it's support for farm assurance across all parts of the UK.**

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says: "There have been some pretty negative comments about farm assurance in the press recently and I think it is important to take a step back from that and remind ourselves that, whatever people's concerns about current proposals for change are, it does not detract from the fundamentals of where farm assurance is now and the role it performs.

"NSA remains committed to the principle of farm assurance and would like to see as few barriers and as much encouragement as possible for sheep keepers to sign up to and remain members of the scheme that operates in their part of the UK.

## Foundation scheme

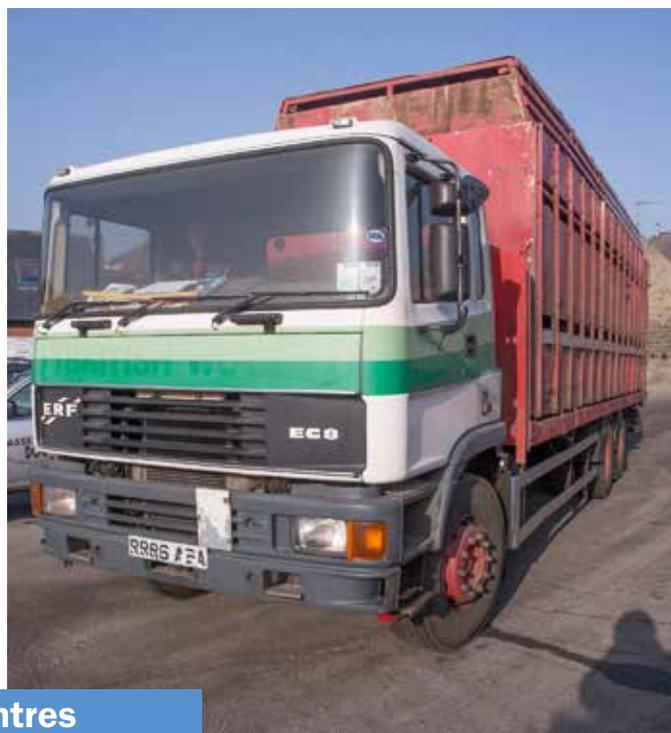
"We support the concept of farm assurance as a foundation assurance to the many supply chains and markets that we work within. It provides the option for farmers to give a declaration of legal compliance, signing up to the scheme as an 'open door invite' for a third party to check they are doing everything within the letter of the law and to recognised codes of practice. On this basis we expect all British products to be produced to largely the same standards, with the added level of confidence that farm assurance scheme members are checked for compliance."

The area of controversy at the current time is Red Tractor Assurance's proposed introduction of whole life assurance for beef, which would require cattle to be born, reared and finished on farm assured premises, rather than just resident for the final 60 days of their life.

While NSA has been assured by RTA that whole life assurance for sheep 'is not and will not be on the agenda', we are concerned about the evidence for this and that it may not be a long-term situation. Therefore, it is right for NSA to be abreast of the situation with beef and to have responded to RTA's consultation



*Farm assurance continues to be as important as ever for the sheep supply chain, but discussions are ongoing about where it goes from here.*



*The transfer of stock between premises is more frequent in the sheep industry than other sectors.*

## Collection centres

**Separate to the consultation on beef whole life assurance, NSA has also responded to a Red Tractor Assurance consultation on collection centres and livestock markets.**

NSA's response focused on the requirements for collection centres, as these are often small-scale farmer-operated businesses with no specific representational body. We asked that the assurance rules be proportionate to the size of the centre and proportionate in comparison to livestock markets.

Collection centres are already inspected by Defra/APHA, so NSA asked for either this inspection to be merged with the RTA inspection, or for all Defra/APHA approved centres to also be RTA approved. To have both inspections would be unnecessary and create unreasonable duplication, NSA stated in its response.

on the topic. Our response stated that NSA does not support a move to whole life assurance for beef and would like to explore the mechanisms for it to be an option for assurance scheme members, rather than mandatory, thereby resulting in the supply chain paying for it where it is required.

Red Tractor Assurance operates in England only, and it's consultation on whole life assurance has implications for the rest of the UK, as they also use the Red Tractor logo. NSA understands that both Farm Assured Welsh Livestock and the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland have responded to the RTA consultation saying they do not support the changes and could not push their members in the same

direction in order to still be able to use the Red Tractor logo on red meat products.

## Other UK nations

Edward Adamson, NSA Northern Ireland Region Development Officer, says: "We have a lot of small producers in Northern Ireland who sell store cattle and sheep and don't see it as being worthwhile to go into an assurance scheme. That means we have considerable levels of stock here that are not assured, but there is absolutely nothing wrong with those animals."

Edward is also concerned about the cost in Northern Ireland, where producers pay a smaller membership fee than other parts of the UK, which does not cover the cost of inspecting individual

*continued on page 23*

# NSA speaks out on plans for the lynx

**A quick spate of correspondence following the announcement of plans to release lynx into the UK countryside has meant NSA is at the forefront of the debate on the topic.**

The Lynx UK Trust says it plans to seek permission from Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage to establish populations of the wild cat in Aberdeenshire, Cumbria and Suffolk. NSA therefore contacted Natural England and also Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Defra, who have the final say on any decision taken by Natural England.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, explains: "NSA believes reintroducing lynx after more than 1,300 years of extinction will pose a real threat to British livestock, and even trial work with the wild cat will lead to predation of livestock. Our primary concern is that the lynx will threaten livelihoods and businesses within the farming industry. Ewes and lambs would be much



*In areas of Europe where the lynx is found it is the third biggest predator, after the brown bear and grey wolf. Picture from Wikimedia; T. Hisgett.*

easier prey than deer because they can't get away so quickly."

NSA received a response from Natural England stating that, if and when it receives an application from the Lynx UK Trust, it will consult 'all relevant parties' and consider the socio-economic impacts of the reintroduction, as well as impacts on the environment and the animals themselves.

"This is vitally important, as the project will disrupt vulnerable ecosystems and challenge the viability of sheep farms," Mr Stocker says. "It is all very well to talk about the release of six or eight lynx, but how do you control them in the

► farms and is topped up by a levy at point of slaughter.

The situation is different in Scotland, where Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb have European Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status and are already underpinned by whole life assurance. Only lambs born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland can carry the Scotch Lamb logo – but at the current time, any animal that has not been assured throughout this whole production process may still be eligible for the Red Tractor logo.

George Milne, NSA Scottish Region Development Officer, says this is very important, as although Quality Meat Scotland is running a recruitment drive to raise awareness among livestock farmers who are not members, currently around 20% of the Scottish breeding flock is non-assured.

George observes that the current situation means it is not possible for all lambs to be eligible for the PGI status in Scotland. "Marts will declare stock as farm assured, as they would in other parts of the UK, and provide additional information if, for example, it was born on a non-assured farm but reared on an assured unit," he says.

The situation is similar in Wales, where the PGI status for Welsh Lamb requires lambs to be born and reared in Wales and slaughtered/processed on HCC-approved premises. Assured stock that does not have this whole life assurance will carry the Red Tractor logo instead.

Phil concludes: "The situation across the UK, with Red Tractor Assurance complementing other schemes, is complex. It is important that one change does not force a chain-reaction that jeopardises the wider food supply chain."

years to come when numbers get to a point where they threaten sheep in the area? The Lynx UK Trust is going to try to soften the blow by talking about a five-year project, but I think putting a stop to it after five years will be very difficult.

"I understand people's interest in reintroducing extinct predators back into the countryside, however, we have to be practical and realistic and look at how things have changed in the last 1,300 years."

## Supporting British lamb this Easter

**Another area of activity for NSA in recent weeks has been to encourage shoppers to 'Buy British' over Easter.**

Lamb consumption doubles at Easter, with more than 11,000 tonnes eaten in British households last year, and the trend set to be repeated in 2015. Advertising by retailers started weeks ago, and NSA spoke out in support of British farmers due to the 'ambiguity' about where lamb on promotion is sourced from.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says: "It's great to see supermarkets promoting the traditional message of eating lamb at Easter, but we know it's not always necessarily true when they say only New Zealand lamb is available. We have shared this message through our press contacts, encouraging them to inform consumers that, if they look for it, British product is available at this time of year."

The NSA press message was: "Easter offers families a great opportunity to come together, so it is worth taking some extra time to make sure you choose British lamb. It is a great way of supporting an industry which produces a product we all love."

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# Global challenges and grazing stock

By Phil Stocker, NSA

**Against a backdrop of feeding a growing global population healthily, within a world challenged by resource limitations, climate change and a need to reduce emissions, a conference on the role of grazing livestock organised by the Sustainable Food Trust was one I was keen to attend.**

Grazing animals have been heavily criticised for methane outputs and climate change in recent years, and for even longer red meat has been linked to obesity, heart related disease and even cancer. Some scientists are calling for global numbers of ruminants to be halved to help slow global warming, and much nutritional advice is still towards eating less red meat, or less meat overall.

This global debate has a massive relevance to the UK where more than 70% of our farmland is grass, much of it uncroppable, and most of the remainder valuable in mixed farming situations and crucial environmentally. At the same time, domestic consumption is on a worrying downward trend and we need to address this by identifying and promoting all the positives of eating sheep meat, sharing the message that it is nutritious, healthy, tasty and convenient, with acceptable environmental and social credentials.

Tackling the critics of ruminants, who lay climate change concerns at our door, was a theme Richard Young, Sustainable Food Trust Policy Director and NSA member, picked up on at the conference: "What I come across so often amongst food and climate change campaigners is the belief, usually based on life cycle analyses, that if we would just eat more plants and less red meat agriculture would miraculously become more sustainable. I do not believe this to be the case.

"Methane emissions from ruminants account for about 4.5% of human-induced global warming (if we count all grazing livestock, but do not deduct the

emissions from the herds of ruminants that previously roamed wild). So halving ruminant numbers could reduce anthropogenic emissions by about 2%. That's not insignificant, but if we then ploughed the surplus grassland to grow crops and depended entirely on fertiliser for nitrogen I believe the net greenhouse gas emissions would in fact be higher."

Professor Bob Rees from SRUC agreed: "Plants emit no methane, but they all need nitrogen to grow. Production of nitrogen fertiliser puts greenhouse gases into the atmosphere equivalent to about eight tonnes of carbon dioxide for every tonne of nitrogen produced, and globally more than 100 million tonnes is used every year to produce food."

## Carbon sink

Using grassland as a carbon sink as a defence of ruminants was questioned by Dr Ute Skiba from the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology, Edinburgh, who said that as intensively managed grasslands create nitrous oxide and grazing livestock create methane, it is unlikely these emissions could be offset by carbon sequestration, particularly in rotational grassland where ploughing can lead to large carbon dioxide losses. However, extensive grazing and permanent pasture can increase soil nitrogen cycling and carbon sequestration, and there are management techniques that can be employed to further improve the balance.

Professor Richard Evershed from Bristol University talked about a quite new and very interesting concept – and one that I could relate to given that we have had methane emitting grazing animals roaming this planet for thousands of years. Professor Evershed talked about 'methane eating bacteria' (methanotrophic) in biologically active soils that consume methane and turn it into stable and valuable forms in the soil. This sounds as though it is ground-breaking science that could show how permanent grasslands

## Red meat and health

**As with carbon and climate change, the nutritional aspects of grass-fed livestock products is a very complex and under-researched area.**

Professor Kevin Shingfield from IBERS, Aberystwyth, said products such as milk and meat are very desirable, with high biological value, a rich source of micronutrients, rich in saturates and beneficial trans-fatty acids, but with an environmental footprint. The impact of optimising grazing on the nutritional value of red meat is to increase carotenoids and tocopherols (powerful and beneficial antioxidants), improve polyunsaturated fat levels, and to elevate Cis9 and Trans11 conjugated linoleic acid (potentially beneficial fatty acids).

It is clear that much more work is needed in this area, but my understanding is that much previous dietary advice and guidance was probably wrong and the best we can do is to eat a varied diet using good and basic ingredients, including lamb

At an individual farmer level, what can be done to ensure the best quality meat in the future, was summed up by Professor Shingfield with a few pointers including: grass breeding and selection improvements; the development of targeted antimicrobial agents at a rumen microbiology level; and optimising animal genetics for forage efficiency and efficient rumen activity.

can actually recycle methane.

While we probably don't have the evidence on a current life cycle analysis to prove grazing animal can be entirely carbon neutral, the full picture is not complete and there are many people out there who feel that much of our science and research into this matter can still only measure part of the picture.

Taking environmental matters as a whole, landscape, biodiversity, nutrient management, resource use and climate change, I feel confident to say grazing sheep perform very well, and better than other livestock. However on an individual basis there are still things that can be done to improve things and, relating to profitability, one of the most attractive ones is to reduce losses and increase efficiency in both livestock management and soil and grassland management.

*The Sustainable Food Trust is a new organisation established by Patrick Holden, previously of the Soil Association. For more details and copies of the conference go to [www.sustainablefoodtrust.org](http://www.sustainablefoodtrust.org).*



*Calls for less red meat are a problem in the UK, where large areas of land are uncroppable.*



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# Founding principles – with some re

By Rebecca Jordan,  
contributor

**Bryan and Liz Griffiths describe their farming system as ‘Saga Shepherding’. This dry aside has more to do with conditions underfoot during the winter months than old age. Sheep and shepherds all prefer dry backs at Southcott Farm, Burrington, North Devon.**

During a normal year, every beast is housed from the end of December. This preserves the sward and soil and eases the work load, which is down to just the husband-and-wife partnership now the family has flown the nest.

When Bryan and Liz married and moved to Southcott 31 years ago they spent the first decade restructuring the farm’s enterprises. “We fenced, housed, introduced continental rams and started scanning the ewes,” says Bryan, who started his second and final year as NSA South West Region Chairman in February. “Those principles have little changed since then, although some have been refined.”

This strong anchor as a family farm with no additional labour is something that Bryan considers to be very important in his

role as an NSA Regional Chairman. “My aim while I am Chairman is to represent family farms – the grass roots of the sheep industry,” he says. “The NSA South West Committee is keen to take up practical issues – such as Red Tractor Assurance and the NSA Next Generation Ambassador Scheme. To do that, we have recently introduced Sam Bullingham, Matthew Croake, Jake Chisolm and Declan Marshall onto the committee.

These are keen youngsters representing a broad spectrum of the industry.

“In my opinion it is vital that policy is practical. Yes, when it comes to red tape there should be a degree of regulation at all levels, but they must be practical and realistic. The ongoing debate with over-regulation within Red Tractor Assurance epitomises what NSA is trying to achieve for the family farm.”

## Lambing

Bryan takes the balancing of NSA commitments with farm work in his stride, even at the busiest times of year. The closed flock of 280 Suffolk Mules kicked off lambing on 18<sup>th</sup> February this year, followed by 500+ North Country Mules, managed as a separate flock, from 25<sup>th</sup> March. Apart from 100 Mules put to a Suffolk to breed ewe lamb replacements for the early-lambing flock, all the females are put to Innovis’ Abermax rams, which are a Texel Charollais composite.

Replacements for the larger flock are sourced from Kendal Market as ewe lambs – although Bryan ‘fulfilled his judging duties’ in the autumn at Tavistock

Market by also buying the winning pen of Mules ewe lambs, from local breeder Peter Heard. As a result he has exceeded his annual quota and this spring will lamb down more than the 120 ewe lambs he usually sources.

Scanning results have averaged 200% for the older ewes, while 90% of the ewe lambs have held to the ram this season.

Teaser rams were used ahead of mating

this time, and that exercise will be repeated again. Rams are

*Left: Bryan checks over newborn lambs from the early lambing Suffolk Mule flock.*



*Lambs from the later-lambing flock are already making a strong start.*

## Farm facts

- 97ha (240 acres) permanent pasture, plus 32ha (80 acres) grass keep.
- 180m (600ft) above sea level.
- North Devon clay.
- 280 Suffolk Mules lambing from 18<sup>th</sup> February.
- 500 North Country Mules lambing from 25<sup>th</sup> March.
- 120 Mule ewe lambs bought in every year.
- 65 store cattle bought in annually.
- 32ha (80 acres) cut to big bale hay or haylage (800-1,000 bales).



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# finement – holding strong in Devon

removed so nothing lambs after 1<sup>st</sup> May.

Bryan and Liz say the success of their sheep enterprise is based on quality forage and cake. They would rather feed a quantity of high protein and soya nuts than take on extra keep and spend time fencing away ground and driving round checking stock.

“We aren’t afraid of using cake,” says Bryan. “You have to spend money on inputs one way or another and we have chosen to focus on feed. And I believe our experiences have shown the benefits gained from feeding cake far outweigh that extra perceived cost.”

At housing, ewes are offered just silage, with



Bryan is pictured here in mid-February with this early lambing flock, with the resulting lambs then photographed four to five weeks later on the creep feeder. Bryan says he not afraid to feed his stock where it is justifiable from a cost perspective.

cake introduced on a rising plane from six

them all by Christmas, but this past autumn there wasn’t a lamb on the farm by the end of October.

## Mixed grazing

Bryan firmly believes his farm benefits from mixed grazing and hence buys in 65 yearling cattle each winter. These usually come from Tavistock Market and are wintered indoors on second rate forage. They are turned out at the end of April, with concentrates and bought-in barley introduced for those not gone by the autumn. Cattle are finished from August to October at 330kg dead weight.

The Griffiths advocate both enterprises are essential to reducing pasture worm burden, as well as improving sward quality. This farm is decades-old permanent pasture, which has supported the business successfully over generations.

*continued on page 28*

weeks pre-lambing. This is a 19% protein and 9% soya ration. At turnout, lambs from the early flock are fed a 19% protein creep ad lib. The first batch of lambs is finished at 19.5kg by 25<sup>th</sup> May each year. For the past six years lambs have gone direct to Jaspers which, in partnership with Dalehead Foods and Waitrose, are major sponsors at the NSA Sheep South West event – see page 14 for details.

“Last year we didn’t castrate any of the ram lambs,” says Liz “What was really dramatic was that the first three picks were all ram lambs, so we’ll definitely be doing the same again this year.”

The North Country Mules are all weaned at the end of July. Their lambs are turned onto silage aftermaths and trough-fed a set ration. The aim is to finished



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▶ However, Bryan is aware there is always room for improvement and has valiantly tried introducing more clover into the pasture.

“I have tried over-seeding, slot seeding – even feeding clover seed to the cattle,” he says. “Nothing has been an overwhelming success – it seems timing and conditions must be exact. What we have here is a simple, tried and tested system that works. As a result I will only fiddle with 10% of the ground at time and spread just 2cwt of a 25:5:5 artificial compound each spring.”

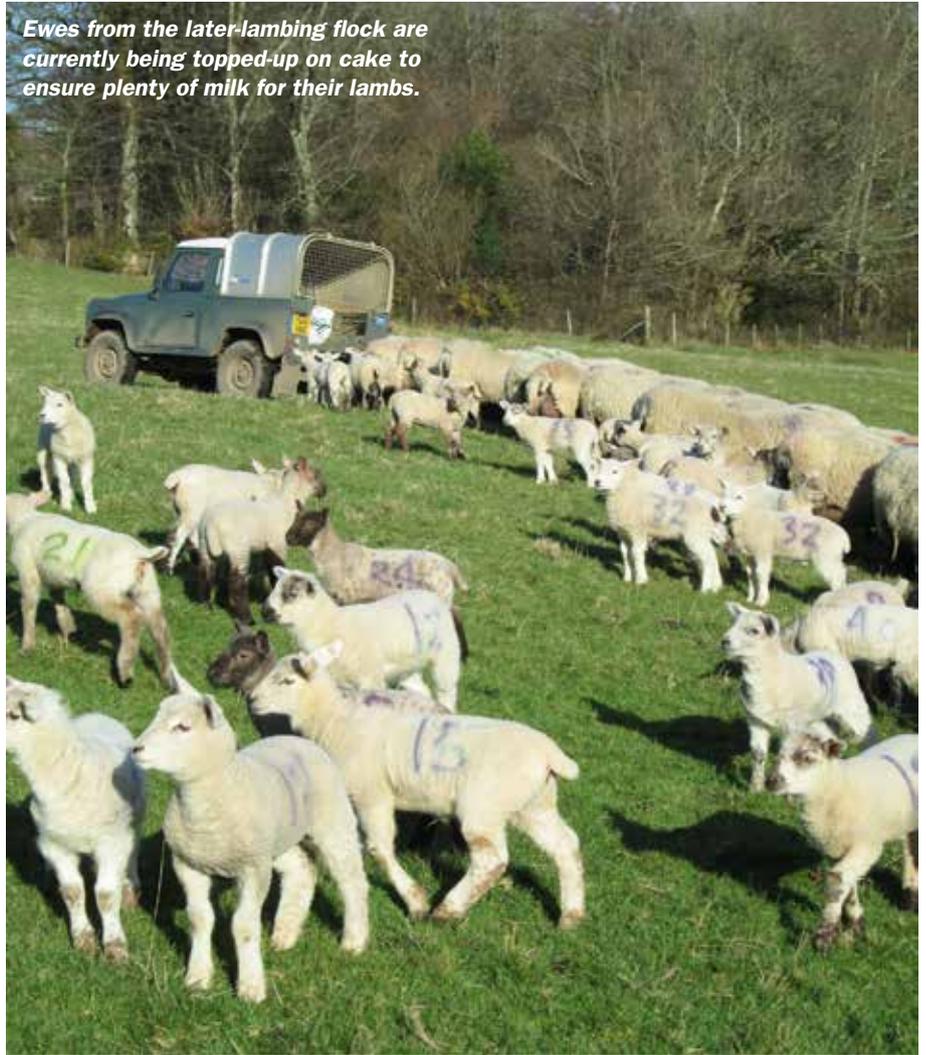
## Flock health

Both Bryan and Liz have a very positive attitude to flock health. Mule ewe lambs are effectively quarantined for their first year at Southcott and managed separately. They are vaccinated and wormed on arrival and, like all the other ewes, are vaccinated against footrot at housing.

“We have taken part in many animal health trials over the years,” says Bryan. “Our ewes have been closely scrutinised for worm resistance and burden. Analysing the results is complicated, but our understanding of the work is that we do not routinely drench stock at tupping.

“We also work closely with Torch Farm Vets and often carry out on-farm post mortems. Some of the results we have seen at this stage have been just as important to improving our business as the feedback we receive from our partnership with Waitrose for the end product.”

*Ewes from the later-lambing flock are currently being topped-up on cake to ensure plenty of milk for their lambs.*



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# A perfect tax storm on the way?

By Mike  
Butler, Old Mill  
Accountants



**With commodity prices down for many farming sectors, logic would suggest that falling profits mean falling tax liabilities – but the truth is that the influence of decreasing equipment purchases brought on by financial pressure, combined with the reduction in tax allowances on farm equipment, will result in the ‘perfect storm’ for some farm businesses.**

Many have benefitted from claiming high Annual Investment Allowances on purchased equipment over the last few years, meaning lower than normal tax liabilities, even in years when profits have been relatively strong. However, these have only resulted from a timing difference and not an actual extra allowance for equipment. At some point there has to be a day of reckoning where advanced allowances are clawed back, and that day is about to arrive.

Future tax rules proposed by the Chancellor in last year’s Autumn

Statement suggest that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 there won’t be a particularly large tax benefit to be gained by businesses re-equipping. In fact, the chances are clawback will occur even for those businesses that do continue to invest in replacements. So even though accounting profits may be down, taxable profits may be higher and, as a consequence, tax liabilities may still be significant at a time when cash flow is tight as a result of the more difficult trading conditions.

## Plan ahead

As always, the key is to plan ahead and understand the situation in advance. Firstly, make sure your business has sufficient cash flow to cover tax liabilities. Secondly, make sure you are paying the tax at the minimum rate. In particular, some businesses may consider incorporating their trade to take advantage of the lower corporation tax rate of 20%. In the correct circumstances a business may have claimed 40-45% income tax relief on machinery allowances over the last few years, yet still be in a position to structure themselves so any clawback is only taxed at 20%. That is a real tax saving of at least

20%, and in fact 22% when you take into account Class 4 National Insurance.

Failure to take advice and failure to understand the numbers is the only thing which will cause businesses to fall foul of this situation. Regretfully it may be impossible to pay no tax at all, but knowing you are paying the minimum is in reality the most important conclusion to reach.

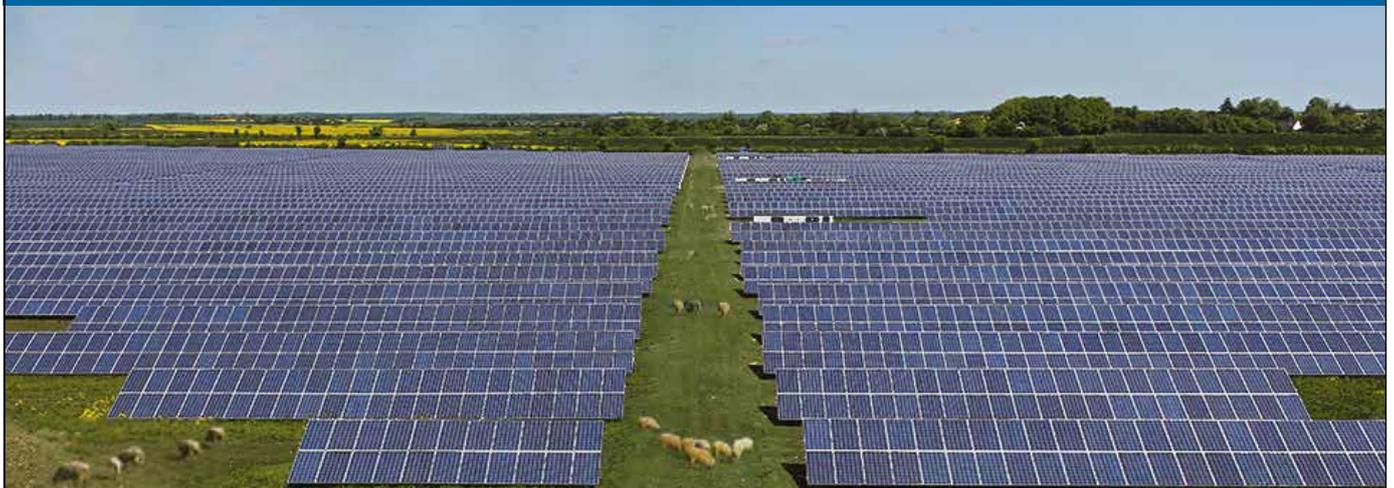
## Property tax warning

MHA, the national association of independent accountants, is warning farmers to be aware of changes to annual tax on enveloped dwellings (ATED).

Although farmhouses are 100% relieved from this tax, any additional property owned by a corporate company or partnership and valued at more than £500k now falls into the scope of ATED and tax relief must be claimed for. Previously the threshold was £1m.

David Missen from MHA says that only a minority of farm business are affected, as most trade as family partnerships, but anyone in doubt should seek advice on how to reduce their liability.

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# The effect on farming of the UK debate over EU membership

By Caroline Stocks, contributor

The coming General Election is being billed as the most important in a generation.

Not only will it decide who will make decisions for the country in one of the most economically-turbulent periods in years, the results will also pave the way for changes in the way the UK and Europe work together.

Regardless of the outcome, each of the main parties is in agreement that the country's relationship with the EU needs to be refined. For some that means holding a referendum on the UK's membership, while others want to renegotiate the country's position in terms of budgets, legislation, trade and agriculture.

As recipients of about £3bn of the EU's annual budget – about half of the UK's total farming income – agriculture potentially has the most to gain from being a member of the EU. But with European legislation often making life more difficult for farmers, could agriculture also see some benefits from leaving?

With that in mind, we asked the country's main political parties how they see the UK's relationship with the EU in future, and how leaving the bloc could impact upon the country's agriculture.

## How would the UK leave the EU?

If the next Government decides to hold a referendum and the majority of voters decide the UK should leave the EU, the Government would have to invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty.

In effect, that would say that we are giving our notice to leave and wish to negotiate our status as a non-member.

Shadow Farming minister Huw Irranca Davies says leaving the EU would be bad for the country's farmers, particularly in terms of direct support. He suggests that if the UK was no longer a member of the EU it would be difficult to argue to a Chancellor to continue the payments we are used to, as domestic budgets were likely to be prioritised elsewhere.

"There's a case for EU reform, particularly in farming," Mr Irranca Davies said at the NFU conference earlier in the year. "We need more decision making in member states, but let's keep the good stuff in there. We don't want to gold plate but some standards are driven by farmers and the EU. We have

massive export markets because [those markets] trust our farmers and our standards. I dread to think what would happen for UK food and farming if we walked away."

## Conservatives

Back in 2013, Prime Minister David Cameron pledged to hold an EU referendum by 2017 if the Conservatives win the next election.

While the party at first refused to say which way it would campaign, its stance towards Europe has softened in recent months with its pro-European MPs gaining a stronger voice.

The party's strategy now is to negotiate reform in Europe in a bid to give more power back to the UK, and then put those reforms to a referendum.

In terms of agriculture, Farming Minister George Eustice says EU membership is important for UK farmers in terms of trade, but the current policy system is dysfunctional. "We should stay in the EU for the single market, which is important for our exports of meat like lamb," he says. "However, the burden of regulation from the EU is far too high and we should use a renegotiation to cut some of the pointless paperwork that plagues our farming industry."

Mr Eustice says the coming years are an opportunity to sort out the problems in Europe which irk the industry most. "The body of law we have in the EU that governs the CAP is dysfunctional and we need to sort it out so people are happy to stay with the EU."

## Labour

The Labour Party wants to stay in Europe, but also wants significant reforms to the way it is run.

Party leader Ed Miliband has previously said a vote on membership would be unlikely under a Labour Government, but a straight in/out referendum could be held if there was 'significant transfer of powers' from the UK to the EU.



## Liberal Democrats

The Lib Dems say there should be a referendum on whether or not the UK remains a member of the EU, but strongly believe that the UK should remain in.

While it is pro-Europe, the party wants to see significant reform to ensure the EU is more competitive, efficient and accountable.

In its manifesto it says it wants the CAP to be further reformed to eliminate production and export subsidies, while decision-making should be made at a more local level. The party also wants more flexibility and more research into sustainable agriculture.

In terms of trade, the party wants to see more access to global markets, particularly in relation to current negotiations with the United States.

## Plaid Cymru

While it wholeheartedly supports EU membership for Wales, Plaid Cymru believes reform is still needed to ensure it functions as well as it could for farmers.

In particular, it wants to see changes to the legislative process to ensure decisions are made as close to the people they affect as possible.

Plaid MEP Jill Evans says leaving the EU would be disastrous for Wales, potentially resulting in cuts to funding for the country's farmers and adversely affecting the Welsh economy. As such, the party has not made plans for agriculture if the UK left the EU, and would instead argue for Wales to become a full member of the EU in its own right.

"Wales is currently underfunded from Westminster, which indicates that EU funds would not be replaced by London Government," she says.

The CAP helps keep more than 80% of Welsh farms in business with direct payments so the country cannot afford to lose it, she adds.

"Staying in the EU is crucial for our future prosperity and eventually we would like to see Wales become a full member of the European Union in our own right. The EU needs to be reformed, with decisions made as closely as possible to the people they affect, but withdrawal would not be in the Welsh national interest."





The NSA South Sheep host farm last year was right on the English Channel, looking out to Europe. In future years, what relationship will the UK have with the union of countries on the continent?

## Scottish National Party

The SNP wants Scotland to remain part of the EU – albeit as an independent member state – and as such isn't making preparations for life outside of the EU, says agricultural spokesman Alyn Smith.

If a referendum is brought forward, the party's MPs will lodge amendments to ensure a 'double majority' is achieved before any of the UK is removed from the EU. That means that not only will a majority vote across the UK be needed, but also a majority vote in Scotland too.

"In the referendum we will strongly be arguing for Scotland to continue EU membership," says Mr Smith. "Without the CAP and single farm payments some 40% of Scotland's farms go bust.

"The implications of leaving the EU are stark, but hypothetical, and politicians proposing to leave need to be pressed on what they will replace EU membership with," he adds.

## Democratic Unionist Party

The DUP says it won't support the UK's membership of the EU unless it sees significant changes in the relationship between the country and the rest of Europe.

In its manifesto, it backs the Prime Minister's commitment to hold an EU referendum by 2017, calling for more localised decision-making and less power being held in Europe.

DUP MEP Diane Dodds, who also sits on the EU's Agriculture Committee, says direct payments to farmers are absolutely vital to farming and the economy in Northern Ireland, but the EU in its current form does not suit the UK, and if a referendum was held tomorrow the party would ask people to vote to come out.

In the party's manifesto, Mrs Dodds says the DUP wants to review a range of agricultural policies including sheep EID and NVZs and take a more localised approach to legislation. She says agricultural policy should be more focused on food rather than the environment, and that a system of support which prioritises food security should be introduced.

## Green Party

The Green Party is keen for the UK to remain members of the EU, but not without some changes.

Henry Gent, organic dairy farmer and Green Party parish councillor in Devon, says pulling out of the bloc would have a negative impact on farmers and, in the face of a referendum, the party would campaign to stay in.

"Leaving would hit trade and putting the country at risk of importing food produced in countries with lower environmental



and worker standards," he says, adding that instead regulations need to be adapted to ensure they are closer to farming and more flexible to allow producers to operate more effectively.

If the UK were to leave and the Greens had a hand in a future government, Mr Gent says the party would introduce tariffs on imports to protect British farming from competition from countries which did not share the same standards. Taxing imports would have the added benefit of increasing the UK's self-sufficiency, he says, and also lead to the possibility of removing direct support.

"We always want to see subsidies being available for environmental and social benefits which the market isn't able to support, such as air and water quality or supporting farming in areas where it isn't necessarily viable," he says. "But we are not particularly keen on Pillar One-type payments which are about keeping farmers in business where they can't make money on the global markets. If it

came to it and we had tariffs on imports it might make the Basic Payment Scheme unnecessary."

## UK Independence Party

A strong opponent of EU membership, UKIP has long-argued for the UK to leave the bloc.

Trade is often at the heart of debates of EU membership, but Stuart Agnew, UKIP agriculture spokesman, insists that leaving will not have a negative impact on the way UK farmers sell their produce.

"We are in a very strong position to strike a good deal by virtue of the fact that we run a £50 billion annual trade deficit with them and we are their biggest single customer," he says. "We wish to have a harmonious trading relationship with the EU, but not political union."

Once outside the EU, the party has pledged to operate its own agricultural subsidy scheme – the only party to do so – paying £80/acre on higher-grade land and reductions on the lower grades. Upland farmers will receive whatever headage payment allocation the party can get from the World Trade Organisation.

The party also has proposals for the livestock sector, including allowing the burial of fallen stock, subject to watercourse safety, relaxing NVZ rules if scientific information supports it, and banning the live export of animals for slaughter.

"We will also abolish compulsory EID and replace it with a flock number double tag as an option," Mr Agnew adds.



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# Stats from 2014 show live selling continues to strengthen, says LAA

By Chris Dodds,  
LAA Executive  
Secretary



Livestock auction marts continued to go from strength to strength in 2014, with numbers of sheep sold at English and Welsh markets once again increasing.

In fact, the proportion of the national flock sold through auction marts has been growing year-on-year since 2011. More and more sheep farmers are seeing the benefits of using the auction mart system to get a fair price for their livestock through the open, transparent and competitive bidding that it offers.

Last year 2,682,633 store and breeding sheep were sold through marts in England and Wales, up from 2,530,199 in 2013. For prime slaughter sheep, 7,287,154 entered auction marts – up a little from 7,243,909 the previous year.

Those extra 200,000 sheep will have experienced modern handling facilities staffed by well-trained drovers. They will have been sold by auctioneers who have the best interests of their farmers foremost in their minds. And they will have been purchased by people who could stand round the ring able to choose exactly what they want to buy.

Despite the many challenges auction marts face and the competition from online systems and direct selling, farmers are voting with their feet, numbers sold have increased and the livestock system is as crucial as ever

to British farming.

Recently we have seen the auction mart's share of the national kill increase. Most noticeably the last three years represent the largest percentage for two decades. Looking to the future, I am sure that it will be supermarket buyers and those that sell direct who will need to reconsider their current policies.

Nationally, there has been a noticeable shift by shoppers away from hypermarkets and large supermarkets, towards convenience stores and online grocers. Figures from the Institute of Grocery Distribution have consistently pointed to this trend for a number of years. Couple that with the desire of shoppers to both shop locally and support local producers, and you can see why some of the major multiple retailers have been struggling to maintain sales recently.

## Choice offered

The LAA would suggest that building stronger and bigger direct contracts with supermarkets and their suppliers might not be the most beneficial way for farmers to secure a long-term business. The major multiple retailers have been heard to say that little over 50% of lambs bought directly hit the spec that they want. But if they bought through auction marts, then surely they'd hit 90% or more. How much could they save if everything hit the conformation and classification that they wanted?

By purchasing through the market, they can buy what they want from the selection presented before them in the sale ring, and



LAA plans to engage more with butchers, retailers and supermarkets to encourage them to buy from auction markets.

let the farmers sell their other groups to those other buyers that want them.

To me that seems an obvious win-win situation – supermarkets and abattoirs can benefit through only buying what they want, providing a consistent product to shoppers and paying a fair price for their meat. Sheep farmers would benefit through being able to sell sheep that they know meet different specifications in groups to those people that want to buy them.

Later this year the LAA is going to embark on a campaign to engage with people working in the food chain. We want to open the doors of our auction marts to butchers, local retailers and the major supermarkets to show them how modern, welfare-friendly and well run they are. Maybe this will go some way towards encouraging more of them to re-consider a system that has served our industry well for nearly 200 years and continues to have a bright future.



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# The TFA's campaign for longer-term and fairer Farm Business Tenancies

Farm Business Tenancies (FBTs) were ushered in 20 years ago, during an era of major deregulation, with the intention of improving the efficiency of land use within the agricultural sector, while increasing opportunities for both progressing farmers and new entrants.

Two decades on and the Tenant Farmers Association believes neither of these objectives have been attained. While we saw an increase in the amount of let land through the early years of the new legislation this has, by and large, tailed off. However, the biggest failing of the legislation has been the perpetuation of short lengths of term.

Year on year the statistics show the average length of FBT in England and Wales hovers around four years. Given that farming is a long-term endeavour requiring significant capital investment, patience, good soil management and the ability to balance profitable years against the bad, why are lengths of term so



short? The answer is, with much higher demand for land than supply, landlords can offer short terms for high rents at very little risk, while at the same time pocketing generous and unconstrained tax benefits.

The TFA believes short term tenancies are holding back progression, investment and sustainable land use. Farm business tenancies have been too short for too long and now is the time

for that to change. The TFA believes average lengths of term on FBTs should be 10 years or more.

Land owners who are prepared to think long term should have nothing to fear from the TFAs proposals. Individuals who wish to continue to let on a short-term basis should also be able to do so, but without the generous taxation benefits or flexibilities for early termination.

## What the Government need to consider to improve FBTs

- Restrict 100% Inheritance Tax relief only for landlords prepared to let for 10+ years.
- Clamp down on land owners using share farming, contract farming, share partnerships and grazing licences as thin veneers of trading activity to gain tax advantage, when in practice they take no risk, have no entrepreneurial input and lack any management control.
- Allow landlords letting land for 10+ years to declare their income as if it was trading income, for taxation purposes.
- Provide landlords letting for 10+ years with easier mechanisms to end tenancies where the tenant is in breach of the terms of the agreement or where landlords have the opportunity of development – subject to proper compensation to the departing tenant.
- Reform Stamp Duty Land Tax to end the discrimination against longer tenancies.
- Require landlords over whom it has influence (for example the Crown Estate) to default to 10+ year tenancies.



## TFA Membership

The Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) is the only organisation dedicated to supporting the agricultural tenanted sector.

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**Supporting you all the time**

Full membership is great value at **only £169** per annum. To find out more visit the TFA's stand at NSA Welsh Sheep.

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# Mother Nature offers a helping hand for improved flock health

By Helen Chesshire,  
Woodland Trust Senior  
Advisor

**Exposure to cold is one of the biggest causes of neonatal loss of lambs, with an estimated one third of deaths due to exposure and starvation.**

Whether you are lambing outdoors or turning stock out of the lambing shed as quickly as you can, good shelter is important for young lamb survival. Studies have shown that in cold, wet and windy weather lamb losses can be reduced by 30% if good shelter is provided. Twins and triplet lambs derive the greatest benefit from shelter, due to their relatively lower birth weight and higher susceptibility to cold, wet and windy conditions.

## Cold resistance

Shelter belts can be designed to assist natural behaviours of ewes and provide opportunities for isolation during outdoor lambing. Isolation increases the chances of early development of a strong bond between the ewe and her lambs, better suckling and colostrum intake and reduced disease risk and greater resistance to the cold.

Providing tree shelter belts also reduces the risk of mastitis in ewe. Teat lesions caused by excessive suckling by lambs allows entry of the bacteria, and the problem is worsened by exposure to cold winds and contamination of the udder by mud, which can predispose ewes to infection.

The planting of small but strategically sited shelterbelts not only helps reduce

## Case Study: Jonathan Francis

Jonathan (pictured) has planted just under 15,000 trees on his 115ha beef and sheep farm in Wales. The planting has been undertaken on small areas of mainly unproductive hill land to provide shelter, improve drainage and reduce water runoff. He says: "The shelter belts on hill ground have immediately made the land more manageable. I've been able to graze it harder and it has been easier to gather the sheep. Once the

neo-natal lamb losses but they are also very effective at improving field drainage.

Research carried out at Pontbren in

Wales showed that within three years of planting a shelter belt – particularly those across the slope – water infiltration rates of the soil was improved by 60 times compared to grazed pasture. This not only reduces water runoff, poaching and consequent damage to the sward, it can also help in the prevention of serious flock health issues.

Recent years have seen an increase in the incidence and spread of liver fluke. Shelter belts will



shelterbelts are established I will have the option of lambing my Welsh purebred ewes outdoors."

help reduce the wet conditions favoured by the snail that acts as the host for the liver fluke parasite. Siting your shelter belts

on particularly wet areas where liver fluke is known to be prevalent allows stock to be fenced out.

Lameness can be a result of a number of infections (including foot rot and CODD) and as a result of soil balling. Reducing surface water can help minimise the area of wet ground liable for poaching and acting as a breeding ground for disease, and also reduce the incidence of soil balling on hoofs.

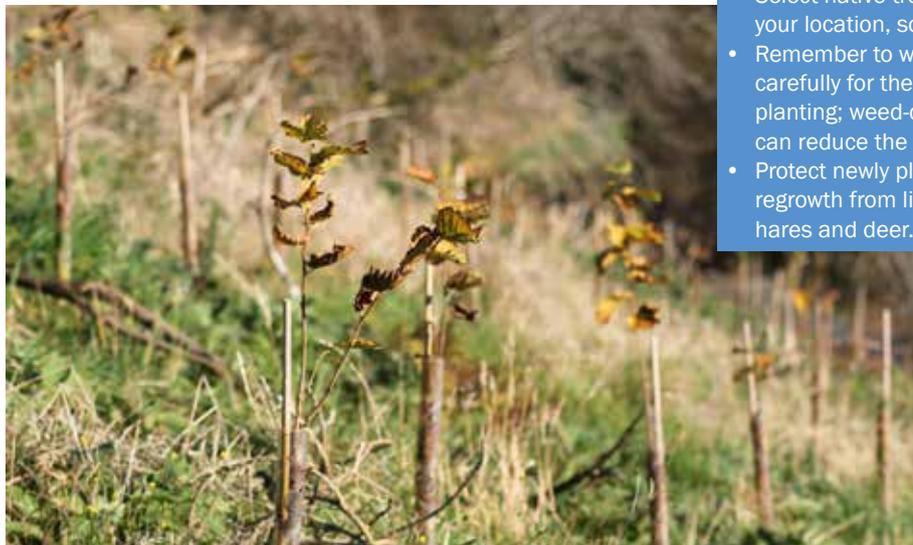
Small tactical tree planting and hedgerow restoration schemes can deliver significant benefits to both the health and welfare of your flock, as well as the local environment.

## Tree management and planting tips

- Maintain and restore existing hedgerows and shelter belts.
- Create new shelter belts by widening existing hedges; plant on the northern or shadier side to avoid shading out the hedge
- Use shrubs to give a dense base to tree shelter belts to ensure plenty of low level cover. Taller trees provide shade in the summer and guard against vortex wind effects.
- Bring back old hedges by laying where there is sufficient material and/or by coppicing and planting up gaps, which can funnel wind.
- Plant up wet areas, awkward corners and across slopes known to be susceptible to surface water run-off.
- Select native tree species suitable for your location, soil type and altitude.
- Remember to weed young trees carefully for the first few years after planting; weed-control before planting can reduce the time needed for this.
- Protect newly planted trees and regrowth from livestock, voles, rabbits, hares and deer.

At the Woodland Trust we are working with farmers across the country to plant trees to help create more resilient farming systems.

Find out more about free advice on tree and hedgerow planting, as well as grant support where available, from the Woodland Trust at NSA Welsh Sheep (Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May), NSA North Sheep (Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June) or by contacting them on 01476 452356 or plant@woodlandtrust.org.uk.



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# Spotlight on bracken intensifies as Basic Payment Scheme rules bite

By Phil Stocker, NSA

**The ineligibility of bracken-infested areas for the Basic Payment Scheme means the frustration of controlling the plant is once again at the forefront of farmers' and landowners' minds.**

Bracken's negative impact on upland ecology and priority habitats, its potential carcinogenic effect, contribution to harbouring ticks and impact on access means there are many other reasons why the negative profile of bracken is increasing, and little justification for it to be left uncontrolled.

Control options are both cultural and chemical. Cultural controls include grazing and treading by cattle, particularly in the spring when new fronds are emerging, and bracken cutting and bruising. However, mechanical cultural controls are restricted to areas suitable for access and use and

## Bracken and area payments

**The key policy issue for sheep farmers and graziers is the ineligibility of bracken infested land for the Basic Farm Scheme, complicated by the difficulties faced in getting approval for treatment where mechanical control is not an option.**

This is made worse on designated land due to the protected status based on ecological importance, despite the fact this ecological importance will be compromised by bracken infestation.

NSA is seeking clarification on what farmers can do, particularly on common ground and in SSSI areas, and the processes they can go through to tackle bracken and relieve the problem of reduced foraging/eligible areas. We expect to have information by mid-April and will share it with members as soon as we can.

in many upland areas these are few and far between.

Chemical controls can be broken into two categories. The first is non-selective weed killers such as glyphosate. In this case management objectives will be to kill all vegetation and reseed. The second chemical option is selective herbicide treatments based on asulam. Technically asulam is prohibited for use, although 'emergency authorisations' are currently being granted on an annual basis that allows windows of treatment during the year. Asulam can be used through hand-based/quad applicators or tractor sprayers – or by helicopter, under licence.

## Permission

Where land is owned/tenanted, not affected by land designations such as SSSI, or under agri-environment schemes, farmers can use either of the above chemical options. Where land designations exist or agri-environment schemes apply then it must be checked that chemical treatments are allowed and whether permission is required. For non-selective herbicides a special case would need to be made, due to the killing of under-species or plants around the infested area being affected. For common land the same conditions apply relating to land designations and agri-environment schemes. In addition the rights holders/

## Asulam use in 2015

**The Chemicals Regulation Directorate has approved the 'emergency authorisation' for asulam to be used for bracken control in the 2015 season.**

As in previous years, it will be legal to own and store asulam products from 18<sup>th</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> October and use them between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> September. All stocks must be used or disposed of before the end of October, as it is illegal to store asulam after this date.

The Bracken Control Group encourages farmers wanting to use a contractor to tackle bracken to contact potential providers as soon as possible, as the short window for application means they get booked up very quickly. Find more information and a list of contractors at [www.brackencontrol.co.uk](http://www.brackencontrol.co.uk).

commons councils must be in agreement.

Farmers can buy asulam under the 'emergency authorisation rules' – see *panel* – directly from a supplier and apply it from ground based equipment. No specific licence is required, although the normal sprayer training is necessary. If seeking to apply asulam by helicopter, the usual approach is for the aerial contractor to provide the asulam and to apply for the permit from the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD).

*Control of bracken means a mix of other plant species, wildlife and grazing livestock, can flourish.*

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AH192/14

# Don't miss out – make sure the wormers you use are effective

By Lesley Stubbing, SCOPS

**Lamb growth rates are a major component of profitability. The faster lambs grow, the more efficient they are and the less feed they need to finish.**

Ewe milk yield and grass quality are determining factors, but effective worm control is vital too. Could you be missing out because your wormer is losing its killing power? The result of more and more worms on the farm becoming resistant and surviving treatment will be slow growth rates and tail end lambs.

The numbers of worms that are resistant to the three older wormer groups, 1-BZ (white), 2-LV (yellow) and 3-ML (clear), are increasing. For example, we know there are worms resistant to the white\* group on most sheep farms, yet sales of white drenches are still very high.

The conclusion must be that a lot of producers are unaware they are losing out by continuing to rely heavily on this group. This is understandable, because the proportion of resistant worms on a farm builds up gradually.

The wormer gets less and less effective over several years and it isn't until the resistant worms outweigh the others that it's obvious there is a problem, and by then it's too late. You need to find out if resistance is present to any of the wormer



## Case Study:

**Andrew Singlehurst, Northamptonshire**

**Lamb producer Andrew Singlehurst says: "My lambs were getting more and more difficult to finish off grass and I was losing money due to the large number of stores still around in the autumn."**

"Like many people, I was still using the white drenches, thinking they were doing a good job. It wasn't until I did a drench check last spring that I realised it just wasn't effective any more. I was shocked. I changed the wormer group and the difference was amazing. Lambs looked and performed better, and by the end of the season I had sold 97% of them finished compared to just over 60%

groups before you reach that point.

It is actually quite easy to check using a 'drench test', which involves three simple steps – see panel.

A reduction in egg count of less than 90% suggests the wormer is not as effective as it should be and resistance may be present. For example, if there was an initial egg count (epg) of 500 the post-drench count should be less than 50epg if the drench is fully effective. If it is higher than this you need to discuss alternative products with your vet or adviser, including the need to use the 4-AD (orange) and 5-SI (purple) groups.

Mid season (June/early July) is

in 2013.

"I reckon this was worth £12,000 in increased lamb value and reduced costs, and even better, I carried on monitoring FECs to determine the need to drench through the season and ended up using fewer doses of wormer into the bargain."

Andrew is so convinced that he now has his own FECPAK<sup>g2</sup> kit and is monitoring his ewes in the run up to lambing. He will start checking lambs when they are about six weeks old and continues to drench-test to make sure the other wormers are working effectively.

*More on FECPAK<sup>g2</sup> on page 40.*

a good time to test, because worm counts in lambs are likely to be rising on contaminated pastures. You will also reap the benefits should you need to change the wormer based on the result.

You should then re-test wormers on a regular basis through the season, because different worm species dominate at different times and this can alter the result.

*Download a leaflet on wormer groups at [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk). \* Please note, the white (1-BZ) group is still considered the best treatment against nematodirus on the majority of farms.*

## How to 'drench test' to check the effectiveness of a wormer



**1. Collecting samples:** Take fresh dung samples (fresh means they should still be warm!) from at least 10 lambs in a mob. These must be taken at random. Make sure each sample is the same size so one animal does not sway the result.

**2. Treating the sheep:** Treat all the lambs in the mob, taking care to ensure the dose rate is correct for their weight, the gun has been calibrated and you get the wormer over the back of the tongue. Check how many days until you need



to take your post drench test – seven days for 2-LV (yellow) or 14 days for 1-BZ (white) and 3-ML (clear) – and mark the date on the calendar.

**3. Re-sampling:** On the set day, go back and re-sample the same mob. It is very important that you stick to these dates. As before, take at least 10 fresh samples, at random from the mob, that are the same size.

**Sources of faecal egg counts (FECs):** There are a number of options to test the



dung samples that you collect:-

- Your vet surgery may carry out sampling in-house, or send them to a lab.
- SQPs / merchants increasingly offer this service to customers.
- Independent laboratories will provide the service.
- You can do it yourself with a FECPAK system, or buy your own microscope kit.

# Know the worms on your farm

Sheep farmers should have a good knowledge of the worms on their farm, according to a new campaign launched by the Animal Health Distributors Association (AHDA), which is encouraging farmers to check on the effectiveness of their wormers using faecal egg counts (FECs).

Andrew Pattison works for R.M. Jones Agricultural Chemists, Hay on Wye, Herefordshire, and is the SQP representative on the SCOPS Steering Group. He says: "It's really important to look at what you are doing and manage the wormers and the worms on the farm. You can't do that if haven't got a correct picture of what's going on. Faecal egg counting is the only way to do it."

Edgar Jones of Wilmaston Farm sought the Andrew's advice after noticing that his lambs were not thriving and there was a certain amount of scouring present. After taking the advice to carry out FECs in order to understand the nature of burden, he now has a clearer picture of what is going on in his flock and the tools to treat it accordingly.

He says: "It has been really important to carry out FECs. If you don't do it then you don't know where your flock stands.



It's possible to go day-to-day without noticing the worm burden in the flock."

Using the information from the FECs, Mr Jones has

Which worms are affecting your sheep?

## Top SCOPS tips

### Check the weight:

Millions of pounds worth of wormers are wasted every year because farmers underestimate the weight of sheep. This also speeds up the development of resistance.

**Quarantine:** Resistance to anthelmintics can be brought in with purchased sheep. The correct quarantine treatments are essential to remove resistant worms.

**Adult sheep:** Mature sheep that are fit and healthy have immunity to most worms, which means the times when adult sheep need to be wormed are very limited.

**Use FECs:** You can check if you have resistance on your farm simply and cheaply by taking dung samples for FECs pre and post drenching – see page 38 for details. Talk to

the SQPs at your local AHDA outlet for more information.

**Timing:** Most farmers who use FECs to monitor worm burdens use less anthelmintic without any loss in flock performance. In many cases lambs actually do better because they are treated at the right time.

**Know your parasites:** If you know which internal parasites you have on the farm, you can target them more effectively and with the most appropriate product. This significantly reduces the chances of developing resistance.

**Pasture management:** Drenching sheep and then putting them straight onto clean pasture increases the risk of anthelmintic resistance developing on your farm. Delaying the move or leaving some sheep untreated will reduce this risk.

been able to build up a picture of susceptibility to wormers on his farm and understand the type of worms that were present. This provided valuable information so he could choose the correct worming strategy.

Lesley Stubbings of SCOPS has contributed to the campaign material. She says: "SCOPS has realised for some time that some farmers do not recognise the need to act while wormers are still apparently working to control clinical disease on their farms.

"In many cases sheep farmers are still achieving good levels of worm control with their current strategies. However, resistance is out there. We can delay the onset of resistance if we adopt the right strategies. With the wrong strategy the loss of clinical worm control can be very rapid – potentially within a single grazing season."

More information at [www.ahda.co.uk](http://www.ahda.co.uk) and [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk).

## Get to know your local SQP

Andrew Pattison has been working for AHDA member R.M. Jones for some 30 years and now leads the animal health side of the business, including the team of 12 SQPs (Suitably Qualified Persons).

He says: "I don't think many of our customers understand what it means. SQPs are advisors in the animal health trade and we are there to help farmers to make an informed choice on the use of animal medicines, such as wormers in sheep and cattle.

"In order to qualify as an SQP you have to register with the professional body (AMTRA) and go through an extensive training programme including residential courses at agricultural colleges, followed by exams to achieve the qualification. Once qualified we have to do continuous professional development (CPD) and keep up our training in order to maintain our SQP status."

While SQPs are unable to provide diagnosis, they can work with their clients on understanding the nature of the problem and developing a solution. In the case outlined with Edgar Jones, Mr Pattison was able to provide sound advice on the use of FECs and the development of a solution.

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# Role of on-farm worm testing

**A project looking at on-farm worm monitoring is helping lamb producers manage worm burdens on their farms, hopefully resulting in better returns from their flocks.**

The two-year project, funded by Sainsbury's through their Agriculture R&D Grant, is using FECPAK<sup>Q2</sup> systems on farms and in vet practices, removing the need for manual faecal egg counting by microscope and technical training. In the longer term, the team aims to develop the new technology further, to give automated decision support and management tools

## Informed decisions

Philip Hambling, Agriculture Manager for Lamb and Pork at Sainsbury's, says: "The technology makes egg counting easier and more reliable, and more frequent counting will give our farmers the power to make informed decisions that benefit the performance of the flock and make more effective use of anthelmintics. We also hope the information from farm will help us develop and implement improved management techniques for the wider farmer group."

Eurion Thomas, European Operations Manager for Techion, the company managing the project, says the technology allows information generated straight from the field to be linked with veterinary and technical expertise to provide farmers with improved data to make informed parasite management decisions, increasing farm



*Gareth Owen preparing samples to test with the new kit.*

profits, lamb performance and reducing treatment costs.

Although still in its early days, the project has already shown some positive results. One producer has already confirmed his suspicion that moxidectin (part of the 3-ML (clear) group of wormers) is not fully effective on their farm, but in contrast has established he can use the levamisole wormers (2-LV yellow) with confidence because they are killing 100% of the worms.

Mr Thomas highlights the value of this information, as it ensures producers only use effective products: "With new evidence emerging that anthelmintic

resistance is increasing, many farmers are paying for wormers that simply aren't effective. Others have commented that they would not go back to using routine worming patterns.

"Previous work has shown that without monitoring we often treat groups of animals when it is not needed or, on the other hand, miss out treatments when there is actually a high worm burden. A typical example of this has been many producers being surprised at the high worm burdens found in the late autumn/winter period when many of us assume worms have gone away for the winter."

## User friendly

Gareth Owen, a producer from Leicestershire, has been piloting the system for the last 18 months. He says: "In the past we would have sent samples away for FEC testing, which inevitably delayed results by a couple of days. This new system of faecal egg counting is user friendly and puts accurate information at our fingertips, so we can make a timely decision on whether we need to drench or not. Being able to process my own samples easily and with confidence also means I am doing far more testing, which is proving to be very important for us. Having the results automatically recorded on the web means both myself and my livestock consultant can access it, allowing us to make more informed management decisions."

# Long-term approaches to cocci

**Coccidiosis is a common cause of depressed growth rates in lambs, says Sharon Cooksey of Bayer Animal Health, adding that the disease is often only treated once clinical signs, such as scours, are seen.**

She encourages farmers to work proactively with their vet to build a complete picture of coccidiosis on their farm. "This enables farmers to be able to accurately manage the disease before it has time to impact production, rather than once the damage has already been done."

"Coccidiosis is a complex disease to understand and manage on farm. Lambs need to be exposed to the disease in low levels so they can build a natural immunity to the disease, but knowing if lambs are exposed to a low or high level of coccidiosis is difficult to establish without previous knowledge of the farm and the grazing history," she says.

"By approaching coccidiosis disease management with a long term approach it is possible to avoid any costly setbacks and ensure lambs meet their full potential. Treatment shouldn't be a knee jerk reaction, but part of a flock health plan."

Treating lambs at the right time with the right medication can prevent gut damage, which is the cause of growth setbacks in lambs exposed to coccidiosis, says Mrs Cooksey. She explains that, once ingested, naïve lambs will multiply infectious oocysts at a rapid rate, potentially turning one oocyst into 16 million oocysts excreted back out on to the pasture, building a higher disease burden for the following year, or later born lambs.

"A timely treatment approach can reduce the burden of infectious coccidiosis oocysts that are excreted back out on to the pasture," she says. "Research supports claims that treatment given

about a week before disease is expected to have an impact is the best way to prevent losses caused by the disease."

## Commercial trial

Mrs Cooksey refers to recently published research on a trial using toltrazuril (Baycox) to treat lambs affected by subclinical disease (showing no clinical signs) on a farm with pathogenic coccidiosis.

The research observed 142 weaned lambs aged between six and eight weeks and found that oocyst faecal counts fell by 99.1% in the first seven days following treatment, compared to the untreated control group. Body weights were recorded at the start and end of the trial, showing an increase of 948g in the treated group compared to the untreated control, despite no clinical signs being observed in either group.

# AHDA

Free advice from qualified  
animal health specialists

A young boy with brown hair, wearing a yellow sweater and a dark blue vest, sits on a wooden fence. He is looking towards an elderly man with white hair. The man is wearing a brown jacket and light-colored trousers, and he is holding a wooden staff. They are standing in a grassy field with a wooden fence in the background. The sky is blue and clear.

## Grandad, where have all the sheep gone?

**A sheep farm without sheep. A grandson with no future on the land.** It sounds unthinkable, yet if you continually use wormers on your sheep with the same active ingredient, resistance builds and they become less effective. Eventually they will fail completely. And one day the sheep will be gone.

Have you checked if your sheep wormers are working properly? Finding out is simple and straightforward. Specially qualified staff at your nearest **AHDA** animal medicines stockist will ask a few questions to establish an effective and comprehensive worming programme. Act now, because inefficient wormers cost money.

**Talking to your local qualified AHDA staff will allow you, and your family, to face the future with confidence.**

To find your nearest AHDA (Animal Health Distributors Association) member go to [www.ahda.co.uk](http://www.ahda.co.uk)

# Investigation of low scan rates reveals toxoplasmosis problem

By Nerys Wright, Eblex

Paul and Charlotte Hope, who farm in Frittenden, Kent, were one of 19 farms across England who took part in a 12-month project with Eblex (supported by NSA) to focus on the importance of animal health.

Many of the focus flocks had lameness targets (see previous NSA articles), but for Paul and Charlotte the two main targets at Cherry Tree Farm were to investigate the reasons for a lower scanning percentage ahead of the 2014 lambing (see table), and to reduce lamb losses from pasteurella. These targets were set in conjunction farm vet Hugh Skinner, from Pierson Stewart and Partners in Cranbrook, Kent, and myself as project facilitator.

During the 12 months of the project Paul worked closely with Hugh and I to work through the possible causes for a reduced scanning percentage. The areas considered were:-

- 1. Ewe body condition:** At weaning time all ewes were condition scored and separated into two groups and allocated grazing accordingly. Ewes

## Previous flock performance

	2013	2014
Ewes tupped	785	775
Empty at scanning	1.5%	5%
Scanning percentage	181	147
Ewe mortality	3%	2%



Paul and Charlotte Hope run a mix of bought-in Mules and home-bred Suffolk crosses.



## Farm Fact File

- 500-acre beef and sheep farm, plus some pigs and poultry for direct selling.
- 170 Suffolk cross ewes lambing in January.
- 630 Mules and Suffolk crosses lambing in early March.
- Suffolk crosses are home-bred and Mules bought-in. Replacements are tupped as shearlings.

were scored every month and ewes reaching the target of BCS 3.5 for tupping were put into the second group. Ewes that did

not gain sufficient condition in the 10 weeks given to them were culled. At tupping 95% of ewes were BCS 3.5 or higher.

- 2. Trace elements:** A selection of ewes was sampled at weaning to check for trace element status. All ewes were within range for copper, selenium and cobalt.
- 3. Ram MOT:** All rams were given a thorough examination 10 weeks before tupping to ensure it was not a tup

Above: A record is being kept this lambing time of causes of lamb and ewe losses.

fertility problem that caused the lower

scanning result in 2014. All the effort of the year rested on the scanning, which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> December and revealed a flock increase of 13% to 160%. However, this was lower than the target of 175% the farm had set itself.

## Management groups

Scanning the ewes in management groups enabled further analysis of the results. It was identified that the shearling groups (retained and purchased) were reducing the overall average of the flock. The shearlings scanned at 128% and 124%, with 22% and 9% empty at the time of scanning. All other management groups scanned in the range of 164-182% with a range of 0-3% empty. Blood samples were taken for a selection of the barren shearlings and high levels of antibodies to toxoplasma were found. A vaccination programme for the replacements is being discussed for next autumn.

Early lambing in January went well and, at the time of writing, Paul and his family were in the thick of the main lambing. Excellent records were being kept on causes of lamb and ewe losses during lambing.

Keeping information like this is crucial to identify underlying reasons for lamb deaths. It may show there are a few lambs lost for every reason under the sun and very little can be done, but alternatively it might help spot a common cause.

# Being alert to sheep scab mites

By Dr Al Nisbet,  
Moredun



**Sheep scab is considered to be the most contagious endemic ectoparasitic disease of sheep in the UK, costing the industry in excess of £14m a year, including costs associated with lost performance, preventative measures and treatment.**

The welfare implications of sheep scab are related to the intense irritation associated with the feeding of sheep scab mites on the skin surface. Rather than piercing the skin, the mites scrape the host skin with their mouthparts while feeding, and deposit faeces directly onto the skin provoking an allergic reaction.

This results in the sheep rubbing, kicking, scratching and nibbling the affected area, which causes raw skin and a scab to form at the site of damage. These welfare issues are compounded by the sheep being unable to rest due to such intense irritation. Untreated infestations of sheep scab can, in some cases, be fatal.



*The sheep scab mite (inset) aggravates the skin of sheep so much that they are unable to rest due to intense irritation. Pictures courtesy of Neil Sargison.*

## Infection

The sheep scab mite is usually transmitted by direct contact between sheep. However, because mites can exist off the sheep for up to 16 days, fence posts, trees, bushes, farm equipment – anywhere infested animals seek relief from the irritation by scratching and rubbing – can also be a source of infection. Scab can also be introduced from neighbouring flocks, the introduction of new stock or animals returning from wintering or from shows, and this has implications for treatment,

quarantine and biosecurity. It is wise to assume that all sheep being brought onto the farm from whatever source (new purchases or returning stock) are infested and should be treated and quarantined for at least two weeks before mixing with the main flock. During quarantine, observe for signs of infestation (nibbling, rubbing, scratching, deranged wool and areas of wool loss) and, if sheep scab is suspected, have the sheep examined by a vet who will professionally identify the parasite and advise on the correct course of treatment.

For effective treatment of sheep scab, only injectables and plunge dippers can be used. Organophosphates (OP dips based on diazinon) and injectable macrocyclic

lactones (endectocides, MLs) are the only remaining practical treatments. In terms of product selection, this should be discussed with your vet and/or licensed animal health distributor / SQP to ensure effectiveness, economic usage and also adherence to legislative guidelines.

## Treatment

One important consideration when using injectable MLs is the integration of the treatment with parasitic nematode control, as MLs are broad spectrum anthelmintics as well as being highly effective against sheep scab mites. This allows scab mite control and worming to be integrated, but also provides a means of accelerating selection for anthelmintic resistance in parasitic nematodes if the compounds are routinely used for scab control.

It should also be noted that, while ML oral drenches are highly effective anthelmintics, they are less than 50% effective against scab when administered by this route.

The advantages of using ML injections over plunge dipping with an OP (i.e. safety, ease of use, less stress on the animal, reduced need for specialist facilities, reduced environmental impact) must be weighed against their disadvantages.

*All NSA members are associate members of Moredun, and you can support Moredun's work further by becoming a full member. For more details, or to request a sheep scab factsheet, contact the Moredun communications team on 01314 455111 or visit [www.moredun.org.uk](http://www.moredun.org.uk).*

## Case Study:

### Regional awareness and action campaign on Mull

**Moredun scientists in conjunction with NFU Scotland and the Scottish Government have been demonstrating the potential use of a new sheep scab diagnostic test as part of local eradication campaigns.**

Mull Vets used a new diagnostic blood test developed by Moredun on an island-wide basis (Isles of Mull and Iona) to determine whether or not flocks had sheep scab. A total of 715 sheep were tested over 73 premises across Mull and Iona during the summer 2014. No

sheep scab mites or obvious lesions were identified in any of the animals tested and so far it would appear that Mull and Iona are effectively free from sheep scab.

To date the study has demonstrated the use of the sheep scab diagnostic test as an effective means of assessing disease status, however, scientists and vets are following up a sub-sample of the original flocks while also testing animals coming on to and off of the islands to access its effectiveness as a screening tool to prevent the re-introduction of sheep scab.

# Maximising lamb performance

In order to maximise the performance of lambs, it is important to understand their energy requirements.



“Up until eight weeks of age, lambs are dependent on their mothers for milk so the priority is to maximise energy intake into ewes to drive lactation,” said Liz Genever, Eblex Senior Livestock Scientist. “Post-eight weeks, their performance becomes more dependent on the quality of the grass or feed they consume, which has consequences for how the group needs to be managed.”

The most economical way of feeding ewes and lambs is with grazed grass, so investing time and effort into getting that right will pay dividends. The grazing targets for ewes and lambs when set stocked is 4-6cm, with limited evidence of benefit if ewes are supplemented when grass is over 3cm. This may alter if grass is poor quality or the ewes are rearing triplets.

Once lambs are starting to eat more grass (from four weeks) the priority is to give them access to high-quality feed. At this point rotational grazing could be used to control supply and demand, with 8-10cm being the pre-grazing target and 4-6cm the post-grazing target in this system.

“Grazing pasture at the right height will ensure growing animals are eating high-

**Table 1: Grazing heights**

Class of stock	Grazing period	Rotation grazing		Set stocking (cm)
		Pre-graze (cm)	Post-graze (cm)	
Ewes and lambs	Turn out – May	8-10	4-5	4
	May – weaning	8-10	4-6	4-6
Pre-tupping	Sep – Nov	8-10	4-5	6-8
Weaned finishing lambs	Jul – Sep	10-12	5-7	6-8

quality grass,” Dr Genever says – see table 1. “The leaf has more than 11.5MJ ME/kg DM and is the most nutritious part of the plant. The stem has only 10.5MJ ME/kg DM, so planning a grazing strategy with this in mind will help optimise nutrition for lambs.”

For producers with low quality or limited grazing, creep feeding can be a good option and help maintain growth rates. However, creep feed is expensive, Dr Genever warns.

“Research has shown that lambs on well-managed, reseeded grazing can match the performance of lambs supplemented with creep feed

on poorer permanent pasture, so there must be a real requirement to justify the investment,” she says.

Lambs introduced to creep during the first two to three weeks after turnout can be expected to eat 40-50kg per head by sale if it is offered ad-lib and the sward height is around 4cm. Lambs on restricted grazing with limited creep feed will gain on average an extra 1kg liveweight for every 5-6kg of creep feed compared with un-supplemented lambs.

Giving lambs the best grazing ahead of ewes, known as forward creep grazing, is a good way to prevent the need for creep feeding.

It is important to identify the likely shortfall in grass availability over the season, so the gaps

can be managed in a way that suits your system, according to Dr Genever.

“Encouraging white clover would be a priority as it helps to counter the dip in grass quality and quantity in the summer,” she says. “The plant and the animals eating it need to be managed carefully, but it can increase lamb liveweight gain by up to 15%.”

## Weaning

Research work is showing there is limited advantage of delaying weaning beyond 90 days of age, unless lambs are close to finishing.

“By this age, ewes and lambs are directly competing for grass and it is more cost-effective to prioritise good grass for growing lambs rather than ewes,” Dr Genever says. “Ewes can be weaned, dried off and then sorted for body condition score.”

Weaning slightly earlier also means that ewes are given plenty of time to recover body condition before the next breeding season and can be very useful to tidy up pastures.

For more information download the Eblex BRP manual ‘Growing and Finishing Lambs for Better Returns’ at [www.eblex.org.uk/returns](http://www.eblex.org.uk/returns). Email [brp@eblex.ahdb.org.uk](mailto:brp@eblex.ahdb.org.uk) for a free Eblex sward stick and grassland guide.



Eblex recommends using a sward stick to monitor and use grazing heights to best effect in sheep systems.

## Monitoring performance

Optimal feeding and monitoring grass is important, but so is keeping track of lamb performance. Regular handling and weighing is a good way to highlight any issues.

“In order to build up a true picture of how individual lambs and the overall flock is performing, good monitoring and record keeping is essential,” Dr Genever says. “Measuring average daily liveweight gain to weaning (kg per day) provides

information about maternal performance, grass availability and parasite control.

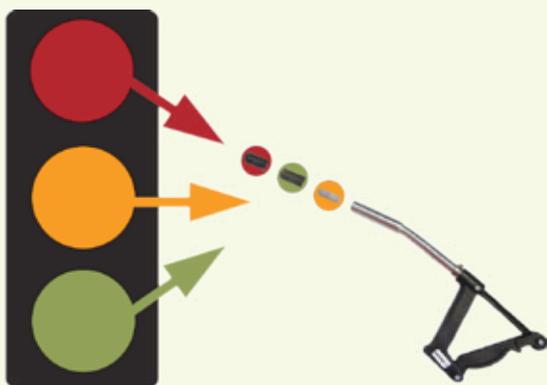
“It’s also worth looking back at scanning, lambing and turnout records to understand how this year compares with previous years or industry averages – see table 2. Lamb losses can be calculated against the number of lambs scanned to see how the business is tracking against targets.”

**Table 2: Standard performance in different systems**

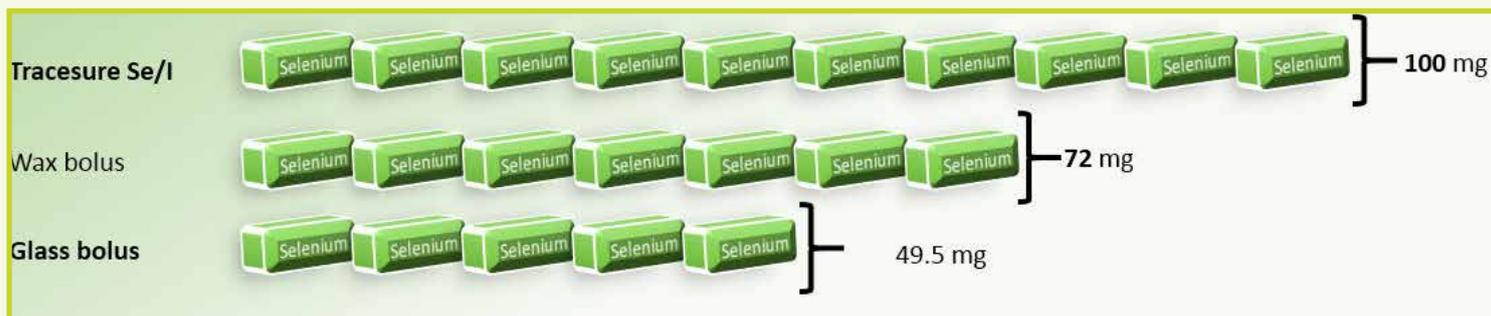
	Standard performance		
	Lowland	Upland	Hill
Ewes tupped (A)	100	100	100
Lambs scanned (B)	195	175	116
Lambing percentage (C)	183	166	112
Lambs turned out (D)	172	156	104
Rearing percentage (E)	168	151	100
	Lamb losses		
Scanning to birth (B-C)	12 (6%)	9 (5%)	4 (3%)
Birth to turn out (C-D)	11 (6%)	10 (6%)	8 (7%)
Turn out to weaning/sale (D-E)	4 (2%)	5 (3%)	4 (3%)
Birth to sale (C-E)	15 (8%)	15 (9%)	12 (10%)
Scanning to sale (B-E)	27 (14%)	24 (14%)	16 (14%)

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# Achieving good lamb growth rates on artificial milk rearing machines

By Rhys Beynon-Thomas and Sarah-Jane Redman, ProStock Vets, Carmarthen



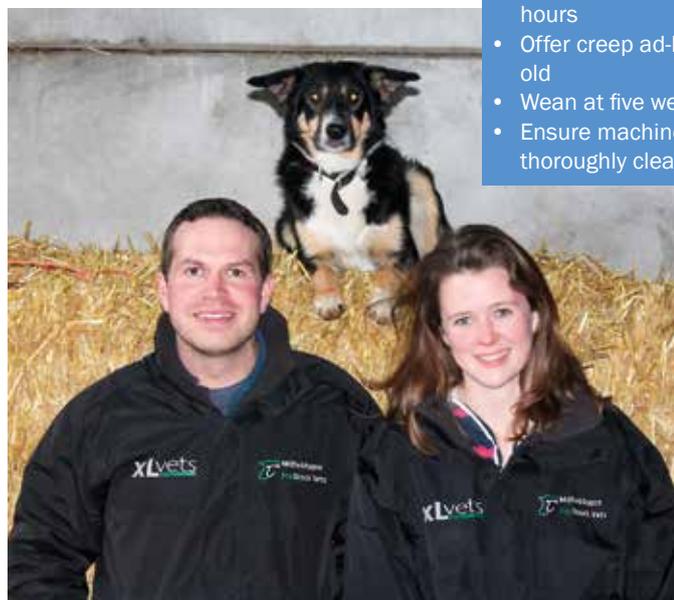
**Artificial milk replacement machines are becoming increasingly popular amongst our clients. As pressure to reduce labour on farms increases and the value of finished lamb continues to remain relatively high, alternative options for rearing lambs are being investigated.**

The system can suit both extensive low input systems, during years of high lamb crops, and the more intensive indoor commercial system with a high number of triplets. For the extensive outdoor system, the artificial feeding machine allows losses that may occur due to a high twinning or triplet rate to be greatly reduced. This can be achieved at no great cost, without a large building space requirement. On a lowland indoor lambing farm, the system reduces the labour demand and allows time to be better spent elsewhere in the shed. We also utilise the system at home on the family farm – Goitre Fach – with our own pedigree Berrichon flock.

## Disease risk

There are some important health risks to consider when rearing lambs on a machine, including clostridial diseases. Vaccinating ewes against clostridial disease and pasteurilla four to six weeks before lambing will provide lambs with passive immunity for up to four weeks against pasteurilla and 12 weeks for clostridial disease, assuming adequate colostrum intake. But remember that some lambs may not receive enough colostrum and artificially reared lambs will need to start a vaccination programme at three weeks of age, with a second booster four to six weeks later.

Avoiding joint and navel ill is important for all lambs, so dip navels with 10% iodine at birth and repeat when lambs dry. To avoid 'watery mouth' (*E.coli enterotoxaemia*) ensure all bedding and the environment is kept as clean as possible, in both lambing pens and mothering pens. An antibiotic oral product may be administered at birth if hygiene is not at its best, or for lambs that



Rhys Beynon-Thomas and Sarah-Jane Redman.

## Artificial rearing

- Ensure lambs suckle for the first 24 hours
- Offer creep ad-lib from less than week old
- Wean at five weeks of age
- Ensure machine and teats are thoroughly cleaned each day

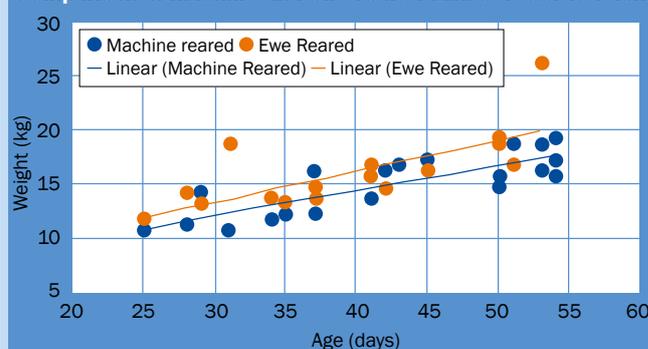
## Personal experience

Rhys and Sarah-Jane both work at Prostock vets in Carmarthen. They returned recently to the area, to live on the family farm, and enjoy helping out in any spare time.

At Goitre Fach, Rhys's parents and brother run a high-yielding 210-cow Holstein herd, as well as 200 pedigree Berrichon ewes lambed in January. The Goitre Berrichon flock has been exhibited successfully at the Royal Welsh Show, with pedigree rams sold annually at the NSA Wales and Border Ram Sale and other sales locally.

Around 50 ram lambs and 50 ewe lambs are kept yearly, with the remaining lambs sold to slaughter at Easter time. Selection is based on high growth rates and mothering ability of ewe. An automated milk powder machine is used to reduce labour demands at lambing.

Comparison of machine and ewe-reared lambs at Goitre Fach



The graph shows the liveweight of machine-reared lambs at Goitre Fach compared with those of siblings reared by the ewe. Ewe-reared lambs had higher overall growth rates at 2.1kg per week compared to machine reared lambs at 1.7kg per week, but the growth on the milk machine, although slower, was more consistent.

According to industry standards, growth rates of up to 2kg per week can be achieved up until weaning. The calculated growth rates in the graph will not be representative of the entire lamb crop, due to the lamb selection criteria for the study i.e. all twins or triplets, but despite this both groups achieve good growth rate. The study concludes that rearing lambs on an artificial feeding machine produces lambs of suitable weight for weaning at five weeks of age.

may not have received adequate colostrum.

Coccidiosis is common in all indoor-reared lambs. Ewes are the initial source, but it rapidly multiplies in lambs resulting in a high challenge for later born lambs. Clinical signs vary from 'poor-doing' lambs to lambs with blood and mucus scours, but remember that all result in delayed growth rates. Use faecal egg counts to diagnose; drenching products can be used as treatment. A prevention option is using decoquinat additive in creep feed at an inclusion rate of 1.67 kg/tonne. Creep feed should be made available to artificially-reared lambs from one week old.

continued on page 47

# Top tips for shearing preparation

**Bob Blanden, NSA South East Regional Manager and sheep shearer, draws on his years of experience in shearing sheds around the UK and the world to provide these tips for making the most of the coming wool harvest.**

- Make sure you have sufficient wool sheets ready before shearing.
- Do not try to shear sheep too early in the season, even if they are getting caste; the wool will lift when the grease has risen.
- Do not treat your sheep against blowfly or lice immediately before shearing, as this risks the shearers' health and leaves residues in the wool.
- Ensure sheep are fully dry before shearing; if it is possible, keep some or all of the sheep indoors overnight for an early start before the dew will have lifted. Do not pack any damp fleeces into wool sheets.
- Avoid staining the wool when handling the sheep by not having them coming straight in off grazing and not being given time to empty their guts, something that requires a number of hours. Grass stains need extra scouring and reduce wool value.



*A level, clean area is essential to set up shearing stands.*

- Emptied sheep are easier to handle, leave less muck in the pens and on shearing boards, making the working safer for shearers and wool winders.
- Avoid dags contaminating your wool, as contaminated wool is devalued and dags blunt shears' combs and cutters. The easy solution is to make sure ewes are crutched out beforehand.
- Contractors need a flat, level and clean area to set up and work on, regardless of whether they are using a shearing trailer or not. Provide shade whenever possible, as shearers are known to suffer sunstroke and risk skin cancer.
- Make certain there are enough people

to help, so catching pens are kept full of only sheep that are to be shorn. Lambs should be drafted out and not penned with ewes. (It has been known for shearers to shear a lamb or two to confirm the point!) It also avoids lambs being squashed and injured in the catching pen.

- Bringing in disease problems with shearing equipment should be considered; if you are concerned, discuss this with your contractor. If you are aware of any problems within your own flock, such as scab, lice, CLA, orf and others, please make your contractor aware so appropriate action can be taken to avoid spreading disease and (where there is a risk) protect shearers from zoonotic diseases. Shearing trailers and boards should be clean when they arrive on farm, but some flock owners also supply moccasins for the shearers to avoid any chance of cross-contamination.
- Store your full, evenly packed wool sheets in a dry situation, possibly up on pallets to avoid absorption of damp from the floor.

▶ Orf is commonly found through the UK and can survive in dry buildings for many years. It can form painful lesions around lambs' mouths and noses and on the teats of ewes. We recommend annual vaccination of ewes, preferably seven weeks prior to lambing. The spread may be greater in machine-reared lambs, due to the teat-sharing nature of the feeding system, so you can consider vaccination of lambs at an early age.

When we are lambing at Goitre Fach, all dams' udders are checked for signs of mastitis or blind quarters. Lambs born to problem ewes or multiple births are closely monitored and bottle-fed their dams' colostrum where possible for two to three days. If the dam is short of colostrum, the lamb is fed another ewe's excess colostrum as replacement.

## Swift movement

After two to three days, lambs are removed from the ewe and started on the automatic machine feeder. The swift movement of lambs onto the machine greatly reduces the labour involved in managing both ewes and lambs in individual mothering pens. When selecting a lamb out of multiple births, the largest lamb would be placed on the feeder, meaning the smallest lambs have less competition suckling the ewe.

The Volac automatic ad-lib milk feeding machine we use provides four teats for the lambs. Teats are split between a nursery pen, where the lambs are first placed until suckling independently, and a larger pen with the existing older artificially reared lambs. This set up provides less competition for lambs while learning to use the machine and increased ease of observations by the stockperson. Within 24 hours the lambs generally will have taken to the feeder and are moved into the larger pen.

We use approximately 8kg of milk powder per lamb up to weaning. It is possible to rent a machine with capacity for up to 40 lambs at a cost of approximately £300 for six months.



*Rhys and Sara-Jane have collected data on the family farm, comparing machine and ewe-reared lambs.*

Whilst eliminating the labour involved with feeding lambs, it does require a keen stockperson to observe the health of the lambs, and a thorough daily clean of the machine to minimise disease transmission.

A high protein creep feed (18%) is offered ad-lib from the first week of age to promote growth. It is high in starch for rumen papillae development, while barley straw is used as bedding and provides a source of fibre.

Weaning is carried out when the machine-reared lambs reach five weeks of age. By this point, lambs should be consuming adequate amounts of fibre and concentrates to aid with good rumen development. We see losses due to twisted gut more commonly beyond this age. The expense of milk replacer is also a major consideration past this point. Weaning should be carried out abruptly, but try to keep lambs away from the ewes and lambs for a further four to five days to avoid any risk of cross-suckling.

# Part two of the wool supply chain: getting the best price for fleeces

Following the article in the February/March issue of *Sheep Farmer*, this second instalment explains what happens to wool after it has been graded at a BWMB depot and allocated to lots of 22-24 bales.



Mark Powell, BWMB Chief Operating Officer, explains that wool is tested before it is sold, to give buyers a full description of its type and quality: "The bales are tested by taking a core sample of wool from each bale allocated to a lot. These samples are tested at the Wool Testing Authority (Europe) for micron, yield, vegetable matter and colour.

## Lab results

"All of this information is essential for buyers to help them find the type and quality of wool they need for their customers. It takes about a week for the results to come back from the laboratory and once the results are known the wool is then ready to be allocated to a sale.

"Sale catalogues contain the vital information for buyers, including the grade number, the weight, the number of bales, the location of the wool and the technical information from the laboratory. BWMB offers wool

on a spot, three months and six months forward basis, giving buyers a chance to secure supplies for immediate use as well as for later delivery."

The board hosts 18 sales a year, explains incoming Board Chairman Ian Buchanan: "The aim is to provide a steady stream of wool to the market throughout the year, helping to maximise the value of the wool to producers, with an average of 1.5-1.7m kg sold at each sale."

Mr Powell continues, saying BWMB wool auctions are conducted electronically, with open cry auctions having ceased in 2003: "We were the first country in the world to introduce an electronic wool auction, but it still requires buyers to attend the sale at Bradford as we believe having all buyers in the room creates the tension and buzz required for a successful sale. The auction is completely transparent and buyers are able to watch other buyers bidding on each lot and how much is being bid at any one time."

Not every lot is always sold, as each has a reserve price

## British Wool Marketing Board

- Farmers' co-operative established in 1950.
- Nine farmer elected Board members.
- Public non-financial corporation with no Government funding.
- Represents approximately 47,000 sheep farmers in the UK.
- Head office based in Bradford.
- Network of 11 grading depots, supported by 14 intermediate depots.
- Handling approximately 30m kg of wool each year.



Above and left: Fleeces are compressed into bales and a core sample taken for testing.



Left bottom: The UK was the first to introduce an electronic auction for fleeces.



allocated depending on the current market, wool type, quality and laboratory test results. The yield potential provided by the lab is vital to this reserve price, as different lots are predicted to lose more or less weight (30% on average for British wool) between the greasy state and scouring.

## Better prices

"The competitive auction system drives buyers to pay the best price they can in order to secure the wool they need. It delivers better prices, with BWMB auctions consistently achieving the best wool prices in Europe," Mr Powell says.

"Once sold, wool is held at a depot until it has been paid for, with a strict policy that no wool is released until it is paid for in full. This puts the Board in a strong position and ensures there is no bad debt.

"After payment has been received it is the responsibility of buyers to arrange collection and haulage, with some wool scoured in the UK and other lots exported from the UK in its greasy state."

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# Creepfeeding revolution

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“ I have tried a lot of makes of creep feeders and had a number of issues causing stock loss, waste and overconsumption:

- the ladder ones had issues with one ewe or two lambs getting their heads stuck,
- the walk through creep feeders are hard to keep the ewes out after shearing. If they get in the feeder they can muck in the trough. This causes the lambs to push creep feed out of the trough onto the ground,
- when I moved any of the creep feeders, creep feed would fall out on the ground; and
- it was very time consuming filling them on a daily basis with 25kg bags. I would often be battling with large ewes trying to knock me over.

Since I have had **3IN1FEEDERS**, I have not had an injury to any ewes or lambs. The new lambs took to the system very easily. When I was using the **3IN1FEEDER** as a creep, I could notice the lambs coming back and forth all day. I had it set so the lambs would get a bit, little and often. The bunches of lambs were very consistent.

The 1800 model is ideal for my farm because I can fill it in bulk with the Front End Loader. It also feeds three times the amount of lambs than other creep feeders so the initial outlay isn't that much more.

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”  
*Robert Watkins*



**Robert, Jack and Charlie Watkins**  
Lower Park Farm, Vowchurch, Herefordshire

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# On My Farm – The Next Generation

**Regular readers of Sheep Farmer will know that NSA often features young people in the sheep sector at the back of the magazine.**

With 12 keen NSA Next Generation Ambassadors taking part in NSA activities this year, we are spoilt for choice and will be running short pieces from them all in the coming editions. Longer diary/blog entries can be found from all 12 Ambassadors in the 'Case Studies' area at [www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk](http://www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk).

The NSA Next Generation Ambassadors

met each other for the first time in February, coming together for three days and covering a wide range of topics, both in a 'classroom' format and through farm visits – see *panel*. NSA is looking forward to a second delivery session in May and another three sessions later in the year, with a debt of gratitude to all the companies and individuals who are supporting the project.

NSA is always interested to hear from young people in the sheep sector and you don't have to be an NSA Next Generation

Ambassador to be featured on these pages. If you would like to write about your experiences in farming please contact us.

*Below: Eblex's Dr Liz Genever leads a session on sward and soil assessment.*



## Delivery session topics

- Performance recording
- Selecting stock and breeding replacements
- The UK sheep sector by numbers
- Designing the perfect ewe!
- Sheep diseases and flock health plans
- Biosecurity
- Body condition scoring
- Grass and forage management
- Soil assessments
- Grass breeding



*A team of Ambassadors pitches their idea for an ideal breeding ewe to 'the Dragon's Den' of NSA's Phil Stocker and Eblex's Chris Lloyd. Three teams competed for (hypothetical!) funding of £100k to set up a breeding company.*



*An interactive farm walk saw host farmer Will Halford and his vet Anne Gibbs provide tips on different prolapse treatments.*

## Oli Newman

**The start of the year brought plenty of sheep work for Oli (21) from Gloucestershire. He is the employed**



**shepherd on a mixed farm with a café and farm shop. Writing in February, Oli says:** "Winter feeding keeps me busy, along with sorting through my remaining lambs, splitting them into certain groups: fit/nearly fit; which ones we would sell as stores, as they looked unlikely to finish without a lot of extra time and feed that we couldn't spare this year; and then a slightly mixed group which we keep right the way through to around the end of May/start of June, when we will have the first of our new season lamb. This allows us to continue to sell our own lamb/hogget in the farm shop all year round, while lambing the entire flock only once around mid-April."

## Lewis Sayers

**Writing in February, young shepherd Lewis (19) from Nottinghamshire, says:**

"I have registered myself as self-employed, which has brought in some new jobs. For the first few weeks I took on a job putting a land drain in someone's field, along with looking after my stock and stock on two other smallholdings. Coming up to the middle of the month it was time to attend the first of the delivery sessions with the NSA. I was filled with nerves, as I knew I was the youngest of the Ambassadors and I wasn't sure if I'd fit in, but it turned out the three days we all spent together were brilliant. We learnt a lot from the guest speakers and from going to a couple of farms. Coming back from the three days it gave me so many ideas.

"Just as the sheep were getting ready for lambing I was contacted by my local



radio station for one of their reporters to come out to have a look at the sheep and to talk with me about lambing, so there's a possibility I might be going on the local news!"

## Harry Frederick

**Writing from his family farm in Kent in early March, Harry (27) says:**

"Lambing is exactly two weeks away and the sheep are looking well. It's time to wheel out the official lambing caravan for its yearly outing, and the money I'll save on rent for the next month has already been used on high quality concentrates for the ewes. Money well spent I think! My next step is to choose an EID system for the flock so I can follow the daily liveweight gain of the lambs and monitor the performance of my different breeds."



*continued on page 52*



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**SPREAD THE WORD!** Entry to NSA Welsh Sheep, NSA North Sheep, NSA South West and NSA Sheep Northern Ireland this summer is FREE\* for all NSA members. Encourage friends, family and neighbours to become a member by calling 01684 892661 or going to www.nationalsheep.org.uk/membership.  
\*Conditions apply; visit the website for details. Entry to NSA Highland Sheep is half price for members.

# Opportunities in the sheep sector for next generation of shepherds

As NSA's Next Generation activity continues to strengthen, we are increasingly in a position to promote opportunities for young people in the sheep sector, some of which are shared here.

We encourage members to let NSA know about jobs, share farming opportunities or land availability specifically for the next generation, and will advertise these at no cost as part of NSA's



## Rental opportunity in Lake District, Cumbria

A long-standing NSA member is keen to create an opportunity for an experienced new entrant or young farmer and is offering to rent, under a five-year FBT, a four-bedroom farmhouse along with approximately 250 acres of land in the Lake District, Cumbria. The land is at 600-1,900ft with in-bye meadow land, permanent pasture and hill land. There is a flock of existing Swaledale sheep that would be included in the letting.

This opportunity would typically suit a young couple where there was some outside income from other employment. The land will become available in September, although the farmhouse would be available in advance. Please send serious expressions of interest, in the first instance, to enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk marked 'Cumbria Farm Opportunity'.

## Employment opportunity on growing Devon farm

NSA member Philip Letts is looking to employ an agricultural college graduate, to be based near Exeter, Devon. The farm currently has 50 sheep (a mix of South Down and Badger Faces) but development is planned and a number of exciting initiatives are in the pipeline, making the position suitable for someone who is keen and enthusiastic about helping the businesses achieve these goals. Day to day activities would include overseeing the flock and meat sales, maintaining fields and fences, helping with stables and horses, working on longer term initiatives (including woodland, vineyard and fruit tree development) and helping the gardener. The right candidate would be flexible with a 'will do' attitude, enthusiasm and a desire to learn. Experience with animals is essential. More information from Nicola Quick at nicola@blurgroup.com.

commitment to sustaining the sheep sector through young people.

Of particular interest are two enquiries received since the New Year from members interested in starting a share farming agreement similar to the one that NSA Chairman Samuel Wharry runs in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. Sam has given his business a new boost by starting a 'company' to run his farm, jointly owned and operated by himself and 23-year-old James Davison.

## Share farming

NSA is in discussions with these members who have expressed an interest in doing something similar, or an alternative sharing farming arrangement, and will help them explore their options. If they decide to start looking for a young person to go into business with, we will share this information via the usual NSA communication routes.

## ► Lynn Allison

Late February brought some extra work for Lynn (22) from Wigtownshire. She splits her time between the family farm, local mart and other jobs where she can. She writes: "The hoggs



were starting to get bother with lice so I brought them in and treated them, and treated the ones that had sore feet. The neighbouring farm was due a TB test so I was helping there for the two days and in return I got my Blackies scanned.

"On the second day of testing we managed to get the cows through the race and back to their fields in time for me to get some time at the market. This was the first store cattle sale of the year. While at the market I managed to spend some time working the weight scales, which I hadn't used since coming back from New Zealand last year."

## Thomas Carrick

Writing from his family farm in Cumbria in early March, Thomas (32) says:

"Our Bluefaced Leicesters have lambed well and got me into the spirit for the 'main event'. Being purebred, they are always more work than the Mule lambs, but AI keeps it tight and the job is wrapped up well before the rest of the ewes are due at the end of this month. A nice, brief lambing recap!

"Swale ewes are fit, and on the back of a very kind autumn have got plenty of lambs in them; none more so than those wintered away on grass.

"The challenge for these ewes now is to make sure that in these last few weeks pre-lambing their condition doesn't slip, and just as importantly, getting the mineral intake correct; something which is a lot easier when feeding a full ration at home."



## George Gough

Having set off for a lambing job in Devon for March and April, self-employed shepherd George (22) from Knighton, Powys, reflects on a busy February:

"A big commitment that always occurs every February is the YFC pantomime competition. Being Vice Chairman of Knighton YFC and having an extremely young club it was a massive delight to finish seventh this year, and I would encourage any young person to get involved in the YFC movement.

"A very wet Thursday afternoon was spent listening to a splendid line up of speakers at the NSA Cymru/Wales Region AGM. It was a real pleasure to meet last year's Ambassador from Wales, Rhydian Thomas, and listen to all the activity's that they undertook as part of the programme and how he is now using all these new skills to improve and build forward in to the future."



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