

# Sheep Farmer

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015



A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

**SPECIAL FEATURE: LAMB PROMOTION  
ON THE DOMESTIC MARKET**

**MORE ON POSITIVE FARMER-VET  
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## Volatility shows its many forms with prices, weather and politics

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive  
**With 'volatility' being the buzz word that frames our future, we have certainly had a couple of months as a taster with markets and the weather leading the field – but added to by some home-grown volatility in the form of farmer action and promotional activity for lamb, and then of course some disturbing happenings surrounding AHDB Beef and Lamb.**

Let's start with AHDB, because it would have been a complete shock for most sheep farmers to realise the level of statutory control that Government ministers hold over the use of levy money. At a time when the lamb market desperately needed a boost, to find that promotional activity planned by AHDB Beef and Lamb was significantly delayed was a kick in the teeth. Stuart Roberts' resignation as AHDB Beef and Lamb Board Chairman was unexpected, but he was clear he did it to expose some uncomfortable truths that may otherwise not have come out.

### Government control

To find that AHDB, under the jurisdiction of the Government, is treated in the same way as organisations like Natural England and the Environment Agency under a category of 'arm's length bodies' is clearly wrong when you consider how these different bodies are funded; the exemption that exists for 'significantly different' bodies needs to be put into action.

That the promotional bid was finally approved is welcome, but this cannot detract from the fact there are some fundamental points of principle that need to be resolved to prevent this happening again. Furthermore, with Defra facing more cuts in funding (of the order of 25-40%) it must not be assumed by anyone that levy money should be used to replace a reducing Government budget. The worked funded by levy money must be properly ring-fenced to benefit the sector from which it is collected, with the activities it funds being decided upon by the democratically elected body that has been put into place to make these decisions and be accountable – in our case, the AHDB Beef and Lamb Board. If the Government wants to 'audit' expenditure to ensure no wrong doing, that's fine, but decisions on the activities needed should not be theirs.

Even without the levy related arguments, the lamb price over the



summer led producers to become more and more frustrated. Some became angry and demonstrated this through direct action while others decided to try to do something positive about growing demand for lamb.

I can fully understand the frustration and despair felt, and there is no doubt the protest messages was heard but some, but to back that up with some positive promotional activity felt as though there was a silver lining to an otherwise dark cloud. The NSA played its part, supporting British Lamb Week where we could – see *page 12* – and it was good to see work already underway being more talked about and pushed to another level. It was even better to see many farmers get involved with local and regional lamb tastings and promotional activity, with several telling me how much they enjoyed it and felt it worthwhile.

### Boosting consumption

With farmers taking matters into their own hands, it is more important than ever to know what our levy bodies are doing to boost domestic consumption. NSA has therefore asked them all to contribute to this edition of Sheep Farmer magazine – see *pages 14 to 20*. Our domestic market still accounts for some 60% of UK production, but with an ageing consumer base and still too many basic traditional

cuts on the shelf, we have a job to do if we are to maintain consumption as future generations come through.

The finished lamb market over the summer months has not been good and while prices look to be moving in the right direction at the time of writing, and are somewhere close now to where they would have been last year, we have entirely missed the peak that we would have expected to see in normal years and many farmers will not have seen their costs covered. But cull ewe prices have held well and this may have, so far, helped stronger breeding sale prices than were expected. Store lamb values too could be a lot worse than the prices reported so far.

If the markets and the politics have been all over the place, the weather has been just as catchy. Some regions have barely had two dry days together, creating hay and forage-making challenges. It feels like we are owed a summer yet again.

Oh, and the new shadow environment and rural affairs secretary is a vegan ... volatility is clearly here to stay.

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# News Update

## NSA Lambing List is live

The 2015/16 NSA Lambing List is now open for members looking for a student to help them on the farm this lambing season. Simply follow the simple steps at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lambing-list](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lambing-list) and we will advertise the position on your behalf to a range of veterinary and agricultural students looking for a valuable work experience placement. Contact NSA Head Office with any questions, or if you do not have internet access.

More than 130 students have already registered an interest with NSA and will be notified when farmers begin to add to the online list. They will contact NSA members directly to discuss the potential for a placement.

## Online presence for NSA Make More of Mutton

The NSA Make More of Mutton project now has its own website at [www.makemoreofmutton.org.uk](http://www.makemoreofmutton.org.uk). Use the site to engage in the quality mutton supply chain.

The site was launched at an event in Devon (pictured) – read more about this and other mutton activity on page 19.



## Sad losses

NSA lost a strong supporter last month, with the passing of Bob Payne. Bob was a Trustee of the NSA and, until recently, a long standing NSA Central Region Chairman. Additionally, as evidenced by the huge number of people attending his funeral, Bob had many lives away from sheep farming, including as a widely-respected social worker in Sheffield for many years. The ceremony was a wonderful celebration of his life, with his passion for sheep reflected in the choice of a wool coffin.

Another loss in recent months was of Philip Whitcombe, a strong supporter of NSA and a former treasurer of the organisation. Our thoughts are with both Bob and Philip's families.

## Movements warning for English sheep keepers

NSA is aware that a very high proportion of sheep farmers in England receiving RPA inspections are getting cross compliance penalties due to sheep identification and movements reporting. A critical factor appears to be that farmers are not checking reports as they are received from CPRCs (e.g. markets and abattoirs), which means that when the inspector comes they have a list that is not compatible with the moves that have actually taken place.

NSA strongly encourages all farmers using CPRCs to check reports returned to them and, if there are any inconsistencies, to contact ARAMS as soon as possible to get the movements recorded on the database accurately. We understand that ARAMS will provide sheep keepers with a list of all data it holds for a CPH since its inception last year and, to our knowledge, this is a problem unique to England.

## Reaction to HNV article

The article on High Natural Value farming in the last edition of Sheep Farmer prompted some interesting responses, including a submission from Keith McDougall, an NSA Vice President from Norfolk. You can read his comments on the role of farming in encouraging biodiversity on the NSA website – find his comments in the 'August' section at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/news](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/news). For further comments on this, or any other Sheep Farmer content, please contact us.

## Four sheep events in 2016

NSA is looking forward to its biennial Sheep Event next year, as well as three excellent regional events:-

- **NSA Eastern Region Winter Fair:** Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February: Melton Mowbray Market, Leicestershire.
- **NSA Scot Sheep:** Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June: Blythbank Farm, West Linton, Scottish Borders.
- **NSA South Sheep:** Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June. Pythouse Farms, Tisbury, Wiltshire.
- **NSA Sheep Event:** Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July: Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire.

## NSA Next Generation open invitation event

For the third year running, NSA Next Generation has teamed up with RASE Innovation for Agriculture to provide an open day for young people in the sheep sector.

The event is moving to northern England this year, by kind permission of



Newton Rigg College, Penrith, Cumbria. The one-day session on **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October** will build on the success of last year's event (pictured) and provide

information for young sheep farmers and new entrants, as well as practical, interactive sessions. *More on page 48.*

## New NSA Articles voted on at national AGM

NSA held its AGM in August, where it was agreed updated Articles of Association would be adopted. As Sheep Farmer went to press, these were with the charities commissions in England/Wales and Scotland for final approval, after which they will be used for governance of the whole organisation, and available publically on the website.

Also at the AGM, the 2014 Annual Report was adopted and His Grace the Duke of Montrose reapproved as NSA President. The short meeting was followed by an excellent tour of the Rhug Estate (pictured) with Farm Manager Gareth Jones, by kind permission of Lord Robert Newborough.

As well as plenty of sheep, the tour took in the estate's table poultry,

cereal and bison enterprises. Mr Jones explained the estate's move to establish a Swaledale flock, based mainly on the mountains and with the intention of producing their own North of England Mules.

These will form the basis of their lamb production, after being mated with Texel, Charollais and associated crosses. The tour could not take in the additional 485ha (1,200 acres) of land closer to the coast, where the Rhug Estate produces saltmarsh lamb, but with some 5,500ha (13,500 acres) being farmed overall there was plenty to see.

The night before the AGM, Prysor Williams of Bangor University provided an excellent talk about engagement between farmers and researchers. A taster from his presentation can be found on page 23.



## Email request

If your email address is not included on the NSA membership database you are missing out on the dedicated NSA Weekly Email Update, a popular newsletter sent to members every Friday with the latest sheep sector news and information. Members not currently receiving the Update can email [membership@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:membership@nationalsheep.org.uk) to be added to the database.

## Sheep book giveaway

To celebrate the publication of Susannah Parkin's new British Sheep Breeds book, NSA's free prize draw has seen copies

given to five NSA members: Dougie Crew, Wiltshire; Clair Llewellyn, Staffordshire; T.R. and P. Morgan, Llanelli; Alfred Roettgers, Iserlohn, Germany; and Sarah Tester, Kent. The draw was also open to non-members, and a sixth copy went to Stuart Piper of Langney, East Sussex. Susannah Parkin is a member of the NSA South East Region Committee and a contributor to several NSA projects. Her book is now available to buy from NSA for £7.99 plus post and packing. Contact NSA Head Office to order copies.

## Book now for biennial sheep breeders event

NSA is involved again in the biennial Sheep Breeders Round Table, with Chief Executive Phil Stocker chairing a session and Chairman Samuel Wharry speaking on his experiences with recording performance data in a hill situation.

This year promises another excellent conference, starting at midday on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November and running through to Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at Eastwood Hall, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. *Download a booking form at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/SBRT](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/SBRT).*

# NSA reports – devolved nations

## NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Davies, Development Officer

**With prices the way they have been this year, HCC's activity around promotion of Welsh Lamb has never been more important, and NSA Cymru/Wales Region was pleased to offer its support to the Welsh Lamb mobile billboard as it began its tour last month - see picture. Over the last few weeks we have seen a slight improvement in the market, which has helped some of the breeding sales but not all.**



I have continued to attend stakeholder meetings about EID Cymru and its implementation as the new electronic sheep movements database in Wales. At the last meeting, Welsh Government announced the database was ready and that work to add CPH numbers and an Ear Tag Allocation System would be done by mid-October. The database will be initially tested by auctioneers and abattoirs, with it being mandatory for them to use the system by January 2016. Farmers will have the option to use it, and Welsh Government says more information will be communicated to farmers in due course. We will keep members updated.

Also towards the end of the year, Welsh Government plans to consult on holding identifiers and associated livestock movements, as part of a CPH review. NSA is also keeping up the pressure for an optional alternative to the six-day rule as talks continue on the use of quarantine units on farm.

NSA Cymru/Wales Region has responded to the Welsh Government's request for views on its strategic framework for agriculture, which is its vision for a prosperous and resilient industry. We agreed with the vision in general, but stated the importance of the role of Welsh Government being more clearly included. NSA believes the future success of our industry in Wales, where many public goods are expected and regulated, will be dependent on a true industry-government partnership within which the Welsh Government is committed and equipped to carry out its responsibilities.

## Biosecurity survey

NSA members in Wales are encouraged to complete a survey to assess the industry's understanding of biosecurity. The questionnaire, compiled by the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group and the Welsh Government, can be completed online or a paper version downloaded. Go to [www.gov.wales/biosecurity](http://www.gov.wales/biosecurity).

NSA Cymru/Wales Region will continue to discuss crucial matters such as this at its meetings – and the next committee meeting will be on Tuesday 10th November on the Royal Welsh Showground. We are also trying to organise a visit to Pencefn Feeds, and we will have our usual stand at the Welsh Winter Fair at the end of November when we look forward to meeting members old and new.



NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chairman Paul Wozenkraft (far left) supporting HCC's Welsh Lamb mobile billboard.

## NSA Northern Ireland Region

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer

**Autumn has arrived for another year and summer 2015 is one a lot of people may want to forget. All sectors of agriculture have suffered from negative income for a variety of reasons, mainly influenced by world events and currency.**



In Northern Ireland we've have farmer protests at Stormont and supermarket carparks, which may have allowed farmers to vent their wrath but have achieved very little. I wonder if we would be better taking time to look at what is directly in our own control (our inputs and management decisions) than waving placards and upsetting our buyers and consumers who we need to purchase our product.

We have had a wet enough summer with little chance to save hay. But conditions have allowed most to harvest bumper crops of grass silage so, assuming we have a decent autumn, fodder supplies will see us all through the coming winter. Our newly 'active' farmers (for CAP reasons) have also added to the amount of fodder saved, but may now be wondering if this farming game is really worthwhile getting into as fodder prices at present do little more than cover the costs!

Recently Cafre has run two very useful information events on rush control. Northern Ireland has been slowly seeing an increase in rush infestation, which needs to be halted for several reasons. One is reduction in more productive grass swards and another is the risk of land becoming ineligible for the Basic Payment Scheme. The lessons learnt at these information days need to be taken on board and rush controlled in a better way. Cutting, spraying, wiping and application of lime to raise soil pH all have a role to play in our battle against this very intrusive weed.

The debate around whole life farm assurance for red meat continues and, while the NI livestock industry remains fully supportive of farm assurance, we believe the financial burden of additional bolt-on regulations and premium requirements should be covered by those asking for such conditions. NSA Northern Ireland Region will continue to work, with other supporters of farm assurance, to keep a realistic and viable scheme in place.

## NSA spots potential

Congratulations to Dennis Taylor, who won the first ever Young Shepherd of the Year Competition in Northern Ireland eight years ago. He had reserve champion at the Suffolk Sheep Society Show and Sale in Stirling in August with a ram lamb, and sold it for 18,000gns. NSA saw his potential several years ago!



Weather conditions in Northern Ireland this summer mean bumper crops of silage but little hay.

## NSA Scottish Region

By George Milne, Development Officer

**NSA Scottish Region is playing its part in trying to increase the consumption of Scotch Lamb.**



Chairman Sybil Macpherson met with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on a farm in the Borders to discuss the lowest prime lamb prices received by farmers for five years. Meanwhile, I met with Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead at the opening Lairg store lamb sale to highlight NSA's concerns.

One of our ideas to help the situation was to hold a large one-day lamb promotion and tasting event in conjunction with the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association (SFMTA). This went ahead in Perth town centre in mid-September, cooking eight different cuts of lamb from a mobile catering unit for passing shoppers to taste. The products were linked to three local butchers in Perth, with vouchers handed out encouraging the public to purchase more lamb.

We believe this is the first lamb tasting event of its kind, offering a large selection of cuts, and it has the potential to be followed up in other towns across Scotland. QMS provided recipe leaflets to hand out and assisted with Scotch Lamb branding, and the timing of the event was to follow on from the successful QMS lamb campaign and Love Lamb weekend, extending this activity and hopefully keeping it in the minds of the consumer for a longer period of time, to encourage repeat buying of lamb products.

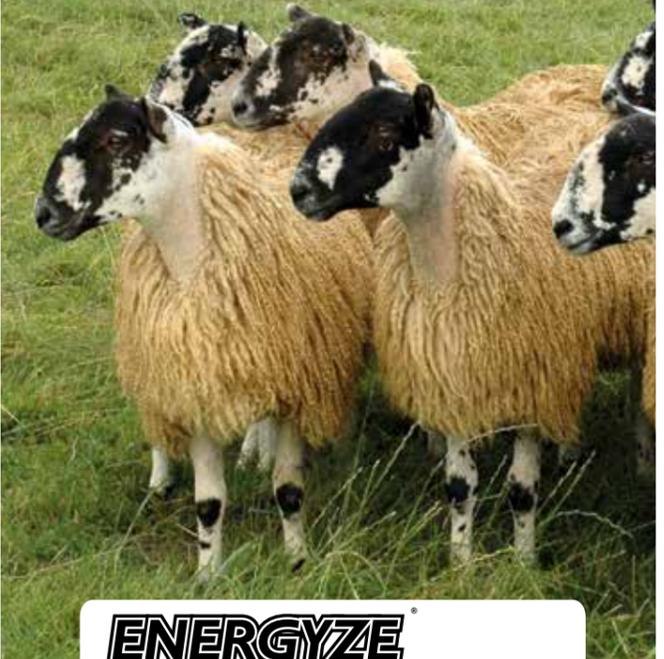
The first meeting of the Scottish Sheep Vision Group took place recently. NSA Scottish Region has a seat on the group, which is chaired by John Scott and is due to report back to the Minister by Christmas.

The group will focus its attention on issues such as primary production, processing output, marketing of prime lamb through a more effective supply chain, knowledge transfer and stimulating confidence levels in the sheep sector. I strongly believe a key factor here is getting lamb onto the consumers shopping list on a regular basis, as if consumer demand was increased then the whole supply chain would be able to function in a more profitable way.



NSA Scottish Region's lamb tasting in Perth town centre proved very popular.

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# NSA report – English regions

## Central

By Richard Wheeldon, Chairman

### Another summer is coming to an end.

At Upper Booth the weather has certainly been varied with no long warm sunny periods, yet it has not had any significant effect on our campsite occupancy which is generally a good indicator of weather. We got the sheep sheared and silage in reasonable time and in decent weather.

Living and working in such a popular area can be very rewarding and also a real challenge. The campsite does give opportunity to engage with people whose lives are far removed from the countryside; many are genuinely interested and enjoy a good natter. Others are rather less engaging and treat the area as a 'playground' – a term used far too often by organisations that should know better.

The public have many rights within the countryside but an awful lot do not accept the responsibilities that go with their rights. We have to time sheep work to avoid weekends, as it is impossible to work safely and efficiently with so many people and vehicles about – many where they shouldn't be.

There seems to be a reasonable crop of lambs this year, and some hesitancy as to when to sell due to prices that seem to have picked up a bit. There are a lot of mucky back ends about (lots of wet grass?) and still a few maggots, but not quite so much as last year. The wet autumn suggests we should be aware

of fluke issues and the Upper Booth flock manager tells me vets have seen nematodirus throughout the season rather than in the traditional spring rise.

As autumn mists are descending – as thick as a bag this morning on Rushup Edge and a number of gathering days has been delayed in the last week or two – I reflect on a summer with reasonable weather, decent lamb crop, satisfactory harvest, happy campers and motivated apprentices getting excellent experience and support from their employers. The future of the industry will be safe in their hands.

However there is still much work to do to balance the quality of life, farming and landscape management within working rural communities, given the expectations and numbers of visitor to the most popular areas of our region.

## Eastern

By Jonathan Barber, Manager

**Our Annual Regional Members' Meeting will be held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October at the Heath Court Hotel, Newmarket at 6.30pm.** We will review our activities over the past year and look forward to the next, followed by a guest speaker. Guaranteed to be an illuminating and interesting evening, we look forward to seeing you there. Please let us know if you are likely to attend, as we plan to serve a hot carvery meal at the end of the meeting – *contact details on page 2.* We will also

be discussing the biennial NSA Eastern Region Winter Fair, to be held at Melton Mowbray Market on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February.

## Marches

By Kevin Harrison, Chairman

**So autumn is here already.** I hope those that had to buy replacements bought them wisely and got the quality they wanted at the price they expected. I would imagine they are now back home in quarantine or safely introduced to the flock. For those who breed your own replacements, I hope you have managed to achieve the quality of stock you wanted.

For me, this time of the year is when to reflect on the months gone by and look forward to next year as everything starts again. In a bad year it is very easy to 'give up' and focus less on things, but for me this year has certainly intensified my focus on the sheep flock and how it performs.

I have very few lambs left from this year's crop but I would imagine those of you with lambs left or those that buy a lot of store lambs will be watching the lamb price very keenly. I hope it firms up and stabilises enough for people to draw their lambs when they are fit and in-spec rather than when the price dictates over quality. If we want British lamb to have the reputation it deserves all year round, it should be sold in-spec all year round. This can then make it easier for those selling and promoting it.

AHDB has come under a lot of pressure recently through actions at the top, but what we must remember is that there are many people from AHDB Beef and Lamb working hard on the coalface to help with market intelligence, knowledge transfer and to promote beef and lamb. These people need our support.

The word 'hope' seems to appear quite regularly in this report. 'Hope springs eternal' and we should always find fresh cause for optimism.

Our Annual Regional Members' Meeting will be held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November, 7pm at NSA Head Office in Malvern, Worcestershire. We have some excellent speakers lined up, full details of which can be found on the website.

## Northern Update

- Following Julie Sedgewick's recent announcement to finish her long and successful time as NSA Northern Region Manager, a replacement will be advertised for shortly. To express an interest please email Julie – contact details on page 2.
- The Annual Regional Members' Meeting will be held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February.

- The Wilson family, NSA members and hosts of NSA North Sheep 2013, have been working tirelessly for some time now to raise awareness of Parkinson's. This disease has affected both sides of the family, including the diagnosis of David seven years ago. The family would like to raise the issue amongst farming communities, as they believe many could be suffering in silence, and are also on a fundraising mission. More than £1,000 has been raised so far, with plans in place for further events including car boot sales, sheep shearing competitions and a promise auction. Kathryn, her son Richard and his fiancé Alex have also taken part in the Trek Mont Blanc Challenge – make a donation at [www.virginmoneygiving.com/team/Top2ewes](http://www.virginmoneygiving.com/team/Top2ewes).

- Correction: NSA Head Office apologises for an omission in the NSA Northern Region report in the August/September Sheep Farmer magazine. The NSA North Sheep Committee was thanked for its tireless work transporting stand equipment onto the field to prevent the ground getting churned up in the wet weather ahead of the event – they were only able to do this through the generous loan of Gators, Polaris and Kubota utility vehicles. We apologise for missing Gators from the original report.

## South East

By Bob Blanden, Manager

**August and September were both busy months in the region, and I write this even before our visit to the Isle of Wight late in September.**

First up was a visit to Shepherd Neame Brewery in Faversham, Kent. This was a fascinating and interesting visit with a sampling session, followed by a pub lunch. We then visited Stewart Wood's Romney flock, one of the few in the UK that has not used NZ genetics. We also saw his Suffolk sheep, which are lambed later to produce shearling rams that have not been forced. Stewart's apple and pear orchards have evolved into a very science-based enterprise. We could see huge changes from the plantings of the older trees, which were further apart, to neater tidy rows closer together for easier picking and spraying. The cold stores were lessons in temperature and humidity control management and investment decisions.

Two rams-fit-for-purpose meetings were held jointly with AHDB Beef and Lamb at Sparsholt College, Hampshire, and Warborough Farms, Oxfordshire, highlighting the importance of selection and management to obtain optimum life expectancy and performance. This can make the difference of up to £8/lamb born. Our thanks to Nerys Wright from AHDB for her organisation and presentation, and to vet Keith O'Donnell

## NSA autumn meetings around the UK

We are heading into the season of NSA Annual Regional Members' Meeting. There are three happening in the immediate weeks, with more to follow in the New Year.

Business at each meeting will include: election/re-approval of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer; nomination/re-approval of the regional Trustee Director; election of new committee members and endorsement of current members; a chairman's report; and a treasurer's report relating to the region's finances.

Members residing in these regions are eligible to appoint a proxy vote on their behalf if they cannot attend their region's meeting, but this must be done in advance with NSA Head Office. Download a proxy notice at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events) or contact NSA Head Office.

### Notice is hereby given that:-

- The Annual Regional Members' Meeting of NSA Eastern Region will be held at Heath Court Hotel, Moulton Road, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 8DY, 6.30pm on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2015.
- The Annual Regional Members' Meeting of NSA Marches Region will be held at the NSA Sheep Centre, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR13 6PH, 7pm on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015.
- The Annual Regional Members' Meeting of NSA Northern Ireland Region will be held at AFBI, Large Park, Hillsborough, County Down, BT26 6DR, 7.30pm on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

from Westpoint who covered health issues and how to do a ram MOT. We were also treated to a demonstration by farm manager David Barber of the semen collecting and cervical AI that they use at Warborough on 1,500 ewes.

It is with great pleasure that we can announce the date and venue for NSA South Sheep 2016. It will be held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June. The venue that has been chosen is Pythouse Farms, near Tisbury, Wiltshire. It is strategically located near to where the A303 is crossed by the A350, making it easily accessible from a large part of the South of England. More information in the next issue.

## South West

By Bryan Griffiths, Chairman

**A great show of rams at the NSA South West Region ram sale met a good crowd of buyers looking to invest in next year's lamb crop. Inevitably prices were a little easier, but buyers and sellers were generally able to do business – see page 9 for a full report.**

The AHDB Beef and Lamb debate has dominated headlines for some weeks and the NSA South West Region Committee has been very active in raising farmers concerns over what is seen to be our levy money. I travelled to Stoneleigh with Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, and while he met with senior staff at AHDB I had the privilege of representing NSA at a meeting with Natural England. The task was to try to develop a means of recording stocking levels for options on land within environmental schemes. The challenge, as ever, was finding something acceptable to the EU yet practicable to farmers. On route home a member phoned in with a query over eartags, which we were quickly able to advise on the relevant regulation. All

## Beer, sheep and apples on show



A brewery tour by NSA South East Region was followed by a farm walk and orchard tour with Kent farmer Stewart Wood.

part of the service at the NSA.

Around 60 members attended our farm walk at the Old Prison Farm on Dartmoor and we saw some fine stock produced in one of the harshest environments within South West England. As our hosts Neil and Matt Cole explained, traditionally one didn't go to the farm, one was sent there for hard labour. When handling stock in the yards they have found it best to ignore the advice yelled by 'local residents'; you can see from the photo just how close the prison is. Many thanks to Neil and Matt for an informative and thought-provoking evening, and to Harpers Feeds for providing the most enjoyable refreshments.

## In the shadow of Dartmoor Prison



NSA South West Region laid on a farm walk at the Old Prison Farm Dartmoor, by kind permission of Neil Cole.

# Busy sale saw top price of 7,000gns

A busier day than for many years saw a top price of 7,000gns and good average prices at the NSA Wales and Border Main Ram Sale at the Royal Welsh Showground in late September.

A clearance of 84% saw some 4,400 sheep sold, generating a turnover of nearly £2.2million. Organisers say their determination to provide quality, health

assured rams paid off in what has been a challenging year for sheep farmers.

Ram Sale Chairman John Owens says: "Good sheep sold very well, considering the way the sheep trade has been. The prices prove that buyers continue to come to Builth for the quality of the veterinary inspected rams. It's unique in a ram sale of this size."



The 7,000gns Border Leicester that topped the sale (pictured) provided a fitting finish to a long career for Jim Brown who regularly travels from Scotland. The ram went to Jim's brother, Pete, who farms at the other side of Scotland on the Ile of Arran. Pete said he had spotted him at the Royal Highland Show and was determined to buy him.

A Texel shearling from W.T. Davies and Co sold for 6,800gns to the Quick family of Crediton, Devon, and Jim and Nick Hartwright, of the Whitehart Flock, Hereford. The Texel breed champion, a ram lamb from Geoff and Eifion Morgan of Blaencar Farm, Sennybridge, sold for 6,000gns to Boden and Davies of Stockport, Greater Manchester.

Emyr Hughes of Wolfscastle, Haverfordwest, won the Charollais breed championship and sold another ram lamb from the same pen for the breed top price of 2,350gns to R.S. and J.S. Gregory of Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

Other highlights included: a Lleyn shearling from G. and A. Fort, West Yorkshire, for 4,800gns; a top in the Bluefaced Leicester ring for R.P. Williams and Sons of Lydbury, Shropshire, for 3,900gns; 3,800gns for a Welsh Mountain ram sold by A. and M. Jones of Llanafan, Builth Wells; and a Beltex from E.L. Evans and Co, Rhayader, at 2,900gns.

Full reports for all NSA ram sales in the 'Event Reports' tab at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events).

## Trend set by early sale

With top prices and clearance rates higher than a year previous, confidence was also higher than expected at the NSA Wales and Border Early Ram Sale in early August.

Top price was 1,300gns for a Charollais from Yorkshire breeders C.W. Marwood and Son, sold to D. and A. Fenwick of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.

Close behind was 1,200gns for a Texel shearling from Towcester, Northamptonshire, which was bought by R.E. and C.J. Davies of Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

Jane Smith, NSA Wales and Border Ram Sales Executive Director, reports: "The early sale achieved the highest clearance in its 25-year history with 82% of rams sold. Turnover exceeded £195,000, with some breed averages well up on last year."

# Strong NSA sales for Eastern and SW

The inclusion of crossbred rams for the first time at the NSA South West Ram Sale in mid-August attracted a lot of interest, with a Texel cross Charollais selling to £609. The ram, bred by E.W. Quick and Sons went to J. Daw of Morchard Bishop, Devon.

The Quick family also had a good day with their pure Texels, but the top price here was for F.H. Chave and Son's shearling ram, sold at £924 to L.T. Foale of Kingsbridge, Devon.

H.C. Derryman and Sons dominated the Suffolk and Hampshire Down rings, taking prices of £945 and £420 respectively. The Beltex ring saw a strong trade, with the best price being £840 for Judith Lapthorne, paid by K. Lukehurst of Kent. And in the Charollais ring, shearlings saw a top of £787.50, achieved by Gerald Burrough.

The two NSA Eastern Region sales, held at Rugby, Warwickshire, in late August and Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, in mid-September both saw a good trade. Buyers were out in force at Melton for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary sale, pushing a top price of



A busy ring at the NSA South West sale (above) and a trophy for best pen of ram lambs for Seahawes at Melton (right).

720gns for a Texel shearling from R.R. and M. Lawrence of Nuneaton, Warwickshire. This sold to G.L. Gent and Son of Oundle, Northamptonshire.

Next in the prices were two Charollais shearling rams from R. Allen, Langrick, Lincolnshire, at 710gns and 700gns. Both sold to B.L. Burton Farms, Rempstone, Nottinghamshire. Mr Allen had an excellent sale and his first prize pen of four rams averaged £719.25.

The best of the lambs came from the champion pen from Seahawes,



Little Chesterton, Oxfordshire. Their best Charollais lamb sold for 500gns to Stephen Cobbald, Sudbury, Suffolk.

At the earlier sale, prices topped at 620gns for a Charollais ram from C.W. Thomas, who also took first prize in the shearling ram section and sold another two shearlings for 600gns and 560gns.

Other top prices were 550gns for a Charollais shearling from A.D. and R.M. Thomas and 520gns for a Texel shearling from R.R. and M. Lawrence. A Suffolk ram lamb sold at 350gns for J.B. and R.L. Cook.

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# NSA recommendation pays off

**It was a good day for Andrew Dickin when he heard he was the ninth winner of NSA's 2015 membership recruitment prize – he got the news he had won a Shearwell EID stick reader kit at the same time as receiving the best price for his lambs at market so far this year.**

Having been entered into the draw after a neighbour recommended he became an NSA member, Mr Dickin says: "The Shearwell EID Stick Reader will be incredibly beneficial to my record keeping, which in my opinion is the worst part of the job. It'll also help my back because I won't have to bend down so much! I'd been researching EID stick readers recently, as I knew I'd want to buy one at some point in the future.

"I was helping a local farmer scan some sheep when he recommended joining NSA and how we both would stand a chance of winning a stick reader if I signed up. Bob Blanden, who does some work for NSA,

was doing the scanning and they both suggested how interesting and informative the articles contained in the publications are – and this has certainly proved to be true."

Mr Dickin, his wife Kate and their two children live on a 90ha (220-acre) tenanted farm in Tanworth-in-Arden, Solihull, West Midlands. They have worked hard to build up the current farm business



Andrew Price of Shearwell (left) and Antony Spencer of the NSA Marches Region Committee (right) present the kit to winner Andrew Dickin.

from 40 females to a planned 450 ewes lambing next year, running alongside a small suckler herd and calf rearing enterprise. Mrs Dickin also supplies home-produced free range eggs to villages and local pubs in the area.

The flock is predominately made up of North Country Mules and Suffolk Mules, which are put to either a Charollais or Hampshire Down tup. Mr Dickin explains:

"All our lambing taking place inside over Easter to make use of family labour. We also had a vet student stay with us for two weeks over lambing this year, which was a huge help and something we will do again next year. We usually sell lambs deadweight but this year decided to send some to Worcester Market as well. We will keep back some Hampshire cross ewe lambs for replacements and, if funds allow, would like to buy in some North Country Mule tugging lambs, as we were really pleased with the result of this last year."

# Reinvestment in sheep to benefit

**The decision of Northern Irish farmer James Alexander to reinvest in sheep last year has received a boost in recent months, as he learnt he has won a free EID stick reader kit courtesy of NSA and Shearwell Data.**

Mr Alexander says: "I was delighted when I heard I had won the NSA's prize draw, especially as the kit I'm currently using doesn't have the range or speed of the Shearwell EID reader. When I bought my digital scales, I was going to buy a stick reader but decided against it as I'd already spent so much money. My digital scales will connect via bluetooth to the wand, so it will fit well in our system."

James farms 800 acres with his father, Nelson, on an owner-occupied farm in Randallstown, Country Antrim. There is never a dull moment for this partnership, with the farm running up to 1,000 head of cattle and 800 sheep at one time, alongside their used tractor business.

The cattle run on a grass based system and James plans to lamb 500 ewes next year alongside 200 dry ewe lambs. Five years ago, rising cattle numbers lead to the sale of the sheep on the farm, however this decision was short lived and reinvestment in the current flock took place in 2014.

The farm's flock of commercial Cheviot



James Alexander (left) receives his prize from John Blaney, NSA Northern Ireland Region Chairman.

Mule ewes are put to a Suffolk tup and lambled through from the last week in March into most of April. Mr Alexander says: "I am aiming to breed a good, early maturing finished lamb, whilst also producing ewe lambs fit for selling as

breeders when they're either ewe lambs or gimmers. I sell at two markets in the area so, to get the most out of my flock, I try to produce lambs I can sell at either rather than just relying on the generic prime lamb market. I received promising prices for my first crop of ewe lambs, so I'm hoping the system will work out okay.

"One of the main reasons I joined the NSA was to keep an eye on what's happening in the market place, as well as being able to advertise for lambing assistance on the NSA Lambing List."

## Time is running out

NSA has nearly given away all of the 12 Shearwell EID stick reader kits for this year's membership recruitment drive – but there is still chance to get in the draw.

New members are automatically entered and existing members get an entry for every new member they recommend to NSA. Start referring people today by adding your name and NSA membership number to the form opposite and passing it to a friend or neighbour so they can join NSA too.

More information on previous winners, plus draw terms and conditions, at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw).

# NSA membership

Existing members can pass on this form to be in with the chance of winning a Shearwell EID Stick Reader Kit

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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# Crucial role of domestic market as a buffer from external forces

By Phil Stocker, NSA

**Much has been written about the reasons for the drop in lamb prices that occurred back in May, prices that continued to bump along the bottom throughout the summer rather than the normally expected seasonal peak.**

The store sales and breeding sales are still in full swing and so far, although they could have been better, they are not as bad as many had feared. Breeding prices have been helped by strong cull ewe prices, making investment in replacements an easier decision – and although it has been a choosy and inconsistent market, quality has been paying. However, there is definitely concern about numbers of lambing flocks being dispersed in some areas, being replaced by the running-on of ewe lambs to be sold into next year's shearing sales. It seems likely that ewe lambs are being kept that should have been killed and we need to be careful that next year's sales will be oversupplied and out of balance.

## Predictions

The question on many sheep farmers' minds now is what the market is going to do from now on, and of course trying to answer that carries a high level of risk. It is not always the case in practice, but in theory the main influencer of all our sheep markets is founded on finished lamb prices and at best this market can be currently be described as 'steady'. The rise in prices that was hoped to come from the Muslim festival Eid didn't really materialise, although it undoubtedly helped and shifted some volumes of lambs too. The export market remains a problem, again with volumes moving but at prices that make that crucial balancing of carcasses difficult.

Processors involved in exports report that these markets are difficult due to the exchange rate, but also because they are becoming more choosy. We can add more value by exporting cuts rather than carcasses, but as more exporters do this, the job of balancing lies in the hands of our processors here rather than businesses overseas. More and more, lambs are not being sold into either export markets or domestic markets, but the range of resulting cuts and products going to different destinations.

We still don't benefit from direct trade into China but readers will know of the difficult state of the Chinese economy, a situation that has also increased pressure



To support British Lamb Week, NSA Marches Region supplied Dan Evans of the Alma Inn, Linton, Herefordshire, with several racks of lamb for customers to taste. Mr Evans reports a great deal of interest and support for home-produced lamb.

on our shores from New Zealand lamb – pressure that is further exacerbated by Europe being awash with relatively cheap pork and poultry due to diplomatic problems with Russia.

The underlying factors behind all this offer no immediate sign of change, and if there is a positive about it all, it is that the situation has reminded us of the crucial importance of our domestic market here in the UK.

## Domestic market

This market cannot be taken for granted, with sheep meat consumption showing long-term declines and too often being the domain of older generations. I believe we are starting to see the benefits of the work that our levy bodies, butchers and processors have been doing over recent years in developing new cuts and new products and, although it is still slow and we need to step things up significantly, you can find products that are lower cost per pack, quicker to cook and that suit more modern and exotic recipes – factors that are crucial if we are to attract younger consumers and build demand long term.

Promotion and product development in all its guises is essential if we are to strengthen our domestic market further and add value to our product – a function that is dependent on the well planned and strategic use of producers levy money. It will surprise no one to hear me say that, while I recognise some retailers

are showing real commitment, we need greater understanding and dedication from all our big retailers to UK sourcing. Producers need to play their part too by meeting the needs of the market, hitting specifications to optimise value and reduce waste and costs.

All our market opportunities are important, but our domestic market is the foundation that helps buffer us from external political and economic forces, as well as reducing risks from incidents such as disease that may affect our ability to trade. Ongoing investment in this market, in good times and bad, makes sense.

## British Lamb Week

This is why NSA did what it could to support British Lamb Week, running a large amount of content online to highlight the recipes and information available from our levy bodies and consumer-facing organisations. Much of this information is on websites that farmers do not see, so we also provided a 'library' of this kind of information so our members could generate their own content for social media.

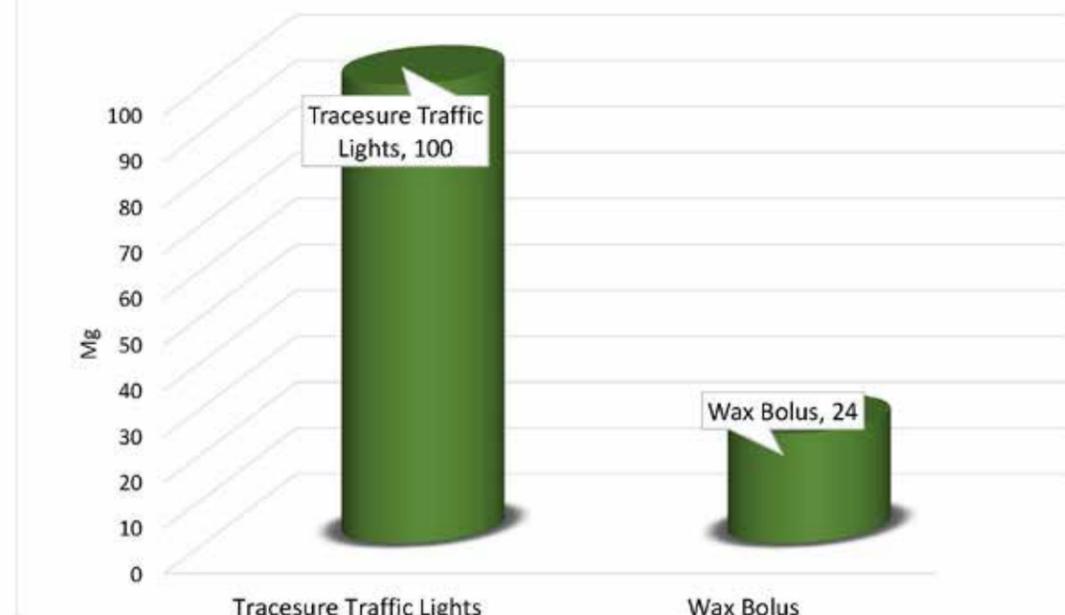
Our experience suggests this worked very well, and while the high numbers of 'likes' and 'favourites' we saw were a far cry from the day-to-day reality of sheep farming, it goes to show the power of new media to engage with our domestic consumer.

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# Combining resources to promote tasty lamb at home and aboard

By Andy Hudson,  
AHDB Beef and  
Lamb Corporate  
Affairs Manager



**The lamb sector hasn't been far from the headlines in recent months, with low prices and levels of consumption dominating. Plenty of work, however, is afoot to help address these issues, as well as the public perception of lamb.**

AHDB Beef and Lamb has been, and continues to be, involved in a range of projects helping to showcase the appeal of home-produced lamb. From working with partner organisations in the EU to focus on the issue of falling consumption, to innovating through cuts development initiatives to add value to the carcass, much work is taking place.

Earlier this year, for example, a €7.7m (£6.17m) campaign to encourage more people to cook with lamb across six European countries was launched via a co-promotion deal secured by AHDB Beef and Lamb with the European Union, Republic of Ireland (Board Bia) and France (Interbev).

'Lamb.Tasty Easy Fun' will promote lamb over the next three years. Launched in June, the campaign targets the 25 to 45-year-old age group, encompassing online communications, work with food bloggers and journalists, in-store merchandising, incentives for butchers and print advertising.

## Tasty Easy Fun

The campaign website features an array of recipes and information on cuts, including suggestions on which ones are best suited to specific recipes. It also features details on cooking times and the style of cooking, including barbecuing, oven cooking and frying, highlighting lamb's versatility in the kitchen.

Ultimately, 'Lamb.Tasty Easy Fun' aims to highlight the importance of European lamb production and increase awareness of lamb as a versatile daily-use meat, with the aim of raising the likelihood of purchases by 5% among consumers. Lamb production's role in maintaining the landscape, protecting the environment and maintaining biodiversity is also highlighted.

The three-year programme will see an annual investment of €1.5 million (£1.19m), across England, Ireland,



A still from one of the 'Lamb. Tasty, Easy, Fun' campaign videos.

France, Belgium, Germany and Denmark – target markets identified as having significant potential.

Major European sheep meat-producing countries have a shared interest in working together to tackle the decline in consumption. More can be achieved through a collaborative approach and this campaign is testament to that. With the EU matching our investment, we can punch above our weight and reach more consumers with the work we do, aiming to stimulate demand for sheep meat.

England, Ireland and France have a strong track record of working together to stimulate demand for lamb through the Agneau Presto campaign in France, which has been running for the last six years. It has helped to diversify the lamb offer on shelves and to increase by 3.5% lamb purchases by shoppers under 35 in 2012, and by 1% in 2013.

In addition to the European campaign, new research commissioned by AHDB Beef and Lamb has revealed that consumers see lamb as the tastiest red meat available, but only innovation in the sector is going to reinvigorate demand. The report (called 'Lamb – It's the Taste, Naturally') was commissioned by AHDB Beef and Lamb to support ongoing trade marketing work, as well as pushing innovation and new cuts development in the sector to add value to the carcass.

It confirmed that lamb has a premium positioning, justified by its highly appealing and distinctive taste, which means

consumers are prepared to pay more for it. It is seen as more natural – and locally sourced – than other meats. Lamb suffers from a perceived lack of value for money though, and, as such, it must be seen to deliver on quality and consistency.

## New cuts

The report also highlights that the lamb cannon and lamb three-bone rack have particular potential to add value to the market after testing well. Getting them onto supermarket shelves is one

important step, but equally important is getting the quality and consistency of the product right. We have used

modern butchery techniques to produce

these – and other lamb cuts in our range – with the objective of enhancing consumer confidence in the protein and encouraging repeat purchase.

Our trade marketing activity also continues with new product development work to innovate butchery techniques and present products differently for foodservice and retailers, with the aim of inspiring product loyalty.

Ultimately, there is plenty of work taking place and our long-term strategic approach will remain to maximise carcass utilisation and add value throughout the supply chain, while attempting to address falling consumption.

More on 'Lamb. Tasty Easy Fun' at [www.tastyeaslamb.co.uk](http://www.tastyeaslamb.co.uk). And find the 'Lamb – It's the Taste, Naturally' report at [www.qsmbeefandlamb.co.uk](http://www.qsmbeefandlamb.co.uk).

**LAMB.**  
TASTY EASY FUN

## Sheep Farmer Special Feature

Lamb promotion activity on pages 12-20.

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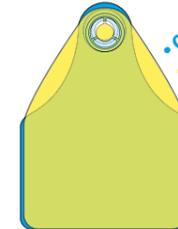
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# HCC launches 'marketing blitz' to boost lamb awareness and sales

A five month, intensive, multi-media, UK-wide marketing campaign to promote PGI Welsh Lamb products to retail consumers was embarked on in July by HCC.



A multi-channel television commercial campaign, a mobile billboard promotion, a cooking and recipe roadshow, posters, public relations and digital and social media interventions all strongly pushed the core message that 'There's lamb ... and there's Welsh Lamb'.



A billboard campaign (pictured above) and mobile kitchen (pictured left) are two activities from HCC.

HCC says the two-season marketing blitz was a fast-track intervention when UK lamb prices dropped after being hit by a set of external forces, including a glut of imports and a strong pound that affected exports. It was launched in July, two months earlier than usual, in swift response to the disappointing prices paid to farmers for their lambs.

It was supported by a 77-venue, 14-day whistle-stop mobile billboard campaign across Wales and England, launched by HCC to back Welsh farmers during British Lamb Week.

The billboard was welcomed by farmers and industry representatives at HCC's offices in Aberystwyth after it started its mammoth journey in Llandudno, Conwy, and through the farming heartland of Gwynedd. The tour included many busy shopping locations across South Wales, England and mid and North East Wales in the campaign fortnight.

Dai Davies, HCC Chairman, says: "HCC stepped in quickly to bring forward planned annual marketing initiatives to help support farmers and Welsh Lamb products when the negative global influences on lamb prices started to bite."

## Wider push

"In recent weeks we've also responded to the price fall by holding discussions with farmer representatives and presenting our wide range of marketing activity to seek their backing and involvement. I'm pleased to say we had a great reaction to our ambitions to build, over a period of time, an army of agricultural ambassadors to bring the industry together and add to the wider promotional push."

HCC's current television advertising campaign features a brand-new, 30-second Welsh Lamb advert. It will air across 26 channels, including S4C, Sky News, Channel 5 and More4 for a period of six weeks. The commercial is particularly aimed at the weekend meal planner and it is anticipated that it will receive at least 15 million viewings. Set in a cosy family kitchen, a juicy Welsh Lamb shank is the centre piece of the dinner table and the focus of the advertisement.

The portable billboard was joined by another peripatetic promotion – a shopper-focused supermarket roadshow, travelling all over Wales and to key locations including Swindon, Bracknell, Cirencester, Chester, Bristol, Weston-super-Mare and Exeter.

## Mobile kitchen

The mobile kitchen, staffed by expert cooks and located in supermarket car parks, will give shoppers a chance to taste a range of tempting, easy-to-cook Welsh Lamb recipes before they are encouraged to purchase cuts of Welsh Lamb in the stores.

The HCC initiative will have visited Waitrose, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Asda stores as far afield as Wrexham, Exeter and Berkshire between the end of August and its conclusion in late November.

HCC conducted research among

previous Welsh Lamb roadshow consumers and found that:-

- More than 65% stated they intended to purchase Welsh Lamb more frequently.
- 62% said their awareness of the nutritional benefits of red meat had increased as a result of the project.
- 45% said they would now take the country of origin into consideration when buying red meat, an increase of 13.5% over the initial figure.

Popular summer festivals were also targeted by HCC, including the hugely successful Festival No. 6 at Portmeirion and the mammoth V Festival in Essex.

These events focused on the versatility of Welsh Lamb for barbecues and general outdoor eating, whereas the autumn promotion focuses on warmer recipes for longer nights.

Consumer online advertising and social media has been used, and a new, on-pack promotion was launched which includes a competition offering a top prize of a dream holiday. A strategically placed promotional poster campaign was also seen in 150 locations near major supermarkets (Morrisons, Waitrose, Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury's stores) in towns and cities across Britain, from London and Lewes in South East England to Bangor in North Wales.

"Welsh Lamb is second to none in the world and HCC is driven to differentiate our PGI status and premium world class products from those of our competitors. This year's summer and autumn advertising campaign is doing just that," says Mr Davies.

## Sheep Farmer Special Feature

Lamb promotion activity on pages 12-20.

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# Focus on simplicity and versatility for 'Wham Bam' lamb campaign

Masterchef presenter Gregg Wallace urged consumers to make the most of the versatility and simplicity of cooking Scotch Lamb PGI at the launch of Quality Meat Scotland's 2015 'Wham Bam Thank You Lamb' campaign.



week meal for all ages to enjoy. Set to reach over 90% of Scottish adults, it builds on last year's very successful campaign which boosted retail sales of lamb in Scotland by 11%.

During a visit hosted by QMS, Mr Wallace met farmers, butchers and chefs and learned more about what makes Scotch Lamb one of the finest ingredients in Scotland's larder. Animal welfare is a key aspect of the quality assurance schemes behind Scotch Lamb, and Mr Wallace also heard about QMS's partnership with the Scottish SPCA and the 'Welfare and Wellbeing Charter' during his visit.

## Potential

Mr Wallace said there was huge scope for many more people to routinely enjoy Scotch Lamb, particularly at this time of year when it is at its most plentiful.

"Lamb had always been my personal favourite and there is real potential for lots more of us to be making the most of this natural, easy-to-cook product which is bursting with flavour and such a great ingredient for a whole range of quick, tasty dishes," he said.

Scotland's retailers are showing strong support for the on-going campaign. Among the multiple retailers who are welcoming QMS ambassadors to cook simple delicious Scotch Lamb dishes to serve to shoppers are Aldi, Asda, Morrisons and



The Scotch Lamb cookery theatre at the Dundee Food Festival.

Tesco.

Laurent Vernet, QMS Head of Marketing, says: "In total our ambassadors are delivering around 112 days of Scotch Lamb sampling in retailers throughout Scotland and we're delighted with the

support being shown by retailers. The sampling activities are a fantastic opportunity to showcase Scotch Lamb and also create some excitement and theatre in the aisles.

To have the Scotch Lamb logo present in retailers representing 85% of total sales of lamb in Scotland is very encouraging for our industry."

## Lamb tastings

Farmers, chefs, butchers and retailers threw their weight behind the 'Love Scotch Lamb Weekend', which took place on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September. During the weekend around 20 Scotch Lamb sampling events were held, and events such as the Dundee Food Festival and Let's Eat Glasgow showcased Scotch Lamb. QMS also welcomed leading London food and lifestyle bloggers to Scotland to showcase Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb.

Farmers and others have also been encouraged to get behind the campaign via QMS's offer of free Scotch Lamb ambassador kits. This initiative has been very well received and is helping to fuel social media sharing of recipes and Scotch Lamb dishes.

Find further information and 'sizzlingly simple' Scotch Lamb recipe ideas at [www.whambamlamb.com](http://www.whambamlamb.com) and [www.scotchbeefandlamb.com](http://www.scotchbeefandlamb.com). And follow 'Enjoy Quality Meat' on Facebook and @scotchkitchen on twitter.

**Sheep Farmer Special Feature**  
Lamb promotion activity on pages 12-20.

## Consumption

Historically, Scotland has consumed less lamb than other parts of GB. Around 4,000 tonnes of lamb (worth around £34 million) is eaten each year in Scotland with about 44% of the population purchasing lamb at least once in the last year (versus 57.8% in Great Britain).

The main audience for the campaign – targeting 3.7 million consumers – is young professionals and busy working parents. And the message is very much that lamb is not just for roasting at the weekend – it can also make a quick, nutritious mid-



Masterchef presenter Gregg Wallace at the launch of the Scotch Lamb campaign with Perthshire farming family, the Ritchies of Montalt, near Dunning.

# 'Pleasure and provenance' of lamb

By Colin Smith, LMC Industry Development Manager



While the export market (including GB) remains the most significant outlet for Northern Ireland lamb, LMC continues to promote lamb on the domestic market.

The existing promotional campaign will enter its third year in November and has returned some very positive results to date in terms of recognition of Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured (NIFQAS) lamb products. Research has shown that 80% of consumers in Northern Ireland recognise the FQAS logo on lamb products and, therefore, the messaging encourages consumers to always check if the lamb they buy is NIFQAS. However the challenge to convince the 40% of consumers here who do not eat lamb to change their meal choices remains a priority. LMC's beef and lamb watch indicates that in the last 12 months commitment from major retail outlets to stock local lamb has improved, in some cases significantly, however the competition from New Zealand lamb remains strong.

The autumn promotional campaign spans all forms of local media from now until December, and the use of 20-second



Activity at entry points to supermarkets, at the security barriers, has allowed LMC to target shoppers as they begin their shop.

TV edits allows for a higher frequency of activity. The advert highlights key points associated with purchasing lamb and reminds consumers to buy lamb that is NIFQA through voiceover and numerous displays of the logo on screen. The advert also directs audiences to the LMC consumer website to find various lamb recipe ideas and promote the NIFQA mark further.

A 30-second radio edit – 'Lamb: Pleasure and Provenance' – is used to compliment the TV activity and stress the versatility of lamb as a meal choice. The campaign reach is extended through print material and digital activity on well-

known local sites, in addition to google ads and social media activity. The social media activity to date has generated some excellent returns in terms of directing traffic to LMC's consumer website.

Outdoor activity for autumn includes advertising across sites close to all of the key multiple retailers. This year we have also trialled the employment of store points at supermarket security barriers and trolley handle adverts.

## School children

The final element of LMC's marketing of lamb is in post-primary schools, where LMC delivers more than 300 school cookery demonstrations designed to give pupils confidence when preparing and cooking lamb dishes. This programme has been delivered for many years and is an important part of LMC's work.

Going forward, LMC plans to introduce new creatives for year three of the advertising campaign and is currently carrying out in-depth research into the consumer behaviour of red meat purchasers in Northern Ireland. This will allow us to tailor the new campaign more specifically to influence purchasing habits.

Find the LMC consumer website at [www.beefandlambni.com](http://www.beefandlambni.com).

# Autumnal boost for mutton project

By Bob Kennard, NSA Make More of Mutton Project Manager

As we move towards autumn, consumers' thoughts turn more to mutton. The work of the NSA Make More of Mutton initiative aims to help quality mutton supply chains – from farmers to butchers, retailers and caterers – to popularise this much neglected meat, and help develop a quality market, separate from the standard cull ewe trade.

In August, the new [www.makemoreofmutton.org.uk](http://www.makemoreofmutton.org.uk) website was launched. This has several resources for those involved in producing, processing and selling quality mutton, including:-

- Supply chain information that will act as a marketplace for those wishing to sell and source quality mutton.
- Point of sale resources, such as leaflets and posters to download or order for anyone selling quality mutton.
- A variety of recent research on all aspects of mutton production.
- A news and events section, where those involved in the supply chain can advertise their mutton-based activities.

The Make More of Mutton supply chain



Chef Tom Welch cooked a range of mutton dishes at an NSA Make More of Mutton event in Devon.

survey has yielded some interesting results already. If you are involved in producing quality mutton, we would still love to hear about your experiences via [www.surveymonkey.com/r/nsamutton](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nsamutton). Results from people involved in 15 quality mutton supply chains, via the survey, are available in the 'research' area of the website.

August saw the first NSA Make More of Mutton regional event, held at the Well Hung Meat Company in South Devon.

Speakers from each section of the supply chain – a farmer, a butcher/retailer and a chef – all gave excellent talks and a good discussion developed. The event was rounded off with a great showcase lunch demonstrating the versatility of mutton, courtesy of local chef Tom Welch.

Further events are being organised and anyone interested can contact me on [mutton@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:mutton@nationalsheep.org.uk) or 07415 855530.

# Ongoing initiatives increasing demand for assured products

By Richard Cattell, Red Tractor Head of Marketing

The Red Tractor logo is one of the most recognised food assurance brands in the UK. More than 65% of shoppers tell us they are aware of it, and a staggering 57% tell us the logo influences their food purchases.

Getting the message out to consumers about what Red Tractor means is essential if we are to increase the demand for assured products in a sustainable way. This is the role of the Red Tractor communications and marketing team, made up of myself, Marketing Manager Andy Thompson and Digital Marketing Manager Dorota Czarnecka.

Our aim is to encourage shoppers to choose Red Tractor products, including lamb. We provide the communication platform that others, such as retailers and foodservice operators, use to promote their own Red Tractor credentials. By working with the food and farming industry (for example, AHDB Beef and Lamb), encouraging them to utilise Red Tractor in



their consumer activity, we are able to magnify our collective investment and ensure our messages are seen by a much wider consumer audience more frequently, to the benefit of all concerned.

Making sure Red Tractor is top of mind when shoppers think of quality foods is a core objective of ours. We undertake an annual consumer activity plan of our own to help achieve this, and I wanted to share a number of examples here.

## BBQ promotion

In May this year Red Tractor teamed up with musician, cheese maker and Red Tractor ambassador Alex James in the UK's biggest ever BBQ promotion. Running from 27<sup>th</sup> April to 14<sup>th</sup> June, the campaign celebrated the great quality seasonal food that UK farmers produce, coinciding with the start of the summer BBQ season. The promotion featured on 50 million packs of Red Tractor Assured products, available across most UK supermarkets. More than 11 million consumers were reached

through TV, radio and social media activity, and an incredible 21,000 consumers entered our competition to win tickets to a VIP barbeque hosted by Alex himself.

Following the success of our BBQ campaign,

## Sheep Farmer Special Feature

Lamb promotion activity on pages 12-20.

Red Tractor is now in the middle of our biggest ever on-pack promotional activity, working with most of the big retailers. Taking place over seven weeks in September and

October, timed to coincide with Red Tractor Week (14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September), the promotion highlights the standards behind the scheme and raise awareness of Red Tractor to consumers. In an unprecedented move, it runs across all Red Tractor pre-packed branded goods.

Farmers across the country played a vital role in launching the campaign on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September, and farmers are also getting involved through a high profile #TrustTheTractor social media campaign by telling consumers what they do and why supporting Red Tractor is so important. The objective is to get as many people as possible to make the connection between buying Red Tractor and supporting our farmers.

## Farmer profiles

Demonstrating the passion and commitment of Red Tractor farmers to the general public is at the forefront of our marketing initiatives. We have commissioned 10 new farmer videos, each focusing on a different food area. They showcase the great work that Red Tractor farmers do, and explain to consumers why Red Tractor standards are important in the production of food and drink they buy. Lamb farmer James Small, based in Somerset, was one of the first to be filmed with hundreds of consumers already having viewed the film.

## #maxloveslamb

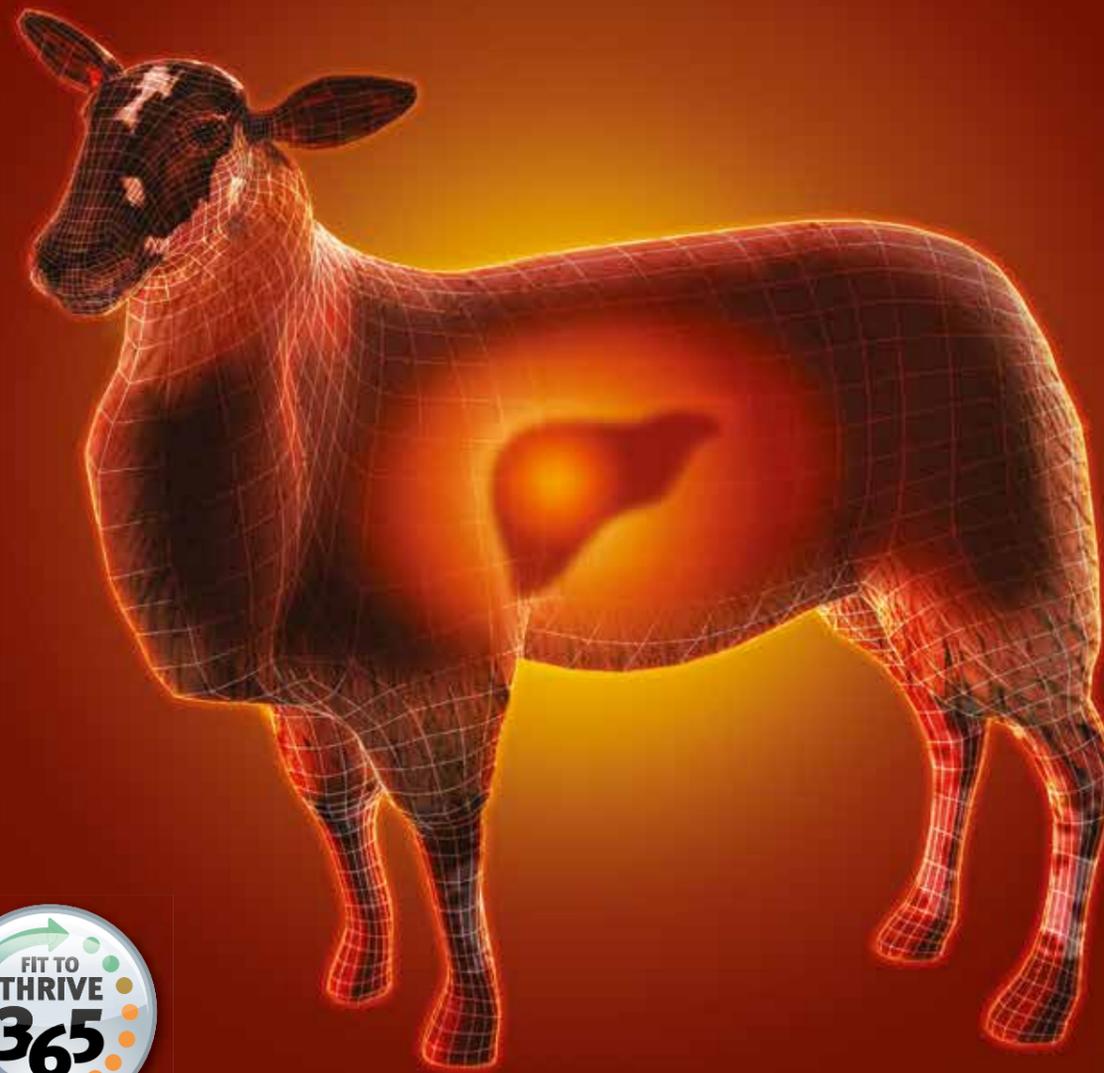
Finally, Red Tractor has worked in partnership with AHDB Beef and Lamb to produce a digital marketing campaign to support quality lamb. The 'Max and Maggie' campaign will run across a number of sites targeted at mums aged 25-45 and across social media. The digital ads feature Max and his sheepdog Maggie, who are campaigning for mums to cook family meals with lamb to help keep his dream of being a sheep farmer alive. All ads and social activity will carry #maxloveslamb as a sign off.

Find Red Tractor activity on Facebook and Twitter, and view the lamb farmer video at [www.redtractor.org.uk/get-involved/farmers](http://www.redtractor.org.uk/get-involved/farmers).



Red Tractor's largest ever on-pack promotional campaign is supported by online activity, including #TrustTheTractor and #maxloveslamb.

# Controlling the right stages of liver fluke, at the right time, with the right product



## Sustainable liver fluke control

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For further information contact Elanco Animal Health on +44 (0)1256 353131 or write to Elanco Animal Health, Lilly House, Priestley Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 9NL. Combinex®, Fasimec® Duo, Fasinex®, Flukiver®, Supaverm® and Rycoben® are trade marks owned by or licensed to Eli Lilly and Company, its affiliates or subsidiaries. **Use Medicines Responsibly** ([www.noah.co.uk/responsible](http://www.noah.co.uk/responsible)) Advice should be sought from a suitably qualified person prior to use. UKSHPFAS00003 rdp19886



# November sees start of new EU laws on sprayers and operators

By Rebecca Wells, The Voluntary Initiative  
**European legislation coming into force this November requires all users of professional pesticide products to hold a recognised certificate.**

Everyone using professional pesticides such as weed killers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides or slug pellets is affected – including farmers and smallholders.

It is already the case that all users of professional pesticides born after 31<sup>st</sup> December 1964 must hold a specified certificate, but for those born before 31<sup>st</sup> December 1964 there has been an exemption commonly known as 'grandfather rights'. This exemption ends on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and from this date anyone making applications needs to be properly trained and qualified.



Changes this November affect farmers spraying grassland and crops, as well as the actual spraying equipment.

## Pesticides

If this change affects you, the first thing to do is check if you are using professional pesticides, not amateur products authorised for home and garden use. If you buy your pesticides from an

agricultural supplier they are likely to be for professional use, but country stores often carry both professional and amateur products so it's a good idea to ask if you're not sure.

Next, decide if you wish to continue using the product(s), in which case you will need to gain a specified certificate. Alternatives to this route are opting to only use amateur products or to hire a contractor with the appropriate certificates and insurance to carry out applications of professional pesticides for you.

If you do want to continue using professional products yourself you will need to decide which certificate is the most appropriate. If you qualified for grandfather rights and only apply pesticides to your own land (owned or rented) you can take a specially designed certificate 'Safe Use of Pesticides

replacing Grandfather Rights'. This is a new qualification that takes into account the extensive experience that applicants will have accumulated over their years of spraying.

If you were born after 31<sup>st</sup> December 1964, or intend to apply pesticides on someone else's land such as a friend or neighbours, even if only occasionally, you'll need to take 'Safe Use of Pesticides' and an application qualification specific to the products you use and how you apply them (hand held with a knapsack, for example, or with a vehicle and boom).

Under the same European legislation all vehicular mounted or trailed sprayers older than five years will need to be tested by November 2016, and then at regular intervals thereafter. This could have an effect on your business decision regarding grandfather rights and what to do next.

## More information

- To find your local training provider and test centre visit [www.nptc.org.uk](http://www.nptc.org.uk) or [www.lantra-awards.co.uk](http://www.lantra-awards.co.uk).
- To find out more about the options for the ending of grandfather rights or for more information about best practice pesticide use, including sprayer testing, visit [www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk](http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk).
- To find a professional agricultural contractor visit the National Association of Agricultural Contractors [www.naac.co.uk/find\\_a\\_contractor](http://www.naac.co.uk/find_a_contractor).

# Reinvigoration of farm research requires industry engagement

By Prysor Williams, Bangor University Environmental Management Lecturer  
**Scientists making scaremongering claims that do not materialise, repeated 'blaming' of agriculture for environmental damage, and a lack of studies with real on-farm application have meant many farmers do not see the value or need for academic research.**

This hasn't been helped by funding shifting the focus from production agriculture to all-things environmental. Numbers of agricultural students also declined and, with questions raised about the viability/need for agricultural research, many universities sold off their research stations. The whole research area has suffered years of decline.

## Reversing trend

Thankfully, this seems to be reversing, and here at Bangor University our university farm, Henfaes Research Centre, is buzzing with studies on various aspects of agriculture research. Agriculture has to play a role in answering some of the major issues facing the world (greater production of food, fuel and fibre; carbon and water storage in soils; protection of biodiversity; and the aesthetic values of the countryside) and so there is recognition again that the sector is important. As a result, funding of agricultural research is becoming more evident, often under the theme of 'sustainable intensification' and



Upland grazing research at Henfaes, which runs from sea level to one of the highest mountains in Wales.

how the industry can deliver more output from fewer inputs.

Sheep farming has helped shape the uplands and will continue to do so, but there are many vocal opponents to its continuation. It is therefore important to gather the evidence-base to inform a balanced discussion on such issues, and to identify ways that sheep farming can deliver more for environmental and socio-economic benefits. This is why funding for upland research on sheep systems, such as that going on at Henfaes, is so important.

Look at any progressive, forward-thinking industry and it is clear research funding should be seen as an investment, not a cost. For agriculture, it is clear the balance must be struck between cutting-

## Sustainable intensification research

One project currently ongoing at Henfaes is the Defra-funded Sustainable Intensification Research Platform (SIP). This is a £4.5m, three-year project looking at integrated farm management for improved economic, environmental and social performance.

Research platforms across the UK have been selected and Henfaes represents the upland livestock farm, whilst others represent dairy, lowland livestock and arable. All study farms are implementing measures that could help deliver a more efficient and resilient agricultural sector, with environmental and economic gains – true 'win-wins' for all.

Henfaes is looking at how to increase productivity from upland grassland through optimised management of grass, soils and nutrients. Four large plots (each more than 3ha) represent four treatments with high and low-cost management

approaches:-

1. Lime and fertiliser are required; set-stocking
  2. No lime or fertiliser; set-stocking
  3. Lime and fertiliser are required; rotational grazing
  4. No lime or fertiliser; rotational grazing
- Data is being collected on many parameters, including lamb growth rates, livestock carrying capacity, cost benefits, greenhouse gas emissions, impact on soil properties (e.g. compaction), biodiversity, and pasture quality and quantity.

All of this work is done within the constraints of making a profit as a commercial farm, agri-environment schemes and highly designated land areas - see *other panel*. If sustainable intensification can be successfully implemented on such a farm, it is hoped the findings can be extrapolated wider and adopted by industry.

## Henfaes Research Centre

- A commercial farm managed to be profitable.
- 1,800 Welsh Mountain ewes.
- Productive pastures at sea level, up to acidic grassland on one of the highest mountains in Wales (the Carneddau).
- Considerable variation in climate, soils (it has all the major soil types of Wales), flora and fauna.
- In a Glastir Advanced agreement for higher-level agri-environment.
- One of the most highly designated farms in Wales being within the Snowdonia National Park and having Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a National Nature Reserve and a Special Area of Conservation.
- Equipped with the latest technology, laboratories, technical support and meeting rooms for industry events and teaching; a great resource for research and knowledge dissemination.

edge blue-sky development and more applied near-the-field work.

It has never been more important that the industry engages with the research and development agenda, to help shape its future direction. Stakeholders such as NSA, levy boards and farming unions should all be given the opportunity to sit around the table to ensure their priorities, ambitions and concerns are heard.

## Engagement

Agriculture is again considered important, and sheep farming in the uplands has to be part of the answer in tackling some of the 'big issues' of our time. Research offers huge opportunities for the livestock sector to become better at what it is doing. Please ensure that you engage with it.

Prysor was the guest speaker the evening before the NSA AGM in August. More from the AGM under the 'Event Reports' tab at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events).



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# Investment in West Wales to secure business for future generations

By Hannah Park, NSA

**Safeguarding the potential of the farm for the future generation has become a priority for Margaret Dalton. As the number of grandchildren has increased, so has the focus of her business decisions on ensuring the farm can remain profitable for the years to come.**

Margaret's desire to keep the family farm in hand is part of years of tireless work running the business and raising two boys after the death of her husband, Don, just 12 years after the couple bought Gelligarneddau in 1963. With only £500 between them, they risked everything to purchase the unit near Lampeter, Ceredigion – and Margaret's success in continuing the business without her partner is made even more remarkable by the fact she spends considerable time off the farm to support the wider farming community.

## Campaigning

She is a longstanding supporter of NSA (including as a current Trustee), plays a role in a number of other groups and organisations, organises farm trips around the UK, and continues to take the lead

on campaigning for the legalisation of 'smokies' (skin-on sheep meat), which she believes could open up a multi-million pound market for UK sheep producers.

But her eye has never been taken off the ball at home, where the farm is nowadays run in partnership with her youngest son, John. Their latest decision to safeguard the future of the farm is to invest in an anaerobic digester, even though this will mean cutting down slightly on sheep numbers, Margaret's self-confessed favourite enterprise on the farm.

"There will always be a place for sheep here, and if the chance to have more land came along there might be more sheep again," Margaret says. "We can keep the option open, but the priority now is to keep the farm going and the digester allows us to do that. The farm is very precious to us, because of the way Don and I started from nothing; it means an awful



Above: Most Texel-sired lambs are finished on grass, with some moved onto turnips in mid-October.

Left: Margaret Dalton.



lot to us. We hope at least one of the grandchildren will be interested in carrying on, so we have to think of the future.

"John's business off the farm is so busy and I'm getting older now, so to cut down on the sheep is probably the right thing to do – but I can't manage without sheep completely."

Most of John's time is taken up with Dalton ATVs in Talsarn, but he dedicates his weekends to the farm, when he and Margaret organise the coming week's work. This is carried out by Margaret and two full time workman, Huw Jones and Dylan Davies. The hill farm is now double the 80 hectares (200 acres) that Margaret and Don bought in the 1960s, a major

purchase early on being the neighbouring farm. It provided Gelligarneddau with an additional 40ha (100 acres) and is where Margaret's older son, David, now lives. He has a talent with IT and, among other commitments, works for his brother's ATV business three days a week.

## Grassland

Apart from 16ha (40 acres) of rougher grazing and permanent pasture, the farm is all managed in rotation. This sees 2ha (five acres) put into turnips each year, followed by an oats-barley-pea wholecrop silage mix, before returning to grassland. There are usually two cuts of grass silage and one crop of hay, but this year a third cut of silage has been taken off in anticipation of the AD plant coming on stream later in the year.

Determined to finish the work her husband started, Margaret drained and improved a lot of the rougher land. Things, however, have gone full-circle. "Since the farm has been in environmental stewardship, a lot of that ground has gone back to been wet and rushy," she says, explaining all the farm is covered

by Glastir and Tir Gofal agreements. "It is frustrating and I'm not sure that the loss of production has done anything to benefit wildlife and biodiversity. But the schemes do bring other benefits, like funding for fencing, so it is still worth it."

The sheep at Gelligarneddau run in tandem with cattle and poultry, the latter of which provided essential cash flow in the early days of the business. Margaret recalls her and Don plucking birds every night in the pantry after the boys had gone to bed, in order to sell 20 a week in Lampeter. The poultry side grew considerably from there, but has since downsized to just 200 ducks, chickens, geese and turkeys for Christmas sales. There are also 100 suckler cows, put to a Charolais bull and sold as 15-18-month-old stores at Tregaron Market.

## Breeding

The 400-strong flock has also experienced some changes over the years. Margaret began with Scottish Rouges but has since switched to pure Lleyn and Lleyn cross Suffolk ewes, describing them as 'quite prolific and much easier to manage'. The very best Lleyms are kept pure and other better ones crossed to the Suffolk, to allow 100 replacements to be bred each year. Everything else is put to the Texel to produce finishing lambs to sell deadweight to Dunbia at Llanybedd, mainly at E and U grades.

Margaret says she likes using an abattoir so close, as she can go in and see the lambs on the hook if she needs to. She appreciates the batch feedback she gets on health and carcass quality, particularly livers, but believes all abattoirs in the UK should now give individual feedback linked to EID. She currently uses a paper system for management recording, but would like to see on-farm technology and abattoir feedback used in the future to enable the farm to, for example, make a

## Farm Facts

- Gelligarneddau bought for £10,000 in 1963 and since doubled in size through purchases and an 8ha (20 acres) rental agreement.
- All of the farm in agri-environment agreements, with some SSSI designations too.
- 146ha (360 acres) of grassland rotation plus 16ha (40 acres) of permanent rough grazing.
- 400 breeding ewes, all Lleyms and Lleyn cross Suffolks.
- 100 ewe lambs kept back annually for replacements.
- Margaret spends time off the farm supporting numerous farming groups; previous roles include NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chairman and NFU County Chairman.
- Her commitment to the industry and campaigning work to legalise smokies has won her an OBE, the NSA's George Hedley Memorial Award, NFU Cymru Woman Farmer of the Year, and NFU Woman Farmer of the Year.
- The family is also a keen supporter of RABI, providing the farm as a venue for a number of events over the years.

true comparison of progeny from the Lleyn versus Suffolk Lleyn ewes. Margaret has recently invested in weigh scales (using Welsh Government funding for this, as well as a separate grant to cover the silage pit) and believes the next step would potentially be an EID reader.

Her particular interest in liver condemnations is due to a devastating, and completely unexpected, fluke problem three years ago when 130 lambs were lost in 10 days. Resistance to triclabendazole flukicides was found to be at the root of the problem and now the flock is tested monthly, in conjunction with Aberystwyth University, to make the right fluke control

*continued on page 26*



Lleyn and Suffolk Lleyn ewes make up the breeding flock.



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"We will start lambing in mid-March and will aim to start getting the first lambs away towards the end of May, into June," Margaret says. "The lambs graze the turnips from 15<sup>th</sup> October and we like to only have about 100 left by then – but it will be more this year as it's been terribly slow-going for finishing lambs this



Drainage and land management improved much of the land at Gelligarneddau, but agri-environment restrictions have seen wet ground and rushes creep back in.



The anaerobic digester, currently under construction, is sited behind the farm buildings and recently covered silage pit.

summer. We don't use any concentrates for finishing but do offer some creep to any lambs that are left on their mother as a triplet or quad, until they're weaned."

Margaret explains a strict routine during lambing time works best for the farm: "We have a last look at the sheep at midnight and don't go back in until 6am. We don't lose any more at night time than we do in the daytime; the only problem we do get is sometimes lambs getting mixed up, but I just can't justify paying someone to be up all night when we already have a wage bill for two workmen.

"All the ewes are scanned, and the twins and triplets are brought in and offered cake prior to bringing the singles in just before lambing."

Growing crops for the AD plant, and

managing it day-to-day, means some sheep will be sold from Gelligarneddau in the coming months. But Margaret sees it as another progression in a business that has never stood still, despite the challenges faced.

### The future

She says: "It's increasingly John's business now and it's his decision, but when he told me what he wanted to do with the digester I thought it was the right way to go; I'm completely behind him. It's very frightening because of the cost but, in the long run, I think it will be beneficial. I feel a bit like I did when we first came here. Don and I were petrified at what we'd done when we bought the farm, but also excited, and I feel that way now."

# Leaving behind a will – why it remains as important as ever

By Daniel Gill, Clarke Willmott solicitor  
**Is it worth making a will? And is it worth leaving money to a charity in that will? These are two questions worth considering in light of the recent, high profile case of Ilott v Mitson.**

Heather Ilott left home at 17. She subsequently married, had five children, relied on state benefits and lived in a housing association house. When her mother passed away, Mrs Ilott and her mother had been estranged for 26 years. It is perhaps therefore not completely surprising that Mrs Ilott's mother left her entire net estate of £486,000 to various charities in her will and didn't leave Mrs Ilott anything.

### Dispute

After her mother's death, Mrs Ilott brought a claim against the executors named in her mother's will, as well as the charities who had been left money. Mrs Ilott's claim was brought under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975. This act allows the court to vary the provisions of a deceased's will if the will does not make reasonable financial

provision for an eligible claimant, such as a son or daughter.

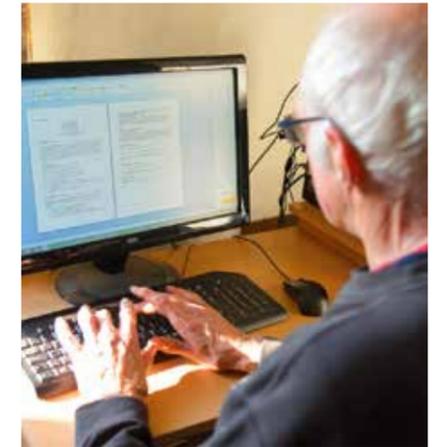
The case has had a long history but at the most recent hearing before the Court of Appeal the court took the view that Mrs Ilott had not received reasonable financial provision from her mother's estate and made an order that she should receive £163,000. The case has received considerable media attention and, in particular, I have seen several articles which question whether it is still worth making a will, and leaving money to charity in that will, if the court can simply change that decision after a person's death.

### Intestacy Rules

Despite the court's decision in this case, it is still very important to make a will, and leave money to charity in that will, for a number of reasons. Firstly, if you do not make a will, when you pass away your estate will pass in accordance with the Intestacy Rules, which provides a mechanism as to who receives your estate – and how much of it – in the absence of a will. Very often the Intestacy Rules do not reflect the way a person wishes their estate to be divided upon their death. For example, unmarried couples, carers and friends have no rights to receive anything under this provision.

In addition, the Intestacy Rules make no provision for money to be left to charity. Therefore, if you would like some of your estate left to charity you should make a will. And if there are no surviving relatives who can inherit, under the Intestacy Rules the entire estate will pass to the Crown.

For the majority of people, they want to leave their estate in a way which is as tax-efficient as possible, so the maximum amount possible is passed on to their



loved ones and the minimum amount possible goes to the taxman. The Intestacy Rules are not designed to be tax-efficient. Simply, if you want to minimise the amount of tax which has to be paid on your estate you should make a will.

### Administration

Ultimately, it has to be remembered that cases like Mrs Ilott's are comparatively rare. The reality is that the vast majority of estates are administered in accordance with the will of the person who has died and challenges to wills are, relatively speaking, few and far between. Indeed, the reason why Mrs Ilott's case received so much attention is because it is unusual.

*Remembering NSA in your will would contribute towards the organisation's work for the future of the sheep sector. If you would like any information on the how NSA benefits from receiving legacies please contact Head Office (details on page 2). NSA is a registered charity in England and Wales (number 249255) and in Scotland (SC042853).*

### Free advice to members

Daniel Gill is a solicitor specialising in contentious probate claims. He is one of the team at Clarke Willmott who provide NSA with a free legal helpline for its members. If you need help on any legal matter, including making a will or challenging/defending a will, you can access up to 30 minutes of free advice. Contact details for Clarke Willmott are available from NSA Head Office (details on page 2) or in the "Technical Information" section on the members-only area of the NSA website.




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# Positive farmer-vet relationship pays dividends for upland flock

By Joanne Briggs, NSA

**The cost of veterinary medicines is always going to be a considerable input on a sheep farm, so some producers want to add as little additional vet time to that bill as possible. But this is not the case for Adam Hunter of Gunnerside, North Yorkshire.**

He has developed a proactive and positive relationship with his vets over the past nine years and strongly believes investing in their professional time has allowed him to better target the interventions and drugs he uses, as well as improving how he uses his time and boosting production at Crow Trees Farm.

He is not concerned if it means his vet bill is higher than it would be if he was just buying product, saying this figure has to be taken in the context of labour saving, fewer 'disasters' and panicked 'firefighting', as well as more stock sold off the farm. Adam's growing confidence in what he does is also an added bonus in the changes implemented over the years.

## Confidence

"I like to know I'm doing a job for a reason," he says. "I don't mind buying the drugs and getting the sheep in if I've identified the problem and know I'm targeting it in the right way. With the price of the medicines, you need to do it right. Also, I don't have any labour here and, when you're on your own, time is your most valuable thing."

Adam works with nearby Bainbridge Vets, run by Michael Woodhouse and Davinia Hinde. The husband-and-wife



Adam Hunter and his vet Davinia Hinde.

team started working in the area nine years ago, coinciding with when Adam, then 18, started running the farm in partnership with his mum, Ruth. She is still an active part of the business, although Adam took on the farm in his own right in April this year.

The traditional hill farm in the Yorkshire Dales National Park has 300ha (750 acres) of in-bye land plus grazing rights on two commons. This supports 650 breeding ewes and 30 suckler cows.

There are 450 Swaledale ewes, most of which are bred pure to produce gimmer lambs and draft ewes for breeding sales. With a hard farm and knowing there is good demand for quality draft ewes, Adam keeps a young flock and tends to sell the Swaledales after three crops of lambs. Around 30 older Swales are put to the Texel each year, and a Texel is also used as a chaser at the end of mating,

## Farm Facts

- 300ha (750 acres) of in-bye land plus grazing rights on two commons.
- ELS and HLS agri-environment agreements on the in-bye and common land; both commons have SSSI status.
- 450 pure Swaledale ewes and 200 Texel cross Swaledales.
- 30 Limousin-based commercial suckler cows.
- No common grazing from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 1<sup>st</sup> April, so hogs and some ewes away-wintered on dairy farms and twin-bearing ewes housed from January.
- Texel crosses lambed from mid-March, all inside; Swaledales from early April with twins indoors and singles outside.
- Adam says he has some excellent neighbours and enjoys working with them on the common land.

producing replacements for Adam's 200-head commercial flock of Texel cross Swaledales. These are put back to the Texel to produce prime lambs, with some of the older females also sold each year with lambs-at-foot.

Adam explains that the farm was producing Mules until 2010 but is now running more commercial ewes instead: "I like the Texel-Swaledale cross and keeping 200 young Texel crosses is easier than older Swaledale ewes on our type of rough-going land. I also don't have the days doing the Mule gimmers up for sale, as the three-quarter Texel lambs can just go to market as fat or stores."

## Sales

Depending on the year and the trade, around 70% are sold finished and 30% store. Adam sells breeding stock through Hawes Market and uses Leyburn for prime lambs, store lambs and 12-month-old store cattle.

Both the sheep and cattle enterprises have seen a boost from working with Bainbridge Vets. Adam says: "I have an excellent relationship with them. They're young and enthusiastic and we discuss a lot of things. One thing I like is that I can text any of them for advice and with questions, which is very handy for me. If we're scanning cows or something I'm there quizzing them for the hour that they're here. They are very honest about things and into new ideas and I like that they're proactive."

"We've done a lot of work over the last

## Vet Facts

- Bainbridge Vets, bought by Michael Woodhouse and Davinia Hinde in 2011.
- A large animal vet practice with three full-time and one part-time vets.
- Davinia recently completed her Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice in Sheep and is now applying for advanced practitioner status.
- Michael has a Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice in Cattle Health and Production but, operating in the Yorkshire Dales, spends plenty of time with sheep clients too.
- The practice is considering contracts for clients such as Adam, separating the annual cost of routine work into 12 equal payments, rather than bigger bills when doing lots of tests or buying vaccines.

few years discussing potential problems before they happen. I'm a firm believer in prevention not cure and would rather discuss how to stop something happening than having to ring up with a major



Draft Swaledale ewes for sale this autumn.

problem. I don't want to only see them when things are going wrong."

As an example of how new challenges are addressed straight away, rather than 'waiting for it to become a disaster', Adam describes the value of a post-mortem on two dead gimmers last year revealing pneumonia as the cause.

"I took them for post-mortem that day and by 2pm I was back home and injecting the others," he says. "We didn't lose any more and, for me, that was a productive day. I've got out of the habit of just saying something is dead. I like to put a reason on everything we lose."

The farm has flock and herd health plans, both focused very much on prevention and including several vaccination programmes. Sheep are vaccinated against toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion ahead of breeding, as well as footrot when they are housed for lambing. Week-old lambs now get scratched for orf at the same time as being tailed, castrated and tagged, and when the passive immunity for clostridial diseases passed from their vaccinated mothers starts to wane later in life, they



Around 40 stone barns and numerous walls provide shelter during hard winters.

are jabbed twice to offer longer-term protection. The cattle are vaccinated against BVD, scour and pneumonia vaccines, with Adam describing this as 'cheap insurance' against some of the problems seen in the past.

## Big successes

Adam says he's not looked back since taking on board Davinia's advice not to trim sheep's feet: "She's got me convinced now. It took her a year or two but I started doing less and less and now routinely footbath instead, as well as injecting any lame ewes and culling persistent problems. It's one of our big successes."

"When you house a lot of ewes feet can be a problem, and it affects colostrum production and lamb rearing too. You could view the vaccine as expensive, but it's saved us hours and hours of time, never mind the impact on productivity."

As well as vaccination, the health plans include routine blood testing. This

continued on page 30



On top of Swaledale gimmers kept as replacements, around 90 are sold each year.



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► has revealed a copper deficiency on the farm, with cattle and sheep boluses now used to ensure this does not affect productivity. Adam couples body condition scoring with blood testing of the ewes, but describing a 'realistic rather than text-book approach', says he does this just once a year in September.

"It's too late when you're going to tup the sheep and they're not in the right condition," he says. "The sheep were in good condition this September but we did the blood test anyway. I found it really satisfying to get a good result. Normally you only test when there's a problem, so it's good to do it as a matter of routine and find we're doing the job right."

Adams says this type of reassurance is one of the main things about working closely with the vets, but that the relationship also brings added bonuses, such as Davinia asking if she could do

some trial work on the farm testing an artificial ewe colostrum product.

"It was a little bit of extra work, but it was great to have a vet on the farm every couple of days during lambing," he says. "Although Davinia was checking the antibodies provided by the artificial colostrum, it meant I got to find out what my ewes were naturally giving the lambs too. It was nice to know I'd got my supplement feeding in the shed right ahead of lambing. Colostrum is half the battle at lambing time – good colostrum and a bit of grass to go out to and the job works well."

Adam has also replaced a routine worming programme with regular worm egg counts, saying this has resulted in less frequent treatments, halving his work load of dosing sheep and reducing how much he spends on wormers. He now knows his resistance status (none found so far)

### View from the vet

Davinia Hinde says: "It's great working with Adam, but this isn't something that happened overnight. We've built up a relationship over nine years and, the more we do, the more confidence he's got in what we can offer. It's all about the relationship and the confidence, and I think that's sometimes where vet-farmer relationships go wrong."

"Proactive flock health planning and building workable health plans is much better than firefighting all the time. Routine post-mortems, blood sampling and worm egg counts – they all allow us to do that. It might cost more initially but the long-term savings speak for themselves."

and can preserve this situation for as long possible by using the right wormer groups at the right time for the lambs, and rarely dosing the ewes.

Testing is every 10 days during the peak nematodirus and coccidiosis risk period in spring, and then once in four or six weeks later in the season. Adam makes this work for him by dropping a dung sample off at the vet practice when he or Ruth are passing anyway. The test is either done there and then, or the results texted through later that day.

When asked what the result of all this is, Adam says the performance of his ewes is the clearest indicator. "I've seen a 20% increase in my scanning rate over the last three years. That's from working with the vets and having the sheep healthier."



Most three-quarter Texel lambs are sold finished, and less than a third as stores.

# Protecting flocks from the threat of infectious causes of abortion

By Professor Lee Innes and Dr David Longbottom, Moredun  
**Infectious abortion is one of the major flock health problems faced by sheep farmers and has a significant financial impact on production.**



A wide range of pathogens are capable of infecting sheep and causing abortion. *Chlamydia abortus* (enzootic abortion of ewes) and *Toxoplasma gondii* are the most commonly diagnosed in the UK and were responsible for 42% and 26%, respectively, of cases submitted to veterinary investigation centres between 2006 and 2013.

Abortions due to *Chlamydia abortus* typically occur in the last few weeks of pregnancy and often the first indication that something is wrong is the appearance of a stillborn lamb two to three weeks prior to the expected lambing date. Strategies for control depend upon the initial infection status of the flock.

The purchase of replacement stock is a common way for infection to enter the flock, therefore purchasing replacements from EAE-free accredited flocks is the correct approach for flocks free of infection. For flocks that are not



Stillborn lambs born just ahead of the expected lambing date can be the first sign of an abortion problem in a flock.

free from infection, the development and commercialisation of a diagnostic blood-test by Moredun scientists has been a major achievement. The test allows for accurate diagnosis by detecting the presence of antibodies to *Chlamydia abortus* in blood samples from infected sheep.

During a chlamydial abortion outbreak, the primary aim is to prevent the spread of infection within the flock, therefore good hygiene and husbandry practice is key. Abortion material and contaminated bedding should be disposed of promptly by burning or burial, and aborted ewes should be isolated until vulval discharges have cleared (about seven to 10 days). Infected lambing pens should be cleaned, disinfected and, if practical, not re-used for that lambing season. In the case of an active outbreak, treatment with oxytetracycline may reduce losses. Your vet will be able to advise on the most appropriate control strategy for your flock. If chlamydial infection is already established in a flock or area, there are several commercially available vaccines (live attenuated and inactivated) which may help in the control of the disease. Your veterinary surgeon will be able to advise you as to which product would be most suitable for use on your farm.

### Toxoplasmosis

Sheep may become infected with *Toxoplasma gondii* through the ingestion of oocysts, shed in the faeces of infected cats, on pasture or in contaminated feed or water. If ewes become infected with *Toxoplasma* for the first time during early pregnancy reabsorption of the foetus may occur, whereas infection later in pregnancy may result in abortion of the foetus a few days before the expected lambing time. Infected ewes develop a lifelong immunity against the disease which protects them against abortion in subsequent

pregnancies. As *Toxoplasma* is easily transmitted from consumption of oocysts on the pasture or in feed or water, it is difficult to prevent the disease from occurring through the maintenance of a closed flock. However, covering feed bins to prevent cats from gaining access can help.

Diagnosis can be achieved by submitting dead lambs and placentas to a veterinary investigation laboratory. Blood sampling may also be carried out, as the presence of *Toxoplasma* antibodies will indicate whether sheep have been exposed to infection or not.

Vaccination is an effective method to prevent toxoplasmosis. The sole live vaccine available is recommended to be used at least three weeks prior to tupping and should not be used on pregnant animals. It has a short shelf life so should be used strictly according to manufacturer's instructions to maintain efficacy.

There are no drugs that can cure sheep infected with *Toxoplasma*, although research has shown that lamb losses due to toxoplasmosis may be reduced by feeding the coccidiostat decoquinate during pregnancy. Decoquinate is most effective if it is already being fed to susceptible ewes at the time they encounter the parasite rather than after the infection is established.

Current research into infectious abortion at Moredun is aimed at advancing our understanding of how sheep can be protected against *C. abortus* and *T. gondii*, and using this knowledge to develop the next generation of vaccines, which will be safer, offer better protection and cost less.

All NSA members are associate members of Moredun too; you can support Moredun's work further by becoming a full member. More details on 01314 455111 or [www.moredun.org](http://www.moredun.org).

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### Moredun Livestock Health Roadshow

NSA strongly encourages members to attend a Moredun meeting if there is one in your area. The events each have a different sheep and/or beef theme and are free to attend.

- Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October: Glenlivet, Banffshire
- Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November: Selkirk, Scottish Borders
- Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November: Hellingly, East Sussex
- Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November: Betws-y-Coed, Conwy, and Dunster, Somerset
- Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November: Brecon, Powys
- Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November: Cold Ashby, Northamptonshire
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November: Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland, and Kendal, Cumbria
- Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November: Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire
- Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November: Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire

Topics, times and booking details are available at [www.moredun.org/events](http://www.moredun.org/events).

# The traditional and alternative options for winter ewe nutrition

By Ruth Wotton, St Boniface Veterinary Clinic



**The measure of success for winter feeding is healthy ewes at the right condition score to give birth to healthy lambs, without having compromised the supply of grass post lambing.**

Whatever system is used, the ewes' requirements for energy, protein and major and trace minerals must be met. These requirements vary with stage of pregnancy, number of lambs and size of ewe. For example, see the differing requirements of a 70kg ewe in table 1.

When feeding sheep, it is crucial to remember they are a ruminant and most of the diet should therefore be forage – a healthy rumen means a healthy ewe. Feeding too much concentrate in one feed can cause a significant drop in rumen pH.

## Neonatal losses

A high proportion of neonatal lamb losses can be attributed to inadequate nutrition during pregnancy. Having lambs born at the correct birthweight to ewes in the correct body condition with a good supply of colostrum is the best prevention for all the diseases of young lambs. But also be aware that over-fat ewes are prone to lambing difficulties.

Getting 90% of ewes at the correct condition score at key points through the production cycle (see table 2) minimises the chance of problems and avoids having a group of over-fat ewes trying to lose weight, or trying to get condition on to thin ewes. In addition to regular condition scoring, blood sampling three weeks before the start of lambing allows an assessment of the adequacy of energy



Nutrition ahead of lambing is key, but different approaches can be considered.

and protein supply and any adjustments to be made.

In addition to the traditional grass or forage-plus-concentrate feeding, there are some alternative approaches to managing ewes over winter.

One alternative is all-grass wintering (AGW), and AHDB Beef and Lamb has been working with pilot farms to develop guidelines for tight paddock grazing through the winter. It's a cliché to say grazed grass is the cheapest feed, and most farms will try and keep sheep grazing as long as possible before providing supplementary feed, but it is difficult to calculate how much ewes are eating and exactly when supplementary feed is required. In addition feeding in the field often leads to areas of poaching around troughs or ring feeders. However, the AHDB work, grazing at a high stocking density in paddocks to which ewes are

moved every one to three days, aims to improve grass utilisation while minimising poaching. Grass utilisation may only be 50-60% with set stocking, but this can be increased by 20-30% using all-grass wintering.

The system is most suitable for well-draining soils, ideally on a single block of land to allow easy

movements and in a climate that allows some winter grass growth. AHDB Beef and Lamb has monitored it on farms from Cornwall to Northumberland, finding that in South West England it was possible to keep ewes out all winter, whereas typically

**Table 1: Nutritional requirements of a 70kg ewe**

	Number of lambs	ME (MJ)	Protein (g)
<b>Early pregnancy</b>	-	8	
<b>Seven weeks pre-lambing</b>	Single	10.2	87
	Twin	11.4	93
	Triplet	12	96
<b>One-week pre-lambing</b>	Single	14.4	107
	Twin	18.3	126
	Triplet	20.3	136

Source: AHDB Beef and Lamb: 'Improving Ewe Nutrition for Better Returns'.

**Table 2: Target body condition scores**

	Lowland ewes	Upland ewes	Hill ewes
<b>Weaning</b>	2.5	2	2
<b>Tupping</b>	3.5	3	2.5
<b>Mid-pregnancy</b>	3	2.5	2
<b>Lambing</b>	3	2.5	2

For more information on condition scoring see AHDB Beef and Lamb: 'Condition Scoring of Ewe for Better Returns'.

**Table 3: Required dry matter intake (DMI) for ewes in an all-grass wintering system**

	DMI as % bodyweight
<b>Pre-scanning</b>	1.5%
<b>Post scanning singles</b>	1.6%
<b>Post scanning twins</b>	2.1%

Source: AHDB Beef and Lamb: 'All Grass Wintering of Sheep for Better Returns'.

in the North East concentrates were introduced in late pregnancy before ewes were housed for lambing.

A plate meter is required for this approach, so a grass budget can be drawn up based on the grass cover available, the residuals required and the intake requirements of the ewes. Size of paddock can then be calculated. Table 3 shows required dry matter intakes for ewes pre and post-scanning (these will need to be adjusted based on grass quality and weather conditions).

It is necessary to have a plan for bad weather, including supplies of conserved forage and sacrifice pastures to limit the areas of poaching. This requirement for a reserve feed supply needs to be factored against the cost savings expected.

## Grazing ability

In order to graze efficiently, ewes will need good teeth and good feet. These should be checked routinely before tupping and any ewes with problems not introduced to the paddock grazing until they have been resolved. A proportion of ewes will fail to adapt to the system and will need alternative management. Over time, culling the ewes that don't cope and controlling lameness will produce a flock better suited to the system.

A second alternative ahead of lambing is total mixed ration (TMR) feeding. Providing a TMR can have advantages over a traditional forage-plus-concentrates system, including providing a constant, balanced supply of energy and protein to rumen microbes and avoiding the changes in rumen pH associated with feeding large meals of concentrate.

To some extent it reduces competition for feed at the trough, but it is still important to ensure there is enough space (20-30cm/ewe) to maximise dry matter intake even in heavily pregnant ewes. With a tight lambing flock, feeding a TMR allows the energy and protein levels of the diet to be adjusted through late pregnancy to meet increasing nutrient demands from decreasing intakes. In addition it should be possible to use cheaper, homegrown ingredients that will still meet both energy and protein requirements. Adas has completed a study that shows rapeseed meal, beans or wheat distiller's dark grains perform equally as well as soya as part of a TMR.

When feeding a TMR it is important to remember there are at least three diets on farm – the diet on paper worked out by the nutritionist, the diet as it is actually fed, and the diet the ewes eat which may be changed by sorting, heating in the trough or feeds not performing as analysed. At the end of the day the sheep will give you the best answer on how good the diet is, so regular condition scoring and blood samples pre-lambing avoid problems due to assumptions that what works on paper must work on farm.

## Traditional systems

Not to neglect the traditional approach of forage-plus-concentrates, simplicity and flexibility are the main advantages of this system. Concentrates and conserved forages can be fed when they are required to supplement grass. The danger of feeding concentrates is that too large a concentrate feed can lead to acidosis, so concentrates should be fed twice daily in late pregnancy. It is important that forages are analysed, as energy and protein content can vary significantly year to year, which changes the specification of the concentrate needed to balance it. The better a forage you can make the easier and cheaper it is to supplement it.

There are various forage crops which can also be an alternative to grazed grass over winter, including kale, fodder beet and turnips. All these crops increase the risk of bloat, especially if they are grazed when frosted, and can cause metabolic problems such as hypocalcaemia. Fodder beet and turnips can cause acidosis and kale has been associated with nitrate poisoning. In addition soil contamination increases the risk of clostridial disease, although that is less of a concern in vaccinated ewes. Where forage crops are used, a grass run back area or baled silage must be offered to minimise these risks.

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# Fodder beet one part of major improvements on demo farm

Strip grazing fodder beet could be a means for sheep farmers to get through the winter as cheaply as possible.

At Frowen, a Farming Connect demonstration farm in Carmarthenshire, a 3.4ha (8.5-acre) field has been planted with fodder beet to provide winter grazing for 400 Aberfield cross Tregaron Welsh ewes.

## DM volume

The farmers, Ben Anthony and Diana Fairclough, have previously grown other forage crops but say nothing compares with the volume of dry matter feed produced by fodder beet.

"It will mean we can rest the grassland for lambing so that we will have better quality pastures at that important time," says Ben.



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If conditions are favourable, they can expect the crop to yield 15t DM/ha compared to swede at 7-8t. With each ewe's daily dry matter requirement between 1.5-2kg, the fodder beet crop will provide 15,000kg/ha, the equivalent of 10,000 sheep grazing days per hectare. That equates to 135 ewes/acre for a month.

Ben and Diana have planted the variety Lactimo, because of its relatively low dry matter (14-16%), while the high percentage of root above ground and large tops make it ideal for grazing in situ.

Grassland and forage specialist Charlie Morgan, who recently led a Farming Connect farm walk at Frowen, says fodder beet is a good main crop for winter feeding. Sown at the end of March and fed from November onwards, it is a high investment crop to grow (the crop at Frowen cost approximately £300/acre) but can facilitate an increase in stocking density and release opportunity elsewhere.

The high feed value and palatability

## Ideal fodder beet varieties for grazing

- Medium to low dry matter percentage varieties are more palatable and easy on teeth, though potentially less hardy.
- A variety that grows well out of the ground is easier to graze, produces higher utilised yield and means less tooth wear, but is potentially more frost susceptible.
- Orange and yellow rooted varieties keep better than red rooted types, especially if they have large tops. These offer extra yield and help protect the roots from frost.

of fodder beet requires careful grazing management to prevent digestive problems. Francis Dunne, of seed supplier Field Options, explains that the crop is best suited to light and medium bodied, free-draining soils.

"Limestone or sand is the ideal. If the



Ben Anthony and Diana Fairclough have taken advice from Charlie Morgan (right) on fodder beet as part of their role as a Farming Connect demonstration farm.

soil isn't free-draining it can be a problem," warns Mr Dunne.

He advises factoring in the cost of one tonne of lime per acre into the growing costs: "Fodder beet takes lime out of the soil so lime should be included even if it isn't needed at planting."

## Weed competition

Fodder beet does not compete well with weeds. The crop at Frowen has been sprayed four times – firstly with a pre-emergence spray, followed by two applications for weed control and finally a fungicide and trace element dressing.

Utilisation is the key to success of any crop and it can be an issue if fodder beet is grazed by sheep without the correct system in place, says Mr Morgan.

"My only concern about fodder beet is that it is so high yielding that sheep can't eat it fast enough," he explains. "This means sheep are in the same place for a long time so that creates a risk of puddling. For that reason, care needs to be taken with the type of land on which it is grown."

The fodder beet field at Frowen was selected because it is free-draining, and it has multiple gateways to alternate access and also allow ewes to be turned onto grass runbacks in adjoining fields during wet conditions.

A prerequisite for fodder beet to work successfully is maintaining a young enough flock that is capable of grazing the crop, Mr Morgan adds.

## Successful changes

Growing fodder beet to graze in situ is the latest in a series of changes Ben and Diana have implemented at Frowen, to impressive effect. They have worked with independent sheep consultant Lesley Stubbings for three years and have implemented a range of projects and trials with support from Farming Connect. They now body condition score ewes at scanning, use teaser rams, and vaccinate ewes to protect against abortion. Improving nutrition and grazing has been a major focus.

These measures have led to a 40% increase per hectare in the financial performance of the flock, despite a downturn in the lamb price. Central to that increase have been a higher scanning percentage and a reduction in lamb losses. In 2014 the flock scanned at 156% and there were losses of 7%. In 2015, the scanning figure had risen to 191% whilst losses were down to 4%.

"When times are tough you will get through it if you can achieve good physical performance," says Mrs Stubbings. "All the improvements Ben and Diana have made have come together to spectacular effect. It is the result of lots of facets, of pulling everything together. There is no single magical solution."

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# Don't expect any 'quick fixes' for wormer resistance in sheep

In the face of recent publicity regarding the use of multi-active wormers in New Zealand, SCOPS is warning sheep farmers that once resistance to a wormer group exists on a farm it is not reversible.



SCOPS asks farmers not to heed recent press coverage about being able to reverse anthelmintic resistance.

"We would all like to think there's a quick fix should we get into trouble, but when it comes to wormer resistance the reality is that once it's established on a farm there is no way back," warns Lesley Stubbings of SCOPS.

"Once you reach the stage where there are more resistant than susceptible worms on a farm, the situation cannot be reversed. This is why it is so important sheep farmers act now while they still have enough susceptible worms on their farms.

"Resistance does not happen overnight. It develops over a number of years and we can slow it right down if we use wormers

## Case study: Matt Blyth, Didling Farms, West Sussex

Following SCOPS advice on controlling worms, alongside improved grassland management, has played a vital role in improving lamb growth rates in the last few years, says Mr Blyth.

As well as moving to a paddock grazing system and adding creep on the permanent grazing, the farm has taken an integrated approach to wormer use.

Matt explains: "The first breakthrough came when we found we had resistance to the 1-BZ (white) group. We now only use this against nematodirus, and then only if there is an early challenge. We also know there are worm species on the farm that have developed some resistance to the 3-ML (clear) group. This means we are very careful when and how we use this group, and we monitor the situation each year using regular drench checks."

Matt has used faecal egg counts for several years and now has his own testing kit so he can take more samples and get quicker results.

"Now I know much more about what is happening and feel more in control of when I need to treat," he says. "The other major benefit is that I have been able to identify which fields or paddocks are

heavily contaminated with worms so plan grazing for weaned lambs to avoid them getting a huge worm burden in the second half of the season, which something we used to fall foul of.

"Coupled with using one of the two newer groups (4-AD orange or 5-SI purple) on alternate years, we are now managing worms better than ever with less than half the total number of doses we used to use over the flock in a year.

"Our next target is to further reduce the number of ewes we drench at lambing. We feed a very high quality TMR and, having monitored ewe egg outputs for the last two years from housing, we know fit ewes, irrespective of litter size, maintain a good immunity to worms up to lambing. This means we only need to treat the shearlings and any that are below target condition.

"I also make sure any sheep coming on to the farm, including rams, are given the full range of treatments advised by SCOPS. I don't want to bring in problems from elsewhere. I've seen the devastation sheep scab can cause and it simply isn't worth the risk. It's an investment I can easily justify, particularly when set against the cost of wormers I don't use at other times of the year."



carefully, as well as cutting our reliance on them. If you wait until resistance is obvious then it's too late. Acting now, when the number of resistant worms is relatively low, is the only way to safeguard your ability to control worms in the future."

SCOPS offers a number of practical recommendations.

- 1. Always give an accurate dose.** Inaccurate dosing is a common weakness and has a dramatic effect on how fast we select for resistance. Underestimating the weight of the sheep, uncalibrated/unserviced guns and poor technique are all major risks.
- 2. Do not mix.** Never mix anything else (e.g. a trace element product or another wormer) with the wormer you are using. At the very least this could reduce the effectiveness of the treatment; at worst a reaction between the mixed products could cause a serious adverse reaction in the sheep.
- 3. Chose the right product for the job.** Do not use a combination product (e.g. fluke and worm) or a long-acting wormer without getting advice on whether they are necessary and how to use them carefully (for example leaving some sheep untreated for a long-acting product).
- 4. Make sure the product you choose is still effective.** Use regular post drench tests to check. Your vet or adviser can tell you how to do this simple check.

- 5. Use one of the two newest wormer groups.** Treating all lambs with a 4-AD (orange) or 5-SI (purple) wormer (available from your vet) once in the mid/late season will minimise the selection for resistance to other wormers used earlier in the same season, helping to maintain the effectiveness of the other groups.
- 6. Don't treat adult sheep unless necessary.** Many ewes do not benefit from a pre-tupping treatment so get advice on which you can leave untreated. If you are using an injectable product for sheep scab (an

endectocide) make sure the problem has been accurately diagnosed and you get advice on how best to minimise the selection for resistant worms.

- 7. Avoid bringing in somebody else's resistant worms.** Follow an effective treatment regime for all in-coming sheep, including a group 4-AD (orange) or 5-SI (purple) wormer. This goes for purchased stock and your own sheep returning from grazing away.
- 8. Never put freshly wormed sheep directly onto 'clean' pasture.** Clean pasture includes new leys or fields with a very low level of worm contamination.

You can worm sheep and leave them where they are for a few days before moving, or leave 10% of them untreated.

- 9. Ask for help.** Talk to your vet or adviser about product choices, testing for resistance and how to get the best from your worm control.

For more information visit [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk). NSA also has a limited number of SCOPS 'Know your anthelmintic groups' leaflets available to members. Use the NSA Head Office contact details on page 2 to request a copy.

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# Survey reveals worrying lack of understanding about liver fluke

A survey of 220 sheep farmers in the UK and Republic of Ireland has revealed a lack of understanding about liver fluke, prompting calls for more engagement from farmers and clearer messages from advisors.

The survey found good awareness of when liver fluke affects flocks, with 70% of respondents correctly identifying autumn/winter, particularly after a wet summer. However, when asked if they could outline the liver fluke cycle, many were unaware of the different stages of fluke (early immature, immature and mature) or when we would expect to see them. The most well-known aspects of the cycle were the intermediate snail host and that sheep pick up cysts from grass, but at just 20% and 30% awareness respectively, this was still very low.

Elanco Animal Health commissioned the survey. Matt Colston from the company says: "Despite limited understanding of the life cycle, it is positive that many farmers identify autumn/winter as the period when liver fluke has most impact on the farm.

"It should be relatively easy, therefore, to communicate that the burden has been building long before the disease becomes clinical and that action can be taken earlier in the season to target treatment dates to prevent infection of the mud snail – but 72% of respondents said they would not do this. For me, this reluctance demonstrates the confusion around treatment and highlights the importance of educating farmers with practical advice."

The survey suggested confusion around treatment was on active ingredients in products and understanding of which of these active ingredients targeted different ages of fluke in the sheep – see table.

Philip Skuce of Moredun says: "Brand recognition seems to be much higher than knowledge of active ingredients. Personally, I would prefer farmers to know what is in the bottle rather than what is on the bottle and what impact this has for the flock, but the survey shows that when we talk about actives we must relate it to



A liver from a sheep with chronic fluke infection.

what people are dealing with every day, providing them with a simple solution to this complex problem."

When deciding what product to use, it was worrying to see that 19% used the product they always used and 8% bought on price. However, it was encouraging that 52% were consulting their vet or animal health advisor on what product to use, and 10% were taking advice on when the threat to livestock was high.

## Product choice

Independent sheep vet Fiona Lovatt says: "Although 63% said they rotate their flukicide, unfortunately when you look closer into how this is being done, only 8% are correctly choosing by active ingredient for specific time of year and the likely dominant stage of fluke present in the animal. 59% appear to have understood the message that they shouldn't always use the same product, but are not considering why and are just rotating product year to year or after each dose. There is a need to move away from rotating and think more about the right ingredient and the right time of the year."

Dr Skuce continues: "Although a very large proportion of respondents had poor understanding of the different stages of fluke or at which time of year the

different stages might be present in their animals, many are looking for and taking advice. Therefore, it is our job to ensure the correct advice is getting through the channels to the farmer in a sensible way that they can put into practice.

"For example, 33% are using flukicides as a preventative treatment when the majority of products for liver fluke are curative. In order to get to a position where there is strategic use of flukicides, we need to change this perception to drive correct dosing and sustainable use of products."

The survey showed good awareness, but low uptake, of on-farm management options. The panel felt this was due to impracticality, lack of time and little understanding of how easy some actions are to take.

George Milne, NSA Scottish Region Development Officer, contributed to the survey analysis as a farmer who has been personally affected by fluke. He says: "Draining land can sometimes be difficult, although maintaining ditches is often easier. Spraying and topping rushes has shown a huge benefit on my farm, without incurring a big cost. Cleaning out drains, fixing leaking troughs; there are lots of simple things that can be done that will make a big difference."

## Fluke treatment products

Active ingredient	Stage of fluke it treats	Awareness of stage of fluke it treats	Suitable timing of use*	Awareness of suitable timing of use
Triclabendazole	From two-day old fluke to adult	39%	Autumn/winter	21%
Closantel	From seven-week old fluke to adult	22%	Winter/spring	10%
Albendazole	From 10-week old fluke to adult	21%	Spring/summer	11%

\* Treatment timings and options will vary between farms and between seasons/years; please consult your vet or animal health advisor.able ess of suitable timing of usestanding of which products target different ages of fluke in the sheep (i.e. ing autumn/wint

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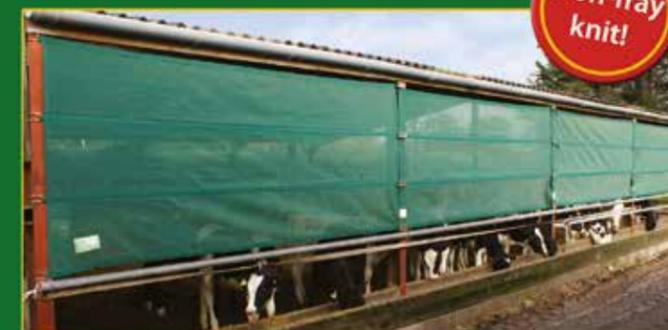


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# Don't neglect your rams after they finish working this autumn

By Kate Phillips, independent sheep consultant and Harper Adams University lecturer

**The boys have done their work and it's now time for a well-earned rest. But don't simply put them all in a field together and forget about them! How many times do you see a ram that has plainly had fly strike or is in poor body condition? It often comes down to post-tupping neglect.**

Examine all rams carefully on removing from the ewes and check for brisket sores, harness chafing and lameness, and make sure any infections are treated correctly with long acting antibiotics if necessary. An open sore of any kind can be an invitation to fly strike, so if you find any lesions make sure to top up fly protection, particularly if the autumn proves to be mild and wet. Any lesion that attracts flies leads to the animal trying to hide that part of its body from attack, which often leads to excessive irritation, sitting and limited grazing. The knock on effect is loss of even more body condition. Check rams regularly.

## Condition score

Check body condition too. A good fit ram going into tupping at body condition score 3.5-4 may well have lost more than one condition score (say 13kg of fat for a 100kg ram) depending on how many ewes he has mated – but excessive weight loss could well be an indication of an underlying health issue, such as fluke.

If fluke is a problem on the farm make sure rams are not missed when the rest of the flock is treated. This goes for most other vaccinations too, including clostridial and pasteurella vaccines. Remember that rams are twice as susceptible to worms as ewes, and bear in mind rams will need

**Ram costs per lamb sired: Based on a £550 ram and 150% lambs reared**

Number of mating seasons	Number of ewes per ram			
	40	60	80	100
1	9.17	6.11	4.58	3.67
2	4.58	3.06	2.29	1.83
3	3.06	2.04	1.53	1.22
4	2.29	1.53	1.15	0.92

Source: AHDB Beef and Lamb: 'Fit for Purpose Rams: A blueprint for breeders'.

a significantly higher dose of wormer, given that many are more than 90kg in bodyweight. Follow SCOPS principles when worming all types of sheep.

Rams also need to be well fed after mating to regain body condition (score 3.0) to see them through the winter. This is particularly important for ram lambs and shearlings that are still growing. This could simply be well managed and high quality grazing (not a small nettle infested patch close to the buildings) but might equally mean feeding a small amount of concentrates, maybe 0.5 kg/head from November to March and ad-lib good quality hay or silage. Make sure to feed 'ram' concentrates since the mineral balance of ewe feeds is wrong (magnesium and phosphorus levels are too high) for males and can cause kidney stones.

## Investment

Keeping rams healthy through the winter and spring will pay dividends in terms of remedial action next summer. Remember, the cost of the ram for each lamb sired reduces the longer a ram lives and works.

At a time when we need to be reducing costs of production this is one area that often gets overlooked and can reduce costs significantly. A yearling ram costing



Care and attention paid to rams post-tupping with pay dividends next season.

£550 at purchase that only works for one season and mates with 40 ewes will cost £9.17 per lamb sired at 150% lambs reared, whereas a ram that works for four seasons and mates with 60 ewes a year will cost only £1.53 per lamb sired – see table.

*This is the second article on ram management from Kate Phillips. The first, on management ahead of tupping, appeared in the August/September edition of Sheep Farmer.*

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# Visual aid to assess lameness control

A new flock assessment tool has been made available by MSD Animal Health, to provide a straightforward way to evaluate the effectiveness of lameness control strategies.

The Lameness Control On-Farm Planner, which was developed in conjunction with FAI Farms, offers a simple and visual 'where are you now' method of identifying whether a lameness management protocol is unbalanced in any way.

## Assessment

John Atkinson, MSD Animal Health Technical Manager, says: "The industry-accepted five-point sheep lameness reduction plan gives shepherds a clear management strategy and a practical protocol for reducing the incidence of this costly problem. However, it can be quite difficult to assess where you are sometimes with existing control approaches, but this new questionnaire-based tool will pinpoint areas of weakness. It is also designed to promote discussion between farmer and adviser over the best action plan for any given flock."

The assessment scores current farm practice within each of the five points that make up the sheep lameness reduction plan: culling, treatment, quarantine,



## New app for recording management data

StockTrace has developed a new app for android smart devices, which works with its software and bluetooth EID readers to offer gains in flock management.

Using a specially designed stand, a phone or tablet with the StockTrace app installed can be mounted on any race with any weigh-head and used with any EID stick reader - see picture. This allows the operator freedom of movement while weighing, grading and drafting animals, as well as saving on the expense of EID panel readers.

Weights can be added either manually or automatically, depending on the scales, and the app automatically shows 'old weight', 'new weight' and calculates DLWG for immediate decision making. Additional, individual information can be added and all the data transferred to the StockTrace Linx software by wifi. Information is securely held in the cloud for easy access anywhere.

More information from StockTrace on 01512 032191 or www.stocktrace.co.uk.



Contact your vet or animal health adviser to work through the lameness control planner.

## New stockist of leg pasterns

Dalton Livestock ID now stocks leg pasterns for sheep and goats, which can be printed for management and official purposes.

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## Schmallenberg vaccine now available

Following recent concerns raised by NSA and others, it is with some relief that a new Schmallenberg vaccine has come to market in the UK.

Zulvac SBV from Zoetis is licensed for use in cattle and sheep in two doses at a three-week interval, the second at least two weeks before mating. Supplies are available immediately.

The vaccine provides seven months of immunity for sheep, so if timed ahead of mating, covers the window of susceptibility during pregnancy (days 28 to 56 in sheep).

The vaccine is POM-V and only available on prescription from vets.



# Moredun launches scab diagnostic

The Moredun Research Institute has developed a novel diagnostic blood test for sheep scab infestation, which was launched in late September at the Sheep Vet Society conference on the Island of Mull, Western Scotland.

Moredun says it is crucial that all infested animals are identified for control and eradication programmes, including sub-clinical cases. Dr Stewart Burgess explains: "During the early stages of sheep scab, infestations are not obvious and animals often appear clinically normal. This sub-clinical stage can last for several weeks during which animals can act as 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."

"Ultimately, it is wise to assume that all sheep being brought onto the farm from whatever source are infested and should be treated and then quarantined for at least two weeks before mixing with the main flock. During quarantine observe for signs of infestation (nibbling, rubbing, scratching, deranged wool, areas of wool loss). If scab

is suspected then the sheep should be examined by a vet to identify the parasite and advise on treatment."

The new test from Moredun detects host antibodies to a protein found only in the sheep scab mite, which means the test can accurately detect that an infestation is due to the scab mite and not another ectoparasite, such as lice. The test can detect infested animals at an early stage and before the onset of clinical symptoms, which will be important in the effective control of the parasite.

SAC Consulting currently provides vets in Scotland with free ectoparasitic examinations of skin scrapings taken from sheep. It is hoped that integrating

the results of the skin

scrapings with this new

blood test will provide

a more powerful and

reliable diagnostic

service for sheep

scab.

Dr Burgess

continues:

"The

development of

a sensitive and

specific blood test

provides an important tool to aid control strategies for sheep scab. We are very pleased to collaborate with SAC to make the test available to support farmers and vets in the control of the disease."

Moredun and NSA enjoy a close working relationship; see more from



## Dipping to control sheep scab

Padraig Hyland, a technical vet for Bimeda, says products that target external parasites only, such as dipping, should continue to be considered by farmers. However, there are a number of tips to consider when dipping, to ensure you get optimal results. Common errors result in reduced performance of the product used, he says.

1. Ensure safety instructions are followed as per the pack, including the wearing of protective clothing, washing exposed skin following any splashes, and not eating, drinking or smoking during dipping.
2. Assist rams and fat sheep through the bath and dip lambs separately from ewes.
3. Reverse the sheep in to ensure thorough wetting of fleece and minimal splash back.
4. Dip every sheep, including the shoulders, for one minute.
5. Dip each head completely under twice.
6. Keep sheep moving in the bath.
7. Top up at recommended intervals to ensure maximum effectiveness and duration of coverage, and mix thoroughly after each top up.
8. Skim contamination from dip regularly to avoid post dipping lameness.
9. Do not dip more than one sheep per two litres of dip wash that was in the bath at the start of dipping before cleaning out the tank and starting again.
10. When a bath becomes foul, always empty it and refill with fresh dip.
11. Allow sheep adequate time in the post dip holding pen to allow the runoff to flow back into the tank.
12. Dispose of all wash remaining at the end of a day's dipping.
13. For best possible tick control, dip ewes in spring before lambing.

Moredun on page 31, including contact details if you wish to find out more about using the new scab test as a farmer or as a vet. The free testing in Scotland is linked to scab being a notifiable disease there, but Moredun will take enquiries from all over the UK.



Keep sheep moving in the bath.



Reverse the sheep to ensure thorough wetting of fleece and minimal splash back.



Dip every sheep, including the shoulders, for one minute.



Dip each head completely under twice.

# Wool Board announces system of quicker payment for producers

When it comes to getting paid for our produce, few of us would choose to delay things any longer than necessary. And so, from next year, the British Wool Marketing Board is moving all producer payments to a BACS system, with payments sent direct to producers' bank accounts.



BWMB says this will increase the ease with which producers deal with the board and greatly increase the speed with which they are paid, potentially meaning cleared funds will reach bank accounts as much as 14 days sooner than when paid by cheque.

Paul McCarten, BWMB Producer Services Manager, says: "With the more reliable BACS payments the funds are processed easier and cleared quicker, aiding cash flow and eliminating any problems which may occur in the process."

## Cost efficiencies

"Producers have been able to opt for BACS payments since 2012, but from May 2016 all producers will be paid this way, giving everyone the benefits currently being enjoyed by those who have already chosen BACS payments."

On top of the obvious benefits of quicker payments, receiving funds by BACS could also reduce producers' bank charges – and it will help cut costs for BWMB, enabling the board to continue providing producers with a cost effective and high quality service. Mr McCarten says: "It is important the board continuously



BWMB does not buy wool from producers, so pays the bulk of money to farmers once it has sold most of that year's clip by electronic auction.

looks for ways to contain costs, at the same time as improving the service available to producers. As a producer organisation it is our responsibility to deliver best value to producers and, in doing so, the board is able to invest in those areas which deliver maximum benefits."

Ian Buchanan, BWMB Chairman, explains that producers currently receiving their wool payments by cheque will shortly receive a letter enclosing a BACS registration form.

"It is vital producers respond as quickly as possible to this letter to enable BWMB to update its records and payment details well ahead of the next wool season," he says, adding that producers will still be paid in the same manner, with an advance payment on the current year's wool and the balance payment due from the previous year.

"This system has been developed to allow the board to operate in any market situation and to use its collective strength within the market place in order to ensure producers receive the true market value of their wool," he explains.

"While some producers question this method of payment it is important to remember the board does not buy wool, it sells it on behalf of producers and does not have the funds for that wool until it has been sold at auction. At the end of October each year upwards of 90% of the wool has been received by depots, but only 25% of the clip will have been auctioned."

## External influences

With wool being traded on a global basis there are many factors outside of BWMB's control which affect wool prices and, as a result, auction prices and clearances can vary dramatically across the season, he says.

"This means the board has to be conservative with the advance payment to ensure it does not run in to financial issues and also ensure it has sufficient resource available to fund promotional activity and to give it collective strength when it comes to selling wool.

"The board sets reserve prices on all wool sold to ensure the best returns for producers and, by having the advance balance payment system in place, is able to act proactively with these reserves maximising the value of wool to producers."

Producers wanting more information on the BWMB BACS payment policy, or any other producer-related enquiries, can contact the Producer Services Department on 01274 688666 or ps@britishwool.org.uk.

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# Opinion Piece: What the future holds for UK agricultural shows

By Paul Hooper, Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations Secretary  
**It may come as something of a surprise to many that in the region of six million people now visit our agricultural and country shows each year. That's about 10% of the population.**

In spite of a period of instability, characterised by the 2001 foot-and-mouth epidemic and remembered as a time of intense pressure, most events weathered the storm and carried on, albeit with some diversification of content and audience.

Thankfully most, if not all, recovered and are now getting back to the business of what I believe to be their primary, two-fold purpose – promoting British agriculture and bridging the rural and urban divide through education.

## Spectacle

The tradition of showing pedigree animals stretches back to the eighteenth century, and even today a parade of prize-winning cattle, sheep and pigs is a spectacle to behold. For the hundreds and thousands of people who go along to watch, it's the chance to get on the other side of the farmer's hedge and see the cream of the crop, not to mention a rare opportunity to appreciate all the wonders of the countryside in one place.

With proper organisation, an injection of creativity and the right marketing mix, agricultural and country shows certainly have the power to break down any public misconceptions about the farming community. They are well-placed to promote an informed understanding of food production and the rural environment.

Paul Hooper (right) believes the spectacle of livestock classes and parades at agricultural and countryside shows plays a key role in educating the public.

The key of course is to be innovative in the way you present farming to non-farming show visitors, and aside from staging livestock displays purely for exhibition, or for competition and education, a good show will also take the visitor through the food chain, using cookery demonstrations to explain how the end product can be used, then making those products readily available at food stands for public consumption.

In my view, educating the family group is particularly important, given that they are the purchasers of food in the future, and ASAO encourages its members to include educational content as part of the event's daily timetable.

It is pleasing to see how most shows, smaller ones included, now go to great lengths to deliver a lively programme of fun, interactive workshops, practical demonstrations and hands-on, collaborative activities to engage visiting children, teachers and parents.

It is important to keep up the momentum, and we can always do more, by tapping into curriculum developments and learning methods, and joining forces with other education providers to make sure that our offering is both relevant and useful.



Aside from entertaining and educating the public, however, show business is about just that – business. Thousands of farmers across the country use the events as an opportunity to exhibit and sell prize-winning stock, meet up with colleagues

## The Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations

Paul Hooper is Secretary of ASAO, as well as the Royal Bath and West of England Society Secretary. His unstinting work in the agricultural show world was rewarded with an OBE in Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday honours this year.

ASAO is a national body that promotes agriculture, horticulture and the countryside through shows and other events, and works hard to encourage and share best practice between agricultural societies and related organisations.

More at [www.asao.co.uk](http://www.asao.co.uk)

and compare notes, and enjoy the social occasion with other farmers and their families.

Offering strong and profitable platforms for livestock enterprise gives them enormous opportunity to do business and helps to encourage important breed development too. The agricultural show is a vital shop window for farmers and food producers, and a place where they can take advantage of interactive commentary, link up with industry leaders, find out about the latest legislation, technology and trends, and review modern agricultural methods and machinery.

## New technology

Take EBVs for example, which chart the genetic factors of an animal, as well as more traditional criteria such as birth, wool type and conformation. They have been described as performance indicators of the unseen, offering additional valuable information about good sound animals. EBVs are growing in importance in the sheep industry, as selecting the right breeding stock can make the difference between a successful or unsuccessful sheep enterprise. Used properly they can help breeders become more profitable in the long run.

Therefore, it is important that the agricultural show of the 21<sup>st</sup> century highlights new methods of tracking vital genetic information in showing and selling animals, together with other exciting new developments, forums for farmer discussion and industry advice on current topics.

In short, it must serve as a valuable means of cascading interest and knowledge to breeders, farmers, food producers and the public at large.



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**NSA**  
 NSA supports the **Sheep Breeders Round Table** and encourages members with an interest in genetics to attend.  
**Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd November 2015, Nottinghamshire**  
 Information and booking forms at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/SBRT](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/SBRT).

**NSA**  
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**NSA Scot Sheep:** Wed 1st June: Blythbank Farm, West Linton, Scottish Borders.

**NSA South Sheep:** Tues 7th June. Pythouse Farms, Tisbury, Wiltshire.  
**NSA Sheep Event:** Wed 27th July: Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire.

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# Business and technical training

By Joanne Briggs, NSA

**The NSA Next Generation Ambassadors have already completed four of the five delivery sessions planned for them in 2015, with the generous support of a number of companies and individuals providing the group with excellent business skills, technical knowhow and personal development.**

The first day of the third session, held in late July, was a particularly intense meeting with some thought-provoking and (hopefully) habit changing training from consultant Wyn Owen. The group looked at how to adapt businesses over time by managing change, as well as negotiation and time management skills.

BWMB was very generous in providing overnight accommodation and a day-long visit to its grading depot in Bradford, plus a fascinating insight into wool processing at a nearby scouring plant. As well as an evening discussion led by former NSA Chairman John Geldard, there were also two exceptional farm visits – one to Roaming Roosters' farm shop in Lancashire looking at branding and added value, and another with John Henderson and David Coates in Yorkshire to see their long-standing share farming agreement.

The focus of the fourth session, held in September, was the lamb production, procurement and processing chain. Two Sisters at Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, hosted the first day, providing a live-dead

training session with MLC Services in the morning and an in-depth afternoon with a factory tour and interaction with all departments involved in the business.

An overnight stay in Abergavenny included dinner with two local farmers, Lyndon Edwards and Mick Wright, who shared their experiences in the sheep sector and provoked some interesting discussion about attitudes to the future. Mr Edwards warned the Ambassadors that whatever they were doing now would be different to where they would be in 10 years, and to embrace that change and take opportunities.

## Discussion

The next day started with a visit to the busy Monmouthshire Market, where the auctioneers had one of their biggest entries of sheep since opening on the new site at Raglan. That afternoon involved a visit to Richard Sparey's farm on the Herefordshire-Wales border, where he challenged the Ambassadors about why they wanted to be sheep farmers and what their futures might hold. The no-holes-barred discussion about how Mr Sparey had grown his business was a great end to the session, looking at the benefits of sheep in being able to utilise land that is of little value to other sectors.

NSA thanks everyone who supports the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors sessions, and acknowledges the generous funding of the NSA regions for all Next Generation activity. More online at [www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk](http://www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk).

Recent visits for the Ambassador group (pictured bottom right) included the Lancashire-based Roaming Roosters food

business (top) and Richard Sparey's Herefordshire farm (bottom left).



## Book now for Next Generation open event

All young people in the sheep sector, and those looking to get a foot on the ladder, are warmly invited to a one-day, free event on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October at Newton Rigg College, Penrith, Cumbria.

This is the third event to be run jointly with RASE Innovation for Agriculture and will be even more interactive than in previous years, with break-out sessions throughout the day where attendees can choose which practical skills to learn more about. There will also be a number guest speakers and the option to stay on for evening entertainment.

Individuals from the NSA Next Generation Ambassador programme in 2014 and 2015 will be present to share their experiences, providing the ideal opportunity to open the application process for the 2016 programme. NSA is very excited about taking on another group of Ambassadors next year and is already planning an exciting line-up of activity.

**There will be no charge to attend the event, but pre-registration is required at [www.innovationforagriculture.org.uk/events](http://www.innovationforagriculture.org.uk/events).**

If you are unable to attend the October event but are interested in applying for the 2016 NSA Next Generation Ambassador programme, email [youngentrants@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:youngentrants@nationalsheep.org.uk) and we will notify you when the application forms go online.



# On My Farm – The Next Generation

**The NSA Next Generation Ambassadors for 2015 are regularly providing updates on their year for the NSA website. A taste from four of the 11 is provided here, but you can read more in the 'Profiles' area at [www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk](http://www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk).**

## Ewan Cumming (22)

Denton, Norfolk

Well, I had a very interesting time at the third NSA Next Generation session. It was good to have a session on time management, as this is definitely not my strong point and hopefully I will be able to apply this to my enterprise. The visit also renewed my support for the British Wool Marketing Board, and I encourage you all to support it as well. The last part of the three day session was also of particular interest to me, as we focused on share farming, which is an area I am trying to break into.

A popular topic of conversation with everyone was the current lamb price. With such poor returns at the moment, it is understandable that everyone is downhearted. In my opinion we, as farmers, can do some things. Firstly, we can look at our own businesses and see where we can improve, which may help us ride out these poor financial times. Improving our grassland management, for example, would allow us to use less fertiliser and yield more kg of meat per hectare. Improving the genetics of our sheep is also an option, which could allow us to more efficiently produce lamb to the specifications the market wants.

## George Hartley-Webb (23)

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

It has been a busy couple of months with Andrew Foulds, who I work for, as we've been selling most of his early lambing flock. Even though it is such a shame to see them go, I've gained some much-needed experience. We've also had the busy, yet slightly painful task of repairing the electric fencing around all the rented ground, since it disappeared underneath the spring growth quite some time ago.

I went to the first of the sheep breeding fairs at Thame Farmers Market to help Andrew sell some of his ewes,



which we managed to do even on the current trade. We also ended up buying 70 Mules thieves for myself.

My Red Polls have been doing well and their calves are growing at an astonishing rate. My only concern is that they are rather fat, which will not help for bulling or calving, and so I have been doing some research on Stabiliser cattle. I went to look at a local herd, which was very impressive. They had some great records of calf gain weights and were easy calving.

## Georgie Radmore (24)

Devon/Pembrokeshire

Before starting a new job in Pembrokeshire in August, I enjoyed being at home with my family on the farm. I spent many days gathering our sheep up on Dartmoor and then shearing, drenching and marking them all ready to go back. It was very satisfying to see them sorted, walking back up to the moors where they are hefted.

I went with my parents to go and select a couple of new rams. After studying the EBVs and a short discussion with Dad, we had selected two rams. We are taking full advantage of hybrid vigour, selecting commercial composite rams for both maternal and terminal breeding. This is our second year of using performance recorded composite rams after some very pleasing results last year, so fingers crossed for the coming year!

Now I live in Pembrokeshire I am now getting back into YFC, which is great. I am looking forward to taking part in all various activities and competitions again. I am planning on going home in the next few weeks though, as we are going to be gathering all the hill sheep off the moor again for 'clearance days' and also when we treat all the sheep and put the rams in.

## Oli Newman (21)

Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

I weaned all the lambs from the ewes in mid-August and the lambs came off the shearlings a week later. We drew out 185 potential ewe lambs and took them to some good, diverse white clover leys. They will be pushed here to be at the correct weight



and size before tupping. The ones that don't quite make it will then be finished at the back end of the year. The rest of the lambs were moved, on mass, to where we took first cut silage, where there is a good mix of grass, red clover and lucerne.

Some of the ewes have gone across the stubbles before we plough, aiding a weed strike. They have gone onto different levels of pasture according to body condition as a result. Over the next few weeks, along with some ewes already split off, the data recorded at lambing will be considered as we sort the rest of them and look at the culls we've drafted off in more detail. The rest of the ewes will then continue to get back into the right condition to allow them to go to the tup.

## George Gough (23)

Knighton, Powys

I enjoy all four seasons equally but the autumn brings with it a fresh, exciting feeling on the farm. There is always the excitement to see if the new tup you bought is working on the ewes, the ground is being worked down again to start a new crop cycle, hedges are being cut, the yard's full of fodder and the sheds are full of straw. Yes, winter brings some hardships along with it, but so does summer.

I always see September as the time to get some much needed condition back on the ewes after a hard summer rearing lambs, and I would much rather do that by giving them some good grazing now than having to start feeding early next year pre-lambing. I like the ewes going into winter in a strong condition.

Something I have experimented with this year is to run an aerator over the ground in the last couple of weeks, to try and maintain some more grass growth late on in the season. It's something I've never done before and have heard mixed reports of their effectiveness, and so hopefully the results will be interesting to see – I'll keep you posted!



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