

Sheep Farmer

JUNE/JULY 2016



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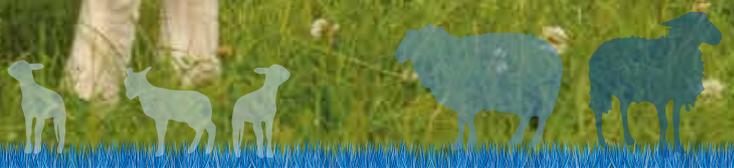
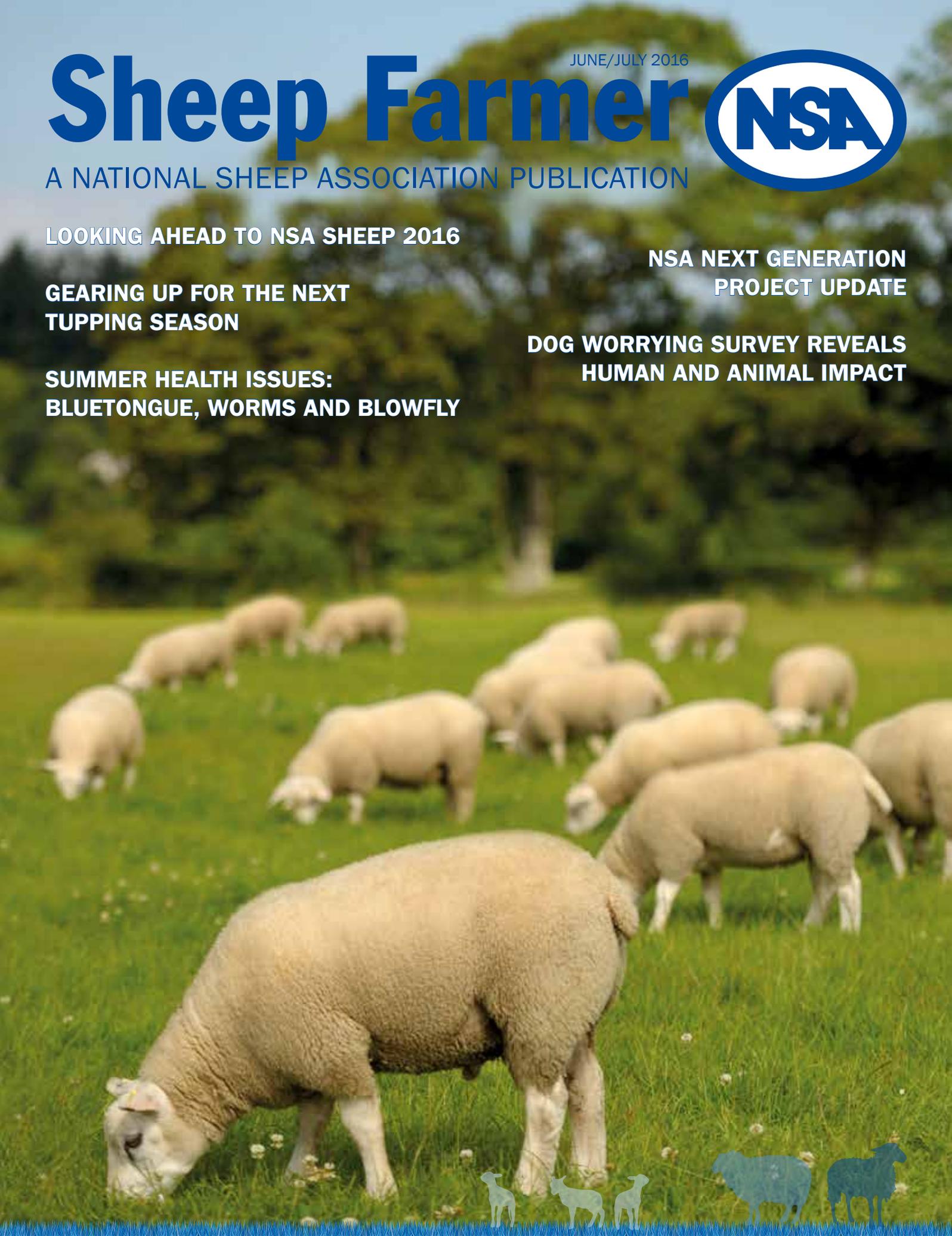
LOOKING AHEAD TO NSA SHEEP 2016

**GEARING UP FOR THE NEXT
TUPPING SEASON**

**SUMMER HEALTH ISSUES:
BLUETONGUE, WORMS AND BLOWFLY**

**NSA NEXT GENERATION
PROJECT UPDATE**

**DOG WORRYING SURVEY REVEALS
HUMAN AND ANIMAL IMPACT**



your business your future

NSA sheep events showcase and celebrate our fantastic industry

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive
Of the many NSA activities, our biennial programme of regional sheep events and national event would be up there among our most recognised and respected. The value of these events is demonstrated by an attendance well in excess of 20,000 people each year, and people come for many reasons.

These include: meeting the trade and discussing new products or approaches with experts; studying the sheep breeds or talking to breed societies; taking the weight off the feet and listening to seminars and debates; and meeting old friends and chewing the fat over happenings during the year. These are specialist events for people interested in sheep farming – full stop. They are technical events but policy related too. They show what's on offer and demonstrate best practice approaches, but also have a social function.

Events in 2016

Our 2016 programme started in February with the NSA Eastern Region Winter Fair at Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (reported in the last issue of Sheep Farmer) – and June got off to a flying start with NSA Scot Sheep on the first day of the month. Scotland undoubtedly deserved a good event with good weather, and they got it. The success of these events is hugely affected by the host farm and the generosity of Glenrath farms, home of the Campbell family, proved a fantastic venue that drew a very healthy crowd through the gates.

NSA Scot Sheep boasted more than 150 trade stands and was the ideal opportunity for newly appointed Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Connectivity, to cut his teeth with the Scottish sheep industry. A busy calendar of meetings meant I couldn't attend this year's event – but it's good to know (and



of no surprise) that the smooth running is not dependant on my attendance!

Swiftly following was NSA South Sheep the week after, held at Pythouse Farm, home of Sir Henry and Lady Rumbold and their farm manager Paul Aldridge. Another immensely successful event, this one extended over a day-and-a-half with an NSA Next Generation session the previous afternoon and a lively social during the evening. With the EU referendum looming closer, NSA South Sheep featured an in/out debate with Owen Paterson and Peter Kendall, and although the farming vote may not be representative, it would suggest things are still finely in the balance.

Organising committees

Our congratulations go to Euan Emslie and Bob Blanden, organisers of NSA Scot Sheep and NSA South Sheep respectively, and also to the hosts, the event committees and chairmen, and the many volunteers who helped throughout. This is a big part of what makes the NSA a special organisation.

Fuller reports on NSA Scot Sheep (page 10) and NSA South Sheep (page 12) are provided within, but there is one more big event to go – NSA Sheep 2016 at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, on Wednesday 27th July. This is lining up to be a great event that no one should miss – and with free entry for NSA members.

NSA Sheep 2016 includes farm tours on the previous day and there will be more than ever to see and do at the event itself. The pre-event dinner on the evening of Tuesday 26th July, combined with the presentation of the NSA George Hedley Memorial Award, will be a special evening of celebrations and an opportunity to

showcase our incredible industry to our international guests as well.

Even with the excitement and hype around the NSA sheep events, we cannot forget the EU referendum will take place shortly after this magazine falls through your letterbox. At the time of writing, views still seem finely balanced. NSA has been very active on this subject, trying to get views and answers relating to farming from the two sides, and offering several debates to help clarify people's thinking. Whatever the outcome it will be one of the most important decisions we make and we will have to live with, and make the most of a democratic process.

Bluetongue

The sunshine we've been enjoying lately also reminds us of the spectre of bluetongue. Problems still persist in France and APHA has predicted an 80% chance of the virus arriving here in late summer. We now know that vaccine will be available in July and therefore encourage all sheep farmers to speak to a good sheep vet about the risks, and remember it could be more than four weeks after the first vaccination before immunity is gained - see page 35.

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Members living within striking of the NSA Sheep Event on Wednesday 27th July will find an Event Guide has been sent to them alongside this magazine. If you would like a copy and don't have one, please visit www.sheepevent.org.uk or call NSA Head Office.

National Sheep Association

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The front page picture of Texel cross lambs is supplied by the Texel Sheep Society, which is a mainline sponsor of the NSA Sheep Event on Wednesday 27th July at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR13 6NW.

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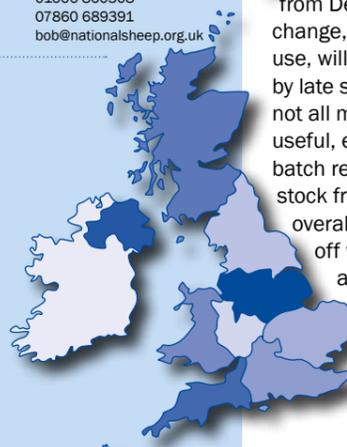
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News Update

Export success

Two exciting developments in the export world came hot on each other's heels in May, with permission given for the UK to start selling ovine semen and embryos to both the United States and New Zealand.

NSA is one of several supporters of the UK Export Certification Partnership, which is a the Defra/industry partnership that secured these new deals as part of its work to widen market access for UK meat and livestock producers. Now is the time for any breed societies or individual breeders who've ever had enquiries or contact with colleagues in New Zealand or the States to follow them up.

Nematodirus survey

While resistance to white drenches (1-BZ) is widespread, regular readers of this magazine and other industry best practice advice will be aware that *Nematodirus battus* worms are still susceptible to this group. This susceptibility will not last indefinitely and very low levels of resistance are now being found, with pockets of greater resistance in certain areas. PhD student Lynsey Melville is investigating this situation from her base at the Moredun Research Institute and has asked NSA members to help her by completing a short questionnaire at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/nematodirus.

English sheep movements

NSA is encouraging members in England to get their heads around the new movement reporting rules announced in April and, if appropriate, for their business to merge holdings to make the most of the positive change from a five-mile to 10-mile rule.

All sheepkeepers should have heard from Defra by now, explaining that this change, and alterations to temporary land use, will be rolled out across England by late summer 2017. NSA knows that not all members will find the changes useful, especially the removal of the batch reporting exemption for breeding stock from January 2018, but we feel the overall package of change is a trade off worth taking in order to obtain a full-scale review of the six-day standstill rule and agreement from the EU for some level of tolerance on EID read rates and movement reporting, reducing cross compliance penalties. There

are concerns emerging over cross border holdings and movements reporting. We are currently seeking clarification and will be working to get an acceptable solution.

Wool bedding giveaway

The second and third people to receive a 100% British wool bedding set, generously provided by the Wool Room, have been found at NSA events. The lucky winner from NSA Scot Sheep was James Harding of Hawick, Scottish Borders. Mr Harding had signed up as a new NSA member that day, so took advantage of his time on the NSA stand to also enter the free competition.



At NSA South Sheep the winner was 17-year-old Georgia Carnie from Melksham, Wiltshire. Her family have been NSA members for many years.

NSA will be giving a fourth bedding set away at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July, so call past the stand to enter on the day. The fifth and final set will be offered to the first person drawn out of the hat of all the entries off the website and at non-NSA events through the summer. NSA members and non-members can enter at www.nationalsheep.org.uk or at the NSA stand at a show near you.

New car stickers

NSA has had new car stickers printed which are available free-of-charge to members. You will automatically receive one when your membership next renews, posted to you with your membership card. If you can't wait that long, or would like more than one sticker, visit the NSA stand at an event this summer or contact NSA Head Office.

Book winners

The four books being offered in the free prize draw in the last edition of Sheep Farmer are now with their lucky new owners. Two copies of Ken Riggall's *A Shepherd and his Flock: 50 Years with*

Notice of NSA AGM

Notice is hereby given that the 123rd Annual General Meeting of National Sheep Association will be held at the University of Bristol School of Veterinary Science, Langford House, Langford, Bristol, BS40 5DU, on Tuesday 9th August 2016 at 10am, to transact the following business:

1. To approve the minutes of the 122nd Annual General Meeting.
2. To receive the Trustees Report to year ended 31st December 2015.
3. To receive the Statement of Accounts to year ended 31st December 2015.
4. To adopt (2) and (3) above.
5. To elect officers for the ensuing year; President and Honorary Treasurer
6. To elect Vice President(s)
7. To elect auditors.

By order of the Board.

Suffolk Sheep went to Lisa Williams of Shepton Mallet, Somerset, and Martin Evans of Newbridge on Wye, Powys.

Two copies of *Hill Sheep Husbandry in England: Adaptive to change in diverse ecosystems*, written by Andrew Humphries, went to Alison Freeman of Craswall, Herefordshire, and Hugh Marcus of Ballymena, County Antrim. Congratulations to all.

Carcase splitting

NSA is continuing efforts to change the way TSE regulations are implemented in the UK, alongside NFU and other industry stakeholders. There has been much discussion around the proposal of agreeing a date after which carcasses will be split, rather than the current system of mouting, and negotiations with Defra and the Food Standards Agency. Progress is slow, mainly due to a dispute about whether we could achieve a hybrid system of date and tooting, or simply a cut off date.

An industry-backed proposal for a hybrid system (no splitting until an agreed cut-off date of 31st May, after which lambs would be mouthed) is currently with the Chief Veterinary Officer for consideration but more work is needed to ascertain if the proposal has a reasonable chance

Members are entitled to submit their votes in advance of the meeting by completing a proxy form, or appoint a person to attend and vote on their behalf. Proxy forms and all documents referred to will be available at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events. Signed and completed proxy forms must be received by post, fax or email no later than 10am on Monday 8th August 2016. For full details of the use and completion of proxy forms please visit the website or call NSA Head Office.

The meeting will be followed by an update on NSA activity and an opportunity to learn more about ongoing work at Bristol vet school. Lunch will be provided so it would be helpful to know if you plan to attend. Email enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk or call NSA Head Office.

of being accepted by the EU. The EU referendum is almost certainly holding things up, but NSA is disappointed that the Government's 'remain' campaigners have not seized the opportunity to secure a better deal on TSE regulations as evidence that we can work within the EU framework.

Events in 2017

We're not even through the 2016 show season yet, and already NSA regions are looking ahead to sheep events in 2017. Announced so far are NSA Welsh Sheep on Tuesday 16th May (Usk, Monmouthshire) and NSA North Sheep on Wednesday 7th June (Tow Law, County Durham) - *more on pages 4 and 7*. Dates of other events will be confirmed in the next edition of this magazine.

Young sheep stars

Now in its second year, the National Young Stars competition was held at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, in the spring. NSA again supported the sheep section (pictured), which saw 10 teams compete to prepare and present show-standard stock for judging.

Blue Texel teams dominated, taking first and third place, with a Charollais team sandwiched in the middle. The third-placed trio of Aled Groucott, Rhys Cooke and Megan Watkins each received a year's free NSA members as part of their prize.



NSA reports – devolved nations

NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Davies, Development Officer



At our regional committee meeting in May the chairman was able to announce the venue for NSA Welsh Sheep 2017.

The event will be held at Llwyn Bedw, Talybont on Usk, by kind permission of Steve and Lisa Williams and family on Tuesday 16th May 2017 (although this date is to be confirmed). The farm runs 3,500 sheep on a closed flock basis with 70 suckler cows. The region is already looking forward to the event and thanks go to the Williams' family for agreeing to host us.

It is great to hear that sales of Welsh Lamb bucked the overall lamb sales trend and increased in the latter part of 2015, according to HCC. Campaigns running from July to November last year resulted in a 46% increase in Welsh Lamb legs and chops and 31% surge in roasting joints. These trends were highlighted at our regional meeting, coinciding with knowledge that the market price for the producer is so far better than 2015.

Sheep and flooding

Wales played host to representatives from the NSA UK Policy and Technical Committee in April, when a small working group visited the Pontbren project in Powys. The visit was arranged following the extreme flooding we saw earlier this year, during which media reports were widely claiming that sheep were partly responsible. Simplistic suggestions that trees are the answer were of course unhelpful and misleading, and originated from an argument put forward by the re-wilding camp, eager to jump on any excuse to criticise sheep farming and give reason for wilding.

The Pontbren project consists of 10 farmers who all sit within a hydrological unit off the River Severn, and has been groundbreaking in terms of influencing agro-environment policy and direction, as well as spreading messages of innovation and new approaches around the farming world.

A reminder to members in our region that the must re-register with Farming Connect before Thursday 30th June if they want to access the new programme offering up to 80% funding on courses including pesticides, chainsaw, VAT and more. As we head into the show season, also remember that AML1 forms must be sent to EID Cymru at Aberystwyth and not your local trading standards office.

If you did not catch NSA Cymru/Wales Region at the Spring Festival in Builth, Montgomeryshire YFC Rally in Kerry or the RWAS Grassland Event at the Rhug, make sure you call past the stand at the Royal Welsh Show. We look forward to seeing you.



Shelter belts planted as part of the Pontbren project in Powys. Picture courtesy of Woodland Trust.

NSA Northern Ireland Region

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer



The year is fair shifting along now. The Royal Ulster Show at Balmoral Park heralded a welcome change in the weather and summer arrived – event report on page 8.

Our regular dog sale was held at the end of May at the request of those in the sheepdog world. Although we did not break any world record prices, as they did a week or two before in Skipton, North Yorkshire, trade with us reflected the quality of the dogs on offer.

We are disappointed with the apparent lack of support for the sheep sector from DAERA (the new name for DARD) in the preliminary list of eligible items in the forthcoming Business Investment Scheme. We see that in the South of Ireland, EU-approved eligible items include portable races, handling units and pens, weigh scales, rollover crates, footbaths and adoption units. It is expected that fencing will be approved there too.

NSA NI is also concerned to hear of increased evidence that high levels of maedi visna infection have been found in some flocks in mainland UK. Producers cannot afford to be complacent about the risks of the disease, which has a severe effect on productivity and economics. In Ireland, both north and south, we enjoy Maedi Visna Free Accreditation and I would urge those importing from the UK mainland to ask if it is absolutely necessary to do so and, if so, to be diligent and take all precautions possible. The implications a breakdown would mean to the NI flock in terms of testing, movement and financial restriction are immense and cannot be overestimated.

Bluetongue threat

While on the subject of precautions against importing of disease, we must also be mindful of the increase of bluetongue infection being seen in France. As it moves north, the chances of it reaching UK again this summer are becoming more likely. It may be a long way from France to Northern Ireland but, again, it is something we can ill afford at the present time and prevention should always be on our minds.

Entirely unrelated to bluetongue, NSA Northern Ireland Region is organising a trip to France for members this summer. We will visit research farms in the Limoges and Clermont Ferrand areas and spend a day at Sommet de L'Elevage. Sommet is claimed to be Europe's number one livestock show, attracting more than 1,400 exhibitors and 85,000 professional visitors, including 4,000 from abroad. There will be more than 2,000 animals of high genetic value on show, including 22 cattle breeds and 26 sheep breeds. Please find my contact details on page 2 if you would like to join us.



The NSA Sheep Centre at the Royal Ulster Show housed a number of breed societies and trade stands - report on page 8.

NSA Scottish Region

By George Milne, Development Officer

We were delighted to see new faces at our recent NSA Scottish Region committee meeting, following appointments at the AGM earlier in the year. A full agenda was discussed, including updates on several policy issues and some important decisions that will need to be made over the coming months.

One was Scotland's BSE status, as a paper has been prepared by the Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers outlining the benefits for the red meat sector of obtaining BSE-free status. NSA fully supports the planned consultation process and then an application being made to Brussels. A discussion was held around the increase in problems for sheep welfare regarding raven attacks, and NSA is supporting the petition to see the current licencing rules changed in 2017 to move to a general licence to control ravens.

Predator problems

On a similar theme, concerns were raised about the increasing number of sea eagles and the serious consequences as a result of this on many sheep farms. An update was also given on the issue regarding the potential release of lynx across Scotland, with NSA continuing to argue against the release programme – more on page 21.

Other policy issues covered included changes from LFASS to ANC, and CAP

reform payments and this year's application problems.

NSA will also be represented at an EU transport regulation meeting held in Brussels and we must watch that new proposals do not interfere with our current arrangements regarding drivers' hours.

Final arrangements were made regarding the NSA Sheep Centre at

this year's Royal Highland Show on Thursday 23rd to Sunday 26th June. This year we will be focusing our attention on lamb tasting using the theme of 'Simple, Easy BBQ Lamb'. We are pleased to be working with the Scottish Craft Butchers to demonstrate how to debone a leg of lamb and then barbecue it to dish out free samples. We will also work with Aldi to barbecue lamb burgers and other convenient, easy lamb dishes to sample.

Our ever popular lamb dressing competition will take place on the Sunday once again and any young handlers wishing to take part should visit our stand during the show to enter the competition. NSA Scottish Region would like to welcome you all to a members' area at this year's show, within our marquee, where tea and coffee will be available over the four days of the show.

NSA Scot Sheep report on page 10.



George (pictured left) reports that NSA Scottish Region will offer lamb tastings at the Royal Highland Show again this year.



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NSA Reports – English regions

Central

By Anne Payne, Manager

Weather conditions

during the lambing season created difficulties in all systems, with those lambing indoors being unable to get their stock out because of no grass, particularly in Staffordshire and surrounds as fields were still so water-logged. For those lambing outdoors, it's been hard work trying to give extra feed, as well as looking out for hypothermic lambs.

In the Dark Peak area around Wild Boar Clough, ravens have also been a big problem during lambing. Attacks were so relentless on two of the farms affected that they sustained losses of about 100 lambs between them and evidence is being gathered to support the application for a licence to carry out some limited and much needed control.

As though winter had over-stayed its welcome, summer seemed to arrive just as suddenly with hot dry weather in the second week in May encouraging folk to get out the barbecue – but on Howden Moor in the High Peak this proved disastrous. A wildfire took hold and burned about 200 acres of old heather (pictured) before it was put out by firefighters with the assistance of many farmers and gamekeepers. This has reignited the debate on the issue of controlled burning on the moors, currently banned in some areas, to act as a firebreak. With some moors being under-grazed, concerns surrounding the amount of combustible material is increasing. We see 20 million visitors come to the Peak District annually, the moors are becoming increasingly

Wildfires in Derbyshire



Some of the damage caused by a wildfire on Howden Moor in NSA Central Region. Around 200 acres of old heather was burned before it was controlled.

Youthful discussion in Suffolk



NSA Eastern Region's first Next Generation focus group meeting kicked off a successful new venture in the area. Here the group views the flock Dan Phipps manages in Suffolk.

dangerous and of course uncontrolled fires are a serious risk not just to people but to livestock, wildlife and carbon stores. Perhaps policies around controlled burning and livestock reductions need to be revisited.

Eastern

By Jonathan Barber, Manager

The region held its first NSA Next Generation focus group meeting recently.

It was a great beginning to a new venture and our thanks go to the Godolphin Stud, Newmarket, for hosting the occasion. Thanks also to: Liam O'Rourke, Stud Director; Dan Phipps, NSA Eastern Region Chairman; and Joanne Briggs, NSA Communications Manager, who not only gave up her Saturday driving eight hours to join us but brought great enthusiasm and made the occasion both enjoyable and informative.

Discussion centred around the positives and negatives associated with sheep farming, as well as the challenges and rewards. Dan then gave the group a tour of the sheep enterprise at Godolphin, which included showing us his own design of a new covered mobile handling, crutching and dosing system. We ogled this amazing piece of kit before finishing the afternoon with a BBQ.

Ewan Cumming, NSA Eastern Region Vice Chairman, was the driver behind the creation of the group and sits as its chairman. It is hoped in time the structure will develop in other parts of the UK, and meanwhile there will be the opportunity for young shepherds to meet up in a new Next

Generation area at the NSA Sheep Event in Malvern, Worcestershire on Wednesday 27th July.

Notifications of future focus group meetings, as well as the region's upcoming visit to the Elveden Estate, Suffolk, will be included in the NSA Weekly Email Update – so look out for that and spread the word among friends. We also look forward to seeing you there or at many of the shows throughout the summer.

Marches

By Kevin Harrison, Chairman

It was good to see so many of you at our EU referendum debate at Stratford Market in May.

We were lucky to have some excellent speakers with South Derbyshire farmer Michael Seals MBE and former Farming Minister Sir Jim Pace putting their opinions forward. The debate was held in a good atmosphere and both sides made their points very well without descending into some of the negative tactics we have seen from others in the wider public debate. I don't know if it helped anyone to make a decision on how to vote, but it certainly gave us food for thought. A full report can be found at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/ events.

I was fortunate enough to spend some time with the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors at the end of May, for their second of five sessions through the year. Now in its third year, the NSA Next Generation project is going from strength to strength, with yet another excellent group of young sheep farmers joining NSA as Ambassadors.

NSA Marches Region will be holding its

Lively and insightful debate in Warwickshire



Many were given food for thought at the NSA Marches Region EU referendum debate.

Young Shepherd's event on Sunday 10th July at Overbury Farms, Gloucestershire, by kind permission of Penelope Bossom. The event will focus on training and personal development, involving a small competition element as well, so if you know of any budding young shepherds who would benefit from taking part please encourage them to enter. We will be putting the two top competitors through to the Young Shepherd of the Year national final at NSA Sheep 2016 at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, on Wednesday 27th July.

NSA Marches Region has a major role in helping to organise the biennial NSA Sheep Event and if you are interested in helping us in the run up, or have some time on the day to volunteer, please contact either myself or Helen Davies, NSA Sheep Event Organiser.

By Webb has had to stand down as our regional secretary due to increasing work commitments and I would like to thank her for all her hard work and input during her time in the position. Hannah Park will be taking on the role and we welcome her on board. *Contact details on page 2.*

Northern

By Heather Stoney-Grayshon, Manager

Back in March some of the NSA Northern Region committee had the pleasure of meeting

with Jane King, ADHB Chief Executive, which proved to be useful with Ms King answering questions while also listening to points of views from the grassroots of farming from our committee members.

By the time this magazine reaches you, we will have had a committee meeting and have got ourselves sorted ahead of the Great Yorkshire Show. Many great sheep will be on show as usual, and there will be a warm welcome if you look out for the NSA trailer.

Looking forward to next year, I am pleased to announce NSA North Sheep

2017 will take place at West Shields Farm, Tow Law, County Durham, on Wednesday 7th June, by kind permission of the hosts W.H. and J. Smith and Sons. The event will allow you will see a commercially, family farm ran with great enthusiasm. The family manages 1,350 Mules and Texels alongside 300 suckler cattle. If you would like to enquire about sponsorship or trade stand space please find my contact details on page 2.

South East

By Bob Blanden, Manager

By the time you get to read this, NSA South Sheep 2016 will be over and all that will be left will be a wash-up meeting to decide whether we got it right or not.

If you weren't there you will be able to decide by the reading the event report on page 12. If you were there, it would be good to hear from you with any comments and suggestions for future events. Hopefully the weather will have been kind and we will have had a good attendance,

All set for NSA North Sheep 2017



Alan, John, Jim and David Smith, hosts of NSA North Sheep 2017, are looking forward to hosting the event on Wednesday 7th June. They are pictured with Event Organiser Heather Stoney-Grayson (centre).

particularly of NSA members.

All of NSA's regional events provide members with a useful and free technical event which non-members are able to attend for a nominal amount compared to most agricultural shows. They generate funds for the region to operate and use for activities for regional members, so we will all be happy if attendance and funds are both high.

Our thanks to all our helpers and those that attended. One of the most important parts of an event is to find a farm with an amenable host that can accept all the disturbance that is bound to happen. As organiser of NSA South Sheep, I can honestly say that it has been a pleasure to work with everyone at Pythouse. Now it is over, plans can be made for the future. More news in the next issue of Sheep Farmer.

South West

By Alan Derryman, Chairman

After the long wet winter we've had, the late arrival of spring this year was not ideal and grass has not been in plentiful supply for many.

It's a month behind last year in many places and only in the last couple of weeks have we seen any real growth. By all reports there has been a big lamb crop, so let's just hope prices will remain above last year, as they have so far through the spring.

May is always a hectic month for me, with the start of shearing courses throughout the region, but it is great to see young enthusiastic people wanting to learn and improve their skills.

Looking ahead, NSA South West Region will be putting on an evening event for members after the busy summer season, so watch this space for more information in the coming months.

Solid sheep offering at Balmoral strengthened by NSA presence

By Edward Adamson, NSA Northern Ireland Region Development Officer

It's over for another year and what a wonderful event the Royal Ulster Show at Balmoral Park was. The NSA Sheep Centre marquee had a 'full house' of sheep breeds and trade exhibitors, who all reported a good number of visitors with solid enquiries.

The thronged alleyways around the show were not replicated in the marquee but no one really wanted all those crowds when only a small percentage were interested in sheep related exhibits. Those who called in had the time and space to talk, examine and enjoy what was to be seen.

Those involved got a pleasant surprise when the Lley Sheep Society exhibiting in the NSA Sheep Centre won reserve prize in the competition for the best trade stand in the pavilions. The judges said they had been round hundreds of stands so this was quite an achievement. It was a joint celebration for me, as organiser of the NSA Sheep Centre and also Lley Sheep Society Northern Ireland Breeders Club



Edward Adamson and Heather Stoney-Grayshon of the Lley Sheep Society with reserve prize for best indoor trade stand.

Chairman. Well done and thank you to all who helped, including Declan Mullen for supplying the sheep.

The shearing competitions were held adjacent to the NSA Sheep Centre, where a large number of spectators, as always, watched and supported their favourites. Sheep shearers from 15 different countries were flexing their muscles and over the three days parted 1,800 hogget ewes from their coats. It was very pleasing to see three familiar faces from the Young



The NSA Sheep Centre provided a focus on the sheep sector for people to do business in a friendly environment.

Londonderry, our 2015 winner, was placed third in stiff competition for the YFCU advanced shearing section. And Iain Wilson of Islandmagee, our 2015 runner-up, won the YFCU novice competition.

Also immediately outside the marquee, the sheep interbreed champion in the showing section was a Charollais shearing ram owned by Diane Christie and shown by Trevor Bell. I make no excuse for blowing my son's trumpet, as he gained breed champion in the Ile de France classes. It is best not to count back to the first time that I won this award!

Busy show

It was a very busy three days, as I tried to be in several places at the same time, had meetings and networked. A special thank you to Charlotte, NSA Membership Recruitment Officer, who manned the NSA stand and entertained visitors when other committee members were not around.

The NSA Sheep Centre at the Royal Ulster Show is one of three organised by NSA. Come and join us at the Royal Highland (23rd-26th June) and Royal Welsh (18th-21st July) shows.



Stewart Adamson collects the Ile de France breed championship.

Shepherd of the Year competition at past NSA Sheep NI events do so well.

Sam McConnell, our 2011 winner, won the blade shearing and will represent Northern Ireland in the world sheep shearing championships in New Zealand in February 2017. Russell Smith of Coleraire, County

Breed societies come together to discuss old and new challenges

With so many sheep breeds, crosses and composites in the UK, NSA feels an effective information network for the numerous societies is essential. That is the reason behind the annual NSA Breed Society Forum, held in Somerset in May this year, followed by a farm walk just over the border in Devon.

The theme for the meeting was 'Solutions to old and new sheep sector challenges', with updates on maedi visna and bluetongue showing the range between well-known and emerging problems. Updates on industry trends and NSA activity were provided by Joseph Keating of AHDB and Phil Stocker of NSA respectively, while a large chunk of the day looked at the role of breed societies in protecting and promoting genetics.

No-cull order

Amanda Carson of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), who is also involved in the Farm Animal Genetic Resources (FAnGR) committee and the Herdwick Sheep Breeders' Association, kicked this off by explaining how the Government would consider sparing certain groups of animals in the result of a disease-related cull, such as for foot-and-mouth. Rare breeds, scientific research animals, animals in education centres, and animals of breeding interest could be protected by putting a code of practice in place.

Tom Blunt of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust continued by presenting work being done by RBST, NSA and others to combine the Ovine Semen Archive with other stores to create a national gene bank. He explained that such a bank would safeguard breeds, gain security from disease threats, protect future generations, recreate lost breeds, create new breeding lines (conservation



The formal part of the NSA Breed Society Forum was followed by a farm walk at Yarrowcombe, Devon. NSA thanks Philip Derryman and family for being very generous hosts.

breeding) and store genetics that might otherwise be lost through breeding trends changing direction.

The Ovine Semen Archive is the industry-owned archive created when Defra signed over genetics collected as part of the National Scrapie Plan, so an important step is to assess the value and streamline what is in store. Mr Blunt said work had already started on this and the breeds with semen in the bank would be contacted before any decisions were made. Future steps would be assessing other stocks held by societies and groups, and collecting more genetics where needed. This would include embryos, which Mr Blunt said was an area RBST was increasing its activity in.

Preservation and registration of genetics is on the radar of the EU as well as groups within the UK, and forthcoming changes to EU zootechnical rules was something Marcus Bates of the British Pig Association joined the meeting to discuss. Declaring his non-sheep role from

the outset, he explained zootechnics are for all livestock species and, although they sounded complex, were something breed societies needed to get their heads around.

Zootechnics

The main aim of the zootechnical legislation was to facilitate trade of breeding animals between member states but, despite having the largest sheep population, the UK only has 29 recognised breed societies compared to 43 in Spain and 64 in Italy. It was agreed NSA would pick this up and provide a simplified interpretation of the legislation to help breed societies understand and engage with it.

More detail from the NSA Breed Society Forum has been sent directly to NSA-affiliated societies; find a copy in the members-only area of the NSA website. SAC Consulting will be providing an update on MV in the next edition of Sheep Farmer.

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Glorious sunshine draws record crowds to NSA Scot Sheep event

Visitors to NSA Scot Sheep 2016 enjoyed glorious sunshine and a packed programme of farm tours, breed exhibits, trade stands, demonstrations, Scottish Young Shepherd of the Year competition, stockjudging, sheepdog trials, sheep shearing challenges and a comprehensive seminar programme.

The farm tour of Blythbank showed just part of the Campbell family's extensive Glenrath farming empire, which includes 10,000 ewes on several farms and is a prime example of the stratified system at its best, with Blackfaces on the hills and Scotch Mules on the lowground. Glenrath is also the UK's largest producer of free range eggs, selling 1.5 million eggs a day to major supermarkets.

Host farmer Ian Campbell had a strong message to those attending the event: "We are learning from our experience in the egg industry that consumers want eggs from high welfare hens which are free to roam and not routinely administered with antibiotics. Some are willing to pay £1 a dozen more for eggs from high welfare hens which look and taste the same as other eggs. Beef and sheep producers enjoy the same advantages of natural production on grass. They could learn from our experience and earn a premium by promoting the high welfare behind Scotch beef and lamb."

Growing agriculture

Royal Bank of Scotland was the main sponsor and Ross McEwan, its Chief Executive, opened the event by highlighting the importance of agriculture to Scotland, with sheep playing a key part in maintaining the fabric of the countryside. He said that, like any business leaders, farmers needed to keep developing and growing their enterprises. RBS was keen to help and had increased



Scottish Young Shepherd of the Year was David McLean of Reston, Berwickshire, who qualifies for the national final with Kelly Blackwood of Biggar, Lanarkshire.

lending to farmers by 7% in the first quarter of this year. More than £19 million of bridging funding had also been loaned to 800 farmers to tide them over following the BPS delays.

Top venue

Warm tribute was paid to RBS and its staff by Sybil Macpherson, NSA Scottish Region Chairman, who also thanked the Campbell family for providing an 'outstanding venue'. Mrs Macpherson said: "It was a fantastic day with a perfect venue, superb weather, great support from our sponsors and trade stand holders, particularly RBS, and a huge attendance."



One of the biggest crowds of the day was for the auction of pairs of ewe hoggs.

Fergus Ewing, Scotland's new Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, was a welcome visitor to the event. He said his priority since his appointment 10 days

Event Fact File

Event: NSA Scot Sheep 2016

Venue: Blythbank Farm, Blythridge, Peebleshire, by kind permission of Glenrath Farms.

Date: Wednesday 1st June.

Competition winners:-

- **Young Shepherd of the Year:** David McLean, Berwickshire. Best junior: Billy Gray, Galston, Ayrshire.
- **Scotland v England shearing test match:** Scotland.
- **District shearing challenge:** Peebleshire.
- **Supershear:** Callum Shaw, Dunfermline.
- **Sheepdog trial:** Angus Jardine, Hawick, with Elsie.
- **Stockjudging:** Robin Blair.
- **Trade stands:** Breed society, Blackface Sheep Breeders Association; Indoor, Logie Durno Sheep; Outdoor, Galloway and McLeod.

Full results, including ewe hogg show and sale report, at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events/reports.

earlier following the Scottish Parliament elections was to fix the flawed IT system that had been the cause of delayed support payments to farmers.

He said: "Most farmers have received 80% of the payments due to them and the computer problems are either already fixed or in the course of being fixed. I know the delays have put many farmers in a difficult financial position and caused anger and frustration, but we are fixing it as a matter of priority."

Representing a rural constituency as an MSP for 17 years, Mr Ewing showed a keen appreciation of farming and the rural sector, and said farmers did not get the credit they deserved producing food for the nation, which was their primary role. Ewe numbers had been falling in Scotland and he looked forward to receiving the review of the Scottish sheep industry that was being carried out for the Scottish Government by a committee under the chairmanship of Ross-shire sheep farmer John Scott.

Top price in the auction of pairs of ewe hoggs, held at the end of the day, was 1,200gns for Bluefaced Leicesters from J. Wight and Son, Midlock, Crawford, Biggar. Second top was 1,000gns for a North Country Cheviot Park duo from Roderick Runciman, Allanshaws, Galashiels.

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EU referendum the hot topic at successful NSA South Sheep

Hordes of visitors grabbed the chance to visit the numerous trade stands and seminars at NSA South Sheep, tour the host farm and watch the various competitions – but it was the EU referendum that, unsurprisingly, grabbed people's attention.

The Duke of Montrose, NSA President, opened the day by welcoming farmers to the heartland of British Down breeds. He highlighted the diversity of the UK sheep sector through its range of breeds and systems, challenging retailers that it was inaccurate for them to suggest there were times of the year when UK lamb was out of season.

Lamb trade

He emphasised that the industry would need to watch its relationship with the EU as, in the event of a Brexit, there could be a tariff of 18-30% to sell our sheep into the EU. This set the theme for a subsequent EU referendum seminar session hearing arguments from Sir Peter Kendall and MP Owen Patterson on why farmers should opt to stay or leave.

At the heart of Mr Patterson's 'leave' argument was the potential for UK farmers to take back decision-making power when it came to policy making and political representation, and set up its own trade agreements. However, Sir Peter Kendall said the main reason for the EU was about trade and having access to a single market of 500 million people, which was 'critical' for the UK and growing its sheep meat

industry.

Over the rest of the day, visitors to the seminar area got to hear a variety of technical talks from farmers and researchers, including the potential development of a vaccine against the *Teladorsagia*

Event Fact File

Event: NSA South Sheep 2016.

Venue: Pythouse Farm, Tisbury, Wiltshire, by kind permission of Sir and Lady Henry Rumbold.

Date: Tuesday 7th June.

Competition winners:-

- **Shepherd of the Future:** Alex Olphert.
- **Best student:** Callum Tudor.
- **Speed shear:** Stewart Pullin.
- **Clean shear:** Will Hinton.
- **Sheepdog trial:** John Wheaton, with Ben.

Full results and more detailed seminar reports at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events/reports.

circumcincta worm. There were also sessions on using melatonin to optimise sheep breeding, breed choice and the benefits of body condition scoring.

The next generation of sheep farmers was represented strongly, with a number of dedicated events and competitions laid on especially for young blood. This included an NSA Next Generation session on the eve of the main show, organised by NSA South East Region to provide practical and technical advice.

Next Generation

The event was aimed at 18 to 35 year olds with a thirst for learning more about sheep farming. The 57 attendees could choose to attend four of a selection of eight workshops, explains vet and chair of the event, Louise Silk.

"There isn't a huge amount to encourage and educate young people and this was a free event to help educate those with a future career in sheep farming," she said.

Workshops covered areas such as practical fecal egg counting, fencing and dog training. A farmer discussion panel also shared their thoughts on the pros and cons of differing roles within the sheep industry. This was followed by an



The seminar marquee was crowded throughout the day, but particularly for the EU referendum debate.

evening social event including shearing competitions, a live band, bar and lamb roast.

On the day of NSA South Sheep event itself, young farmers competed in the Shepherd of the Future competition, where they were judged on various criteria including selecting lambs for slaughter, fencing and flock management.

Speaking at the awards presentations for the competition, NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker said he was hugely encouraged by the amount of young people at this event, and NSA events in general.

"It really sets the industry up well to see so much young blood coming in, and such high calibre of young people at that. It places a massive responsibility on us as an organisation, and others, to make sure what you're coming into is rewarding and satisfying and permanent."



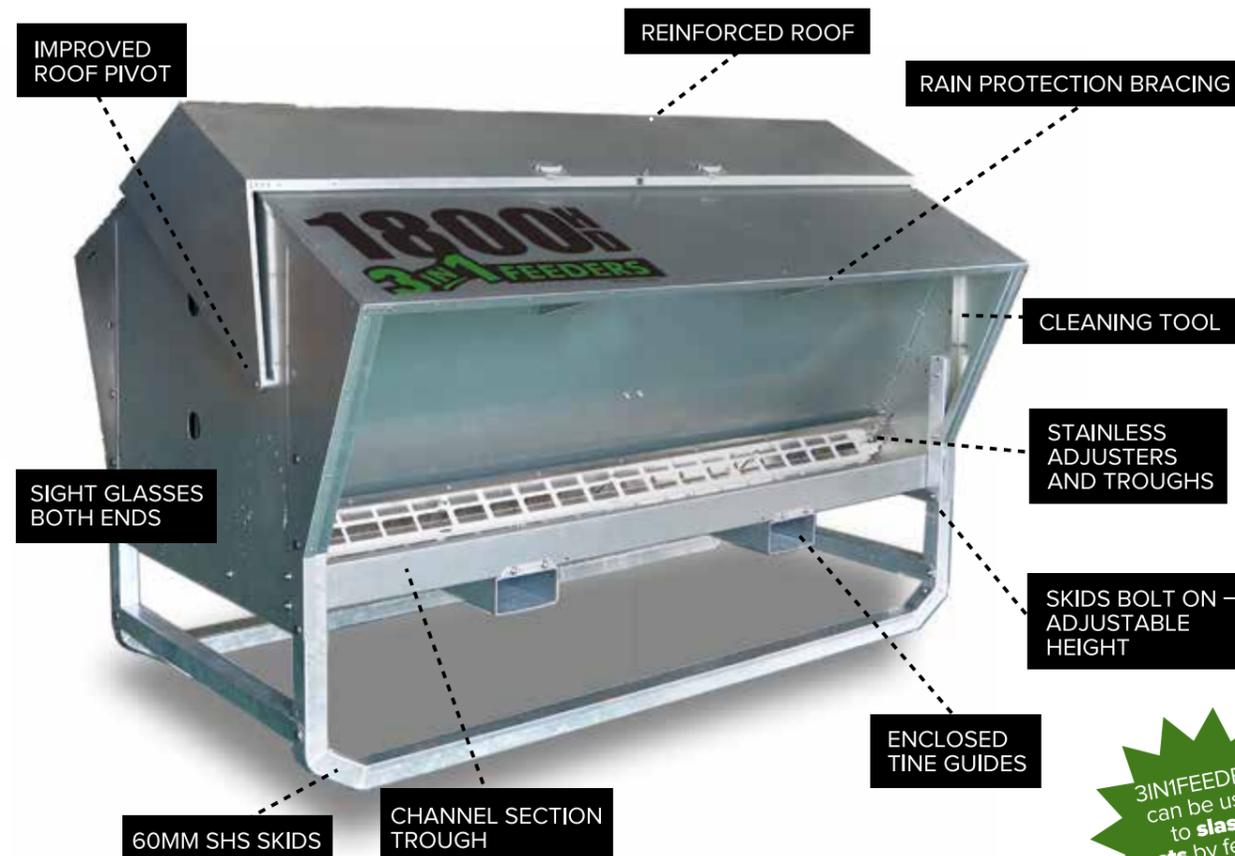
Around 60 young people with an interest in the sheep sector gathered for an NSA Next Generation afternoon.



Alex Olphert, an NSA Next Generation Ambassador (left), collects his Shepherd of the Future prize from NSA's Phil Stocker.



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June 1: NSA Scot Sheep, West Linton

June 7: NSA South Sheep, Salisbury

June 23-26: Royal Highland Show, Edinbrough

July 6-7: Livestock Event, Birmingham

July 12-14: Great Yorkshire Show, Harrogate

July 18-21: Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells

July 27: NSA Sheep Event, Malvern

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The very best of the industry will be showcased at NSA Sheep 2016, to highlight the huge amount of potential for farm businesses to access opportunities, drive efficiencies and harness innovation.

Under the banner of 'Adding value', there will be 250+ trade stands and sheep breed exhibits, seminars, debates and workshops, the Young Shepherd of the Year national final, countless demonstrations, a new grassland working area, sheepdog sale, fencing competition, cookery theatre, and new NSA Next Generation Area – and that's just to name a few.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, explains: "NSA Sheep 2016 will build on the strength of previous events to provide even more for sheep farmers. And we must provide more, as the sheep industry is facing a huge amount of potential opportunity that it is struggling to capitalise on. For too long we have been facing success tomorrow, yet dealing with continual difficulties today. Delivering events like NSA Sheep 2016 is one of the NSA's specialisms, and the biennial programme of national and regional events provides an unrivalled programme of activities to bring sheep farmers together, with each other, the trade, supporting industries, researchers and many others."

What? NSA Sheep 2016. Where? Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR13 6NW. When? 9am-5pm. How much? Free for NSA members; £15 otherwise. More info: www.sheepevent.org.uk



Workshops to encourage Q&As

Following the debut of a workshop programme at the NSA Sheep Event two years ago, NSA has built on the success and chosen three topics for visitors to engage on. The workshops are slightly smaller and more informal than the seminars, with the intention of people getting involved, asking questions and make the most of the experts on hand. Find the workshop area in Avon Hall.

Branching out... How trees on sheep farms can increase productivity and profit

10.30am, repeated at 1.30pm
 Vet Emily Gascoigne will consider key threats to lamb survival and growth and the effects of trees on drainage, changes of conditions underfoot and provision of shelter. Woodland creation advisor Hamish Thomson will give advice on planting location and species choice. PhD student Pip Jones will discuss data



gathered on the influence of trees, hedgerows and shelterbelts.

Protect your payments... Keeping on top of sheep identification, reporting and recording rules

11.15am, repeated at 2.15pm
 Session leader Ian Cairns says: "The focus will be protecting your payments. It's your

money; you don't want to lose it, so we'll look at ways to help you be prepared for an inspection. This will include being aware of what the main breaches are and ways to reduce your risk." Ian has generously offered to be on the NSA stand between the two sessions to deal with additional queries.

Great grass... The role of over-seeding in grassland management

12 noon, repeated at 3pm
 To complement live over-seeding demonstrations throughout the day, Cotswold Seeds will also lead a workshop on improving grassland. This will provide an opportunity for visitors to ask questions and gain a more technical insight into what will be shown by the demonstration. The demonstrations will be below Avon Hall, running every 45 minutes from 10am.

Seminars to engage on top topics

The NSA Sheep Event seminar programme always provides a line-up of interesting speakers and relevant topics – and this year is no exception. Four seminars will see farmers and industry spokesmen put forward their opinions and experiences, with plenty of time in each session for the audience to engage in discussion and debate.

The seminars will be held in a spacious marquee between the Wye and Avon halls (in a similar location to previous years). For the first time, the NSA stand will sit right next door – so call in for a cuppa any time.

Adding value by understanding the role of sheep in upland and hill areas - at 11am

NSA will launch a reviewed version of its 'Complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas' report, raising awareness of the importance of maintaining a viable sheep industry and highlighting the many unvalued benefits sheep production and grazing deliver. See page 24 for more information.

- Chairing: **Phil Stocker**, NSA Chief Executive
- Representing England: **Robert Helliwell**, Derbyshire sheep farmer and NSA Central Region committee member.
- Representing Wales: **Jeff Gwillim**, Powys sheep farmer involved in the NSA-supported Black Mountain Land Use Partnership.
- Representing Scotland: **Jennifer Craig**, Lanarkshire sheep farmer and NSA Next Generation Ambassador.
- Representing Northern Ireland: **John Blaney**, County Antrim sheep farmer and NSA NI Region committee member.

The Basic Payment Scheme: Adding value or undermining our industry? - at 12.15pm

With budgets under pressure and the tax-paying public far removed from the intricacies of food production, what future is there for the Basic Payment Scheme (even if we do remain in the EU after the referendum vote)? Would the industry fall to pieces without direct payments or flourish as businesses stop 'farming the subsidy'?

- Chairing: **Dan Phipps**, a sheep farmer from Suffolk, NSA UK Policy & Technical Committee Chairman and NSA Eastern Region Chairman.
- One the role of direct payment for family farms: **John Yeomans**, Powys farmer.
- On the role of direct payments in the tenanted sector: **James Gray**, Hampshire farmer and TFA Vice Chairman.
- On farming without receiving direct payments: **Ewan Cumming**, Norfolk farmer and NSA Next Generation Ambassador.
- On safeguarding against a subsidy-free future: **Richard Sparey**, Herefordshire farmer.

Adding value by maximising the marketplace - at 1.15pm

Whether we're selling prime lamb or breeding genetics, marketing a standard sheep fleece or niche red meat products, finding efficiencies and maximising value is a sure way to guard against the increasing volatility of the market. This seminar will ask whether the sheep sector as a whole, as well as individual businesses, needs to step up its game.

- Chairing: **Ben Briggs**, Farmers Guardian Editor
- On adding value to prime lamb: **John Richards**, HCC Industry Information Executive
- On adding value to genetics: **Liz Genever**, AHDB Beef & Lamb Senior Beef and Sheep Scientist
- On adding value to native breeds and mutton: **Bob Kennard**, NSA Make More of Mutton project manager
- On adding value to wool: **Ian Buchannan**, BWMB Chairman

Adding value and maximising output by optimising flock health - at 2.30pm

Truth or myth? Vets think sheep farmers don't earn them money, and sheep farmers think vets have no interest or knowledge about sheep! In an effort to resolve this catch-22 situation, the final seminar of the day will highlight the positive outcomes for farmers who enjoy a close working relationship with their vet.

Sponsored by MSD Animal Health.

- Chairing: **Bryan Griffiths**, a sheep farmer from Devon and NSA English Committee Chairman.
- First farmer-vet team: Cumbrian farm manager **Andy Dyer** and **Eva De Vries** of Coomara Vets.
- Second farmer-vet team: Gloucestershire sheep farmer **Pauhla Whitaker** and **Phillipa Page** of the Wood Veterinary Group.



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Setting the standard for the year

The NSA Wales & Border Early Sale, to be held this year on Monday 1st August at the Royal Welsh Showground, is the first really big commercial sale of tups in the season and sets the standard for the year.

Buyers with early lambing flocks know it's a 'one stop shop' and that they are assured of a quality, health assured purchase at the Builth sale. Quality is more important than ever in an increasingly competitive market and an innovation this year is an online catalogue, available on the new website.

Chairman John Owens of Leominster, Herefordshire, is confident of a good sale. He says the lamb trade has been reasonably positive, an encouraging sign that bodes well.



NSA Ram Sales 2016

- **NSA Wales & Border Early Sale:** Monday 1st August, Royal Welsh Showground, Powys.
- **NSA South West Ram Sale:** Wednesday 17th August, Exeter Livestock Centre, Devon.
- **NSA Eastern Region Shearling Ram Sale:** Friday 26th August, Rugby Farmers Mart, Warwickshire.
- **NSA Eastern Region Ram Sale 2016:** Friday 16th September, Melton Mowbray Livestock Market, Leicestershire.
- **NSA Wales & Border Main Sale:** Monday 19th September, Royal Welsh Showground, Powys.

Last year, the 25th anniversary early sale saw a trade with a better top price and clearance rate than had been predicted. The top price of 1,300gns went to Yorkshire Charollais breeders C.W. Marwood and Son, who sold to D. and A. Fenwick, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Their March-born shearling (pictured) had won breed champion and interbreed champion at three major shows in the preceding three weeks, including the Great Yorkshire with 2,300 sheep entered.

Second top was a Texel making 1,200 guineas, and there were also some improved breed averages.

The sale achieved the highest clearance in the 25-year history of the sale, with 82.03% of rams sold. Turnover exceeded £195,000.

More at www.nsaramsales.co.uk or from Jane Smith, Executive Director, on 01291 673939.

Females also on offer at SW sale

The NSA South West Ram Sale is being held on Wednesday 17th August at Exeter Livestock Centre, Devon. Societies with official sales hold their shows on Tuesday evening, providing an extra chance to see rams out of their pens.

Following on from the successful introduction of a section for crossbred shearlings last year, this will continue. New this year is the sale of females from any of the breeds who have males present. They will have to be either registered with or eligible for registration with their respective society. They will also undergo the same rigorous inspection as the rams.

Entry forms

Entries for the sale close on Monday 4th July and entry forms will be sent to anyone who has sold in the last three years. They will also be available to download from the NSA website and www.kivells.com, or request one over the phone using the details below.

The ballot will be held the following week and catalogues will be available from early August. These will be automatically mailed to vendors and previous purchasers and will also be available via the same routes at the entry forms.

This sale is renowned for its high standards and the committee is looking forward to seeing a high standard of entries on the day, when purchasers will be able to buy with confidence.

More at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events or from Sue Martyn, Ram Sale Secretary, on 01409 271385 or 07697 512660.

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Welcome post-lambing surprise for three lucky NSA members

Luck was on the side of three new NSA members when they each received a £200 voucher just a few months after signing up to join the association.

NSA has teamed up with Fecpak^{G2}, Cox Agri/Ritchey and JG Animal Health to give away three £200 vouchers in a free prize draw giveaway every other month throughout 2016. This latest round of winners marks the half-way point in the

Ed Bott, Worcestershire

Living only a stone's away from NSA Head Office, there was no excuse for Mr Bott not to join the association! From his base at Malvern, Worcestershire, he says he will be putting the voucher towards improving faecal egg counting and hopefully making efficiencies within the flock long term.



He describes the sheep enterprise: "The flock is made up predominately of North Country Mules, around 350 ewes, which are put to the Suffolk, Suftex or Charollais tup. We've recently finished another busy lambing season for the year, lambing everything inside during most of March. I'll market the main of prime lambs liveweight and buy in replacements. Alongside the sheep enterprise, we also make and sell around 500 acres of hay and 2,000 straw bales annually."

campaign, with three draws done and three more to come.

While new NSA members are automatically entered into the draw, existing members who have recommend a friend or neighbour to sign up to NSA also get an entry in the hat. That's one entry for every person you encourage to sign up, so increase your odds of a win and start recommending today. Pass on the application form on the page opposite, find us at a show this summer, or go online.

Winners

For the most recent draw: the voucher for Fecpak^{G2} has gone to NSA Marches Region member Edward Bott; £200 to spend with Cox Agri/Ritchey to Robin Welton from NSA South East Region; and the JG Animal Health voucher to NSA Scottish Region member Michael Ritch. Michael joined up at the beginning of year, upon hearing he had been accepted into the NSA Next Generation Ambassador programme.

NSA news

Having all recently signed up to become NSA members, each winner describes the regular communication they receive from NSA as being extremely useful in keeping them up to date with the sheep world, and after a busy lambing period, could be forgiven for forgetting they were even in the running to win the prize draw.

Robin Welton, Buckinghamshire

Having spent the past couple of years investing and growing the relatively new sheep enterprise on the farm near Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, Mr Welton says he will be putting his £200 voucher win towards a number of everyday essentials to help with the running of the farm. He explains: "Sheep haven't always been a feature for us. When we made the decision to sell off the milking herd we still wanted some livestock on the farm so decided to invest in the sheep. We've continued to build the Aberdale flock since then, running this alongside an arable enterprise as well as managing a number of office and storage units."

Membership forms, terms and conditions and profiles of previous winners at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw.

Michael Ritch, Aberdeenshire

With an expanding flock and plenty of ambition, timing for Mr Ritch, who farms alongside his father and grandfather in Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, couldn't have been better after he recently took the decision to invest in breeding sheep to add to the farms exiting beef and arable enterprises.

He explains: "After we took on an extra block of non-arable land without buildings, breeding sheep became a new addition for the business, having stuck to store lambs for finishing on grass or turnips in the past.

"Over the next few years I'm keen to improve grazing management and increase numbers within the flock, and I'm looking forward to discussing the possibilities of which products I might purchase with my voucher to best benefit the sheep enterprise."



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NSA's 2016 membership recruitment campaign is supported by JG Animal Health, Cox Agri/Ritchey Ltd and Fecpak^{G2} who are donating £200 vouchers for six draws in 2016. 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 to NSA. The earlier in the year you enter the draw, the more chances you have of winning.

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NSA dog worrying survey looks at impact on sheep and farmers

More than 230 farmers responded to the survey NSA conducted this spring, asking about on-farm experiences of sheep worrying by dogs – and the results have been incredibly useful in helping NSA draw attention to the problem.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, explains: “This is the third such survey conducted by NSA and, this time, focused on the impact on sheep owners as well as the sheep themselves. This provided a new angle for local and regional press to report on, boosting coverage of the dog worrying issue at a time of year when the weather was improving and dog walkers were starting to be out and about more.”

Anxiety and stress

The survey found dog worrying was causing around 85% of affected farmers to experience elevated levels of anxiety and stress. While the cost and extra time needed to deal with attacks was also highlighted, a worrying trend about the personal impact was revealed – 46% of farmers surveyed listed anxiety about spending time away from their farm, 35% said it had a negative impact on their family/social life, 30% cited depression and 24% went as far as to say they had considered giving up sheep farming. When asked what the single most damaging impact was, the most frequent answer was living with the anxiety of another attack.

Phil continues: “Highlighting and raising

awareness of this issue is a major remit for NSA, which is why we have gathered this evidence. We know the impact attacks have on the welfare of sheep is huge, but what this survey has revealed for the first time is the wider implications on farmers and their families.”

Adding to the stress linked to dog worrying, the farmers surveyed revealed the unpredictable situation they find themselves in when asking a dog walker to abide by the law and keep their dog on



Animal welfare is a well-known impact of sheep worrying by dogs, but the personal impact on farmers and their families is now better understood.



a lead. The survey showed 30% received a mixture of positive and negative responses from dog owners and 25% only received negative responses. Just under half (44%) described this negative response as verbal abuse. In line with previous NSA findings, the survey also shows the majority of attacks occur in private or enclosed fields with no public footpath or right of way.

Under-reporting

The survey confirmed NSA's view that the rising number of sheep worrying cases reported to the police is just the tip of the iceberg. Responses suggested only 34% of farmers affected reported every incident, meaning the vast number of attacks go unreported. In addition, only 39% of survey respondents who had reported a case to the police were given a crime reference or incidence number logging the crime.

Phil concludes: “We know reporting dog worrying incidents can be incredibly frustrating and tedious, particularly in parts of the country where farmers feel the police are disinterested in the crime. But it is hard figures held by the police that reveal the extent of the problem, supported by work such as this NSA survey.”

Find the full survey results, information for farmers and dog control signs at www.sheepworrying.org.uk.

occurring on private, enclosed fields, with 42% not having any footpath or public right of way.

- Of the 69% of survey respondents who had received negative responses when asking a walker to put their dog on a lead, the most common was verbal abuse (34%), followed by polite refusal (30%), intimidation by the dog (19%) and vandalism or some other form of retribution (10%).
- Of the 78% of respondents who had reported an incident to the police, the most commonly described result was ‘no outcome’ (21%). It was unusual for incidents to proceed as far as the police issuing the dog owners with a restraining order (3%), a court order (6%) or having the dogs destroyed (6%). Out of court settlements were slightly more common at 9%.

Based on 233 responses from farmers in England, Wales, Scotland and NI.

Survey highlights

- Farmers affected by dog worrying typically see two to five attacks per year, with an average of four sheep killed and five sheep injured.
- At the extreme end, three respondents said they experienced 50-100 attacks per year and two said 100+; 9% had 10+ sheep killed per attack and 14% had 10+ sheep injured.
- The two main reasons for sheep worrying attacks were dog owners not putting their dogs on a lead (72%) and dog owners assuming their pet wouldn't attack livestock or do damage if they did (71%).
- 85% of respondents said dog attacks were a cause of stress to them as individuals. Although 83% listed financial losses as a concern, only 16% gave this as the main impact.
- 83% of attacks were reported as

NSA continues to voice concern on proposed lynx introduction

By Joanne Briggs, NSA

The latest information available from Lynx UK Trust is that it has dropped from five potential trial sights for a release programme of the predator to just three, one of which it will select for a licence application later this year.

One of the three remaining, Kielder Forest, straddles the England-Scotland border and, as it would require a licence application to both Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage, looks unlikely to be selected. With Thetford Forest and the Lake District now out of the equation, the other sites are Aberdeenshire and Kintyre in Scotland.

Opposition

NSA is continuing in its opposition to the proposal, regardless of the site, not just because of predation on sheep but the wider implications for the countryside. This wider picture is outlined in a newly released NSA report - more below.

Due to NSA's negative response to its consultation, Lynx UK invited us to attend a meeting in Cumbria in late May to discuss



The NSA report (which can be found at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/policy-work) reacts to many of the claims made by Lynx UK in its report, pictured.

the next steps in a licence application for a five-year trial. This would involve six adult

lynx, three of each sex. NSA, represented by NSA Chairman Samuel Wharry, NSA Scottish Region Development Officer George Milne and myself, was almost the sole voice there arguing against the lynx trial application.

This is just the latest of several occasions we've presented our concerns to Lynx UK, and while they tell us they are listening, there is no evidence so far that they are acting on the information we are giving them. They remain set on making a licence application and argue a trial isn't guaranteed to be successful so is as much in our interest as theirs. They have invited NSA to be part of a working group designing the trial, arguing we need to do that in order to influence compensation rates and decide what trigger points would prematurely end the trial or deem it a failure. However, they want us to do that before they make the licence application and NSA does not feel it is appropriate to help them design a trial that they could argue is palatable to farmers and therefore increase the likelihood of permission being granted.

Industry roundtable launches lynx report

An industry roundtable discussion was held in London in April (pictured) to formally mark the release of NSA's report on 'The wider consequences of the introduction of Eurasian lynx to the UK'.

The report brings together researched evidence about the potential impact of introducing the big cat to the countryside. It discusses the unsuitability of the UK for a release programme, the limited success of similar projects in Europe, and the problems already seen with other protected predators. Alongside NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker, speakers at the launch included Tomas Olsson (NSA member from Sweden who loses many sheep to lynx and wolves), Sybil Macpherson (NSA Scottish Region Chairman who struggles with predation by sea eagles) and Perrin Dineley (NSA member and the first person in England to gain permission to control ravens on his farm).

Farmer experiences

Sybil said: “Flocks that were removed from the hills in my area of Scotland have been brought back in recent years, to overcome the negative impact of under-grazing on biodiversity. It is already difficult to maintain those vital sheep numbers due to predation by sea eagles, and I make a plea today to the powers that be for them to put more consideration into granting a licence to release the lynx than they did with the management of sea eagles. Sea eagles have meant the end of profitability for many sheep farmers – add lynx to the equation and the land will become an unmanaged wilderness that is no use to man or beast, domesticated or wild.”

Tomas said: “It's like a stick of dynamite with a very long fuse.



First the roe deer go, then your favourite cat disappears without you realising, and then they start to take sheep. In the beginning you just lose some sheep and you don't know why, but then you find more and more dead and not even eaten. The behaviour of lynx is changing; all over Sweden we see this. I think it is maybe the younger ones that hunt for fun and kill more than they can eat. It's the pressure of living with it. You wake up every morning, go outside and find dead sheep that you have spent so much time improving through your breeding programme and caring for through lambing time – just in order to feed the lynx.”

Phil said: “We know first-hand of the revulsion the public feels towards dog attacks, but there is an assumption within the plans for a lynx release programme that it's ok for the lynx to kill and maim sheep. The animal welfare implications are unacceptable.”

Discussing farming issues on both sides of the EU referendum debate

While the EU referendum is a hugely divisive topic, the campaigning work of both the 'remain' camp and the 'Brexiters' has meant NSA has found Government ministers to be far more willing to meet with farmers than usual.

On top of numerous staged events for the agricultural sector, NSA has had two intimate meetings in quick succession, the first with Elizabeth Truss, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the second with George Eustice, Food and Farming Minister. While the EU referendum dominated both, it was also a valuable opportunity to raise other topics that NSA is working on. These included proposals to release lynx into the UK with Mrs Truss, as her constituency was one of the areas being considered, and carcass splitting with Mr Eustice, as he has been supportive so far changes to UK implementation.

Focusing purely on the EU referendum element of the discussion, NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker reports on the meeting with Mrs Truss. He says: "As a strong and vocal supporter of the UK remaining in the EU, Mrs Truss made a strong case for staying in to protect our export markets and to cater for the regulations and controls we need for wider global trade. She explained that no non-EU country has complete access to the EU market and argued Brexit would be bad for most business activity, but particularly so for agriculture and sheep farming due to our highly protected status as an industry. We also felt Mrs Truss made clear her views about the unlikelihood of future financial support for agriculture in the event of coming out of Europe."

Support payments

Bryan Griffiths, NSA English Committee Chairman, comments on the meeting with Mr Eustice meeting. He says: "Mr Eustice said sheep producers had nothing to fear from an 'out' vote as, although approximately £3 billion per year was currently being drawn from Europe for support payments, this was a very small amount relative to the UK Government's annual spend. He saw no reason why a similar amount could not be found by the UK treasury and outlined his vision for payments based on a simple accreditation scheme, the abolition of cross compliance and perhaps the introduction of a Canadian-style crop insurance scheme. He reasoned that since the UK imported £18 billion worth of food from Europe and exported just £7 billion it was in the best interest of those on the continent to keep trade flowing."

While a small number of NSA officer holders from all the UK nations were able to attend the two ministerial meetings, two events organised by NSA allowed for a much larger audience. Kevin Harrison, NSA Marches Region Chairman, summarises the debate organised for members at Stratford Market, Warwickshire. The 'out' speaker there was Derbyshire farmer Michael Seals, versus Jim Paice, former Farming Minister.

Kevin says: "The one comment from Mr Paice that caught my attention was that no one has left the EU before so they're not going to make it easy for us, as they don't want other countries to do it too. Mr Seals argued that the reason farmers get so many inspections is because our Government is fined so much by the EU; they're not doing it for the sake of it. He believed we'd be fiscal neutral in 10 years, as we'd come back from any knock-on impact to the economy."

Following the NSA Marches Region debate was an NSA South East Region one, staged at NSA South Sheep between Sir Peter Kendall and MP Owen Patterson. At the heart of Mr Patterson's 'leave' argument was the potential for UK farmers to take back more decision-making power when it came to policies and political



Top to bottom: Meeting with Liz Truss in Suffolk, discussing Brexit with George Eustice in London, debating at NSA South Sheep.

representation. He said: "Far better for this country would be to sit down with local politicians, with local organisations and to tailor a proper rural policy to our own industry and our own environment."

He added taking control could enable the UK Government to spend the same or more on agriculture, but benefit from making its own decisions on how this was done. Leaving would also enable the UK to take more power back on the world stage, develop technologies and set up its own trade agreements.

Sheep meat trade

However, Sir Peter Kendall said the main reason for the EU was about trade and having access to a single market of 500 million people, which was 'critical' for the UK and growing its sheep meat industry. Leaving would mean we had no say in standards and would need to develop trade agreements with all of the 27 remaining states.

"We're unpicking 40 years of trade lines and trade deals we have in place," he said, adding the industry 'would be in for some pretty significant economic shocks' if we left due to the fact the spend on farming and subsidies would have to compete against areas such as the NHS, which would always rank higher.

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The economy, environment and society benefit from hill farming

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive

I often think about the effort that has gone into defending upland sheep farming and wonder why it's had to be that way. Why the objections? And if those who constantly called for its demise had their way and upland sheep farming disappeared, like so many other ancient industries and traditional ways of life, would it matter? We could always keep a few heritage farm museums as tourist attractions, so not to lose touch with everything that has gone before.

But of course we'd lose so much more if this were to happen. Hill and upland sheep farming may be one of our oldest industries, but it is still an industry. In fact, I believe it should be recognised as one of our most modern in terms of renewable technology and triple bottom line accounting. Valuable products are made from little more than solar energy, rain and soil via the medium of grass and forage, and the outputs are as much environmental and social as they are economic. Although it has to pay its way and justify its existence, upland sheep farming is a way of life that continues to hold the values that have been easily lost in an increasingly urban and distant society.

Opposing views

Much of the evidence needed to support the value of upland sheep farming is available, yet we still struggled to combat opposing views. That is why NSA decided to review 'The Complementary Role of Sheep in Less Favoured Areas' report, originally produced four years ago. The first report undoubtedly helped the debate, but it is sobering just how much things have moved on in such a short period of time. For instance, flooding



NSA is launching a new report to help promote and defend sheep farming in hill and upland areas.

and water management was far lower down the agenda, and the rewilding campaign was virtually unheard of.

With the launch of our revised report we have the evidence and arguments to make a compelling case for sheep farming in the uplands and we will use this to take a refreshed and appealing argument to the policy makers and the wider public. With such a sensitive and iconic land type we need to ensure the right sort of sheep farming can thrive, and that upland farmers can rise to the challenge of quality in all they do, as well as helping to communicate it. This new report should help us move things onto a new level and get upland sheep farming rightfully recognised.

The new report on 'The complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas' will be launched in the seminar area at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July. Details on pages 14-15.

The complementary role of sheep farming

Laura Williams, NSA Technical Support Officer, summarises the NSA report:-

The long term sustainability of sheep farming is important if we are to supply domestic, export and developing markets against a backdrop of a growing world population and expanding ethnic diversity and wealth.

The public should be better informed about the importance of red meat as part of a balanced and healthy diet. Large retailers could play a stronger role in supporting and promoting the industry, over and above the existing work of more niche markets and direct sales. Retailers and textile manufacturers could also grow the British wool industry to ensure a better price for fleeces.

It is vital the hill and upland sheep sector, producing sustainable meat and wool, is additionally supported and rewarded for the many public goods and services it provides.

The value of the genetic traits, such as hardiness and high maternal instincts carried by our upland breeds, should also be recognised. The loss of these, and the stratified cross breeds that make their



Picture credit: Dave Pape, Wikimedia.

way to lower ground, would change the entire face of the sheep industry in the UK. For the whole industry it is beneficial to create and maintain a wide range bank of genetic material.

The unique environment created by hundreds of years of upland farming can be highly valuable in leading to quality water, carbon sequestration and biodiversity. The uplands provides an environment of minimal input use and pollution, providing clean, fresh water and combating the carbon dioxide emissions

from more urban and industrial areas by locking these elements within valuable stores of carbon.

It is important the traditional practices and environmental management undertaken by farmers is not undermined by a desire of other interest groups to 're-wild' the landscape, reducing our farming capital and making the countryside inhabitable to more fragile plant and animal species, and less accessible to tourists. Upland sheep farming has largely created and maintained an attractive and desirable environment that delivers valuable plant communities, wildlife and invertebrate activity.

Upland areas founded on sheep farming offer social and health benefits for residents and tourists. These communities provide a wealth of history and culture, with many traditional practices, services, buildings and ways of life maintained by the local people. Upland sheep farmers are proud of their work and achievements that often span generations, and proud too of the strong sense of belonging provided by their ancestral heritage.

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Making the most of the mid-Wales hill country with purebred Lleyn flock

By Hannah Park, NSA

With a passion for Lleyn sheep stretching back almost two decades, Llew Thomas has certainly made a name for himself in associated circles, and looks set to do so for many years to come.

Llew has a keen eye and passion for the breed, having offered his services as a Lleyn steward at the Royal Welsh Show for almost 15 years, establishing his own registered purebred flock back in 1999 and serving on the Lleyn Sheep Society Council for the past four years. Luckily for NSA, he also found time to take on the role of NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chairman for a two-year stint from March this year.

Llew bought Llygad-yr-Haul at Whitemill, Carmarthen, in 1985, and he and partner Sharon have both worked hard to get it to where it is today, with the flock experiencing a complete turn-around in that time. Llew explains: "We began with a cross-bred flock of hill sheep up until 1999, when we began establishing the existing flock of 130 registered purebred Llyens.

We're on quite harsh ground here, as the farm sits at about 275m (900ft) at its highest point. To receive the subsidies available for farms in less favoured areas like this one in the 1980s you had to use a specific hill breeds. We decided to make the move to the Lleyns after these rules were relaxed, and have since found they perform much better and are far more prolific, despite not really being designed for this type landscape as a rule."

Under the old Tir Gofal scheme, Llew



Llew Thomas.

also spent time restoring fencing and hedges across the farm and planting six acres of trees, but has since taken the farm out of environmental schemes all together.

Farm Facts

- Llygad-yr-Haul ranges from 183m (600ft) to 275m (900ft) at its highest point.
- 120 breeding ewes, all registered purebred Lleyns.
- 22 Lleyn ewe lambs put to the South Down for the first time this year.
- 30 ewe lambs kept back annually for replacements.

environmental schemes all together.

Lost production

He says: "The cash benefit just wasn't high enough when we factored in the loss of production on that land. It might be something we look at in the future though, and benefits like grants for fencing are always a help. We are quite lucky here too, with the ground being fairly dry and free draining."

Modestly, Llew describes the enterprise

as 'very much small-scale', but this doesn't mean business decisions are taken lightly. Their latest purchase, a South Down ram lamb to put to a number of the ewe lambs this year, is the most recent venture.

"We used to lamb all the ewe lambs but found it was affecting their growth as shearlings when putting them to the larger Lleyn rams," Llew says. "Sharon had a prize-winning

flock of pedigree South Downs, so that was part of the reason for choosing it as an alternative I suppose. We put just over 20 ewe lambs to the South Down this year as a bit of an experiment and I'm looking forward to seeing how their progeny turn out as carcasses later on in the year. The lambs are looking well at the moment, maybe a little on the small side, but we'll wait to see."

Small base

The hill farm sits in 12 hectares (30 acres) of owned permanent pasture, with additional grazing taken on as and when it is needed throughout the year. Around 3ha (seven acres) of grass silage is cut each year, which is fed alongside bought-in hay and a ready mixed ration when required. Llew explains: "After scanning the ewes around Christmas time, we'll bring them in and feed on silage and concentrate ration. It's so important to look after and keep an eye on the ewes ahead of lambing, as well as during lambing time, and giving them a well-managed diet here pays dividends later on. For instance, we'd normally turn the ewes out to grass after they've lambed, but with it being so cold and wet this year, the grass just didn't come on in the way it normally would. I ended up topping up the ewes with lambs with a hay and bagged feed supplement outside until about the end of April."

Lambing takes place from around mid-March indoors, a system Llew says he's always operated. He says: "I like to save the grass for the ewes with lambs at foot more than anything, and the farm

is quite exposed so it is as much for the shepherd's benefit as the sheep I suppose, to make sure we can manage them more easily, which is key during the early stages."

Society sales

After weaning in July, around 60 purebred Lleyn ewe lambs will be sold across four different society sales through the autumn, with Llew keeping around 30 back each year to use for his own replacements. Although ram production isn't an area Llew specialises in, he says he'll normally sell one or two pure rams a year to private buyers who've expressed an interest, and might be open to doing more if the demand was there. Wethers and a handful of lower quality ewe lambs are sold to Dunbia in Llanybydder in mid-October time, while any lambs sold after this are generally sent as stores.

"We're aiming for 20kg liveweight, and generally get good feedback which I'm happy with," says Llew. "We'll get a few U grades back, but it's mostly Rs. I've been to see our lambs on the hook a couple of times, which is always useful, and it's handy with the abattoir being so close. I'm hoping to go over there again this autumn, when we send in the first of the South Down cross Lleyns to see how they kill out. We'll also take a few of those carcasses to the Welsh Winter Fair later in the year, to compete with, as they seem to do quite well there."

Health status

Llew makes clear what a priority high health status is, not just for within his own flock, but for many other Lleyn breeders



The flock is made up entirely of pure-bred Lleyns.

too. He says keeping MV accredited status is vital for maintaining a good reputation as a quality breeder.

He is also concerned about health

risks not related to breeding sales, for example nematodirus in particular this year, treating the flock when required. He vaccinates against clostridial diseases ahead of lambing and deals with foot problems as they arise.

"The beauty of a

smaller flock these days is that I can keep them close by and keep an eye on them," says Llew. "Foot problems especially are something I look out for and tend to pull



out those ewes with persistent problems. The lambs are also treated against flystrike and against clostridial diseases in June. "

Quality stock

Despite being a regular on the show scene throughout the summer, including his duties as a steward at the Royal Welsh Show, Llew says he has never been tempted to show himself. "Obviously a lot of the pure breeders will travel the UK during the summer show season, but I'm very over conscious of the health risks, especially since we run a closed flock. I do really enjoy it though, and it's a privilege and always a credit to the breed to see such a quality show of stock each year."



The South Down ram lamb, used on a handful of Lleyn ewe lambs for the first time this year.



Above: Purebred Lleyn rams make up the majority of those used on the farm. Above right: South Down cross Lleyn lambs born out of Lleyn ewe lambs this spring. This is a new venture for the farm.

Year-round promotional activity inspires consumers to buy lamb

Supermarkets have introduced 22 new lines in the mini roast category in the last year to support the long-term sustainability of the sector and encourage new consumers, as a result of new product development work by AHDB Beef & Lamb.



Mike Whittemore, AHDB Head of Trade and Product Development, says the focus is helping add value to the carcass while tackling faltering roast sales, by encouraging a shift in consumer buying habits and ensuring beef and lamb products remain staples of the weekly shop.

Mini roasts have been core to the AHDB Beef & Lamb market development strategy over the last three years, with a key promotional period in the autumn. The promotion is all about encouraging consumers to select a mini roast for a convenient mid-week meal.

Detailed analysis of the most recent television adverts, which ran last November, shows the short-term impact of the campaign directly delivered £526,000 worth of mini roast sales, with the 'halo effect' (people seeing the adverts and purchasing other beef or lamb joints) adding up to £11 million, or £12.7 million for the whole red meat roasting category. Sales were up for both beef and lamb, with the adverts reaching 22 million households across Britain. The best results were for beef with 72% of the halo effect; lamb and pork saw 14% each.

Easier roasting

Mr Whittemore explains: "Our analysis showed people switching from chicken to buy the beef and lamb products, with a rise in the number of people saying the mini roast offered a quicker, easier way to roast than more traditional products.

"We do a lot of new product development work aimed at taking beef and lamb cuts and offering practical meal solutions for modern families, who demand convenience, especially during the working week. We then work with the processors and retailers to highlight the cuts, recipe ideas and promotion potential, with the ultimate aim of adding value to the carcass and ensuring the new product developed is available for consumers to buy in store. This is long-term work, but these latest results show the approach is working and resonating with shoppers."

Laura Ryan, AHDB Beef & Lamb Sector Strategy Director, says: "The campaign was most successful with older shoppers, so for this year we will review our approach including further engagement with multiple retailers and their convenience ranges. While we are delighted with the results, it is important to remember this is one element of a broad marketing strategy that covers a very wide range of activity."

Other aspects of AHDB Beef & Lamb's year-round promotional programme include barbecue activity running across all sectors during May and June. In multiple retailers, this activity is timed to coincide with the Red Tractor barbecue on-pack promotion. Serve-over counter materials and promotional kits in Quality Standard Mark retailers promote key cuts to consumers, with a social and digital media campaign running alongside this activity.

The EU lamb campaign, which AHDB Beef & Lamb co-funds with a number of other organisations, continues to promote the message that lamb is tasty, easy and fun to cook. Picking up on the 'Summer of Sport' theme, a press and digital advertising campaign is running throughout June and July. Around the same time, PR, social media and in-store activity is planned to promote the versatility of lamb keema.



The EU lamb campaign, part funded by AHDB Beef & Lamb, promotes the message that lamb is tasty, easy and fun to cook.

Throughout the year, the organisation's trade team will continue its product development work, aimed at developing practical meal solutions for modern families, with a particular focus on offering convenient products for the working week. From June through to October, the team will be working across all sectors to promote cuts such as lamb cannon, three-bone rack, dice, burgers, mini roasts and lamb shoulder as pulled lamb, as well as promoting key steak cuts, such as the tri-tip steak, over the summer months.

Halal market

The growing domestic halal market represents a significant opportunity for the sheep industry as well, so AHDB Beef & Lamb is running a programme of specific activity during 2016. This has included hosting a cookery and butchery demonstration at the Muslim Lifestyle Show at London Olympia in April, highlighting the versatility of lamb and the different cuts consumers should look out for when shopping. A similar demonstration will also take place at the Big John's Mela event at Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, in late July. A cookery programme called Healthy Kitchen has been commissioned for British Muslim TV to showcase the quality of home-produced beef and lamb, as well as new and innovative recipes. The series will run for seven episodes, starting this month.

More about trade development and promotion work at www.beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/marketing, or visit AHDB at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July (stand number 148).

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TAGMASTER

Replacing mutton 'bad memories'

By Bob Kennard, NSA Make More of Mutton Project Manager

There are many producers of superb quality mutton in the UK, and it is a sector that offers great opportunities for sheep farmers looking to add value to their older animals.

Perhaps the greatest problem faced by retailers, whether farmer-retailers, butchers or caterers, in promoting mutton to the public is a psychological one stemming from bad folk-memories of poor quality wartime meat.

The question is how to overcome this misplaced prejudice among potential customers. It has been shown time and again that once people try quality mutton all pre-conceptions are abandoned and the vast majority of people, regardless of age or background, love it. Generic publicity campaigns promoting quality mutton will certainly start to break down resistance, but how about a local, bottom-up approach?

One such initiative has yielded positive results in Suffolk, where for three years a celebration of mutton has been organised by a farmer, a butcher and local chef. Jason Gathorne-Hardy of White House Farm, Great Glemham, started his 14-

day 'Alde Valley Mutton Renaissance' in 2014. Held each February/March, he describes the fortnight as highlighting and supporting the local supply chain, from farm to fork. Interest in mutton has grown each year and, in 2015, third generation butcher Gerard King, of Salter and King in Aldeburgh, worked with Jason to add 'Mutton Week' to the overall event.

Celebration

This year, the events held during the mutton celebration included butchery demonstrations and a farm supper with local chef Peter Harrison, who has developed a range of superb mutton dishes through his involvement with Jason and Gerard over the past mutton events. Quality mutton was also on the menu at a number of local pubs and restaurants, and a farm walk was included in the programme to explain about the production of mutton.

This series of events has been a great way of bringing the taste and story of mutton to a local audience, and has certainly broken down some of the barriers to embracing the meat, as well as boosting local businesses. The formula of collaboration between farmer, butcher and



Jason Gathorne Hardy has led the farmer-butcher-chef combination for Mutton Week in Suffolk.

chefs, which is key to its success, could be repeated elsewhere in the country, with the potential to also highlight local breeds of sheep where appropriate.

The NSA Make More of Mutton initiative is happy to help local Mutton Weeks with tips and ideas, as well as potential publicity. Contact Bob on 07415 855530 or mutton@nationalsheep.org.uk.

Cutting Costs Without Cutting Corners: A Veterinarian's Guide To Choosing Animal Health Products



Rachel Mallet, BVM&S MRCVS, is a qualified Veterinary Surgeon and the Professional Services Vet for Bimeda. As sheep farmers' face increasing financial pressure, Rachel is eager to provide information about how careful product selection can help farmers to cut costs, without risking animal welfare. The key area where dairy farmers can increase profitability without compromising their animals' health is the area of generic medicines.

We caught up with Rachel to find out more.

So, Rachel, you are concerned that some farmers are cutting costs in the wrong areas?

Yes, absolutely. I recently heard of a sheep farmer who stopped using trace element boluses as a cost-saving measure in spite of the fact that blood tests had shown his animals were deficient in selenium. As a consequence a number of animals were born with white muscle disease and the farmer was hit with an increase in vet bills.

However, you believe there is a risk-free way to cut costs?

Yes; an area where costs can be reduced without cutting corners, is in the area of product selection. If we look at the buying behaviour of farmers we tend to see farmers buying the same product they have always bought, out of force of habit or through fear that switching to an alternative could have a negative impact. In reality, if farmers were to actively seek out alternative brands, (sometimes known as 'brand alternatives' or 'generics') they could make significant savings, without compromising on the health of their livestock.

How does farmer buying behaviour compare to that of other consumers?

Something I always find interesting is that when I talk to farmers at marts, shows and lectures they often tell me it has never occurred to them to ask for a brand alternative when they speak to their SQP or vet. The same farmers usually tell me that they have no hesitation in selecting a generic painkiller for themselves. I want farmers to start engaging with their SQPs and vets to fully understand what options are open to them, and if they can make their pound go further.

So, what are brand alternatives or generics medicines?

Generic medicines are those whose original patent has expired and may now be produced by manufacturers other than the original innovator.

Are generic drugs as good as the brand leader?

From speaking to farmers around the UK I am aware that there is a perception that brands other than the original brand are poor quality. This is simply not the case. The active ingredient(s) in a generic medication must be bioequivalent to that of the brand leader. This means that it must be proven to have the same effect as the original product.

Ok, does that mean that all medicines have to undergo the same approval process?

Yes, exactly. There is no distinction between 'generics' and 'non generics' when it comes to the standards applied for quality and approval processes. Generics must undergo the same rigorous processes for approval as brand leaders known as Marketing Authorisation (MA).

What are the potential benefits to UK farmers of considering generic products?

Generic products often cost less than brand leaders so cost of treatment per animal may be reduced. This allows greater profit for farmers while still having the same desired effect and means you can invest more in your systems and ensure greater welfare standards.

How can farmers utilise generics?

- Ask your vet or SQP to detail the generic products they have available.
- Ask for a breakdown of cost of treatment per animal to compare.
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For Earth, For Life

Maximising output from grass with a proactive flock health approach

By Joanne Briggs, NSA
Working closely with the Sheep Veterinary Society, NSA is a firm believer in members using a dedicated sheep vet to drive flock performance. But that does not mean health should take a backseat if you do not have that expertise locally, as it is not right to make the assumption that all mixed practice vets are disinterested in sheep.

Farm manager Andy Dyer says he has engaged with Coomara Vets, a mixed vet practice near Carlisle, and optimised production in his commercial Mule flock, particularly through an annually reviewed health plan.

"It doesn't cost that much to do the plan and you save the money anyway by being more targeted with medicines," he says, giving the example within the flock he runs of faecal egg counts (FECs) resulting in less drenching of lambs.

"When it goes wrong with sheep it is expensive and it's hard to see any return from the vet work. With a caesarean on a cow, even if you lose the calf, the vet's still paid for themselves by saving the cow; spending £120 on a sheep caesarean is rarely going to pay for itself. I find you definitely get a cost benefit from using a vet for preventative work. When I do my costings I don't look at vet-and-meds and think 'I could save money by not spending that', as our vets have an appetite to help us manage the sheep profitably."

Sheep Farmer Special Series
This is the sixth article in a series looking at how vets and farmers work together. More in the next edition.

Farm facts

- Privately owned estate of 1,420ha (3,500 acres).
- 400ha (1,000 acres) is managed by Andy, who is also estate manager for the larger area. All grassland and forage crops, apart from 50ha (120 acres) rented out for arable.
- Ewes housed from February on homemade haylage, with concentrate limited almost entirely to triplet-bearing ewes. Twins and singles grazed on stubble turnips and then grass in April, before lambing outside.
- All lambs sold store, but looking at forage crops this summer/autumn for finishing a small number.
- Andy supported by a workman one day a week, plus extra hours at lambing.



The flock is predominantly put to the Texel, with the Suffolk used on ewe lambs.

With one of the best known North of England Mule Sheep Association sales on his doorstep, Andy takes confidence from the high health status of stock offered at

Lazonby. However, he also knows growing the flock through the annual purchase of ewe lambs increases his risk of introducing health challenges.

There was no flock at all when he came to Garthfolds Farm on the Lazonby Estate, Penrith, four years ago. The owners rented out the land on short-term lets from the 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak until employing Andy as Farm and Estate Manager. From 100 Mule ewe lambs purchased in 2012, the flock now stands at 400 females. These are put to the Texel and lambed outside from mid-April. There are also a small number of pedigree Texels belonging to his employer's son, plus 11 Highland cattle to manage ground in a HLS agreement.

Other stock

Grazing for around 120-130 store cattle and dairy animals is provided from late spring, to aid cash flow and facilitate Andy's mixed-stocking rotation-grazing system over the summer. Once winter comes 1,000 Blackface, Swaledale and Herdwick sheep are taken in on tack – but these are away by early February, at the same time as the home flock is housed.



Andy Dyer.

Andy explains: "I want to maximise forage-only lamb production as much as possible and am a firm believer in giving the grass a break in February and March. This year Storm Desmond meant we had 70 acres under water around Christmas and everything else was saturated and poaching badly. We had a choice to make and brought our own sheep inside earlier than usual.

"Our neighbours thought we were mad when we were out fertiliser spreading as usual in early March, but it meant the grass was actively growing by April. The idea is that ewes go onto protein-rich grass two weeks before lambing. We also keep haylage fields shut up from February so we can make a high protein, high ME, good dry matter crop.

"It's light land here that can drought out in summertime. By the time lambs are needing a lot to eat it's dry and we're running out of grass. We sell 50-80 stores a fortnight from the third week in July."

Further flock expansion is limited by housing availability and so, instead of buying 90-100 Mule ewe lambs each autumn, Andy now plans to buy shearing replacements. He anticipates this will bring the scanning rate closer to 180%, as running a young flock so far has kept it at 160-165%. This change will not affect the farm's strict quarantine procedures, with these sheep kept completely separate from the rest of the flock until tugging.

Stock from NEMSA members at the Lazonby sale comes dipped or injected for scab, but Andy gives everything a further injection on arrival, to be absolutely sure. The 3-ML (clear) product used for this also kills worms. NEMSA members are



Ewes are set stocked for lambing and then rotationally grazed through the summer.

encouraged to vaccinate for clostridial diseases but, to ensure they are protected with the same vaccine as the one used at Garthfolds, Andy again adopts the 'buyer

beware' stance and stands the extra cost of starting everything into the farm vaccination programme with two doses. Previous blood testing work has revealed a cobalt deficiency on the farm, and a bit of a selenium shortage, so incoming stock is given a bolus on arrival and free access to mineral blocks. Tups go through exactly the same process, having been bought privately from farms with a known health status.

Routine health treatments for the whole flock include the clostridial booster and a flukicide before tugging, plus another fluke dose before lambing. Cobalt supplementation has increased

continued on page 34

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► to twice a year. Lameness is dealt with in individual ewes when needed. Later lambing and, therefore, later shearing means Andy 'cannot relax' on flystike. Ewes are tailed in early June and treated when needed before shearing in July. Lambs are protected with a short-withdrawal product initially and something stronger later in the season if needed.

Risk factors

At lambing time itself, Andy identifies the biggest risks as inclement weather and big singles. The first is addressed by putting plastic jackets on lambs as soon as possible in bad weather, and the second is down to good grassland management. Andy says: "With the forage-based system and them going out to good grassland just before lambing I have to be careful with big lambs in the singles. They need a relatively level plane of nutrition to get colostrum and healthy lambs, but we don't want them too big."

"The flock is split over four fields for lambing, with ewes moved on as they lamb. That means they have plenty of grass in front of them before lambing and then move into better grass to get the lambs growing quickly. We took more note of lamb deaths this year, of when and why we lost them. When we review the flock health plan before lambing next year we will be able to pick up some pointers from that."

Most of the lambs lost this year were



Above: All ewes are quarantined after purchase, only mixing with the established flock at tupping.

Left: Parts of the farm flood in a bad winter, although the farm is drought-prone in the summer.



born dead, but Andy knows his abortion status is 'non-detectable' due to monitoring of empty rates and annual blood testing of geld ewes. By continuing to take care when sourcing stock, he hopes to stay clear of enzootic abortion in particular, to avoid the cost of vaccinating if possible.

Although expansion has been the priority, Andy says he's still been 'quite fussy' and culled persistent foot problems and non-breeders. As the flock ages, his selection process will also now focus on lamb

numbers. He says: "We're going to start keeping track of ewes that always produce a single, as these are often big, fat things that look after themselves well but aren't producing much. We will use EID to see if they all come from the same flocks and it's a genetic thing, or if it's management or something in the background that needs dealing with. Because we're already measuring lamb mortality we can see if a ewe gave birth to two lambs and then lost one, which is more likely to be a management fault on our part. By working with the vet we can monitor and work on that."

Handling costs

When asked if his approach to flock health is different because he's 'started from scratch', Andy says the principles apply regardless of the situation. He says: "It's down to getting the best handle on costs in any system. It's about working out where things are going right and where they're going wrong. Can we fix what's going wrong? Can we live with it or do we need to change it? If it's going right, what other tweaks can we make?"

"The flock health plan is an aid to that, as it means we take the time to monitor things. It concentrates the mind. If a quarter of the flock isn't producing anything, it doesn't matter if the rest of the flock is flying."

Andy and Eva will feature in one of the seminars at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July, alongside another of the vet-farmer duos that have appeared in Sheep Farmer magazine as part of this flock health series (see page 15). NSA is also collecting all the articles in a special booklet. Pick up at copy at NSA Sheep 2016 or contact NSA Head Office.

View from the vet

Eva De Vries of Coomara Vets is Andy's vet while Practice Director Charlotte Denston is on maternity leave. She is already enjoying working with Andy and says his flock health plan is 'one of the best' she's worked with.

For this year's annual review of the health plan, Eva and Andy looked at the vaccination programme and parasite control. They also focused on measures of production and compared figures collected by Andy at lambing time to what they'd been previously and where they should sit.

Eva says: "The visit was right at the tail end of lambing so it was useful to see his lambing set-up and discuss it. That was

good, as vets don't get to do that very much. We also went back over what he does when he buys in replacements, as that is a risk period for his flock."

All the vets at the Coomara practice do both large and small animals, and for other farmers using a mixed practice, Eva says this does not mean they should not try to engage and utilise their expertise.

"There is a lot of knowledge with the vets, even the ones that are not specialists in sheep," she says. "If you never see your vet then you cannot say your flock is healthy, because you cannot see every problem, or don't see them, or won't see them. Vets can bring a fresh view to the farm."

Assess your flock's risk ahead of BTV8 vaccine arrival in July

By Amanda Carson, Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)
A decade ago bluetongue was one of those diseases with a strange name that was only found in the tropical areas of the world.

Occasionally midges infected with the bluetongue virus (BTV) would be blown from North Africa into the Mediterranean countries, but in 2006 bluetongue disease emerged in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and France and, the year after, infected midges were blown across the channel to East Anglia.

There are currently 26 different serotypes and the bluetongue strain that appeared in Northern Europe (BTV8) had never been seen outside Africa before. While BTV can affect all cloven hoofed livestock, BTV8 caused severe clinical disease in sheep and some Belgian flocks saw 25% losses in 2006. BTV does not cause disease in humans.

A BTV8 vaccine was produced in 2008 and use of this, combined with surveillance testing, brought things under control in Europe by 2012 – until August 2015 when it re-emerged in France. The main risks the outbreak in France poses are importation of infected animals and the arrival of infected midges. Midge movements may be considerable (up to 250km a day by wind and 16km a day over water) and so APHA and the Pirbright Institute are working closely with the Met Office to monitor weather patterns that may suggest increased risk. Animals can only be imported with a veterinary health certificate and so APHA can trace these and test them for BTV.

Transmission

Ruminants get BTV when infected midges feed on livestock and transmit the virus via their bite. The virus doesn't pass from animal-to-animal; only biting midges can spread it. However BTV8 is a strain that can pass from the dam across the placenta to the offspring. The virus circulates and multiplies in the animal, taking around three days to cause clinical disease, during which time the animal's immune system responds, causing fever. The virus targets the cells that line the small blood vessels and, once damaged, these capillaries cause blood and serum to leak out of the blood vessels leading to swelling (oedema), redness (inflammation) and pain.

The signs of bluetongue infection are fever-face-feet. Of these, the first sign is fever. Sheep are depressed, their ears go down

and they look sick. As the virus damages the blood vessels, serum leaks out leading to oedema swelling, often seen around the face but also causing reddening of the gums, small erosions and even bleeding. Oedema and reddening around the skin at the top of the feet can be seen.

All this swelling causes pain, the sheep drool, may have difficulty breathing and are lame. Secondary infections may cause crusting around the nose and, in rare cases, oedema in the throat can cut off the blood supply to the tongue, causing it to go blue. The swelling from oedema, bleeding and inflammation that can be seen on the outside is also occurring inside, in the lungs and other organs, and this is what can kill sheep. If the sheep is pregnant when it is bitten by an infected midge, the virus can attack the foetus and cause abortion.

Viral disease can't be cured by antibiotics and insect repellents can only do so much – only vaccination can protect sheep. Both MSD Animal Health and Zoetis have announced that vaccine will be available in July so farmers are advised to register requirements with their vet, especially if they run an early breeding flock.

Links to two videos produced by APHA and Pirbright can be found at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/bluetongue.

Joint campaign against bluetongue

NSA is once again supporting the joint campaign against bluetongue (JAB), which was the industry-wide initiative created the last time bluetongue hit the UK. Although vaccination will not be compulsory this time, JAB is highlighting the 80% risk of the virus spreading to the UK this summer and encouraging farmers in high risk areas to think about vaccination.



What to do

- Monitor stock carefully and report any clinical signs of disease.
- Source animals responsibly and check the health status of animals you are looking to buy.
- Consider vaccination as a method of reducing the spread of infection; consult your vet about if you want help assessing the risk to your flock.
- Maintain good biosecurity, such as washing equipment after use.

What to look out for

- Lethargy, reluctance to move
- Ulcers in the mouth and on the muzzle
- Discharge of mucus and drooling from mouth and nose
- Swelling of the muzzle, face and above the hoof
- Redding of the skin above the hoof
- Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose
- Fever
- Lameness
- Breathing problems

Who to contact: Bluetongue is notifiable, which means if you suspect an animal is showing signs of disease you must tell APHA immediately. Failure to do so is an offence.

- In England, call 03000 200301
- In Wales, call 03003 038268
- In Scotland, contact your local APHA Field Services Office

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Welfare groups saddle industry with outdated codes on welfare

By Jamie Foster, Roythornes Solicitors
I am a regulatory solicitor whose practice is based in agriculture. I defend farmers and food producers facing regulatory investigations and prosecutions brought by Trading Standards, Defra and the Food Standards Agency.

As a result, the recent row regarding Defra's plan to replace statutory welfare codes was of particular interest and is a fascinating filter through which to view the regulation of the food and farming industries.

Defra's original idea was to replace the statutory codes with codes to which industry could contribute. There was no question that welfare codes would be scrapped altogether, or given over entirely to industry. There was, however, a real recognition that the current codes are outdated and inappropriate for achieving the highest levels of animal welfare that we aspire to in this country. Clearly the people best placed to ensure the codes were fit for purpose were those working most closely with the animals whose welfare is to be protected – and, as such, NSA and other stakeholder groups had been approached by Defra to begin work in this area.

Government u-turn

However, Defra recently announced a U-turn on this policy and a decision to retain the old, outdated codes on a purely statutory basis. So what went wrong? Well firstly there was a great deal of effective lobbying by welfare groups. Animal rights charities and vegan pressure groups like RSPCA, Animal Aid and Brian May's Save Me organisation threw up their hands in horror at the idea of livestock keepers having an input. For these groups farmers will forever be seen as heartless animal abusers who are determined to profit at the cost of welfare.

Shadow Defra Minister Kerry McCarthy, a vegan herself, campaigned against farmers being given any say into the content of the codes. Sadly Defra appears to have caved into this pressure and backed away from a forward-looking policy that could have had real benefits for welfare in this country.

So what is wrong with the codes as they currently stand? On one view they appear pretty anodyne, requiring people to be qualified and to implement the 'five freedoms'. If you read the code for sheep and goats it becomes immediately clear



Extreme interpretation of outdated welfare codes ignores the reality of sheep farming challenges such as feed/water access and lameness, argues Jamie Foster

they offer no new information or guidance to anyone who has any level of skill or experience in looking after livestock. The danger is the way the codes are used by those enforcing them.

I cannot remember a Trading Standards or Defra prosecution where the codes were not used to try to bolster weak prosecution cases. The requirement that animals should ideally have a constant supply of clean water available to them, for example, leads prosecutors to argue a contaminated trough or an empty bucket on farm means the law has been broken. The code should be read as requiring animals to have sufficient water of sufficient cleanliness to avoid any ill effects through dehydration or contamination. This is never how prosecutors make their case and, as Magistrates Courts are not specialist courts with expertise and experience in farming or food industry regulation, when they are told by a prosecutor that the law requires sheep to have a constant water supply, they often accept this as a reality, rather than asking what sheep that are not thirsty or sick gain from being near clean water they don't intend to drink.

The same applies to lameness. A realistic code would require lameness to be treated. It would also recognise the inevitability of the condition and require farmers to make judgment calls regarding the welfare implications for individual animals. Unfortunately the current code merely says that lame sheep should be culled if they don't respond to treatment and that lame sheep should not be transported. This encourages

prosecutors to argue that any lame sheep found should already have been culled and that any sheep making the journey to a slaughterhouse showing any signs of lameness is an indication that an offence has been committed.

This approach, which essentially ignores the reality of the situation of individual animals, is neither helpful to overall welfare nor fair to the individual stock keeper. Unfortunately the codes encourage such polarised, black and white arguments.

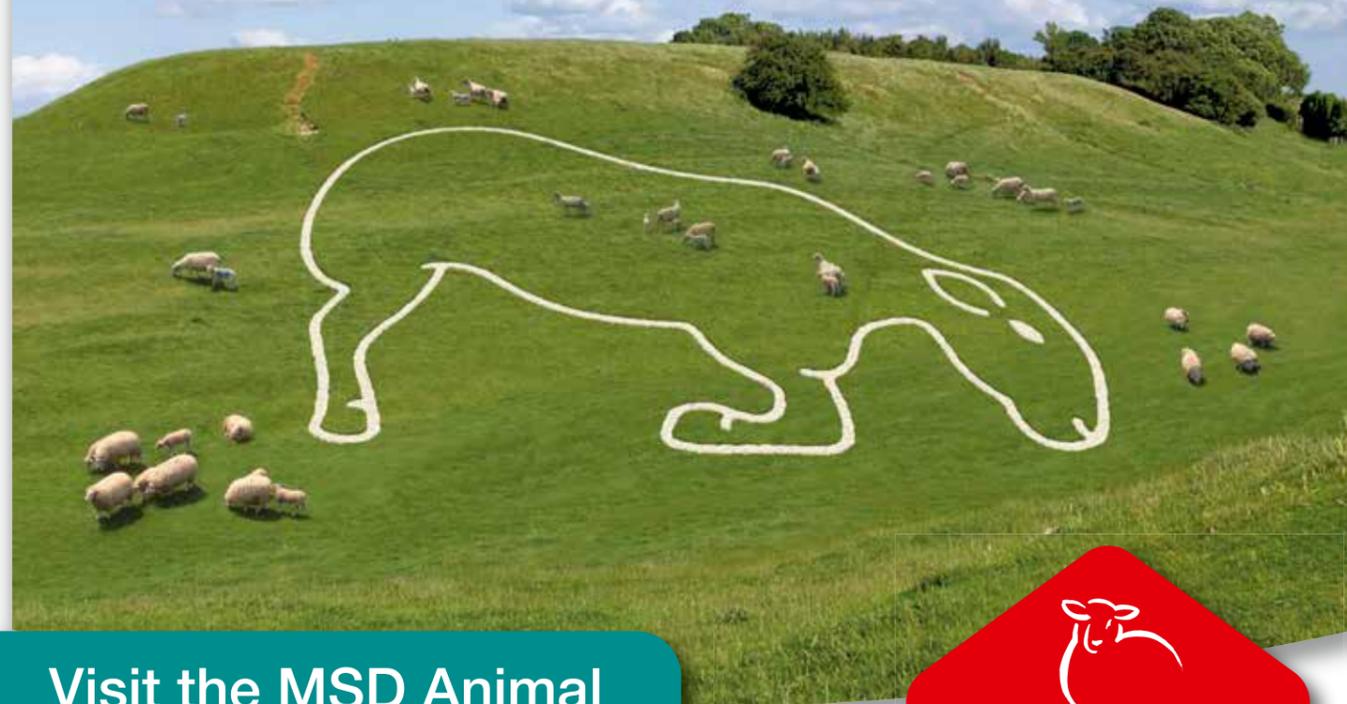
Everyday reality

A set of codes written by politicians without input from industry are unlikely to deal with the realities on the ground, and put good livestock keepers at risk from spurious arguments made by over-diligent regulators. It is time we stopped listening to the vegans and the die-hard campaigners and recognised we have the highest welfare standards in the world. It appears plain common sense that the best way to maintain them is to actively involve the farmers and food producers responsible for such high standards. It is time the entire enforcement regime was looked at again in order to ensure welfare for animals and the best legal framework to guide and regulate livestock keepers. At present they are a blunt weapon that achieves neither of these objectives.

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

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Positive steps for SCOPS boot campers – with more to come

By Lesley Stubbings, SCOPS

In the last issue of this magazine, I had just analysed some initial feedback from the SCOPS-NSA 'boot camp' group and was about to challenge them to think about what they needed to do regarding worming ewes around lambing.

This is a crucial topic because we now know that treating ewes (adult sheep) unnecessarily can be very selective for resistance, so we need to try to minimise wormer use around lambing while still making sure ewes that need treatment receive it.

The preliminary survey of the boot campers showed they had a varied approach to worming ewes. Nearly 70% said they always treated all or the majority of their ewes around lambing and the white (1-BZ) group was still being used by a number of them, while 40% planned to use moxidectin (from the 3-ML clear group). I set them the challenge to think about reducing the number of ewes treated by taking account of body condition score (BCS) and planning nutrition. If they intended to use a persistent wormer (moxidectin), I also challenged them to think about whether they really needed to use it and, if so, how they might reduce the number of ewes treated, particularly if they had used an injectable form of moxidectin for sheep scab control over the winter.

Encouraging results

After lambing I went back to the group and asked them what they had done with respect to ewe treatments – and the answers were very encouraging. More than 60% of the members said they had changed what they did this year – 56% had treated fewer ewes, 12% more and, by inference, 38% stayed the same. In terms of the percentage of ewes actually treated, 75% of the group said they gave half or less of their ewes a wormer around lambing. This is a great stride forward and suggests they were really thinking about which ewes to treat, taking the pressure off the worming products themselves.

There was also a shift in the products used compared to previous years and the intentions at the start of the year. The white drenches were only used in 12% of flocks and, although nearly 40% had indicated they would use moxidectin, only 23% actually did, mainly using another non persistent 3-ML product.

Drench testing

Our next challenge is to try to establish what wormers are working effectively on the farms by using some drench testing. The boot campers are currently teeing up access to FECs for this through their vet, animal health adviser or doing their own. We will also start to get some information on infection levels on the farms. This will start them thinking about when is the best time to treat lambs – which leads us to the next question about how to choose a worming product.

Choosing the right product is a key part of any worming strategy, yet many people are still not taking the time to check which group of wormer they are using and whether or not it is the best for the worms they are targeting. Over-use of wormers is expensive and also speeds up the development of resistance.



Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep

Know your Anthelmintics Groups 2016



Less drenching of ewes is one area where bootcampers have responded, as well as using the SCOPS guide (pictured left) to make better product choices.

Combinations are a common problem. It may sound attractive to 'kill two birds with one stone', and there are times when they are very useful, but before using a combination you need to ask yourself 'do I really need that flukicide and wormer combination now?' The odds are that you don't and you can save the one you don't need for when it really is required.

A change of brand is not enough when choosing a product; you have to make sure you have the right one. SCOPS has just produced the 2016 version of our popular leaflet 'Know Your Anthelmintics'. It is available at www.scops.org.uk as a printer friendly pdf.

SCOPS will be operating a large demonstration area at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July. Visit stand 139.

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New technology on its way, but on farm techniques already available

By Ruth Wonfor, Farming Connect

Improving lamb finishing rates has been the focus of recent Farming Connect events. Worms can reduce growth rates by 50% without any clinical signs and have a detrimental effect on production generally, through reduced daily liveweight gain and ultimately longer days to finish.



Blanket worm treatments within a flock can speed up resistance to anthelmintics.

Roundworms, or nematodes, are some of the most common parasites of sheep and anthelmintics have been used since the 1960s to control infections in livestock. Extensive use of these drugs has led to the development of widespread global resistance.

Speaking at an event in Aberystwyth, vet Kate Hovers, who was part of the Wales Against Anthelmintic Resistance Development (WAARD) project, said lambs treated with an effective drench will have average daily weight gains of 250g/day and take 48 days to reach a target weight of 42kg. However, treatment with a drench that is only 75% effective will result in lambs growing at 190g/day and they take 63 days to reach the target weight.

Sustainability

In order to develop a more sustainable approach to roundworm control, there should be regular monitoring of gastrointestinal nematodes and anthelmintic effectiveness on farms. Management strategies also need to change to lengthen the life of new classes of anthelmintics.

Testing for resistance on farms is essential. The most common method is the faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT). Resistance is normally presumed if egg counts are not reduced by more than 95%. However, the test has limitations, including decreased sensitivity if worm burdens are low. Newer methods such as larval development and migration assays are less laborious than FECRT and allow the analysis of more than one drug at a time. Molecular diagnostics are perhaps the most accurate to test for resistance through analysis of specific genes or mutations indicative of resistance. However, further work is needed to develop these new techniques for their use in sustainable control monitoring programmes on farm.

While we wait for this development, we already know that several on-farm

management practices can minimise the use of anthelmintics, without any detrimental effect on production. It is common practice to treat the whole flock, however, it is beneficial to leave a proportion untreated to create a refugia of susceptible parasites, which will slow down resistance development. There are two ways to increase the refugia population when using anthelmintics:-

- Targeted treatments (TT) are when we try to make sure a treatment is given at a time when it will be the most effective against the worms – for example, based on an FEC. This avoids over-use.
- Target selective treatment (TST) is when we try to reduce the number of animals given anthelmintic, leaving those not needing to be wormed untreated. Examples are where heavier, faster growing lambs or fit, healthy ewes are left un-dosed.

Reduced costs

Both methods reduce the use of anthelmintics, without detriment to daily weight gain and days to finish. Targeted treatment save about £660/year in anthelmintic use. Selective treatment will incur more costs through increased labour by weighing lambs regularly, however, they are identified earlier as having reached target weights and removed from production.

Grazing management can improve parasite control through reducing stocking densities, or co-grazing with cattle and sheep. As nematode parasites are often host specific, cattle can be grazed on low contamination pasture to reduce parasite load before susceptible sheep are introduced.

Genetic selection of lambs for tolerance or resistance to infections is crucial for sustainability in nematode control. Breeding for tolerance is more sustainable, as parasites are less likely to develop

resistance themselves. However, in practice it is easier to select for resistance through phenotypic methods such as reduced FEC. Over several generations, genetic selection programmes reduce FEC which subsequently reduce pasture contamination. Genetically resistant sheep have a better immune response to the parasites and graze further away from dung. To further develop this system, the discovery of highly heritable immune biomarkers will be useful in future selection programmes.

Other future scientific developments include work by scientists to better understand the pharmacological actions of available anthelmintics, which may improve the activity and sustainable management of the drugs. This will be imperative for newer classes of anthelmintics.

Anti-parasitics

Laboratory studies have looked at essential oils, such as tea tree oil, where anti-parasitic properties have been identified against nematodes. Although promising, these investigations are still very much at the developmental stage, and further work is required to investigate their efficacy in the live animal.

Parasite vaccine development is something many farmers are interested in. Future developments are likely to investigate natural or hidden antigens that are specific to nematodes, to produce recombinant vaccines.

Better education surrounding anthelmintic resistance and how to combat it is required to encourage adoption of all the principles outlined here. This should include the benefits of changing management, effects on production and financial returns. It is imperative that development occurs between farmers, vets, advisors and parasitologists.

How land management choices impact human and animal health

By Philip Skuce and Beth Wells, Moredun Research Institute

With so much of the UK ideally suited to grazing livestock, it is vital the grass-fed livestock sector is efficient, sustainable and profitable.



Grass-fed cattle and sheep are generally agreed to have a lower carbon footprint than grain-fed livestock, while grazing livestock also help to maintain the appearance and accessibility of land and, as native breeds are being used increasingly in conservation grazing, to promote biodiversity and conservation.

The carbon footprint of livestock production could be reduced further by improving livestock health – but given the threat that animal pathogens pose to public and environmental health, Moredun is also interested in the interactions between land management, healthy animals and healthy humans. An understanding of the impact of land management strategies on reservoirs and transmission routes of animal and human pathogens is now essential to inform sustainable land management decisions.

Water supplies

For example, *Cryptosporidium* parasites are ubiquitous in the environment and one species in particular, *C. parvum*, has been the commonest cause of gastro-enteritis in neonatal calves in the UK for the past 10 years and results in major production losses in beef and dairy herds. *C. parvum* also poses a serious risk to public health through contamination of water supplies, as it has a very hardy environmental stage. The oocyst (egg), protected by a tough outer shell, can survive in most environmental conditions in the UK, as well as many common farm disinfectants and chemical treatment of water.

In a project aimed at informing the

farming and water industry, livestock and wildlife faecal samples and water supplies were tested in a catchment on the Glenlivet Estate with a history of *Cryptosporidium* contamination and associated public health issues. Zoonotic species of *Cryptosporidium* were found in livestock and wildlife, which genotyping confirmed were the same strains that were found in the water supplies. Working with stakeholders, solutions to mitigate against contamination of water supplies were implemented using payment for ecosystems services.

Another environmentally ubiquitous parasite is liver fluke, *Fasciola hepatica*, which is a major pathogen of livestock and also commonly found in red deer. The incidence of fasciolosis, the disease caused by the liver fluke, is increasing as well as spreading west to east across the UK. The lifecycle of the liver fluke involves an intermediate mud snail host, *Galba truncatula*, which explains the impact of climate and weather on liver fluke occurrence, as the snail is significantly affected by climate and flourishes in wet summers and mild winters.

Land management practices also impact on liver fluke disease. Land (re) wetting to attract wetland birds contributes to improved habitat for mud snails, especially when grazed, explaining both their attractiveness to birds and their contribution to liver fluke disease in livestock. Increasing biodiversity such as land suitable for Natterjack toads may also lead to increases in snail prevalence and increase numbers of wildlife as reservoirs for liver fluke. If these areas are then grazed by livestock, the effect



A changing climate and environmental stewardship options are two factors contributing to wetter land and increased liver fluke.

can be devastating as the animals may ingest high burdens of the parasite leading to acute fasciolosis. As anthelmintic resistance becomes increasingly common in liver fluke, land management practices to reduce the risk of liver fluke will become increasingly important.

Finally, agroforestry, such as the Scottish Government Woodland Expansion scheme, is an attractive land management strategy from a number of perspectives, but forest-field boundaries are ideal habitats for ticks and their wildlife and livestock hosts, whereas restoring peatlands almost eradicates *Ixodes*

ticks. As more deer results in more ticks, deer management may be used to control tick ranges e.g. deer fencing. Combined with an increase in average temperatures, an increase in tick habitat may contribute to emergence of a number of tick-borne diseases, including Lyme disease, which primarily affects

humans, and louping ill, which affects people, sheep and grouse.

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, or talk to Moredun at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July (stand number 149).

Health and the environment

- Land management decisions may adversely affect livestock health and welfare, as well as public health.
- Parasites such as ticks, liver fluke and *Cryptosporidium* have environmental stages that are affected by how we manage land.
- Land management decisions should be based on scientific evidence and involve collaborative discussions and knowledge exchange, representing all interests, including animal and human health.



Both ticks and liver fluke are parasites that affect sheep and deer, meaning land management options must consider livestock and wildlife.



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Start thinking about rams well ahead of upcoming tupping time

By Nick Pile, Cliffe Veterinary Group, East Sussex



When preparing for your next crop of lambs, it is all too easy to focus on the ewes and neglect the rams. The ewes are only half the story as rams unfit to do the job will negatively affect your scanning percentage.

As well as having lots of lambs on the ground, fit and fertile rams are also essential for a tight lambing pattern. This can simplify pre lambing ewe nutrition and lamb management by ensuring stock is at the same stage of the production cycle at the same time. A fertile ram should get 85% of 60 ewes in lamb within the first 17-day cycle and leave less than 2% barren after six weeks.

There are very few completely sterile rams, but up to 30% of rams may be subfertile, meaning they get fewer ewes in lamb and take longer to do so. If the infertile rams happen to be the more dominant individuals then this can lead to even more significant losses.

Ram power

Many farms are running as few as 30 ewes to each ram but fully fit and fertile rams should be able to mate twice this number. Some rams, depending on breed, age, topography and stocking densities will serve up to 100 ewes. Ask yourself how many rams you need. It will save you money to keep fewer rams and ensure those you do keep are highly fertile, fit and bred for longevity – see table.

Ensuring they have the correct conformation will also go a long way towards minimising the risk of a ram breaking down or developing arthritis early. Make sure their toes point straight forward, their back legs are not too



Consider pre-sale nutrition and quarantine requirements when buying in a ram (left), but all rams, regardless of how many breeding seasons they've done (above) should be checked for the five Ts.



straight (when viewed from the side) and that their pasterns are not dropped. If you need to increase your ram power, plan ahead. Try not to buy a ram one week before he needs to work,

as he will need at least three weeks to adjust to a new ration and four weeks for effective quarantining. Rams are often overfed running up to sales and if put straight out to work without concentrate and with no transition they will melt away before your eyes. Always ask for an honest description of the pre-sale ration. Source rams on the farm of origin wherever possible and look for maedi visna accreditation and caseous lymphadenitis (CLA) monitoring.

Whether your ram has been recently bought or resident on the farm for more than one breeding season, always remember the five Ts – tone, toes, treat, teeth and testicles. This process should begin two to three months before tupping.

Tone. Aim for rams to have a body condition score of 3.5-4 so they are fit not

fat. When handling them, the loin muscles should feel full and rounded and the horizontal processes of spine should not be detected. Overfat rams are often lazy and have a poor libido, and the scrotum will be surrounded in fat, which raises the temperature of the testicles and causes poor quality sperm.

Toes. Every ram should have all four feet inspected and any lameness problems sorted well in advance. Look for signs of stiffness or arthritis too, as any pain will affect a ram's willingness to work and, therefore, the scanning percentage.

Treat. Ensure clostridial and other farm-specific vaccinations (bluetongue, louping ill etc) are up-to-date well in advance of the breeding season.

Teeth. Check your rams' mouths to ensure they have good enough teeth to fuel them for the season ahead. The teeth should be complete with good occlusion of the teeth to the dental pad. The jaw should not have any heat or swelling. Look out for dropping of food or drooling, as these may be subtle signs of disease.

Testicles. Ensure rams are shorn early, as uncomfortably hot rams will lie down for longer, squashing their scrotums and overheating their testicles, resulting in poor quality semen. The testes themselves should be shorn to ensure adequate heat loss. Careful palpation of the testicles is essential, to check the testes are freely moveable within the scrotal sac. Feel for any heat or swelling, asymmetry, hard or soft areas, and check for scrotal mange. The testicles should have the consistency of a flexed biceps muscle and feel the

Top tips for tackling blowfly strike

By Fiona Anderson, Elanco

Although the blowfly season typically occurs between April and October, unpredictable weather patterns and regional climate can mean blowflies don't always arrive when expected.

A survey we've conducted showed 94% of farmers have found themselves caught out in the past – but this doesn't need to be the case, as blowfly strike is preventable and there are a number of easy steps to combat the parasite.

1. Find the right product to protect your flock. If you do one thing, choose a preventative product that provides full fleece protection and use it. Prevention is the best form of protection against blowfly – don't wait until you see signs, as it may already be too late. Insect growth regulators prevent first-stage larvae developing into the second-stage larvae, as it is the second stage that starts to damage the skin and cause problems.

2. Integrate a parasite prevention plan into your production schedule. Think about how long you need cover for, the meat withdrawal period of the product you are using and when your lambs are going to market. Using a prevention plan will save you time in the long run, as you can treat sheep when they are already grouped and plan additional staffing if needed. If you don't already have a parasite prevention plan, speak to your vet or SQP.

3. Find the earliest period of risk for your farm. Small changes in the climate can result in big changes on the ground, meaning it's important you assess the risks on your own farm as well as monitoring the blowfly risk

nearby. Treat each field as its own microclimate, as different areas of your farm can have varying levels of risk. Keep a close eye on these risk areas, such as areas with a moist climate or damp ground, wooded areas with a low wind factor, areas with sheltered valleys, and south-facing slopes.

4. Use a preventative product early. While it's important to monitor the weather and other signs of the impending blowfly season, it's better to strike first and use a preventative product early. Blowfly strike can establish itself very quickly so waiting

for clear signs of the blowfly season before acting is a gamble. With everything else that needs to be done on-farm, it might be easy to miss an affected sheep.

5. Treat correctly. Use the right equipment, including calibrating your applicator, weighing your animals and applying the product according to manufacturers' instructions.

Elanco is a Major Sponsor of NSA Sheep 2016 (stand number 177). Zoetis and Bimeda are also attending (stand numbers 157 and 153 respectively).

More blowfly advice

Zoetis vet Dave Armstrong suggests setting up a few DIY traps around the farm to give an indication of fly populations – see picture.

"Don't wait until flies have become a nuisance to livestock and people alike. Setting up a few DIY traps around the farm can give an early indication that treatment may be needed," he says.

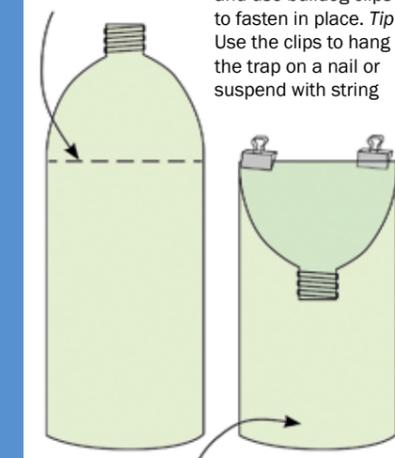
Meanwhile Rachel Mallett of Bimeda shares some gory details about blowflies. She says one adult fly can lay up to 3,000 eggs in its 28-day lifetime, and those eggs secrete an odour that attracts other flies and rapidly exacerbates the problem.

The most susceptible animals are sheep or lambs with faecal staining of the wool, open wounds or fleece rot. Therefore, Ms Mallett says management factors to consider are: avoiding nutritional upsets that may cause scouring; having a sound worm control strategy; reducing footrot by isolating and treating lame sheep; and monitoring open wounds, such as shearing injuries.

How to make a fly trap from a two-litre plastic drink bottle

Cut here with razor or sharp knife

Invert top into base and use bulldog clips to fasten in place. Tip: Use the clips to hang the trap on a nail or suspend with string



Place bait tailored to the pest in base. Tip: Try raw liver to tempt fly species that both livestock.

same all over. The circumference of the scrotum at its widest point will vary between breeds but a ram lamb should measure approximately 32cm, a shearing 34cm and a mature ram 36cm. Check



Scrotum measurements vary between breeds but a mature ram should be around 36cm.

the ram's penis for signs of abnormal discharge or injury and ensure it protrudes freely from the prepuce. The vermiform appendage (the wormlike projection on the end of the penis) must be free of adhesions. There should be no brisket sores, which may affect the ability of the ram to mount.

Fertility testing

Fertility testing is essential for farmers wishing to drive down ram costs and maximise their ram-to-ewe ratios – and this insurance against poor productivity is becoming routine in many flocks. It is very risky to run 80-100 ewes per ram if the rams are of an unknown quantity. Even a slight fever in the two months before tupping can adversely affect fertility, as sperm take more than 60 days to mature. A veterinary pre-breeding examination will

involve assessment of all the above and should include assessment of a semen sample.

Semen is collected using an electro-ejaculator and assessed on farm for density, gross motility and progressive motility (swimming in the right direction). Smears will be made and examined for any sperm defects, although this is often done back at the practice. Testing is best done six to eight weeks prior to the breeding season. Too late and any defects may not be able to be corrected in time. Too early and the risk of a problem between testing and tupping becomes more likely.

Speak to your vet for further advice but, more often than not, the cost of this annual pre breeding fertility examination is offset by the savings made in ram costs.

Find XLVets at NSA Sheep 2016 (stand number 119).

Ram cost per ewe mated				
Longevity (number of mating seasons)	Number of ewes covered			
	40 ewes	60 ewes	80 ewes	100 ewes
1	£9.17	£6.11	£4.58	£3.67
2	£4.58	£3.06	£2.29	£1.83
3	£3.06	£2.04	£1.58	£1.22
4	£2.29	£1.53	£1.15	£0.92

Source: AHDB Beef & Lamb. Based on ram cost of £550/head and a lambing percentage of 150%.

New look at grazing 'hidden gems'

Alongside its new booklet on 'Crop solutions for cost efficient lamb production', Sinclair McGill will be showcasing two 'often overlooked' forages at NSA Sheep 2016 in July.

Ian Misselbrook, Sinclair McGill Grass Seed Manager, says chicory and plantain are grown by many producers in New Zealand, both as straight crops and in grazing mixtures, and that he believes UK sheep producers could take advantage of these 'hidden gems' of forage herbs.

He says: "Both forage herbs are highly palatable, and trials have shown ewes and finishing lambs will selectively graze both plantain and chicory in mixed pasture. They are also rich sources of minerals, such as calcium, sodium, copper and selenium, and they can also extend the grazing season."

However, Mr Misselbrook says rearing lambs on home-produced forage does not mean it has to be low-output, extensive production. "Quite the opposite, in fact," he says, adding that some of the products outlined in new booklet have the potential to dramatically reduce the time it takes to finish lambs and increase output, when compared to high supplementary diets.

Increased intakes

He suggests this is because adding chicory and/or plantain to swards adds variety that ewes and lambs enjoy, increasing grazing intakes. Different varieties of chicory will also increase milk production in ewes and liveweight gain in finishing lambs. Sinclair McGill also has a newly available seed mix called 'Lambtastic', which combines forage chicory and plantain with white clover, ryegrasses and Timothy. It is designed to give swards a sprint-start in the spring, particularly for early lambing flocks.

Mr Misselbrook says the forage herbs are relatively easy to grow. Chicory can be established in an existing sward by slot seeding. Plantain, which is a ribbed leafy perennial herb, does better when sown in a reseed mixture. He continues: "Sheep producers who are growing the crops in the UK all say these species are just as reliable as grass and brassicas. Indeed producers based in drier regions with light soils, such as East Anglian and South East England, say adding these forage herbs to grass mixtures allows them to continue grazing during June, July



Chicory is too often overlooked, says Ian Misselbrook of SinclairMcGill.

and August when grass growth has slowed due to lack of rainfall.

"The great advantage of chicory and plantain is their deep, fibrous roots that provide a degree of drought tolerance. This makes them ideal for use on units that sometimes struggle to provide enough grazing for stock come mid-summer.

"With the additional health benefits of high mineral intakes and anecdotal claims about the anthelmintic qualities of chicory, producers could even see a reduction in their veterinary expenses for ewes and lambs if they add these forage herbs to their grazing rotation or sward mixtures."

The new Lambtastic grass seed mix will be on display at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July, where copies of the Sinclair McGill lamb production booklet will also be available. Visit stand number 84 or call 01472 370105.

More product news

Online seed shop

For field margin planting, smallholders or to top up existing orders, small quantities of seed can now be ordered online from Nickerson Direct. The new online shop launched by seed company Nickerson gives quick and easy access to a comprehensive range of forage grasses, root and fodder crops, amenity, environmental and soil improvement mixtures. Users of the new website can access the support of technical advisers and also link to the main Nickerson website for product sheets and growers' guides for each crop.

Go to www.nickersondirect.co.uk.

Handling small flocks

Fearing has launched two new mobile sheep handling systems, designed for smaller flock owners and new entrants as an alternative to its larger Alligator systems.



The Alligator Smallholder Mini (pictured) handles up to 10 ewes at a time and is suitable for one-person operation. It

includes sheeted and barred hurdles, a head yoke and backing gate. A slightly larger, trailer-mounted version, for towing behind a vehicle or quad, also has a three way drafting gate and guillotine gates. Fearing says the modular design of both models means it can be expanded as flock size grows over time.

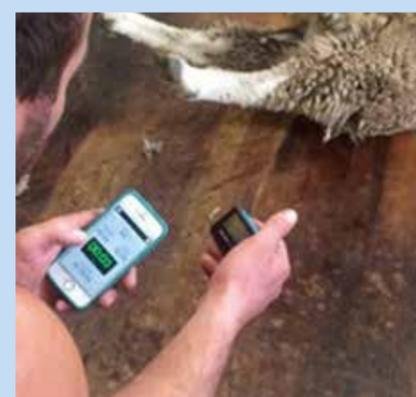
More on 08456 009070 or at www.fearing.co.uk.

Pacemaker for shearers

A free smart phone app called Shear Pace has been released, development in New Zealand to help shearers set and achieve shearing tally goals.

On being given a time, goal tally or both, the app calculates the optimal time for each sheep. The timer stays green if the shearer is on time or turns red if they slip below pace. The free version will work for time periods of 15-120 minutes; paid-for upgrades can be used for full day tallies and income predictions.

Development Storm Baynes-Ryan says:



"This app gives shearers the ability to shear better, by allowing them to think about the sheep and not the clock. This will also improve the wool clip for the farmers, as there will be less second cuts and skin cuts as a result of better concentration."

Shear Pace is available from the iTunes store. The android market will follow, as will the Shed version (paid) and Ringer version (subscription).

Demand more from your grassland

Ever-changing weather patterns in the UK and Europe means producers need to plan ahead and demand more from their forage, says Tim Kerridge, DLF Seeds Managing Director.

He says: "A 10% improvement in yield and quality from the UK's 1.2m ha of grassland under five years old could result in an additional £1 billion worth of meat or milk being produced from grassland, rather than prolonging an over reliance on more expensive supplementary feeds.

"Grass is key to profitability. Although lot of farmers are hearing that message, a lot are not acting on it. The problem is grass is deceptive – it looks okay on first glance, but if weed grass was yellow and seed grass green you'd sooner see farmers invest."

Reseeding decisions

Rod Bonshor, DLF UK Forage Grass Products Manager, suggests careful species and seed choice when making future reseeding decisions. Temperature rises are less predictable than they were, suggests Mr Bonshor, and altering weather patterns have caused several associated pressures, particularly in parts of Europe.

"You can't afford to look at breeding and forage goals as a snap point in time," he says. "They need to be something which is going to last years. It is vital to select species appropriate to your site and soil type and consider how long you want the ley to last within the farm cropping rotation, as well as the type of fertiliser policy being adopted, as moisture has to be available. This limits the response time of the grass species, with the shallower rooted species more prone to stress and the deeper rooted ones being able to access more moisture, minerals, nutrients and help aerate the soil profile.

Alternative species

"While the UK is currently an 85% ryegrass market, site and climate fundamentally dictates the output from the grass sward so I'd recommend considering the attributes species such as cocksfoot, meadow fescue, Timothy and festuloliums have to offer in line with this. The deeper rooted species can access more moisture, minerals, nutrients and help aerate the soil profile, which means they are more productive in dry conditions,



Reseeding decisions will become increasingly important as the climate continues to change.

especially when teamed with legumes like red clover. Similarly, on a wet soil under low N, timothy and meadow fescue thrive."

Recommended list published

The 2016/2017 Recommended Grass and Clover Lists have been updated and have five new ryegrass varieties for this year. NSA recommends anyone purchasing seed to use the lists, as they only include varieties that have undergone at least four years of independent testing.

Copies are available from AHDB Beef & Lamb (England) and HCC (Wales). Different lists are compiled for Scotland and Northern Ireland and are also available via the levy bodies.



Multi-cut grass variety

A quick-to-establish grass variety that offers bulk and palatability has been launched by Barenbrug UK. Barspectra II, a tetraploid westerwold ryegrass development in Italy, has been released to the UK following trials at the company's research site in Worcestershire. Barenbrug says it is suitable for silage and hay production and, with resistance to lodging, frost and disease, is a good choice for extending the growing season in both spring and autumn. It has high digestibility, crude protein content and is rich in soluble sugars.

More on 01359 272000 or www.barenbrug.co.uk.

Swede variety trial

Recent trial work commissioned by Limagrain at the James Hutton Institute, Scotland, has highlighted the advantages of more modern varieties of swede.

The variety Gowrie (pictured) gave an extra 18% dry matter yield per hectare in



the trial, compared to the older variety Ruta Otofte used as the control. Lomond gave an addition 11%.

Martin Titley of Limagrain says: "Swedes have a metabolisable energy (ME) of 12.8-13.1MJ/kg dry matter and crops are capable of producing up to 10 tonnes DM/ha, so looking at the best variety is important. Time of feeding should also be considered, along with disease resistance to clubroot and powdery mildew."

The keys to profitable production: focus, planning, targets and drive

By Michael Blanche, Quality Meat Scotland
Working for QMS and being a sheep farmer has its advantages, mostly because I don't have the excuse of being too busy to attend meetings and listen to experts talk about sheep and grassland management.

My sheep enterprise performance has increased, and in no small part as a result of meeting and listening to New Zealand sheep and pasture consultant Trevor Cook. Being in Trevor's company and listening to his message has definitely made me a better sheep farmer.

Before conception

I've always understood that ewes need to be fed well and be in decent nick to perform at their best. The difference since listening to Trevor is focus, planning, targets and drive. What blows my mind is that weight gain of lambs born in April 2017 can be significantly influenced by what we do with their mothers from August 2016, before they are even conceived. The way I view sheep production now is a series of building blocks – weaning to tugging; the first 50 days of pregnancy; the second 50 days; the third 50 days and lactation. We have to think ahead and build the blocks right, knowing that with each block managed correctly profits are

more and more guaranteed.

My first target is to get all ewes to a body condition score (BCS) of no less than 3 at tugging. Check out the QMS video which shows a nifty way of condition scoring using your hand.

Your flock should not average this – they should all be at or over it. Really this means splitting your ewes into two groups – 'fats' to make them work for you and 'leans' to be given the best grazing. For a few weeks at the end of the summer there is no stock class that will make you more money from a kilo of grass than a lean ewe being brought back up to BCS3. I now make it one of my main targets of the year and it is pretty close to being the most important.

'20 golden days'

This year I tried Trevor's concept of the '20 golden days' – 10 days before tugging and 10 days into tugging. By giving ewes in good fettle the best of grass (I was moving them daily around a paddock system) you let yourself have a great opportunity to have a good scan. I know you will say this is just flushing, but usually I don't have enough grass to flush properly for more than 20 days. Trevor says focusing on feeding for those 20 days actually lasts for another 10 days, seeing you past the end of the first cycle. Moving back to maintenance after day 10 of tugging will have significant advantages in setting up

paddock sward heights so we have grass in the spring.

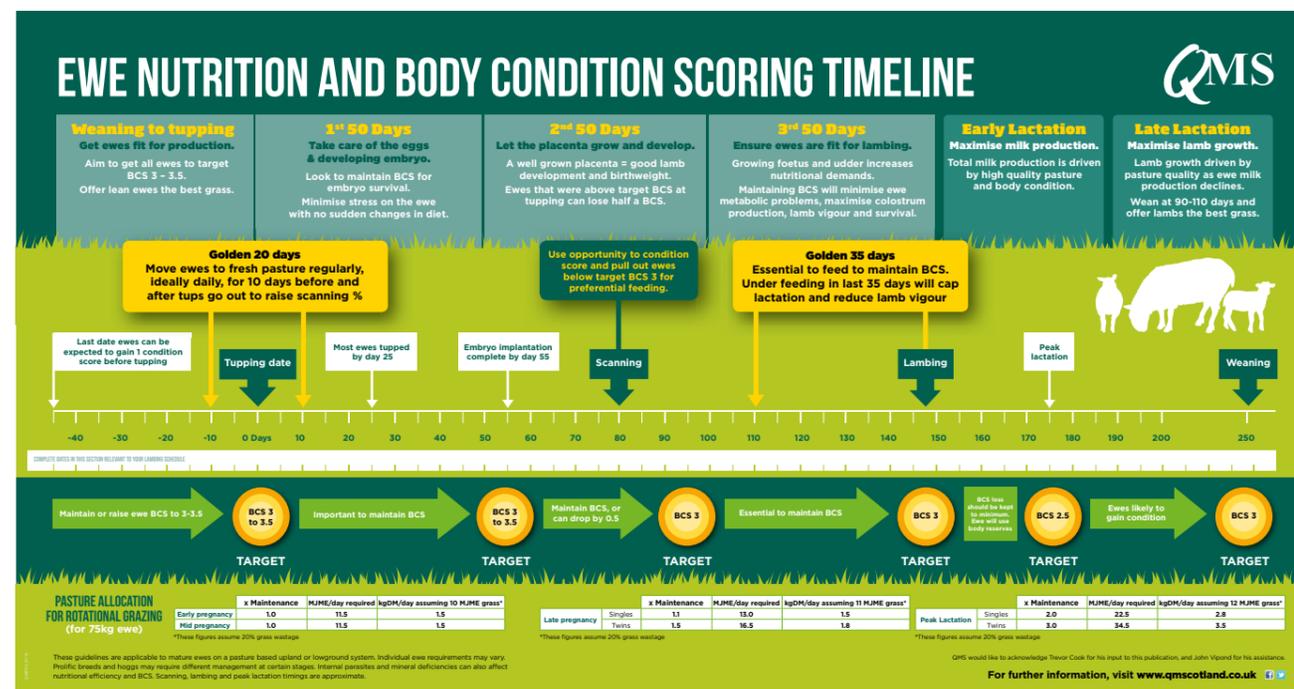
There is some work to suggest overfeeding in the first 50 days reduces scanning percentages slightly, so aim for maintenance (but absolutely no underfeeding). The second 50 days is perhaps where I tended to take my eye off the ball, but losing any more than half a condition score at this point has a huge impact on lamb weaning weights. Know what they are getting and cross-check with condition scoring at scanning, and draw off multiples below BCS 3 for preferential feeding.

Pre-lambing

The final 50 days has always been seen as the most important period of the year, and disappointing losses at lambing are very often due to underfeeding in the final month. Once a ewe has lambs on the ground her requirements increase to phenomenal quantities of quality pasture. Lambs will steadily eat more pasture and the digestibility of that pasture is incredibly important.

Remember we are building lambs in a sheep enterprise (conceived, carried, grown, born and grown some more) and each building block is as important as the last.

Need to see the QMS ewe nutrition and BCS timeline a bit bigger?! Find it online at www.qmscotland.co.uk.



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NSA Next Generation at Sheep 2016

It was the 2012 Sheep Event where NSA announced continued commitment to young people by launching a dedicated project to help the next generation get ahead in the industry. Just four years later and NSA Next Generation is so central to our work that it has a dedicated area at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July.

This brand new area of the event, located in Avon Hall, is the place to head for a whole wealth of information and opportunities. Regardless of whether you're a new entrant or have countless generations of farming blood, there will be something to help you make the best of your career and/or sheep flock.

Joanne Briggs, NSA Communications Manager, explains: "NSA Next Generation was born out of a determination of NSA office holders and a number of external supporters to drive the future of the whole sheep industry through the encouragement and empowerment of young people. Thanks to a commitment from NSA Head Office and funding from



The Young Shepherd of the Year national final will also incorporate the European for England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and France.

the NSA regions and ram sales, a huge number of activities are now going on. We're looking forward to NSA Sheep 2016 where we can showcase these and meet more people who could benefit from what

we're doing." NSA Sheep 2016 details on pages 14-15. More at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk or via NSA Head Office.

What to spot

TV presenter James Manning will be spending part of the day in the NSA Next Generation area, meeting likeminded enthusiasts keen to promote a positive future for young people in agriculture. James, who has been involved in BBC2's Harvest 2015 and Channel4's First Time Farmers, is an advocate for showcasing a dynamic and passionate industry that young people will want to be a part of. **National final**

The NSA Next Generation area will also be the base for the hotly contested Young Shepherd of the Year national final, where

18 finalists from nine regional will register for this exciting contest. Incorporated into the competition this year will also be the European Young Shepherd of the Year final. Representative teams from France and the Republic of Ireland will be put to the same tasks as the UK competitors (split into English, Welsh, Scottish and NI teams), with the results totted up to find individual and team winners for the European title.

Tickling tastebuds
Situated by the event's cookery theatre, it seems only right for the NSA

Next Generation area to have a cookery challenge. Visitors from the four UK nations can cheer on their representative in the Ready Steady Cook Cooking inspirational British lamb dishes will be two National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs members plus representatives from the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs and Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster.



NSA Ambassadors



The 2015 NSA Next Generation Ambassador group is continuing its programme of personal development and skills training. The second session was in May (pictured) with a number of workshops and farm tours over two days in Wiltshire and Somerset. The third session will incorporate NSA Sheep 2016.

On My Farm - The Next Generation

The 12 NSA Next Generation Ambassadors for 2016 are writing monthly blog entries for the NSA Next Generation website. You can check on their progress through the year in the 'Profiles' area at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk, and enjoy some highlights here.

Dan Pritchard (31)

Producing salt marsh lamb near Swansea

Now that May has passed, we have finally finished lambing. The remaining, long overdue ewe lambs, assumed empty, have been moved to join up with the rest of the lambed ewe lambs which we're checking regularly. Needless to say, the day after we did this I got an extra two lambs out of a couple of them!



Dan's flock on the marsh.

All the ewes are now on the marsh with their lambs being ear-notched, paint marked and wormed. It looks like the ewes have lambed at about 140% from a scanning percentage of about 160%, a figure I'm pleased with as I did think we had a slight problem with abortion early on in the lambing period.

We've started to prepare the ground for silage, hay or fodder beet, with the beet fields completely drilled and just receiving the first spray for weeds. Hopefully next week I will be getting on there with a bit of nitrogen to give them a boost.

Ernie Richards (23)

Shepherding a pure Lleyn flock on the Welsh border

The warmer weather recently has defiantly begun to change the landscape and, with temperatures reaching the mid-20s, the grass has responded in growing quickly, giving the sheep a much wanted boost. Supplementary feeding has now stopped but the sheep are still checked daily



and moved regularly, as good grassland utilisation is important to ensure it has time to recover.

The hogs have been taken off their wintering field and put through the handling system, treated for worms, cobalt deficiency and taken to pastures new. Assessing the hogs gives a good idea of potential yearling ewe sales for the autumn.

Apart from sheep, we have been busy with other jobs including general farm maintenance, chain harrowing, muck spreading, sowing grass seeds and fencing. In the last couple of days the farm also welcomed 40 Radnorshire Young Farmers for the pre-rally stockjudging competition.

Hannah Jackson (23)

Splitting her time between her own sheep and shepherding work in Cumbria

So finally, after a long but extremely rewarding three months, lambing 2016 has drawn to a close. Finishing lambing has finally given me chance to focus on my own flock and watch their progress as they thrive now the warm weather has eventually arrived. The lambs are growing well and bouncing round the field and there really is no better feeling!

May always feels like a quiet month to me despite working and contracting almost every day. It just doesn't throw the same demands at me that lambing does. I spend most of May being contracted to tail, castrate and mark lambs across a number of farms, as a lot locally use outdoor lambing systems and bring everything into pens over a number of days at the end of lambing. Towards the end of May shearing will begin. I rousey on a shearing round of 25,000 sheep, starting the end of May and going through to the beginning of August.



Hannah is throwing herself into shearing season.

Jacob Anthony (23)

Managing the sheep on the family farm in Glamorgan

Ewes are doing well, grazing on new pastures with their lambs progressing extremely well.



As it has been so mild this last month, I haven't applied any fly preventives to sheep as I am trying to leave it as long as possible without disturbing the lambs. I feel as little disruption as possible in the first few weeks of the lambs' lives is better, but has meant my only shepherding jobs this month have consisted of thorough daily checks on the quad bike with my trusty sheepdog Joe.

We have seen a new arrival on the farm since my last blog, a sort of celebrity puppy called Dolly (pictured). She is a Welsh sheepdog



and out of a litter from Kate Humble's Teg and Tango, the dogs who starred on her TV programme. We have used Welsh dogs for years on the farm, as we find them extremely hard and well suited. They are a good all-rounder, as they can work cattle too.

Michael Ritch (25)

Starting with sheep in Aberdeenshire.

As the rain, wind and hail has continued into the beginning of May, I was beginning to dread the thought of outdoor lambing. But as luck would have it the weather transformed just in time for the first lambs to drop and as I write this I am even boasting a bit of a sun tan!

So far it has been a reasonably successful, with over three quarters of the ewes lambing in the first two weeks. They are starting to slow up a bit now but hopefully another week will see them all lambed. Away from the lambing field, all the store lambs have now been sold and all the cattle have been turned out to grass, with the bulls also being put in with the cows. The spring barley is all through the ground and receiving its first dose of fertiliser and weed control.





Commercial farmers share what they like about Charollais rams

At the British Charollais Sheep Society we asked our commercial farmers what they like about the Charollais breed. In our survey we found the traits that were most important and also what things we could improve. Here we share the five most popular responses.

Easy lambing: Commercial lamb producers get on very well with Charollais. Highest on the list of pluses (96% of respondents) was easy lambing. We have worked hard to maintain the natural wedge shape of the breed, fine bone and no massive heads. This not only gives easier lambing but has definite advantages on carcase yield too.

Growth and weight: Charollais cross lambs consistently grow faster than other terminal sire lambs, working on the principle that 'birth to death in the shortest period of time is the quickest route to profitability'. Charollais lambs reach killing weight fast and have high yield of meat.

Longevity of rams: Charollais rams last and continue to serve high numbers of ewes. The cost per lamb of your terminal sire, if he only lasts a couple of seasons, will be high. Charollais will not let you down and will keep costs down.

Vigour: Charollais cross lambs are



vigorous when born; they are up and suckling in no time at all. Farmers over the years have been apprehensive of the hardiness of the breed but we have made great strides to put on more head cover and better fleeces so hardiness of cross lambs is no more of an issue than it is for any other cross. A Charollais lamb that gets up and suckles will keep on going. More and more farmers lamb outside using Charollais sires.

Price of lambs: Prices for Charollais cross lambs in markets are strong; buyers know they will get excellent yield and consistent quality lambs. Selling deadweight is a winner with Charollais crosses, as killing out percentage is high and the level of uniform grades suits the supermarket trade.

The British Charollais Sheep Society is exhibiting at NSA Sheep 2016 on Wednesday 27th July. Visit stand 85.

Charollais selection technology Sourcing rams via the internet

Charollais rams are being put to test in a major progeny trial looking at the varying performance of different terminal sires.

Six commercial farms across the UK are taking part in the Ram Compare trial over two breeding seasons. The 6,000 progeny from five terminal sire breeds will be recorded to look at a range of traits that have an impact on the profitability of commercial lamb production.

The project will aim to identify which genes have the biggest impact on speed of finishing and carcase value, as well as identifying the degree of difference between breeding lines for new traits like saleable meat yield and tenderness.

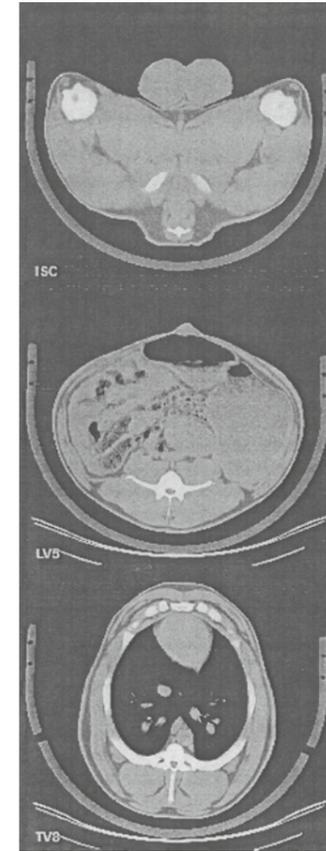
We welcome the opportunity to pitch the traits of the Charollais breed against Texel, Suffolk, Meatline and Hampshire Down rams and are confident that the trial will confirm our superior traits of fast growth, high meat yield and the eating quality of our lamb.

While we await the results of this new trial, we continue to use important CT scanning work as an important factor in breed improvement. Each year the very best of the performance recorded ram

lambs from the Charollais breed are analysed by the use of CT scanning. This process gives us highly accurate data on important carcase traits of future stock rams.

The images from each scan give us a result for total lean meat, bone and fat, as well as eye muscle area and a measurement for gigot (leg) shape. This data is included into the BLUP analysis for the whole breed, so information from these scans can permeate through all the recorded results, leading to increased accuracy and better selection of superior meat producing rams.

Left: CT scans from the highest index ram lamb scanned this year. His figures include a 51.1% killing out percentage, 61% muscle, 16% bone, 8.14 gigot shape and 39.5cm² eye muscle.



The Charollais Sheep Society has a full programme of auction sales in 2016, starting in early July, but if you would prefer to buy off-farm instead, visit our new and up-to-date internet-based system to find what you are looking for.

We have linked up with market leader Sell My Livestock with a web-based platform for breeders of Charollais to advertise their stock. The website will have a great selection of Charollais for sale around the UK. All sheep on the new portal will come with the Charollais Sheep Society seal of pedigree authenticity, backed by full identity and parentage records, as well as fertility guarantees for rams



Choose your preferred buying method - online or at a sale.

We feel a web-based sales option has several advantages. It is less stressful for the animals, as there are fewer movements in the sale chain. Typical transaction costs are less. And there is a vastly expanded marketplace.

Of course if you prefer to visit a market and select rams there, we continue to offer inspected and guaranteed stock at our network of auction sales around the UK.

Go to www.charollais-sheep.com and follow the Sell My Livestock link.

Features of the Charollais platform at Sell My Livestock

- Improved layout and search
- Watch list
- Make an Offer option
- Star rating system for sellers
- Secure payments with FarmPay
- Enhanced user profiles
- Alerts and wanted listing

Tasty and tender Charollais lamb

The winner of the ABP producer group lamb 'taste and tenderness' competitions in both 2014 and 2015 were lambs from Alice and Mark Blakeney from Downs View Farm, Mere, Wiltshire.

The competition requires the selection of five lambs with carcase weights between 18.5kg and 19kg. Mark's groups of Charollais-sired lambs from Texel



Meat from Charollais-sired lambs has done well in taste tests.

Mule ewes were in the top 10 at the first stages of the competition, which attracted more than 500 entries. They were then put before a taste panel to assess tenderness and flavour, which is where Mark's lambs earned huge praise and particular commendation for their consistency, which is important to major retailers. In fact, a major retailer has specifically requested from of Mark's lambs for an event they are hosting.

The British Charollais Sheep Society says: "For two years these Charollais lambs have blown away the panel for their superiority in taste. The panel could not believe just how much difference there was between the lamb presented. Charollais has a unique combination of just the right level of fat externally but has intramuscular fat too, giving it that distinctive softness and delicious flavour."

Why Farmers like Charollais

“Charollais tick all the boxes for us; easy lambing, vigorous lambs and they certainly grow well and finish.”
A McIntyre, North Ayrshire

“Charollais are harder than they look - we lamb most outside and they get up and suck and are fine.”
Mr McLoghlin, Londonderry

“We buy Charollais each year at Bult Wells and stick with them for easy lambing and quick growth.”
R I Owen, Powys

“Charollais are great for first time lambers - we use them on Texel cross hogs and they lamb easily. Hardiness of lambs is just the same as any other breed.”
A Jones, North Wales

“We like Charollais on Texel cross Mule ewes. They lamb easily, good growth and price compares well to other breeds.”
D Clarke, Downpatrick

“We run all Charollais tups on 2,000 North Country Mules with great results. Easy lambing and lambs away from 12 weeks of age. A consistent, quality product with high meat yield.”
J Wild, Rutland

“Very happy with Charollais tups - they are as hardy as they need to be and grow and finish fast.”
D Ellis, Welshpool

“Charollais ram bought off-farm are fit and ready to work. I have used the breed for a long time with no complaints.”
R Savage, Shrewsbury

“Charollais are perfect for early lambers - the ram works faster and harder through the summer than other breeds. The cross is ideal for selling deadweight.”
R Clifford, Driffield

Demand high but prices pressurised

Looking ahead to the coming months of wool sales, BWMB is anticipating a tough selling season but taking encouragement from the fact only 1% of 2015 stocks have been carried over, showing demand for British wool is still strong.



Ian Buchanan, BWMB Chairman, says: "There's no sign of any let up in the demand for fine and medium wools, with this market largely driven by Chinese demand. But, closer to home, the carpet wool market has been a tougher climate altogether. Carpet retailers have been holding back prices, which has knocked back the price manufacturers are willing to pay at BWMB auctions. To cope with these price restrictions they are using more polypropylene in carpets, reducing the volume of wool required."

While the outlook is less positive than this time 12 months ago, BWMB continues to work hard on behalf of UK wool producers to maximise returns. Mr Buchanan says: "The benefit of selling your wool through the board is perfectly shown by the marketing work done both directly by BWMB and through its involvement with the Campaign for Wool (CfW). The collective strength BWMB offers wool producers should never be underestimated."

Tough trading

Looking at the year ahead he says the market is likely to remain tough for much of the season. "We don't anticipate any great changes to the wool price in the near future. However, we're still seeing high clearance rates at BWMB auctions, so that bodes well for the coming season, as does the low level of carry over from last season's clip. It is naturally disappointing to see wool prices back on last year, but BWMB feels it is important to be realistic about the situation. We've based our guide prices on the best



market intelligence we have and the prices achieved at BWMB sales over the last four months."

Adding another level of integrity to the Board's work is the Quality Assurance Certification Scheme for manufacturers. This new scheme will build on the success of the quality control scheme implemented in BWMB depots and help manufacturers promote their products to consumers.

Mr Buchanan explains: "British wool is a premier fibre, recognised for its strength and resilience, and we need to tell our customers which products contain British Wool so they can appreciate the unique qualities. Under the new Quality Assurance Certification Scheme manufacturers can apply for Platinum (100% British Wool) or Gold (80%+ British Wool) certification. The scheme ensures that we can trace the wool content back to our auction sales and through the supply chain."

BWMB and Campaign for Wool are NSA Sheep 2016 Mainline Sponsors. Visit stand number 128 on Wednesday 27th July.

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Mule £0.95 / kg	Cheviot £1.20 / kg	Beulah £0.80 / kg
Welsh £0.45 / kg	Swaledale £0.40 / kg	Blackface £0.61 / kg

*Net value after all operating costs have been deducted and excluding VAT. Based on sales January to April 2016.

You can find out more about British wool and the work of the British Wool Marketing Board at:
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FOR INFORMATION CONTACT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING
07979476087
defaidpenfrith@yahoo.co.uk
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