

Sheep Farmer

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2016



A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

NSA SHEEP 2016 EXTENDED REPORT

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Support NSA to shape positive Brexit future

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive
I shan't dwell on the EU referendum decision here, because it is covered in full on pages 22 and 23 – and you can bet that will be the case for many issues of this magazine to come.

Suffice to say, the decision taken will change the course of history and have a deep and lasting impact on our future, and the future of many other nations too.

Since the momentous result on 23rd June we have been providing regular updates in the NSA Weekly Email Update, with this proving once again to be an invaluable tool to get information out to members quickly, regularly and cheaply. If you are reading this and are not signed up to receive this e-newsletter every Friday, just contact the office and ask. If you don't use a computer all you need is a smart phone to be able to receive it.

So the decision to leave the EU has been taken, even though the triggering of the now famous Article 50 may not happen until 2017. From that point we will have a minimum of two years before our exit is complete and we embark in a direction that is as yet undecided. In the meantime there will be a hell of a lot to do, with a lack of capacity and expertise in our various administrations, and an opportunity and need for bodies such as NSA to provide direction and evidence.

Stand up for sheep

Membership of NSA is essential if we are to have the resources and backing to do what is needed. We need your membership and we need you to encourage others to join too. We have a mammoth task to do and now, more than ever, the industry has to invest and stand up for its future. NSA is here to do this for sheep farming. We won't do this in isolation because that won't get us far, but will work with others wherever we can.

Fortunately we have been investing in direction and evidence for some time and have plenty of work we can draw on. At NSA Sheep 2016, we launched our revised *Complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas* report, work that we believe makes a convincing case for the benefits of sheep farming to our economy, our environment and to society. It lays out the many public goods that sheep farming in upland regions provides, and uses research and respected opinion to evidence and support our case. To an extent many of the arguments relate to much of our lowland sheep farming too, but upland sheep farming is unique, highly



constrained by land type and climate, and takes place in areas with very high levels of public interest. It is financially challenged and inadequately rewarded, and we need to get to a point where sheep enterprises themselves are more viable, as well as getting proper recognition and reward for associated public goods and ecosystem services. This work couldn't be better timed to influence discussions on farm support post-Brexit.

NSA Sheep 2016

Finally, much of this issue of Sheep Farmer is devoted to NSA Sheep 2016 – and what an event this was. It kicked off with a pre-event dinner the night before, attended by more than 400 people eating the most spectacular British lamb. We presented the George Hedley Memorial Award for services to the sheep industry and the Bob Payne Memorial Award for NSA Unsung Hero, before holding a raffle and charity auction raising more than £3,250 for the Addington Fund.

The event itself drew a huge crowd, with more international visitors than ever before, trade stands reporting very good levels of business, and workshops and seminars all well attended. Farming Minister George Eustice joined us for part of the day and we were able to cram a lot into his busy schedule, including a press briefing, a tour of the event and involvement in a seminar about the future of direct payments post-Brexit.

The day demonstrated the valuable role NSA events play, fulfilling a technical, business, educational and social role – and long may they continue.

If you are not currently receiving the NSA Weekly Email Update, call NSA Head Office on 01684 892661 or email membership@nationalsheep.org.uk.

Sheep Farmer



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Front page

The front page picture is of a Kelpie demo at the NSA Sheep Event, held on Wednesday 27th July at the Three Counties Showground, Worcestershire. Behind is a small collection of the many trade stands and the wire fencing competition. Full report on pages 12-15.

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News Update

Wool bedding giveaway

The fourth and penultimate winner in the NSA giveaway for a British wool bedding set was decided at NSA Sheep 2016. Of everyone who entered on the day, the first name out of the hat was NSA member Neil Heseltine of Skipton, North Yorkshire. He was helping on the North of England Mule Sheep Association stand at the event, but also found time to fill in the entry form on the NSA stand.

For your chance to win, enter online at www.nationalsheep.org.uk.

US to take British lamb?

With uncertainty about market access to the EU following Brexit, it is heartening to hear that other doors may be opening for British lamb exports. NSA welcomes work by Defra to respond to a US Government consultation as the first step towards market access being granted for sheep products to the USA.

Lamb sales in the USA have dropped over the years, as a result of falling domestic production, and NSA would like to see British lamb exported and promoted to boost consumption.

See page 24 for further policy updates on lynx, TSEs and bluetongue.

Welsh commons meeting

The Welsh Commons Forum Annual Members Meeting will be held at Park Lodge Hotel, Aberystwyth, on Monday 5th September from 10am. Places are also available to join a facilities tour at Pwllpeiran Upland Research centre at 2pm. The cost of this is £15 per person, to include a lamb dinner. Book a place using the contact details on page 2.

Join the NSA team

NSA is sad to have lost staff member Charlotte Underwood from the team this month. Charlotte worked on NSA membership recruitment and retention for five years, and her departure creates an exciting opportunity for a new person to join the staff at Malvern, Worcestershire. The job will be formally advertised later in the year but any outstanding candidates with a suitable background in sales, service or promotion are warmly encouraged to send an expression of interest to enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk. All enquiries will be dealt with confidentially.

NSA ram sales

Depending on when this magazine reaches you, you might just make it to the NSA South West Region Ram Sale at Exeter Market on Wednesday 17th August. More than 650 sheep are booked in from 13 breeds, including an increase to 45-head following last year's debut for crossbred rams.

All lots are inspected prior to sale, with some having extra health assurance under the SureSheep scheme. A report will be included in the next edition of Sheep Farmer, and in the meantime turn to page 19 for a report from the NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale and previews of three other NSA sales.



New shearing record

NSA offers its congratulations to champion shearer Matt Smith (pictured below), who has conquered the nine-hour ewe shearing world record. He set a tally of 731 ewes, setting a pace of one every 44 seconds and smashing the previous record (set in 2007) by 10 sheep. This is the first time a world record of this kind has been attempted in the UK and the event was supported by BWMB.



Outstanding contribution award



Having been named as recipient of the award earlier in the year, Julie Sedgewick has been formerly presented with the NSA George Hedley Memorial Award. She is pictured above with NSA Chairman Samuel Wharry.

More than 400 sheep farmers and industry representatives were there to see her pick up the prize at an NSA sheep industry dinner, held the evening before NSA Sheep 2016. This was a fitting occasion to make the presentation, as Julie's many years organising national and regional events was one of the many reasons she was nominated to receive the accolade for outstanding contribution to the sheep industry. Julie's retirement in February saw the end of her 27-year

involvement with NSA Northern Region in particular, not to mention promotional work done with other industry bodies and breed societies.

On the same evening, Sue Martyn of NSA South West Region was also recognised for her years of hard work with the Bob Payne Memorial Award for NSA Unsung Hero. This prize is only given when an exception individual is identified, and Sue is considered by NSA to more than fit this bill, for her previous roles as NSA South West Regional Manager and NSA Sheep South West Organiser, and ongoing service to the NSA SW Region Ram Sale.

Sue was unfortunately unable to collect her award but will be presented with the cut glass vase in the near future.

Countryfile Live

NSA is pleased to have been invited to support the first ever Countryfile Live event, a four-day show at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, based on the popular BBC programme. We will be seizing this opportunity to tell the general public about sheep farming in early August, as a feature within Adam Henson's livestock area. The value of sheep for food, environment and society will be the focus, as well as the scourge of dog worrying.

Correction

NSA Welsh Sheep 2017 will be held near Talybont-on-Usk in Brecon. Apologies for the incorrect mention of Usk, Monmouthshire, in the previous edition. Details at www.welshsheep.org.uk.

NSA reports – devolved nations

NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Davies, Development Officer



It has been another busy couple of months with the usual board and regional meetings taking place, along with plenty of stakeholder meetings too.

Quarantine units still dominate the Livestock Identification Advisory Group (LIDAG) meetings, with the need for separate CPH numbers and 24-hour electronic reporting being two of the issues for discussion before QUs are a viable option for farmers wanting an alternative to the six-day standstill and/or considering merging holdings as we move from a five-mile to 10-mile movement reporting rule. Welsh Government has a priority list to offer merged holdings and remove CTS links and SOAs and will be contacting producers on an individual basis, so it must be stressed that it is business as usual until you hear from them.

Illegal smokies

Margaret Dalton represented NSA Cymru/Wales Region at a recent Food Standards Agency Wales meeting in Cardiff about smokies. Demand for these products within some ethnic communities is not dampened by the fact they are illegal in the UK and the resulting undercover trade is not in the interests of consumers, producers or animal welfare. There is a likely link with sheep rustling in some areas and NSA was eager to discuss the findings of a research review commissioned by FSA Wales and conducted by Liverpool University. It is clear more work needs to be done and the next stage is likely to be the creation of a new industry consortium. NSA has made it clear we are ready and prepared to take an active role in such a group.

We are looking forward to Love Lamb Week at the beginning of September (*more on page 28*), which some members may remember took place last year. Although in the early planning stages at the moment, I would like to see NSA Cymru/Wales Region take part in activity during this week-long celebration to encourage people to buy British lamb during its peak season.

Royal Welsh

Our next regional meeting is Wednesday 17th August in Neuadd Henllan on the Royal Welsh Show Ground at 2.15pm. Jamie McCoy will be joining us to talk about this Nuffield Scholarship studies about the future of the family farm.

The NSA Sheep Centre at the Royal Welsh Show was a hive of activity over the four days (*more on page 10*) and my thanks go to all the members from NSA Cymru/Wales Region who helped at this and at the NSA Sheep Event at Malvern a week later.



NSA's Helen Davies (inside right) see Caroline Lewis of Lampeter, Ceredigion, win the fleece competition in the NSA Sheep Centre at the Royal Welsh. They are flanked by BWMB and Animax reps.

NSA Northern Ireland Region

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer



Regardless of how you voted, we seem to be on our way out of the EU. Let's hope it's a seamless operation. The resulting fall in the value of sterling has certainly helped to keep the lamb price more stable at a time when it would usually be falling.

After a period of untruths, backstabbing and self-interest, the politicians have to remember that people need to eat and agriculture needs some sort of normality not too far away from the situation pre-Brexit. In Northern Ireland, NSA will be busy trying to influence DAERA over the next couple of months.

Michelle McIlveen has been the new Agricultural Minister since our election in May when the DUP took over responsibility for agriculture, environment and rural affairs from Sein Fein. She is showing great interest and hopefully getting to grips with how the agricultural industry works. She has said money cannot be found to continue the payment of ANCs but the good news is BPS cheques should start arriving for some in mid-October. This will coincide with the opening of the much-awaited Business Investment Scheme which, subject to the necessary approvals, will include a portfolio of measures to support sustainable growth in agriculture. It is part of the wider Farm Business Improvement Scheme, which is proposed to include a capital investment scheme. The recently formed Business Development Groups have all had meetings and members are getting to know each other, which allows more dialogue and interaction.

Open farm weekend

In June Maurice McHenry, a past NSA Northern Ireland Regional Chairman, worked with this family to be one of the farms to participate in NI's Open Farm Weekend. As a former 'most beautiful farm' award winner, the site near Ballintoy on the famous North Coast Road proved a popular location for this family day out. Chef Edele Healey led three cookery demonstrations each day, showing the nutritional advantages and versatility of lamb. Generous support from Dunbia and Co-Op in the form of burgers and kebabs allowed almost 400 visitors to sample lamb, some of them for the first time.

We are exceptionally proud that Northern Ireland did so well in the European Young Shepherd of the Year competition, held at NSA Sheep 2016 in July. We'll just hope the Europeans have recovered from their loss when NSA Northern Ireland Region visits France in October for a series of farm tours. There are just two seats left on the bus as I write this and we are looking forward to a busy and informative few days.



Open Farm Weekend allowed hundreds of people to get an insight into agriculture in Northern Ireland.

NSA Scottish Region

By George Milne, Development Officer



It has been a busy time with NSA Scot Sheep and the Royal Highland Show, but we have not taken our eyes off the ball in terms of representing sheep farmers on policy issues.

Many will still be waiting to receive their final payments for the Basic Payment and Less Favoured Area Support schemes, which has caused so much pain for everyone in many ways. It is certainly a situation that we do not want to see repeated next year and we will be doing everything in our power to make sure Scottish Government does a better job this time around.

Ewe hogg payments

As I put pen to paper, no payments had yet been issued to those claiming sheep headage payments. Let's hope they have arrived by the time you read this report. This scheme needs changes and NSA will be working with Government officials to try and deliver a more simplified claims system next year.

NSA Scot Sheep provided us with a great opportunity to meet the new Cabinet Secretary, Fergus Ewing, who attended the event. He also attended the workshop discussing the change from LFASS to the new Areas of Natural Constraint. We will be following this up with a meeting to give the Government a clear vision of what would be the best balance for all those in the new ANCs.

No man's land

Some of you may question where this is all going now we are in an exit position from the EU, with Scotland possibly trying to remain in. This is the problem of finding ourselves in a 'no man's land' where we may well be for a considerable amount of time. However, the Scottish Government has said it will be business as

usual regarding policymaking – so we will need to continue to speak up for what is the best for the sheep industry until further developments take place.

We are actively working to explain to Scottish Natural Heritage why it cannot grant a licence for lynx to be released in Kielder Forest, and we remain involved in land use, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change discussions. These are all key areas for Scottish Government and will not go away, whether we are in or out of Europe.



NSA Scottish Region Chairman Sybil Macpherson in the first of many anticipated meetings with the new Cabinet Secretary.



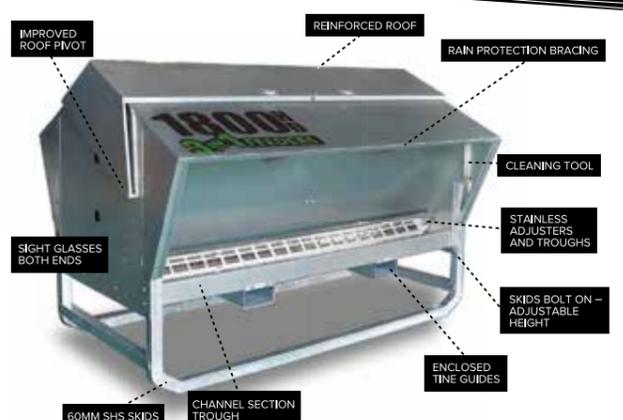
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19: NSA Main Ram Sale, Builth Wells

NOVEMBER
9: Beef South West, Exeter
19-20: English Winter Fair, Stafford
28-29: Royal Welsh Winter Fair, Builth Wells

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NSA reports – English regions

Central

By Anne Payne, Manager



Following the resignation of Richard Wheeldon as Regional Chairman, due to the demands of a new job with the National Trust, Alastair Sneddon was confirmed as our new Chairman at a recent committee meeting.

We thank Richard for all his hard work over the last 18 months, particularly his success in encouraging a record 20 entrants to the Young Shepherd of the Year competition at the 2015 NSA Central Region Winter Fair. We welcome Alastair to the post, knowing that as a senior partner at Bagshaws he is no stranger to NSA and the sheep world.

The warm wet spring has continued to create problems for sheep farmers, with more incidents of footrot and early signs of flystrike, the latter exacerbated by delayed shearing. Many are also late in getting in their silage. Lamb numbers are building in the markets now, with the prospect of early and later-born lambs becoming ready all at once, which might boost entries and test demand.

As a backdrop to all of this, the Brexit outcome of the referendum has raised a mixture of concerns, even among those who voted for it. Farmers will be desperate to know the current support system will be honoured by future governments, and it behoves all of us to get involved in supplying data and views to our negotiators in the coming weeks. Much of the future-planning of allied farming organisations was dependent on European funding too, so this will of course now have to be revisited.

Eastern

By Jonathan Barber, Manager



NSA Eastern Region members were recently treated to a fascinating trip around the Elveden Estate, Norfolk.

Farm Manager Andrew Francis was our tour guide around the estate, alongside NSA Trustee Andrew Foulds, who is a partner of Elveden Livestock, which is responsible for the various livestock enterprises that utilise feed and land on the estate. During the tour, visitors saw a herd of 60 South Devon cows and calves as well as the flock of 600 Scottish Blackface ewes.

We also learnt about the farm's specialism in potato, onion, carrot and parsnip production, which follows a one-in-six crop rotation. This rotation, spring cropping and rouging is why, unlike many

New regional chairman



NSA Central Region has welcomed Alastair Sneddon to the position of Chairman. He also continues as regional rep for the NSA English Committee.

arable farms, they do not suffer from a black grass problem. Around 29 million onions are supplied to major retailers 52 weeks a year.

Elveden lies in the geographical area known as Breckland and the soil structure consists of sand with flints over a chalky till. The sand depth is 10-100cm and is very free draining with low moisture holding capacity, hence there is a great need for irrigation across the land, which is delivered by two reservoirs and 130 miles of pipework. More than 1,000 acres is in stewardship and Higher Level schemes.

Upcoming dates for your diary include the two NSA Eastern Region Ram Sales – see page 19 for details.

Marches

By Kevin Harrison, Chairman



After plenty of debate the nation has decided to leave the EU. We now need to decide what we want as an industry post-Brexit so we are ahead of the game and have an idea as to where we want to steer the debate when we get the ear of those that intend to make the decisions. If you have any views or ideas you want heard please let us know so we can take these to the various NSA committees.

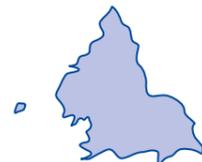
It was a shame to have to cancel our Young Shepherd of the Year competition, due to a lack of entrants this year, and disappointing to all the committee members who had worked hard to organise it, for our hosts at Overbury Farms and for those that did enter who were not be able to showcase their

shepherding skills. While enjoyable and rewarding, sheep farming is a very difficult industry to be in technically, financially and physically. I would encourage all younger members to make the most of what is available to them to help improve their knowledge and skills. The region invests heavily in NSA Next Generation to help support young people and we should reconsider this if the interest is not there.

Thank you to all NSA Marches Region members who gave up their time to help make the NSA Sheep Event a huge success again. Your input makes a big difference to the smooth running of the event. Reports from page 12.

Northern

By Heather Stoney-Grayshon, Manager



The region held a party in Barnard Castle, County Durham, for Julie Sedgewick, former Regional Manager, to thank her for all her efforts with NSA Northern Region and NSA North Sheep. It was a lovely social evening with much reminiscing.

The region held a committee meeting in June, where we were joined by Joanne Briggs, NSA Communications Manager, and Hannah Jackson, NSA Next Generation Ambassador. Much interesting discussion was had, including new committee membership nominations. As it was held before the vote, there was a lot of what ifs and questions surrounding the EU referendum. Now we know the result I am sure the August committee meeting will be even more interesting with plenty of discussion to be had.

As ever, NSA had a presence at the Great Yorkshire Show with Bob Blandon, NSA South East Regional Manager, very kindly attending with the NSA trailer for the three days. Douglas Drysdale supplied the usual bar and catering facilities, while Bob and helpers from NSA Northern Region Committee signed up some new NSA members.

South East

By Bob Blandon, Manager



After the success of our previous meetings, we are once again planning to run two 'Rams fit for purpose and making use of EBVs' meetings this summer, jointly with AHDB Beef & Lamb.

The first will be on Wednesday 24th August at Lackham College, Chippenham, Wiltshire, and the second on Monday 12th

September at James Barker's farm, Lavendon Mill, Lavendon, Buckinghamshire, MK46 4HJ. Both meetings will start at 4pm and light refreshments will be available. So we have an idea of numbers, those wishing to attend either meeting should contact me using the details on page 2.

Support for the Seven Sisters Sheepdog Trial on the weekend of Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th September would be appreciated by committee members Sam Stanistreet and wife Zoe, who jointly organise it. Competitors include European handlers and the trial is located on the A259 between Seaford and Eastbourne.

Please could anyone who entered the fleece competition at NSA South Sheep contact me, as we have some administrative loose ends that need tying up.

South West

By Kate White, Secretary



After a busy and somewhat turbulent summer before the Brexit decision, now we know the outcome we will hopefully soon start to see what the implications actually are as we commence the long and arduous process of leaving the EU.

It is still too early to say how it will affect us but there can be no doubt that it will, from lamb prices and trade agreements to subsidies and compliance terms. Various meetings shall be held in the coming weeks and it is important for sheep farmers to get involved and make our voices heard in order to really have a say in our future. Please look out for dates and details of regional meetings, and if you are unable to attend contact any of the NSA South West Region Committee to have your say. We want to collate ideas and to ensure your voices are collectively heard.

Meanwhile, life goes on and it is the time of year to find fresh blood for your flock once again. Depending on when this magazine reaches you, there may still be time to get to the NSA South West Region Ram Sale on Wednesday 17th August at Exeter Livestock Market.

By the time you read this we may have two new shearing world record holders in the area. Matt Smith, originally from New Zealand and now living in Cornwall, will have attempted the nine-hour ewe record on his home farm near Launceston, and Ivan Smith will have tried for the nine-hour lamb record. It is very exciting that these first world record attempts in the northern hemisphere are happening on our doorstep.

Sheep and arable mix in Norfolk



NSA Eastern Region enjoyed a tour of Elveden Estate. With 22,5000 acres, 10,000 of which are farmland, it is the largest ring-fenced arable farm in lowland Britain.



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Superb sheep industry showcase in NSA's Royal Highland marquee

By George Milne, NSA Scottish Region Development Officer

The NSA Sheep Centre, located in a prominent site on the Royal Highland Showground, is one of the largest promotional marquees, if not the largest, at the four-day event.

It is regarded by the show as a main attraction for the 180,000 plus visitors and this year the NSA Scottish Region Committee did a fantastic job in putting on a great display. The marquee included a mix of trade stands, sheep breed societies, BWMB and tag manufacturers. There was also a new business area, which proved very successful in allowing members and guests to sit down for a coffee and catch up with the NSA office holders on duty.

We had visits from a number of MPs and MSPs, including David Mundell, Willie Rennie, Liam MacArthur and Alex Ferguson to mention a few. Many Scottish Government officials also dropped in,



Lamb tastings on three days of the four-day show were a hit with visitors.

giving NSA office holders the chance to put over up-to-date views from the industry. Meanwhile, in the nearby sheep rings, the next generation was encouraged through a lamb dressing competition.

General public

The marquee was constantly busy over the four days and has to be one of the best opportunities for us as a sheep industry to connect with the public. Therefore, all the farmer-facing activity was coupled with a great many attractions for the general public. This included a display of high quality woollen fabrics, the River Tweed Forum demonstrating the importance of integrated farming systems to reduce water pollution, skilled craftsmen showcasing stick making and wool spinning, and incredibly popular lamb tasting session.

We did lamb tasting on a relatively small scale last year, so this time the NSA Scottish Region Committee decided to up the heat and demonstrate how easy and versatile Scotch Lamb is to put on the barbeque. With the assistance of

the Scottish Craft Butchers, Stewart McClymont showed visitors how simple it is to barbeque a leg of lamb to cook a large cut of meat to feed several people. Chef Chris Trotter also spoke about the many benefits of using Scotch Lamb and dished up salsas and sauces to go with delicious lamb cuts for the public to sample.

BBQ time

This was carried out each morning for three days, and then Chris and the NSA Scottish Region Committee spent two hours each afternoon cooking up a

huge variety of different lamb cuts supplied by Aldi, including leg steaks, chops, racks and kebabs. Samples given to the public really encouraged them to connect with the live butchery and cooking demonstrations.

I would like to thank everyone

involved in the marquee for their huge amount of time and effort in making a spectacular display for the many visitors. What a great PR exercise for the Scottish sheep sector.



From left to right, NSA Scottish Region's George Milne, Maimie Paterson and Sybil Macpherson help chef Nigel Owens celebrate his 'lamb lollipops' being named lamb product of the year.

Charity shear

Now recognisable in households the length and breadth of the UK, Sybil and George Macpherson took advantage of their newfound fame to raise more than £4,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support at the show.

The removal of George's beard has become an annual occurrence, but was a major attraction this year with many people recognising the duo after the massive success of the BBC's 'This Farming Life'. The production team behind the hit series were also recognised for its service to the sheep industry by being named as this year's recipients of the NSA Scotland Silver Salver.

Find the Highland Show report at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events for a video of Sybil, NSA Scottish Region Chairman, 'shearing' husband George.



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Hot topics on the agenda at a scorcher of a Royal Welsh Show

By Helen Davies, NSA Cymru/Wales Development Officer
The 2016 Royal Welsh Show will be remembered for the heat if nothing else. The NSA Sheep Centre had a full house with a good mix of sheep breeds and industry-related stands, and although numbers of visitors would have been down slightly due to the hot weather, there were some solid business enquiries made during the week.

The building on Monday afternoon onwards was a hive of activity with many breed societies and trade stands holding receptions to welcome friends old and new. NSA was among this number and it was good to meet and greet so many of you and also NSA supporters from throughout the year.

Shearing support

The noise and the crowds mean we can never forget our close proximity to the shearing shed during the show. NSA Cymru/Wales sponsors some of the competitions and it is always a delight to go and do the presentations.



The NSA stand fronted the Sheep Centre.



Llew Thomas, NSA Cymru/Wales Regional Chairman, welcomes the Lady Ambassador.



Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths (centre) with NSA officer holders.

NSA official holders attended many stakeholder meetings during the four days and discussed a huge range of topics from common land, carcase classification, TB, environmental issues and many more. On the Wednesday we met with Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths and reaffirmed that NSA wants to and needs to be involved with Brexit discussions. We also highlighting our concerns over the proposed quarantine units, which are a part of the CPH review that will start later this year. Thursday saw the Lady Ambassador have a tour of the NSA Sheep Centre and find out more about NSA.

Although I did not get to see much of

the judging it was good to hear reports back about how well NSA members had done, and some even had the honour of judging. NSA Trustee John Geldard judged the Charollais on Tuesday whilst my father John Pryce had the job of choosing the best Suffolks on the Monday. Both clearly enjoyed both the experience and the challenge.

All of the above would not be possible without a brilliant team and I must thank my NSA Cymru/Wales Region committee members and NSA staff members Bob Blanden and Charlotte Underwood for helping to man the stand during the week.



NSA staff member Hannah Park (right) presenting the wool handling prizes.



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Cautious optimism of sheep sector reflected at thriving industry event

The cautious optimism currently being seen in the sector was enough to fuel a very successful NSA Sheep Event at the end of July, with the day dominated by strong crowds and trade stands reporting a huge amount of business conducted.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, reports: "It was a really fantastic day with a generally forward-thinking and positive mood among the thousands of people attending. Farmers weren't just passing the time; they were really thinking about where they could make wise investments to ensure their businesses were more sustainable. It was also evident that there is a huge amount of young energy coming into this industry. It stands us in good stead for the future that so many of the next generation were making the most of the show."

"I would agree there is a general



A weight crate was the prize in the Texel Sheep Society Youth Development Team's stockjudging competition.



Winning European Young Shepherds William Hinton and Richard Carter.

air of cautious optimism in the sheep sector at the moment, which was clearly indicated by the positivity of the event. The Brexit decision means there are clear challenges ahead, but there are also some big opportunities that need to be taken advantage of. Visitors were sharing their different views for a positive future and so there is undoubtedly a need for a concentrated effort by farming bodies and the Government to work on priorities."

Farming Minister George Eustice attended the event, welcoming visitors



Ambassadors from three different years of the programme welcomed visitors to the newly created NSA Next Generation area.

at the opening ceremony and joining a panel discussion about the future of direct payments for farmers. He spoke about ways for the Government and agriculture to work towards common post-Brexit goals.

Trade deals

Mr Stocker continues: "Mr Eustice made it clear the Government is working to create trade deals across the globe, including positive steps towards market access



Indoor and outdoor stands reported a good level of trade at the event.

Event fact file

Event: NSA Sheep 2016.

Venue: Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire.

Date: Wednesday 27th July.

Competition winners:-

- **Young Shepherd of the Year:** Richard Carter, Gloucestershire. **Highest placed under 21:** Iain Wilson, Northern Ireland.
- **European Young Shepherd of the Year:** England (Richard Carter and William Hinton).
- **Wire Fencing:** Mike Ford Fencing.
- **Four Nations Ready Steady Cook:** Michael Ritch, Scottish Association YFC.
- **Stockjudging:** Louise Atkins, Devon.
- **Carcase selection:** Joe Blandford, Herefordshire, Richard Carter, Gloucestershire, and Philip Derryman, Devon.
- **Outdoor trade stand:** Bryce Suma Post Drivers.
- **Indoor trade stand:** AHDB Beef & Lamb.
- **Breed society stand:** Blackface Sheep Breeders Association.
- **Breed society pen of sheep:** Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association.

Full results and competition sponsors at www.sheepevent.org.uk.



Sheep handling options were one of many popular demonstrations.

for lambs in the USA. Much of this work started before the EU referendum, but NSA Sheep 2016 gave us the opportunity to really stress the importance of continued access to the EU common market and just how crucial negotiations in this area will be.

"The minister's comments on support payments to farmers were generally well received by visitors, with an air of excitement and interest from people about what he was saying. He made it clear he does not want to hear suggestions from the industry of remaining with the status quo and NSA accepts Mr Eustice's invitation to pitch innovative approaches and options that will serve the industry well, push it forward and be justifiable to the public.

Public goods

"The launch at the event of an NSA report into the complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas proved very timely, as this outlines the public goods provided by farmers and what is needed to recognise and support the fine balance between production, environment and society. Another area that matches the minister's desired approach is the existing

Left: All systems go in the wire fencing competition.

Below: The event took over the Three Counties Showground.

NSA proposal for an animal health scheme to incentivise forward-looking approaches to exotic and endemic diseases.

New era

"We are entering a new era for the sheep sector and NSA Sheep 2016 reflected that in the content of the day and conversations generated by the farmers attending. It will be very interesting to see what the sector looks like by the time of the next event in 2018."

More pictures and video clips at www.sheepevent.org.uk.

Thank you

NSA is indebted to all sponsors of the biennial event, plus the many volunteers and helpers who did so much. In addition to the Major Sponsors here, all supporters can be found at www.sheepevent.org.uk. The event will be held again on Wednesday 18th July 2018.



Graham Powell and children Rhys and Megan show off Jane, the 22-month-old bitch they sold for the sheepdog sale's top price of 2,750gns.



'Once in a lifetime opportunity' to reward upland sheep farming

The Brexit decision is a once in a generation opportunity for the sheep industry to ensure future rural policy and support payments reward the 'vital' role sheep farming plays in helping manage the landscape, provide employment and support rural communities in hill and upland areas.

That was the clear message from farmers speaking at NSA Sheep 2016's opening seminar chaired by Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive. He opened the session by saying the UK 'needed to get back to delivering the returns these farmers deserve'.

New report

Coinciding with the launch of the NSA report on *The complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas*, guest speakers suggested current rules and payments were in danger of harming a landscape shaped by the commitment and work of sheep farmers over generations but enjoyed by the public for free.

Derbyshire Peak District farmer Robert Helliwell told a packed audience the region attracted 16 million visitors annually and, were it not for a campsite, the 400ha (988-acre) tenanted unit's books would not balance. Current environment schemes didn't help in creating new avenues of income either, he said.

"There's nothing better in my mind than heather-fed lamb finished on the moor. It would be a niche market but we're not allowed to access some moor grazing during winter," commented Mr Helliwell.

The 'one size fits all' system of regulation had to end, added Jeff Gwillim, a fifth generation sheep and beef farmer



The seminar tent remained packed throughout the day.

from the Black Mountains of Powys. "We not only need a voice but the wherewithal to take action," he said of future rural policy and the potential for future change.

Under-valued

Current challenges for upland and hill areas included the unchecked invasion of bracken, a need to control indigenous populations of ponies, and addressing the risk of damage to plant, insect and animal species from under-grazing – as big a concern today as over-grazing was in the era of headage support payments, he suggested.

NSA Next Generation Ambassador and Lanarkshire hill farmer Jennifer Craig supported this view, suggesting the public had 'very little appreciation of the history

of how hill farming has maintained the landscape' and, in that respect, it was easy for farmers to feel very under-valued.

Demographics

From her perspective, future policy had to be shaped to account for the demographics of the Scottish sheep sector as well as its geography. "Problems include lone working, a lack of successors, living within remote locations, falling income, regulation and legislation, and increases in predators and land loss to forestry," she said.

County Antrim sheep farmer John Blaney added: "The Government would do well to be advised by the silver-haired farmers who remember how sheep were historically farmed in the hill areas."

General agreement for the need to shake up farm support system

Farming Minister George Eustice told visitors to NSA Sheep 2016 he wanted to see fundamental, ground-breaking change to the current system of farm supports that could become 'the envy of the world'.

Brexit – which was not the surprise some suggested, he said – gave farming and policymakers an opportunity to think through what good agricultural support looks like. "Don't come to me if you want to cling to the past," he said of non-government organisations and lobbyists. "I believe passionately in a need for change; we can design something that is the envy of the world."

Mr Eustice agreed the current system of rules and fines – both of which were 'hard-wired' in current EU regulations – were often out of kilter with each other. Negotiations within an enlarged EU would have been problematic, he suggested, adding future policy should reward those farmers taking risks with their own capital.

Active farmers

These comments from the minister were an unscheduled addition to a seminar titled *The basic payment scheme: Adding value or undermining our industry?* The other panelists also had committed views. James Gray, Hampshire sheep farmer and Tenant Farmers Association Vice Chairman, was adamant payments that landed in the landowners' pockets who didn't farm did the industry no good.

"It needs to go to active farmers; those exposed to entrepreneurial risk," he said, suggesting the current payout to UK landowners from Brussels should instead be split with £1bn going to the hill



George Eustice joined a panel of farmers to discuss the future of agricultural support.

and upland sector, £1bn to capital grants, £1bn to support near market research, and any extra for an 'out-goers scheme'.

Powys farmer John Yeomans told the audience an open day at the family owned unit near Newtown suggested the operation helped support 2,300 staff in allied businesses locally.

"We don't want subsidy; we want a fair price for our produce. The current rules are founded on a culture of mistrust. Schemes need to be much simpler, not 60 days to get information in and months to get appeal decision," he said.

But life without subsidy was already a reality for Norfolk-based Ewan Cummings, an NSA Next Generation Ambassador. Now entered into a share-farming agreement he had been able to access land having formerly been priced out of the rental market due to competition from subsidised bio-digester operators, he told delegates.

Closer ties with abattoirs and retailers were a way forward and co-operatives 'were not a mad socialist experiment', he ventured, citing progress in New Zealand in its post-subsidy support era.

Rewarding risk

Herefordshire farmer Richard Sparey was equally as damning about current payments suggesting they 'pushed up rents' and provided 'big pensions' for some. As a recipient himself, he said: "If the Basic Payment Scheme goes we'll suck it up; if it stays I'll take it. We need to target support to those that want to produce, those taking the risk. We need to profit so we can survive the poorer years."

"I can see room for headage payments within agri-environment schemes but we don't want to spend the next 20 years farming with our hands tied behind our back. Give us the tools to farm," he said.

Workshops

NSA Sheep 2016 included four seminars, three reported here and the fourth covered on page 34. Following their success in 2014, this year's event also had a packed programme of workshops. These were created with the intention of being small, informal sessions – but massive crowds meant they saw similar attendances to the seminars themselves. Topics included lameness, integration of sheep (reported on page 16), sheep identification and grassland rejuvenation. Their popularity and feedback from visitors will be considered as we design NSA Sheep 2018.

Ideas for adding value

Lamb is all too often seen as a standard product on retailers' shelves, leading to calls at NSA Sheep 2016 for more differentiation in the marketplace – a move demanding greater information on regional identification, rearing and finishing systems, and better use of genetics to improve efficiencies.

HCC analyst John Richards told farmers attending the seminar *Adding value by maximising the marketplace* that the shift in sterling's value post-Brexit had seen short-term gains in prices. "Sheep sold at €5/kg have been worth £4.20/kg against £3.50/kg for the same period last year,"

he explained, but added an annual fall in consumption and lower prices for offal and fleeces were longer term concerns.

The sheep meat market needed differentiation, said Bob Kennard, NSA Make More of Mutton Project Manager. "You wouldn't go into a supermarket and just ask for a bottle of red wine," he suggested. Instead, lamb should be differentiated by breed, age (mature carcasses being a taste 'revelation', he ventured), rearing and finishing system, and the landscape of origin.

Breeding also had its part to play, explained AHDB's Liz Genever.

Successful breeding decisions backed up by performance figures offered lifetime benefits. These were calculated to be currently worth an extra £20m to the sector each year.

Other income streams needed to be exploited, added Ian Buchanan, BWMB Chairman. "About 60% of the UK's wool goes for carpet making, 25% is exported, and 10% is used for knitting (fabric)," he explained.

Right: Could lamb tastings at future NSA sheep events include products with market differentiation?



'Robot sheep' just one attraction in packed Sheep Event workshops

A novel breed turned heads at NSA Sheep 2016. Hardy in all weathers and maintenance free, they were actually model sheep, jam packed with hi-tech gadgets. These automated participants in new tree research carry their own 'central heating', a thermal array to mimic the metabolism of real animals.

The fake sheep were just one of the reasons the workshop area at the event was packed throughout the day, as visitors flocked to hear expert speakers on four completely different topics. Woodland Trust used the opportunity to talk about a study looking at whether energy that could go into growth is being diverted into survival mechanisms.

Losing energy

Dr Andy Smith from Bangor University explains: "If it's very cold a sheep burns more energy to keep warm for survival and needs more food. Conversely, if it's too hot, animals tend to eat less and seek shade to keep cool. Both situations affect weight gain and productivity, because energy that could go into growth is used to regulate body metabolism."

PhD student Pip Jones is placing the model sheep near trees, hedgerows and shelter belts, comparing the results with exposed locations. She says: "Although it's early days, I've been really surprised by some measurements. Sheep use substantial energy just staying warm and



One of the model sheep gathering data alongside a flock.

lose a lot of heat, especially when there's a wind-chill. On a sunny day the sheep's fleece recorded a temperature of 60°C, which is incredibly hot. The shelter of trees could really contribute, reducing the effects of wind-chill in the winter and creating shade in the summer. I'm looking at how temperature changes in different conditions and what provides good shelter."

Wind flow and microclimate around hedgerows, as well as the impact of tree cover on fodder growth and energy content, are being measured. This work is part of 'Multi-Land', a largescale

partnership between Bangor and Aberystwyth Universities, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Coed Cymru, Natural Resources Wales, Snowdonia National Park Authority, Woodland Trust and National Trust.

Dr Smith continues: "Our ambition is to increase on-farm profitability. The aim of the model sheep project is to produce a tool kit for farmers to help them work out the best position for trees and shelter belts to provide protection in winter and shade in summer. Multi-Land is also about sustainability, creating resilience to future proof farms against climate change."

Picture credit: WTML/Laurence Clark.

A vet's view: Fiona Lovatt

The role of trees and hedgerows may have important benefits for flock productivity and welfare, especially with the increasing popularity of outdoor lambing, says Fiona Lovatt.



"From a flock health point of view we need to undertake further research but there are a number of situations where a sheltered field is invaluable, not least in reducing the risk of hypothermia in new born lambs and potentially the risk of mastitis in their mothers," she says. "Tree and hedge planting can improve drainage and play a vital role in integrated sheep farming, which must be good for both the flock and the environment."

Exposure is one of the biggest causes of neonatal deaths with around a third of lamb losses due to hypothermia and starvation. Exposure to cold winds also worsens mastitis. By creating the right conditions for ewes and young lambs, lamb mortality can be reduced.

Strategically planted tree shelter belts and wide hedges have been shown to improve drainage, and drier underfoot conditions are kinder to sheep's feet, Dr Lovatt says. There is also the opportunity to fence off trees planted around streams and keep livestock away from wet areas where liver fluke thrives.

A farmer's view: Jonathan Francis

"We've got to look at new ways of doing things in order to secure a future for farming, and in my experience, harnessing the benefits of planting trees is definitely worth exploring," says Jonathan Francis of Caersws, Powys. "Apart from losing a bit of ground, I can't see a downside."



Mr Francis battles the elements when running 400 Welsh and Welsh Mules ewes plus 60 sucklers and followers on exposed land. He says: "The east wind can be a killer. It blows really hard, especially in spring. The rain runs off the hill and some fields are so wet they are unusable."

Over the last two years he's planted almost 15,000 trees to provide shelter belts for ewes and new born lambs after turnout, as well as tackle water problems. For example, on an exposed 13ha (31-acre) sloping field he was worked with Coed Cymru advice and funding from Woodland Trust to create a six-metre wide shelter belt. Around 2,000 birch, oak and hedgerow species are already starting to provide protection and alleviate rainwater run-off and, as they mature, the shelter benefits will increase. Three larger shelter belts have also been planted on hill ground to filter strong gusts of wind.

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Youthful energy at NSA Sheep 2016

A newly created NSA Next Generation area, plus young shepherds from England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and France pitting their husbandry skills against each other, meant there was plenty of young blood and youthful energy at NSA Sheep 2016.

NSA's Joanne Briggs says: "It felt like a real coming of age for the NSA Next Generation project, with its own identity at the event and positivity about the future. The programme was launched at NSA Sheep 2012 and has come a long way since then, thanks to funding from NSA regions and support from many industry partners."

A competition in the NSA Next Generation area asked visitors how they would secure their future in the industry if they were given a pen of four lambs. Toby Lawton from Newport, Shropshire, won an NSA goodie bag for his commercially-focused response



about tugging the ewe lambs and finishing the progeny to meet current market specifications.

This year's NSA Next Generation Ambassadors were joined by individuals from the 2014 and 2015 groups to welcome other young people to the event, share ideas and discuss options for a positive future.

The event was one of three days together for the 2016 group, as part of

their third of five delivery sessions during the year. They had already done two farm 'walks' (one on a farm in Herefordshire plus a virtual one in Northern Ireland) looking at grassland management and integration of alternative forages. Grassland was the focus of the whole session, plus personal development training on how to be a leader, time management, conflict resolution and negotiating skills.

On My Farm - The Next Generation

Regular blogs from the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors can be found at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk. Here is a taster from around the UK.

Jamie Laurie (23)

On the family farm in Dumfriesshire

We have about moved from spring into summer and after a count up of all the lambs I think lambing time has been a success overall. Some groups did better than others but I think at this stage we have much the same number of lambs on the ground as we normally would.

Clipping has just begun to get underway on the farm now too, and we've managed to get the hoggs and tups done so far. We've made a start on the ewes too but they aren't easy going yet so it'll be a few weeks before they're finished. I would like to get started on first cut as soon as the weather improves, so here's hoping for a dry few weeks.



Fred Love (24)

Starting from scratch in Nottinghamshire

June was a blur with lots going on. We were busy with weaning lambs, separating them in to various weight groups and deciding which ones we'll keep to be sheared to then go to the ram in the back end of this year. It has been a very unsettled month though, with the weather not being the best for shearing. The grass we drilled in late May is now



looking brilliant though and we seem to have had grass coming out of our ears, which I can't really complain about.

We've also seen a few new arrivals on the farm this month, the first being 12 Beef Shorthorn heifers, with there being plenty of grass we thought this would be perfect timing, but we're also conscious of trying to tackle the worm burden and feel that having a small herd of cows to rotare around the farm will help to clean up the ground. The second new arrival is a pup called Flin. He's a Kelpie cross Collie and has settled in very well with the rest of the dogs. I'm looking forward to introducing him to the sheep in the future

Jacob Anthony (23)

Managing the family sheep flock in Glamorgan

I've managed to get the odd evening and day away from the farm lately, helping a friend out on his shearing round. We've also made a start on shearing my ewes at home. The first worming dose for the lambs was



a good opportunity to see how they are progressing, and it was very pleasant to see they are doing well. By the time I write my next blog I hope to have sent a few loads of lambs to the abattoir. I for one was very happy with the UK voting to leave the European Union, as I am a very firm believer that life outside Europe will undoubtedly be better for us as an agricultural industry long term. The time has come for both sides of the argument to stop squabbling, to unite and move forward to help make Britain Great again.

Confidence drives brisk Builth trade

Buyers were in a confident mood at this year's NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale, with keen bidding on quality, strong sheep in early August.

It meant that, with just two more sheep sold this year than last, the gross sale figure for the 390-head put under the hammer was £213,615, compared to £195,000 in 2015. Average prices were generally up, and in some breeds substantially so. The top price overall was 3,350gns, up from 1,300gns last year.

This headline figure was for a Texel shearling from Dewi Williams of Abergele, Conwy, sold to Michael James of Builth Wells, Powys, for 3,350gns. The ram was sired by the son of Garngwr Upper Class, a ram sold at Lanark for £32,000.

Top prices

The second highest price was 2,100gns for another Texel, the breed champion yearling sold by Barbara and Jo Smith from their Slapton Flock at Towcester, Northamptonshire. Charollais topped at 1,220gns for a shearling ram from Charles Marwood of York, sold to R. Swift and Sons, Church Eaton, Staffordshire.

There were two 1,000gns Suffolks, one of which was sold by John Sinnett of



Top price at the early Builth sale was 3,350gns for Dewi Williams' Texel shearling.

Stockton-on-Teme, Worcester, to Roger Morgan of Usk, Monmouthshire. The other was sold by T.C. and C.A. Harding of Nuneaton, Warwickshire, to Derek Farr of Pontrilas, Herefordshire. The highest priced Beltex was sold by Tecwyn Jones, Llanrwst, Conwy, for 750gns to John Owen of Llanerchymedd, Anglesey.

Jane Smith, NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Executive Director, said farmers had generally been looking for stronger sheep soon able to go out to work. This favoured yearlings and quality. Chairman John Owens agreed: "Anything tidy had a good trade. Recent lamb prices have helped."

Meet John Owens on pages 26 and 27.

Two NSA Eastern Region ram sales

NSA Eastern Region is again holding two sales at two venues – Rugby Farmers Mart on Friday 26th August and Melton Mowbray Market on Friday 16th September.

The Rugby sale will run alongside the August Sheep Fair. Jonathan Barber, NSA Eastern Region Manager, says: "This sale is ideal for early lambing flocks and will feature rams from all major terminal sires including Charollais, Texel and Suffolk. This sale continues to grow in popularity with buyers and last year saw very good clearance rates and highly satisfactory prices."

36th anniversary

The Melton Mowbray sale will be the 36th annual NSA sale at the venue. Up to 280 entries are predicted, with all major terminal sires again expected, plus various crosses. Jonathan continues: "With all rams inspected and presented ahead of the sale, it has established itself as the day to source top quality tups at reasonable prices. The auctioneers and market staff at Melton put every effort into ensuring a well-attended day and the facilities for penning, selling and payment are top rate.

"We are also indebted to Melton Mowbray Town Council who support the sale with generous prize money. We hope many NSA members will take the opportunity to purchase their rams here and join the ranks of many sheep farmers who are regular and highly satisfied customers."

Entry forms and catalogues at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events or from NSA Eastern Region on 01953 607860 or office@ceressolutions.co.uk.

NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale

With almost 40 years' experience under its belt, NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale is the largest sale organised under NSA auspices. It will take place this year on Monday 19th September, as always at the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells.

John Owens, NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Chairman, says the sale has built up a reputation for quality health assured rams and continued to grow in popularity. Turnover grows year on year, with a clearance rate of 84% and the top price of 7,000gns going to a Border Leicester ram in 2015.

New website

An innovation for this year is the launch of a new website, which has served as an excellent tool so far in helping buyers and vendors get the best out of the sale. A gallery of pictures, online entry forms for vendors and catalogues for buyers are just some of the features.

As usual vendors and buyers are expected to travel from all corners of the UK, ready to enjoy the famed buzz and atmosphere the sale never fails to offer. Mr Owens adds: "The sale continues to go from strength to strength each year, with headline prices over the past few years signaling a satisfactory trade in quality rams, with vendors generally pleased that averages have held up well."

Information at www.nsaramsales.co.uk or from Jane Smith, NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Executive Director, on jane@nsaramsales.co.uk or 01291 673939.

Only two more chances to win in NSA £200 voucher prize draw

With the fourth draw in the NSA 2016 campaign now completed, there are only two more chances for members to get their hands on a £200 voucher.

Three individuals have just been given the news that they were successful in the latest draw, and having all recently signed up to the organisation to keep abreast with the latest technical and seasonal information for the sheep sector, a £200 voucher win was the last thing they expected.

NSA has teamed up with Fecpak⁶², Cox Agri/Ritchey and JG Animal Health to offer three vouchers every other month during 2016. New members are automatically entered into the draw, as well as existing members who recommend a friend or neighbour to sign up to NSA.

With no limit to the number of entries for existing members, the more people you recommend the more chances you have to win. Write your membership details on the form opposite and pass it to a friend or neighbour.

Full terms and conditions at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw.

Alex Thorneycroft-Taylor, Dorset



Winning a £200 voucher for Fecpak⁶² couldn't have come at a better time for Alex Thorneycroft-Taylor, as he embarks on a programme to improve parasite control across the 1,000-head flock he manages in Wardon Hill, Dorchester.

Having developed an interest in sheep when growing up in Cumbria, Mr Thorneycroft-Taylor now runs the sheep and a 170-cow suckler herd on the 2,800 acre estate where he works.

He says: "Monitoring growth rates, carrying out weaning checks and keeping on top of parasitic challenges is a big focus for us at the moment. We're currently monitoring grazing and seasonality patterns, looking at establishing the most effective stocking levels for both enterprises in the future."

"We've also introduced full flock recording into the sheep enterprise this year, which began during lambing and will follow each lamb right through to finishing and include abattoir data. The aim is to improve specifications across the board, while building on the traits which will help us to improve the closed flock."



Marc Smith, Gloucestershire

Most winners in NSA's bimonthly draw are surprised to hear of their win, but none more so than Marc Smith. He didn't even realise he'd been entered into the draw by his employers when they recently signed him up as a new NSA member.

Mr Smith explains: "I am relatively new to my shepherding role and my employer subscribed me to NSA thinking it would be beneficial and further my knowledge, which I am pleased to say it has. It is great to read about what's happening in the world of sheep, thoughts and current research."

"My interest, knowledge and passion for sheep has increased over the years and I was given the opportunity to take on the management of a 750-ewe flock at Cirencester this spring, working alongside the owner. The flock is split equally between Mule and Welsh Cheviot ewes, all lambed outdoors in April. We finish 1,500 fat lambs and run on 550 shearlings with the aim of selling most at autumn breeding sales. We also take tack sheep from Wales over the winter months."

Mr Smith says he's hoping to put his voucher towards the purchase of several sundry items needed to establish his own flock in the coming months.



Caroline Hall, Powys



A voucher win was a nice surprise for Caroline Hall during a busy time preparing sheep for the upcoming autumn sales. She runs a smallholding in the Cilieni Valley, Sennybridge, and says she was thrilled at the news. She will be putting the money towards nutritional products to use on her newly-established flock of Bluefaced Leicester rams.

She explains: "I started my small ram breeding enterprise after my partner gave me a ewe lamb for my birthday two years ago. I've since expanded the flock, purchasing several breeding ewes and a ram from the NSA Wales & Border Ram Sale. I went down the route of breeding Bluefaced Leicester rams because there is demand for them in this area to produce Mules. With my first progeny ready for sale this year, I'll be taking them to the main NSA sale in Builth Wells. Hopefully it'll be a successful day, but we'll see what happens."



NSA membership

Existing members can pass on this form to be in with the chance of winning a £200 voucher



NSA's 2016 membership recruitment campaign is supported by JG Animal Health, Cox Agri/Ritchey Ltd and Fecpak⁶² 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 wants your views to create post-Brexit sheep industry vision

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive
Whichever position you took in the EU referendum, to remain or leave, few would disagree there were aspects of 'the other side' that weren't attractive.

Whether we were well enough informed, whether people were voting on single issues, or whether such a decision should ever have been left to a referendum is all still important to reflect on – but in terms of the practicalities ahead it is more or less irrelevant. What is absolutely vital now is that we all (as individuals, farming organisations, Government departments and Ministers) work to make sure the challenges that Brexit will create are overcome, and the opportunities it offers are grasped.

European partners

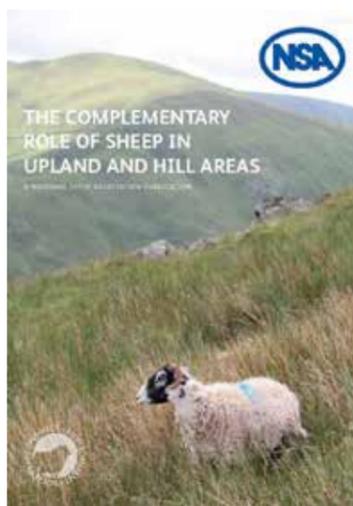
At that more global level, we may be exiting the European Union but we are still European and it will be important to reach out and demonstrate our enthusiasm for working and collaborating in many areas with others. Our decision to leave may yet have profound implications for the rest of the EU, but we will not thrive with a 'Little Britain' mentality. This relates to peace and security too – we have been fortunate enough for most of us to have lived our lives through peacetime in Europe, but security and

This long-planned NSA report has been released at a critical time.



What way now for UK agriculture? NSA is committed to help the sheep sector navigate its journey through the negotiations.

terrorism has become a major challenge with cross nation intelligence essential for



our wellbeing. Political and national conflicts are serious trade and market-affecting factors and do nothing to provide the stability our businesses need.

For agriculture, and of course our focus is on sheep farming in particular, Brexit could well change our course of direction forever. You might read that from a positive or a negative perspective, but what it suggests is that we have the opportunity now to shape the direction of

sheep farming in the UK far more than we have in the past.

Throughout the referendum there was no 'plan B' to help us with our deliberations, and that plan still doesn't exist. But plan B will now be needed and, while it looks likely that we may not trigger Article 50 until next year, and not until this is done will we start a period of a minimum of two years to negotiate and complete our exit, the next nine to 12 months will be a crucial time in setting the foundations for our future and the role that sheep will play in the areas of food, fibre, economy, export and domestic markets, and land management. In essence, the role of sheep in our society.

In the meantime, as far as we can be sure, between now and when we actually complete our exit from the EU, our trade conditions, agricultural programmes

departments will be expected to report into/engage with this unit is as yet unclear.

NSA supports Defra and the devolved nations in continuing to consult on regulations currently being debated in Brussels, such as the EU Animal Health Law. We cannot allow inappropriate regulations to be passed that we have to abide by until we officially leave the union and, after that, which we may have to find satisfactory equivalents to in order to export to the continent.



Farming may not look immediately different, but it soon will.

via the CAP (the Basic Payment Scheme and agri-environment programmes, EU research projects and (not welcome news for many) regulations will remain as they are.

Sheep focus

NSA will be devoting all the resources we can to ensuring ministers and government administrations spend adequate time and effort supporting the UK sheep industry through what will be a volatile time. Even though the immediate currency impacts have helped lift lamb prices post referendum, there will be many other influences in the years ahead. NSA will also be playing its part to offer thinking and approaches that will help frame future public support for farming, food and environment – always in the knowledge that sheep farming in all its diversity is a resource-friendly, renewable and sustainable activity, with economic, environmental and society benefits. For it to deliver it has to be viable and rewarding.

I am confident that a lot of the work we have completed over

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Brexit questions: What NSA is consulting on

- The completion of a 25 year Food and Farming vision across the UK on the basis that if you don't know where you're going you'll never get there.
- Trade access to Europe post-Brexit, but in new markets too. Could wider trade deals negatively affect lamb imports into the UK?
- How the existing NZ sheep meat import quota could/should change. It is currently an EU quota but with a high percentage coming to the UK.
- Investment into our domestic market, and how we maintain and build consumption at home.
- Future farm support approaches and the need for have a level playing field with other countries and/or protect our markets. How can we simplify the costs and bureaucracy of schemes? The future of earned recognition in supporting farm schemes. What is the model of farm support that would drive the things we need to see?
- Greater clarity over the rationale behind payments. If no one understands what they are for how can they ever be justified?
- With regulations and legislation, what is required to protect and what is practical? How can regulation help and not hinder, and again, can earned recognition be used?
- Potential collaboration on research investment, with a focus on ensuring projects result in on-farm change.
- Sharing information with former EU partners, on subjects such as disease surveillance.
- Migrant labour needs and movement of people. Although the sheep sector may appear not to be badly affected on first inspection, we have to consider the reliance of the abattoir sector on foreign labour.
- Challenges to overcome in the devolved nations, such as the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and how the republic being part of the EU trading block affects movements and trade.

recent years will stand us in good stead, the various reports we have produced, our policy positions, our active internal networks via our regional committees and membership, and the external relationships we have built. The most recent example of this is the relaunch of our report on *The complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas*, launched at NSA Sheep 2016. The release of this report had been planned for some time and it coinciding with the referendum result should not suggest NSA is neglecting lowland sheep farming. But few of the issues and topics covered have changed because of Brexit and it is an even more powerful document now it also contains Brexit 'manifesto' suggestions.

NSA consultation

All NSA regions are now consulting among committees on a range of themes that will help us capture all views and positions, also giving our members chance to engage with the process. As we crunch all this feedback during the late summer months, using it to build on existing work, we will formulate clear needs, positions and proposals with the aim of influencing our political leaders and Government departments.

I encourage all NSA members to engage with us in the forthcoming months and help us carve the best possible future for our interests – interests I believe are for the benefit of society as a whole. Contact your Regional Manager or Chairman, or NSA Head Office if you are uncertain about how to go about it. The next few years will be busy but no one can say they won't be interesting.

Find contact details for NSA regions on page 2. Download a copy of the NSA hill and uplands report at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/policy-work or request a copy from Head Office.

NSA continues fight against the lynx

Following the announcement by Lynx UK Trust that it has identified Kielder Forest as a suitable location for releasing lynx into the British countryside, NSA has stressed the need for the correct steps to be taken and any licence application to be fully and independently consulted on.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says: "We are dismayed Lynx UK Trust is still pursuing plans to release lynx, as we do not share their belief that the UK has any suitable locations. We are too small an island and too densely populated."

Lynx UK Trust says it has chosen Kielder due to its greater woodland cover, lower woodland fragmentation and potential impacts on the local economy. However, the site doesn't hold a significantly greater deer population than the second-choice site in Aberdeenshire and certainly has a higher sheep density.

Cross-border

Mr Stocker continues: "As Kielder Forest spans the border between England and Scotland, any licence application to release lynx there would have to be approved by both Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. It would not be appropriate for any trial to go ahead without the express approval of both bodies, which could only happen after a full and independent consultation period that goes over and above what Lynx UK claims to be doing to engage with stakeholders. Such consultation would reveal a wide range of very genuine concerns about introducing the lynx. These



The lynx is not an internationally at-risk species, thriving in counties that, unlike the UK, have areas of wilderness.

are not limited to sheep, but also the fragile balance of economics, environment and rural society, plus the welfare of the lynx themselves."

The next step is a meeting in partnership with the British Deer Society in the Kielder Forest area in mid-August. Both NSA and BDS have published reports

summarising their concerns, with the BDS one focusing on the negative impact on deer stalking opportunities. A more local focus will be added by the fact the specific site is now known and attendees can raise issues particular to the area.

Read the NSA's lynx report at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/policy-work.

Range of policy issues on NSA agenda

After months of work by NSA and NFU, Defra finally agreed to sign off an industry-proposal for changes to the carcass splitting rules in June. A suggested move away from mouthing lambs and using a calendar cut-off date instead was subsequently sent to Brussels – and then a few days later the UK voted to leave Europe.

The fight goes on as we will still operate under EU rules until 2018 and, should the proposal be positively received in Brussels, it would suggest a similar approach would be acceptable to the EU as a buyer of UK lamb once we have left the common market. Depending on the initial response, NSA and NFU will meet with EU representatives for further discussions.

Bluetongue: While it is positive that clinical cases of BTv8 in France remain



NSA encourages members to speak to their vet about bluetongue.

very low, the UK is still on high alert. Now vaccine is available in the UK, NSA urges members to speak to their vets about its potential use in high risk flocks/areas. Random testing of bulk milk in the UK

has been done to better understand the situation, and no evidence has yet been found of circulating disease.

NSA has continued to engage in discussions about zoning in the event of an outbreak and has supported the general consensus that zones should be kept to a minimum. Vaccinated and sero-converted stock would be permitted to move out of a zone, as well as animals going directly to slaughter.

CPH review: Defra has begun the process of contacting farmers in England to ask if they would like to merge holdings ahead of a move from a five-mile to 10-mile movement rule. The process will include removing the last of the remaining CTS links and SOAs. Links to Defra guidance on this can be found on the NSA website. See page 4 for news on similar changes in Wales.

Prattley

Gary Orrells,
Abermule, Powys



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Family focus on quality stock brings breeding, showing and sale successes

By Hannah Park, NSA

Producing, showing and selling quality stock is the clear focus for John Owens and his family in their sheep farming enterprise at Shobdon, Leominster, Herefordshire.

The family has notched up some impressive wins over many years as regulars on the show and sale scene – and earned quite the reputation as breeders of quality commercial rams in the process. They are a longstanding supporter of the annual NSA rams sales at Builth Wells, selling every year since it began in the 1980s and meaning John's recent succession as NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Committee Chairman could not be better suited.

Annual outing

"We are lucky to have such a sale on our doorstep really, with a lot of the auction markets closing," John says. "To have that number of rams available together in one place means buyers can get fixed up on one day. It gives people choice and there's something to suit every system. It's an annual outing for many too, but it is getting harder to keep these kind of things going, what with all the rules and regulations, which is another reason I think the ram sales are so important."

John plans to sell around 80 rams of his own in the main sale this year, to include Suffolk, Beltex, Beltex cross Texel



A pedigree Texel flock is the latest edition to the farm, with high hopes for breeding rams.

John Owens with wife Philippa and daughters Hannah (centre left) and Ellie (centre right).



and Beltex cross Charollais males. These are all breeds kept on the farm, alongside flocks of pedigree Kerry Hills and pedigree Texels.

"Builth is our biggest day of the year; it's our main pay cheque," he says. "We try to offer a full range of rams to suit all kinds of systems and appeal to all."

Total sales for the Owens family this year will be around 140 breeding rams, at the NSA sale and a number of others, as well as privately. The main of these are aimed at the commercial market.

"It is nice to have new buyers, but we do rely on a lot returning and have built up a customer base stretching back to when



Top: A selection of commercial rams, some of which will head to the NSA Wales & Border Main Sale in September. Left: Kerry Hills have long been established on the farm.

my father was here," John says. "Success for us is when a buyer returns because what they bought did them well. They're reared with that goal in mind; fit, fleshed and healthy to go on and work.

"We are firm believers in not pushing a



Top: A selection of commercial rams, some of which will head to the NSA Wales & Border Main Sale in September. Left: Kerry Hills have long been established on the farm.

ram too hard as a lamb and sell all our commercial males as yearlings. Don't get me wrong though, we will feed our rams on grass and a home mix ration before Builth sales, because you have to. It's a catch-22 really. But you've got to have that balance and they've got to look good on the day."

Ram breeding

Woodhouse, the family farm, runs 200 Beltex cross and 160 purebred Suffolk ewes to breed rams from. The best of the females born out of the Beltex crosses are kept and crossed back to either the Beltex, Texel or Charollais, while better Suffolks will be bred pure. Lesser quality females and rams unsuitable for sale are finished, along with lambs from a commercial flock of 200 Texel Mules. Stock is finished off grass and sold liveweight at Ludlow market, although John says he will offer

creep initially to get the first of the lambs away for the stronger, earlier trade.

"We are fussy in what we keep here," he says. "Quality wise, we cull rather hard. I don't believe in keeping a ram if he's not going to make us money. It's better to just get rid and sell as a finished lamb than end up with a lot of output later for us and not a lot of gain for the next man."

Flock health

With so much income riding on the success of the autumn sales, the threat of bluetongue to UK shores has meant careful consideration for John. "I've ordered the vaccine," he says. "We just can't risk not being able to sell these rams if there were an outbreak that meant we weren't allowed to move non-vaccinated stock. We were stuck terribly with Schmallenberg a few years ago, especially in the Suffolks, having chosen not to vaccinate against it initially. It's taken up until now to get those numbers back up, being left with fewer replacements the following year and less to sell than we would have liked the year after."

John is the third generation to farm at Woodhouse, which is spread over 90ha (225 acres) of owned permanent pasture and an additional 50ha (125 acres) of rented land. Most of the work is managed by John and wife Philippa, alongside daughters Hannah (25) and Ellie (20). Hannah also works three days a week for McCartneys in Ludlow while Ellie does seasonal sheep work locally. Tractor work is done by contractors, with around 4ha (10 acres) of swedes and kale grown annually. Around 40ha (100 acres) of grass has been cut so far this year, as much as possible as hay and the remainder as silage, all for home use in the winter.

"The girls are quite keen on showing," says John. "It's in the blood I suppose. They've both had success in the young

handler's section at the Royal Welsh.

Hannah was asked back to judge the class this year and Ellie has already bred and produced her own prize winning Hill Rador ewe. Winning champion-of-champion at the Royal Welsh with a Kerry Hill in 2010 has got to be a highlight for us all."

With Hannah and Ellie so much involved, the family has been expanding the pedigree side of the business and bought 20 in-lamb pedigree Texels from the Cairness flock in Aberdeen in 2014, to add to the farms established flock of 60 pedigree Kerry Hills. Keen to uphold this new Texel flock to the same standard at the other sheep, John carried out some embryo work for the first time last year.



Welsh cobs are kept for riding, breeding and showing.

"It was something we've never done before, but after a recommendation from a friend it seemed like the best and quickest road to go down," he explains. "Having lambed the ewes for one season, we selected what we considered to be the best and used AI to Cormmoorweedhopper, which is full brother to the £85,000 lamb Velvet Jacket, which was purchased jointly with Tom Evans of the Welsh Flock. We're pleased with the result, and I think we will have a flock of ewes uniform in type and conformation.

"The ewes were flushed in October with a 75% take rate, which might be beginners luck I think. We will be looking at lambing them earlier eventually to keep up with



A herd of 50 suckler cows run alongside the sheep enterprise at Woodhouse.

Farm facts

- 91ha (225 acres) of owned permanent pasture and 50ha (125 acres) of rented land.
- Several flocks run separately: 200 Beltex cross ewes, 200 Texel Mules, 160 Suffolks, 60 Kerry Hills and 30 Texels.
- John has been on the NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Committee for many years, serving as Chairman since 2015. He also sits on Kerry Hill Flock Book Society's Council.

other Texel breeders. The plan is to sell some breeding females next year."

Running several separate flocks, John jokes that lambing time can be 'a bit hectic', with each flock being brought inside in separate batches to lamb. "The Suffolks are lambed first, at the beginning of January, followed by the commercial ewes," he explains. "The Kerry Hills and the continental crosses will follow at the end of February."

Other enterprises

The sheep run in tandem with a 50-head suckler herd, made up of 14 pedigree Charollais and the rest continental crosses, all put to the British Blue to calf from mid-February. Weaned calves are sold through Knighton and Ludlow markets, with finished stock also sold through Ludlow, aside from a few pedigree Charollais males sold privately as stock bulls.

Around 10 Welsh cobs are also kept, for riding as well as breeding, with the main of sales either being made privately or at the autumn cob sale at Builth Wells. Some were also shown at Royal Welsh this year, where Cascob Brenin Dafydd, a three-year-old colt, was champion.

"A lot of people have diversified into doing other things with their farm, into poultry enterprises or anaerobic digesters or whatever it might be, but we've chosen to stick with what we know," John says. "I'm not saying we haven't looked into it, but for now we've decided to carry on what we enjoy doing as stock farmers."

Opportunity for sheep farmers to get behind Love Lamb Week

The sheep industry is being urged to come together to promote home-produced lamb during Love Lamb Week, which will run from Thursday 1st to Wednesday 7th September this year.

NSA is throwing its weight behind the campaign, which has been born out of the social media campaign launched last year by NSA member Rachel Lumley.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive said: "Love Lamb Week is a fantastic initiative to increase positive interest in sheep farming and encourage consumption of lamb. We encourage you to get involved by hosting or supporting events in your area and spreading the message on social media. It will not only be an opportunity to highlight much of the existing lamb promotional activity, but also provide an ideal platform to bring farmers, businesses and consumers together in raising the profile of



The NSA Next Generation Ambassadors are excited about Love Lamb Week. Are you?



Ideas and inspiration

- Find @natsheep and @lovebritishlamb on Twitter and Facebook and share Love Lamb content.
- Visit your local farm shop, butcher or pub and highlight Love Lamb Week. Ask them to promote local lamb on the specials board for the week to celebrate.
- See if you can visit your local school with a lamb and hand out recipe leaflets to promote quick and easy keema lamb mince, perfect for the back to school rush.
- Speak to your NSA regional committee about getting involved in any activities they might have planned.
- Tell your story. Post pictures of any activity online, from your delicious lamb dinner to an event in your area. Remember to use the hashtags #lovelambweek and #lovelamb.
- Go to www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lovelamb for more ideas and to download logos, posters, recipe cards and a press release template to share your story with local press.

British lamb during its peak season."

With NSA taking the lead on encouraging farmers to get involved, AHDB Beef & Lamb is playing its part in helping attract the attention of the press and broadcast media, chefs and retailers. The week will coincide with the start of AHDB's lamb keema campaign, which aims to introduce consumers to lamb mince as an easy, low-cost route in to eating lamb. Once consumers develop a taste for keema, the aim is to encourage them to move to higher-value lamb cuts. Other levy bodies have autumn activity planned as well, and the hope is to tie in with this where possible.

NSA's support of Love Lamb Week was announced at NSA Sheep 2016, where the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors showed their enthusiasm, promoting the idea through the event's new NSA Next Generation area. They were joined by James Manning, star of Channel 4's First Time Farmers and BBC2's Harvest Time.

He says: "The natural enthusiasm of

the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors in the run-up to Love Lamb Week shows how much scope there is for this campaign. I love the idea of getting the younger generation involved, whether this be through schools, colleges or universities, to demonstrate the versatility cooking with lamb has to offer. Social media too is such a powerful tool now too, and I'd encourage as many people as possible to post and share Love Lamb Week content so we can spread this message far and wide.

Farmer passion

"The beauty of this is everyone can play a part in getting the Love Lamb Week message out there, however big or small. As farmers we are passionate about the products we produce, so channelling that energy into a strategically planned week dedicated to promotion of British lamb can only be a good thing in highlighting this fantastic product to the masses."

Get involved at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lovelamb.

Revitalisation for wether mutton

For hundreds of years there were two types of mutton in the UK – wether mutton from castrated males slaughtered after a number of wool crops, and ewe mutton from breeding females culled out of flocks.

Bob Kennard, NSA Make More of Mutton Manager, explains: "Many Victorians prized wether mutton above all meats due to its superior eating quality, but it has virtually disappeared since the collapse of the wool price. Today's mutton is almost invariably from ewes – but due to the recent rise in popularity of quality mutton, a few pioneers are returning to wethers in ultra-low input systems."



The Granvilles run Hebridean Blackface wethers to more than two and a half years old.

Outer Hebrides

One example is Sandy and Ali Granville, who run a flock of Hebridean Blackface on their croft on the Isle of Lewis. Mr Granville explains: "Hebridean Blackface wethers are weaned at four months and then, save for being sheared twice, lead an independent life, until they are slaughtered before three years of age. Many of them are kept on offshore islands and see nobody but passing sailors for months at a time.

"These animals have had no feeding save what they forage for themselves on the heather hills. The mutton is slaughtered on the island in the early autumn, hung, cut, vacuum packed, boxed and delivered throughout mainland UK in time for Christmas."

Since appearing on the recent BBC 'This Farming Life' series, Mr Granville says orders 'have gone beserk'. "People all over the country are desperate to get our

meat," he says. "It seems from here that the growth of mutton sales is only limited by the shortage of supply."

Mr Kennard describes the Granvilles as pioneers, but says others are following suit if they can find low cost production systems, such as being paid for conservation grazing. "Wether mutton is becoming a reality again as consumers start to rediscover this almost lost British food icon," he says.



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Tackling lameness on farm - how to judge appropriate use of antibiotics

By Phillipa Page and Fiona Lovatt, Flock Health Ltd

Lameness is still one of the most common issues facing sheep farmers, and an area of great frustration to those who appreciate its significant costs to flock performance but have so far failed to tackle it effectively.

How often have we heard comments such as 'my antibiotics are not working', 'isn't there anything stronger?', 'I've tried everything but nothing seems to work' and 'there'll always be lame sheep'. There are a number of reasons why these comments are all too common.

Sheep Farmer Special Series

This is the first article of three looking at appropriate antibiotic use on sheep farms. 'As little as possible as much as necessary'



Lameness in sheep need to be treated, but in an era of rising resistance, antibiotics must be used responsibly.

Following much research into sheep lameness, we know correct diagnosis is key. Engaging with your vet and developing a farm-specific lameness control plan will include establishing the correct diagnosis and developing an effective control plan.

Every actual case of lameness has significant costs for the individual in terms of pain, stress and loss of performance, and costs for the flock as the disease spreads and further cases develop. This means a major key to success is to prevent new cases occurring, and careful implementation of the five-point plan has been proven to work on many farms.

Prompt treatment

One of the points of the five-point plan is the prompt treatment of clinical cases with an injectable antibiotic. Of course, it is absolutely right to carefully consider every treatment with an antibiotic and to only use when necessary. However, it is also very important to consider that many cases of lameness results from the pain of a bacterial infection of the foot and the only appropriate treatment is the prompt injection of an effective antibiotic. It is essential that every injection is appropriately administered.

It is totally appropriate to treat affected sheep with the correct antibiotic at the correct dose, following the correct diagnosis. It is not appropriate to 'blanket treat' whole flocks with antibiotics. However, in cases of high levels of footrot or contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD), it is appropriate to separate out all sheep with lesions into a 'crock flock' and to treat every one of these sheep at the same time. The five-point plan should

be used with the sound remainder of the flock, with no lame previously-lame sheep mixed in until completely problem-free.

Scald in lambs

Topical spray antibiotics are appropriate to treat lambs with scald lesions and to use in addition to injectable antibiotics for adult sheep to reduce the spread of surface bacteria. Disinfectant footbaths are useful for the treatment of scald in lambs and to help avoid the spread of disease, but they are not effective to treat clinical footrot or CODD. Antibiotic footbaths are not licensed for sheep but your vets may recommend their use

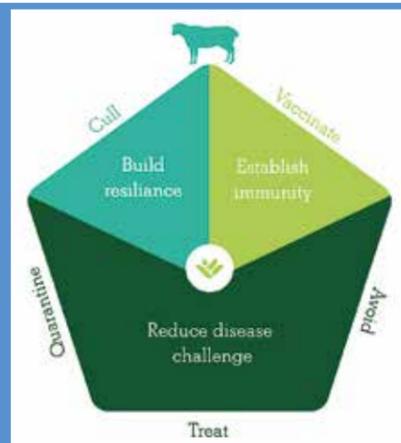
specifically to control the spread of CODD in the face of an outbreak.

The use of antibiotics in the treatment of lame sheep is important to effectively heal infected lesions, but they have no long lasting preventative action so they must be used as part of a combined lameness control plan. By working closely with a good vet on a lameness reduction plan, farmers can both dramatically reduce levels of lameness as well as the quantity of antibiotics required for its treatment.

Turn over for more information on footbathing, plus identifying the difference between footrot and CODD.

The five-point plan

- 1. Treat.** It is essential all lame sheep are caught and treated effectively, which will include use of an injectable antibiotic for footrot and CODD.
- 2. Avoid spread.** The spread of footrot and CODD can be reduced if sheep with lesions are removed from the group. Footbathing and lime spread in high traffic areas can also be helpful.
- 3. Vaccinate.** Use of vaccination has been shown to reduce levels of footrot significantly by protecting individual sheep and lowering the level of challenge on the farm.
- 4. Cull.** Persistent offenders should be treated, noted by good record-keeping and culled (when sound). A recurrently lame ewe costs money and is a constant source of infection.
- 5. Quarantine.** All incoming sheep should be quarantined to avoid the introduction of a different and perhaps



more virulent strain of footrot or CODD. Examine feet and use a footbath during quarantine. Lame sheep should never be added to the flock. Visit www.fhpmmodels.reading.ac.uk/models.htm for a cost-benefit modelling tool for footrot vaccination.

Treating clinically affected sheep

- **Use the correct product for the diagnosis.** In adult sheep, scald is usually a case of early footrot and should be treated as such. The majority of simple antibiotics work very effectively for both, by acting from within, so improvement is often noted following just one injection. CODD often requires a prolonged antibiotic course and there are farms where the simpler antibiotics no longer work and it is essential your vet is actively involved.
- **Treat promptly.** Antibiotics will work most effectively if given as soon as possible after lameness is first noticed and before extensive damage to the horn and deeper tissues has occurred.
- **Dose correctly.** Each product has a different concentration (so 5ml for one is not 5ml for another) and the average ewe bodyweight varies from 50kg to 90kg. Under-dosing is worse than just an ineffective treatment as it increases the chance that bacteria will develop resistance to that product. Carefully read the instructions or discuss with your vet each time.
- **Administer carefully.** Check the route

- of injection (i.e. under the skin or into the muscle) and inject through clean dry skin.
- **Store appropriately.** Do not keep product that is out of date or that has been contaminated by a needle that has been in a sheep. Only ever use a sterile needle to penetrate the bottle.
- **Consider your actions.** Research demonstrates trimming lame sheep can delay healing and that infection can be transferred on the foot trimmers themselves. Where possible, avoid trimming.



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Threat to formalin poses potential risk for range of lameness tools

Sheep farmers would be forgiven for missing the fact that formaldehyde has been reclassified as a carcinogen. Why would the change on 1st January 2016 make any different on UK farms?

Formalin is the saturated (i.e. liquid) form of formaldehyde, which means this vital tool for tackling lames is under serious threat.



Formalin is widely used to control scald in lambs, and is appropriate alongside other controls for footrot in adult sheep.

A Defra briefing explains: "Certain restrictions will apply. It can only be put on the market by a registered supplier. It will have to be labelled appropriately for its chemical categorisation and therefore used in a competent manner. It will not be available for use by amateurs; it will be for professional use only."

As NSA understands the current situation, we are heading in a similar direction to where we are with rodenticides. Rodenticide 'stewardship' means certain products can only be applied by certified individuals who are able to demonstrate compliance. Certificates of competence are available via an online training course, and NSA is very supportive of 'earned recognition' to exempt members of farm assurance schemes.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says: "NSA has responded to this threat by establishing just how important formalin is to sheep farmers and sharing that with other industry groups and Defra. We understand the need for best practice and, potentially, a stewardship scheme similar to the one with rodenticides, but

NSA survey results

Responses from NSA members revealed this picture about formalin.

- 82 respondents out of 88 (93%) had used formalin to footbath sheep, mainly for scald but also for footrot.
- 56% said they used it every time they footbathed sheep.
- 64% said they accurately measured and used it according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 41% said the removal of formalin would cause them 'serious problems' and 44% said it would be a 'manageable problem'.

we have made it clear that we cannot see this product removed from the market completely.

"In addition, this cannot be used to add strength to the argument within the EU that producers should have a 'licence to farm'. Many products used on farms are dangerous, either to the environment or to human health, but the aim should be widely explaining the risks and incentivising best practice."

What is the risk of using formalin?

By Chris Lewis, sheep vet

Formaldehyde is widely used in building materials, steel industry, household products, agriculture, mortuaries, undertakers and pathological labs.

There is a marked variation in people who come into contact with it at a level of 0.1%. Some individuals suffer from watery eyes and a burning sensation in the eyes, nose and throat, as well as coughing, wheezing and skin irritation. Others are totally unaffected at this level of exposure, so it is surmised that there is probably a genetic predisposition to the difference in response.

Exposure rates

In 1980 colonies of rats were exposed to formaldehyde. The rate of exposure was 15 parts per million for six hours a day, five days a week for 16 months. After 16 months three out of 120 rats were diagnosed with nasal cancer, and after 18 months 36 were affected. Based on these findings the USA Environmental Protection Agency classified formaldehyde as a probable carcinogen under conditions of unusually high and prolonged exposure.

The International Agency of Research on Cancer classified it as a likely carcinogen. In 2011, again in the USA and again based on the original rat study, the National Toxicology Program considered formaldehyde to be a carcinogen. This was updated in 2014 following studies that showed a slightly significant bias in populations exposed to those not exposed. The route of exposure was not defined and at least three other studies could find no statistical relationship.

Sheep footbaths using formaldehyde do so as formalin a 10% solution. This is further diluted to a 3% level. Footbathing of sheep in formalin is usually carried out infrequently, probably six times a year at most. Hardly comparable to what the rats were subject to.

Reports in Medical Oncology state formalin is not a potent carcinogen. More recently a Health and Safety leaflet for foundry workers makes no mention of formaldehyde as a hazard.

In the case of shepherds using formalin footbaths, if you suffer the discomforts outlined above you should make other arrangements. It is prudent



Masks have become commonplace when dipping and are recommended when using formalin too.

when making up footbaths and running sheep through that a face mask is used, even if the operator appears unaffected.

Formalin at 3% is still one of the most effective ways, within a foot care program, to achieve excellent results. Sheep should not be footbathed in a stronger solution, nor footbathed unless done so as part of a comprehensive programme.

CODD and footrot similarities and differences are critical for control

Lameness remains a major problem within the UK sheep industry despite major advances in recent years in controlling infectious causes, in particular footrot. Recent evidence suggests that while lameness has reduced on many farms, average levels are still above the industry target of less than 5% within an affected flock.



Katie Brian of AHDB Beef & Lamb says: "Many farmers have found recent advice, including the five-point plan for controlling footrot, is useful and cost effective in focusing their time and resources."

A key part of this plan is the prompt treatment of individual infected sheep using injectable antibiotics, for example oxytetracyclines. "This is practically difficult on more extensive farms, particularly when it comes to identifying individually lame sheep and then catching and treating them promptly," adds Katie.

"Tailoring a lameness control plan to suit an individual farm situation is therefore important in order for it to remain effective." Despite the success of lameness control plans, problems within the industry still persist, in particular when identifying and tackling contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD). While CODD is now more widely recognised by producers and vets, it is still often misdiagnosed as footrot.

Joe Angell of Liverpool University comments: "CODD is a recently recognised but severe form of infectious foot disease. Footrot is present at some level on nearly all farms in the UK and, until recently, CODD was present on only a small number. However, recent surveys suggest approximately half of UK sheep producers are identifying cases of CODD, with some farms experiencing major problems

inspecting every foot of every sheep that arrives on farm. Around 30% of early CODD lesions do not result in lameness, so using lame animals as a marker to spot affected individuals, potentially resulting in the spread of disease to an otherwise unaffected flock."

Once bought-in sheep have been checked over, they should spend a minimum of 28 days in isolation away from the main flock, to protect from all diseases, including CODD. Similar



CODD starts as a small red sore in the front and top of the hoof (left), later under-running the hoof horn capsule until it detaches (right).



affecting up to 30% of the flock at a time."

In a recent survey, the majority of sheep farmers who knew how CODD had arrived on their farm reported they had unwittingly purchased an infected animal that had

Tackling CODD

- Learn to recognise CODD and distinguish it from footrot.
- Develop biosecurity and treatment plans in conjunction with a vet.
- Check and isolate all bought-in stock and buy from a flock with known health status.
- If disease is present on farm, work strategically to reduce it.
- Promptly treat and isolate infected animals.
- Cull non-responsive cases.
- Start by working to control footrot, as the two are closely related.

spread it to the rest of the flock.

"It is likely there are still many farms without CODD, so it is important to adopt rigorous biosecurity practices in order to keep the disease out," says Mr Angell.

"It is also important that new animals are bought from flocks of known health status. As an additional check, producers should carry out a visual

inspection of every foot of every sheep that arrives on farm. Around 30% of early CODD lesions do not result in lameness, so using lame animals as a marker to spot affected individuals, potentially resulting in the spread of disease to an otherwise unaffected flock."

Once bought-in sheep have been checked over, they should spend a minimum of 28 days in isolation away from the main flock, to protect from all diseases, including CODD. Similar

practices should be adopted when sheep return from over-wintering.

"It appears that controlling footrot is a benefit in terms of controlling CODD," says Mr Angell, commenting on recent Liverpool University work showing strong links between the presence of footrot and CODD. "Therefore, employing strategic and effective footrot control is the first stage in controlling CODD on farms. CODD-causing bacteria are only sensitive to certain antibiotics, so developing a close relationship with your vet is also essential, to ensure effective and responsible antibiotic use.

Antibiotic use

The most up-to-date study on eliminating CODD and footrot using an approach where all sheep on a farm – healthy and diseased – were injected with antibiotic, showed this was an unreliable approach to eliminating clinical disease. The study failed to eliminate footrot from any of the flocks on trial and only a few flocks successfully eliminated CODD. One flock from the control group eliminated CODD by controlling footrot through preventive strategies, prompt treatment and then isolating clinical cases.

"Lameness causes serious financial losses to the sheep industry," concludes Miss Brian. "It may not be possible to eradicate lameness entirely, but producers who understand the condition and its many and varied causes can reduce the physical and financial impacts of having lame animals on farm."

Download the AHDB 'Reducing Lameness for Better Returns' manual at www.beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk.

Picture credit: Liverpool University

Healthier flock built on the back of concerted lameness control

By Joanne Briggs, NSA
With a firm focus on buying replacements with a high health status, Roddy Marshall has managed to build up sheep numbers within his Aberdeenshire-based flock over many years without the problems buying in stock can sometimes cause.

He has slowly replaced his father's traditional Scotch Halfbred flock at Meikle Haddo, Newburgh, Ellon, with Shetland cross Cheviots sourced directly from Shetland, which is renowned for its zero tolerance on disease. Roddy has a personal preference for this type of ewe, but also a lot of respect for how the Shetland breeders pay attention to health.

He says: "The sheep come to me in September as gimmers, so are 16-17 months old when they go to the tup for the first time. We lamb in late April and early



Roddy Marshall (pictured left) says the flock is thriving due to sourcing of high health replacements and tackling the reservoir of lameness.

May, so there's enough grass about, and the Shetland Cheviots are quite small, milky ewes that suit this.

"On the Shetland Islands they are very particular and anything that arrives on the boat with CLA, for example, gets turned straight back again. That's great for people like me buying replacements. There's no scab or enzootic abortion to worry about."

The Shetland Cheviots are crossed to a Charollais, and for many years Roddy has made the most of the Ingram family's Logie Durno breeding work to purchase tups. Like the Shetland sellers, it is their approach of provide buyers with healthy-assured stock that attracted him. More recently, Roddy has also bought Logie Durno hybrid breeding ewes, with the intention of increasing ewe prolificacy and lamb carcase size. "The flock is still four-fifths Shetland Cheviots but I can see the health benefits of breeding my own replacements and having a closed flock," he says. "But I don't want to lose the hybrid vigour of the Shetland Cheviot so I think we'll end up with half and half."

Flock expansion

The flock is bigger at the current time than it's ever been, as Roddy took on a fulltime member of staff two years ago and increased sheep numbers above his usual 1,500. However, he readily admits expansion has gone too far, with increased input costs not being matched by increased output. He has decided 1,500-1,800 ewes is right for the farm and will lamb some older ewes earlier next year, to sell with lambs at foot. The plan instead is to intensify production, by giving ewes opportunity to conceive more, reducing neonatal mortality by lambing inside, and boosting growth by using grass better.

Previously only gimmers and ewe lambs were lambed inside, but a new building is going up to house the whole flock. Roddy says: "It can be really disheartening to go outside in a morning and find lambs dead that you could have saved. An extensive system can work well but we're less than a mile from the coast and exposed to strong winds off the North Sea. The shed will reduce losses, but with ewes still going out

during the day to get a bite of grass.

"We'd let some of the grass get a bit old and a couple of wettish back ends had meant it got poached and tramped in areas," says Roddy, who wants to maximise his own pasture in lieu of any extra grazing being available locally. "We ploughed and re-sowed 40 acres in the spring but it can get dry here in May, which would limit germination, so I also decided to do 40 acres in early July, stitching in a grass mix. We will continue to set stock the farm but keep more ewes to the acre and make better use of the grass we have."

Knowing hygiene and management will be crucial in the move from indoor to outdoor lambing, Roddy also wants to stay on the ball with general health around the year. He will continue to use Glenythan Vet Group at Ellon, working with them on his flock health plan to meet farm assurance standards, and ensuring they are part of the wider team of advisors he uses. He particularly mentions Sandy Carnie, the Suitably Qualified Person at Towns and Carnie agricultural merchants.

"I'm not a proud person," Roddy says. "If I need advice then I'll ring and ask."

He is proud to have successfully tackled a rumbling lameness problem in the flock three years ago.

"We were using bottles of penicillin like it was going out of fashion and I used to take antibiotic spray with me where I went," Roddy says, blaming footrot and contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) as the causes. "Whenever we brought stock in for weaning or worming I always had to inject and trim. We only had a bit of seasonal help at lambing time back then, so it was far too time consuming and a massive chore." The industry-approved five-point plan for lameness control is: culling badly or repeatedly infected animals; quarantining incoming animals; promptly treating clinical cases; preventing spread of infection, particularly when handling and gathering; and vaccinating where appropriate - see page 30.



A typical Charollais cross lamb, out of a Shetland Cheviot ewe.

tupping, with one dose for ewes and two for rams. Ewes are also given a multi-vit drench, wormed and fluked and go onto bare pasture before being flushed for the tup. Silage is fed through the winter, alongside turnips if needed, and extra energy provided before lambing with a liquid feed and ewe rolls.

On the previous outdoor-lambing system, lambs were gathered at a few weeks old for tail docking, dosed for worms and coccidiosis and vaccinated for pasteurilla and clostridial diseases. For the last two years all lambs were sold at stores in the following September and October. Even with numbers being cut back, Roddy says he will stick with this approach in order to give the grass a rest and the ewes the best chance of conceiving and rearing lambs the next season.

"Sheep seem to thrive on this land but I need to get the scanning rate up a bit," says Roddy, explaining it has dropped to 160% from a high of 180%, due to the flock size increasing over the last couple of years. "We've been vastly overstocked and the ewes are not really achieving what I think they should. There is a happy medium and I think we can maintain the health status and produce more, bigger lambs with the changes we're making."

Vaccination

Roddy says vaccination has been vital at Meikle Haddo, but only as part of the solution, not a 'golden bullet'. He says: "We always segregated any really bad cases of CODD and, if they were old ewes, we'd cull them straight away. If they were younger we'd give them two chances, as we would with footrot. We still go through the ewes at weaning time and cull for bad udders, for example, but we don't see the lame ones we used to."

"We'll have to keep on top of hygiene once we have the new shed, but for the ones we already lamb inside we don't get any lameness as there is no host for it now. It's the same outside when the lambs get older. When grass gets long we used to get scald, but not now because they can't get it from their mothers."

Stock is vaccinated for footrot before

Farm facts

- Main farm of 115ha (280 acres) with a second block of 60ha (140 acres) 11 miles away.
- Business managed by Roddy, with the support of wife Fiona. Employee Pam Sutherland did 12 lambing seasons on the farm before starting fulltime two years ago.
- Flock increased from 1,500 ewes in the last two years, but returning to 1,500-1,800.
- Mainly Shetland cross Cheviot females, put to the Charollais, but with an increasing number of Lleyn-derived hybrid females being introduced.
- Also 60 Angus cows, which may increase in the future with a new shed and fewer ewes.

Farmer-vet case studies

This feature on Roddy Marshall marks the end of a special Sheep Farmer series covering six editions of the magazine. Each instalment featured a farmer taking a proactive approach to flock health, showcasing successful farmer-vet working relationships.

The farm features have been pulled together into a handy booklet (pictured), which was launched at NSA Sheep 2016 with a special seminar led by four of the farmers and vets involved.

The seminar concluded closer working relations between vets and sheep farmers can pay dividends in flock health, improving productivity and giving reassurance on day-to-day decision making.

Gloucestershire-based sheep farmer Pauhla Whittaker said securing the services of Phillipa Page of Wood Veterinary Group had helped tackle a raft of background issues. These included watery mouth, abortion, mastitis, parasites, orf and trace element

deficiencies.

"Never underestimate the value of moral support," said Mrs Whitaker, who added the vet's working knowledge of the farm had helped identify what action to take swiftly to limit the impact of relapses in disease.

Andy Dyer of Lazonby Estate Farms, Cumbria, suggested a close working relationship with Eva De Vries of Coomara Vets dispelled a myth that medicine bills might rise. He said: "Our figures suggest spend on medicine in 2015 was £5.25/ewe against industry figures from SAC of £5.36/ewe."

Both Pauhla and Andy said the vet provided 'a fresh pair of eyes' on health matters, which was valued equally alongside the setting up a flock health plan to formalise decision making and getting regular updates on new medicines.

Contact NSA Head Office for a Healthy Flocks booklet, or find the seminar details in the "Attractions" section at www.sheepevent.org.uk to download a copy.



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RAPPA

Industry response is needed as cases of MV continue to increase

By Brian Hosie, SAC Consulting
Despite being introduced into Great Britain in the 1970s, it is only in the last five years that we have started to diagnose maedi visna in significant numbers in commercial flocks.

Between 1995 and 2010 disease prevalence increased from one flock in every 70 (1.4%) to one flock in 35 (2.8%). More worrying still, flocks with MV saw a doubling in the number of infected sheep during that time too.

The serious impact on the livelihoods of the family families affected means I believe all flock owners now need to take the threat seriously and take action to prevent it impacting on their businesses.

At particular risk are highly productive crossbred flocks producing finished lambs and sheep milk units. The first indication is a few ewes being thin, breathless and sometimes lame. Ewe mortality rates increase slowly and lambing percentages



A pen of MV-infected Mule ewes, pictured before the whole flock was slaughtered.

and growth rates gradually decline. Consistent with its nature as a slow viral disease, MV is usually only identified many years after its introduction, by which time it is well established in a flock.

Most outbreaks have been in the Midlands and the south of England, but disease occurs throughout Britain, including in the north of England, Wales and Scotland. Although most farmers do not wish to be identified, we are grateful to those who are willing to share their experiences.

For example, MV was first diagnosed by post mortem of two ewes in a flock of 350 North Country Mules kept at Brooksby, Melton College, Leicestershire. One group of sheep was culled but soon wasting, deaths, mastitis and arthritis was widespread in ewes, coupled with poor lamb growth.

Testing revealed 58% of the flock was MV positive so everything was culled and the flock restocked with accredited Lleyns. The estimated cost of was £10,000 or £30 per ewe.

More recently, the owner of a flock of

530 Mule, Suffolk cross and Texel cross ewes in North Devon noted more ewe deaths around lambing, thin ewes, barren ewes, a lack of milk, poor lamb growth rates and a heavier culling rate. Blood testing of 48 ewes found 23 were MV positive, and good on-farm records showed 24% of ewes were dead, barren or culled at lambing because they had no milk. The rearing percentage was only 104% and this flock may be culled as it is no longer financially viable.

Concerted action

It is clear MV is causing financial hardship on many farms, and that it will continue to spread unless the sheep industry takes concerted action. The onus is on breeders to join an accreditation scheme and sell healthy stock – and on commercial buyers to buy accredited stock rather than replacements of unknown status from the non-accredited ring. Vets should also test for it so flock owners know their MV status.

More information on MV accreditation at www.psghs.co.uk.

Maedi visna facts

- **Symptoms:** Long incubation period and symptoms that are slow to develop. These include weight loss, breathlessness, mastitis, reduced milk yield and swollen joints. Production losses may include poor lambing percentages and reduced lamb weaning weights.
- **Transmission:** Nose-to-nose contact, colostrum and infected equipment.
- **Diagnosis:** Blood test or post mortem. To blood test, select 12 thinner or older ewes and consider looking for liver fluke, worms, trace element deficiencies, Johne's and OPA/Jaagsiekte, as well as MV. Cost is around £37+VAT plus vet time.
- **Cure:** Fatal; no cure or vaccine.
- **Prevention:** Keep flocks clear by only purchasing replacements from MV-accredited flocks and avoiding contact with infected stock. Quarantine and test all purchased stock before mixing and secure boundary fences.

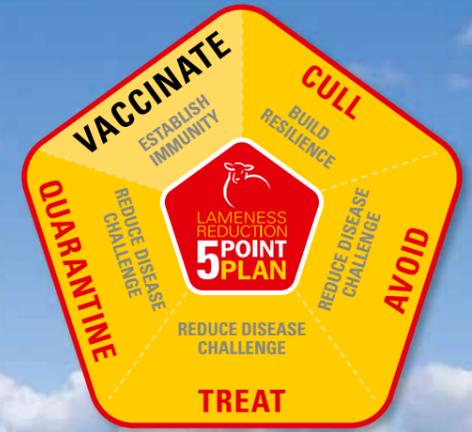
Recent MV outbreaks

Location	Breed	Incidence
Leicestershire	North Country Mules	58% tested positive. Flock culled and restocked with MV-accredited ewes.
North Devon	Mule, Suffolk x and Texel x	24% ewe losses. 23 of 48 ewes tested positive.
Derbyshire	Blueface Leicester breeder	11 of 26 tup lambs (42%) aged 6-7mths tested positive in pre-export test before despatch to Ireland.
Lancashire	Masham	4 of 6 thin ewes with lower lambing percentages and small lambs with poor weaning weights tested positive. Reduced flock productivity of 20-40% (£30-£50k/year).
Leicestershire	North Country Mules	445 of 800 ewes (56%) tested positive after cases of ill thrift, mastitis, lameness and abortion. 9 of 150 ewes and rams (6%) for export tested positive, plus 7 of 26 three/four-crop ewes (27%).
South East England	Romney	MV confirmed by post mortem and then 30% of flock tested positive.
Central Scotland	Lleyn and Lleyn cross Texels	MV found in Mule, Texel and Blackface ewes and Bluefaced Leicester stock tups after flock affected by
North of England	Mule breeder	10% ewe mortality / 8-10% culled for mastitis / joint ill in lambs.

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Limited understanding of OPA but growing concern over prevalence

By Dr Chris Cousens,
Moredun Research
Institute

Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma (OPA, or Jaagsiekte) is often described as an iceberg disease, because only a small proportion of cases are ever reported or seen by vets.

UK prevalence data is incomplete and, even though the majority of flocks and sheep do not have the disease, OPA is considered by many to be a major threat to the sheep industry. Most affected flocks lose 1-5% of adult sheep to OPA a year, which is a continuous

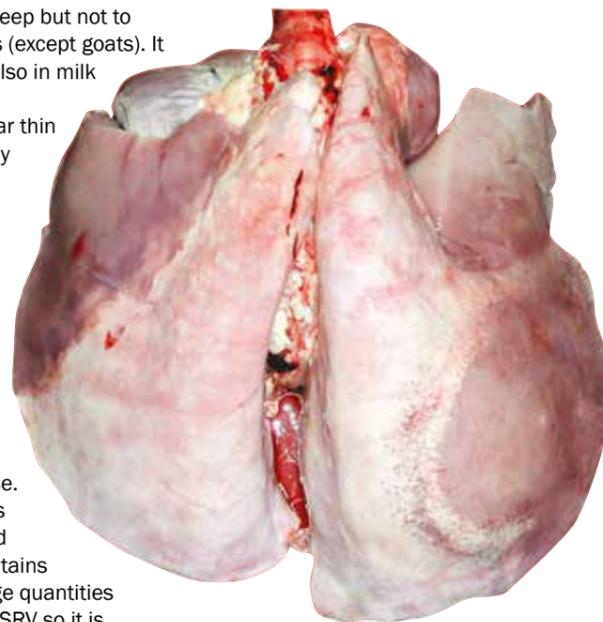
drain on profitability and an animal welfare issue. But we know some flocks suffer very large losses, with more than 20% of sheep dying in one year.

OPA is a cancer caused by a virus (Jaagsiekte sheep retrovirus or JSRV). This virus causes cells in the lung to become cancerous and these cells then produce more virus, which can infect new areas of the lung, or new sheep.



OPA spreads between sheep but not to humans or other animals (except goats). It is spread in the air and also in milk or colostrum.

Sheep with OPA appear thin with increased respiratory effort. They may survive for many weeks after the signs of disease appear, or die suddenly. Often large amounts of clear or frothy fluid may come from the affected lungs, appearing as discharge dripping or pouring from the



These OPA-affected lungs show dark areas containing tumours and an enlarged right lung that is affected more than the other.

possible from clinical signs. The method can reliably detect OPA tumours of 2cm or more at the ventral surfaces of the lungs. However, it will never guarantee that a sheep is free of OPA because it cannot detect the very smallest tumours.

We are now using the ultrasound technique to determine whether screening flocks over several years and removing all sheep identified with OPA will successfully reduce or eliminate the disease in these flocks. Other aspects of our research include studies on how the virus is able to cause OPA and whether we can identify genes associated with susceptibility or resistance to OPA in sheep.



Ultrasound scanning is being used for on-farm screening of OPA.

Recent OPA evidence

- A slaughterhouse study recorded OPA in 31 out of 3,385 (0.9%) cull sheep from England, Scotland and Wales.
- A fallen stock study in Northern England found 5.6% of sheep (n=106) had gross lesions of OPA.
- A two year survey (2008-2010) of 125 flocks in Scotland showed 11% of flocks may carry the virus. A later disease surveillance report (2013) suggests the number of cases is higher, as 53% of sheep over two years of age recorded as dying of pasteurilla/mannheimia pneumonia also had OPA.

nose. This fluid contains large quantities of JSRV so it is important to remove affected sheep from the flock and disinfect this material, as the virus can survive for several weeks in a cool, wet environment. It is important to note that the early stages

of OPA cannot be clinically diagnosed as the tumours are too small to cause any breathing problems, even though they are able to produce virus which can infect other sheep.

Diagnostics

Moredun's current research is predominantly aimed at developing tests to diagnose early OPA in order to enable test-and-cull in affected flocks, to provide assurance that sheep to be purchased do not carry the disease, and eventually to eradicate the disease. One project is trying to develop a method to diagnose OPA using tumour biomarkers. This is a cutting edge technology in human medicine that should also prove valuable in the veterinary field. At the current stage we are measuring how gene expression is altered in the sheep lung during OPA, which will identify new biomarkers of the disease.

At the other end of the scale, we are working with Dr Phil Scott of Capital Veterinary Services using the well-established technique of ultrasound to diagnose OPA at an earlier stage than is

New biosecurity poster

NSA members will find a booklet provided with this magazine, produced by Moredun and the Crown Estate, Scotland, about biosecurity for key livestock diseases, including OPA. It provides best practice information for important endemic disease affecting sheep and beef, and is complemented by a pull-out-wall poster. You receive this as all NSA members are also associate members of Moredun. You can support Moredun further by becoming a full member. Details on 01314 455111 or www.moredun.org.uk.



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Potential for more flocks to find easy routes into technology use

Use of new technology, such as digital weighing equipment, EID stick readers and smart phone apps, offers the sheep industry a significant opportunity to improve bottom line profitability, according to Paul Hunter, Allflex Technical Sales Manager.

Pointing to the latest lamb carcass data collated by AHDB Beef & Lamb as one indicator of the scope for improvement, he says tried and tested systems now provide easy access to a more precise approach to management and marketing that will pay dividends for many.

Mr Hunter says: "The data shows more than 43% of finished lambs sold across Great Britain in 2015 failed to achieve target market specification. Of these, around two-thirds are too fat and a good proportion will be overweight." See table.

"These out-of-specification lambs are not achieving their potential market value and may even be attracting penalties. In a lot of cases they are being kept on farm too long – perhaps in the expectation of better prices – but feeding lambs for longer and then being penalised for excess weight, or because they are over-fat, is rarely good practice."

Regular weighing

Mr Hunter says incorporation of even the simplest weigh crates into sheep handling systems would be a good starting point for many, allowing growth rates to be monitored regularly.

"Most sheep handling systems are now available with weighing equipment as an optional extra, but the majority are sold without it," he says. "The implication is that a lot of sheep farmers simply don't see the necessity of regular weighing."

"Having integral weighing equipment means it will be easily portable and practical to use as part of the system, so it becomes quick and easy to check-weigh lambs when doing other jobs such as tailing or drenching."

While the market value achieved for finished lambs is the most tangible

measure of success, Mr Hunter believes a mindset of guessing weights – rather than accurately weighing and recording – has the potential to create problems throughout the business.

"Drenching is another area where greater precision achieved through



accurately weighing lambs will pay dividends," he adds. "Significant variance from the recommended dose rates will either mean drench is being wasted or – in the case of under-dosing – the product may not be fully effective, which can increase the risk of wormer resistance developing."

Other management decisions also benefit from more regular and accurate weighing, plus recording of information, such as feeding and breeding selection. It is about selecting a system to suit requirements, as the range of technology is now very broad and far-reaching.

Entry-level digital weighing systems are a significant step on from the traditional strain gauge, allowing greater speed and accuracy, according to Mr Hunter, while taking the next step in technology allows animal identification and weight recording, with instant growth rate information being available. Stick readers can be easily integrated with digital weighing equipment, with information transferrable directly to dedicated apps on smart phones or tablets.

"For anyone not used to digital technology it can seem daunting and this may well be a barrier for some farmers,"



Adaption kits to 'digitalise' traditional strain gauge weigh crates (left) can be a good starting point, followed by integrating stick readers with digital equipment and smart phones (above).

he says. "My advice is to start with a relatively basic system and then build in as much sophistication as you need. It is possible, for example, to use an adaption kit to convert a traditional strain gauge weigh crate into a digital system – a good starting point perhaps for some.

"There is then the potential to use a stick reader in tandem with this digital weighing system to record information such as growth rates, treatments and so on. The stick reader can work as a stand-alone device, with its own data recording facility and display, and it can also be linked to a smart phone, tablet or computer via a bluetooth connection.

Unlimited potential

"There really is unlimited potential, with top-of-the-range systems allowing as many as 100 pieces of data per animal to be recorded and functions such as automatic shedding gates being built into handling systems. For many, though, simply maintaining a discipline of more regular and accurate weighing, and using the information to make more precise management decisions, will pay dividends."

As a business investment, Paul Hunter suggests modern weighing and recording technology offers a return very quickly in most cases. "The potential gains over a few years from better lamb marketing and more precise decision making in feeding and breeding selection will far exceed the cost of upgrading handling and weighing systems in the majority of cases," he concludes. "The key is not to be phased by technology but to embrace it."

Efficiency measures help flock cut costs and reduce emissions

Achieving improved performance through measurement and management can reduce days to slaughter and costs, says Julie Finch, HCC Corporate Strategy Manager.



A weaned 20kg lamb achieving as little as an improved 50g/day growth can be finished 20 days sooner, which has the potential to lower feed, veterinary, labour and time costs, as well as help to meet climate change objectives.

Dr Finch explains: "There's considerable pressure on agriculture to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but improving efficiency is a win-win solution. Sending lambs to market more quickly means less financial input for farmers, and also fewer emissions."

Knowledge exchange

This year has seen a renewed focus by HCC on bringing the results of academic research directly to farmers. The new 'ON-Farm' workshops have brought experts from areas such as genetics, grassland management and environmental sustainability together with farmers and agriculture students. HCC also runs specialist 'selection for slaughter' courses, helping farmers meet market requirements, as well as sessions on ram fertility at this year's summer shows.

One farmer who is already implementing many measures to increase efficiency is Huw Rees Jones of Glanyrafon Farm, Painscastle, Powys. Glanyrafon is a 1,200-head improved upland sheep farm. The flock consists of 1,000 commercial ewes from an Aberdale base and 200 pure Texels. Some Romney cross ewe lambs were introduced for the first time this year.

Grassland management

Mr Jones maintains a forensic focus on performance in managing his grassland, annually reseeding a percentage of the farm, and this year he has put down a plantain and Italian ryegrass ley. He aims to introduce a new farm software system to incorporate EID and enable him to further monitor his stock.

He says: "I'm hoping, with the new software system in place,

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Huw Rees Jones (pictured left) has found a number of measures have come together to improve flock performance, including genetics and grassland management.



to monitor around 800 lambs and their growth rates on the different leys. I will then be able to tailor my reseeding decisions around this data. Regular weighing gives me access to a mass of information about my ewes and rams."

Genetics also play an integral role in overall farm outcomes, such as sustainability and increased profitability. The Texel flock provides terminal sires for Glanyrafon's commercial flock as well as producing yearlings for the summer

ram sales. The rams produced from the farm come from the strongest genetics as the rams are run on a 'mob' basis; anything that falls short of the required performance criteria during its first winter is culled. This ensures the remaining rams are resilient, able to perform at tugging time and require little management intervention during the following winter.

Ram selling

Mr Jones says it is important to the business that these rams can perform well and produce good fleshing lambs that meet their market criteria. "It is very important to me that farmers who buy my rams are confident in their purchase and will come back again next time to buy more" he adds.

A close eye is kept on the maternal breeding lines within the Texel flock. As the flock is largely managed by one labour unit it is important ewes can lamb with little assistance and yet are able to produce strong fast-growing lambs.

Mr Jones explains: "The commercial flock is largely Aberdale-based due to its proven high prolificacy. A maternal Texel line complements the existing genetics and can help provide higher conformation carcasses especially for the live market."

The flock lambs in three batches, the Texels at the beginning of March, the main commercial flock from the beginning of April and the flock breeding ewe replacements from mid-April. Monitoring the flock has shown that introducing more prolific genetics has produced an increase of 20% more lambs with the same production costs. Scanning percentage has increased to around 190% flock average, but this comes with the need to manage the increased risk of triplets.

According to Dr Finch, spreading innovations such as those in operation at Glanyrafon Farm more widely will be a key part of HCC's work in the coming years. She says: "There's a huge amount of good work being done by people in the industry. It shows careful monitoring and adopting best practice across a range of areas can make a real difference to flock efficiency."

GB lambs carcass weights

	Sample size	Mean weight	In-spec carcasses*
England	46.9%	19.7kg	54.0%
Scotland	3.5%	19.6kg	66.4%
Wales	49.6%	19.6kg	58.9%
GB	100%	19.6kg	56.8%

* Target specification is E, U, R conformation and 1, 2, 3L fat class.

Source: AHDB Jan-Dec 2015 using 146,424 carcasses (25% of total).

Use the whole toolbox to guard your flock from liver fluke losses

By Liz Howse,
Penbode Vets,
Devon



The diagnosis and control of liver fluke can be a challenge with changing epidemiology, emergence of resistance and a need for an understanding of its complicated lifecycle. However, by understanding these factors, a sensible liver fluke control plan can be proposed and implemented on farm to minimise the potentially devastating effects of this parasite on your livestock.

Liver fluke is a flatworm, *Fasciola hepatica*, which can infect many species including sheep, cattle, humans, deer, goats and horses. The adults live in the bile ducts of the liver and shed eggs which are passed in the faeces. In warm and wet weather these eggs hatch on the pasture to release mobile miracidia. Miracidia migrate to find a snail host (the mud snail, *Galba truncatula*) where further development and multiplication occurs.

Eventually the next lifecycle stage, cercariae, are released from the mudsnail. These encyst on pasture to form metacercariae. Metacercariae are ingested and immature fluke migrate to, and through, the liver towards the bile ducts where adults can be found.

Infestation

The disease caused in sheep depends on the number of metacercariae ingested and over what period of time. Large numbers in a short time period means many immature fluke travel through the liver six to eight weeks later; this can lead to acute disease with sudden deaths. Subacute disease is seen slightly later on with a lower infection rate and can result in signs such as breathlessness, lethargy and anaemia. In smaller burdens the sheep may show few signs of infection until 10 to 12 weeks post infection. By this time adult fluke are in the bile ducts causing chronic disease,



Flukicide choice for treating sheep must be targeted, as resistance is developing.

which presents itself as poor performance, bottle jaw and thin sheep.

Liver fluke infestation can be hard to detect in a live sheep but suspected infection may be confirmed by blood tests or faecal tests – see panel. Post mortem inspections can diagnose death from fluke and abattoir feedback is useful to indicate the level of disease in a flock. Much of an on-farm control strategy comes from combining the current situation with knowledge of the farm and local area, historic problems, weather conditions, time of year and the likely stages of infestation based on these factors.

Hatching of fluke eggs and snail multiplication varies year on year depending on conditions. Snails can be infected in the summer or, less commonly, over winter. The mud snail thrives in wet, muddy and slightly acidic soils at temperatures above 10°C. Thus it is more common in wet areas of the country with high summer rainfall. It can exist in permanent habitats such as streams and pools, and temporary habitats such as poached fields.

Warm and wet summers mean maximal snail activity and high numbers of infective metacercariae in the late summer to early autumn. Dry summers usually mean

lower levels of pasture contamination. Snails infected over winter can sometimes cause heavy pasture contamination and significant disease in the spring.

Detecting liver fluke

- **Faecal coproantigen ELISA test.** This is a fairly new test that detects secretions of living fluke in the sheep's faeces. A positive result therefore means current infection. Samples need to be sent to the lab on the day of collection.
- **Fluke eggs in a faecal sample.** This indicates the presence of adult fluke, but does not pick up early infections, and egg secretion is intermittent so false negative results can occur. Occasionally eggs can be found after treatment in the absence of infection, if they are stored in the gall bladder.
- **Blood tests.** These can show signs of liver damage and the presence of antibodies to fluke. However, liver damage is not unique to fluke and antibody levels stay high for months after an infection, so positive results may not mean current infection.

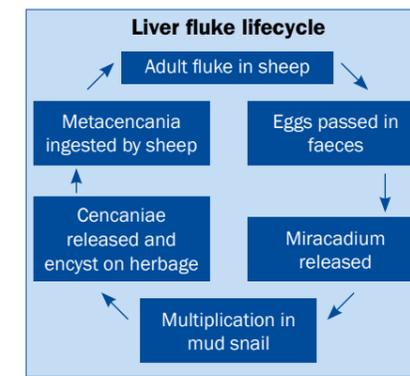
The most common situation is where summer infection of snails leads to ingestion of metacercariae in the late summer or early autumn. This means adult fluke will be present in the sheep by late autumn to early winter and that pasture will be contaminated by eggs.

Control is based around two main factors: reducing the intake of metacercariae, and reducing pasture contamination. Not all measures to reduce the intake of metacercariae are practical in every situation, but when implemented they can reduce reliance on flukicide treatments. There needs to be some

knowledge of the snail habitats on the farm. Wet boggy areas can be fenced off and the wettest fields avoided from July onwards. Pasture management to reduce poaching of fields and draining areas of land can also help to decrease snail habitats. On smallholdings, geese have been known to help by eating snails.

To reduce pasture contamination, delayed turnout could reduce pasture contamination. But in reality, if infestation is present farmers often have to resort to strategic use of flukicides. Treatments during winter to catch residual infection mean sheep should not be shedding liver fluke eggs back onto pasture in the spring.

There are various flukicide treatments available to kill different stages of



liver fluke – see table – and choices should be targeted because there is resistance developing to these products. Triclabendazole has known resistance.

Careful use of these products is vital if we are to have sustainable control of liver fluke in the future. Combination products should generally be avoided unless worm treatments are needed at the same time as the fluke treatment. Bear in mind that immunity to fluke is very poor so control will be needed year on year.

With milder winters and wetter summers, the time at which we typically see clinical disease seems to be coming earlier in the season. By combining fluke forecasts, abattoir feedback, diagnostics and knowledge of your farm and its history, you and your vet should be able to produce an adaptable and sustainable fluke control programme for your farm.

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Lifecycle stages killed by different flukicides

Active ingredient	Lifecycle stage killed	Example of use
Triclabendazole	All stages down to two-day-old larvae	At risk periods of acute liver fluke, six to eight weeks after ingestion of large numbers of metacercariae e.g. in the autumn after a wet summer.
Nitroxynil or closantel	Adults down to six/seven-week old larvae	Where the risk of acute disease is lower but production losses are expected from larvae in lower numbers e.g. six weeks after the temperature falls in the winter, typically around Christmas.
Albendazole or oxclozanide	Adults only	Where adults are the only stage to be targeted e.g. to reduce pasture contamination in the spring.

See the SCOPS 'Know your anthelmintic groups' leaflet for more information on trade names and meat withholdings. Request a copy from NSA or download one at www.scops.org.uk.

Updated advice for quarantining offers gold-silver-bronze options

By Lesley Stubbings, SCOPS

Experts in risk management say a 'risk' is something that can be quantified and/or the probability calculated, so we can make a balanced decision. For example, few of us would risk a tightrope walk but happily ride a bike.

When we can't assess the risk it is described as an 'uncertainty' which leaves us less able, and therefore less willing, to make a decision. Is our inability to quantify the risk the reason why, as an industry, we find it so difficult to spend time and money protecting our flocks from threats brought by in-coming sheep?

Invisible challenge

We have an expectation that the vendor is supplying healthy sheep. And good stockmanship demands we only buy in sheep that look well, doesn't it? The issue is many of the potential problems are not obvious and may take a while to surface. For example, anthelmintic resistant worms not come back to bite us for several years, but by then the damage is done. Even if they look the picture of health, were the top priced pen or even from somebody you know well, they still carry the potential to wreak havoc in your flock.

If we look at the prevalence of anthelmintic resistance in the UK, supported by a number of recent studies, there is a high probability that in-coming



Are you prepared to take the risk with incoming stock this autumn?

sheep will be carrying resistant worms that we need to eliminate. The situation for sheep scab is similar, with an increase in the number of cases. Fewer and fewer people are dipping and control is difficult using endectocides due to practical issues such as achieving 100% treatment rate and segregation.

So, the majority of in-coming sheep should be considered as a risk, but there is also some scope for a risk assessment based on where the sheep are coming from. For example, rams from a known

local source may be considered very low risk for sheep scab; ewe lambs coming from the north of England are very high risk. Remember, it can take up to six months for scab to show its hand as an outbreak.

To reflect the different choices available and the situations where sheep scab may not be a risk, SCOPS has put together a new matrix of treatment options - see table. This means you have a choice of products and the level of protection offered (gold, silver or bronze).

Gold standard

While we would encourage you to consider the gold standard, providing you carry out all the treatments in your chosen column and isolate incoming stock, you will protect your flock. Effective protection has three elements:-

1. Isolate (quarantine) incoming stock. Yard for 24-48 hours and then keep isolated from the resident flock for as long as possible; three weeks is the absolute minimum.
2. Treat the sheep against the unseen threats from parasites while they are yarded.
3. Maintain isolation when they are turned out to a field(s) that have carried sheep this season.

For brand names of the actives in the table, download the 2016 SCOPS 'Know Your Anthelmintics' leaflet at www.scops.org.uk.

SCOPS Quarantine Treatment Options

Choose your risk category from the three options below and then carry out ALL the treatments shown in your choice of either the gold, silver or bronze columns.

	Scab risk (No Dip)			Scab risk (Dip)			No scab risk		
4-AD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5-SI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mox (inj)	✓	✓	✓						
Do			✓	✓					
OP				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mox (oral)				✓	✓		✓	✓	

Key: Gold Standard Silver Standard Bronze Standard
 4-AD = Monepantel (Zolvix™) Do = Doramectin (Dectomax™)
 5-SI = Derquantel and abamectin (Startect™) OP = Organophosphate plunge dip
 Mox (inj) = Moxidectin injection* Mox (oral) = Moxidectin oral drench

* 1% preferred but seek advice.

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Sheep nutrition focus for product development and new research

Gold silage bales

Silostop has launched a gold silage wrap film specifically for sheep farmers, designed to stop the entry of oxygen into baled silage and discourage listeria growth. The company claims its film is 100 times more effective at limiting oxygen entry into silage than conventional PE plastic film, preventing the slow ingress of oxygen over time.



Jennifer Hitchman from Silostop says: "The unique oxygen barrier properties of Silostop film prevent air from entering, so the pH remains at four or below, thus reducing listeria bacteria growth. The more palatable, the more forage is eaten, with this in turn leading to greater production."

More on 02036 965760 or www.silostop.com.

Turnip trial results

Trial work commissioned by Limagrain UK and conducted at Bishop Burton College, East Yorkshire, has shown sheep have a preference for certain stubble turnip varieties.

A group of 80 finishing lambs of mixed breeds from the college flock were grazed on a 1.33ha field that was drilled in mid-August 2015 with three varieties of stubble turnips. The sheep moved from grass leys to the turnips in late November and, after a week grazing a mix of the varieties, were moved to an area where each

New 3in1 bolus

Animax has added to its Tracesure range of boluses with a new 3in1 Sheep & Lamb product. The combined bolus offers 185mg of cobalt, 100mg of selenium and 660mg of iodine, which the company claims are the highest levels available on the market and delivered consistency over time using leaching technology.

Dr Elizabeth Berry from Animax says the bolus is for adult sheep, as well as ewe and ram lambs retained for breeding. She adds: "Tracesure 3in1 Sheep & Lamb contains optimum amounts of trace elements to cover demands during growth, pregnancy and lactation, and will provide these for approximately six months."

More at www.animax-vet.com.



Mounted version of sward rejuvenator

Opico has launched a mounted version of the He-Va sward rejuvenator to over-seed worn grassland in just one pass. The 3m-wide machine relies on an aggressive Shattaboard with slicing plates and two rows of heavy duty harrow tines to break up and level soil surfaces in front of the outlets from an Air8 grass seeder. A 600mm diameter Star roller then firms the soil behind and breaks up any clods to encourage seed germination.

Opico says the machine is ideal for use in badly poached fields which require restoration, and that it can also be used – minus the seeder – for harrowing grassland to remove trash and stimulate grass growth, and for molehill levelling.

The new machine retails at £16,213+VAT, making it a cheaper alternative to the trailed version.

Information on 01778 421111 or www.opico.co.uk.



turnip type was in a defined strip.

Careful measurements taken regularly for three weeks revealed a preference for Hector, a newer variety, followed by Samson and then Vollenda. "Our yield assessments showed dry matter intake of Hector was 5% higher than for Samson, which was confirmed by the grazing trial results," reports Robert David from Limagrain, adding the higher proportion of root growing above the ground, making it easier to graze, may explain the preference for Hector.

More at www.lgseeds.co.uk or enquiries@limagrain.co.uk.

Grassland scoring tools

To help producers looking to improve grassland, Barenbrug has produced a new video and complementary guide book.

The film takes viewers through a field indexing system, providing a simple way to benchmark pasture status. The hardback, ring-bound Good Grass Guide offers further pointers on what to look for when scoring a field, as well as practical options on fixing areas in need of work.

Barenbrug's Mhairi Dawson says: "Most farms have fields at different stages of maturity. This variation can make it difficult to know which tasks to prioritise. Hopefully our indexing system will aid a field-by-field approach."

More at www.barenbrug.co.uk/GoodGrassGuide.



Top Suffolk Breeder Recommends COSECURE™ Sheep Bolus

Is It Time You Switched To The UK's Fastest-Growing Bolus Range?

Bimeda® manufactures the Cosecure and Cosecure range of multiple trace element boluses. The range is proving highly popular with farmers, vets, nutritionists and animal health advisors, and was the UK's fastest-growing multiple trace element range last year.¹

Cosecure delivers ionic copper, ionic cobalt and ionic selenium. Cosecure boluses deliver these trace elements, plus iodine. The boluses last for up to eight months in sheep and up to six months in cattle. Cosecure boluses are also available for lambs.

They deliver the same amount of trace elements every single day, so there are no peaks or troughs of supplementation and no guesswork for the farmer.

One farmer who endorses the Cosecure bolus range is esteemed Suffolk Breeder, William Montgomery, of Comber in County Down, who is also a former President of the Suffolk Sheep Society.

We spoke to William to find out about his experience.



Photo showing the gradual dissolution of a Cosecure bolus

William, tell us a bit about your flock and your experience as a sheep farmer.

I have had breed pedigree registered Suffolk sheep for 62 years and currently have a Smiddiehill Pedigree Suffolk flock with 40 ewes. To me quality is everything and I think that's probably reflected in the fact that I have 15 Balmoral Championships to my name, along with 14 Premier Sale Championships.

Have you had any health issues with your flock in recent years?

Yes, over the past few years we had issues with poor conception and ill thrift among lambs. The sheep and lambs also began to eat the wall. We believed that trace element deficiencies were at the heart of the issue.

So what did you do?

I tried a variety of different trace element supplementation products but we saw no difference. Conception rates and ill-thrift went unchanged, and the animals continued to eat the wall.

What was your next step?

My local farm SQP Mr Ivan Porter identified trace element deficiencies and recommended that I used the Cosecure lamb and sheep boluses last year and I had great results. We identified that the animals needed additional copper, cobalt and selenium and Ivan explained that these trace elements are vital for fertility, growth and ongoing health. The Cosecure boluses supply these trace elements at a controlled and constant rate.

They dissolve at a controlled rate, so the animal receives exactly the same amount of trace elements every single day.

What improvements have you seen since using Cosecure boluses?

Conception rates moved to 100% and lamb mortality at birth reduced to almost zero. The animals have also thankfully stopped eating the wall. The only thing we changed on farm was that we started using the boluses. Our profitability has improved as we've seen improved fertility, reduced mortality and reduced vets' fees.

Did you notice any other improvements?

I was also very impressed by the healthy, blacker heads on both my lambs and ewes. The ewes lambed very easy this year and almost stress free, which I have never seen before. Like I said, the only activity we changed was that we started using the Cosecure boluses.

What would you say to farmers who had never bolused before?

I think there are a lot of misconceptions about bolusing but as long as you adopt the correct technique, I don't think you'll have any issues. The Cosecure boluses are made of soluble glass, so you need to make sure they are at body temperature before giving them to the animal. Once you've bolused the flock, the boluses last for up to 8 months in sheep and 6 months in lambs so it's time-saving in the long run too.

For more information on the Cosecure and Cosecure range of boluses for cattle and sheep, call Bimeda on 01248 725 400.

IMPORTANT: Bimeda recommends that you speak to your vet or animal health advisor before using any complementary feedstuff or nutritional supplement. There is an increased risk of copper toxicity associated with housed sheep and certain breeds. Always seek professional advice to ensure that there is a need for supplementation, before using any copper-containing bolus.



Sources: 1. GfK data, November 2015 MAT sales of multiple trace element boluses

New British Wool boss answers topical wool industry questions

Joe Farren, newly appointed British Wool Marketing Board Chief Executive, answers questions on his new role, BWMB and future prospects for British wool.



Q. What attracted you to the BWMB role?

A. I have a farming background but worked outside agriculture for the last 20 years. This role offered an opportunity to get back into the industry and use my experience and knowledge from senior positions in distribution to help BWMB improve efficiencies in depots and its logistics and collection network. My work in business development has also given me a useful insight to help improve British Wool marketing.

Q. Is BWMB still relevant to 21st century sheep farmers when the rest of agriculture works in an open market?

A. BWMB ensures UK wool producers have collective strength in the global marketplace. Without the Board I'm certain prices would be far lower and producers wouldn't get the returns they do now. It has been estimated that around half of UK wool would not reach the market without BWMB's collection and grading service. The wool sector is



The BWMB Chief Executive, Joe Farren (left), at the North of England Wools depot.

an excellent example where collaboration and working together delivers for farmers.

Q. Why does BWMB partly pay 12 months in arrears?

A. BWMB doesn't buy producers' wool. We collect, grade and batch it to sell on their behalf. This helps maximise returns and means BWMB can spread sales through the year to match demand. Farmers get the average price through the year, removing the considerable volatility around the global price, but the true market value is unknown until the whole wool clip is sold. While new entrants may have only a part payment in their first year, for every year afterwards they receive one annual payment consisting of that year's advance and last year's balance. We have the prepayment system to ensure BWMB can absorb the negative cash impact in the event of an exceptionally poor trading year. However, this is constantly under review and should BWMB consider there is a more appropriate system it will endeavour to make the necessary changes.

Q. What is BWMB doing to maximise returns to producers?

A. BWMB is constantly reviewing its activities and looking at new markets for British wool. That may be, for example, looking at introducing new wool grades to suit the changing market, or examining the BWMB depot and distribution infrastructure to become more efficient. That does not mean depot closures are on the agenda, as ensuring all our depots are operating efficiently may mean expanding BWMB's network of intermediary depots or collection centres to improve the service to farmers and reduce the overall cost of collection.

Q. Do other buyers in the marketplace pose a threat?

A. BWMB offers the best proposition for UK wool producers, as our competitive auction system ensures the best possible price and returns the true market value to producers. Fair competition in the marketplace is good, but producers should remember that failing to support BWMB is undermining their own medium to long-term bargaining position as BWMB auctions effectively set the benchmark price for all buyers in the UK market. Less volume through BWMB auctions will put downward pressure on prices.

Q. What impact will Brexit have?

A. In the short-term, some weakening of sterling may increase overseas demand for British wool. But in the long-term it will all depend on trade deals the British Government is able to negotiate. BWMB will be working with representative organisations, such as NSA and NFU, to ensure wool is on the agenda when agricultural trade deals are being discussed.

Q. Will BWMB continue to support Campaign for Wool?

A. Absolutely. CfW has helped raise the profile of wool significantly across the world and that has had a positive effect on wool demand. The Prince of Wales is fully committed and so is BWMB.

Q. Does wool have a bright future?

A. I'm sure of it. Natural fibres are growing in prominence and are far more sustainable than manmade fibres. Additionally, BWMB is always looking for innovative uses for British wool and regularly speaks to entrepreneurs and product developers looking to use British wool in novel products across a wide variety of uses.

British Wool Marketing Board

Your Wool - Your Board
2016 Guide Wool Clip Values*

 Suffolk £0.95 / kg	 Romney £1.12 / kg	 Texel £1.02 / kg
 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:
Web: britishwool.org.uk Telephone: 01274 688 666

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Rams: Tuesday 27th September 2016
Draft ewes: Tuesday 4th October 2016
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Broughton in Furness Mart, 01228 406200

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Lleyn sheep suit 'nice and simple' system on Scottish livestock unit

Willie Aiken and his father John farm at Carlophill Farm, Penicuik Scotland. They have 400ha (1,000 acres) at 275-520m above sea level (900-1700ft), ranging from wet heather hills down to peat and clay fields that are better suited to a dry summer.

"We get a lot of rain in this part of the world," states Willie. They farm 930 Lleyn and Lleyn cross ewes, which are all put to the Lleyn ram for early April lambing as part of this commercial system. Alongside the sheep they run 190 Saler cows. Willie says life is about more than just farming. Therefore the livestock have to work around him so that he can have a life at the weekends.

The family ventured into the Lleyn breed after attending the NSA Scot Sheep event at Poledean Farm, Moffat, Dumfriesshire, back in 2004. They say that moving into the Lleyn has enabled the business to produce higher numbers with a lower input. And, as the lambs are slighter later finishing, they work to benefit from the later trade, saying this is often improved. The April lambing also suits the lambing staff, and works with the grass growth in the area.

"I wanted a breed that did not require a high number of man hours but would have good longevity with high milk yields and good lambing percentages – and



Willie Aiken.



Above: The Aiken family says a later lambing system suits the farm.

Right: The flock is lambed inside in two large polytunnels.

most importantly, put money in my back pocket," says Willie.

The present flock is made up of 700 purebred Lleyn and 230 Lleyn cross Meatlink or Suffolk ewes. The family ventures to the sales every year to purchase their rams, which are selected on eye and breed knowledge. They pay 'middle of the road' prices. Female replacements are all produced on farm.

Indoor lambing

In-lamb ewes are outside on a good quality nut, fed with the snacker from the start of the year. They are moved inside when ground conditions get too wet. Willie comments: "We currently have two large polytunnels carrying 450 ewes each, which is a blessing. Life in the polytunnels is great – nice and healthy while also being dry. My lambing staff love it in their shorts and t-shirts."

Any lamb not selected as a breeding replacement is sent to slaughter. All lambs go deadweight to one buyer who comes on farm and selects his own lambs. "Nice and simple," says Willie. The lambs are finishing mostly at U and E grades with a few Rs. At 3L-3H they are averaging 20kg.



Willie concludes: "The future of the industry is an unknown. I for one hope it picks up and moves forward on a positive step. The Lleyn breed is definitely here to stay – it's a cracking breed. Yes there is a variation, which can be seen in the tups, and at the end of the day it is up to the producer to select the sheep that suit them. If you are looking for a breed of ewe that covers both hill and lowland ground, this is the ideal choice."

Terminal sire used over a Lleyn to meet current market requirements

Doe Hill, a mixed livestock farm at Morpeth, Northumberland, is the home of a sheep enterprise that makes the best of the maternal qualities of the Lleyn ewe while working alongside terminal sires.

Kris Gray has been farm manager at G.N. Potts and Son since October 2012, and all the shepherding is done by him and his partner Maggie. The 265ha (650-acre) farm carries 550 ewes, comprising 360 Lleyn, 40 Beltex cross Lleyn, 120 Beltex cross Lleyn ewe hoggs and 150 Hexham-type Blackface.

There is also a herd of 130 suckler cattle.

Kris explains he first came across the Lleyn when he started working at Doe Hill. "I had never farmed with Lleyn before, but I have found them easy to work with," he

says, adding that he has found they work well alongside the cattle.

When the cattle are housed during the winter, the Lleyn can be moved onto their ground and go through most of the winter without supplementary feeding. He says he has found that the lambs appear to have a higher resistance to worms, hence they require less dosing than some of the other breeds he has worked with.

Lambing time at Doe Hill usually starts around the 5th April, enabling calving to be finished first. This often falls in the school holidays, when the children are available to help. "Children are great for

day in the six weeks up to lambing. Those carrying singles get nothing. The overall scanning percentage is around 185%.

The majority of the Lleyn and Lleyn cross ewes are put to the Beltex or Texel, with all lambs sold through the weekly market at Scots Gap once they are finished. About 150 Lleyn ewes are put back to the Lleyn to produce the replacements helping to keep a closed flock. All lambs are finished off grass with the aim of getting them above 40kg and away by Christmas. Recent success saw the Doe Hill flock awarded reserve champion for a pen of Beltex cross Lleyn lambs at the Christmas Primestock Show.

Kris Gray says he enjoys working with the Lleyn ewes as a maternal breed.



A Doe Hill Lleyn ewe with Beltex cross lambs

Doe Hill farm facts

- Terminal sire used over the Lleyn ewe.
- Lambs finished off grass.
- Maternal ability of Lleyn used to its best advantage.
- Tight-skinned lambs produced.
- Low feeding costs.

catching lambs," jokes Kris. All lambing is done outside after the ewes have been out-wintered. Ewes carrying twins get 0.45kg (1lb) of nuts per

Of the lambs sold in 2015, the Beltex cross Lleyns averaged £80 for 40kg+.

Kris says he enjoys working with the Lleyn for a number of reasons. He lists their easy nature alongside their ability to out-winter on minimal feed and be lambed outdoors. He adds that they are great mothers with the ability to produce lambs that suit the needs of the live market.

"The Lleyn is a very versatile sheep and very low maintenance when tugged pure, yet in my opinion she works even better when crossed with a terminal," says Kris. "I find the Lleyn ewes can almost live on fresh air. They have really surprised me in the time I have worked with them. I think the best thing about the Lleyn is definitely the maternal instinct; they never leave their lambs. Being able to get a 45kg tight-skinned lamb good enough to sell through the live auction ring, from what is effectively a hill sheep, is quite amazing."



Lleyn sheep autumn 2016 sale dates

- **Exeter – Thursday 25th August.** Kivells, EX2 8FD. 01392 251261.
- **Ross on Wye – Thursday 1st September.** R.G. and R.B. Williams joint auctioneers Gwilym Richards, HR9 7QQ. 01989 762225 or 01600 860300.
- **Ruthin – Monday 5th September.** Ruthin Farmers Auction, LL15 1PB. 01824 705000.
- **Thainstone – Wednesday 7th September.** Aberdeen & Northern Marts, AB51 5XZ. 01467 623700.
- **Ballymena – Saturday 10th September.** Ballymena Livestock Centre, Northern Ireland, BT42 4QJ. 02825 633470.
- **Stirling – Monday 12th September.** United Auctions, FK9 4RN. 01786 473055.
- **Carmarthen – Thursday 15th September.** Carmarthen Livestock Centre, SA33 5DR. 01267 236268.
- **Bakewell – Saturday 17th September.** Bagshaws, DE45 1AH. 01629 812777.
- **NSA Wales & Border Ram Sale – Monday 19th September.** Ruthin Farmers at the Royal Welsh Showground. 01824 705000.
- **Carlisle – Thursday 22nd September.** Harrison & Hetherington, CA1 2RS. 01228 406230.
- **Welshpool – Saturday 24th September.** Welshpool Livestock Sales, SY21 8SR. 01938 553438.
- **Roscommon – Saturday 24th September.** Roscommon Co-op Livestock Centre, Republic of Ireland. 0906 626352.
- **Skipton – Thursday 29th September.** CCM Auctions, BD23 1UD. 01756 792375.

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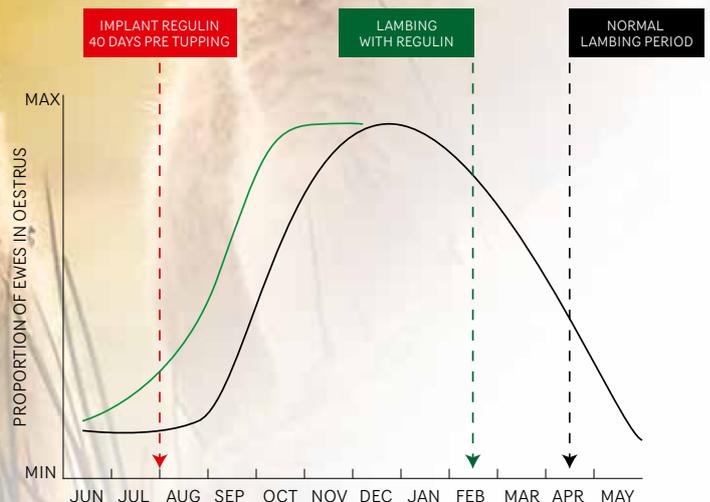
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