

Sheep Farmer

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2016/2017

A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION



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Much work needed in these uncertain times

By Phil Stocker, NSA
If the Brexit decision was not enough on its own to signify dissatisfaction in 'the system', the result of the US elections surely is.

There is a deep discontent and, in both cases, a majority have voted for change. Whether real change will be delivered is yet to be seen, but this is all evidence that we are living in a volatile world that is difficult to predict. Uncertainty is the only certainty.

After decades of globalisation we are hearing more about protectionism. Protection of borders, economies and sovereignty. Our modern UK sheep industry has been influenced heavily by globalisation, and done well from it. Nearly 40% of our production is sold overseas with some 95% of this going into EU nations. This, on top of our domestic market, provides healthy competition, avoids reliance on one route to market and gives the chance to get value from every bit of the animal.

Seasonality

We import more or less as much as we export, meaning in theory we could simply be self-sufficient. But seasonality, due to weather patterns and related grass growth, means we have adapted to balancing peaks in supply by exporting and troughs by importing. Of course it's not that black and white, but it's the basis of our trade. We also rely on the migration of people, as without foreign labour our abattoir and meat processing structure would fall apart.

Trade and labour are two priorities that NSA, working with other livestock interest groups, has been raising with our Secretary of State, ministers and political leaders across the UK nations. We cannot afford to risk falling off the edge of a cliff when we leave the EU, and if it's correct that no trade deals can be done until we have left the EU, we either need a pre-agreed deal that can be made immediately, or preferably a substantial transitional period where two-way access to the single market, without tariffs, continues for an agreed period until permanent deals are done.

Farming Minister George Eustice says he is confident the EU will want to continue with tariff-free trade, due to the volume of mutual trade that is done. He also thinks the UK Treasury will be persuaded to accept the importance of food and farming as the UK's largest



manufacturing industry and will not damage it with free trade deals with countries such as Australia on the basis of benefits for our financial services industry. He suggests that while we have some work to do to explain why, we should be able to maintain access to permanent non-seasonal migrant labour where jobs exist and domestic labour will not fill the demand.

Trade and labour are only two aspects of Brexit detail, alongside other priorities such as the future of farm support and farm regulation, all of which require a lot of work from NSA if we are to get anything like the sort of outcome sheep farming needs. And it doesn't stop with Brexit – we have many other subjects needing attention and investment. The list of policy work NSA does to benefit members could continue well into the following pages.

Subscriptions

This time last year I was delighted to be able to tell you we had delayed a decision to increase membership subscriptions. But NSA subs have not increased for many years and, to help us do what needs to be done to safeguard the future for sheep farming in the UK, we will be initiating a very modest £5 increase for full individual membership from the start of 2017. Our half price under 27s category will continue, as will the 20% discount for the first year you pay your subscription by direct debit.

I truly hope you agree the volume and quality of work done by NSA, and the benefits it gives you, means your membership continues to be one of the best investments you can make for your business – and I thank you in anticipation of your ongoing support.

Sheep
Farmer



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Front page

The front page picture is by professional photographer Wayne Hutchinson and features one of his own Swaledale ewe lambs. To supply a picture of your sheep for the front page of the magazine, use the contact details overleaf to ask NSA about photo specifications.

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News Update

Happy Christmas

Everyone at NSA, from the staff at Head Office to regional office holders and ram sales representatives, would like to take this opportunity to wish all members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We may not know what 2017 had in store, but we all hope for it to be prosperous and profitable.



If you are on the lookout for Christmas presents for sheep enthusiasts, please contact NSA Head Office to purchase an array of goods. We sell NSA mugs (£5), baseball caps (£5) and ties (£7 in navy, green or burgundy). We also stock the hugely informative British Sheep Breeds Book, written by NSA member Susannah Parkin (£8), and the beautifully illustrated BWMB British Sheep and Wool book (£10). All prices include VAT. Postage and packing starts at £2.50.

Lambing list

Don't forget the NSA Lambing List is open for business. NSA members can post their details online to find a student or students to help on the farm this lambing time. Application is online at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lambing-list but if you do not have internet access you can contact NSA Head Office. An improvement to the service this year is the option for NSA members to indicate if they do not want under 18 years olds to apply, and also guidelines that students have to read before they can access the list on the NSA Next Generation website.

Red Tractor consultation

NSA urges members in farm assurance programmes to be aware that Red Tractor is consulting on proposed additions to the existing scheme. Although any changes will affect English farms initially, NSA feels it could also impact schemes in other UK nations and that everyone should voice their opinions during the consultation period.

Members can feed their views to NSA as we work on our response, but please also respond as an individual farmer before the deadline on Saturday 31st December via consultation.redtractor.org.uk/rta/standards-review-2017.

On the topic of consultations, NSA has recently responded to Defra about TB in non-bovines. The consultation included proposed compensation rates for sheep, which NSA argued should be paid at a full tabular rate and not the half rate currently suggested.

NSA questions

Please do not hesitate to contact NSA Head Office if you have any questions about the £5 membership subscription increase from 1st January 2017 – explanation on page 1. Similarly, contact us if you do not currently receive the NSA Weekly Email Update or NSA event reminders via text. Both are free to members.

Tell us about your rams



Having successfully applied for funding from the Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF), NSA is facilitating a group of experts to investigate the flock life of rams and reasons for deaths and culling in the UK.

Independent sheep consultant Lesley Stubbings is also involved. She says: "While there is plenty of opinion on how long rams should and do last in commercial flocks, there is no actual data available. We are asking farmers from across the UK to complete a short

Annual Regional Members Meetings

The remaining six NSA Annual Regional Members Meetings have all now been confirmed. The business at each will include: election/reapproval of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer; nomination/reapproval of the regional Trustee Director; election of new committee members and endorsement of current members; a chairman's report; and a treasurer's report relating to the region's finances.

Members residing in a region are eligible to appoint a proxy vote on their behalf if they cannot attend the meeting, but this must be done in advance with NSA Head Office. Download a proxy notice at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events or contact NSA Head Office.

Notice is hereby given that:-

- The Annual Members Meeting of NSA Scottish Region will be held at Airth Castle Hotel and Spa, Airth,

- Stirlingshire, FK2 8JF, 2pm on Wednesday 15th February.
- The Annual Members Meeting of NSA Central Region will be held at the Bluebell Inn, Buxton Road, Tissington, Derbyshire, DE6 1NH, 7.30pm on Wednesday 15th February.
- The Annual Members Meeting of NSA Northern Region will be held at the Hired Lad, Penrith Auction Mart, Penrith, CA11 7JG, 7.30pm on Thursday 16th February.
- The Annual Members Meeting of NSA South West Region will be held at Fingle Glen Golf Hotel, Tedburn, Exeter, Devon, EX6 6AF, 7.30pm on Wednesday 22nd February.
- The Annual Members Meeting of NSA Cymru/Wales Region will be held at the Royal Welsh Showground, Hafod y Hendre, Builth Wells, LD2 3SY, 2pm on Thursday 23rd February.

NSA office holder rewarded in Wales

NSA is delighted that Helen Davies, NSA Cymru/Wales Regional Development Officer, is this year's recipient of the John Gittins Memorial Award for outstanding contributions to the Welsh sheep industry. The judging panel said Helen was the unanimous winner this year, making her the first female to



collect the prestigious award.

John Lloyd of the NSA Cymru/Wales Regional Committee says: "Helen deserves this recognition as an indefatigable and enthusiastic promoter of the Welsh sheep industry. Her many roles with NSA influence the sector in numerous ways, in addition to her particular passion for and support of Suffolk sheep, working with her father to show and promote the breed.

"Helen's involvement in NSA involves a level of commitment far beyond that of a normal employment and it is down to her that the NSA Welsh Sheep event continues to go from strength to strength. Helen gives her all to the industry and is always enthusiastic about whatever task is thrown her way."

NSA reports – devolved nations

NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Davies, Development Officer



By the time you read this, NSA Cymru/Wales Region will have enjoyed a busy couple of days at the Welsh Winter Fair.

In addition to our usual activity sponsoring the hill and native breed section, we also organised a regional launch of the NSA *Complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas* report, held cooking demonstrations in conjunction with HCC and our NSA Next Generation Ambassadors Jacob Anthony and Dan Pritchard, and provided mutton tastings from the NSA stand with mutton kindly donated by Regional Chairman Llew Thomas.

Other recent activity has included meeting with HCC and other industry partners to discuss the low market prices seen for light lambs this year, posing a challenge for some hill farmers. We welcomed this opportunity to discuss the factors behind the price dip and look at ongoing HCC work to promote this traditional product. We all need to work unanimously in this area, including encouraging producers to engage in regular discussion with their chosen market outlet to gauge when the product is likely to be in highest demand and achieve maximum returns as a result.

Preserving genetics

Committee member Margaret Dalton represented NSA Cymru/Wales Region at a meeting to discuss the future of the pedigree flocks at IBERS, to reflect industry concerns that, while the flock may be struggling financially, selling the sheep would terminate more than 40 years of genetics work. It is hoped a solution will be found.

Our recent committee meeting discussed a whole range of topics concerning Brexit and included a very informative talk from EID Cymru. We are now looking ahead to the NSA Cymru/Wales Annual Regional Members Meeting on Thursday 23rd February – *details on page 3*.

A new system for defining agricultural holdings and registering temporary land has been launched in Wales, but changes will be rolled out gradually over two years and you do not need to take any action until you are contacted by Rural Payment Wales, other than to familiarise yourselves with what is planned. Part of the changes is to remove all CTS links, so new applications are no longer being accepted for these.

We have a new website for NSA Welsh Sheep, our biennial event to be held on Tuesday 16th May. Online trade stand bookings and event information is at www.welshsheep.org.uk.



NSA Welsh Sheep 2017 is being hosted by Godfrey, Stephen, Luke and Lisa Williams.

NSA Northern Ireland Region

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer



It's now December and more than 90% of our eligible farmers have received all or part of their Basic Farm Payment.

This is very positive, but on the other hand the 150+ items eligible under the Farm Business Investment Scheme Capital Grant include very few related to the sheep sector, despite NSA corresponding with DAERA on a list of suggestions. If post-Brexit support is to move away from area-based payments, any capital grant scheme will need to allow more flexibility and be more realistic about the requirements of farmers.

French trip

NSA Northern Ireland Region organised a trip for sheep farmers to visit farms and research facilities in the Limoges region of France in early October, plus the world famous Sommet de L'Elevage Livestock Show in Clermont Ferrand. A visit to Du Mourier Experimental Farm, run by Le CIIRPO and connected to livestock breeding research and development by the Institut de L'Elevage, showed how information is disseminated to French farmers with the support of 15 sheep farmers on the advisory board. The farm runs 720 ewes on 95ha of different grazing systems, including work to compare cell grazing versus set stocking for production, labour, economics, environmental issues and grass structure.

Other visits were to sheep farms, including the 116ha farm of Colin and Zoe Horlock, who moved from Essex 13 years ago. Their 500-ewe flock is based on a crisscross of Suffolk and Charollais grazed on a paddock system. With no rain since the end of June it was difficult to see any difference in the grazed paddock and the one they were moving into; they had made excellent hay early in the summer but used half of it already. The biggest surprise of the visit was being greeted by William and Fiona Elliot, who moved to France a few years ago from Tildarg, Ballyclare. Word had got out through their lamb group that an NI party was visiting and they came to meet us!

Report launch

We had a regional launch in November for the NSA *Complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas* report. A tour of CAFRE's Glenwherry hill farm was followed by a presentation by Joanne Briggs, NSA Communications Manager, giving all attending a chance to understand the limitations and potential of marginal farms, and the restrictive nature of current regulations.



The NSA Northern Ireland Region trip to France included visits to a number of research and commercial farms.

NSA Scottish Region

By George Milne, Development Officer

Brexit talks are to the fore in Scotland now, and rightly so. All politicians at all levels are discussing options for the future, so it is up to us to collectively agree where we want our sector to be in 20 years.

NSA will need to be at the forefront of delivering a policy to justify securing a budget for support payments going forward, as well as suggesting a mechanism for delivering support directly to active producers.

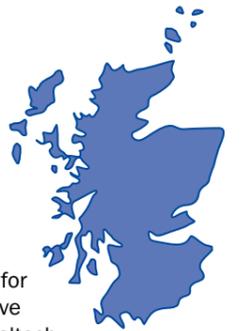
Trade will be most important, as 96% of all exported UK lamb goes to EU countries. New trade agreements cannot be signed until we officially exit, so some form of transition period will have to be put in place and trade talks should begin now. Tariffs and quotas will need to be agreed, and rules and regulation can be looked at, but we must remember any changes must be compliant with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules and with the various export conditions set up countries we want to trade with.

Timescales may be uncertain but we have to work with what we know at the moment and look towards an Article 50 agreement being signed in March 2017 and a UK exit by 2020. With this in mind, NSA Scottish Region has organised a meeting for mid-December to specifically concentrate on Brexit. This is in

addition to our usual committee meeting at the end of November and will enable discussion about what we want to see going forward.

Winter events

We hope to run a Brexit conference for members to attend in early 2017 but, in the meantime, 'Opportunities for Scotch Lamb' roadshow meetings have been organised in conjunction with Caltech



George will once again be involved in the popular NSA Scottish Region roadshow meetings this winter.

Crystalyx. The first one was on 30th November at Moffat and, depending on when you read this, you may be able to join us on 7th December at Carfraemill Hotel, Lauder, or 17th January at Weigh Inn Hotel, Thurso. Speakers will include myself, QMS's Stuart Ashworth and Caltech's Euan Hart. Details at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events.

The Scottish Government had applied to the EU for BSE negligible risk status, with a possible outcome in May 2017. While NSA is working towards carcass splitting changes for the whole of the UK, if Scotland is successful in this area, it will allow us to argue to completely end splitting requirements and potentially access new export markets ahead of the rest of the UK.

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NSA reports – English regions

Central

By Anne Payne, Manager

Plans for our new look winter event at Bakewell Livestock Market on Thursday 26th January, newly named as the NSA Central Region Early Gathering, are coming along.

We are preparing a varied programme of demonstrations, interactive workshops and seminars, as well as having trade stands and holding both the NSA Next Generation Shepherd and Junior Shepherd competitions again. This is a must-see event, covering many topical issues - *details on page 10.*

The NSA Central Region Annual Regional Members Meeting is being held on Wednesday 15th February 2017 – *details on page 3.* Joanne Briggs, NSA Communications Manager, will be updating us on NSA's current and ongoing work, including that around Brexit and the Next Generation programme. A hot-pot supper with British sheep meat will follow.

The warm, mild weather we've seen throughout this year's growing season means many folk are reporting continuing problems with feet, flystrike, fluke and nematodirus, as well as some feeling that conditions this year may lead to a greater need for a pasteurella vaccine. On the plus side, there is a reported rise in interest in tackling the huge problem of worm resistance, with more farmers now using the group four and five wormers.

Conditions do at least mean there has been no shortage of grass and this appears to have encouraged good prices for lambs in the early part of the season, alongside the weaker pound, though this appears to have faded somewhat as Brexit influences continue. Breeding sales seem to have been a bit variable, with some showing improved prices on last year and others not. As for winter fodder, the plentiful supplies for most will act as a reassurance, should the forecast weather conditions prove to be as unfriendly as we're led to believe.

Eastern

By Jonathan Barber, Manager

We held our Annual Regional Members Meeting in mid-October, which had a good attendance.

Dan Phipps was reapproved as Chairman, with Ewan Cumming, an NSA Next Generation Ambassador, continuing as Vice Chairman. Robert Spink, also an NSA Next Generation Ambassador,

was appointed as a member of the regional committee and elected to help represent our region at NSA English Committee meetings.

Our NSA Eastern Region Next Generation group is due to meet before Christmas, and again before lambing time. This group was formed recently by Ewan, who also spoke at the NSA Next Generation event in Stratford Livestock Market in November – *more on page 44.* We will be holding a Youthful Shepherds Event on Saturday 10th June at the Godolphin Stud (previously Darley), Newmarket, Suffolk.

Also next year, we will be working together with NSA Head Office at the Cereals Event on 14th-15th June to explain the benefits of sheep in arable farming areas. The region will be holding a farm walk on Friday 19th May too, by kind permission of Richard Thompson of George Thomson Farms, the Grove, Hurn Bank, Holbeach, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE12 8JJ, which will provide a great example of integrating livestock, sheep and cattle into a first-class arable farm.

At a recent meeting, the region discussed dog worrying in length, not only for the damage it does to sheep, but to farmers who are left feeling that they are not respected and can do nothing to prevent reckless dog owners from destroying their sheep and livelihoods. NSA was congratulated on the ongoing work it does in conjunction with others on the issue.

Marches

By Kevin Harrison, Chairman

By the time you read this, we will have appointed a new regional chairman and I wish them all the best in their appointment.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my role for the last three years and, while standing down may leave me with an element of sadness, I will look back fondly on what we have achieved over those three years.

NSA sheep events, debates, joint AHDB meetings, young shepherd competitions, prize giveaways and farm walks, to name a few, have all given

Next Generation group



NSA Eastern Region is the first to set up a regional Next Generation group. More people are very welcome to attend the next meeting. Regional contact details on page 2.

me the opportunity to meet some great sheep farmers and wonderful characters across the region and beyond. One of the most rewarding duties has been my involvement with the NSA Next Generation programme and particularly the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors. To see so much young talent coming into the industry from all NSA regions is very encouraging, and it's great to see their confidence and abilities grow as they get more involved in the organisation.

I hope to continue to contribute to the region and to the NSA Next Generation project, as well as my positions representing Marches Region and England on the NSA English and NSA UK Policy and Technical committees respectively. Both are very important in getting sheep farmers thoughts and opinions heard from the ground up, which is vital in the changing and challenging time we face. Feel free to contact me still if you have any concerns that you want to discuss.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the regional committee for their help over the years and you as members for your ongoing support. NSA Marches Region now has 700 members and long may it continue to grow and strengthen.

Northern

By Heather Stoney-Grayshon, Manager

September and October saw regional members busy with the annual sheep sales.

Generally decent trade had been seen across the board and the prime lamb trade has held steady, helping some of the later ewe lamb trade, which seems to be up a little as demand remains.

A committee meeting was held in

early November in Penrith, Cumbria. Once again Brexit featured highly, with discussion being generated thanks to information on the topic from NSA Head Office. There is a lot of uncertainty ahead, but we must work together to achieve the best possible outcome for the whole industry.

The end of November will see a second organising committee meeting for NSA North Sheep 2017. Our new-look NSA North Sheep website is live and stand space and sponsorship for the event on Wednesday 7th June can now be booked at www.northsheep.org.uk. New for 2017 is a section for individual breeders to book stands, and those who are NSA members can enjoy a discounted rate.

The NSA Northern Region Annual Regional Members Meeting is on Thursday 16th February 2017 – *details on page 3.* We invite you all in the region to join us.

South East

By Bob Blanden, Manager

Our second of two 'Rams: Fit for Purpose' meetings was held jointly with AHDB Beef & Lamb in late September, by kind permission of James Barker, Manor Farm, Bedfordshire.

AHDB's Nerys Wright again did the business efficiently, supported by the farm's vet Oliver Sheldon. About to go on maternity leave, she certainly wasn't going to attempt to turn James's big Suffolk tups over! We would like to record our best wishes to Nerys on the forthcoming arrival and, during her absence, we will be well provided for by AHDB in our region. Nerys does an outstanding job, is active on our regional committee and always pleased to support our activities.

It has been decided to not repeat the Sheep Health Conference we held in conjunction with our Annual Regional Members Meeting (ARMM) last year, although the committee is considering holding this in autumn instead. Our 2017 ARMM will be on Wednesday 8th February – *details on page 3 and at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events.* Following formal business will be an update from some of our regional NSA Next Generation Ambassadors on how they feel the programme has helped them. Gordon Wyeth, Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmer of the Year 2016, will give a talk on his farming enterprises, followed by local farmer Ian Robertson and Signet's Steve West explaining the Ram Compare Project and Ian's involvement in it. An Irish stew and baked potatoes will be provided, so for catering purposes please let me know if you plan to attend – *contact details on page 2.*

NSA South East Region has also been lending weight to an issue the Small Shepherd Club has highlighted, regarding package sizes of bluetongue vaccine. It is great to be working with this not-so-small organisation, which is mainly active within our region.

South West

By Kate White, Secretary

Back in late September, approximately 85 farmers met and enjoyed a thoroughly interesting farm tour at Matt and Pip Smith's farm on the edge of Bodmin, Cornwall.

Matt won the nine-hour ewe world shearing record in July this year, shearing 731 sheep in nine hours. He and his wife Pip kindly escorted us around their farm, where we looked at grassland and fodder management and the New Zealand farming methods Kiwi-born Matt has brought over with him. Focusing on increasing efficiency and enabling higher stocking rates, everything Matt and Pip seem to be doing makes a lot of sense and it was great to see such enthusiastic, hardworking young farmers working with and maximising what they have got. A full report can be found in the "Event Reports" section at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events.

NZ-inspired farm walk



The wet weather did not dampen enthusiasm at an NSA South West Region farm walk.

Some of you will have recently received a letter about the new movement rules, with more of you set to hear from Defra as the changes are rolled out. Make sure you check the details and read the letter thoroughly, as there is a limit to the amount of time before any existing grass keep numbers and/or temporary holdings disappear. Don't get caught out.

The NSA South West Annual Regional Members Meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd February – *details on page 3.* We invite you all in the region to join us for the evening, where we hope to have guest speakers from Red Tractor Assurance and an update from one of our regional NSA Next Generation Ambassadors. We'll enjoy a bite to eat at the end and look forward to seeing many of you there.

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Role for everyone in sheep health

By Laura Williams, NSA

The importance of improving the health and welfare of the UK sheep flock is essential for the optimal use of nutrients for best performance, the production of a safe and quality product and a reduced environmental impact.

That was the vision expressed at the SHAWG biennial conference by a number of farmer and industry speakers. Ben Anthony, a farmer who has worked closely with independent sheep consultant Lesley Stubbings, told of the success he has in terms of health performance. He said: "The biggest



This was the third biennial Sheep Health and Welfare Group conference.

drivers of performance include nutrition, genetics, body condition and grass management."

When asked about the benefits of paying for an independent consultant, Mr Anthony added: "They have the knowledge and practical experience. It is priceless, a no brainer".

Medicines

The main focus of the afternoon session was how farmers could make the most of the investment in medicines on farm, and where reliance on antimicrobials and anthelmintics could be reduced. Sheep vet Fiona Lovatt raised essential tips to remember for medicine use. "Right product to the right animals at the right time," she said. "And as little as possible but as much as necessary."

She added: "There are two types of sheep farmer. Those who are active in their flock health management, profitable and business-like, to whom the use of their vet saves them money; and those to whom the use of their vet costs them money."

It was raised by both the experts and the audience that a good sheep vet is hard to find, which makes it difficult

SHAWG future

Peter Baber, long-standing Sheep Health and Welfare Group (SHAWG) Chairman, retired at this year's conference. He was replaced by Leicestershire sheep farmer Charles Sercombe who, like Mr Baber, has an active role within NSA. Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says: "The current position of SHAWG in the industry is a real credit to Peter and all the work he has done for the past eight years, which we really appreciate."

to utilise health planning and build strong relationships to improve flock output for maximum product value and minimum costs. But speakers made it clear that for every farmer to achieve optimum production results, health and performance advice must be flock-specific and not 'one size fits all'.

It was also decided, through roundtable discussions, that every single member of the sheep sector, be it farmers, vets or industry bodies, had a role to play in the improvement of health and welfare, and particularly the reduction of anthelmintic and antibiotic use through the knowledge exchange of best practice methods.

Lamb to lead innovation march?

By Joanne Briggs, NSA

The future of grocery shopping is going to be a computer automatically ordering cupboard staples, such as baked beans and pasta, with online stores and physical supermarkets fighting to inspire and excite shoppers with new and innovative products in the fresh food category.

That was the vision presented at this year's Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) conference, which was pretty brutal in telling retailers and suppliers they weren't currently doing enough to excite consumers. Supermarkets were boring and uninspiring, speakers said, and the rise of Lidl and Aldi was not all about low prices but also the surprise of shopping in an unpredictable 'Aladdin's cave'.

Innovation

Joanne Denney-Finch of IGD said: "In the decade where online shopping and smart phones have fundamentally changed our culture and social behaviour, supermarkets have remained the same. Fresh food is where our emotions come in and we need more innovation. Shoppers are looking for a different, more exciting shopping



Channel 4 News presenter Krishnan Guru-Murthy (far right) chaired panel discussions during the day.

experience."

Matt Hill from Kraft Heinz echoed this, saying that even a company as big as his struggled to get supermarkets to think outside the box. "Uniform shop shelves that look like library shelves leave shoppers on autopilot," he said.

Mr Hill and other speakers opened the door for red meat to lead such innovation, as protein was the 'food hero' against the villains of sugar and salt. Reflecting on the challenges facing confectioners, Blas Maquivar of Mars said 65% of shoppers were now looking to cut fat consumption and 43% actively

considered natural ingredients.

There is also a role for lamb in the rise of dine-in product ranges (the glamorous successor of ready meals). These ranges, alongside food-to-go, were emphasised within discussions around the massive switch from large out-of-town supermarkets to smaller high street convenience stores.

Convenience

Michael Fletcher from Co-op said: "Convenience is growing because people need to top up their online shop or discount shop. Good quality, fresh food is number one here, above price, as 40% of people do not know what they're going to eat tonight and want inspiration."

This 'instant gratification' was highlighted by retail psychologist Dimitrios Tsvirikos as indicative of the mobile age, with Martijn Bertsen of Google saying 40% of all search engine uses were now conducted on mobile devices looking for a nearby service, store or restaurant. He claimed that while 80% of sales were still in physical shops, nearly all were 'touched by the internet' in some way, be it googling a store, recipe or meal idea.

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January health check offered by revamped Central Region event

January will see the return of the NSA Central Region winter event – this year sporting a new look as the NSA Central Region Early Gathering.

Once again held in Bakewell Market, a focus on keeping the event indoors out of the winter weather will see a selection of trade stands in the spacious concourse area complemented by a rolling programme of seminars and demonstrations. Visitors can choose what to get involved in on the day, gaining maximum knowledge from minimum concentration.

The event will have a health theme, covering a wide range of topics:-

- Health of the industry
- Health of the countryside
- Health of the shepherd
- Health of the sheepdog
- Health of your records
- Healthy competition

Seminars in the morning will see NSA Next Generation Ambassadors talk about ways into the industry, succession

planning, and the challenges and opportunities facing young and new entrants to the industry. Next will be a seminar focusing on both the health of the sheepdog and



Above: The new look event will bring everything undercover in the main market.

Left: Seminars, demonstrations and workshops will fill the day.

the shepherd, supported by a 'health check corner' from the market's regular nurse and physio available throughout the day.

A 'big debate' will generate interesting discussion around the future of the sector and will include short presentations on Brexit and the future of BPS, lamb marketing and consumption trends, and the NSA *Complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas* report.

The rolling programme of demonstrations and workshops will be found in both livestock rings. The small ring will see butchery demonstrations from AHDB and an interactive exercise led by a variety of industry experts on current health issues facing the sheep sector. In the main ring, a seminar on keeping farm records will be repeated alongside a focus on lameness from MSD Animal Health.

As in previous years, there will also be the NSA Next Generation Shepherd Competition, with a Junior Shepherd sections for younger competitors. Both will challenge and encourage the next generation of farmers and help them hone their sheep husbandry skills.

Alastair Sneddon, NSA Central Region Chairman, says: "This event will be more undercover and therefore much warmer than in previous years, aiming to give visitors a quick top-up of relevant information in what is otherwise a quiet time for the industry. The focus on health may seem specific, but can be applied to all areas of the sector and we will give a 'New Year sheep industry health check' through our seminars, workshops and debates. Bags full of information delivered in one event has not been done before under one roof in Central Region, and we look forward to making the event a huge success."



NSA Central Region Early Gathering

- Thursday 26th January 2017.
- Bakewell Market, Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH.
- Event open from 10am to 4pm.
- Free admission for NSA members; £5 for non-members.
- Enquiries to Anne Payne, Event Organiser. Contact details on page 2.
- More information at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events/nsa-central-region-early-gathering.



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Final winners announced in NSA prize draw voucher giveaway

The draw for the sixth and final set of names marked the end of the NSA 2016 prize draw giveaway. This brought the final number of winners up to 18, all of whom won a £200 voucher for Cox Agri/Ritchey, Fecpack⁶² or JG Animal Health.

Congratulations to the final three winners: Sandra Vine of Hailsham, East Sussex, Glenda Jones from Boncath, Pembrokeshire, and Roger Bates from Glyn Ceiriog, Denbighshire.

Due to an admin error, the third winner in the fifth prize draw was not announced in the previous issue of Sheep Farmer. NSA can now confirm this as Darren Hough, based on the outskirts of the Saddleworth Moor, Greater Manchester. His prize was a £200 Fecpak⁶² voucher.

Commiserations to the many members and referring members who missed out this time, but there will be more chances to win in 2017, with details of a new prize draw to be announced early in January. As in previous membership recruitment campaigns, new members will be automatically entered into the draw and existing members can gain unlimited entries by referring friends and neighbours to join NSA.

Details of all NSA membership recruitment prize draws at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw.



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Darren Hough, Greater Manchester

Based on the outskirts of Saddleworth Moor near Grasscroft, Greater Manchester, Darren Hough has had an involvement in sheep all his life and runs a commercial flock of 800 ewes alongside a pedigree Texel flock.

He says: "The main of our commercial ewes are put to the Texel, while some of the smaller ewes are put to the Suffolk to add weight for the prime lamb trade. We also use the Charollais on shearlings to encourage easy lambing, which takes place inside starting mid-March. I have several friends who are members of NSA and, having heard great reports, had been meaning to sign up as a member for a while. It was an added bonus to do it at NSA Sheep 2016 and get into the event for free."



Roger Bates, Denbighshire, and Glenda Jones, Pembrokeshire

Two winners from opposite ends of Wales were announced in this final prize draw: Roger Bates from Glyn Ceiriog, Denbighshire, and Glenda Jones of Boncath, Pembrokeshire. They have won £200 vouchers for Cox Agri/Ritchey and Fecpak⁶² respectively.

Mr Bates says he couldn't have been more surprised when he got the call to say he'd won and nearly hung up thinking it was a hoax. He took over the family farm in 1992, the majority of which lies 1,000ft above sea level on the North East Wales coastline. Two thirds of his flock are Easycare, with Easycare tups being put on the best wool shedding ewes. The remaining ewes are crossed with a terminal sire. Lambing starts in late April with minimal use of concentrates.

Mrs Jones' family farm is a mixed sheep, beef and arable enterprise running alongside catering cottages. A flock of 600 ewes is mostly made up of Texels put to Charollais and Lleyn tups. Innovis genetics have also been introduced recently, which Mrs Jones hopes will improve performance, thriftiness and ease of lambing.

Sandra Vine, East Sussex

A spur of the moment decision to sign up as members at NSA South Sheep earlier this year has paid off for mother-and-son partnership Sandra and James Vine. They now have a £200 JG Animal Health voucher to spend on their farm on the Pevensey Levels, East Sussex.

Mrs Vine says she started farming when she got married and has since formed a new partnership with son James when husband Les sadly passed away last year. She says: "The partnership works well with James responsible for all the practical sheep work and myself on the office side of things. We have a flock of 500 ewes, mainly Romneys and some Suffolk Mules. We keep some of the Romneys pure to breed replacements and put the rest to the Texel. James also keeps some Texel and Charollais ewes to breed pure."

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Assessing the role of processor and supermarket lamb schemes

By Howard Walsh, contributor

Most major supermarkets, in collaboration with their processors, have breed specific or regionally specific branded lamb at varying times of year, some of which pay the producer a premium.

The precise details of the retailer backed bonuses are often regarded as 'commercially sensitive' and only made available to farmer suppliers, but what do we know about what is currently on offer?

Many of the current schemes in place have come about as a result of processor, retailer and, in some cases, breed society collaboration, boosted by the constant need to innovate and develop new marketing propositions.

Mike Whittemore, AHDB Beef & Lamb Head of Trade and Product Development, says anything encouraging lamb retail sales should be welcomed, including any of these schemes, despite the fact they represent only a fraction of total lamb sales. But he also believes there is more to do, at both farm and retail level. He says: "Who wants fat and bone these days? Certainly not the younger consumers, which is why retailers' premium branded packs can command a premium and why lamb producer group members, who strive to improve the grade of the lambs they are sending in, should see some of that premium."

Differentiation

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says most retailer-processor schemes that differentiate product on the shelves send correct signals back through the supply chain, and offer a welcome premium to the producer. He says: "They can help to grow or at least maintain lamb's share of the market, and to promote it as more than just a commodity product. But we must be aware of any one scheme dominating and therefore possibly distorting the decisions flockmasters make."



Breed-specific supermarket schemes include the Swaledale initiative from Marks and Spencer.

"Generally speaking I think it is in the sheep industry's interest for there to be more of these selling propositions, coupled with more innovation at point-of-sale, with clear labelling and more effort put into 'telling the story' behind the different products."

One scheme, in existence for almost 10 years, sees Scottish Blackface lamb branded as Border Blackface in Sainsbury's Taste the Difference range for three or four months in winter and early spring. It slots into the supermarket's Taste the Difference supply with West Country and Welsh Hill lamb. These all attract a substantial premium on their own grid.

Aileen McFadzean, Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association Secretary, says: "The scheme takes just over 25,000 lambs each season and the valuable thing is that finishers are eligible to supply, not just breeders. This therefore creates an important store lamb outlet for our breeders in the West of Scotland who simply do not have the grazing to finish lambs."

Bonus payments

Sainsbury's also has a YFC scheme in Wales, run through Dunbia Llanybydder and designed to help new and younger shepherds develop their businesses. It provides a bonus above the British price and a further headage bonus for hitting target specification. A further headage payment is made to YFC to support their activities.

Entering its seventh season is Marks and Spencer's Swaledale lamb scheme, in conjunction with processor Dawn Meats. The product is included in the retailer's Speciality Lamb range between January and April and a new award was presented for the first time this year to the lamb producer achieving the best hit rate for lambs in-spec. The Speciality Lamb range also includes Cotswold (May-June), salt marsh (July-September) and Borders (September-December).

Asda last year made a commitment to increase sourcing and promotion of British lamb and said it was intent on working with producers in its LambLink scheme to deliver increased value back to sheep farmers long-term.

Included in the Co-op Truly Irresistible fresh lamb range, in addition to its standard lamb, are cuts produced from native breeds in the Cambrian Mountains of mid-Wales. There are 21 producers in the group who supply at selected times throughout the year. They are required to undertake carbon footprint assessments and maintain strict animal welfare and environmental standards.

Waitrose says all its UK fresh lamb is branded from a region (Welsh, West Country, Welsh Organic, West Country Organic and Salt Marsh) or breed (Dorset and Abervale). Lamb sales are promoted throughout the year and all schemes have a Dalehead Foods base price and a specific grid to reward quality. Producer groups are scheme specific and have representation on the Waitrose lamb development forums.

Regional supermarket Booths claims to be the only supermarket to stock Herdwick lamb and mutton and it was the success of this line, introduced seven years ago, which prompted the introduction of salt marsh lamb too. Herdwick is sold from January to May, followed by salt marsh until September. Both command a premium at retail level and this is passed back to the farmer.

Meat buyer David Simons said: "Returning shoppers to native breeds and marketing them as something special and worth paying a premium for will ultimately benefit farmers in reputation and open up other markets for their goods."

Cost of production

Tesco's Finest range incorporates lambs from designated regions as the season progresses, beginning with the South West and progressing through Welsh Hill, North of England and then Scottish. Producers receive a premium over the standard grid for in-spec lambs. Tesco is also pursuing its cost of production model with 100 producers.

However, Tesco is not involved in the joint arrangement between its lamb supplier Two Sisters Red Meat and Innovis. Launched earlier this summer, the scheme sees rams of a newly developed composite hired to farmers supplying Two Sisters. It is understood all 73 rams made available this season have been taken up, with a graduated hire charge to be deducted from finishers' lamb payments. Consignors next spring will be given the option of payment on the standard grid, or on a grid with enhanced payments for in-spec lambs but higher penalties for those falling outside the required spec. Performance recording is an integral part of the deal.

Another scheme with no specific retailer backing is the more recently announced collaborative venture by processor ABP and the Alpha Ram Producer Group. It initially includes Easyrams and the Meatlinc Sheep Company but with the intention that more like-minded ram breeders (for terminal sires and maternal traits) will get on board in time.

Lamb producers joining the group will receive bonus payments of 5-15p/kg deadweight over and above the ruling grid price at ABP's Yetminster site – see panel. They can also access group meetings and consultancy advice.

Steven Feehan, ABP Head of UK Procurement, says the aim of the Alpha Lamb Producer Group is to improve the quality of lamb produced for ABP and the profitability of individual



Launching the Alpha Ram project: From left to right, George Fell of the Meatlinc Sheep Company, ABP's Mark Eastwood and Robyn Hulme of Easyrams.

ABP and Alpha Rams

Three tiers of entry to the Alpha Ram Producer Group.

- **Bronze:** 5p/kg bonus for using Alpha rams.
- **Silver:** 10p/kg bonus for using Alpha rams, implementing rotational grazing and FECs, attending discussion groups and taking consultancy advice.
- **Gold:** 15p/kg bonus for all the above plus lamb performance recording, sire identification on a percentage of lambs, dam breed identification of lambs supplied, and breeding replacements using Alpha maternal sires

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member's sheep enterprises. The latter is as much in ABP's interest, he says, to make flocks more sustainable and therefore safeguard the long term supply of lamb. He says his concerns about the profitability of the UK sheep sector being hamstrung by a continuing focus on 'beauty' and the showing, rather than EBVs, led him to get interested in the New Zealand emphasis on genetics and maximising the potential of grass while reducing labour costs.

"By collaborating with some of the UK's most innovative ram breeders we will help bring about the necessary changes required in the sheep industry more quickly," Mr Feehan says, describing the bonus payments as 'pump-priming' for other measures to improve profitability for group members.

Robyn Hulme of EasyRam's agrees, saying a potentially attainable improvement of 2% on killing out percentage alone would see the bonuses pale into insignificance.

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Industry experts comment on 'buoyant and consistent' trade

Despite the slight seasonal dip in recent weeks, the prime sheep market is showing great consistency with considerable increases over 2015 figures, according to some of the leading markets and auctioneers across the UK.



"It has certainly been much easier to export because of the exchange rate, and that can be seen as a direct result of the Brexit vote," says Archie Hamilton of Longtown Mart, Carlisle.

"While there have been some seasonal fluctuations, we are currently selling lambs at around 15-20p/kg up on levels seen at this time last year, and that has by and large been the case all season. Farmers have had a good season for breeding, prime sheep and cull ewes, and this filters throughout the industry when there are good returns."

This view is mirrored by Elwyn Davies of Hobbs Parker Auctioneers at Ashford Market, Kent. He says: "The trade for finished lambs has been strong in recent months and followed on from the favourable results during the summer. Throughout September and early October, overall averages of around 175p/kg were the norm, some 25p/kg above those achieved over the same period last year. The lamb trade continues to benefit from a favourable exchange rate and relatively tight supplies nationally, due to difficult finishing conditions.

"Stores have seen a good steady trade throughout, averaging around £57 per head, with the best crossbred lambs selling readily at £65. The majority of small long-term sorts are ranging within the £50-£55 bracket."

Store lambs

As expected with a buoyant export demand, the best heavyweight lambs have attracted big premiums and well-fleshed heavyweights, which have been in relatively short supply, have grossed well, often in the £85-£90 per head bracket. Stephen Dodsworth of Darlington Farmers Auction Mart, County Durham, explains: "Our weekly red market always sees the well-fleshed lambs very easy to sell. At least at the moment, the days are gone when the buyer prefers a lean 37kg lamb."

Mr Dodsworth advises vendors that leaner lambs are worth considerably more sold through the store ring, in some instances as much as £5-£10 per head more. He believes this trend looks set to continue for the next couple of months at least, but will not last



Prime lamb sales this year have been consistently good.

forever. "We always see a period, usually just as the supermarkets move on to New Zealand lamb, in which our old season lambs all start to come heavier," he warns. "This results in the lightweights being in short supply and in high demand."

Given the blistering trade of feeding lambs this year, Mr Dodsworth feels the smart store lamb buyer needs to box clever when the time comes to sell them back in the prime rings. He says: "If you're putting sheep away on roots with the intention of selling them in March or April, I suggest a smaller breed at a smaller bought-in price might just pay dividends. A Beltex, Hill Cheviot or Blackie bought for under £60, which will come back at 38-42kg in the spring, looks the smart money to me. Paying £70 and beyond for a Suffolk that will weigh 55-60kg could be a dangerous game."

Chris Dodds, LAA Executive Secretary, says this overall enthusiasm and optimism is mirrored across the country and could continue into next year. He says: "The stronger trade achieved all season has put some much needed confidence back into the sheep industry. It is due to several factors. The lower value of UK sterling means exporters are more competitive when selling into the EU and other world markets. Supply throughout the season has not outstripped demand, which has helped to bolster trade. And there has been reduced volumes of lamb available from alternative sources, such as New Zealand.

"I would anticipate that demand will remain strong and, as long as the American election results don't shake world financial markets too much, we will see trade remain strong well into 2017."

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Options to increase lamb shelf-life

By James Ruggeri, HCC

With our future trading relationship with Europe under discussion, it has never been more important to develop new markets further afield. Increasing the shelf-life of PGI Welsh Lamb is therefore a key objective, as it could provide a greater competitive advantage in markets such as North America, the Middle East and Asia.



Extended shelf-life would reduce freight costs, as sea freight, rather than air freight, could be utilised. It could also enable Welsh Lamb to compete more effectively with New Zealand chilled lamb, which already has a shelf-life of up to 100 days, and help extend the seasonal availability of Welsh Lamb in the UK.

Lamb presentation

Cleanliness levels throughout the supply chain have the greatest impact on shelf-life. Hygienic practices, along with good temperature control once the animal has been slaughtered, help keep microbial contamination to an absolute minimum. Consideration should therefore be given to on-farm practices to maintain and improve the cleanliness and presentation of lambs prior to transportation. For instance, lambs clipped and then returned to a field before being transported to an abattoir, especially at this time of year, may be soiled again.

In practical terms, clipping belly wool should be delayed until lambs are fit for sale, with stock kept on clean, dry bedding afterwards. The dock area must be clipped and three strokes up the belly are necessary to comply with abattoir requirements. Lambs should also be free of dags.

A recent HCC study revealed reluctance among some producers to ensure feed is withheld from livestock prior to transportation, mainly due to concerns it would negatively impact the weight of the animal and its carcass value.



Sending clean stock to slaughter is a major part of extending the shelf-life of lamb.

The same study took 60 lambs from the same farm and compared a group transported to the abattoir without being housed and groups housed for six and 12 hours prior to transportation.

All lambs were weighted and classified according to FSA Clean Livestock Policy immediately prior to slaughter. The trial demonstrated the withdrawal of feed for up to 12 hours before transportation effectively decreased the dirtiness of the animals prior to slaughter, without having a negative impact on slaughter weight and carcass conformation.

The role of the producers in boosting shelf-life is just one element highlighted in HCC's Selection for Slaughter training; find an event near you at www.hccmpw.org.uk. Also find a new fact sheet on extending shelf-life at www.hccmpw.org.uk/publications/farming_and_industry_development/.

Top chefs celebrate quality mutton

The inclusion of mutton at the Master Chefs of Great Britain's annual lunch shows the extent of the increasing popularity of quality mutton in the UK.



Make More of Mutton

Whether it is appearing on a menu of a village pub, being sold by local butchers or farm shops or highlighted at grand dinners, more people are trying it and enjoying the experience.

Sue McGeever organised the Master Chefs event, which was held at Sheraton Park Lane Hotel in London and featured mutton cannelloni and smoked mutton crumble (pictured). She says: "It was wonderful to bring mutton to the table and our guests really enjoyed the flavour and textures of the dish, which combined shoulder of mutton with smoked mutton. It would be good to see mutton being served in more restaurants around the UK."

But if the resurgence of quality mutton looks set to accelerate, will we have the supplies to cope? Bob Kennard, NSA Make More of Mutton Manager, says: "The problem is that grabbing a

few cull ewes that would otherwise go to market and trying to pass them off as a quality product is not the answer. Indeed, it could do serious damage. If the market is to continue growing, 'quality' must be the watchword. Only good quality ewes should be selected for the purpose, and actively finished with a good covering of both muscle and a modest fat content (classification 2 or 3L). Hanging is essential and 10 days is generally considered a minimum."

Carcass balance

Mr Kennard continues: "It's then a question of finding a market. Some producers set up to sell to the consumer, but a wholesale trade can offer a potentially larger market. Approaching local restaurants and butchers can start things off. However, as with all meats, carcass balance is one secret to success and selling the whole animal is essential. A large restaurant order of just one cut can cause as much of a problem as selling nothing."

Find useful resources as part of the NSA Make More of Mutton initiative at www.nsamutton.org.uk.



Experts predict a bright future for renewable energy industry

Major changes at Government level, combined with a sharper-than-expected reduction in financial support, has caused rapid change in the renewable energy sector and created questions about the future.

However, experts argue that opportunities for energy projects remain plentiful for farmers, due to falling equipment installation costs and innovative solutions.

Lucy Hopwood from bioenergy consultants NNFC predicts a little more stability in what has been a rapid evolving anaerobic digester and biogas sector. She says: "This sector has seen short-term tariff depression windows, where subsidy reductions have resulted in people trying to 'get in quick' before it's enforced. This has caused rapid growth, ironically putting more pressure on the market, triggering more depression and creating instability. But if we don't have support, cost reductions have to happen or we need greater price premiums for green energy."

"The good news is that the industry

Tips for sheep farmers

By Darren Edwards, Fisher German

Already got a renewable energy installation?

1. Consider re-financing to improve your rate of return or release capital for reinvestment elsewhere on the farm.
2. Be wary of Valuation Office Agency (VOA) business rate increases and cash flow implications. It may be possible to challenge the VOA over the rateable value applied to your project.
3. Seek professional advice if you're re-approached about incorporating a battery storage system into sites leased to renewable energy companies (i.e. solar parks).

Considering an installation?

1. Do not be deterred by the negative press. Attractive returns can still be achieved under the right circumstances and for carefully planned projects.
2. Seek to match the energy supply with your on-farm demand for maximum financial benefit.
3. Consider post-Brexit opportunities, such as cheaper solar PV kit through the abolition of EU import taxes, and the creation of viable investments in a non-subsidy marketplace.



Falling costs, particularly for wind power, mean renewable energy is still a viable on-farm investment, experts say.

can affect cost reductions if plants are sized appropriate to the situation, rather than tailored to tariff boundaries. It's important to think about optimising performance, sourcing the most cost-effective feedstocks available and looking at where the energy can be best used on farm. The reduction of subsidies will make people sit back and think, which is important, because strategic planning is essential."

Falling costs

Solar has had a rough ride over the last 18 months, but still remains one of the most versatile sources of renewable energy, providing 3.4% of UK electricity. Oliver Savory of the Solar Trade Association says: "Installation costs are rapidly falling and the cost of maintenance is very low. A modular-based solar energy system is economical at all scales and is quickly approaching grid parity with conventional electricity production. Globally, solar energy is set to reach 13% of energy generation by 2030. It has a bright future in the UK, as long as it has support from the Government to transition into a post-subsidy future."

Hydropower is an option for land with access to a watercourse, suggests Simon Hamlyn of the British Hydropower Association as, even with reduced Feed in Tariffs (FiT), it will provide a guaranteed, index-linked income for 20 years. He says: "A hydro installation will last 50 to 70 years so is an investment for future generations. Smaller off-grid schemes, below 100kW and providing

enough power for the farm, will offset heat and electricity bills using a readily available and clean resource."

Meanwhile, onshore wind costs are predicted to fall to £60/MWh by 2020, as a result of technology advances and a focus on high-wind sites predominantly in Scotland, making it one of the cheapest sources of home-grown energy. Adam Wentworth from Renewable UK says: "The Government needs to show it won't stand in the way of subsidy-free forms of power, like onshore wind, and compete head-to-head with options like nuclear and gas."

Energy storage

A new development to watch out for is energy storage, says David Jacobmeyer, Director of Energy Now Expo. He explains: "Breakthroughs in energy storage technologies and decentralised energy are the most exciting recent development in the renewable energy sector. Interest in land rental from developers of large battery storage sites, to store energy and provide grid services, has largely replaced interest from solar farm developers in the last six months."

"While it's clear that subsidy will reduce, there's still a strong case for investing in renewable energy now or looking at optimising the value of an existing installation."

More on the latest innovations and renewable energy policies at the Energy Now Expo on 8th-9th February 2017. Register to attend for free on 01293 854405 or www.energynowexpo.co.uk.

NSA policy work continues apace

While Brexit discussions are the clear priority for NSA at the current time, that does not mean other policy topics are being neglected. A whole host of activity is underway in all UK nations, led by NSA staff and development officers.

NSA has been representing the UK at a Brussels-based EU sheep meat reflection group, alongside UK farming unions and levy bodies. The group was set up at the request of EU Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan (pictures) and concluded in October with the release of a report identifying ways to help a sector that is struggling across Europe. NSA was able to raise issues around falling lamb consumption, price reporting, carcass splitting and EID regulations, and will pick these same topics up in ongoing Brexit work too.

NSA will be holding an exhibition in the Houses of Parliament in mid-December, providing an opportunity to present our work on the complementary role of sheep in upland and hill areas to a wide range of ministers and civil servants. Farming Minister George Eustice has agreed to host a reception as part of the exhibition.

Basis Payment delays

We have also been corresponding with Mr Eustice, as well as other MPs and RPA, about the unacceptable situation with the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme. While Northern Ireland is well into paying 2016 monies, with Scotland implementing a loan scheme to get ahead too, it does not hide the fact some farmers are still owed the balance of 2015 payments. In England the situation has been made worse by RPA seemingly refusing to acknowledge money is outstanding, despite NSA knowing some members with common land are still waiting.

England and Wales are in the process of changing from a five-mile to 10-mile movement rule. Wales is just starting out while Defra says 20% of English sheep keepers have been contacted so far. For farmers eagerly awaiting the opportunity to merge holdings, you cannot do anything until you receive your letter, after which you only have 30 days to take action. NSA understands an announcement around the England-Wales cross-border issue with the CPH changes will be made in January.

Responsible antibiotic use

It is positive to hear on-farm antibiotic use dropped 10% between 2014 and 2015, with the use of critically important antibiotics remaining low. However, this does not mean we can be complacent and NSA has been involved in a survey that has highlighted areas for potentially reducing use on sheep farms, namely lameness control, abortion prevention and lambing shed management – more on pages 38-39. We have also increased our funding to the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) alliance and support its new www.farmantibiotics.org educational website.

Don't miss our Brexit update on page 1.



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Make your farm your fortress with crime prevention technology

By Laura Williams, NSA

Crime statistics show a re-emergence of sheep rustling since 2010, following a decade of historically low levels. There also seems to have been a change in the scale of crime, with hundreds of sheep now being stolen at once, rather than handfuls here and there.

Compared to data collected for the previous year, livestock theft was the only category to show an increase in 2015, up 7%, while thefts of tractors, ATVs, equine and rural homes all decreased.

Opting for livestock might be due to increased security around farm vehicles deterring thieves, while a correlation between prices and thefts often results in more crime when lamb prices are high. Claims for sheep rustling made to NFU Mutual are £2.9m on their own, so the total cost is much higher. Importantly, the health and welfare of stolen sheep is compromised, and years of hard work through breeding and improvement programmes disappear overnight.

Several police forces offer free advice on rural crime prevention, including a site-specific farm survey that combines the farmer's knowledge with the experience of the police to find the best crime solution or prevention tactic. This has worked well in Herefordshire, for example, where 350 farmers using the scheme and displaying Stop That Thief signs have not reported any further crimes in the last two years. The signs, displayed on the perimeter of a farm premises where thieves are most likely to enter, are only available to farmers who sign up to the scheme, so potential criminals know they are not a dummy.

Security equipment

If the initial on-farm survey concludes the business may benefit from equipment, a local approved supplier is contacted to install it for a trial period of three weeks. This might include a laser beam device that sounds an alarm when broken and sends a message to up to four devices registered by the farmer, alerting them to an intruder. Guard Cam devices also work well, which is both a security light and alarm, with the option to play your own deterring message and record movement for playback if needed.

Paul Crumpton, West Mercia Police Rural Crime Reduction Coordinator, urges farmers to also work together to report suspicions. He says: "Somebody always knows something. If you have a gut feeling about something, talk to the police. You may feel like nothing is happening but it is all part of a larger jigsaw puzzle and the more pieces we can get the better. If the risk of being caught is high, the reward to the potential thief is low. We need to work towards preventing the crime before it



Ask if your local police force will help you pinpoint security weaknesses on your farm.

even happens."

Security firm Westflight have been involved in Stop That Thief work with West Mercia Police and NFU Mutual. The family-owned company also farms in the Welsh hills so knows what is at stake. When looking to install security alarms and systems, the company recommends a three-step approach of prevention, detection and recovery. It offers these tips:-

- Careful consideration of what you want to achieve will assist you in making a good and effective decision about what type of security you want, and what actions you will take if it is used in anger.
- Use several discrete detection devices to alert you that intruders are on your property, and make it clear they have been detected using loud sirens, lights and strobes and could be challenged and apprehended at any moment.
- Test any security system regularly, at least weekly, and move it around when circumstances change. It's only any good if it works when you need it.

Telemetricor, a Hampshire-based security company, has joined the fight against rural crime with a recently launched piece of new technology. The high-tech yet easy-to-use system can operate over difficult terrain and send images back to a server to alert the farmer of intruders through a mobile phone app, which can be shared immediately with police or a neighbourhood watch group.

New technology

Hugo Stride, Telemetricor Director, says: "The system is incredibly versatile and removes the need for constantly watching out for suspicious activity. During a six-week trial of the product on a 4,000-acre estate, three separate incidents were prevented because the farmer was alerted to the suspicious activity from the comfort of his own home." Mr Stride offers these tips:-

- Completely preventing unwanted access is practically impossible on a large area of land. Accept this but work towards minimising it.
- A good, long-range sentry system, easily moved in response to crime patterns or as part of the day's rounds, will notify you promptly of intruders on your property.
- Alter intruders of the effective security measures you have, giving yourself as much notice and evidence as possible.

But what about technology specifically for sheep? SmartWater

has spent the last 20 years ensuring perpetrators of theft have been brought to justice through its forensic technology of permanent traceable liquid markers. It's used on everything from bank notes to copper wiring, and now trial work with Harper Adams University is critically examining the potential effectiveness and durability of SmartWater on sheep and lambs, experimenting with different stock paints and application sites.



A new Telemetric device captures crime images and sends them to a mobile phone app.

NSA has been supporting this work and the ambitions of SmartWater to drive down sheep rustling by providing an effective deterrent that anyone handling invisibly marked sheep will be identifiable.

While in this developmental stage, SmartWater has used its crime fighting expertise to provide these tips for farmers:-

- Signage at entrances and perimeter fencing should advise a potential perpetrator that the farmer is serious about security.
- Small appliances and tools should be held in locked steel shipping containers. Locks should be accredited high security locks that cannot be breached using a bolt cutter.
- Make sure sheep are identifiable and, where possible, padlock field gates and take time to inspect outside fences; visit your sheep at different times of the day.

Making sheep identifiable is difficult when eartags can be cut out, but NSA member Pip Simpson has attracted a huge amount of media attention with his colourful measures to protect his flock in Cumbria. Mr Simpson says he has lost more than 300 sheep to theft in the last four years and decided to act by spraying the sheep luminous orange. The spray does not affect the sheep but Mr Simpson hopes it will deter thieves or make it very easy to identify his sheep if they are stolen. Since doing this, he has gathered his sheep off the fell twice, with every single one accounted for.

Farmer co-operation

Mr Simpson has now reached out to NSA to help promote the message to members that sheep theft is a nationwide problem and that farmers must work together to clamp down on it. He would like to see a change in law so sheep can be microchipped, and is currently working with a company who develop microchips and GPS trackers. His hope is that the microchip will text the farmer once an individual sheep leaves a set radius, providing its location if theft is suspected. Currently, this kind of microchip would be too large to put under the skin, but the company is working on making it as small as possible while maintaining its function.

As a victim of crime on many occasions, Mr Simpson offers this advice:-

- Checking animals regularly is difficult if they are on the fell, but be vigilant and don't ignore any unusual or suspicious activity in the surrounding area.
- If you suspect black market activity, or a neighbour can't justify a sudden increase in sheep numbers, report it to your local farm watch group or to the police.
- Use the power of social media. An article about orange sheep got two million Facebook hits in one day.

Dial 101 to contact your local police force for advice or to report a crime. Also find out if they have a local rural crime co-ordinator.

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History of breeding, showing and judging adds expertise to NSA South West Sale

By Hannah Park, NSA

Showing and selling livestock is in the blood for David Darke. It is a lifelong passion that has not only earned him and his family their fair share of impressive wins over the years, but has seen him establish himself as a well-known personality in exhibitor and judging circles, as well as the wider farming community and NSA.

David's involvement with NSA spans more than four decades with his current commitment, as NSA South West Regional Ram Sale Chairman, beginning in 1988 when he joined the original founding committee. Fondly recalling its beginnings, David says: "I remember the day. A few of just us got chatting and the next thing we knew we'd formed a committee. We had our first sale in 1988 in Whipton, Devon, where the Devon County Showground used to be.



David Darke.

"We used to see between 1,000 and 1,100 sheep go through the ring and spent several years on the original site before moving to where we hold the sale today at Westpoint, the Exeter Livestock Centre, to cut costs."

Inspections

In addition to chairing the committee, David also does all the pre-sale inspections, alongside Harrold Keas and other members of the committee, a process he says is key to the sales continued success. "I'm sure I've been given the nickname Dentist Darke," he jokes. "But as far as I'm concerned there are no in-betweens, a ram is either correct or not. We've kept up a high standard so it's encouraging that buyers and sellers recognise that and come back year after year.

"The sale has grown in size in the last few years, introducing the option to enter crossbred rams in 2015 and females in 2016, alongside official breed society females which have always been at the sale. We'll be continuing with that and see how it progresses."

David also mentions the introduction of the SureSheep scheme this year, which vendors can opt into. The scheme aims to provide an additional guarantee to buyers that rams are healthy and prepared for work, and was embraced by the committee to try and attract more purchasers.



Fact File

- Long-term involvement for David in NSA, including NSA South West Regional Chairman (1992-1995), event organiser and a former member of what was the NSA Council. He is the current NSA South West Region Ram Sale Chairman.
- David has travelled all over the UK and overseas showing and judging. Destinations include Northern and Southern Ireland, France, Africa and New Zealand.
- The 450-cow Friesian dairy herd is now the primary enterprise on the farm, although David still takes an active interest in the sheep sector.

David's hard work is not limited to the sale of course. It is evident on the home farm too, South Hurish at Kingsbridge, Devon, where his family began farming in 1931. Originally tenanted by his grandfather, David bought the farm in 1975. It is

now managed in partnership between David, wife Jill, daughter-in-law Sue and grandson Tom. With three full-time staff members to share the work, Tom has taken on the day-to-day running of the farm's 450-head Friesian dairy herd.

The farm is spread over 285ha (700

acres) with several fields bordering the cliff-edge of the South Devon coastline. Just over half of the ground is owned with the other half rented on a permanent basis. It is managed in three and four-year grass leys with around 200ha (500 acres) of silage cut three times annually for home use.

Milking herd

The milking stock is kept pure to breed replacements, by natural mating or AI, with some heifers put to Aberdeen-Angus bulls. Crossbred calves and Friesian bull calves are sold at a few weeks old. This is managed in the face of an ongoing TB challenge, with the farm being under movement restrictions on and off for

around 15 years, during which time more than 300 animals have been lost.

The dairy herd has now replaced sheep as the primary activity on the farm, after the decision was made four years ago to sell the sheep. David says this was disheartening but necessary for the farm's future success to focus resources on one enterprise.

Sheep breeding

Before this, the farm ran a flock of 200 ewes, including 120 pedigree South Devon ewes, a breed which has since been amalgamated with the Devon and Cornwall Longwool. There were also 80 Hampshire Downs, which were later replaced by Texels.

David explains: "My grandfather established the flock of South Devons in 1908, originally to produce and sell breeding stock, through private sales mainly, but some at shows and

sales on the back of wins. I decided to introduce Hampshires to the farm after I left school, when we started to have difficulty selling our South Devon males, and we began selling breeding stock from the Hampshires once the flock had become established.

"In a competitive market it took a bit of time to build up a reputation with new buyers, but we managed it. We went onto introduce Texel breeding in the 1970s, as its popularity as a terminal sire began to grow at that time."

With a heavy focus on showing, David explains how lambing dates moved earlier and earlier each year, eventually settling at 1st January. He continues: "The shift from the original outdoor system my grandfather established to an indoor one was essential to minimise losses, especially during the harsh winters in the 1950s and 1960s.

Continued on page 24



The Friesian dairy herd is now the primary enterprise at South Hurish.

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► The farm's proximity to the sea also meant salt burn could be a real problem."

David talks fondly about how his passion for showing and, later, judging has taken him to shows and sales all over the world. As well as all parts of mainland UK and Northern Ireland, he was invited to the Republic of Ireland, France, Africa and New Zealand, forming what he describes as some of his fondest memories along the way.

"I was first asked to judge overseas in 1979," says David. "I judged the Hampshire Downs at the Royal Show in



Home-bred Friesian heifers are kept as replacements.

Nairobi, Kenya, and from there a number of times in New Zealand, including the Centenary All Breeds Show 1985 in Christchurch. That was quite an honour, as was being asked to judge the supreme champion at what was the Royal Smithfield and Royal Agricultural Society Show here in the UK. I've also judged at the Royal Welsh, Great Yorkshire and Three Counties.

"Judging is what started Jill and I off travelling abroad really. We've seen and experienced so many things in other countries we wouldn't have had the chance to otherwise. I always consider it an honour to be asked, whether it's a one-day local show or one of the large well-known nationals."

Show success

It's his own success in the show ring David credits for getting these opportunities, referring mostly to his former flock of Devon and Cornwall Longwools when listing his numerous titles won at agricultural shows across South West England, including the Royal Bath and West, Devon County and Royal Cornwall. The pinnacle was arguably winning supreme champion at the former Royal Show in 1985 with a Devon and Cornwall two-shear ram.

When asked about what the future

holds, David makes no secret of his concern for the industry as a whole on the back of the recent Brexit decision. He says: "The falling value of the pound has clearly done wonders for lamb exports and made considerable difference in helping keep a much more level trade. Consistency is what producers are after, but I think we are going to see more volatility for most of our commodities in the future, because we'll need to negotiate a lot more with the world market and, as a result, will be subject to world fluctuations."

Farming future

"Farming and the rural communities can't expect to be looked after like Europe has looked after us and I certainly can't see the consumer paying the real market price for the cost of British farmers' production, because they've not been used to doing that."

In terms of his own farm business, David explains how it is still reeling from the impact of the low milk price. "We are looking to downsize," he says. "We'll be reducing cow numbers by another 100 in 2017, to cut production and labour costs. I think, and certainly hope, we have reached the bottom though. There seems to be a bit more optimism in the marketplace now."

Minimising costs is top priority

By Alan Stone, Old Mill Accountants
Given the favourable currency exchange rates for export at present, and the related demand for British lamb, you could relax and believe that happy days are here.



However it is very important that you do not take your eyes off the ball. In agriculture in general and sheep farming in particular, what goes around usually comes around sooner than you would like. Global currencies and sterling are rather volatile at the moment.

Whatever the state of the market, there is always a need to focus on costs. Don't wait to be challenged by changes in market conditions. Be proactive and make the most of current opportunities by running an efficient business now to maximise returns during beneficial trading conditions. This will also mean you are efficient for when times might be more challenging.

Best resource use

Usually this is not a case of seeking a cheaper deal for purchases but making sure you make best use of the resources available to you and implementing the latest thinking. In order to stay ahead in volatile markets it is important to consider farming practise and if the implementation of different methods might suit you. For example, would moving to an outdoor lambing or weaning lambs to sell early help your business?

Cost analysis and monitoring across the business is important and there is now a whole raft of software options



Focus on costs, even when income is not as difficult as sometimes.

available to make that easier. At Old Mill we see cloud accounting software as an attractive option, recommending a system that enables you to see your financial performance in real time and does not require time-consuming data input. We are also watching an Irish software business that is developing a suite of products to help monitor inputs, outputs and even benchmarking for various aspects of farming. There are increasingly fewer excuses for remaining in the dark about how you are performing.

Whatever the market situation, a focus on costs will help you ensure your business is robust. Attention to costs now will help proof your business against times when the situation turns more challenging.

EPC rules apply to farm property

If you let farm property, including tied properties or those for workers on an assured short-term let, you need to be aware of forthcoming changes to rules around energy.

All properties re-let from 1st April 2018 must have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) with an E rating or better, with the same rule applying to existing tenancies from 2020, even if they are in continual occupancy with the same tenant.

Energy Performance Certificates

EPCs are needed whenever a domestic property is built, sold or rented. They contain information about a property's energy use and typical energy costs, plus recommendations about how to reduce energy use and save money.

Despite being introduced under an EU directive, they are widely expected to continue for the foreseeable future. EPCs give efficiency ratings from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient) and are valid for 10 years.

Details at www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/greenerbuildings/epc.

Andrew Fallows of Carter Jonas in York says: "This has the potential to create headaches for some landowners if they aren't properly prepared. After April 2018 they won't be able to let out a house with a rating lower than E unless they have 'made use of all available funding or subsidy to make all reasonable improvements'."

Assessments

He says landlords should start by getting assessments done: "Audits cost around £40 each and will pinpoint the efficiency issues that need addressing. Low cost measures include lighting and roof insulation, and cavity wall insulation is also fairly cheap. Expenses start rising when you are looking at new thermostats and boilers, heating systems, double glazing, wall cladding or renewable technologies."

Mr Fallows adds that many improvements do attract grant funding but the application process can be time-consuming if a number of properties are involved. "The most important point is to plan ahead so you aren't left with empty properties and a backlog of work once the regulations come in," he says.

Adrian Cawood from the Agricultural

Energy Efficiency Rating		
	Current	Potential
Very energy efficient - lower running costs		
(92-100) A		
(81-91) B		
(69-80) C	74	76
(55-68) D		
(39-54) E		
(21-38) F		
(1-20) G		
Not energy efficient - higher running costs		

Energy efficiency ratings run from A to G. Let properties will require E or above.

Mortgage Corporation (AMC) says farms and estate owners can borrow to renovate if they want to avoid hitting cashflow.

He says: "The cost to upgrade properties is usually £25,000 to £100,000, so it is best to look for a standard loan that can be drawn down in phased tranches. It's also wise to identify a longer term repayment loan that can fit in with the returns from the property. Usually the EPC improvements are carried out alongside some upgrading, and both can result in an uplift in rental value and yield."

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Forage analysis is the first step in getting pre-lambing nutrition right

By Nerys Wright, AHDB Beef & Lamb
Maximising ewe intakes from forage (grass or conserved feed) is key to keeping supplement costs and, therefore, variable costs down. However, this will depend largely on the quality and quantity of forage available.



Forage analysis should underpin decisions about concentrate purchases.

Many producers will have been able to produce adequate amounts of conserved forage this year, but the quality will vary depending on when it was cut. This variability will make forage sampling even more important.

Recent trial work measuring the dry matter intakes of ewes in late pregnancy found they consumed more than 2% of their liveweight on a range of forages (grass silage, lucerne, red clover and urea-treated whole-crop wheat). While it would be difficult to practically calculate the daily intake of each individual ewe on every farm, ensuring ewes have adequate access to forage at all times will help optimise intake of energy and protein from forage. And analysis of the forages determine the metabolisable energy (ME) and crude protein (CP) will underpin the need for supplementation.

A forage analysis report can look daunting and difficult to interpret but for sheep there are a few key results to utilise – see table.

Once analysis has taken place and a decision to supplementary feed has been made, there are several factors to consider when looking to buy concentrates to fill the forage gap:-

- Shop around for the best price. Ask for quotes and specifications from two or three companies.
- Be prepared to pay for the better ingredients. Cheap is not always best.
- Analyse the specification in detail, especially when comparing two feeds that may vary by £15/tonne.
- Look at the ingredients, especially the protein sources. The ingredients determine the protein percentage of the overall compound. For example, an 18% protein compound containing 10% soya would be a higher-quality feed than a 20% protein feed where the main ingredient is urea
- Look at the fibre level, as fibre is low in energy and a high content will reduce the energy density of the diet. It is important for ewes to eat fibre,

but it should come from the forage not the compound feed.

Energy and protein are crucial components of a ewe's diet. Feeding sufficient levels of protein in late pregnancy and lactation not only has benefits for the ewe and her growing lambs for that production year, but also has an impact on their future performance and longevity. Under-feeding protein has been linked to poor milk production and higher mastitis incidence, which contributes to higher culling rates. This is especially true for ewes rearing their first lambs, as ewes only develop mammary tissue when pregnant for the first time.

Shearlings

The sheep key performance indicator (KPI) project, funded by AHDB Beef & Lamb, has identified that the age group of ewes that contribute the highest number of light lambs at eight weeks of age (defined as 17kg or lighter when flock average is 20kg) are shearling ewes lambing for the first time. Further research is required but the evidence suggests that careful feeding of young ewes in late pregnancy and lactation should be considered to improve eight-week weights of the lambs from shearling ewes.

AHDB Beef & Lamb is currently working on an updated version of the 1983 Feeding the Ewe manual. The new document will be available at www.beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk, where you can also download manuals on 'Managing ewes for better returns', 'Improving ewe nutrition for better returns' and 'Breeding from ewe lambs'.

Interpreting a forage analysis report	
Dry matter (DM)	The measure of what is not water. Pregnant ewes have restricted space and wet forage will fill them up with water, making it harder for them to eat the amount of energy needed.
Digestibility (or D value)	How quickly the rumen will digest the feed. The higher the D value the more digestible it is, meaning it will be digested quicker and enable ewes to eat more each day.
Metabolisable energy (ME)	The amount of energy in the feed that the rumen bugs can utilise. The higher the ME the better energy source the feed is.
Crude protein (CP)	Total protein content of a food source as determined by its nitrogen content. This does not differentiate between the different types of protein in sheep feed. These is rumen degradable protein (protein that is broken down and utilised by the rumen bugs to produce microbial protein) and digestible undegradable protein (protein that passes through the rumen and is digested and absorbed in the intestines). The latter is mostly used for milk production and energy in late pregnancy.
pH (for silage)	Measure of acidity and an indicator of the fermentation process. Poor fermentation will lead to unfavourable smells that discourage the ewe from eating as much.



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Condition scoring and biochemistry for metabolic monitoring of females

By Victoria Fisher, Farm First Veterinary Services, Abergavenny



The major pitfall around lambing time is often inappropriate nutrition, which can have many disastrous consequences to ewe welfare, lamb survivability and overall profitability.

Poor nutrition can be the result of either underfeeding or overfeeding and can lead to problems such as twin lamb disease (pregnancy toxemia), hypocalcaemia, poor birth weights, poor colostrum quality and yield, and poor lamb vigour.

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a vital tool that should be used throughout the year to monitor fat over the loin, but is particularly useful at weaning, tupping, mid-pregnancy and lambing – see table. Checking BCS in mid-pregnancy is vital, as this allows adequate time to correct nutrition before the ewe reaches the last trimester of pregnancy. A ewe that is a little under-condition may be given a little extra feed to gain condition, while a ewe that is over condition can be carefully managed to limit weight gain; reducing BCS at this stage can be tricky.

Nutrition

The metabolic requirement of the ewe rises rapidly in the last eight weeks of pregnancy, as 70% of foetal growth occurs at this time. A suitable diet is required to meet this increase in energy and protein demand, but a major limiting factor is the volume of food the ewe is physically able to consume due to the increasing womb size taking up space in her abdomen. As a rule of thumb for dry matter intake, a pregnant ewe can eat approximately 2.2% of her bodyweight.

An ideal diet should consist of good quality forage supplemented with as little concentrate feed as possible. It is therefore a good idea to get your forage analysed, a service that is available



Metabolic testing six weeks before lambing gives time to make adjustments.

through most feed companies, as there is a wide variation in the protein and energy levels between forages. From this data you can calculate how much concentrate will be needed to meet energy and protein requirements.

Energy is the most common problem in sheep diets, either too much or not enough. For example, a twin-bearing Mule ewe requires 11.5MJ of energy seven weeks prior to lambing, rising to 18.3MJ one week before she lambs. A similar single-bearing ewe requires 10MJ and 14.4MJ respectively. Feeding both ewes the same diet is likely to result in the single-bearing ewe gaining condition, a higher lamb birthweight and therefore a more difficult lambing.

Energy lack

Twin lamb disease is one of the most common problems in the heavily pregnant ewe. This is where the energy demands of the ewe are not met by the diet provided, resulting in an overproduction of ketones – see

diagram. These are not as efficient an energy source as glucose and are poorly utilised by the brain. This results in clinical signs including isolation, lethargy, inappetence, blindness, 'stargazing', teeth grinding, muscle tremor, head-pressing and recumbancy.

Over-fat ewes at lambing also suffer twin lamb disease, as although they have a good store of energy as fat, they often have a poorer appetite. This fat is broken down so rapidly the liver is unable to cope and this can cause liver damage.

In addition to energy, protein is required in the diet for the immune system, foetal growth, colostrum/milk yield and, in particular, colostrum quality; immunoglobulins are the proteins in the colostrum that protect the lamb from infection. Supplying elevated protein levels in the ewe around lambing has also been linked with reduced worm egg output and decreased incidence of acute mastitis post lambing.

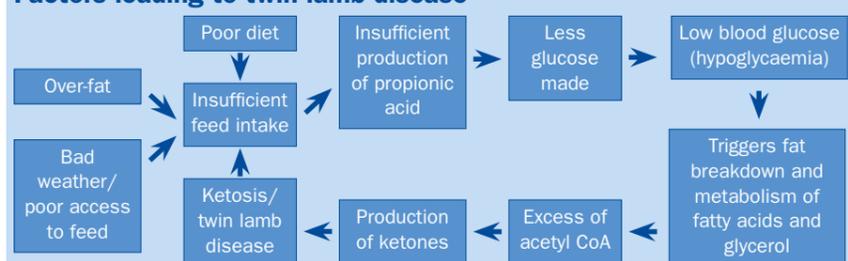
Protein types

There are different sources of protein in ruminant nutrition. Effective rumen degradable protein (ERDP), such as grass, urea and beans, is used by the microbes in the rumen to make microbial crude protein (MCP). Throughout the rest of the productive year this form of protein is adequate, and is often also adequate for single bearing ewes, but is insufficient for ewes carrying multiple lambs. These ewes often require a source of digestible undegradable protein (DUP), such as soya, that bypasses the rumen and goes directly to the intestines for digestion.

Metabolic profiling is blood sampling a group of ewes in the run up to pregnancy to monitor energy and protein. This is a useful early warning system to indicate if there are any shortfalls in the diet that need to be addressed. Metabolic profiles look at three parameters, which need to be interpreted carefully and can be added to with calcium and magnesium checks where concerns exist.

- **Ketones** (HB) are an indicator of energy metabolism – see diagram – and even mild elevations can be detected, indicating the ration needs to be altered to prevent twin lamb disease closer to lambing.
- **Albumin** is an indicator of long-term protein metabolism. Low levels can indicate poor feed quality or

Factors leading to twin lamb disease



Target body condition score for ewes:-			
	Hill ewes	Upland ewes	Lowland ewes
At weaning	2	2	2.5
At tupping	2.5	3	3.5
Mid-pregnancy	2	2.5	3
At lambing	2	2.5	3

underestimation of the protein content of the diet. Albumin levels may also be reduced in sick animals or those suffering from kidney disease, parasite infestations or Johne's.

- **Urea** is an indicator of short-term protein metabolism and energy metabolism. Low levels of urea can indicate there is a shortage of ERDP in the diet and, in some instances, can also indicate a lack of energy in the diet.

Sampling should ideally be done four to six weeks prior to the expected lambing date, as this is when the ewes metabolic requirements are increasing, but still allows enough time for the diet to be adjusted. Any abnormalities at this stage will often be mild, but action needs to be taken before demands rapidly increase. If done too far in advance of lambing there is unlikely to be an increase in requirement and results are often normal. Ewes should be sampled at least four hours after concentrate feeding, as this can alter the results.



Nutrition affects colostrum and milk quantity and quality.

The aim is to sample a group of ewes that represent the majority of the flock and are expected to lamb the earliest. Sample five or six ewes per group if the flock has been scanned, or at least 10 if not scanned. Avoid sampling ewes which are obviously poorer or sick, as their results are likely to be skewed and not represent the flock, although it may be a good idea to check these animals on an individual basis.

Your vet will always be happy to speak to you about managing your ewes in the run up to lambing, including metabolic profiling and body condition scoring.

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Getting the most from scanning

Like many other activities carried out on an annual basis, a certain amount of complacency and lack of understanding of the basics can lead to pregnancy scanning being carried out in far from ideal conditions.

As one scanner says: "The skill of the scanning operator, even those with years of experience, can easily be compromised. A skilled operator will work around some aspects, but be aware that it can slow them up – or compromise accuracy from less experienced scanners. Work with your scanner to get the best result for your flock and, as these are the opinions of a few operators, find out just what your own scanning operator's protocols are by asking them."

- Although there are small differences between scanners, the consensus is to scan at 80-90 days into gestation. The simplest way to achieve this is to book early, particularly if you lamb at the peak time of late-March/early-April.
- During the months prior to scanning, do not mark in the area on the fleece that gets marked at scanning. Otherwise this leads to 'confusion marks'.
- Plan in advance to ensure you have sufficient labour on scanning day to do the job as efficiently as possible.
- Plan to have the sheep as empty as possible, as this makes a real difference to the person holding the probe. Grass, hay and straw are just about workable, as they are high fibre and less compacted, but silage and roots make scanning difficult without some fasting.
- Please do not use scanning as an occasion to carry out other tasks, as this can impact the job in hand.
- There are many marking options, but the best one will be the one the operator uses. Those operators that do their own marking have less of a problem, but if you supply someone make certain they concentrate and can react quickly to instructions.
- Drafting afterwards is not good if it requires someone to be stood in front, as it puts sheep off exiting. Some operators operate their own system, which does work.
- Endeavour to receive all information from the scanner, not just numbers. Information about earlies, lates and reabsorptions in their marking system are important for flock management.
- Check with your scanner what they will need for biosecurity management before they move on to their next customer.



Some forward-planning can make life easier for your scanner and for you.

Armoury of options puts disease prevention at top of priority list

By Beth Wells, Moredun

Prevention is better than cure. It may be an overused statement but it is definitely true when it comes to endemic livestock diseases, which provide the greatest constraint to improving livestock production efficiency.



Diagnostic, vaccines and management strategies all aid disease prevention.

However, with a strong armoury at our disposal in terms of diagnostics, vaccines and management strategies, we have never been better placed to put disease prevention at the top of our priorities for improving efficiency.

Good farm biosecurity is at the heart of disease prevention and, in looking at ways of improving this, there is a 'big five' to consider.

- 1. Livestock movement:** This is the most likely route for introducing disease. Run closed herds and flocks, or buy from accredited schemes or trusted sources if at all possible.
- 2. Quarantine:** Always keep introduced animals isolated. Ensure best practice quarantine conditions and check quarantine periods for key diseases.
- 3. Diagnostic tests and preventative vaccines:** Use these whenever recommended, as knowing disease status is important and prevention is better than cure.
- 4. Hygiene:** Practice good hygiene including the use of effective disinfectants. Provision of good environmental conditions will lead to reduced risk of infection.
- 5. Health plans:** Improve disease prevention and control by developing flock and herd health plans in consultation with your vet. Use and update them regularly.

The next step is then to look at the diseases you want to target for your particular flock or herd. A useful tool in doing this is the recently produced Moredun biosecurity handbook on the key diseases affecting UK livestock, which was put together by 17 disease experts from Moredun and beyond.

It is accompanied by a useful chart (pictured) that can be used as a quick reference when information is required on, for example, sheep scab when new tups have been brought into the farm. At a glance it is clear from the poster that scab is a notifiable disease in Scotland and has a quarantine period of at least two weeks, with diagnostics, treatments, disinfectants and best practice guidelines available.

Handbook and poster

This information is expanded in the handbook where an explanation of how *Psoroptes* mites are transmitted and why all incoming animals must be quarantined, even if they are returning wintering hogs or summer grazed animals.

The current advice is to treat every incoming sheep with an approved product and quarantine isolated from the main flock for at least two weeks.



During this time, the quarantined animals should be observed carefully for any signs of scratching, rubbing, nibbling, wool loss and deranged wool.

The Moredun biosecurity handbook is accompanied by a quick-reference poster.

If any of these signs are in evidence, a diagnosis must be obtained.

It is important to stress that the longest quarantine time for all the diseases you are trying to prevent is used so, for example, if liver fluke was under consideration as well as sheep scab, the quarantine time would be increased to three weeks. And it is safe to say that incoming animals should never be mixed with the resident flock without considering the possible disease risks, even if you are a ram short.

Health planning

When multiple diseases are being considered, health plans are especially useful for monitoring the disease control strategies that have been put in place, as well as providing a reminder of when testing or prophylactic treatments and vaccines are due, providing accurate and timely application.

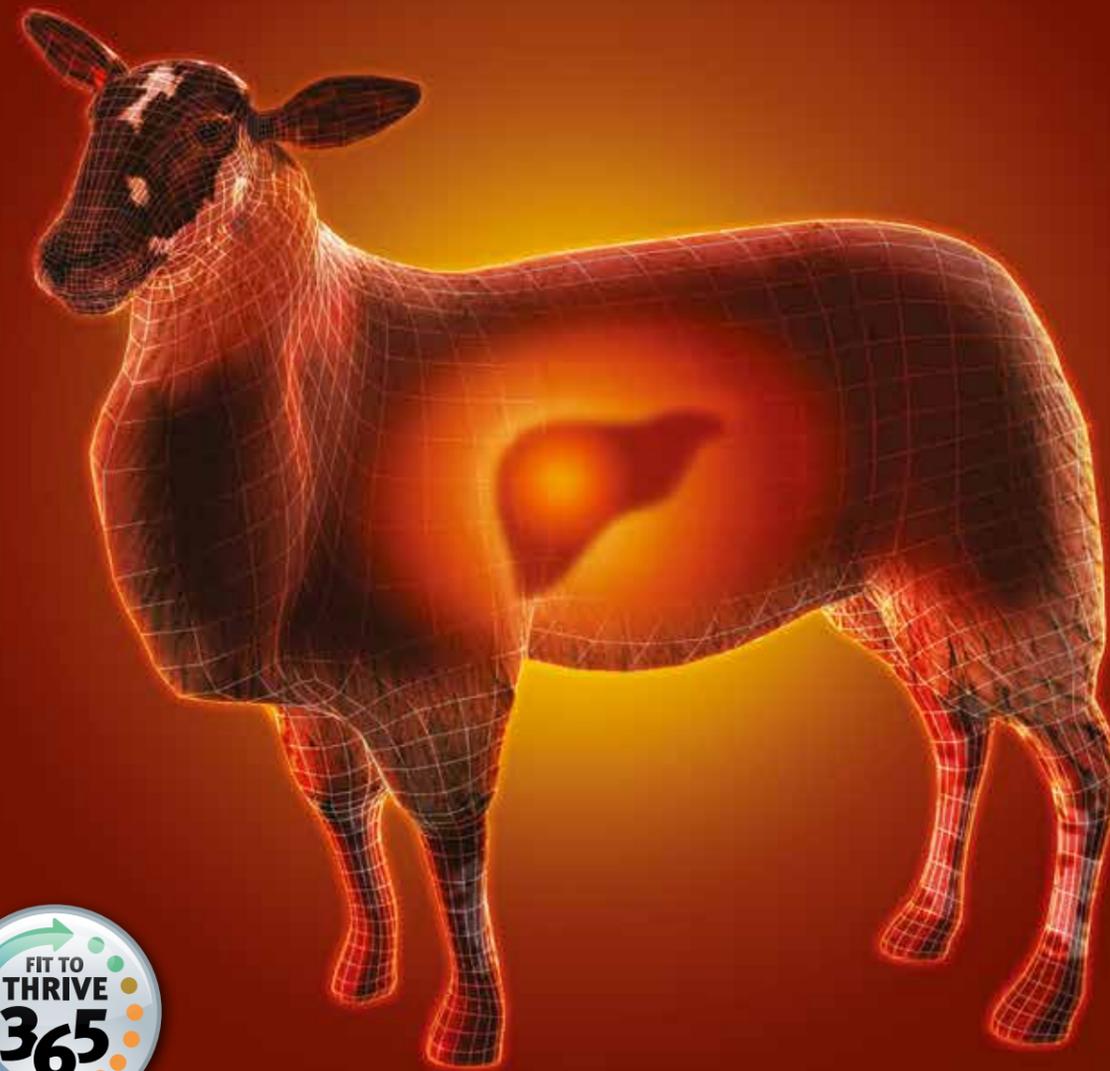
Improvements in farm biosecurity need not be complicated and a checklist of more straightforward wins is a good way forward, such as focussing on farm boundaries including fencing, farm entry and exit points and farm buildings. At the entrance to all farm buildings, disinfection footbaths are advisable and are essential at the entrance of the quarantine facilities, along with a change in overclothes. Remembering that quarantined animals must be fed and checked last.

Another way forward is to target one or two diseases and give 100% effort into best practice biosecurity for these. This is a better approach than having a stab at all the key diseases and not doing any one thoroughly, as this approach will end in failure and disappointment.

As well as the longer term benefits of good farm biosecurity, there are definite economic advantages to checking, testing and, if necessary, treating any animals in quarantine. This is because any required treatments are restricted to a small group rather than the whole flock or herd.

As NSA members are automatically Moredun associate members too, the biosecurity handbook and poster was distributed with the August/September edition of *Sheep Farmer* magazine. Contact Moredun for an additional copy on 01314 455111 or beth.wells@moredun.ac.uk.

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Lamb price provides additional incentive to rear surplus lambs

Predictions that lamb prices could remain strong next year should be an added incentive to do the best by surplus lambs this spring, says Volac Technical Specialist Ian Watson.

"It's always worth rearing as many lambs as you can, but it could really pay next year," he says. "Our advice is to plan ahead and re-examine current practices in order to rear as many surplus lambs as possible. Every sheep producer has to cope with surplus lambs to a certain extent, but when prices are weak the motivation to be as productive as possible just isn't there. It should be now."

In addition to rearing orphans, Mr Watson recommends removing any third and fourth lambs from their mothers to help boost lamb survival rates and performance. When deciding which lamb to remove from a triplet-bearing ewe, he advises removing either the smallest or the largest one to leave a balanced pair.

Colostrum intake

"Whichever lamb is chosen it must be sucking well, been with its mother for 24 hours after birth and have received a good supply of colostrum, particularly in the first six hours of life," he says.

Mr Watson claims more sheep farmers are becoming as accepting as professional calf rearers about the latest technology available. Quoting a 135% increase in sales of



Ensure lambs are in a draft-free pen with clean, dry bedding.

automatic lamb milk feeders for the 2016 lambing season, he highlights the advantages over traditional restricted feeding with a bottle or teated bucket.

"Farmers are undoubtedly attracted by the labour-saving benefits and the fact machine-rearing frees up time to focus on other important jobs," he says. "But they also report faster



Keeping pipes behind a wire mesh stops lambs chewing them and pulling them into the pen.

growth rates because there is no limit to how much or when the lambs can drink. Producers also say they see fewer digestive upsets.

"Most significantly, users report a decent margin over lifetime feed of £15-£25 per lamb. This margin could be even healthier in 2017 if lamb prices and demand remains buoyant."

Mr Watson stresses that machines are no substitute for good husbandry, a message that is echoed by Gill Dickson, Pyon Products Youngstock Specialist.

"Lambs need shelter from draughts and to have deep straw bedding to keep them clean and warm," she says, adding that pens should be well drained to ensure good hygiene levels.

"Place teats at 12-15 inches (30-38cm) from the ground, and fix the suckler plates with a max of 10 lambs per teat," Mrs Dickson says. "Place a piece of weldmesh behind the teats so the lambs can't pull the pipes into the pen."

Weaning

"There is no need to feed hay, as it will stop them from eating lamb creep and give them a pot belly. The starch in the lamb creep is essential to stimulate development of the rumen and encourage cudding. Make sure there is a very small amount of fresh concentrate given each day, with straw and fresh water. Typical lambs on artificial rearing systems use 10-12.5kg of milk powder and 75-100kg of creep per head."

Mr Watson recommends a creep feed with 18% crude protein, saying lambs should be weaned abruptly at no less than five weeks of age when they are eating an average of 0.25kg of creep a day over three days.

Artificial rearing tips

By Gill Dickson, Pyon Products

1. Source a suitable lamb milk powder. Calf milk powder is cheaper but contains too much copper for lambs.
2. Weigh the powder and mix according to the manufacturer's instructions.
3. Leave the lamb on the ewe for 24 hours if possible, to get sufficient colostrum. Alternatively, feed fresh ewe colostrum by teated bottle or pipe during the first six hours of life, or defrosted ewe's colostrum or powdered colostrum. Aim for four feeds of 50ml/kg liveweight in the first 24hrs.
4. Leave the lamb under a heat lamp or warming box, to get warm and hungry.
5. Mix warm milk powder and introduce the lamb to the teated bottle. When sucking keenly, transfer to an ad lib teat bar.
6. After six hours, check the lamb's belly is full or lead him up to the teat again.
7. Clean teats and lines and refresh the barrel once per day, whether you're feeding milk cold or warm.
8. Never let the teat run dry or mix stale milk with new milk.

Product news

Gem-like rodenticides

Lodi UK is leading its new range of rodenticides with Sapphire Grain, a bait that contains whole and cut wheat and will kill in a single feed. It is available in 3kg, 5kg and 20kg mixed grain packs, as well as 50g sachets in 5kg packs.

There is also Sapphire Paste (pictured), formulated from premium grade cereals mulched and mixed with peanut butter oils, making it attractive to rodents even in the most difficult environments, again killing in a single feed.

The 'gems' range is completed with bromadiolone-based Jade baits, available in grain, block, paste and cluster grain form and designed to be highly palatable, and also difenacoum-based Ruby baits, in block and paste form with an 'irresistible' combination of aniseed and peanut oils. *More on 01384 404242 or www.lodi-uk.com.*



rolls. Each roll has 216 patches and is supplied in boxes of 36.

The company has also released figures for the first time showing reduced dry matter losses in silage clamps sealed with an oxygen barrier film rather than a standard polyethylene sheet. The work carried out at the INRA Research Centre in France compared two identical clamps of perennial ryegrass silage. The one sealed with an oxygen barrier showed lower dry matter losses (7% versus 15.2%), lower reductions in butyric acid levels (17.2% v 7.35%) and higher acetic levels (15.9% v 6.26%). *More at www.silostop.com.*

Rappa revamp

Following an overhaul of its range of mobile handling equipment, Rappa is now selling five different systems.

Its existing three mid-range systems, the Series 10 Compact, Standard and Super, are now complemented at either end by a Series 8 Buggy for flocks of up to 70 sheep and a Series 12 Super for flocks of more than 500 head.

The company says it reviewed its range as part of the process to gain Type Approval status for its UK trailers,

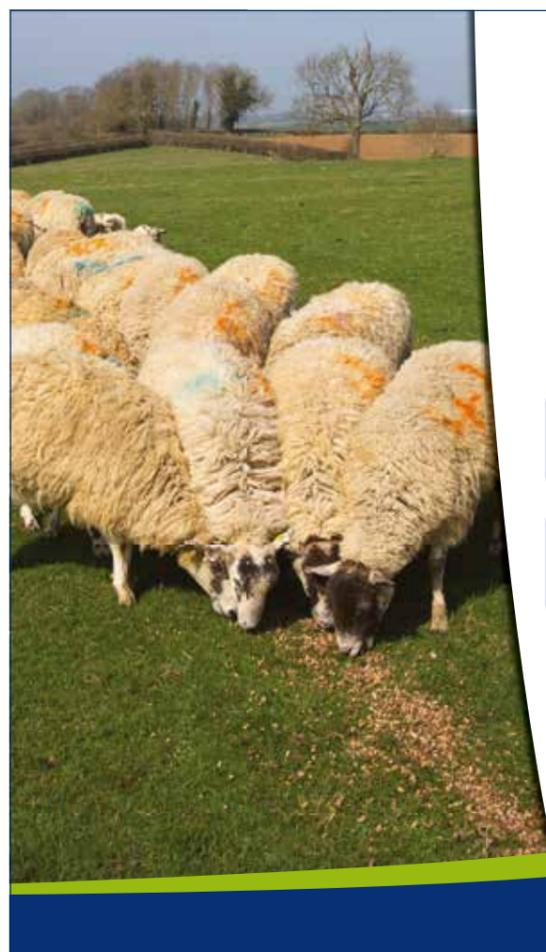


making them all legally compliant with new regulations. This prompted a look at other aspects of the design and resulted in a number of additions and new features. As well as introducing the Series 8 and Series 12, all the Series 10 models now come with a new winch bridge position, new drawbar design and increased hurdle capacity. *More on 01264 810665 or www.rappamobileyards.co.uk.*

Lightweight wellies

Protecto has adding a new Challenger welly to its Border range, claiming they will keep feet warm down to temperature of -30°C despite being lightweight.

The company says that even the full safety version, with steel top cap, is lighter than many non-safety boots. The ability of the polyurethane boots to resist corrosion from chemicals means they could also last three times longer than conventional PVC rubber boots. *More on 01948 667676 or www.dairyspares.com.*



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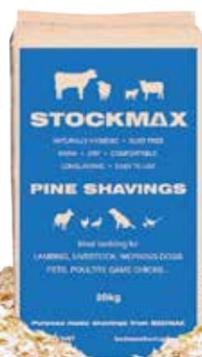
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Vaccination ahead of key risk periods reduces the threat of pasteurellosis

By Amanda Carson, Animal and Plant Health Agency
In September this year, post-mortem centres in England, Wales and Scotland reported cases of systemic *Bibersteinia trehalosi* infection in sheep, also known as systemic pasteurellosis.

Typically six to nine-month-old lambs are affected, with disease outbreaks usually occurring between October and December. However, it can also be seen in adult animals.

Bibersteinia trehalosi is a bacteria found in the tonsils and throat of healthy animals. When animals become stressed, for example due to poor nutrition or excessive worm burdens, the immune system can become suppressed and allow these bacteria



Haemorrhages in the chest wall and heart caused by pasteurellosis.

to multiply and spread through the body. While one of the classic signs of bacteria spread, via the bloodstream, can be seen at post mortem examination as haemorrhages in the carcass (pictured), diagnostic confirmation of the disease requires culture of the bacterium from multiple body sites.

Immune suppression

In one case, seven lambs aged six months died from a group that had received a full vaccination course that included pasteurella, and had been wormed two weeks earlier. However, post mortem found a worm egg count of 9,450 trichostrongyle-type eggs per gram in one of the lambs, which was considered to be a likely trigger-factor for systemic pasteurellosis and also suggested anthelmintic resistance. Relevant advice was provided, including to reassess worming protocols on the farm. In another case three adult rams, all in good condition, died suddenly. The rams had been vaccinated, wormed and dipped a week earlier. In this case it is possible additional handling or other environmental or management changes, such as introducing new rams to a group, contributed to stress that led to the development of the disease.

Control of pasteurellosis is best achieved by vaccination. Farmers and their vets should work together to plan and complete vaccination against pasteurellosis before the likely period of risk, so before the advent of cold weather or other predictable stressors. Vaccines don't cover all strains of pasteurella so it is important that a proper diagnosis is made, and if vaccine failure is still suspected this should be reported to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate via your vet.

More from APHA

Liver fluke

Both SCOPS and NADIS are warning farmers to be on their guard against liver fluke this autumn, due to this year's mild winter and wet summer.

Planning liver fluke treatments can be difficult, especially for farms that have suspected resistance to triclabendazole, the drug that is most effective against the immature stages of the parasite. To help respond to the liver fluke threat this autumn, find specific information on how to assess the fluke risk of a farm or pastures within a farm at www.scops.org.uk, as well as quarantine recommendations for incoming stock and details of the effectiveness of different flukicidal drugs against different stages of the parasite.

Oxyclozanide poisoning

The Bristol University Farm Animal Pathology Service recently investigated a case where sheep developed swollen faces and heads. A group of 300 replacement ewe lambs had been drenched with a combination product (containing oxyclozanide and levamisole) and three days later at least six were off-colour, developed droopy ears, had high temperatures and their faces began to slowly swell – see picture. Two affected ewe lambs died, while a further 13 animals in the group developed the same clinical signs the following day.

The case was reported to APHA due to concerns about bluetongue, which causes swelling and is a notifiable disease. The official disease investigation ruled bluetongue out, and

oxyclozanide poisoning was suspected due to the observed clinical signs and similar cases seen by APHA Veterinary Investigation Centres and SAC Disease Surveillance Centres.

Combination oxyclozanide and levamisole products require frequent mixing during dosing, to prevent possible settling out of the suspension. Weighing of stock prior to treatment is also essential to prevent both overdosing (which can be fatal) and under-dosing (which is a known risk factor in the development of anthelmintic resistance).

In this case, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate was informed of an adverse effect to a veterinary product and, following a food safety risk assessment, the farmer was advised that affected sheep should not be slaughtered for 28 days after drenching.

International congress

The UK is proud to be hosting the Ninth International Sheep Veterinary Congress in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, on 22nd-26th May 2017. The theme is sustainable global food security and anyone wishing to present a paper is invited to submit an abstract of approximately 400 words.

Details at www.sheepvetsoc.org.uk/isvc2017.



The swollen face of a ewe lamb with suspected oxyclozanide poisoning.

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No part of the UK is exempt from the liver fluke risk this winter

By Lesley Stubbings, SCOPS

Sheep farmers in areas where liver fluke is endemic are well aware that they need to be on their guard over the coming months.

One of the mildest winters on record followed by a very wet summer has left some regions, for example North and West Wales, North West England and Scotland, at high risk.

But what about those areas that don't get a mention in the national warnings? If you are in a so-called 'lower risk' area, you must carry out your own risk assessment and use the tests, guidance and information available to help decide what action, if any, to take. Do not assume that liver fluke is only a problem in wet areas of the country. Instead, assess the risk within your own situation.

1. Farm history: If there is any history of liver fluke on the farm, you must take the threat seriously this winter. Also consider any changes in recent years, such as taking on rougher, wetter grazing or land with drainage problems or ponds.

2. Wet areas: Think about places where the mud snail vital to the fluke life cycle can thrive, such as muddy (rather than flooded) areas in a field or around water troughs. Fluke can multiply up to 500 times inside the snail, so you do not need large areas



Fluke tests and information sources

- **Post-mortem examination.** Investigate any unexplained deaths and ask for abattoir feedback on the presence of liver fluke.
- **Fluke egg detection.** Have faeces samples examined by a lab to see if fluke eggs are present. This will confirm the presence of adult fluke.
- **Coproantigen ELISA.** Use this new test to detect infection up to three weeks earlier than by egg detection.
- **Blood tests.** Assess liver function, via a biochemistry test, to give an indication that liver fluke may be present, and look for antibodies, via a serology test, to detect if the sheep is producing an immune response to infection.

of mud to support a significant liver fluke population. You can reduce the risk by draining or fencing these areas off.

3. Grazing patterns: If these snail habits were grazed by sheep in the first half of the grazing season, there is a higher risk the snails will have become infected and that there will be a large number of liver fluke in the area later in the season. If you grazed these areas again with sheep from



late summer onwards, the sheep will have been exposed to high levels of infection and this high risk will continue all winter.

If you think some or all of your sheep could be at risk, you must take action and discuss your options with your vet or adviser. A number of tests are available to help guide the need for treatment and the choice of treatment is also critical to success.

Useful information

- For treatment options use www.scops.org.uk/endoparasites-liver-fluke.html.
- For detailed regional warnings use www.nadis.org.uk/parasite-forecast.aspx.
- For local weather information use www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/datasets. The number of days with 1mm+ rain between June and September will have favoured the snail and increased risk.



Muddy areas, rather than flooded areas, favour the tiny mud snail (above right).

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With ewes coming into the winter in good condition, the key is to now keep them in that condition, not getting overly fat or losing too much weight. Either of these scenarios can lead to reduced performance and the increased chance of metabolic disorders.

Twin and triplet bearing ewes have a very high demand for energy and especially glucose and, as they get closer to lambing, this demand increases. If these energy and glucose demands aren't met, ewes can suffer from twin lamb disease/pregnancy toxemia, a serious metabolic disorder. This can lead to reduced performance, and in severe cases, loss of livestock.

Around 70% of the lamb's growth takes place in the last two months of pregnancy. It is therefore vital to ensure the ewe's nutritional requirements are met during this time.

To meet the high energy demands of the growing lamb, ewes metabolise body fat in the liver, producing ketones. If the energy supplied in the diet is inadequate, too much fat is metabolised, leading to an excessive build-up of ketones to toxic levels. The rule that prevention

is better than cure is particularly true in this situation. By feeding the ewe properly, in terms of both quantity and quality of feed supplied, twin lamb disease can be prevented.

The general rule of sheep feeding to offer supplementary nutrients six weeks pre lambing date is a useful guide, but must be related to ewe condition and, where possible, with predicted scanning information.

- **Singles:** Low levels of supplement should be offered to avoid too large a birth weight.
- **Twins:** Medium level of supplementation where the aim is to ensure two viable and thriving lambs.
- **Triplets:** Maximum care and attention and careful supplementation required.

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Preserving antibiotics for the future by reducing use in lambing sheds

By Emily Gascoigne, vet
Antimicrobial use in agriculture, particularly blanket use of preventative antibiotics (prophylactics) in healthy animals, has come under the spotlight. At the same time there have been documented cases of antibiotic resistance in lamb scour and joint ill bacteria, so now is a good time to work with your vet to look at on-farm practices.



Good lambing shed hygiene can reduce the environment load of *E.coli* and other bacteria.

Joint ill and scour are the most common reasons for antibiotic usage in neonatal lambs but we can reduce reliance if we consider infection risks and implement management changes.

E.coli infection typically presents in neonatal lambs with constipation followed by scouring, dehydration, collapse and mortality.

Sheep Farmer Special Series

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

So called 'rattle belly' or 'watery mouth' can be a significant cause of poor thrift and lamb losses. Although there are some strains (K99) that are especially aggressive, lambs typically become vulnerable to *E.coli* when necessary criteria are not met. The bacteria are shed in faeces and any contaminated object is potentially a source of infection, including stomach feeding tubes, bottles, feeding equipment and milk (which itself can become contaminated). This means hygiene is very important.

Diagnosis

Because other pathogens and poor nutrition can cause scour, it is important to present cases to your vet and confirm with a diagnosis using faecal sampling. While this may not sound cost effective for an individual neonatal lamb, applying a correct diagnosis, treatment and management practices to the remaining lambs may have significant impacts for health and welfare.

Joint ill can be caused by a mixed flora of bacteria (gram positives and gram negatives) which, once in the bloodstream, deposit in multiple joints to cause infection, stiffness and swelling. Lambs typically become infected via their navel but, crucially, also by oral infection. This is usually linked to bacterial load in the environment, so hygiene is critical here too.

Oral 'pump' antibiotics are one of the most common antibiotics used in

sheep enterprises. The two licensed products are Spectam (Ceva Animal Health) and Oroject (Zoetis Animal Health). There can be some misconceptions about these products but they are antibiotics and are licensed for prophylactic usage for watery mouth in the face of an outbreak – i.e. in clinically healthy animals to prevent development of disease. Both contain aminoglycosides, which work locally in the gut by killing gram negative bacteria such as *E.coli*.

- If you are treating every lamb there are four questions to consider:-
1. What are the risk factors for the disease?
 2. Can we use any other strategies to reduce our dependency on antibiotics?
 3. Have I got the correct diagnosis?
 4. How can we use antibiotics sensibly and keep them working?

Lambs have no effective immune system immediately after birth and rely on antibodies from the ewe provided by colostrum. These antibodies bind bacteria in the guts or, once absorbed, act centrally in the blood stream. They cross the intestinal wall via pores in the intestinal walls but these pores close within six hours of birth, so failure to obtain colostrum within this time leaves lambs compromised. Colostrum is liquid gold so, if faced by a watery mouth outbreak, work with your vet to assess the three Qs.

Quality: Colostrum quality can vary between ewes and factors such as

breed, age, mastitis, nutrition and body condition score. Thin ewes will produce less volume and poorer quality so consider factors such as chronic liver fluke, chronic lameness, poor nutrition, feeding practices and suboptimal condition at tupping. Colostrum quality can be assessed using a refractometer.

Quantity: New born lambs need 10% of their body weight in milk. For a 4kg lamb that's 400ml in its first 24 hours including 200ml in the first six to eight hours. In addition to the ewe's production, consider reduced willingness or ability of the lamb to feed. Are lambs sore and weak after difficult lambings? Are they being out-competed by their sibling(s)? Are ewes reluctant to allow lambs to feed due to mastitis or post-lambing pain? Focusing on ewe care and condition from weaning to pre-lambing can improve lamb size, vigour, ease of lambing and milk availability.

Quickly: Sufficient colostrum within six hours of birth ensures lambs have energy and protein before their infection-fighting energy from brown fat reserves runs out. It also ensures they have protective antibodies before the gut closes. Can your lambs feed quickly? Are they losing their mothers in big maternity units? Are low slung udders making sucking a challenge? Could lambing support staff be more focused on the three Qs?

We can assess the three Qs by blood sampling lambs when less than seven days old, to check there has been sufficient transfer. But remember, we

The drugs don't work

As part of diligent antibiotic usage, using an antibiotic which we know works is important to maximise the opportunity for clinical cure. In the lab we can easily work out which antibiotics will work and see evidence where resistance may have already developed. Don't tolerate poor clinical results; they warrant further investigation.

invest in colostrum quality throughout the productive year. Our weaning and flushing management, culling, lameness reduction strategies, fluke control plan and nutritional rationing are just some examples of how we prepare ewes for

the point of lambing.

The discussion about rational antibiotic use in the lambing window is a vast one and cannot be fully explored here. But the discussion should not start and end with choice of product. It should instead begin with a preventative strategy. How are you going to optimise colostrum quality, ewe health, lamb health and hygiene to give every lamb the chance to find sufficient, good quality colostrum quickly?

We must ensure we can justify all usage on farm and, if we must use antibiotics, that we are using the right ones. Have we confirmed the pathogen involved and which antibiotics will kill it?

Do we have strategies in place to reduce the course needed, such as navel dipping and disinfection policy? And do we actually need to use them or are they an unnecessary cost?

Ewe health

Flock health and management planning is the ideal vehicle for this discussion, as it focuses on having a ewe in prime reproductive health and condition, managing her body condition score, creating a clean environment and minimising endemic disease. All these principles optimise ewe performance, reduce lamb mortality and reduce antibiotic usage.

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Premium British wool labels boost the brand and assures customers

As part of its work within the wool supply chain, including its consumer promotions, British Wool Marketing Board (BWMB) operates a three-tier certification process for products made with British wool.



BWMB marketing manager Tim Booth says this premium certification structure allows companies to add another layer of assurance to their products and is a beneficially unique selling point for many manufacturers.

Mr Booth says: "British wool is recognised in a number of sectors as a quality product, including both the interior furnishings and apparel sectors, giving manufacturers, retailers and end-users a high degree of confidence in the product. As a result, many retailers and end-users seek reassurance when they're sourcing wool products that British wool has been used in the manufacturing process."

Performance and reliability

Mr Booth adds that higher levels of British wool will ensure optimum performance levels and reliability within the product. "The unique bulk and robust 'spring'-like quality of the natural crimp in the wool from British sheep breeds means it lends itself to longer appearance retention, wear-ability, structure and function within a wide range of products," he says.

"When British wool is substituted with a different wool within a blend, the strengths brought to the product by the British

wool and the performance attributes gained from it are compromised. This may impact on both spinning and manufacturing processes and ultimately the finished item."

To help manufacturers and retailers in their marketing efforts, BWMB issues certificates depending on the percentage of British wool included in the product. The highest level is the platinum label, which requires 100% of the wool content in the finished product to be grown in the UK on British breeds.

"In the case of carpets, it must be either 100% wool or a minimum of 80% wool to 20% man-made fibres to qualify for the platinum label," Mr Booth says. "In other products the entire wool content must be 100% British wool to qualify.

"The second tier of classification is the gold label. This again refers only to the wool content of the finished product, with 70% of this wool having to be British. The balance of the wool content must be another natural fibre, such as wool of another origin or cashmere or suchlike. Under this label, carpets must once again be either 100% wool or a minimum of 80% wool to 20% man-made fibres in order to qualify. But other products must be 100% natural fibre with a minimum of 70% British wool."

The third tier of the scheme is the blue label, requiring a minimum of 50% of the wool in the finished product to be British.

Assurance scheme

To qualify to use these premium labels, licensed manufacturers must provide evidence of the wool content within a specified product or range. This means each company has to declare its wool processing partners and the products in which the wool for the labels will be used. The information supplied in the company's application may be subject to an audit by BWMB.

Mr Booth says the premium label scheme is a valuable component of BWMB's marketing strategy for manufacturers to encourage greater uptake of British wool across the market. He says: "Supporting manufacturers and retailers is a central part of our marketing activities which enables them to promote quality British wool products to their customers. The premium label scheme gives manufacturers and retailers a real point of difference when using British wool in their products and gives an assurance to the end user on the quality of the product they're buying, much as the Red Tractor logo does in food retailing."

Keep reading for two more pages of wool promotions, reflecting on a successful Wool Week 2016.



Only products with 100% British wool qualify for the platinum logo.



Wool Week 2016 focuses on the role of wool in work, rest and play

Now in seventh year, the Campaign for Wool UK Wool Week that ran in mid-October 2016 was more jam-packed with activities than ever.



Uniting the UK's leading brands in fashion, crafts and interiors, the seven woolly-filled days allowed the public hands-on and exciting access to wool, with the aim of promoting the fibre as a versatile and premium product.

The week kicked off with the opening of the first ever Wool BnB, an imaginative and highly creative display of all the possible ways of bringing wool into the home. The main message of the London-based spectacle was that the many performance benefits of wool can help create a perfect home that is young and vibrant but also embodies comfort.

Several events took place throughout the week in the specially created bed and breakfast venue, which was then made available for a week of cosy overnight stays for a few lucky visitors:

- **Wool weaving workshop:** Textiles designer Amy Ilic provided the opportunity for visitors to try their hand at weaving on mini table looms, bringing people in for an inspirational craft afternoon.

- **A cut above the rest:** Anderson &

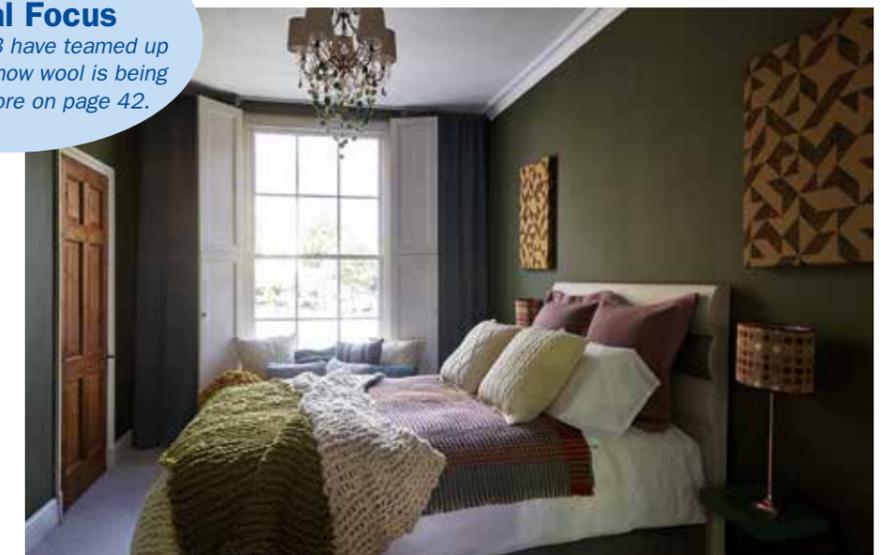


Sheppard, a leading Saville Row tailor, demonstrated the craft, expertise and skill required in cutting a bespoke wool suit.

- **Fashion patch workshop:** This was a truly stylish workshop, hand-crafting beautiful woolly crochet trims to personalise jeans and jackets.
- **Wool and the gang:** The BnB was the perfect venue for the return of the knit and natter workshop.
- **Hats for charity:** This drop-in session saw visitors knitting fun hats for Innocent smoothie bottles. This winter Innocent will give 25p to Age UK for every 'behatted' smoothie sold.

Sheep Farmer Special Focus

NSA and BWMB have teamed up to tell farmers how wool is being promoted. More on page 42.



- **Slowing down fast fashion:** Alex James, former bass guitarist for Blur and now a farmer and cheese maker, screened his film documenting the enormous human and environmental costs of the fashion industry. Wool is an attractive, sustainable alternative.
- **Styling your home:** Stylist and curator of the Wool BnB, Karina Garrick, gave hourly talks on recreating woolly style in your own home.
- **Woolly adventure talks:** The Turner Twins spoke of their experiences of using wool in unusual conditions.
- **SofarSound:** The Wool BnB was also the ultimate cosy location for an intimate acoustic gig.

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More from Wool Week 2016: lots going on throughout the country

As well as a specially created Wool BnB in London, there was lots of wool activity outside of the capital too.



Selvedge

Selvedge magazine held the Selvedge Wool Symposium at the Artworkers Guild in London, proudly sponsored by British Wool. It featured a series of speakers and the opportunity to hand-spin wool from a variety of rare breeds in a 'fibre tasting' session.



THE CAMPAIGN FOR WOOL
NATIONALSHEEP.ORG.UK



Sheep Farmer Special Focus

NSA and BWMB have teamed up to tell farmers how wool is being promoted. More on page 41.



in Wales today, including exhibitions from a range of local businesses, craftspeople and talented spinners.

universities, attracted a high standard of work that displayed the design potential of real wool.

Welsh Wool Museum

The National Wool Museum hosted a Celebration of Wool Day, showing visitors the variety of uses for wool

Hand-knitting awards

The first Campaign for Wool Hand Knitting Competition, aimed at students choosing a design and knit pathway at top UK

Woolly Hat Day

Friday 14th October saw the return of Woolly Hat Day, encouraging the wool-loving community to host an event and share its success online with the Twitter hashtag #WoollyHatDay. It encouraged the use and wear of wool for keeping warm and raised money for the incredible work of the Mission for Seafarers.

Baaatique Hotel

The 'Baaatique' Hotel popped up at the Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour. Visitors saw work, rest and play in multi-functional spaces, with the beauty, comfort and quality of wool from some of the most prestigious industry names.



Find out more at www.campaignforwool.org, follow the campaign on Twitter @campaignforwool, and like it on Facebook at /thecampaignforwool.

Bicester Village

Pop-up boutique British Wool Collective opened a popular fashion hub, Bicester Village, in Wool Week. It will run until early January 2017, the perfect opportunity for those looking for high quality woolly Christmas gifts from a fine array of British brands



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- NSA Central Region Early Gathering: Thursday 26th January, Bakewell, Derbyshire
- NSA Welsh Sheep: Tuesday 16th May, Talybont-on-Usk, Powys
- NSA Highland Sheep: Wed 31st May at Strathpeffer, Ross-shire
- NSA North Sheep: Wed 7th June at Tow Law, Northumberland
- NSA Sheep SW: Tuesday 20th June at Tiverton, Devon
- NSA Sheep NI: Monday 3rd July at Ballymena County Antrim

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NSA Next Generation event a big hit

More than 80 young people with an interest in sheep and a thirst for knowledge came together to enjoy the fourth annual NSA Next Generation event, held this year at Stratford-upon-Avon Livestock Market, Warwickshire.

Supporting younger sheep farmers and new entrants is a major area of work for NSA, with this event and many other activities held as part of the ongoing NSA Next Generation project. Hannah Park, NSA Communications Officer, reports on the Stratford event: "The interactive format was designed to attract everyone from established shepherds looking for advice specific to their system to new entrants looking for inspiration or ideas on which sheep farming path might be best suited to them. It provided an ideal opportunity for those attending to meet like-minded individuals and NSA representatives. A series of practical workshops (pictured) made up the bulk of the day, and followed a



series of introductory talks from four young shepherds who've each taken a different path into sheep farming."

The event will be held again in November 2017, hopefully in Wales. More information at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk.



NSA Ambassadors for 2016 reflect on an action-packed 12 months

The NSA Next Generation event in mid-November also represented the final of five delivery sessions for the 2016 NSA Next Generation Ambassador group.

As well as getting involved in the open event at Stratford Market, the group had the opportunity to meet and exchange experiences with Ambassadors from the previous two years of the programme. They also completed their media training and prepared for continuing their roles as ambassadors now their first year is over, forging links with NSA regional committees.

Here they share their experiences from what has been a whirlwind of a year for them.

Jacob Anthony (23) Bridgend

Pushing the sheep enterprise within the family farm.

"My involvement in the programme this year has changed my attitude and inspired me to be more positive. It's also spurred me on to increase numbers at home, improve efficiency and improve our set-up, particularly with our handling system. I've not only improved my knowledge of the sector through the year, but also enjoyed socialising with like-minded people."

Fred Love (24) Nottinghamshire

Growing his flock from a standing start as a new entrant.

"I would recommend others to sign up to the NSA Next Generation Ambassador programme, as it's a great way to meet people and have your eyes opened to all parts of the industry. It's made me more confident to increase my flock further and employ someone in the future to give them an opportunity too. I want to promote the sheep industry and this NSA programme."

Hannah Jackson (24) Cumbria

Freelance shepherding alongside a small commercial flock.

"This programme has made me even more positive about the industry and keen to work through NSA to help other new entrants like me starting out with sheep. I want to help the younger generation and represent younger people within NSA. With my own flock, I've started making better use of grass and adding value by direct selling boxed lamb. I feel I now have a great support system for the future."

Jamie Laurie (23) Dumfries and Galloway

Working with his father on a tenanted mixed livestock farm.

"Being an NSA Next Generation Ambassador is an amazing opportunity. It's made me realise the importance of promoting the sheep sector. I'm on Twitter now and want to continue being an Ambassador for our industry. It's also meant I have a more structured plan for what I want for my own future and how I should farm sheep as efficiently and profitably as possible."

Ellen Helliwell (23) Cumbria

Moving from Gloucestershire for a new shepherding job.

"I want to say thank you to NSA for this amazing experience. I've learnt so much, gained confidence and met like-minded people who will be my friends for life. If you're passionate about sheep you should definitely apply for the programme. It will aid you so much for your future. I've become more confident in making decisions and want to improve the flock I'm now working with, as well as starting my own flock and promoting the industry as much as possible."

Ernie Richards (23) Shropshire

Working as an employed shepherd on the Welsh border.

"This has been a brilliant experience. I've absolutely loved it. It makes you think more about what you're doing and has really opened my eyes. I'm looking forward to applying what I've learnt to the flock I work with, and also to my own flock in time. My links with NSA will continue as I get more involved with NSA Marches Region Committee."

Alex Olphert (24) Hampshire

Juggling work on the busy family farm with local contracting.

"I feel like I've learnt a huge amount in the last year. It's inspired me to keep improving the family business, but also to play my part to develop all parts of the sheep sector so we have a thriving industry. I've changed a few areas on the farm already, including new grass leys and improved ewe management and selection. I've also been able to grow my contact base."

Apply now for 2017 sheep training

A key part of the NSA Next Generation project is a unique opportunity for up to 12 people per year to become NSA Next Generation Ambassadors.

Each year's group is invited to take part in five delivery sessions over 12 months, providing sheep farming expertise, business management skills and personal development. The group shares targets and plans, spurring each other on to further their careers and farm businesses, before each individual continues their Ambassador role by committing to NSA or sheep industry activity in the longer-term.

Joanne Briggs, NSA Communications Manager, says: "A huge amount of topics are covered within the five sessions, combined with farm walks (pictured), site visits and guest speakers. We've had unbelievable feedback from the three groups from 2014 to 2016, all of whom remain in touch with each other and with NSA. It really is a fantastic opportunity and I urge people to apply to take part."

The application window for the 2017 NSA Next Generation Ambassador group is open until Sunday 18th December. It involves answering six questions about your involvement in



sheep and views about the sector, which NSA uses to shortlist up to 20 people for interview, before selecting the final 12.

Find full details and the online application form at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk/applyonline. Meet the 2016 group below.

James Wright (24) Gloucestershire

Studying agriculture alongside farming sheep after a recent move from West Sussex to Cirencester.

"Looking back on my year as an NSA Next Generation Ambassador, it's been great to take the time to look at my farming business objectively. I feel I have a greater appreciation of the wider industry and am armed with more knowledge. Hopefully this will help me as I continue to look for a tenancy and increase my sheep to a number that allows me to work with them full-time."

Olly Matthews (28) Somerset

Running sheep and poultry in partnership with his brother.

"This programme has been great and I definitely want to stay as involved as possible with NSA in the future. It's made me look more at my financial data and be more confident about expanding sheep numbers and developing our flock."

Michael Ritch (25) Aberdeenshire

Adding sheep to the family's beef and arable enterprises.

"I've already started making changes as a result of being an Ambassador. I'm now using faecal egg counts and rotational paddock grazing. I'm keen to keep increasing ewe numbers, but to improve quality and efficiency at the same time. I would definitely encourage others to do the programme. It's made me more confident to meet new people and discuss topics and give my point of view. You meet like-minded people and see so many different farming systems."

Robert Spink (25) Norfolk/Suffolk border

Balancing sheep and crops since taking on the family farm.

"This programme is a great way to learn more skills, gain a greater understanding of the industry and meet some brilliant people from across the country. It has been an inspirational year for me, making me more confident to move forward and willing to listen to new and progressive ideas. I'm on the NSA English Committee now and want to get more involved in this and NSA Eastern Region, as well as promoting sheep farming locally and helping with young shepherds' activities/groups."



The NSA Next Generation Ambassadors 2016 receiving their certificates of achievement. Back row from left to right: Dan Pritchard, James Wright, Olly Matthews and Jamie Laurie. Middle row: Alex Olphert, Jacob Anthony, Michael Ritch, Robert Spink and Fred Love. Front row: Ellen Helliwell, Ernie Richards and Hannah Jackson.

Dan Pritchard (31) Swansea

Developing the family business selling salt marsh lamb.

"The programme has definitely inspired me to try and run a more profitable business. My first steps towards this have been focused on sheep health and I've spoken to my vet about a better worming programme and introducing vaccination for abortion. I look forward to getting involved with NSA in my region, to keep up the link with NSA."

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