

Sheep Farmer

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2018/2019



A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

**NEW NSA NEXT GENERATION
TRAVEL BURSARY ON OFFER**

**LASTEST NSA BREXIT
AND POLICY UPDATES**

**NSA CENTRAL REGION EARLY
GATHERING - WHAT TO EXPECT**

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING IDEAS

WINTER PREPERATION TIPS

**WHAT THE BUDGET
MIGHT OFFER YOU**



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Brexit questions still to be answered in 2019

I'm sure you can understand why Brexit features so regularly within my Sheep Farmer introduction. Writing this in late November, with a term of less than the gestation period of a ewe to go before we leave the EU, we still don't know whether we have a deal agreed.

We could still crash out with no deal and face a period where we have no access to the EU, after which we would regain access at some stage but could see tariffs applied. Or we may yet see the withdrawal agreement go through and progress to an extra transition period during which we are part of a customs union, using this time to negotiate a more permanent relationship.

Best deal

All the analysis has shown that for the UK sheep industry a deal that allows us tariff-free access to the EU is the best option, and that is what our Prime Minister is negotiating for. But it is prudent to be prepared for all eventualities and in recent months we have seen a host of Government technical papers setting out what would be done in the case of a no deal.

These papers give confidence that at least some planning has been done. But the content in one of them gave me cause for concern and led to NSA issuing its own statement outlining what we might want or need to protect our industry in the case of a no deal. The paper suggested the UK Government would do all it could to ease the flow of goods from the EU into the UK to allow our manufacturing industries to continue, yet there was little we could do to influence any reciprocal product flows. This is worrying, as virtually all our sheepmeat exports, 40% of our total production, goes to the EU.

Over-supply

The NSA statement made a number of suggestions (see pages 10) including that, if we lost our main export trade, we would have little option but to find a way to control imports to avoid a massive oversupply onto our domestic market. Then if we were faced with hefty tariffs, we would expect a form of financial intervention to allow this trade to work and be viable.

Finally, we suggested there are many ways our sheep farming industry could adapt to spread the placement of lamb and mutton throughout the year – but that such a longer-term change



of direction would require greater investment in our own domestic market. If not, then a form of emergency aid may be needed to take us through a difficult period, and its important to note this is identified in the draft Agriculture Bill. I am convinced this discussion needs to be had and thankfully it now is.

We should not ignore the messages coming from the most recent report from our levy bodies looking at what producers can do to prepare for Brexit - and indeed the suggestions are things to consider regardless of our EU departure. This work shows there are sheep farms whose performance is such that they would survive almost whatever Brexit throws at them. It says achieving a 1% improvement in 10 different areas is easier than trying to get a 10% improvement in one; it's about general attention to detail.

Staff changes

There are some internal NSA changes I'm pleased to announce. Every member of staff works hard for NSA, for our officers and members, and we have a great team that pulls together effectively. To further improve our work, we have created a new role of Operations Director and are about to appoint a new staff member to focus on the delivery of more NSA activities with our regions – offering more for you and aiming to grow our membership further (more on page 3). We also have some exciting NSA Next Generation news (see page 15).

As we approach Christmas and the New Year, on behalf of all at NSA, I wish you the very best for the festive season and hope you get to enjoy time with friends and family, to have fun and to reflect. Focus on good nutrition, good health and low levels of stress, and prepare for 2019 to be a busy and unpredictable year.

Sheep Farmer



December/January
2018/2019 edition
Vol. 37, No 5 ISSN 0141-2434
A National Sheep Association publication.

Contents

- 2 New round-up
- 4 NSA reports: Devolved nations
- 6 NSA reports: English regions
- 8 NSA Central Region Early Gathering preview
- 10 Latest NSA policy activity
- 14 SHAWG conference report
- 15 NSA NEXT GENERATION: 2018 round-up
- 20 Return to China to promote UK sheep genetics
- 22 FARM FEATURE: Peter Delbridge, NSA South West Region Trustee
- 24 Advice on 2018 Budget
- 26 Scab and fluke winter reminders
- 28 Recognising skin diseases
- 30 Livestock importing risks
- 32 Blood testing in-lamb ewes
- 34 Benchmarking to drive change
- 36 Johne's disease: are you aware?
- 39 Product news
- 40 SPECIAL FEATURE: Sheep dairy industry in Spain
- 42 British Wool expands in China
- 44 Christmas gifts ideas

The front page picture of Suffolk ewe lambs was taken by NSA staff member Helen Roberts, on the farm of Jack Pryce, Helen's father and a well-known Suffolk breeder based in Powys. The sheep were caught in the snow storms last spring – which we hope we don't see a repeat of in 2019!

This NSA magazine is published with design and production services provided by Ladies in Print.

Ladies in Print

Email: ladiesinprint@outlook.com
Tel: 01684 899255

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News Update

Winning NSA members

NSA is pleased to hear member Sam Jones was named Sheep Innovator of the Year at the Farmers Guardian awards 2018, with runners up Matt and Becky Van der Borgh also deserving congratulations. Further congratulations to NSA Next Generation Ambassador Jacob Anthony for his victory as Young Farmer of the Year at the Farmers Weekly awards. Congratulations to them all (pictured below) and also to those who were nominated. We look forward to more NSA winners in the future!



Are we in touch?

We get really positive feedback from members receiving the NSA Weekly Email Update every Friday – but not everyone is currently seeing it. If we don't have your email address, please send it to membership@nationalsheep.org.uk. We also occasionally send text messages about events in your area. Let us have a mobile number if you would like this service too.

Wedding bells for NSA

Congratulations go to Helen Roberts (nee Davies) who got married in October. As NSA Corporate Sales Manager, one of Helen's many roles is to sell advertising for this magazine. Despite her new surname, all Helen's contact details remain the same – and we wish her and Clive future happiness. Clive's wedding present to Helen was some Bluefaced Leicester ewes, to rival her lifelong passion for Suffolks.



Next Generation

NSA has now completed five years of its Next Generation Ambassador programme, in which up to 12 young people each year complete a personal development programme. As well as joining their regional NSA committee, a number of Ambassadors are now also engaging with NSA at an even higher level with three of them representing regions on NSA English Committee – and one now joining the NSA Management Board as a Trustee.

Jonny Farmer, an employed shepherd from Portglenone, County Antrim, is the first Ambassador to reach such a level – and NSA warmly welcomes his meaningful contribution.



Raffle now open

NSA members in Scotland have probably by now seen raffle tickets for sale across the region. NSA Scottish Region, in association with Honda, have a TRX 420FM1 ATV (pictured) to give away to one lucky winner. Tickets are £1 each and available via participating



NSA-affiliated breed societies and NSA Scottish Region events, including NSA Highland Sheep.

The winner will be drawn at 4pm on Sunday 23rd June in the NSA Scottish Region marquee at the Royal Highland Show, with the winner notified shortly afterwards. Please contact NSA Scottish Region.

Lambing list open

The NSA Lambing List has now been open over a month and is already making matches across the UK. NSA members searching for extra help over lambing 2019 are invited to add their name to the list by visiting www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lambing-list or, if you do not have internet access, contacting NSA Head Office. Vet students and other young people are already well underway searching for placements, so don't miss your chance!



Annual regional meetings

With NSA Eastern Region and NSA Northern Ireland Region's Annual Members Meetings behind us, the dates for the rest of the regions have now been announced.

- For members in the South East:** Notice is hereby given that the Annual Regional Members Meeting for NSA South East Region will be held on Tuesday 12th February 2019, 6pm at the Angel Hotel, Privett, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3NN.
- For members in Marches Region:** Notice is hereby given that the Annual Regional Members Meeting for NSA Marches Region will be held on Monday 11th February, 6pm at Hereford Cattle Market, Roman Road, Hereford, HR4 7AN.
- For members in Scotland:** Notice is hereby given that the Annual Regional Members Meeting for NSA Scottish Region will be held on Wednesday 13th February 2019, 3pm at Airth Castle Hotel, Airth, Stirlingshire, FK2 8JF. It will be followed by a dinner at 7pm.
- For members in the North:** Notice is hereby given that the Annual Regional Members Meeting for NSA Northern Region will be held on Wednesday 13th February, 7.30pm at the Hired Lad, Penrith, CA11 0DN.
- For members in the South West:** Notice is hereby given that the Annual Regional Members Meeting for NSA South West Region will be held on Tuesday 19th February 2019, 7.30pm at the Stockman's Restaurant in Exeter Livestock Centre, Matford Business Park, Exeter, EX2 8FD.
- For members in Wales:** Notice is hereby given that the Annual Regional Members Meeting for NSA Cymru/Wales Region will be held on Wednesday 20th February 2019, 2pm at Hafod y Hendre, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, LD2 3SY.
- For members in Central Region:** Notice is hereby given that the Annual Regional Members Meeting for NSA Central Region will be held on Wednesday 20th February, 7pm at Bakewell Market, Agricultural Way, Bakewell, DE45 1AH.

Legacy gift

We recently received a cheque from a retiring collection at a funeral where NSA was the beneficiary. Peter David Hodges (David) had worked with sheep all his life and his family therefore chose NSA to receive the funds. NSA sends its grateful thanks to the family, and offers condolences as they come to terms with the loss of Mr Hodges.

NSA reports – devolved nations

NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Roberts, Development Officer



While I was away on honeymoon (please note my new name of Roberts, contact details remain unchanged) a good turnout enjoyed an interesting farm tour at Cwm Risca Farm near Bridgend by kind permission



of recently crowned Farmers Weekly Young Farmer of the Year and NSA Next Generation Ambassador Jacob Anthony, and his family. The Anthony's run 1,000 Lleyn cross Texel ewes as well as 300 cattle over their 283ha hill farm. A full report is online.

Since then it has been conference season and NSA Cymru/Wales Region attended both the NFU Cymru and HCC conferences to hear speakers talking on subjects that will impact industry next year.

A meeting has taken place with stakeholders and Welsh Government to discuss amendments to the quarantine unit scheme, to maintain and increase entries at shows next year keeping this vital part of the rural community alive. NSA Cymru/Wales Region will continue to raise this issue when it meets with the Cabinet Secretary in December. The recently closed consultation 'Brexit and Our Land' will also be discussed.

Sheep scab activity

NSA Cymru/Wales Region has been involved in the launch of a Welsh sheep scab paper to Welsh Government seeking funding for a proposed scheme. The launch took place at Ian Rickman's farm near Llandovery, Carmarthenshire, and was followed by a plunge dipping demonstration. This was followed up with a further presentation of the paper to ministers at the Welsh Winter Fair at Builth Wells. The Winter Fair proved busy for the region with members and friends enjoying a welcome cup of refreshment along with a sample of sheep cheese from Carrie Grimes, Coysn Cymru. Congratulations to Clwyd Hughes, Denbigh, for winning the John Gittins Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to Welsh sheep farming.

As we near the end of 2018, plans for NSA events in 2019 are under way. Amongst the six main NSA events taking place is NSA Welsh Sheep, on Tuesday 21st May. For those interested, applications for trade and breed society space are now open.

The NSA Cymru/Wales Annual Regional Members Meeting will take place on Wednesday 20th February in Hafod y Hendre on the Royal Welsh Showground. More details on page 3 and online.



Helen Roberts at Glynllifon with Farm Manager Rhodri Manod Owen, where NSA Welsh Sheep will be held in 2019.

NSA Northern Ireland Region

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer



In mid-November I was part of a strong British livestock presence at the world's largest indoor livestock exhibition, EuroTier in Germany. Attending were 20 UK companies with the support of the Department of International Trade, AHDB, British Livestock Genetics Consortium and UK Technology for Agriculture & Genetics. We hope and presume trade with the rest of EU can continue post-Brexit. The British presence and the live sheep on the stand created quite an interest.



NSA Northern Ireland Region held its Annual Regional Members Meeting at AFBI, Hillsborough, where all office holders remained in place - other than our representative on the Board of Trustees John Blaney, who stepped down after representing NSA Northern Ireland Region for five years. He is replaced by our Vice Chairman and Next Generation Ambassador Jonny Farmer from Portglenone, County Antrim. This appointment shows the value of NSA's Next Generation scheme as Jonny is the first person through the programme to reach the top level of NSA.

Guest speakers

Afterwards there was an open meeting, which saw an excellent crowd hear from our guest speakers. NSA Northern Ireland Region Chairman Brian Jamieson welcomed everyone and introduced NSA Communications Officer Eleanor Phipps who gave an update on NSA's work. The main speaker was Dr Tim Keady from Teagasc in the Republic of Ireland, who gave a presentation listing several things we should be focusing on to improve the profitability of sheep farming, which held much interest for all in attendance. Dr Aurelie Aubry from AFBI gave a short resume of the current work and projects at Hillsborough, followed by a very interactive Q&A session.

A series of local meetings across NSA Northern Ireland Region is in planning in conjunction with MSD Animal Health and Parklands Vet Group for the end of January/early February. Antimicrobial resistance is a big issue at current and these events will help farmers understand the implications and offer simple recommendations on how to reduce use. The sheep sector is probably the lowest user of such drugs, but we are still expected to play our part in resolving this problem. It would be much better to show government we are proactive and provide a voluntary solution where we could avoid mandatory regulations on the supply and use of the very efficient and useful drugs we have at our disposal at present.



NSA Northern Ireland Region saw a good attendance to its annual meeting in mid-November.

NSA Scottish Region

By George Milne, Development Officer



Our most recent NSA Scottish Region Committee meeting had a packed agenda. Many policy issues were discussed, including



the Agricultural Bill, and LFASS and the immediate need to see it continue to be paid at its full rate until a new scheme is designed for Scotland. We further discussed climate change updates and a discussion around possible changes to EID being mooted in Brussels.

NSA Scottish Region gave evidence to the Farm Animal Welfare Committee at a meeting held in Aberdeen. The meeting focused on several issues including live exports, lame sheep and cattle arriving at markets and abattoirs, drivers' hours and distance of movements. There was a free-flowing discussion and the need and importance for livestock movements in Scotland was emphasised for breeding sheep and store/prime lambs. The committee left with a clear understanding of NSA Scottish Regions concerns and requirements.

NSA Scottish Region Vice Chairman Kathy Peebles and I attended a meeting with Deidre Brock, SNP MP for Edinburgh North and Leith. Ms Brock sits on the Agricultural Bill Committee in Westminster. The meeting was organised by NSA Scottish Region following Ms Brock meeting with NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker a few weeks earlier. The meeting gave us the opportunity to discuss in detail our concerns in the Agriculture Bill for Scotland. It is essential that under the Bill Scotland has powers to develop and implement its own type of support schemes.

Joint meeting

NSA Scottish Region is delighted to have joined up with Caltech Crystalyx to host an evening roadshow meeting entitled 'Brexit: Opportunities for Scotch Lamb'. The meeting, at Carrs Billington, Ayr, had an attendance of 70 people who heard presentations from Euan Hart of Crystalyx, Iain MacDonald of QMS and myself. On behalf of NSA Scottish Region, I highlighted all the important policy work being carried out by NSA and NSA Scottish Region for the greater good of the sheep industry. NSA Scottish Region is grateful to Crystalyx and Carrs Billington for hosting the event.

NSA Scottish Region also saw a series of popular sheepdog training events over the last few months. And now we look forward to our Annual Regional Members Meeting and Dinner on Wednesday 13th February. Contact me for dinner tickets please (contact details on page 2).



NSA Scottish Region and the International Sheepdog Society hosted a training day in early-November with kind permission of William Evans at Awhirk Farm.



Could you be a driving force in NSA?

Two exciting job opportunities are currently available

NSA Activities & Campaigns Officer

NSA is looking for an enthusiastic, experienced, organised and creative individual to develop and expand activities, campaigns and initiatives to raise the profile of the association, directly leading to the recruitment and retention of members. This is a full-time role using NSA

Head Office as a base. There will be extensive travel throughout the UK (full driving licence required). The ideal candidate will perform well on independent projects and work effectively with other NSA staff and office holders. Sales experience and/or knowledge of sheep farming is preferable but not essential.

NSA South East Region Secretary

NSA South East Region is looking for a Regional Secretary to organise and coordinate its presence in South East England. This is an exciting opportunity within a small and friendly team of regional sheep farming committee members. It is a flexible role that will suit an enthusiastic and self-motivated individual. NSA South East Region will pay an honorarium of £1,800 per annum plus travelling expenses.

Find full job descriptions for both roles at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/news. Closing date for applications is Monday 7th January 2019.

NSA reports – English regions

Central

By Anne Payne, Regional Manager



Next year will be busy from the outset, with the NSA Central Region Early Gathering on Thursday 24th January (see page 8) and our Annual Regional Members Meeting, followed by a pea and pie supper, on Wednesday 20th February at Bakewell Market, where all will be welcome.

Some will be pleased to put 2018 behind them as, following the summer drought, farmers are busy dealing with the after-effects of limited forage supplies. We hope ewes that went to the tup in poor condition will not show below average scanning results. Poorer condition could also be contributing to further reports of lice and scab in some parts of the region.

In addition, unusually for the time of year, there appear to be incidences of scouring lambs due to nematodirus and coccidiosis, due to the unseasonal rise in temperature accompanied by wet weather, following on from the frosts last month.

On the plus side, auctioneer and NSA Central Region Chairman Alastair Sneddon reports on more encouraging store lamb prices after a slow start to the trade. He has also observed Texel cross and often Texel cross Mules being more sought after than Mules at recent breeding sales, and adds that 'gimmering', the art of turning a ewe lamb into a shearling, appears to be increasing.

Expanding halal markets



AHDB Halal Sector Manager Awal Fuseini spoke at an NSA South West Region meeting and shared information on this increasingly expanding market.

Eastern

By Jonathan Barber, Manager



The NSA Eastern Region Annual Members Meeting in early October saw a good attendance to support Chairman Dan Phipps, Vice Chairman Robert Spink and myself, Regional Manager and Treasurer.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker gave an informative presentation, which lead onto an enjoyable debate about the sheep industries present and future. One subject of particular interest was the proposed new system to cover animal movements and what this might mean for us all.

I spent an enjoyable week away

from home to promote the UK livestock sector, especially sheep and lamb, at the biennial EuroTier in Hanover, Germany. It is an amazing and worthwhile event, where we receive positive and congratulatory comments on the excellence of our UK sheep industry and its products. We will have to work hard to move products before we get caught up in the potential stoppages after our leaving the EU.

Organisation is underway for 2019 events and I can give you the following dates for your diaries.

On Thursday 16th May we will be holding a farm visit to John Pausey, Shrimpling Park Farms, Bury St

Edmunds, Suffolk. And our NSA Next Generation and Young Shepherd of the year competition will be at Godolphin Stud in Suffolk on Saturday 8th June 2019. More details to follow.

Marches

By Lorna Davies, Secretary



NSA Marches Region is holding an event on Wednesday 19th December at Stratford Livestock Market with sheep farmer and Nuffield scholar Geraint Powell. Geraint will discuss 'Sustainable grazing strategies that meet ecological demands' and, as a fellow Nuffield, I'll speak about the value of managing water.

We both hope to share knowledge and to hear your thoughts on the lessons learnt and how they might feed into the industry. It's also an opportunity to have a pre-Christmas get together for the region and pass on Christmas greetings in person. As farmers' thoughts turn to winter feeding, housing, lambing and an increased workload made by short days and long nights the Marches Region

hopes this event will help its members feel prepared.

This idea began following an interesting NFU Cymru conference that focused on what farmers might face post-Brexit, which set a bit of a downturn to my month, worrying about market access and the stability of farm finances going forward. I then attended and presented at the Nuffield Farming conference in Glasgow and it was a relief to meet and hear people within the agricultural industry talk about their methods of innovation and resilience within food production and ways to bridge the consumer producer gap.

We look forward to seeing you for our Annual Regional Members Meeting on Monday 11th February - see page 3.

Northern

By Heather Stoney-Grayshon, Manager

NSA Northern Region Chairman Eddie Eastham represented NSA at a 'Brexit and the Uplands Conference' hosted by the National Geographic Society at Penrith, Cumbria. Eddie reports strong environmental views from many (non-farmers) who were also in attendance.

Thomas Carrick, Thomas Vickers and Greg Dalton attended a meeting with Adam Quinney and Will Jackson from AHDB Beef & Lamb, after the region was invited to send representation to share the views of northern beef and lamb levy payers with thoughts on AHDB's role post-Brexit.

Our Annual Regional Members Meeting is being held at the Hired Lad, Penrith, on Wednesday 13th February

at 7.30pm. The evening will include a presentation by Marie Hall of Defra and Matt Bagley of Newton Rigg College on future land use/environment schemes. Eleanor Phipps from NSA Head Office will also join us to provide an update on NSA activity in this and other policy areas.

Nominations for the T.I. Allinson Lifetime Achievement Award should be made to myself by Monday 31st December with a 200-word citation.

Stand bookings and sponsorship enquiries are now coming in thick and fast for NSA North Sheep 2019. More details, and application forms, can be found at www.northsheep.org.uk, and any enquiries should be made to me - see page 2 for contact details.

South East

By Bob Blanden, Manager

The NSA South East Region farm walk at the end of October at Matt and Becky Van der Borgh's Top Paddock Sheep Dairy, near Horsham, Sussex, was enjoyed by around 30 members and gave an insight into the potential for farming sheep for a different product than normal in the UK.

We've also had a joint meeting in Kent with AHDB Beef & Lamb on 'Minimising carcass losses in the supply chain' to highlight what producers can do before lambs leave the farm. The region sponsored a meeting of the Hampshire Sheep Group about the proposed new Livestock Information Programme. Defra's Simon Hall explained how a new purpose-built multi-species system could resolve all the problems that have evolved from the present 'sticky plastered' system. With around 50

attendees, it was comforting to realise producers recognise the importance of getting it right.

Our Annual Regional Members Meeting is to be held at the Angel, Privett, Alton, Hampshire. James Farm and Country Supplies is sponsoring the food at the end and we will be joined by Dr Kenton from Scotmin to provide nutritional information.

It is with regret I report Alan West, after more than 30 years and two periods as chairman, has decided to stand down from the NSA South East Region Committee. We are looking for a new NSA South East Regional Secretary, as I have tended my resignation for personal reasons. I would like to take the opportunity of thanking all the regional members for their support over the years.

South West

By Ian May, Manager

We recently hosted a well-attended regional committee meeting covering a number of important topics. These included sobering discussions on the potential impacts of a no-deal Brexit and what we may wish to see out of the still embryonic Environmental Land Management Scheme. Hopefully there will be more clarity on at least one of these topics soon.

During November we held a meeting on the halal market and its importance to the sheep industry. I would like to thank Awal Fuseini, AHDB Halal Sector Manager, for taking the time to talk to us about what is an often misunderstood but critical market for UK sheepmeat producers.

Efforts are gaining pace for NSA Sheep South West on Tuesday 18th June at Southcott, Burrington, Umberleigh, Devon, EX37 9LF. The website is now accepting exhibitor registrations.

We are pleased to announce Shearwell Data as a major sponsor with Crystalyx, Harpers Feeds and MSD Animal Health as main sponsors and Kivells Auctioneers as a national sponsor supporting the 'Gift of the gavel' competition. Other sponsorship opportunities are still available so contact Sue Martyn on suem@nationalsheep.org.uk to find out more.

The NSA South West Region Annual Members Meeting has been fixed for Tuesday 19th February, 7.30pm at the Stockman's Restaurant in Exeter Livestock Centre. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

Industry discussions



NSA Eastern Region's ARMM had a strong turnout, where NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker gave a policy update and welcomed questions from members.

Sheep dairy in the UK



NSA South East Region welcomed 30 people to Matt and Becky Van der Borgh's dairy farm, guests were able to sample some sheep dairy products.

Central Region Early Gathering set to be busy and exciting day

Following a successful change in format when last held in January 2017, NSA Central Region Early Gathering is returning to Bakewell Market on Thursday 24th January 2019.

As the ambiguity of Brexit hangs over the sheep industry, the event takes the theme of 'vital information for an uncertain future' and will feature seminars and interactive workshops to equip sheep farmers with useful information with which to move forward into 2019 with hope for a positive future.

Three seminars will be spread throughout the day kicking off with a panel of industry experts, including leading sheep vets, discussing the increasingly important topic of antibiotic resistance. Titled 'Ensuring the effectiveness of antibiotics in the future by tackling resistance challenges' the panel will explore practical examples of reducing antibiotic use through vaccinations and best practice as well as tackling misinformation on crossover between animal use and human resistance.

Red meat

As popular media continues to raise damaging questions over the health benefits of red meat, in addition to increasing claims livestock production is damaging the British countryside and wider environment, seminar two will look to how we overcome this perceived 'wisdom' that red meat production and consumption is bad for animal health,



NSA Central Region 2019 looks set to be a busy day with a series of seminars and workshops across a variety of topics.

human health and the environment. Titled 'Securing a future market by giving the public 'permission' to eat our lamb', the second seminar is likely to be an interesting listen with speakers from AHDB, the world of agricultural research and a farmer at the face of this negative publicity, speaking about how we can all take steps to counteract these arguments.

Brexit

The final seminar of the day will aim to update attendees on the one subject that cannot have been avoided for the last two years and that will have the biggest impact on UK agriculture in modern times. Titled 'Brexit – What we know so far', it will provide an up-to-date picture on the UK's position as we prepare to leave the EU in just a few short months. A well-informed panel including NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker and Defra officials will lead what will no doubt be a hotly debated topic.

Following some intensive seminars, visitors to NSA Central Region Early Gathering may need some lighter relief. Attendees will be able to meet with a range of exhibitors in the shelter of the market to view and discuss the latest products and equipment ranges on offer as well as taking the welcome opportunity to meet up with friends old and new before lambing time confines us all once again to the farm.

For those that are looking for some more hands-on advice, NSA Central

Event fact file

Event: NSA Central Region Early Gathering.
Venue: Bakewell Market, Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH.
Date: Thursday 24th January 2019. 10am-4pm.
Admission: Free for NSA members; £5 for non-members.
General enquiries: Call NSA Head Office or go to the event minisite at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/creg.

region Early Gathering has added another popular workshop to this year's programme. Visitors can choose from a selection of five workshops running throughout the day, providing an array of useful take home information.

Young shepherds

NSA Central Region will also be on the search for its NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year as the biennial competition holds its first regional heat of 2019. Kindly sponsored by the Texel Society the competition will see young shepherds compete against each other in a series of shepherding tasks as well as a test of knowledge of the UK sheep industry and sheep husbandry. The winner from each regional heat will move forward to the national finals at NSA Sheep Event 2020 in Malvern, Worcestershire. For more information visit the NSA website.

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NSA tackle policymakers on sheep industry security once UK leaves EU

NSA has spent much of the past few years pushing the sheep industry's Brexit concerns forward to policymakers, something that has especially stepped up in the past few months.

NSA is now calling for MPs and peers to support the Prime Minister's proposed deal, which it believes will deliver some much-needed stability for the future of the sheep industry. The deal sets out a plan for the future relationship between the UK and the EU and would allow the UK to move forward with developing future trade beyond the EU while still retaining our current trade within.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, says: "The proposed deal will allow people to plan and prepare for the future. It would keep us from the cliff edge in March, which we warn would be extremely damaging to sheep farming."

Negotiations

"This deal would allow us to negotiate and prepare trade deals outside of the EU, giving us more time to build trade agreements before we move away from the EU. It would be in the interest of our industry for MPs to get behind this



NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker challenges Defra Secretary Michael Gove on Brexit.

agreement and make the most of what can be achieved in the longer term."

If agreed, the deal would allow the UK Government to work on building deals above and beyond World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. The trade deals the UK currently relies on as an

EU member state have been developed across the last 40 years of the EU's existence. Member states are not able to develop their own trade deals beyond these. However, accepting the proposed Brexit deal would allow the UK to negotiate its own trade deals, meaning

we may not have to drop back to WTO rules when we eventually do fully leave.

It would also allow more time for the development of the Agriculture Bill, as the necessity to get the Bill through Parliament and the terms of a new payment scheme in place would be less pressing. Mr Stocker comments: "The Government and all devolved Governments would continue work on their respective Bills, but this would allow more breathing space for policymakers and industry to work together to reduce the risks of such a monumental change without lengthy consideration and trial."

No deal

The alternative would be facing a no deal Brexit, an option NSA is clear would need serious safeguards and preparation if it is to be something the industry must face. NSA has set out what steps need to be taken to enable the industry to react to such a scenario.

Mr Stocker says: "It would be highly damaging to the UK sheep sector if the UK eases the flow of imports into the UK, something the Government has suggested it would do to keep our manufacturing going, at the same time as the EU delays the approval of products destined for its side of the Channel. If we lose access for UK sheepmeat, even for a few months, and still allow imported lamb to come in then our markets will become flooded and prices will plummet, with farmers feeling the brunt of it."

"It is worth noting, however, Defra has assured NSA the Government is working hard to ensure action for the UK to be registered as an EU third country, allowing us to continue trading with them, will be taken as 'swiftly as possible', and not the three to six months being speculated. Regardless, in a no deal scenario it is difficult to see how we could survive if our export volumes remained in our home market at the same time as retaining current import levels of mainly New Zealand lamb."

Controlling imports

"There would be calls for imports to be controlled, and then there are unknowns such as whether we would be looking at emergency measures to carry us over for a few months before returning to normal, or if would this be part of a greater long-term focus on our domestic market. This would give us challenges with seasonality, but using public procurement markets such as our armed forces, schools and hospitals, and investing in long-term cold storage would allow us to make the most of what could otherwise be a catastrophe."

In the short term, under a no-deal and once registered as an EU third country,

Continued on page 12

Good news on sheep dip issues and carcase splitting rules

With much uncertainty surrounding the industry as we approach the end of 2018, members will be pleased to hear of two recent announcements hard fought for by NSA.

The long-awaited news of rule changes for the ageing of sheep for specified risk material removal (spinal column etc) has finally been delivered, with Defra Ministers recently announcing the existing method of checking for tooth eruption can be changed to an agreed calendar date of 30th June, from 2019. This aligns with other accepted definitions of when a sheep is 12 months of age, namely in EID rules.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker says: "This is a major step forward following almost five years of intensive data gathering and positioning by NSA and relevant industry bodies. It's an example of what can be achieved by organisations working together, and of what can be done through constructive and supportive working between industry and regulators."

Dip storage

Another piece of welcome news is the Environment Agency's decision in England to allow dipping contractors to store spent dip without the need for permitting and licensing. There are obviously conditions that go with this (outlined below) but the decision will save contractors thousands of pounds and increase the option and the viability of farmers using mobile dips.

Mr Stocker says: "This is another example that we can make progress

if industry bodies and Government agencies work together. NSA has been working intensively on this subject since the new permitting and licensing fees came into place in England, and joined forces with other organisations such as NFU, SCOPS, the Chartered Institute of Waste Management and Bimeda to add collective strength. We have also been promised a light touch review of on-farm disposal early in the New Year and we will make sure this subject doesn't go away."

Conditions for storage fee exceptions:-

- Dip must be diluted for use in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions at the place of use and be below hazardous waste thresholds.
- The total quantity of waste dip stored at any one time must not exceed 20 cubic metres (20,000 litres).
- The waste dip is stored in a bunded area with an impermeable base able to retain 110% of the largest container or 25% of the total volume that could be stored, whichever is greater.
- No waste dip is stored for longer than three months.
- The operator, while not obliged to inform the Environment Agency of their activities to store dip before disposal, has registered for a waste carriers licence for the transport of spent dip back to their premises. These licences are free for operators only carrying waste they produce themselves.



The Environment Agency is exempting dipping contractors from the new dip storage licence fees.

Carcase classification and price reporting

Following a consultation earlier this year on making carcase classification and price reporting mandatory, Defra has since invited NSA and other industry bodies to a meeting to discuss ways forward.

The Agriculture Bill offers the chance to mandate for this as part of greater transparency throughout the supply chain and making trading relationships more equitable, although quite how Brexit will affect this is still not known. Overall it seems industry and Government is aligned with wanting to make classification mandatory (with a derogation for plants processing less than 1,000 sheep a week) and to find ways to report deadweight prices in a standardised way and publish lists of charges and deductions. While this is being dealt with by the Agriculture Bill, devolved nations will need to adopt similar legislation if they choose to follow and, with such a high level of cross border trade, NSA believes it is essential to make this move together.



Carcase classification and price reporting is not currently compulsory.

NSA responds to AHDB consultation

NSA, as well as many of its individual members, responded to the recently closed call for views from Defra on the future of the English levy body AHDB Beef & Lamb. Key points of NSA's response include:

- NSA believes the previous restructure of AHDB, which led to the coming together of all the different sector companies, has not benefitted the sheep sector. While sharing services such as HR and IT makes sense, merging has diluted 'ownership' among AHDB teams.
- While NSA appreciates views vary widely amongst its membership on the importance of AHDB's research and development work, on balance, and given our departure from the EU, NSA feels we need to see more work being done on trade, market and product development for the foreseeable future. NSA wants to see AHDB use a minimum of levy money to lever down other R&D funds, so this work can be continued while allowing levy money to be invested in market opportunity.
- The governance of the levy boards and committees is not effectively representing industry interests and has led to a disconnect between levy payers and AHDB. NSA believes it is essential there are several places elected from levy payers and a place for properly constituted and democratic organisations to have a more formal role within these structures.

Concerns continue as rewilding calls grow louder

Many NSA members will have been following the progress of a proposed introduction of the Eurasian lynx into an area of land around Kielder Forest, Northumberland.

While Natural England has yet to decide on this with no indication given to when it will, NSA continues to offer its support to the affected areas and members.

NSA has recently been made aware of early discussions in advance of a

potential proposal to introduce sea eagles (a species that already blights Western Scotland) to the Isle of Wight in order to create a population that would spread along the south coast of England.

NSA will follow these proposals and use lessons learnt from the Scotland introduction to ensure the livelihood of sheep farmers is recognised and their contribution to the economy, environment and rural communities is valued rather than threatened.



Picture credit: Wikimedia, L.G. Nyqvist.

the UK would be trading under WTO terms and tariffs. For sheepmeat, our involvement in the NZ/EU 'tariff rate quota' would cease, meaning the lamb currently arriving in the UK from New Zealand would be halted. However, policymakers in New Zealand are keen to offer the UK a trade deal that would likely not favour the UK sheepmeat industry but would appeal to the UK Government as it would allow other trade to expand.

Expecting wider world markets to absorb what currently goes to the EU in the short to medium term is unrealistic, and so NSA says the UK Government must offset tariff costs in order to allow trade to continue to function.

Mr Stocker says: "The Government says it would not pay the £40 billion 'divorce bill' if no deal is reached and NSA would expect that money to be reinvested to enable industries to continue to operate."

NSA has been busy organising and attending meetings with policy makers, including joining a mass lobby in the House of Commons to encourage Ministers and MPs to lend their support to the Agriculture Bill and help deliver a long-term secure funding pot for the industry.

NSA believes it is vital to forge these relationships to ensure what matters to sheep farmers, as food producers, is recognised.

LIP planning continues

The Livestock Information Programme continues to progress with a commitment for funding, the involvement of all relevant industry bodies, and a high level of sign up by Ministers and civil servants.

The industry's Traceability Design Users Group, of which NSA is part, has now been provided with a timetable for policy and regulatory development that will see a review of sheep identification and movements reporting, culminating in a formal consultation at the end of 2019. NSA will call for the focus to be on food traceability and disease control.

NSA tackles negative red meat media claims

Readers of national press will have recently seen a surge in negative attention towards red meat, for environmental and health reasons. NSA has been vocal in disputing these claims, although it accepts it will need to do even more on these subjects in the future.

Mr Stocker comments: "Red meat is an important and enjoyable part of good human nutrition and suggestions of a 'red meat tax' are ridiculous. It would push food prices upwards and make life difficult for low income households who already struggle to make ends meet and who deserve a healthy diet. A varied and balanced diet is very important and sensible red meat consumption is part of this."

Grass fed

"Lamb and mutton is predominantly grass-fed and packed with micro nutrients and essential amino acids as well as protein. Claims red meat production 'takes up land and uses high levels of water' are again misguided and these claims are based on poor and incomplete science. Much of the land used for sheep farming is either not suitable for other forms of food

production or is building soil fertility for subsequent cropping."

In response to the call by the Committee for Climate Change for 50% of beef and lamb pasture to be cut, NSA reemphasised the important role sheep



NSA has been highlighting the wider benefits of sheep to the UK.

play in regenerative agriculture which in turn contributes to keeping our uplands in a good condition and improving our lowland soil quality and a return to mixed farming.

NSA also disputes the science on which standard carbon footprint calculations – as they do not consider full life cycle analysis or the role of animals, pasture and carbon sequestration, and they confuse what is essentially a natural carbon cycle (that has been going for on thousands of years) with an industrial carbon cycle (dependent on the use of fossil fuels and land use change).

Bigger picture

Mr Stocker comments: "It is hugely frustrating a body like the CCC refuses to accept the wider and more natural aspects of the carbon cycle and rarely seeks to address weaknesses in the system. But also frustrating the study has focused on carbon. Sustainability is not just about carbon and it should never be assumed to be one single objective. This should be about the whole, and should assess wildlife biodiversity, ecology and social communities."



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Molasses blends for energised ewes

Feeding high energy molasses blends to ewes in late pregnancy can have a big impact on lambing success, reducing the risk of twin lamb disease and boosting lamb vigour.

ED&F Man's Richard Taylor points out, "Most ewes are coming into the winter in good condition. The key is to keep them in good condition, preventing them getting overly fat or losing too much weight, either of which can lead to reduced performance and the increased chance of metabolic disorders."

Twin and triplet bearing ewes have a particularly high demand for energy, especially glucose, and as they get closer to lambing this demand increases. If these energy and glucose demands aren't met, then ewes can suffer twin lamb disease/pregnancy toxemia.

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

To meet the high energy demands of the growing lamb, ewes naturally metabolise body fat in the liver, producing ketones. If the dietary energy supply is inadequate, excessive body fat is metabolised, leading to an excessive build-up of ketones to toxic levels and body condition loss.

The rule that prevention is better than cure is particularly true in this situation. Twin lamb disease can be prevented by feeding the ewe properly, in terms of both quantity and quality of feed supplied.

Start supplementary nutrients six weeks pre lambing date with an amount based on ewe condition, and where possible with predicted scanning information.

Singles: Low levels of supplement should be offered to avoid too large a lamb birth weight.

Twins: Medium level of supplementation where the aim is to ensure two viable and thriving lambs Triplets: Maximum care and attention is required and careful supplementation is required to ensure all 3 lambs can be carried and delivered successfully.

Sheep diets should be based around good quality forage, supplemented with appropriate energy and protein sources, as well as good sources of vitamins and minerals. Sheepmol and Sheepmol Plus are high dry matter, high sugar blends of cane molasses, glycerine and liquid co-products, formulated specifically for sheep. The unique mix of energy sources promotes healthy lamb growth and maintains ewe health.

As pregnancy progresses and the lamb grows, the physical pressure on the rumen increases and intake capacity is reduced. In this situation liquid feeds offer a number of unique benefits:-

- The exceptional palatability drives intakes when DMI can be reduced
- Low substitution rates mean more can be fed than would be the case with a dry feed without reducing forage intakes
- The high sugar supply boosts rumen function, meaning ewes get more from each mouthful consumed
- Free access feeding can reduce stress and the incidence of bullying or prolapse

ED&F Man offer a proven range of sheep supplementary products including the recently launched Sheepmol range, and if extra protein is required, Prime 20. All are high sugar, high energy liquids. The Sheepmol range has the added benefit of glycerine inclusion to reduce the likelihood of twin lamb disease.

Challenge set for UK sheep sector to be the 'best in the world' by 2028

By Nicola Noble, NSA

Attendees at the biennial Sheep Health and Welfare Conference, held in late-November in Staffordshire, were challenged to become 'the best in the world' – and then given a variety of routes and options to achieve this.

Charles Sercombe, Sheep Health and Welfare Group Chairman, and NSA office holder, said: "In 10 years' time we will have the best health and welfare standards, the best quality product and the best traceability in the world. The research is out there, but we need to work together to increase our extension services (and those available from others) to ensure best practice at farm level is achieved across the UK."

One of several areas of best practice discussed was responsible use of antibiotics, with Fiona Lovatt of Flock Health saying her involvement with a cross-industry group setting antibiotic targets had left her feeling the sheep sector had some catching up to do.

Responsible use

She said: "Surrounded by members from pig, poultry, beef and dairy, I was feeling pretty smug as a sheep vet. But although we may not use a huge amount of antibiotics within our industry in comparison to others, we do tend to use it irresponsibly (prophylactically) in areas where use could be avoided."

Dr Lovatt highlighted three hot spot areas (in neonatal lambs, for control of enzootic abortion and when treating lameness) routine antibiotic use could be replaced by improved management



NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker chairing one of the discussions at the conference.

strategies. She went on the share practices for plan-prevent-protect followed by monitor-measure-manage.

She continued: "Unfortunately, current metrics on vaccine use, antibiotic use and even general medicine use is either inaccurate or out of date. Without reliable data, informed decisions can't be made. With more reliable on-farm data, we can accurately inform policy makers decisions and demonstrate our proactivity to the Government, but it can also help improve productivity on farm."

Highlights from a large number of other presentations included:-

- Poppy Frater of SAC Consultancy presented an international project focused on sharing good practice between UK, EU and non-EU countries via www.sheepnet.network/knowledge-reservoir.
- Lleyn breeder George Cullimore shared progress on breeding for specific health traits, explaining the challenge was ensuring balance and trade-offs to prevent the loss of other critical traits.
- Vets Davinia Hinde and Charlotte Mouland sought opinions on a 'tinder-style' phone app, to link buyer and breeder to ensure good health status for flocks who buy in their replacements.
- Jasmeet Kalar of Nottingham University looked at technology to help farmers predict and prevent problems, rather than reacting, saying the falling price of accelerometers, temperature boluses, cameras and weighing platforms was positive, but more work was needed on battery life, increased data security, validation of technology and wider sharing of patterns and useful data.
- Professor Davy McCracken of SRUC shared his experience of using an on-farm radio wireless platform to predict rainfall to prevent flooding and run-off, soil temperatures to predict grass growth and therefore grazing length, livestock tracking for animal health and even environmental data to predict the threat of fluke, worms, flies and ticks.

Find presentations at www.beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns/health-and-welfare/shawg-conference-news.



The conference was well attended with nearly 200 attendees enjoying the range of speakers and discussions.

Hexham Mart a fantastic venue for successful NSA Next Generation day

More than 100 young shepherds, students and industry representatives gathered at Hexham Livestock Market, Northumberland, in mid-November to take part in the annual NSA Next Generation open event.

The day was made up interactive workshops combined with talks from industry experts and a discussion panel with the most recent cohort of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors. Groups from several agricultural colleges and young shepherds from across the UK made the trip to attend the one-day event.

As in previous years, NSA Next Generation Ambassadors were involved in the day, giving engaging talks to their peers and sharing their own experiences of working in the sheep industry

(see panel below), before industry professionals led interactive workshops on a range of topics allowing young people the opportunity to ask questions and learn from those in the know.

Workshops

Joanne Briggs coordinates the NSA Next Generation project. She says: "Attendees selected four out of seven workshops they wanted to attend when they registered, be it animal health, business planning or understanding Brexit, and it was really positive to see them making their way to different work stations around the market to get the most from each session. Small groups allowed people to ask questions and drive discussion according to their own



Interactive workshops were part of the NSA Next Generation day.

£2,750 travel bursaries
Young people attending the event in Hexham were the first to learn of two £2,750 travel bursaries currently being offered by NSA.

A single £1,000 bursary was announced earlier in the year, as the NSA Samuel Wharry Memorial Award for the Next Generation. But days before applications opened, and slightly delaying the launch, NSA was offered additional funding for the two new bursaries. These are in partnership with the Company of Merchants of the Staple of England, to which NSA is very appreciative.

The bursaries will to support two young people in study trips in 2019 and are open to UK residents under the age of 35 on 31st December 2018. The application process asks those interested to design their own trip to learn more about the practical application of science and technology in the sheep sector.

Apply online at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk.

personal needs, which was something we wanted to encourage on the day."

The event will be repeated again in autumn 2019. Sign up to the NSA Next Generation newsletter for details.

Email enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk.



Different routes into sheep farming

Six NSA Next Generation Ambassadors provided honest accounts of their own experiences working in the sheep sector.

Taking more responsibility within a family farming business

- Catherine Sanderson: "Putting your ideas into an already functioning farm is difficult and it can take time to get family to put their trust in you – but keep going. Working for a common goal is satisfying with the added benefit of spending quality time with your family."
- Bleddyn Davies: "Don't expect to agree on everything you want to implement, but bounce ideas off each other, be open and don't hold things back."

Starting from scratch as a first generation sheep farmer

- Oliver Brayne: "Just keep going. Don't limit yourself to only one route to achieve your goal. I knew I wanted to work for myself but was open as to how I could do it. Don't be afraid to ask for help."
- Rollo Deutsch: "Sheep are a good way into farming. I have increasingly managed to get pieces of land to allow me to increase my flock. I hope this will continue, but I'm not afraid to take a step back if it means securing a longer-term farm tenancy."

Working for someone else

- Joe Emmett: "Choose employers that suit you and you can work well with. Surround yourself with good people and don't let people down. It can take a long time to gain a good reputation but no time at all to lose it."
- Sion Morgan: "Working as an employed shepherd means the opportunity to work with excellent facilities and large numbers of sheep without the personal outlay, and it can give you chance to learn from the best in the industry to put you in a better position to move forward."

NSA Next Generation Ambassador programme 2018 concludes in style

With a three-day excursion to Hexham, Northumberland, the 2018 intake of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors concluded their formal training in style.

The fifth and final delivery session focussed on ensuring a legacy, with the Ambassadors spending time with various NSA office holders and developing their ongoing roles to promote the industry and interact with NSA.

NSA involvement

Speaking to the Ambassadors and attendees at the annual NSA Next Generation open day, NSA Chairman Bryan Griffiths said: "I just run a typical family farm in Devon so, if I can stand here today as the nation chairman, it just goes to show that anyone can get involved. NSA prides itself on representing grassroots farmers so people who want to get involved will never be turned away. The future will be shaped by the people who bother to turn up and who share their views."

With five groups of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors now active with



NSA Chairman Bryan Griffiths (centre) presented the Next Generation Ambassadors with certificates of achievement.

the organisation, there is not going to be a 2019 intake. Instead NSA is planning a series of alternative activities through the year, details of which will be shared in the spring.

With a busy 12 months of

technical sheep farming and personal development sessions behind them, the NSA Ambassadors from the 2018 intake share their experiences and pictures over the next few pages. Find more online at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk.

Lauren Bird (28)

Scottish Borders:

I have learnt a lot over the past 12 months on the NSA Ambassador programme and really appreciate the experiences it has given me. I have taken something from every farm we visited and seeing such a wide variety of different enterprises gave me insights I otherwise wouldn't have had. A practical thing to take away for me



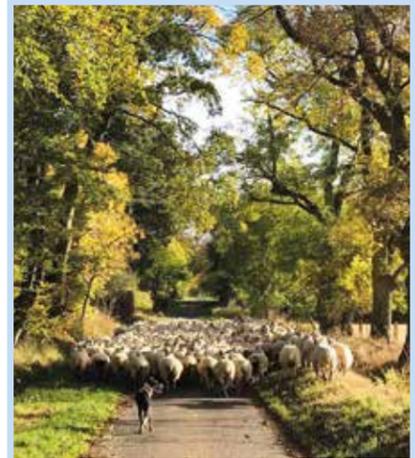
from the very first session was on colostrum. I always knew its importance but the talk from vet Phillipa Page really highlighted some key facts, and this lambing I intend to make a greater effort to ensure every lamb in the flock I work with gets its quota and hopefully reduce joint ill.

I think the whole Ambassador team has been awesome and I know I've made some long-term friends in the group. NSA has given me more motivation to get involved within the sheep industry to have an impact on the future. Brexit will be challenging but what will be will be; change is always hard.



how you implement and carry it out that makes the difference.

In the next few years I plan to do more faecal egg counts and believe this will benefit my flock and production.



Oliver Brayne (32)

Derbyshire:

Attention to detail and using preventative treatments are the two most important messages I've taken away from the sessions this year.

During that time I have taken on a National Trust tenancy and it's been good to recognise that no one system or set up is better than another. It's



Continued on page 18

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Tom Chapman (28)

Staffordshire: Over the past year we have been very lucky to visit and meet so many great farms and farmers across the country. Personally, I think I took the most away from visiting Frank Lloyd in Herefordshire with his breeding of Aberfield rams. The way he farmed was similar to what I aspire to do and I was impressed with the quality of his stock.



A change I have already implemented at home is regular weighing of lambs. If I see a decrease in daily liveweight gains, it means I need to investigate worming lambs.

In the next few years I am looking to sell lambs direct from the farm where I am a tenant and develop my social media use and a brand to help promote my product. My outlook for myself and my farm for 2019 is to be better not bitter in my approach to life.

Bleddyn Davies (26)

Ceredigion: Following my time on the NSA Ambassador scheme and all the information that's been shared with me, I've started looking at costs within my family business to improve margins.



I've also been looking at increasing forage use and lowering dependence on concentrates and also reducing antibiotic use for practical and financial benefit.

In the next year or two I am looking to implement rotational grazing into



Rollo Deutsch (23)

Gloucestershire: All the farmers we have visited and met this year were great. My favourites were Marc Jones in Powys and Mark Steel in Worcestershire because I think they have great business minds.

Over the past months I have learnt to focus on my costs more and question what I'm doing and spending with the various parcels of land I rent. This was due to Marc helping me look in more detail at my figures. Lesley Stubbings, independent sheep consultant, also helped focus my mind on medicine use and encouraged me to use my vet more.

I am planning to make a five-year plan that will include to work with my vet to keep my sheep as healthy as possible,



the sheep system at home, increasing forage utilisation and production with higher stocking rates. In 2019, my motto will be to take every opportunity available and build a sustainable business in preparation for post-Brexit.

Joe Emmett (27)

Norfolk: The NSA Next Generation Ambassador programme has been a very useful experience for me. Something I valued and have started using is the time management and business planning techniques shared with us by life coach Wyn Owen in the third session. This will



Kirree Kermode (33)

Isle of Man: Becomin a NSA Next Generation Ambassador has been a really eye opening experience for me. I particularly valued our visit to Deer Park Hall, Worcestershire, where we met farmer Mark Steele. There was so much variety within his enterprise, covering some niche markets and really adding value to each of his products.

On the family farm the use of antibiotics has been much more in my mind when working with our stock, especially after our first session. It was still lambing



mainly through managing worm burdens. I am planning to begin in the new year by speaking with my vets to see if they will offer a service to monitor my worm burden while I'm away shearing.

be even more important now I've taken on a new tenancy alongside my job as a self-employed shepherd.

I hope to implement more focus in my business by adding value to my breeding females and buying in more improved genetics. In the next few years also I'd like to stay involved in NSA and hope to get a role on the NSA Eastern Region Committee.

David McMullan (28)

County Antrim: The NSA Ambassador programme has been a great experience for me. I enjoyed visiting Kevin Harrison near Bristol as he ran a similar set up to myself on the family farm, but with some acute difference that were interesting to see.

One of the biggest things I have taken away is more in-depth knowledge of antibiotic use and resistance. I have



time at home and when I returned I was able to use different methods advised by sheep vet Phillipa Page that worked to prevent joint ill.

Over the next few years I plan to pay more attention to cost of production and ensuring I get more benefits from grass crops. More immediately I intend to embrace more EID technology to make life easier than using soggy bits of paper.



also learnt a lot about genetics and am now trying to breed better traits into my flock. Moving forward I am going to implement stricter culling policies and better biosecurity. I'll also start a stricter regime of running faecal egg counts routinely. For 2019, my resolution is to make more money and spend plenty of time with my young family (pictured).



Richard Rossiter (27)

Devon: Becoming an NSA Next Generation Ambassador has been a brilliant experience for me. I have taken away and implemented doing more faecal egg counts on my farm to



Sion Morgan (29)

Scottish Borders: For me, the farm advice from Marc Jones has been a big help and has helped me fine tune my approach to the farming system where I work. He advised that feed budgeting



Catherine Sanderson (25)

North Yorkshire: I have thoroughly enjoyed all of our farm visits and the breadth of systems we saw. A constant theme was attention to detail. At Kevin Harrison's farm in Somerset his focus on nutrition and health was amazing and there was a lot more we could have



reduce drenching. I've really been seeing benefits on cost savings, as well as doing my part to reduce resistance. Over the next few years I plan to implement more condition scoring and recording more lambing data, so getting the right genetics that we want to carry on improving the flock on the family farm.

Zoey Symington (22)

Shetland: I've taken away a lot of different benefits from the programme this year. The piece of advice that springs to mind would be the control of worms in our flock. Also, I have reduced



is crucial to knowing your supply and demand. I have yet to implement this advice but hope when I do it will help me succeed in running my own operation.

My next step is to build more equity to try and get a step closer to getting on the farming ladder. I have moved from Wales to Scotland for a shepherding job but ultimately want to start my own enterprise. I am concerned where the final Brexit negotiations will end up, but I do see this as an opportunity for young entrants with the knowledge, time, energy and passion to access land and build their businesses.



learned there. Since learning about it as an NSA Ambassador, we have started doing our own faecal egg counts on my family farm. Although I haven't done any worming differently yet, I feel more in control of the worm burden and more confident in my worming strategies. Looking to the future I am hoping to make better use of EID and record sheep better.

Like the rest of the UK, I have no idea if Brexit will even happen or if it will be good or bad – but I think it could give us a good opportunity to develop a new countryside stewardship scheme that would be good to support my farm.



medicine use and, therefore, cost. This is definitely a benefit, as I am not routinely drenching like I used to within my own flock.

In the future I would like to do more stock recording. We have all the devices but don't use them to the full potential.

In 2019 my aim is to make the most of my new job on the mainland. I will be working on a large farm in Aberdeenshire and am looking forward to getting stuck into it. I think Brexit could be very difficult for Shetland, where my family is, and farming could easily become a non-profitable enterprise. The uncertainty at the moment is very worrying to the Shetland farming community and we would like to see more of a focus on

the negotiations for Scotland to include the Highlands and Islands.



NSA delivers information on UK systems and the benefits for China

By Kevin Harrison, NSA English Committee Chairman

Following on from my visit to China in September and our NSA presence at the Viv China Expo, I was lucky enough to be invited to speak at the 2018 International Symposium on Chinese Sheep Industry Development.

It was a two-day conference including speakers from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, USA, myself from the UK and Chinese industry experts. More than 200 Chinese sheep farmers, government officials and meat marketers attended the conference. I was asked to give a presentation on 'British sheep production, from farm to fork'. I covered many topics including breed selection, genetic improvements, genetic selection, lamb grading, lamb consumption in the UK, consumer demands, PGI, farm assurance standards and provenance.

The conference was a huge success and it was an honour to represent the UK sheep industry to the Chinese and international delegates. More excellent contacts have been made within Chinese government and the Chinese sheep industry.

Farm visits

On the second day we were treated to two farm visits, both running breeding programmes.

The first sheep business we visited belonged to Dr C.J. Lin. He was doing great work creating crossbreeds using the local Chinese Hu breed and was



NSA English Committee Chairman Kevin Harrison delivered a farm to fork presentation in China.

experimenting with terminal sires like the Australian White and the Dorper and then trying to stabilise the cross breed. These were then sent to some of his other farms, including one in inner Mongolia, to see how they performed. On this particular farm there were 11,000 sheep of which 6,000 were breeding ewes all kept indoors on slats. The total farm size was only 35ha. Most of his forage for the total mix ration (TMR) was purchased from within a 50km radius of the farm, fairly convenient compared to some. Something that I learnt about at the



The sheep are kept indoors on slats with specially regulated diets.

conference was the staggering amount of forage that was imported into China to feed their animals.

Flock recording

This farm was run to a very high standard with its own flock recording system with readers linked to mobile phones and full data access availability at the read of one tag. They even had safeguards in place in the software so the wrong ram couldn't be put to the wrong ewe, helping to eliminate human error. The farm had its own laboratories for AI and embryo transfer and at the time of our visit had 20,000 embryos on-site and 13,000 straws of semen. The farm had its own auction for selling off breeding stock.

This farm was a real eye-opener



Strengthening relationships with China is important to help secure trade.

to the standard the top Chinese sheep businesses are now running at. Nearly everything they were doing breed wise and tech wise would have been highly influenced from New Zealand and Australia.

After an interesting lunch we moved on to the Teng Yuan Mu Ye Animal Husbandry Company. This farm was a multiplier site solely producing Hu sheep for selling on as breeding stock, such is the high demand for this fat tailed, prolific, domesticated sheep. They had 60,000 Hu all kept indoors on bamboo slats all on TMR. The ration was being mixed in one shed and distributed around the sheep sheds via four self-propelled feed wagons running constantly like worker bees to keep them fed.

Reflections

On my return back to Beijing I was lucky enough to spend an hour visiting the Great Wall of China. A historical reminder of the efforts the Chinese have gone to to protect their borders and trade.

There are many people working hard behind the scenes to open up the trade doors into China for the British sheep industry. It will take time but it is moving in the right direction. We just need to concentrate on keeping our industry world class in animal health, food security and traceability.



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Resilience and forward planning are key drivers for NSA South West Trustee

By Eleanor Phipps, NSA

Having thrived at Blindwell Farm high up on Exmoor since the 1850s, the Delbridge family and their Exmoor Horns are still going strong – but only because the people and the sheep have adapted to change over the years to ensure the long-term resilience of the business.

This balance between stability and flexibility is an asset that Peter is now sharing with NSA too, having joined the NSA Management Board earlier this year as a Trustee.

With wife Carol and daughters Charlotte and Katie, Peter runs 60 Exmoor Horns, 270 Exlanas, 160 Swaledales and 310 North of England Mules, as well as 40 suckler cows. “The Exmoors have been here for as long as we have and are an important part of our heritage. The breed has its qualities and is well at home on the edge of the moor,” he says, but adds that the Exlanas have found a place more recently and are

now pushing out the Swales and Mules.

“They’re a very capable breed and are hardy enough to adapt,” he says. “They look after themselves and lamb outdoors well as a maternal breed, so increasing their numbers won’t put too much strain on the rest of the farm.”

The Exmoors and Mules are lambed indoors, while the Exlanas and Swales are lambed outside. This can prove a challenge when the weather is bad but has been made possible by years of work from Peter and his family that

Farm facts

- 180ha (440-acre) upland farm.
- 800 breeding ewes, split between Exmoor Horn, Exlana, Swaledale and Mule breeds.
- 40 Hereford cross beef cows covered by a Limousin bull; calves sold at 16 months as forward stores.
- Land is 50% brown free-draining earth and 50% reclaimed ground.



Both the native Exmoor Horn breed and the Delbridge family have been at Blindwell Farm for more than 160 years.

has meant the land is capable of sustaining livestock at the levels it does.

Peter says: “Because the farm starts at 1,000 feet above sea level and rises to 1,400, average annual rainfall is around 70 inches. This results in the soil being naturally acidic with a pH of 4-4.5. The best we can get it to is 5.5-6. Knowing the deficiencies, we have, I have to dose the ewes with selenium, cobalt and copper during pregnancy. And we have to monitor carefully for fluke and treat accordingly.”

Lambing cycle

The rams go in from early November, allowing lambing to begin on 1st April with a view to finish anything not selected for breeding as prime lambs. These are sold direct to slaughter at Randall Parker or through Stags at their collection centre at Honiton. Where this isn’t achieved, Peter will dip into the store trade at Blackmoor Gate Market or Sedgemoor.

On a good year Peter he will aim to sell 50% finished with that figure dropping to 35% on a bad year. The lambs are sold from the end of June with the last of the tailenders going in March, having been supplemented on pellets once the grass has run out.

As a non-executive board member of Mole Valley, Peter’s choice of feed supplier is an obvious one. “All concentrates are bought in from Mole Valley, which is a farmer-owned co-op where quality and value can be assured,” he says.

Feeding

“The outdoor ewes get rolls, and the indoor ewes get pellets during the last six weeks of pregnancy. I grow all my forage at home and some years I’ll grow stubble turnips or rape to fatten the lambs as part of my reseeding programme.”

Some 15% of finished lambs are sold to Pipers Farm, which runs a local farm shop selling grass-fed, free-range meat. Peter comments: “Pipers pays at a base level of the price of production plus. We’ve been selling to them on this model for more than 20 years and it’s an arrangement that works for us and them, provided we send a consistent product.”

Peter keeps 250 of his ewe lambs for breeding and then sells 50 of these as shearlings. While his Exmoor and Exlana flocks are self-sustaining, he buys in replacement Swaledales, with this flock crossed to the Bluefaced Leicester to maintain the Mule flock.

Over the years, Peter has taken

support scheme that properly provides for farmers in the area. The Exmoor Hill Farm Network has mapped out a proposed scheme and, Peter says, has the ear of Defra Secretary Michael Gove.

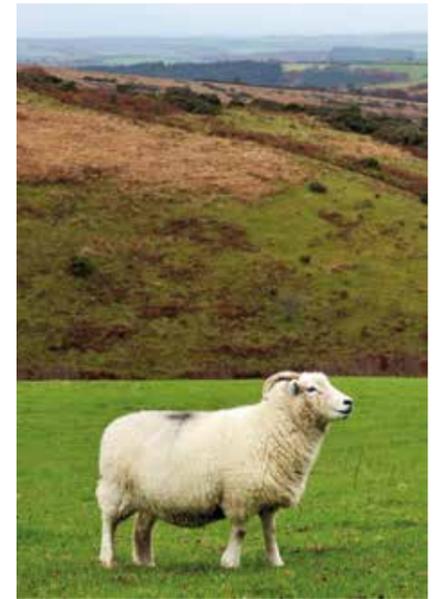
Future funding

He explains: “The scheme we’d like to see for Exmoor focuses on our natural area and supports that which works in our communities. As we the farmers have helped develop this proposal, we know it would work for what we need. The system looks positive and at the moment it looks like it is getting off the ground and gaining some momentum.” Ensuring support for farmers is something Peter feels passionately about and has practiced over many years. Peter comments: “Before I was introduced to NSA, I was part of the local South Molton sheep discussion group. The group meets throughout the winter to discuss sheep, our systems and offer support to one another. During the summer we visit group members’ farms. I was made chairman of the group and that is how I first came to be involved with NSA.”

This involvement was to first join the NSA South West Region Committee in the 1990s, before later becoming NSA South West Region Chairman and now the NSA Trustee for South West Region. This is in addition to his role with Mole Valley, which he has been doing for 10 years, following in the footsteps of his father who was a founding member.

Proactive

“I’ve always felt the sheep industry should be more proactive and less reactive, so groups that represent the industry and drive forward the agenda are important. This is something I feel strongly about,” says Peter.



The farm is 1,000-1,400ft above sea level.

Within his own business, Peter says building resilience for the future is led him to focus on ways to future-proof his farm. He says: “We’d been looking at lower cost models. Bringing in greater numbers of the Exlanas is a start, as they will incur a lower production cost than the other breeds. With Brexit around the corner, we know sheep are vulnerable, so we’re making sure we have other things in place. A real income support for us at the moment is our bunk house.”

Versatility

Peter and Carol run a 16-bed bunkhouse in a converted barn off the house. They have had this for four years and say its success has helped supplement their income.

Looking further forward still, Peter says his biggest challenge is succession. He explains: “At this point we’re not sure how interested any of my daughters will be in taking on the farm, so I’m considering what steps to take to prepare for this. I am open to most ideas but imagine myself looking for a young person to come in with a share farming model.

“I’m concerned about how this might work though, as farmers work exceptionally hard but at the moment receive little recognition or appreciation. This attitude needs to change to encourage more young people to stay in farming. This is why getting involved in organisations like NSA and its Next Generation programme is so important to help steer the agenda.”



Peter is increasing his numbers of Exlana sheep, an easy-care breed that he argues will increase productivity.



Peter Delbridge.

Changes in the Budget offer both pros and cons for rural businesses

By Natalie Hallett,
Old Mill
The latest Budget from the Government, announced in October, saw a number of changes introduced by the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, that will impact the agricultural sector. These will be introduced over the next few years for a vital transition stage with Brexit ongoing.



One of the key changes, which was not announced in the speech, is a new structures and buildings allowance (SBA), introduced with immediate effect. The SBA gives a 2% capital allowance every year on any new buildings that have not yet been started, or if contracts have not yet been signed. This extra allowance might be useful for anyone putting up new farm buildings.

Investment

Also important for farmers is an increase in the Annual Investment Allowance, which will rise from £200,000 to £1m from the 1st January 2019 for two years. For farmers or big contractors who need to invest or buy a lot of kit, this will make a substantial difference. However, the two-year time cap on this means farmers should take advantage as soon as they can, rather than postponing investment.

However, care does need to be taken with regards to timing as the year end of the business will impact on when a claim on a substantial purchase can be maximised. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as purchasing after 1st January 2019, so it is crucial to take advice before committing.

For farmers who have diversified,



Sheep farmers should seek advice from their accountant to determine how this budget may affect them.

a reduction in business rates could result in a sizeable tax break. If the rateable value of property is £51,000 or less, it means these businesses will get a reduction of one third off their current rates for the next two years. If you have a farm shop, furnished holiday lets, a solar park or a number of other diversified activities, you may well benefit from this reduction.

Fuel duty

Other benefits include the fuel duty freeze, the increase in the personal allowance to £12,500 and higher rate tax threshold to £50,000 as of April 2019, and the reduction in the employer apprenticeship contributions from 10% to 5% for small businesses.

The National Living Wage has also been increased from £7.83 to £8.21,

coming into effect as of April 2019, which will likely mean cost of employment increases for a number of farmers. There have also been additional increases for those under 25, ranging from 20p to 32p per hour depending on age and whether under the apprenticeship scheme.

New restrictions have been added to Entrepreneurs'

Relief, which allows business owners a saving on capital gains tax. The qualifying period to meet the strict criteria will increase from 12 months to two years from April 2019. To be eligible for the relief now, you will also have to meet tougher rules where the business is run through a Limited Company.

Property

Farmers who sell or gift property they've previously inhabited may be stung by the tightened Principal Private Residence relief rules from April 2020. The current automatic final 18-month deemed occupation period will be reduced to nine months. Lettings relief rules have also been restricted, meaning owners will now have to have lived with the tenant to be eligible for the £40,000 relief.

Those who are considering selling properties that could qualify for principle private residence and lettings reliefs may want to consider whether they ensure the sale takes place before 6th April 2020 to maximise the use of the reliefs. We are yet to see the full detail on this, so we will have to wait and see if the reliefs will be 'use it or lose it' in the run up to 6th April 2020.

It's worth bearing in mind the Chancellor has warned that, should we leave Europe with no-deal, the Budget will likely be overhauled. As it stands though, there are a number of benefits farmers can start making the most of now.

Old Mill is NSA's accountant and offers to take questions and queries from NSA members at enquiries@oldmillgroup.co.uk.

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What to watch with sheep scab

By Lesley Stubbings,
SCOPS

The news earlier this year that sheep scab mites have developed resistance to the injectables (3-MLs) on some farms came as a bit of a shock.



We have come to rely heavily on this group of products for sheep scab control, with them currently accounting for about 80% of treatments against scab. Alongside this, anecdotal reports suggest the number of cases of sheep scab has risen sharply in the last 12-18 months. Many people who have not seen scab for years have had an outbreak or a close shave.



Blood testing after treating will let you test whether the treatment has been effective.

Winter checklist

- Common grazing is usually the main factor associated with a high risk of sheep scab, but increasingly flocks on fully enclosed areas are falling victim. This is because they are not recognising the threat any and all in-coming sheep and/or a neighbour with scab pose.
- Clinical signs of sheep scab may take months to appear following exposure to the mites. For example, sheep may pick them up in a market, on a lorry or at a show but you don't realise until months later when the flock starts to scratch.
- Always get a diagnosis before you

treat. A skin scrape is still a definitive diagnosis of sheep scab, but the blood test now available is a vital part of our armoury. It can detect sheep that have been exposed as early as two weeks post-infestation.

- If you use an injectable to treat, you can also use the blood test after treatment to check it was effective. If not fully effective, this does not necessarily mean you have resistance, but you should discuss carefully with your vet or advisor. Plunge dipping in an OP is normally the next step.
- Plunge dipping in an OP will kill all

scab mites and you should then be able to use the injectables again, albeit carefully and only when necessary. Mobile dippers are becoming more readily available and plans for an accreditation scheme for these contractors is progressing. Showers or jettors must not be used. OP dip is not licensed for these application methods. They are not effective and, as such, could lead to resistance in the mites to the OPs, our last line of defence.

For more information on sheep scab and how to tell it apart from other skin diseases, turn to page 28.

Be on guard for liver fluke this winter

While liver fluke burdens on pasture have generally been lower than last season, experts are warning it is dangerous to assume this applies to all farms, all areas on a farm, or that levels will remain low as the autumn and winter progresses.

Moredun's Philip Skuce says: "Sheep and cattle farmers must be on their guard this winter, because we are predicting that, due to changes in weather patterns, acute liver fluke cases may occur later than normal."



SCOPS' top tips to fighting fluke include not treating your flock too early

Five on fluke

1. Don't get caught out by treating too early. Many sheep farmers treat for fluke too early in the autumn and assume this will provide sufficient cover for their flocks. This is unlikely to be the case. Monitoring is essential to determining the need and timing of further treatments.

2. Worms can produce similar signs to liver fluke disease. This has caught some farmers out this autumn, including in ewes which can be affected by the *Haemonchus contortus* (or Barber's Pole) worm.

3. Investigate deaths. A post mortem is still the gold standard to establish whether fluke is present, so consider further action with deadstock.

4. Monitor abattoir returns carefully. These are valuable reports regarding the presence of liver fluke.

5. In lower risk situations consider treating sheep with closantel or nitroxinil. This will take the pressure off triclabendazole, to which resistance is building.

For more information and updates visit www.scops.org.uk.



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Know the difference: scab and other skin diseases found in sheep

By Ed Hill, Thrums Vet Group, Angus
Outbreaks of sheep scab tend to increase in the winter months, but scab is only one of a multitude of causes for wool loss or itchiness in sheep. Before taking action, obtaining a correct diagnosis is vital, as treatment and control strategies will vary depending on the underlying cause.



All pictures credited to NADIS & Phil Scott.

Sheep scab is caused by the mite *Psoroptes ovis*, which causes scabby, oozy lesions in the skin and is intensely itchy. In neglected cases the disease will lead to self-trauma, secondary infection, emaciation and death. It should be noted however, that sheep can carry the mites with no associated signs. Sheep scab has been a notifiable disease in Scotland since 2011.

Scab is usually passed from one sheep to another in close confinement, therefore, housing and sales greatly facilitate transmission. Mites can survive off sheep for up to 17 days and so shared equipment and contractors also pose a risk. Ensure you review your biosecurity policy regularly to prevent scab incursion.

Scab treatment

There are a number of products available for the treatment and prevention of scab. The choice of product will depend on a number of factors and should be discussed as part of your veterinary health plan.

Sheep scab is estimated to be the fourth most expensive disease of sheep, costing the UK sheep industry in excess of £8.3m per year. Most of these costs are likely to be incurred as a result of routine preventative treatment, many of which it could be argued were not necessary. In 2018 the first confirmed report of scab mites that are resistant to the actions of the moxidectin injectable products was reported, a situation that is only going to deteriorate if misuse continues. In addition, use of such products aimed only to control scab can inadvertently



Above: A severe case of sheep scab.

Left: Lumpy wool on the muzzle and ears of a lamb.

accelerate the development of resistance in gut worms.

Good news comes in the form of the relatively new blood test for sheep scab, which can accurately detect exposure to the scab mites. Blood testing batches of sheep may give you the information required to decide whether treatment is required or not and in the event of a negative result may save you time, money and unnecessary product use.

The decision whether to treat or test should always be done in conjunction with the help of an expert, who will be best placed to advise you based on an in-depth understanding of your flock, local knowledge and familiarity with the tests and treatment products available.

In the event of a positive scab diagnosis, it is important to discuss this openly with neighbouring sheep farmers to allow co-ordinated testing or treating as required. If this does not happen it is likely to result in constant re-infestation of yours and surrounding flocks.

Lice in sheep

There are three species of louse that infest sheep in the UK. Heavy louse infestations are commonly associated with poor body condition, unhygienic housing or debilitation due to underlying disease. Moderate louse infestations are not likely to be associated with any significant loss in production. Heavy infestations cause irritation which leads to fleece damage, self-trauma and reduced feeding. Lice can be identified by the keen naked eye or with the assistance of a magnifying glass.

Lice can be readily treated by plunge dipping with an organophosphate dip or certain pour-on products. If using a pour-on it is vital to use the correct technique and equipment to allow the product to get down to the skin, or it will not be as effective and may promote resistance. Further investigation may well be required to establish if there is an underlying disease or management issue that has led to a heavy infestation.



A thin ewe infested with lice.

Dermatophilosis, more commonly referred to as 'lumpy wool', is a skin infection caused by the bacteria *Dermatophilus congolensis*. Periods of prolonged rainfall result in permanently moist skins, which allow the bacteria to penetrate and set up infection. Transmission often occurs during close contact, such as when gathering.

Lesions usually occur along the back and appear as well defined oozy scabs that eventually lift off. Smaller lesions around the muzzle and the ears can also be seen. The damaged wool often grows back with a darker pigmentation. If in any doubt, your vet will be able to differentiate it from scab by taking samples. Lumpy wool is rarely of clinical significance but can be treated with certain antibiotics if required, such as in sale rams.

'Sunburn' in sheep

Photosensitisation, also known as 'sunburn' or 'yellowses', is the result of photo-active pigments being deposited in the skin and reacting with sunlight. This occurs either by ingesting plants such as St John's wort or bog asphodel, or as a result of underlying liver damage. Excessive sunlight is not required with cases being seen in the north of Scotland in January.

Cases often occur sporadically but outbreaks can occur when large numbers of animals ingest the toxic plants. Summers such as the one just past may lead to higher numbers of cases due to reduced availability of good grazing but weeds proliferating.

Affected animals are dull, the ears are most obviously affected which become swollen and droopy. The muzzle, face



A severe case of photosensitisation.

and eyelids may also be affected. In severe cases the skin may shed and become infected. Ears may thicken, curl up and even fall off. Treatment with antibiotics, steroid anti-inflammatories and removal from sunlight and is usually successful. However, severely affected animals may have to be humanely destroyed.

Diagnosing mange

Chorioptic mange, like scab, is caused by a mite. Chorioptes bovis is the sheep-adapted bovine mange mite that causes this sporadic issue. It causes localised, exudative and itchy lesions on the head, lower limbs and on the lower part of the scrotum, which can lead to poor fertility in rams. Diagnosis is by clinical signs and the identification of the mite under the microscope. Chorioptic mange does not cause a positive result on the scab blood test. Plunge OP dipping is usually successful in dealing with cases that require treatment, or speak to your vet about alternative solutions.

Stress issues

Wool slip occurs occasionally in sheep two to four weeks following recovery from an illness or stressor, such as twin lamb disease. At first it may be mistaken for scab, but closer inspection will reveal no inflammation of the skin and affected sheep are not usually itchy.

All of the conditions discussed above can present in very similar fashions, but the right treatment for one condition can be vastly different from another. Therefore, establishing the correct diagnosis early is critical to avoid spending money on an ineffective product, or worse, allowing a serious problem to go uncontrolled.

More information at www.scops.org.uk.



A case of chorioptic mange on the head of a shearling ram.

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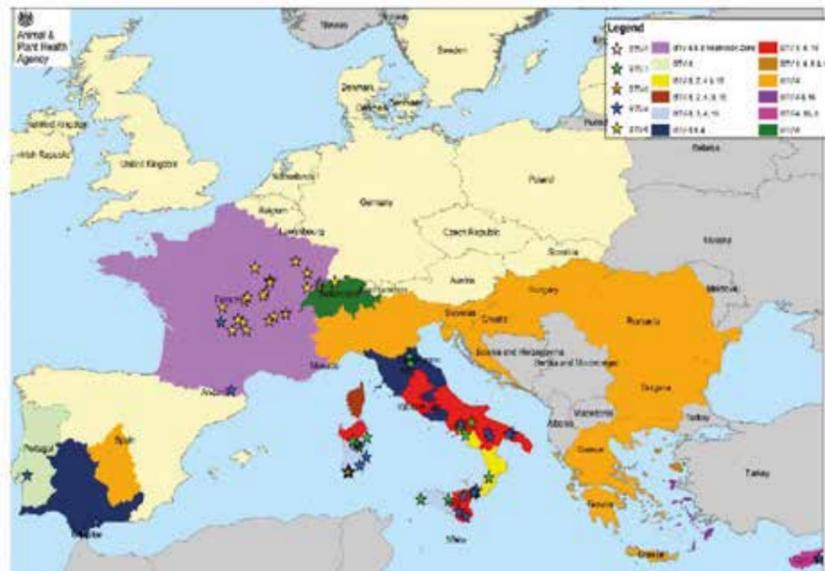
Managing the risk of bluetongue when importing sheep into the UK

By Amanda Carson, APHA
The recent reports of bluetongue (BTV) in cattle and sheep imported from France have raised concerns and, perhaps more importantly, awareness of the risks of importing disease.



International trade in live sheep has contributed to the improvement and diversity of sheep breeds for many years. Many popular commercial breeds used here are not originally native to the UK, while British breeds have been exported around the world, becoming established and being used to develop new breeds.

However, sheep moving to UK from overseas could risk bringing diseases not currently found here, known as the notifiable diseases, which is why the UK has import controls in place.



Map of Europe showing countries where there is BTV, by BTV serotypes present.

UK controls

'Traces' is an internet-based system for the application of health certification for intra-EU trade in live animals, genetic material and some animal products. It also aids in the monitoring of movements and animal welfare during transport and animal health controls, with importers having to notify APHA at least 24 hours before the arrival of the consignment.

If you're importing live animals and animal products, you must make sure the exporter you're working with gets the right health certificate required by EU or national law. These certificates vary by country. For sheep this generally means animals must be examined by a veterinarian who will certify the animals to be free of disease.

This may include testing for specific diseases such as contagious agalactia

Brexit

It is likely the current Traces set-up will be replaced with a new system post Brexit, however, imported animals will still be required to be accompanied by veterinary certification.

or brucellosis and certifying the tests have been carried out. In addition,

the vet must make a declaration the flock has been free of diseases like caseous lymphadenitis or Johnes for the previous 12 months, and maedi visna and ovine pulmonary adenomatosis for three years.

In the case of BTV, sheep imported from affected countries must be vaccinated before travelling. This means the correct vaccination course has been followed to cover the relevant serotypes. Animals must have been vaccinated more than 60 days before the date of movement.

Imports

To protect the GB sheep industry APHA inspect imported sheep five to seven days after arrival and test them for contagious agalactia and brucella regardless of the prevalence in their country of origin. In addition, while the UK only accepts animals from affected countries which have been vaccinated with an approved vaccine, sheep coming from countries where there is BTV are tested to check they aren't carrying the virus. Additional tests may be carried out to ensure they have antibody protection to show they have been effectively vaccinated.

There is also always a risk of introducing diseases to a flock already

present in the UK, for example enzootic abortion or parasites that are resistant to anthelmintics, which is why isolation on farm is so important. Additional testing for other diseases should be considered either before the import or when the sheep arrive into isolation facilities, so seeking veterinary advice before importing sheep is vital.

Testing

If imported animals test positive for BTV when tested by APHA, they will be culled with no compensation. If imported animals are found to be non-compliant with regards to vaccination status, they may be culled, with no compensation or a notice served requiring them to be sent back to the country of origin. Restrictions will be placed on farms where positive animals are found. Restrictions will remain in place for several weeks and will not be lifted until susceptible animals on the farm have been sampled and test negative.

Importing really requires careful consideration. Taking advice is key to helping protect valuable animals and your reputation by making sure you are confident the sheep are free or protected against diseases. Although not required by law, you should seriously consider asking the exporter to provide evidence the bluetongue vaccination has been effective and animals are protected.

Further information is available on Gov.uk or from the Joint Campaign Against Bluetongue.

Countries with BTV

- Austria
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- France - mainland
- France - Corsica
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Malta
- Portugal
- Romania
- Spain
- Slovenia
- Switzerland

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Research demonstrates benefits of blood testing pregnant ewes

Taking metabolic profiles of in-lamb ewes three weeks before lambing is allowing two Welsh sheep farmers to rectify dietary shortfalls in energy and protein, according to research completed by Farming Connect.

Irwel Jones and Richard Tudor blood tested their flocks prior to lambing last season in conjunction with their roles as Farming Connect Demonstration Farmers. The project was intended to not only inform their decisions but to help other farmers gain valuable information that could help to improve their own systems.



Metabolic profiling

Mr Jones of Aberbranddu, a 650-acre hill farm near Llanwrda, Carmarthenshire, runs a flock of 850 mainly Tregaron Welsh ewes and 280 ewe lamb replacements, lambing the ewes from mid-March. Metabolic profiling was undertaken on 20 ewes in February 2018. At that stage the ewes were on a diet of ad lib grass silage and 300g/head/day of a 32% protein nut. Although the results showed their energy balance and protein status were generally good, in the thinner ewes' levels of beta hydroxybutyrate, produced in response to an energy deficit, were slightly high. Based on this information, Mr Jones grouped the housed ewes according to their body condition score (BCS) to ensure the thinner ewes were not competing with the fitter animals for feed.

Farming Connect Red Meat Technical Officer for South Wales, Menna Williams, oversaw the project on Mr Jones' farm.

Miss Williams says: "The project confirmed the importance of achieving the correct BCS at both tupping and in the run up to lambing. Foetal growth has a high energy demand, especially on low BCS ewes."

The research also revealed some of the twin-bearing ewes in this group to have low albumin levels, an indicator of possible disease issues. The ewes had previously been treated with a flukicide after the post-mortems of barren ewes identified low to moderate levels of fluke.

Protein status

Miss Williams says: "Albumin is a long-term measure of protein status and, as levels can take months to recover from previous disease problems, it is important to consider recent treatments when metabolic profiling is undertaken."

Mr Tudor, who runs a flock of Texel-cross and Welsh Mule ewes at Llysun, near Llanerfyl, Montgomeryshire, also took action based on metabolic profiling results. Three groups were tested – two groups of twin-bearing ewes, one with a BCS average of 2.5 and the other at 3.5, and the third involved triplet-bearing ewes at a BCS of 2.5. The flock was on a diet of ad lib haylage with twin-bearing ewes receiving 0.5kg/day of compound and those carrying triplets 0.7kg. The results showed the overall energy balance was satisfactory, but the majority had marginally low albumin results. A factor which may have contributed to this was poor protein intakes prompted by exceptionally cold weather in the previous two months. But faecal egg count sampling was recommended to rule out fluke

Reducing antibiotics

- Group ewes according to condition and the number of lambs.
- Analyse forages and implement strict hygiene protocols.
- Monitor lambs to ensure they receive optimal colostrum intakes.
- Treat navels of new born lambs promptly and repeat after a few hours.
- Only give antibiotics to high risk lambs.

Mr Jones says blood testing ewes means more effective management decisions.

or worm infestation and post mortems were also carried out on dead ewes.

Farming Connect Red Meat Technical Officer for Mid Wales, Lisa Roberts, who coordinated the project, says this sampling had confirmed the presence of fluke.

Mrs Roberts comments: "Mr Tudor had previously treated the ewes twice post tupping so further investigations to triclabendazole efficacy was undertaken."

Antibiotic reduction

Mr Tudor's motivation for this work had been to reduce antibiotic use at lambing time. Previously antibiotics had been routinely used due to issues with joint ill but, by implementing a series of measures, rates were cut by a considerable amount.

"Due to this, Llysun used at least 50% less antibiotics over the lambing period this year compared to previous years," Mrs Roberts explains.

To monitor colostrum absorption, blood samples were taken from lambs between two to five days old. Levels of immunoglobulin, an indicator of the quality and volume of colostrum absorbed, were good. Those with poorer levels were born to ewes with a lower BCS. Mrs Roberts says: "It is much more efficient for ewes to be in correct BCS now and to maintain through to lambing than to try to improve BCS of in-lamb ewes. It is important for fertility too, as ovulation rates reduce by 0.45 for every one unit in BCS."

As a result of the projects, Mr Tudor and Mr Jones plan to use metabolic profiling again in the 2019 lambing season, in combination with other measures.

Farmers in Wales keen to consider metabolic testing can register interest with Farming Connect, which will run free tests on a first come first served basis.

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Assessing business performance and benchmarking to drive change

Having an understanding of your business' physical and financial performance can help to drive decisions and highlight areas of improvement – that's the message from Challenge Sheep farmer and NSA Next Generation Ambassador James Drummond.



James Drummond says benchmarking is allowing him to organise his business.

The Farmbench tool

- Easy to use online tool.
- Helps identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Compares results anonymously to similar enterprises.
- Helps users improve business performance.
- Helps manage many challenges faced by sector.

Scrutinising figures

"Taking part in the benchmarking groups has given us the opportunity to scrutinise our figures against fellow farmers, both those with similar systems and those with differing production systems. Listening to others then helps to quantify the benefits a change in the production system could bring. We've undergone a major change in the breeding plan on farm, including implanting 1,800 embryos in the last five years, which has meant forecasting and benchmarking have been extremely valuable tools to manage the business."

Mr Drummond has recently completed the first year of AHDB Beef & Lamb's Challenge Sheep project, which is tracking 9,000 replacements from a range of English sheep farms over seven years to understand how flock performance can be improved. The project aims to generate new knowledge and highlight existing information on managing ewe replacements. Alongside the collection of the data, all farmers involved are using Farmbench to understand their costs.

"Not every farmer makes a positive net margin and being part of Challenge Sheep with a group of forward-thinking

sheep farmers has allowed us to meet and analyse each other's systems, to understand why certain costs are higher and where others have managed to reduce their cost of production and ultimately raise their net margins," says Mr Drummond.

"It's not just about comparing ourselves against those with similar systems but looking at maximising output while raising market value of our produce from the lowest cost of production possible enables me to focus on increasing net margin per ewe and more importantly per hectare. Benchmarking against fellow farmers shows points in the production system where savings can be made and more importantly shows areas where business performance is strong."

Data input

While benchmarking is not a new practice, Farmbench makes it easier for farmers to allocate 100% of their fixed costs. The system currently offers data input for beef, lamb, potatoes and cereals enterprises, with dairy and sugar beet coming on board in December. Recent updates to the beef and sheep enterprise areas mean forage enterprises are segregated and modifications to data entry have made it simpler to input data.

Mr Drummond concludes: "It does take time to collect it, but the value of the data and the insight into the financial performance of an enterprise is hugely important. The first year will probably be the most daunting but actually, when you start compiling the data required, you realise it is fairly straight forward and its only information you should have at hand anyway. It then gets simpler, as you know when data collection is required and the process just becomes a normal practice. If you want to know the breakdown of an enterprises financial performance and be able to improve your business, Farmbench is an extremely valuable tool."

To find out how Farmbench could help to improve your farm business, visit www.andh.org.uk/farmbench.

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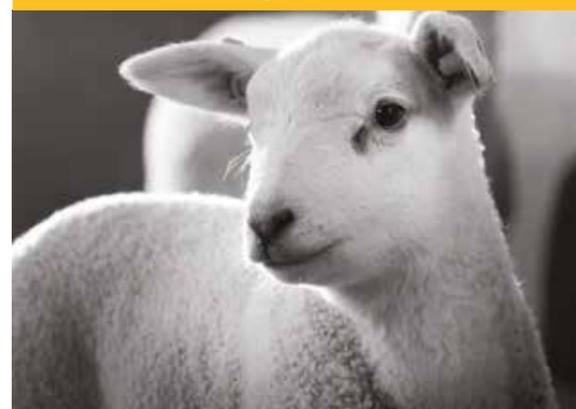
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NSA Highland Sheep
Wednesday 12th June
Caithness
www.nsascotland.org

NSA Welsh Sheep
Tuesday 21st May
Gwynedd
www.welshsheep.org.uk

NSA Sheep South West
Tuesday 18th June
Devon www.sheep-southwest.org.uk

NSA North Sheep
Wednesday 5th June
North Yorkshire
www.northsheep.org.uk

NSA Sheep NI
Monday 1st July
County Antrim
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Risk of Johne's disease should not be underestimated or ignored

By Dr Karen Stevenson, Moredun
Johne's disease is an infectious bacterial enteritis caused by *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (*map*).



It affects all ruminants and is particularly difficult to diagnose in sheep. The only consistent clinical sign in sheep is progressive severe weight loss, which could be attributed to other chronic or parasitic diseases. Johne's has a prolonged incubation period of two to four years and during this time infected animals show no outward signs of disease. However, the infection can be spread to flock mates and other livestock by shedding *Map* in their faeces. For this reason, Johne's often goes undetected until it already has become established in the flock and clinical losses occur. Individual animals do show considerable variation in disease progression.

Vaccine available

A vaccine, Gudair, manufactured by CZ Veterinaria, has recently been granted a limited marketing authorisation by the UK Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Moredun research has revealed species can pass on strains to other species, so co- or sequential grazing can be a risk.

the bacterium, but as many sheep are low shedders and shedding can be intermittent, a negative result does not guarantee freedom from infection. These tests are expensive for sheep farmers so pooling faecal samples or targeting suspicious animals can cut costs. If Johne's is diagnosed or suspected on the farm, there are a number of control measures available.

expensive for sheep farmers so pooling faecal samples or targeting suspicious animals can cut costs. If Johne's is diagnosed or suspected on the farm, there are a number of control measures available.

Infection

It is important to cull clinical cases to prevent further spread of disease and it is advisable not to retain offspring of clinical cases for breeding since vertical transmission can occur. Young animals are more susceptible to infection, so cleaning lambing pens and water troughs regularly to lessen exposure to contaminated faeces will reduce the risk. Feeding pooled colostrum should also be avoided.

It is common practice for farmers to use multi-species grazing to improve utilisation of pastures, but this is a risk factor for the transmission. Evidence for this has come from investigating *Map*

strain types.

There is an effective vaccine available for sheep and goats given as a single 1ml dose from two to three weeks of age. The vaccine is under-utilised in the UK but used extensively in Spain and Australia. It reduces clinical disease and shedding by stimulating immunity to *Map*. However, it does not prevent infection so be aware that animals may still be infected and can potentially spread disease. Vaccination of replacement lambs in flocks can be a cost effective control measure to reduce Johne's. The vaccine is not recommended for use in cattle in areas where bovine tuberculosis is endemic, as it can compromise tuberculin skin testing.

All NSA members are automatically Moredun Associate members and can contact Moredun for more information.

Identification

The most reliable way to determine if Johne's is present in a flock is by post mortem examination of suspect thin ewes.

Affected animals characteristically have a thickened gut and enlarged mesenteric lymph nodes. Tissue samples can be obtained for microscopic examination and culture to confirm the presence of *Map*. Blood tests to detect antibodies to *Map* are available but not all infected animals will elicit a detectable antibody response. PCR or faecal culture tests may detect

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Efficiency of livestock markets is crucial in helping trade remain steady in 2019

With an exceptional hogget trade last spring followed by disappointing prime lamb numbers and increased store sales, auctioneers around the country reflect on a challenging 2018 and look ahead to an unpredictable 2019.



LAA believes 2019 could be a strong year as prices stabilise following 2018's unpredictable weather.

Elwyn Davies, auctioneer and managing director of Hobbs Parker at Ashford Livestock Market says: "We enjoyed an exceptional hogget trade through the spring of 2018, with demand outstripping supply. Record prices were achieved with specialist feeders enjoying the best margins ever."

However, while the lamb trade at Ashford was brisk, it eased sooner than in 2017, levelling at a seasonal low of 165p/kg by the end of October. Mr Davies continues: "Interestingly, the overall gross average of £80 is very similar to the previous year, with several producers selecting their heavier lambs for the finished market and entering the lighter weight in the store market. Expectations were high for the store lamb trade in the autumn, but the extreme weather and lack of keep, have been the main contributing factor to the disappointing returns."

Prime lamb

Mark Richardson, auctioneer with H&H, operating out of Kirkby Stephen Mart, Cumbria, agrees: "Our prime lamb values are very much on a par with the same period from 2017, although they also levelled off a little earlier."

Stephen Walker of Leyburn Auction Mart in North Yorkshire also cites the weather as a key driver in trade prices through 2018. Mr Walker says: "In the case of breeding sheep this year, the price has been down even though there has been no greater supply than normal. This must be wholly down to the drought suffered through the summer, when our southern buyers were not able to accommodate sheep. This of course had a knock-on effect further north and affected the whole run of breeding sales."

Mr Richardson revealed that across its markets, H&H had seen numbers of breeding sheep down some 15% on the

same period in 2017. However, and perhaps as a result, a dramatic 30% increase in cast ewes was recorded, with numbers reaching 16,500 between July and October at Kirkby Stephen alone.

Mr Walker feels there is room for optimism for the trade going into 2019. He comments: "I believe there will be a short-fall of breeding sheep in the next six to 12 months, and prices could improve quite considerably. Prime sheep are anybody's guess, but I'm optimistic about Brexit. The French public will still want our lamb, as they have done for many years, so market forces should prevail in our favour."

Mr Richardson also believes Brexit offers opportunities. He says: "We have got a product that is in high demand, as it is seen by consumers in many export markets as of high, if not the best, quality. It is our unique selling point, and an opportunity for the sector."

Future trade

Mr Davies adds: "It is always difficult to predict future trade, however, high prices in the southern hemisphere, favourable exchange rates and relatively tighter supplies due to heavy losses in the spring will all help in creating a decent trade."

Mr Davies also highlights the opportunities presented by the halal food sector, with Muslim consumers accounting for approximately 20% of all sheepmeat sold in the UK. "It is expected that this figure is likely to increase due to more disposable income and changing consumer habits of

the younger Muslim population. During the key religious festivals there is normally an increase in demand," he says.

With unpredictable times ahead Mr Davies points out the importance of the livestock market. He says: "The livestock market is essential for the success of the industry. It is super-efficient in the trading of all grades and quality of stock. The marketplace provides facilities to offer level lots of similar quality stock, to meet the specific requirements of individual buyers, and achieves competitive return. The live ring offers transparency and competitive bidding, and the market operators can offer expert marketing advice to maximise returns for the producer."

Beyond the ring

Mr Richardson agrees, but feels the strength of the auction mart system stretches beyond the sales ring. "Livestock marts offer a platform for business information to be shared. Farmers can get together and discuss prices, and get a true feel for values."

LAA Executive Secretary Chris Dodds concludes: "When trade is not as fast, it is essential for farmers to put their stock in front of as many buyers as possible, in level lots. The livestock auction mart system uniquely provides this platform, playing a crucial role in maximising returns, while at the same time offering farmers the opportunity to benchmark their sheep and businesses, as a whole, against others within the industry."

New feed bucket

Crystalyx has developed a new feed bucket called **Sheep Beet Balancer**. It is designed to complement a high brassica diet and balance the key nutritional deficiencies typically seen on this ration.

Iodine is locked up from a brassica diet and Crystalyx says its new product supplies a recommended amount to support animal performance and lamb survival. The company also says the product contains a high phosphorus level and a high digestible undegradable protein from quality prairie meal to maintain good animal performance.

The Sheep Beet Balancer is available in a 22.5kg minitub and intakes range from 20-60g/head/day depending on age and size of animal.

Diet balance

The new block should be fed alongside adequate forage as a source of fibre and Crystalyx say it is proven to increase forage digestion by as much as 10%. It further claims the block is packed full of energy, protein, trace elements, minerals and vitamins, with the required intake often being less than half that of other feed blocks on the market. Crystalyx also says its feed blocks can last up to twice the amount of time than other feed blocks meaning that there is less need to replace them.

For more information visit the Crystalyx website or call 016973 32592.



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A new drencher has been launched into the UK by Dairy Spares. The **Trusti Tuber, Dairy Spares claim, is designed to ensure feeding is easy and quick.** Milk or colostrum

is safely delivered into the animal's stomach with a transparent, soft, flexible feeding tube with a large internal diameter to speed milk flow.

At the end of the tube are safety stripes which show the operator the minimum distance the tube needs to be passed into the mouth so the end goes past the animal's airway, ensuring milk is delivered safely to the stomach and not the lungs. The Trusti Tuber has a 240ml vial into which milk/colostrum from ewes can be milked directly. The vial has a handle to make it easy to hold one-handed, and a flat base so it will remain upright when placed on a level surface. It costs £14.85+VAT.

Dairy Spares has also extended its Border range of wellies with the Warrior boot, available as a soft-toe and a safety boot. Made from polyurethane, the boots are claimed to be lighter than PVC and rubber boots, and up to three times more durable.

Details of local stockist from Dairy Spares on 01948 667676 or www.dairyspares.co.uk.



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Spanish trip reveals options to meet rising sheep dairy demands

By Eleanor Phipps, NSA

Sheep milk is becoming increasingly popular around the world, with the rise in popularity of cheeses such as feta and halloumi. Sales reports from Tesco in 2011-2012 reported its halloumi sales were up 132% while Waitrose reported 104%. With cheese regularly being brought by 98% of British households, why is the UK sheep industry not capitalising on this market more?

There are a variety of reasons, but a visit to a Spanish sheep dairy, some 130 miles north of Madrid (a trip for UK vets, farmers and journalists sponsored by Zinpro), revealed one reason - milking sheep on a large scale would be a hard sell to the British public. Recent months have seen what seems like a steady increase of industry criticism, from veganism to climate change, and agriculture has been under the spotlight. The attitude in Spain is different.



Over 4,200 ewes are milked, producing more sheep milk than the entire UK per year.

Efficiency

At Cerrromonte S.L, Spain, they do this by selling a story about maximising efficiency of production within a small site. The lambs are removed at birth and the ewe immediately goes back onto the production line, following a month's rest in late pregnancy. The ewe will be milked with other recently lambing ewes for a week to remove the colostrum and early milk, which will be sent to the lambing unit to feed the lambs. After that week, she will be returned to the general

milking population, with 60-100 days of production expected, milking twice a day. She will then be sponged and artificially inseminated. This continues for as long as the ewe can healthily deliver, usually four or five years with 1.4 lambings per annum.

Her lambs will be taken to a separate unit. They will be plunge tube fed 400ml in their first day, in four rounds. They then spend the first 20-25 days of their lives on slats with other lambs and feeding off the milk machines. They will



With 480 ewes lambing a month, the lambs are weaned at 20-25 days.

then be weaned, docked and sorted. The ewe lambs will be kept and moved on to a specialist diet to start building up for their own milking cycle from eight months of age, and ram lambs sold on to a feeding plant where they will be fattened ready for slaughter. With 19 workers running two milking shifts a day, the ewes are kept busy and maintained with a specialist diet that keeps them at maximum milk producing efficiency without any wastage.

The system is high tech and runs on



The lambs are weaned, docked and sorted at 20-25 days.

top level technology with the ewes identified as soon as they step in to the milking parlour, and an average milking taking a minute and a half with the machine automatically stopping when it can yield no more milk.

Dairy systems

While not dissimilar to a traditional cow dairy system, which is not without its critics in this country, a system such as this would be hard to introduce in the UK.

Aesthetically, much of the system was not pleasing but the sheep themselves were well cared for and far from distressed. The ewes have their lambs removed before they bond with them and had had maternal traits long bred out of them. They were sustained on a rich diet and had plenty of roaming space. In the lamb unit, mortality had been as high as 50% when straw bedding was used, but had dropped substantially since moving onto slats. The lambs were kept fed, healthy and socialised. Legally, in the UK tails would have to be docked earlier, but otherwise the standards were high.

UK systems

The UK sheep dairy industry is smaller and less industrial. More commonly lambs are weaned from their mothers at a month old. But to meet the demand of a country in the middle of a beloved halloumi shortage, the UK public would have to accept the realities of an intensive system should sheep dairy consumption rise NSA thanks Zinpro for inviting it on this trip.



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While the set-up at Cerrromonte S.L. is considerable, many sheep dairies in Spain have even greater numbers.

British Wool marketing expansion into China sees new office open

The Chinese market has for many years been the largest user of British wool outside of the UK, using an estimated 25% of the total clip. Since the peak of 2011/12 this has been a relatively stable number and British Wool is keen to exploit new opportunities, working with downstream partners to increase business.



Sandy Mi is British Wool's new Sales & Marketing Manager on the ground in China.

British Wool Chief Executive Joe Farren comments: "We view China as one of the potential growth areas for our business. With a sizeable growing number of affluent consumers, it is certainly a market where there is a lot of potential demand for high quality British wool rich products. There is also a huge appetite for provenance and British wool fits with this perfectly."

"A new Chinese office has recently been opened in Shanghai. Having people on the ground in China will allow us to add value to existing business as well as exploiting new opportunities with downstream partners."

The new Shanghai office will help facilitate the overall sales and marketing strategy as British Wool Head of Marketing Graham Clark explains: "Over the past 12 months we have been implementing a new marketing approach in the UK, at the core of which is targeting consumers directly with the British wool message. This has been a multi-channel approach through social media, a new website, consumer exhibitions and point of purchase in retailers. The same strategy, with regional modifications, will be rolled out in the Chinese market over the next 12 months. This should help, over time, drive traffic (and sales) to our partnering brands."

Online strategy

Mr Clark continues: "With more than 772 million internet users in China (around 20% of internet users worldwide) clearly an online strategy will be key to any success we have. To this end a website is currently in development and we are creating a social media persona on relevant channels such as WeChat. Our social media channels aim to: educate consumers on the benefits of purchasing a British wool rich product, inform consumers where they can purchase the products from and promote our partnering brands."

Another development British Wool is working on that will be rolled out in China is fibre and end product performance

testing for the carpet sector. Some types of British wool are the bulkiest and strongest wool in the world. This produces a product that bounces back and retains its appearance for longer, making these types the top choice for carpets in the commercial environment. Mr Clark comments: "Our fibre and end product testing will act as an invaluable selling tool for carpet manufacturers selling into commercial markets."

To ensure all of this activity is channelled to the right brands and products, British Wool will be launching a new licensee scheme in China at the beginning of 2019. Mr Clark explains: "With our planned increased presence in the Chinese market it is crucial we are able to identify the correct downstream partners and ensure the products they are selling have the content of British wool we stipulate for our new scheme. The system that monitors the scheme, which has already been launched in the UK, is online and fully automated and traces the origin of the wool through the various manufacturing processes right back to the wool merchants."

Mr Farren concludes: "A lot of time, effort and thought has gone into our plans to target the Chinese market, and we are already working on an exciting new development with a market leading downstream partner. We see this as one of many such relationships moving forward."

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Global sheep book makes a bid for your Christmas present list

Vets and small ruminant advisors from around the world are hoping people will be adding a beautiful book with hundreds of sheep (and goat) pictures to their Christmas lists this year.

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, joins those endorsing the book, saying it is a lovely item to dip in and out of to appreciate sheep farming in every corner of globe.

He says: "This is an amazing book and shows the incredible impact keeping sheep has had, and continues to have, on cultures and societies throughout the world. Sheep farming is very much a part of our history and tradition and, thinking of the sustainability challenges ahead of us, it is important it continues to be in the future."

Charity effort

'The World of Sheep and Goats: A global view of small ruminant production' contains pictorial contributions from attendees of the ninth International Sheep Veterinary Congress, held last year in the UK. The images from more than 50 countries were recently pulled together into a 160-page book, to raise money for Karl Linklater Fund. Profits will be used to help small ruminant specialists from emerging countries



From Spain (on the front cover) to the Falklands, Lake District, Germany and Canada, the book features 50 countries around the world.

attend the 10th International Sheep Veterinary Congress in Spain in 2021.

Vet Neil Sargison was instrumental in pulling the book together. He says: "No guidelines were given in advance, so it might have been expected that the images would depict individual situations around the world and emphasise a wide diversity in approaches and issues. Instead, what has emerged is a fascinating and frequently beautiful illustration of the fact that, although locations, systems and environments differed, the same concerns and values based on an overwhelming enthusiasm

for improving sheep and goat welfare and production come through."

The book provides an insight into the challenges faced by sheep and goat producers globally. The cultural and social importance of small ruminant production is illustrated, from the transhumant shepherds who still walk their sheep to seasonal grazing along ancient routes in Spain, Germany and Italy, to nomadic shepherds in India, all of whom are concerned our changing society threatens their traditional routes and a long-established way of life. The importance of learning from these traditional practices as well as from those who understand their local area is emphasised.

Positivity

Professor Sargison continues: "Many texts refer to challenges ahead, from the effects of a changing society to concerns about the environment and the sustainability of many farming practices. There is still, however, a great deal of hope and positivity.

Sheep and goats are recognised as having many environmentally-friendly attributes as they can thrive in areas that would otherwise be unusable; modern technology can make working practices safer and more efficient and above all, there is an appreciation of the sense of pride and satisfaction found among livestock farmers all over the world. This means any advances will stem from a feeling of mutual respect and partnerships forged among all those involved."

The book is available from a variety of stockists, including Moredun. Go to www.moredun.org.uk and select "Shop" at the bottom of the page.

More sheepy Christmas gifts

If you're looking for more inspirational Christmas ideas for sheep lovers, why not opt for the gift that gives something all year round – an NSA membership subscription.

As part of a special winter giveaway, you can use the form opposite to buy a subscription and receive a free gift. Whether you keep the gift for yourself or pass it on is up to you! While stocks last, there are NSA caps, mugs and ties to select from, or British Wool's British Sheep Breeds book.

All these items can also be purchased from NSA Head Office. Caps and mugs with the 'NSA says British

lamb is best' message are £7.50 each. NSA ties are £9.50 for one or £12.50 for two, and the British Wool book is £12.50 per copy.

Copies of the NSA South East Region 2019 calendar (pictured) are



also available, featuring 12 sheep farming photographs contributed by NSA members and friends. These are £9.60 each.

All prices include VAT and post/package. Prices will be revised for multiple purchases sent to the same address. Phone or email your order to NSA Head Office using the contact details on page 2.

National Sheep Association Winter Giveaway



Join NSA today or buy the perfect gift for someone with an interest in the sheep sector. Every membership subscription supports the vital work NSA does to provide a voice for the industry - and until Wednesday 23rd January 2019 we are giving away one of the following to all new members. One giveaway per membership subscription purchased. Please tick the item you'd like to receive. Limited stock; once they've gone, they've gone!



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