

SHEEP FARMER

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019

A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION



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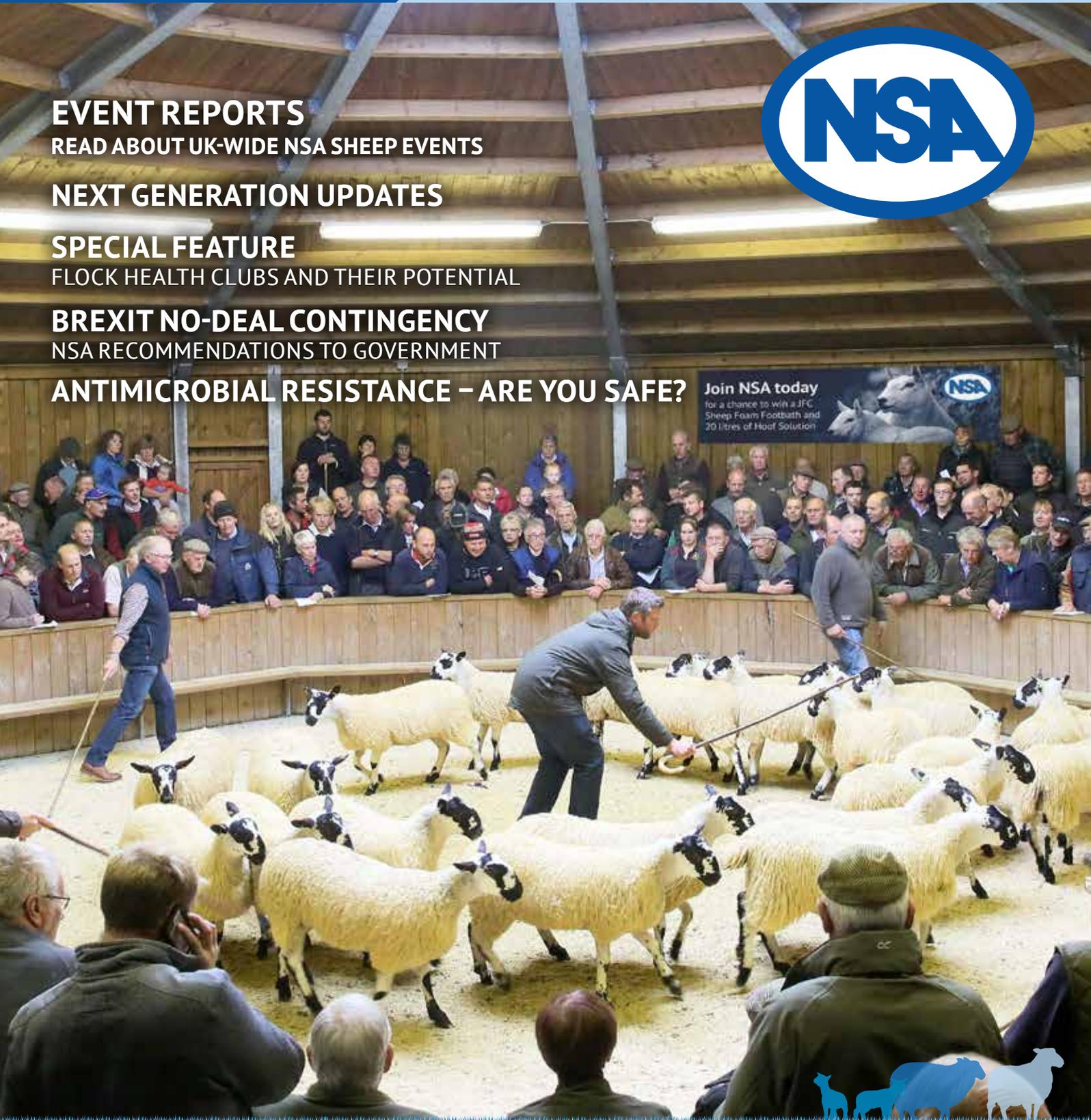
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DELIVERY IS FREE TO AN AREA NEAR YOU

Summer sheep events give us all food for thought

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive



INSIDE YOUR SHEEP FARMER
AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019
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The beginning of July saw the end of a very busy and satisfying six weeks in which NSA, through our regional teams, delivered five major NSA sheep events.

Starting with NSA Welsh Sheep in mid-May, followed by North Sheep, Highland Sheep, Sheep South West, and finishing up with Sheep Northern Ireland, we have welcomed more than 16,000 people through the gates. The numbers are encouraging and the level of engagement equally so, with stands, seminars and workshops all busy.

We may not know what it will look like, but we know change is coming and, as I've said before, we do have a good idea of the direction of travel. We need our sheep enterprises as lean as possible, and we will need to focus on improving the environment if we are to tap into public money.

Future funding

In due course 'the environment' will stretch way beyond the current scope of agri-environment schemes to include wildlife habitats, climate change mitigation, improving the quality of soil air and water, and activities that benefit the health and wellbeing of people.

It has been said that food and farming should be recognised as our primary health service, but currently our National Health Service is more focused on treating illness than promoting health. But recognition that food, environment and medicine are the front and the back end of the same body is the approach that should unlock funds in a post CAP world.

It's not going to be easy and there is much work to be done if we are to find a financially viable model on an industry level. That is why it was so good to see attendees at our sheep events getting stuck into what was on offer. The good news is that the need for a transition period of several years has been accepted. Those years will fly by and it would be wrong to waste them by fighting for the status quo.

While teams of researchers and academics will be putting values on a host of public goods,

much of the responsibility to make our sheep enterprises more profitable will fall back to farmers and the wider industry.

Improving profitability can only come from a balance of two things – optimising value and controlling costs. Thankfully, we seem to have moved on from thinking we can compete on a low price global commodity market and now recognise our future is more about reliable and credible standards, product quality and premiums.

But none of this is black and white. While it feels right to be adding value and developing premium markets, this won't work for fifth quarter products, or even third or fourth, and improving profitability is more about making sound investments than simply cutting costs. Investments in seed, feed, veterinary input, skills, marketing and many other inputs can add costs but they can also add value.

Yet the question of how we can, on an industry level, have the greatest effect on the prices we receive remains. A vital piece of the puzzle is remembering supply and demand dynamics are king. If demand is high and supply short then we know where it leads, and vice versa. So investing in new markets and driving demand must be a priority. But potential changes in supply to the EU, and low consumption in younger generations are two things to stay focused on. A wide basket of market opportunities is also essential and here UK sheep farming is in a good place.

Markets

But the linkage between many farmers and the marketplace, the point that brings a level of equity between tens of thousands of small businesses and a tiny number of large and very organised ones, is the livestock market.

Not every farmer chooses to use them for all their stock, but few would manage without them entirely and, while they may bring a cost in terms of sales commission, there is no doubt they outweigh this with the added value they bring for the industry as a whole.

The Government sees inequity in trading power as something it can and will act to address and, while it is often not recognised, our auction marts have been performing this function for a very long time.

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Chairman: **Tim Ward**



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Eastern



Chairman: **Dan Phipps**



Manager: **Jonathan Barber**
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Marches



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Northern



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Development Officer:
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NSA news

Second NSA membership winner selected

The second lucky winner of NSA's 2019 membership prize draw, of a JFC Agri foam footbath and 20 litres of hoof solution, has been announced as **Edwin Jones from Llanegryn, Gwynedd**.

Edwin is the third generation of his family to farm the 400 acres at Nant Madyn. He currently runs 600 Welsh Mountain ewes and 20 Welsh Black cattle with a recently purchased Luing bull.

Commenting on his win Edwin says: "I am really pleased to win this prize. We have needed to change something to keep on top of lameness and we are hoping this will work effectively, meaning we can finish lambs a little quicker."

Edwin decided to join NSA whilst visiting NSA Welsh Sheep back in May. He says: "Having been involved with sheep and shearing all of my life I felt it was time to sign up. It is good to keep updated with technical news and changes to policy, and NSA is excellent at delivering this information to its members."

Two further prize packages are still to be won in this year's giveaway. All new members and existing members can also enter by recommending a friend, family member or neighbour to sign up as well.

More at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/membership.

NSA AGM 2019 reminder

NSA members are reminded that the 126th NSA AGM will take place at **United Auctions, Stirling Agricultural Centre, FK9 4RN, on Friday 9th August 2019 at 10.30am**.

Members are entitled to submit their votes in advance of the meeting by completing a proxy form or appoint a person to attend and vote on their behalf. Proxy forms and other documents related to the meeting will be added as available against the diary entry for the AGM at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events. Details on the proxy forms are online, and the deadline for signed and completed forms to be received at NSA Head Office (by post or by attaching a signed scanned copy to an email) is 10am on Thursday 8th August. Anyone without internet access can call NSA Head Office.

NSA membership now online

NSA is pleased to announce it has stepped forward in the digital era with a new online membership form. Prospective members will now no longer need to request a membership pack from NSA Head Office, but can click to join immediately online, allowing them to benefit from NSA membership for longer. Keen eyed readers will notice the NSA membership form is no longer present in this magazine, so anyone hoping to join up a friend, neighbour or family member can refer them to www.nationalsheep.org.uk/apply-now.

Don't forget the Wales & Border early ram sale

NSA Wales and Border Early Ram Sale is taking place on Monday 5th August, as this edition of Sheep Farmer is due to arrive with members. If it's not too late, be sure to head to the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, to select your early breeding ram.

Love Lamb Week 2019

Love Lamb week will take place this year from Sunday 1st September. Members are once again invited to participate by talking to the public about their farm and produce, sharing recipes and generally shouting about how great lamb is. NSA will once again be involved and will be happy to support members where it can. More on page 21.



Edwin Jones has won the second prize draw of 2019.

NSA Marches Secretary



Katie James.

NSA Marches Region has appointed a familiar face, Katie James, as its Regional Secretary. Katie already works as Communications Officer for NSA and is looking forward to getting stuck in the with additional role. Alongside working for NSA, Katie runs a flock of pedigree Rylands near her home in Hanley Swan, Worcestershire. Find out more about what Marches Region is up to on page 15.

Maternity cover welcomed



Wendy Jones.

With NSA Livestock Researcher Nicola Noble now out of the office on maternity leave, NSA has welcomed Wendy Jones (contact details page 2) to to cover for Nicola for the duration of her leave. NSA welcomes Wendy to the role and wishes Nicola the best of luck with her new baby. You can read more about Nicola and Wendy's work on page 24.

New secretary sought for Central Region

Anne Payne, NSA Central Region Manager, is looking to retire after many years of service to NSA and the industry. In anticipation of this loss, the search is on to find a regional secretary to take on administrative responsibilities such as organising committee meetings and liaising with NSA Head Office on events, activities and regional finances. For more information on the job, which is paid on an annual honorarium, contact NSA Operations Director Joanne Briggs (contact details page 2).



NSA officeholders



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Honorary President



Bryan Griffiths
Chair of the Board



David Gregory
Honorary Treasurer
Finance & General Purposes Chairman



Eddie Eastham
UK Policy & Technical Chairman



Kevin Harrison
English Committee Chairman

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Scottish Region raffle winner

NSA Scottish Region has selected its 2019 Honda quad bike raffle winner.

Gordon Rennie of Newmill, Keith, Morayshire, was selected in the NSA Sheep Centre at the Royal Highland Show and was near speechless when told he had won. A full profile of Gordon and his prize will follow in the October/November Edition of Sheep Farmer. To read more about NSA Scottish Region's activities turn to page 12.



The prize draw took place at the Royal Highland show.

Bookings open for Sheep Breeders Round Table

NSA is delighted to once again be involved in organising the biennial Sheep Breeders Round Table 2019, the leading event for farmers, breeders, researchers and vets with an interest in sheep genetics, breeding and productivity.

Titled 'Becoming the best sheep industry in the world' and organised jointly by NSA, AgriSearch, AHDB Beef & Lamb, HCC and QMS, the conference will take place on Friday 15th to Sunday 17th November at the Radisson Blue Hotel, East Midlands Airport.

Sessions this year will include information about the EU iSAGE research project, levy board updates on major projects, an international session focusing on the sheep industry in the Netherlands, ewe efficiency, precision agriculture and genomic revolution. Delegates will also have the opportunity to choose from a selection of skills workshops, while a series of breeders and breeding groups will spend the Sunday morning sharing their business vision, mission, successes and failures in an open and honest discussion.

Information and online bookings at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/SBRT.

NSA Lambing List soon to be opened

With the sheep farming year ticking on, NSA is again beginning to think about its Lambing List 'matchmaking' service.

The 2020 list will soon be open for members to submit their details ready for students and young people to search and find a match for the lambing season. The lambing list will be open for submissions from early October and will be available at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lambing-list.

NSA regional reports

Eastern

Early June saw NSA Eastern Region host its biennial Next Generation Event in Suffolk, with a mix of skills workshops and seminars.

Congratulations go to Tom Martin (pictured) for winning the Young Shepherd competition, and thanks to everyone who came along and made the most of the day. Thank you also to the hosts and sponsors, speakers and James Bickerton of Reaseheath College and various volunteers who ran the competition.



NSA Eastern Region also hosted a farm walk in mid-May. A large group of members gathered on John Pawsey's organic farm near to Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, to see how he and his shepherd, NSA Next Generation Ambassador Robert Spink, are integrating 1,000 breeding Romney ewes into their arable rotation. The group enjoyed hearing about John's aim to improve soil structure and fertility, reduce black grass and hence get higher yields from the following cereal crops. He looked at various livestock projects and chose sheep mainly due to lower infrastructure costs.

Marches

NSA Marches Region was pleased to welcome enthusiastic young shepherds to its Next Generation Competitive Training Day in May.

In total 28 young sheep enthusiasts displayed an impressive level of skill in tasks such as shearing and lamb selection. Winning was 17-year-old Tom Garlick of Herefordshire. Thanks go to the hosts and sponsors for making the day a huge success. The region has also hosted a farm visit to Common Farm near Worcester by kind permission of Will Halford and, despite torrential rain, a good number of members and other local farmers enjoyed a tour of Will's farm to view his successful enterprise based around an impressive flock of North Country Mules.



YOUR NSA REGION All NSA regions have been busy over the last few months. Read NSA event reports on page 6 – 14. Don't forget, NSA devolved regions also dedicate time to policy work. Read about this on page 22.



NSA membership now available online



Sign up online to become a member of NSA at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/apply-online and be entered into NSA's membership prize draw.

Already a member? Recommend a friend for your chance to win too.

Contact NSA Head Office for further information or to request a membership pack.

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Northern Ireland National Show
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Ballymena Mart - 11am

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Further information from Aileen McFadzean,
Tel: 07768 820 405 or Email: aileen@scottish-blackface.co.uk



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NSA presence at Balmoral brings positive results

Once again NSA had a presence at Balmoral Show in the form of a 'sheep centre' marquee to showcase the industry. The newest member of the NSA Head Office team, Chris Adamson, attended his first event in Northern Ireland and showed his excellent communication skills by signing up a record number of new members.

Show organisers quoted an attendance of 120,000 visitors and the NSA marquee was kept very busy on the first two days with a continuous queue of people passing through.

The question on most people's mind was what's going to be the result for the Northern Ireland sheep industry after Brexit and, while nobody can really answer, some positive and progressive discussions were had. A few others complained that the price of lamb had dropped compared to spring 2018 prices but we have a different set of circumstances this year and, much as we hate to admit it, the prices may have been artificially high last year. Unfortunately values have fallen further still since then.

All in all most visiting sheep farmers were happy enough, as they had enjoyed an excellent winter and spring making lambing time a much easier process than it could have been. Grass growth was amazing and lambs were thriving well.



NSA Northern Ireland Region officeholders answered queries from Brexit uncertainty to lamb prices.



The NSA marquee was busy with a record number of new NSA members signed up.

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Field Officer Tel: 07527 174420
www.welshmules.co.uk

The Swaledale Sheep Breeders' Association

SWALEDALE EWE AND EWE LAMB SALES 2019

20TH SEPTEMBER

Middleton in Teesdale
EWE LAMB

27TH SEPTEMBER

Ruswarp, North Yorkshire
EWES AND SHEARLING

27TH SEPTEMBER

NWA, Junction 36, Cumbria
EWES AND SHEARLINGS

27TH SEPTEMBER

Clitheroe, Lancashire
EWES & SHEARLINGS

28TH SEPTEMBER

St John's Chapel
EWES, SHEARLINGS AND EWE LAMBS

30TH SEPTEMBER

Middleton in Teesdale
EWES AND SHEARLINGS

1ST OCTOBER

Bentham, Lancs
EWES, SHEARLINGS AND EWE LAMBS

3RD OCTOBER

Hexham, Northumberland
(HEXHAM, BELLINGHAM & TOW LAW SALE) EWES

4TH OCTOBER

Kirkby Stephen
EWES AND SHEARLINGS

5TH OCTOBER

Kirkby Stephen
EWE LAMBS

5TH OCTOBER

Skipton, N. Yorkshire
EWES AND SHEARLINGS

7TH OCTOBER

Hawes
EWES AND SHEARLINGS

8TH OCTOBER

Cockermouth, Cumbria
EWES AND EWE LAMBS

10TH OCTOBER

Penrith, Cumbria
EWES AND SHEARLINGS

12TH OCTOBER

Hawes
SHEARLINGS AND EWE LAMBS

12TH OCTOBER

Lazonby, Cumbria
EWES, SHEARLINGS & EWE LAMBS

15TH OCTOBER

Hawes
EWES

26TH OCTOBER

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Unity for the future was the message at NSA Welsh Sheep

Working together and speaking with a common voice to meet the challenges of an uncertain future was the message emphasised at NSA Welsh Sheep 2019.

The choice of setting, Glynllifon Agricultural College near Caernarfon, was particularly appropriate and the partnership provided a compelling setting for a great turnout.

Opening the event, Dafydd Evans, Chief Executive Officer of Grwp Llandrillo Menai, said the traditional way of life was being challenged with many opposing public interests having an influence over future land use direction. These included access and tourism, environmental and care for natural resources, or the more extreme views of the rewilding and vegan lobbies.

He said: "The future is about making what we do appealing to our customer base and finding new marketplaces.

Development

"Agricultural colleges have a key role here in developing new skills, showcasing innovation and leading on research - not only for young people. There is an opportunity to influence the policies that affect us and the markets we depend on, but we will only succeed if we work together."

He congratulated NSA on setting up forums

for discussion and also on its Next Generation programme. The opportunity it offered for young people very much chimed with the work at Glynllifon.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker said it was highly significant that the event was held at the college, with attention focused on the next generation, as they are the industry's lifeblood.

He said NSA had been at the forefront, presenting the industry in a positive mode following the Climate Change Committee and the United Nations Environment Report.

He added: "For all the noise that the anti livestock brigade make I think we are still a very strong sector and a very strong industry, with a lot more positives than negatives.

Challenges

"Farmers are going to be challenged to become more productive and at the same time to improve the environment. And that's always felt like a real challenge to me.

"We can increase our margins and certainly our farmers would like to see sheep farming being more profitable and for it to produce more positive margins. And at the same time there are so many good environmental outcomes that can come from our industry, not to mention all the social, community and cultural good that comes from Welsh sheep farming.

"It's something that's very evident from sheep

Competition results

NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year
Tomos Glyn Davies, Prion, Denbigh.

Best pair of continental hogs

Derek and Cindy Steen, Coxhill Farm, Moffat, Dumfriesshire with a Roussin.

Best pair of native hogs

Wynne Davies, Bronallt, Nefyn, Gwynedd, with a Lleyn.

Full results at www.welshsheep.org.uk



Winning Next Generation Shepherd Tomos Glyn Davies (right) collects his prize from Phil Stocker of NSA and Ailish Ross of the Texel Sheep Society.

farming here in NSA Cymru/Wales Region. It is a very strong culture of small family farms. They are essentially micro businesses and that's something we need to fight hard to make sure we protect in the future."

Competitions at the event proved very popular and a good day was had by all. NSA Cymru/Wales Chairman Tim Ward praised Event Organiser Helen Roberts for her hard work in putting together the happy and successful day.

The event saw a number of successful tours of the farm at Glynllifon college.



Highland Sheep welcomes visitors to the far North

Enthusiasts from all over Scotland – and further afield – braved a bitterly cold day to attend NSA Scottish Region's Highland Sheep event in Scotland's most northerly mainland county, Caithness, in mid-June.

They were rewarded with an outstanding display of both sheep and cattle at Sibmister Farm, Murkle, near Thurso, where the Sutherland family run a flock of 1,600 mostly Cheviot Mule ewes, but including purebred flocks of 60 Suffolks and 50 Texels, alongside their beef herd.

In addition to the farm tour, the busy event included 100 trade stands and sheep breed stands, a comprehensive demonstration area and a packed programme of butchery and cookery demonstrations, the Next Generation Shepherd of the Year competition, stockjudging competition, sheepdog trial, workshops, seminars and a farmers' market with craft stalls.

Brexit

NSA Scottish Region Chairman Jen Craig comments: "It was one of the best on-farm events we have held in the north and the long journey for many to get there proved very worthwhile, with a large number of sheep farmers making the journey from areas such as Aberdeenshire and across the Pentland Firth from the Orkney Isles."

Inevitably, Brexit and the consequences for the sheep industry dominated discussion at the event. NFU Scotland President Andrew McCormick, who officially opened the event, said the huge uncertainty stifling the industry meant farmers were having to fight their corner as never before.

In the event of a decision on Brexit being delayed until the end of October, or later, he said sheep finishers would be in a position of having to buy store lambs in the autumn not knowing the market they would be selling finished lambs into.

Oxfordshire farmer, Mike Gooding, a director of marketing company Farmers Fresh, warned that it would take time and effort to secure new markets for British lamb around the world in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

Speaking at the event, Mr Gooding warned: "If we are faced with a 40% export tariff to trade with France and other EU countries, we might as well pack up and go home. We can have the

best lambs in the world backed by all manner of assurances but the key to securing new markets is building up a relationship with key potential buyers. That takes time and won't happen overnight."

Export tariffs

Another speaker, Scott Donaldson of Harrison and Hetherington auctioneers and Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers in Scotland President, warned that export tariffs would have a huge impact on the sheep industry. During his seminar, Mr Donaldson commented: "The store lamb trade is crucial to the agricultural economy of the north of Scotland and we are going to come under real pressure if we lose the export trade and ethnic demand."



Alish Ross of the Texel Sheep Society (centre) with joint Next Generation Shepherd winners Farquhar Renwick and Amy Jo Reid.



NSA committee member John Fyall thanked the Sutherland family for hosting the event.

Competition results

Show and sale of pairs of ewe hoggs
D.N. Campbell & Sons, Bardnaclavan, Westfield, Thurso, Caithness (North Country Cheviot – Park).

NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year
Farquhar Renwick, Lochbroom, and Amy Jo Reid, Moray (joint).

Invitational Sheepdog Trial
Michael Shearer, Lythmore, Westfield, Thurso, Caithness, with Roy. Young handler Joe Mackenzie with Tweedie.

Trade stands
Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association (breed society), Harbro (indoor) and Allans of Gillock (outdoor).

Full results at www.nsasotland.org

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NSA North Sheep focuses on the next generation

An incredible turn out of sheep farmers from across the north of England, and beyond visited New Hall Farm, Rathmell, North Yorkshire, for NSA North Sheep 2019 in early June. In terms of number of visitors and trades stand, it was described by many as one of the best yet.

With a young chairman, a multi-generational family farm, the local YFC stockjudging, local school children educated and many young people attending, it was also an event that saw the next generation of the sheep industry in the North of England very much coming to the fore.

Showcase

The Frankland family were admired for their tremendous stockmanship and together the family had worked tirelessly to present what was a tremendous showcase of sheep and an excellent example of a commercial Yorkshire farming enterprise.

Speaking after the day, Richard Frankland, said: "We have all really enjoyed hosting this event and have been overwhelmed with the response and feedback from everyone."

With the day focusing on key issues, including sheep exports, share farming, sheep health and welfare, and the future for Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), locals and farmers from across the region and beyond experienced a day of knowledge transfer, discussion and debate while witnessing the latest industry trends and

equipment.

The seminars were packed and it was apparent from the ELMS seminar that farmers are looking for simpler schemes with an outcome-based approach. The speakers were all keen to highlight that productivity and environment improvements need to go hand in hand and that there are opportunities for farmers, but they need to be grasped.

Competition

Shearing is a vital industry skill and, in a competition sponsored by British Wool, there was a strongly fought battle of the counties, which resulted in a first for Lancashire YFC, Cumbria YFC scooping second place and Yorkshire YFC achieving third.

Thomas Carrick, NSA North Sheep Chairman, says: "I am over the moon. I would really like to thank the Frankland family for their hard work and commitment to this year's event, and the stock especially are a credit to the hard work of the entire family. This was a very good day out and the highlight, for me, was the farm tour."

Thousands of attendees took part in the farm tours, which gave them the opportunity to see first-hand the results of tremendous stockmanship – which can only be described as some of the very highest calibre of sheep and cattle in this part of Yorkshire – and to learn about the practical aspects, such as breeding and feeding regimes.

In his opening address, Bryan Griffiths, NSA Chairman, said: "I am delighted to see that all sectors of the industry are represented across the breed societies and trade stands, attended by sheep farmers from all areas - not just Northern Region but the United Kingdom."

Competition results

NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year
Matthew Fearon, Keswick.

Trade stands

Blackface Sheep Breeders Association (breed society), Wannops Farm (sheep breeder), Gisburn Auction Mart (indoor) and Townson Tractors (outdoor).



NSA Northern Region Chairman Thomas Carrick welcomed crowds to the event.

Organised on behalf of the NSA Northern Region Committee, the Next Generation Shepherd competition provided young shepherds and with the chance to portray their shepherding skills across five different areas.

Achieving first place was Matthew Fearon from Keswick, second place went to Michael Hogg from Washington, Tyne and Wear, and third to Thomas Watson from County Durham.

Event Organiser Heather Stoney-Grayshon said: "We would like to reiterate a big thank you to those who made the day possible: the sponsors, committee and the volunteers. This includes major sponsor Agrilloid, all the mainline sponsors, the farm tours sponsors and the other companies that supported us."

Successful day marks NSA Sheep South West

In mid-June NSA South West Region hosted a hugely successful NSA Sheep South West event. This was in no small part down to the enthusiasm of its hosts, NSA Chairman Bryan Griffiths and wife Liz.

The day followed the usual format of trade and breed society stands with something of interest for everyone. After a break for one event the farm tour returned to the schedule - and its popularity was evident as an extra tour had to be laid on where Bryan and Liz gave an overview of the flock policies at Southcott and their simple commercial lamb production system that has been developed with blend of experience and science.

Shearing

Another highlight of the day again involved Bryan with his 'Wool harvesting through the ages' talk. Bryan is a keen shearer and entertained the huge crowd that gathered within the designated wool area where he was joined by Alan Derryman, Matt Smith and Andrew Wear. Here they showed old hand turned equipment and explained how shearing techniques have changed over the years until the present time.

A workshop/seminar area was re-introduced this year and a packed programme ensured there was something for everyone. The highlight was the NSA seminar, 'Sheep farming - adapting to a changing world', chaired by NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker with Rizvan Khalid of Euro Quality Lambs, Taro Takahashi from Rothamstead, North Wyke, and Liam Stokes of Defra. The seminar provided food for thought for everyone, and good attendee interaction took place.

Sheepdog sale

There was a small entry of sheepdogs and it was the first dog to be sold, entered by Mrs Watson, Postbridge, that sold for 2,000gns to the Johnson family of Bridport. Another made 700gns and puppies sold to 200gns.

Several overseas visitors were present from Australia, America, France, Switzerland and Canada. The local primary school came along and, after their guided tour was finished, they stayed to see things they had missed. NSA is very grateful to all exhibitors who took the time to explain their products/breeds to them.

NSA South West Region has received a lot of positive feedback, particularly from people who had never attended an event before, and already we are being asked where the next one will be. This is going to be a hard act to follow but, as usual, NSA South West Region will relish the challenge.

Competition results

NSA Next Generation of the Year
Adam Garthwaite (open) and Henry Baskerville (student).

Trade stands

Lley Sheep Society (breed society), Fernhill Farm (indoor) and Rappa (outdoor).

Fleeces

Richmond Harding (medium).

Gift of the Gavel

Matt Darke (open) and Kian Frain (under 26).

Photography competition

Louise Moorhouse.

Full results and sponsors at www.sheepsouthwest.org.uk.



Adam Garthwaite, NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year.

The farm tour showcased New Hall Farm to more than 3,000 people attending North Sheep 2019.



NSA Chairman, and Host, Bryan Griffiths welcomes attendees to the event in Southcott, Devon.

Busy few days for NSA at Royal Highland Show

The NSA Scottish Region 'sheep centre' marquee was as busy as ever this year, with thousands of farmers and general public through the doors over the four days of the Royal Highland Show at Ingliston, Edinburgh, and a record number of visitors attending and soaking up the very best of Scottish rural life.

Officeholders and committee members had meetings with lots of Scottish and UK Government politicians and leaders of other countryside organisations within the marquee, which will prove to be beneficial for the region in the future.

More than 20 sheep breed societies and commercial companies, including British Wool, exhibited within the marquee and a new feature within the activities programme this year was a cycle-powered sheep shearing machine challenge.

Along with hand clipping demonstrations and talks about why shearing is so important, this was a spectacle for visitors and thanks must go to the good sports from within the industry who

pedal-powered the shears and to the shearing experts who did a great job.

Meet Elfie the Valais Blacknose sheep and Raymond Irving, stars of the latest BBC series of 'This Farming Life' also proved popular with the general public.

The Royal Highland Show fleece competition also took place in the marquee and the champion fleece was won by Margaret MacEwan-King from Lanark with a Polwarth cross Ryland.

Competitions

A number of junior competitors, aged between eight and 19, took part in the NSA Scottish Region and RHASS lamb dressing competition on the Sunday afternoon with 15-year-old Finn Christie from Inverurie being awarded the Michael Dun memorial trophy as overall winner by judges Robert Paterson and Mary Dunlop.

The show finished with the NSA Scottish Region and Honda ATV prize raffle draw - see page 4.

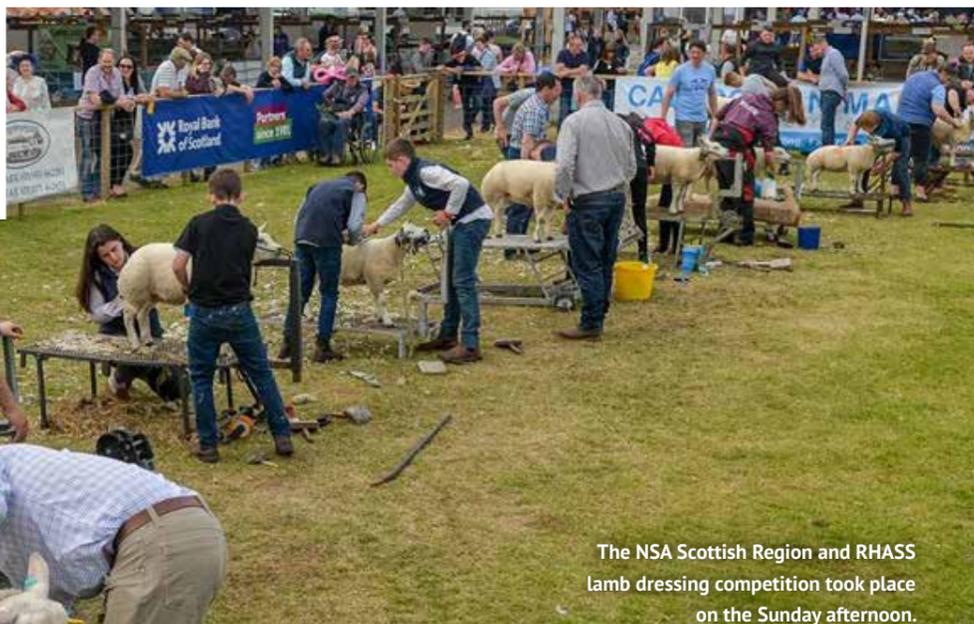
A number of NSA affiliated sheep breed societies also helped sell raffle tickets to raise funds for their organisation with the breed selling the most, the Cheviot Sheep Society, being rewarded with a Honda EU22 generator worth £1,249.



A 'Selfie with Elfie' was a popular attraction for the general public.



A pedal-powered shearing demonstration took place in the NSA Scottish Region area.



The NSA Scottish Region and RHASS lamb dressing competition took place on the Sunday afternoon.

New raffle open for 2020

Following the success of the raffle this year, NSA Scottish Region, in association with Honda, has a TRX 420FM1 ATV to give away to one lucky winner. Tickets are once again £1 each and available via participating NSA-affiliated breed societies and NSA Scottish Region events, including NSA Scot Sheep 2020. The winner will be drawn at 4pm on Sunday 21st June 2020 in the NSA Scottish Region marquee at the Royal Highland Show, with the winner notified shortly afterwards. NSA members in Scotland will shortly see raffle tickets for sale across the region.

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Further information is available from Ceva Animal Health Ltd., Unit 3, Anglo Office Park, White Lion Road, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 9FB Tel: 01494 781510 www.ceva.co.uk



Packed day for NSA Sheep Northern Ireland

After months of planning and organising, NSA Sheep Northern Ireland 2019 took place in early July in Ballymena Livestock Market, County Antrim.

The day passed quickly with lots going on in various parts of the market. A good number of visitors showed a positive interest and trade stands were very pleased with the amount of potential business generated.

The uncertainty of Brexit may have discouraged the smaller less committed sheep farmers but those intent on staying in the business were well focused and keen to improve their sheep enterprise.

NSA Northern Ireland Region committee member Campbell Tweed accompanied Billy Martin, Royal Ulster Agricultural Society President, around the stands as he acted as stand judge. Mr Martin showed a great interest while going around the stands and thoroughly enjoyed his task.

Hard work

Competition for the best stand has been increasing over the years and there was some very hard work put into some of the breed stands at Sheep NI. The breeds make the whole event quite a spectacle with their efforts.

The Next Generation Shepherd Competition was a series of six sections including shearing,

lamb selection, quad handling, veterinary knowledge, body condition scoring and a written test. The top two young shepherds now represent Northern Ireland at National and European level for the next two years.

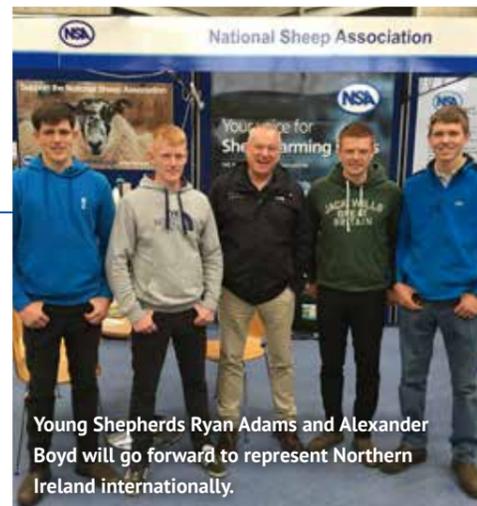
The sheepdog sale saw a smaller entry coming forward with regular consignee N. McElDowney of Draperstown, topping the sale with a dog at £1,450 followed by E. and P. McCormick, Cushendall, who received £1,200 for a bitch.

In the seminars Alex Higgins, AFBI, Hillsborough, explained the various reasons why soil health had such a large influence on the production achieved and gave an interesting talk on how to look after the soil to improve its structure.

Seminars

The second seminar was delivered by Dr Tommy Boland from University College Dublin and concentrated on forage and herbal leys. The research at UCD has been developed in two primary directions. The first of these is to identify which is the best combination of species to include in specialised sheep swards. The second is to quantify the performance of ewes and lambs on such pastures. Boland admitted that more work is required to develop species of clover and a range of herbs which are more persistent under Irish conditions.

However, initial results are strongly suggesting that significant lamb growth rate gains can be achieved by using multi species pastures, as



Young Shepherds Ryan Adams and Alexander Boyd will go forward to represent Northern Ireland internationally.

opposed to single variety perennial ryegrass swards. There was a good debate with the audience on his findings.

The third seminar was given by Dr Elizabeth Earle, of AgriSearch and the NSA Northern Ireland regional committee, and followed on from the previous speakers by giving an explanation of how best to utilise the forage that has been grown. The potential to increase stock numbers by better grazing regimes is startling and from discussion after her talk several farmers are already employing her suggestions on grazing.

The final speaker of the day was NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker who spoke about the role of NSA and the importance of a voice for the sheep industry keeping pressure on those in government to explain the role and benefits of sheep in the countryside.

NSA Northern Ireland Regional Development Officer Edward Adamson comments: "We had a very busy and enjoyable day that would not have been possible without the support of our generous sponsors and the help of a large number of hard-working people who we are indebted to. Thank you to everyone involved."

Competition results

NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year Ryan Adams, Coleraine.

Trade stands

Blackface Sheep Society (breed society), Shearwell Data (indoor) and Leam Agri Fleeces

Freda Magill.

Full results and sponsors at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events/reports.



Champion Fleece winner Freda Magill pictured here with Joe Farren, British Wool, and Alan McIntosh, Ulster Wool.

NSA regional event previews

South West

NSA South West Region is grateful to David and Richard Rossiter for agreeing to host a farm walk on Burton Farm in Galmpton, Kingsbridge, Devon, TQ7 3EY, on Sunday 4th August at 2pm.

David and Richard farm 1,300 breeding ewes across 1,000 acres of permanent pasture, herbal lays, arable crops and clifftop grazing. All are welcome to join for what will be an interesting and enjoyable afternoon.



The tour will be hosted by NSA Next Generation Ambassador Richard Rossiter and his father David.

Central

NSA Central Region is visiting the JCB Farm at Farley, Staffordshire, on Thursday 15th August, for a tour to be led by NSA Next Generation Ambassador Matt Haydon (pictured).

In addition to the flock of 2,200 Lleyn ewes – both commercial and pedigree – the enterprise includes beef suckler cattle, a red deer herd, arable and a chicken fattening unit plus hatchery. As trailer space will be limited, places will be booked on a first come, first served basis.

NSA Central Region committee would like to put on activities on the eastern side of the region and invites members to some suggestions – or better still, an invitation to visit their farm. The region is sponsoring the Eccleshall Speed Shear Event once more on Saturday 17th August, as well as sponsoring Hope Show again on Monday 25th August.



Cymru / Wales

As this Sheep Farmer goes to print, NSA Cymru/Wales Region will be busy manning the NSA sheep centre at the Royal Welsh Show and hopes to see many members over the four days.

The region is holding a closed committee meeting on Wednesday 28th August at 2.15pm in Hafod y Hendre, where the second consultation connected with 'Brexit and our Land' will be discussed. If you have any comments regarding this consultation, please contact an NSA Cymru/Wales committee member, as your views are appreciated.

Marches

An NSA Marches Region visit to Cotswold Seeds near Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire, is currently being planned for the first half of September and more details will be shared via NSA communications routes.

YOUR NSA REGION

To attend or enquire about events in your region or raise a sheep farming issue you want discussed at a regional committee meeting, find your regional representative on page 2. Don't forget, devolved regions also dedicate time to policy work. Read about this on page 22.



South East

NSA South East Region invites all members to join it on its farm walk at Lambert Farm, BN7 3AS, on Monday 12th August 2019 at 6pm, by kind permission of Plumpton College.

Run by farm manager Daniel Hird, the farm boasts 750ha (1,853 acres). The extensive part of the farm is primarily linked to the grazing provided on the chalk downlands. This carries 600 breeding ewes and Lambert Farm supplies the college with its own produce including lamb, beef, pork and cheese.

NSA South East Region is also hosting its Sheep Health, Wealth and Production Conference 2019 on Wednesday 20th November 2019 at the School of Veterinary Medicine, Guildford, Surrey.

Attendees can expect to hear from an impressive line-up of leading sheep industry experts discussing the latest topics influencing sheep health and production.

The venue holds a limited number of people so members are encouraged to book their place at the conference as soon as bookings open in the next few months.

South East Regions farm walk is being hosted by Lambert farm.



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New features at SW ram sale

The 31st NSA South West Ram Sale will be held on Wednesday 14th August at Exeter Livestock Centre, EX2 8FD.

Some breeds will be holding their shows on the concourse the evening before and this allows prospective buyers the opportunity to see some of the high quality stock out of their pens before buying commences.

The sale is known for the very high standards it demands and all the sheep are required to pass a rigorous inspection before they are allowed through the sale ring. This, coupled with the usual auctioneers' conditions and the ram sale bye laws, means producers can buy top quality rams with confidence.

This is the largest multi-breed sale in South West England with 14 breeds represented and nearly 600 rams entered, which includes a number of performance recorded

animals. The figures for these will be available on the day. Once again, the Texel breed has the highest number forward, followed by Charollais, Suffolk and Beltex.

The sale committee is always keen to improve the sale for vendors and purchasers and 2019 sees the first official society sale for the Blue Texel Sheep Society, and its members have supported it well with males and females for sale.

Another change for this year is that females will be sold first. The non-MV sheep will continue to be sold through a separate ring at approximately 11.30am with a few progressive changes to the ring following feedback from vendors in 2018.

Catalogues for the sale can be downloaded at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events or www.kivells.com or requested from Sale Secretary Sue Martyn.



New SW Region ram sale chairman Robert Jordan and wife Rebecca selling their Texels.

NSA ram sale dates

Wales & Border Early Sale

Monday 5th August.

South West Ram Sale

Wednesday 14th August.

Rugby Ram Sale

Friday 30th August.

Melton Mowbray Ram Sale

Friday 20th September.

Wales & Border Main Ram Sale

Monday 23rd August.

For more information about the NSA ram sales, contact the respective sale organiser, whose contact details can be found on page two.

Entries still open for W&B Main sale

NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale will take place on Monday 23rd September 2019. Entries can be submitted online or by post until Wednesday 7th August.

The sale provides buyers with a one stop shop, where they can choose from around 5,000 quality, veterinary-inspected rams. Vendors can bring a large consignment or just a few rams, giving them maximum trading flexibility.

The highest price at last year's 40th anniversary sale went to a Bluefaced Leicester ram. The 12,000gns sale was the highlight of a day that saw good rams sell well.

There was an 80% clearance of the 4,727 rams forward. Turnover was £1.84million with a solid trade reflected in some really high prices for top tups, although overall prices reflected the difficult year politically and in regard to the challenging weather seen.

The 12,000gns ram was sold by Vale of Glamorgan couple, semi-retired Tudor and Janet Harris. The Bonvilston yearling was out of a homebred ewe put to the sire Cendy.

The highest priced Texel was the breed champion, a Canllefaes yearling at 5,200gns. A homebred shearling from Geoff and Bridget Probert's Mortimer Flock topped the Charollais trade at 4,000gns.

A fleet of 'tup taxis' will again be on standby to transport tups to buyers' vehicles. The system is now an established part of the sale and eases traffic, helping buyers to get away as smoothly as possible.

The sale is an important economic driver in mid-Wales and attracts vendors from the length and breadth of Britain. It also attracts buyers from across the country and from Europe, reflecting the sale's international reputation.

As well as being a great place to do business, with numerous trade stands and advisers, buyers and vendors enjoy catching up with one another often over a great meal provided by 'Fingers and Forks'.

More at www.nsaramsales.co.uk or from Executive Director Jane Smith.



Last year's sale saw a top price of 12,000gns.

RamCompare delivers EBVs for carcass traits

By Samuel Boon, AHDB

Buyers at upcoming NSA rams sales, as well as farmers across the country, can now access breeding values that focus on traits rewarded further down the supply chain, including primal weights of the loin and haunch and meat tenderness.

RamCompare is the UK's commercial progeny test for terminal sire breeds. During 2016 and 2017 project partners Randall Parker Foods and Dunbia enabled a detailed assessment of 1,500 carcasses to assess saleable meat yield, with records obtained for the weight of the primal cuts within the carcasse.

The AHDB meat science team retained the loin samples and measured shearforce from cuts that had been defrosted and cooked in a standardised manner.

Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) were produced to assess the weight of individual primals at a constant carcasse weight, enabling a prediction of the meat yield within the carcasse from specific cuts.

This work shows, when primals are assessed on a carcasse weight adjusted basis, it is hard to find rams that are superior for all attributes. Those that excel in one area of the carcasse tend to be weaker in another.

Shearforce EBVs are adjusted for both carcasse weight and age and are measured in units of kilogram-force. The higher the shearforce measurement the tougher the meat. Low Shearforce EBVs are therefore desirable. While the vast majority of lambs on the trial were extremely tender, significant differences were found between sires.

At present these EBVs have only been reported for RamCompare rams used during 2016 and 2017, but the approach clearly shows the use of genetically superior sires can have a marked effect on traits that directly influence consumer acceptability.

RamCompare is continuing to increase the dataset with slaughter data from progeny born this year through to December 2020. The project has assessed 138 rams from nine different breeds over the last three years, collecting records from more than 12,000 lambs.

This spring a further 6,000 lambs including progeny from 64 new sires will be born onto RamCompare farms. The project is always looking for new rams to use on the trial, with an annual call for ram nominations at the start of each year.

See www.ramcompare.com for more information.

Two busy sales in Eastern Region

Rugby Farmers Mart, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire will play host to NSA Eastern Region for its Rugby Ram Sale on Friday 30th August. The sale is aimed at early lambing flocks and those who want to settle in their tups well in advance of the breeding season.

There is an anticipated entry of more than 120 rams including Charollais, Texel, Suffolk and Beltex. The sale is held on the same day as a major commercial ewe lamb sale, so there are plenty of buyers at the venue.

The region's second 2019 sale will be the 34th annual Melton Ram Sale on Friday 20th September. This sale usually attracts an entry of 250-270-head of various terminal sire breeds and the quality continues to improve year on year. The sale has seen average prices rise over the past few years and clearance rates for correct, well-fleshed tups are very high.



The Rugby ram sale attracts around 120 quality tups each year.



EBVs were produced using carcass information and shearforce testing.



NSA is concerned about the contingency for sheepmeat exports in a no-deal WTO Brexit scenario.

Post-Brexit contingency tops NSA policy agenda

By the time this edition of *Sheep Farmer* reaches members, Britain should have a new Prime Minister.

The outcome, within an already volatile future, will further affect the direction of farming, food and environmental policy and support. NSA is acutely aware it is also likely to impact heavily on contingency support for the industry if we end up with a no-deal Brexit and market disruption.

At the time of writing, the two candidates, Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt, have been setting out their respective policies – including regarding support for the sheep industry. Mr Johnson is insisting 'GATT 24' will be the solution to the UK's problems in a no deal WTO scenario.

WTO tariffs

'GATT 24' is the term used to reference Article 24 of the World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and allows countries in the process of negotiating trade deals to trade with zero tariffs until the deal is ratified.

However, there is serious concern surrounding the viability of the use of this in Brexit, as the article exists to assist those countries with deals very close to ratification. NSA is concerned that, as the UK currently has no such deals, using GATT 24 would not be viable.

Meanwhile, Mr Hunt initially suggested he would set aside £6 billion to support farmers and

others by helping to offsetting tariffs. However, this statement seemed to fade from sight, with no assurances from the Treasury, and an added risk of WTO challenge if done in such a blatant way.

NSA has been in close contact with Defra and Farming Minister Robert Goodwill to provide advice on the most effective approach to contingency planning if such a no-deal WTO scenario should occur. NSA has been clear that finding a way to help exporters pay for tariffs, thus supporting the market, is the best option.

Headage payment

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, comments: "From day one we have said a way should be found to offset tariffs costs, as the tariffs we would face in a WTO/no-deal scenario would be a massive disrupting factor. If this could be done, confirmed and communicated well in advance, then it could hold the market up for the benefit of all players."

Current Government proposals appear to centre on a ewe headage payment. Mr Stocker adds: "This option is being chosen due to its simplicity. Government can simply identify the number of ewes a holding has and pay accordingly – however this neglects some areas such as store lamb values and finishers and is far from addressing the core issue. We must identify a way to avoid the market going wrong rather than wait for it to do so and then come in with a blunt rescue package. We are calling for a more strategic approach to

be considered, in order to minimise the risk of problems occurring."

However, NSA is aware that, under WTO rules, it is illegal for a Government to pay export tariffs. Mr Stocker says: "This doesn't mean a more cohesive support is impossible, but it does mean industry and Government must be creative in our thinking to come up with an option that supports sheepmeat producers and exporters, without exposing ourselves to WTO challenge. This is particularly important as leaving without a deal in October would hit right in the middle of the marketing season and is simply not acceptable."

NSA will continue to work with Defra and other related groups to encourage Government policy to adapt to better support industry.



The two candidates for Prime Minister must ensure the country doesn't crash out, NSA says.

NSA continues to defend industry

Following continuing negative media surrounding the environmental impact of consuming lamb, NSA is criticising the media for its pedalling of misinformation.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker comments: "The spreading of false information isn't just frustrating but damaging. NSA is getting involved in as many research projects as we can to help gather the scientific backing we need to prove what we already know. Sheep are good for the countryside, and for the environment in its widest sense when farmed extensively and well. The UK approach to sheep farming generally meets these standards and needs to be recognised as such."



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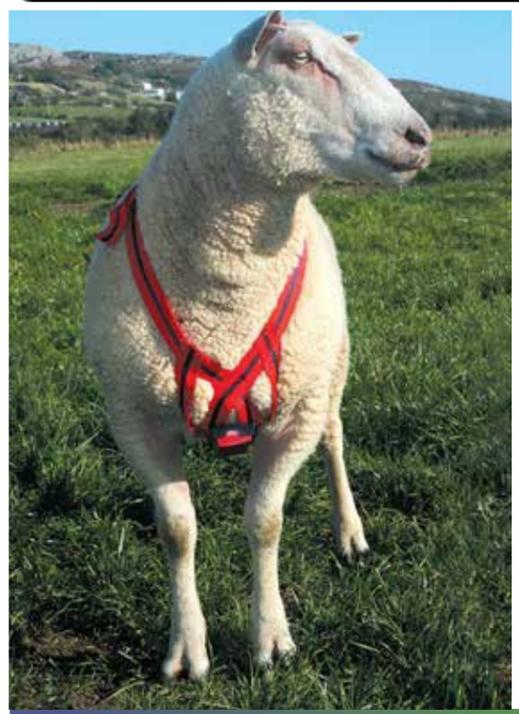
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NSA says the the carcass splitting change must be made for next season.

Iceberg disease awareness push

Relating both to Brexit and interest within the UK, the subject of iceberg diseases is back on the agenda.

NSA has learnt that once the UK becomes an EU third country (if we were to leave with no deal or at the end of any agreed transition period) breeding sheep being exported to the EU will need to be part of a nationally approved notification scheme for five key diseases. These are paratuberculosis (Johne's), caseous lymphadenitis (CLA), pulmonary adenomatosis (OPA), maedi visna (MV) and contagious caprine pleuropneumonia (CCPP). Some of these diseases have increasingly been talked about as 'silently' affecting the UK flock and being key diseases that we should be doing more about. NSA will be involved in meetings over the coming months to determine what the UK sector can do to ensure it maintains its valuable export breeding trade while also having something that could provide better protection within internal trade.

NSA technical work update

Just over two years since NSA invested in having a Livestock Researcher on staff, we are starting to reap the rewards in terms of project results – and so NSA will provide a short update to members in Sheep Farmer magazine going forward.

The motivation for getting involved in this area of work was two-fold: NSA had been invited to support a pan-European research project called iSAGE, and we were regularly seeing gaps between industry research and its suitability for on-farm implementation. Recommendations on industry efficiency are now being collated as final part of the iSAGE project, and results from an NSA-supported echinococcus farm dog study and a Warwick University lameness project are in the pipeline too – watch this space for more.

Northern Ireland welfare policy work

By Edward Adamson, Regional Development Officer

NSA Northern Ireland Region has been involved in the drafting of a consultation document on the strategic framework for animal health and welfare policy in Northern Ireland.

At present the contents are still confidential but when DAERA give it final clearance, we hope by the end of July, it should be made public and we will share information with members.

As Vice Chairman of the AgriSearch Sheep Committee, I sit on the committee of strategic antimicrobial use in dairy beef and lamb Production (STAMP), a DAERA/AgriSearch co-funded initiative.

The partners in the project are Agrisearch, AFBI, LMC, VetImpress and AHWNI. The group is tasked with looking at and investigating the capture of antibiotic use on farms. Members will also be kept up to date on information coming out of STAMP as it emerges.



Carcass splitting in slow progress

NSA is continuing to attend regular conference calls with Defra to discuss progressing the change in carcass splitting regulation. At the time of writing, NSA is aware Defra intends to run a short (21 day) consultation and will need to pass secondary legislation within Parliament in order to move forward. NSA will keep members up to date with this via its weekly newsletter.

Rewilding calls push forward

Plans to release white tailed eagles in the Isle of Wight are now well progressed, with releases scheduled by the time this edition of Sheep Farmer reaches members. NSA has been invited to two stakeholder meetings to take place in early August and will continue to counter claims the Isle of Wight is a suitable place to release the birds and direct the release in as farmer friendly way as possible.



As many as 60 birds will be released in coming years on the Isle of Wight.

Bracing for a no-deal Brexit in Wales

By Helen Roberts, Regional Development Officer



Discussions about Brexit are still underway and, when you read this, we should have a new Prime Minister in place - and that means it is looking more like a no deal will be the order of the day. I do hope I am wrong on this.

NSA Cymru/Wales Region has already been involved with no-deal Brexit discussions, however, if a no-deal is to be the case a support system needs to be in place as soon as possible for the sheep industry to brace itself and weather the storm ahead. One way of doing this will be to take notice of the results of the Red Meat Benchmarking Scheme if you took part in this. The scheme data sheets have now been validated and the results

released. The main aim of the project was to increase beef and sheep producers' understanding of their costs of production and business performance.

By providing them with accurate, up-to-date farm data which can be benchmarked against the data of comparable farms, it is hoped producers can easily identify the strengths and weaknesses of their businesses and feel empowered to make informed changes. As the uncertainty of Brexit continues, it is crucial that our farms are strong and sustainable for future success.

A sheep scab project will be included in the next RDP round, but probably won't be up and running until late next year. NSA Cymru/Wales Region will keep members updated on this.

Scotland keeps pressure on policy makers

By Jen Craig, Regional Chairman



Between the Royal Highland Show and NSA Highland Sheep, NSA Scottish Region has had a busy few months. However, that hasn't stopped us being as busy as ever meeting with policymakers and striving to make Scottish sheep farmers' voices heard.

At the Royal Highland Show, we took the opportunity to hold meetings with a number of groups including the Scottish Government, opposition parties and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association regarding predation and the proposed changes to fox control laws.

Scottish Region committee members have also met with Lord Duncan,

Lord Callanan and Deirdre Brock MP to discuss the implications of a no-deal Brexit on the sector. We remain clear this is absolutely not acceptable for Scottish farmers and are following contingency discussions closely.

Just as the previous edition went to print, we also had a meeting with Defra Secretary Michael Gove at Stirling Market, where we were able to press him on the topic of splitting hogs. We have also had further correspondence following our meeting with Mr Gove and are continuing to apply pressure for that change to come.

NSA Scottish Region has also been involved in discussion with Lantra and other stakeholders looking into sheep sector specific apprenticeships and how we can improve them going forward.

Love Lamb Week returns with boosted investment

For the fifth consecutive year NSA will join with other farming associations and levy boards to promote all that is fantastic about lamb during Love Lamb Week in the first week of September.

The industry-wide initiative is timed to promote lamb at its peak time of supply with the weeklong campaign delivering positive messages aiming to stem the decline in lamb sales and boost consumer attitudes towards sheepmeat across target audiences.

Lending her support to the campaign is one of the recipients of this year's NSA Samuel Wharry Memorial Award for the Next Generation, Charlie Beaty from Warwickshire. Charlie comments: "I hope farmers across the country will get involved in Love Lamb Week and inspire more people to put it on their plates. We have a great message to deliver to the consumer of good nutrition and environmentally friendly meat. On our farm we produce our sheep on permanent pasture, helping to absorb carbon from

the atmosphere and producing quality feed to give our lamb its delicious flavour." Love Lamb

Week 2019 will

mark the second phase of AHDB's boosted investment in the marketing of lamb. AHDB Beef and Lamb Strategy Director, Will Jackson says: "Our board are supportive of us bringing some of the £1.4 million budget for lamb marketing in towards Love Lamb Week this year, a campaign we have supported since it began. We hope it can increase sales of lamb at a time when it's vitally important."

NSA would like to hear of any activity its members are planning for Love Lamb Week this year, from lamb tastings, open farm events to simply increasing social media activity using the industry recognised hashtags of #LoveLambWeek and #LoveLamb to increase the reach of the campaign.



Charlie Beaty, NSA travel bursary winner, is supporting this year's #LoveLambWeek campaign.

Progressive breeding and understanding of systems direct upland enterprise

By Eleanor Phipps, NSA

With 2,000 breeding ewes over land reaching 2,500ft in the Cumbrian Hills, new NSA Northern Region Chairman Thomas Carrick truly knows the meaning of upland farming.

Thomas, along with his wife Kim, brother Graham and his wife Amy, and father Gregory, farm 1,820ha (4,500 acres) of land at 365-765m above sea level (1,200-2,500ft), including some moorland.

There they run 2,000 Swaledales, which are bred either pure for replacements, or crossed with Bluefaced Leicester tups to produce North Country Mule lambs with the primary enterprise being the production of breeding gimmers to sell on.

Thomas begins lambing at the start of April and finishes in mid-May, with most of the lambing done outdoors. He comments: "Lambing outdoors helps with labour as indoors is too intense. Outdoors we can just let the ewes get on with it, and it takes far less work for me to keep an eye on them that it would if I had them all inside. It also helps keep down antibiotic use."

The Carrick family is making a concerted effort to use less antibiotics on the farm and favours a strong vaccination programme instead. Thomas says: "We're thorough with vaccinations. And as

fluke can be a problem for us because of how wet our land is, we rotate flukicides to help prevent resistance. We also vaccinate for footrot every year, which may seem like a big job but is worth it in terms of welfare and for reducing labour. When the ewes are out on the hills its not an easy job to keep on top of, but if we treat everything once a year, we really see the benefit in the stock."

Finishing

All male lambs, provided they're finished by October, are sold direct to Randall Parker Foods. Those that don't make the grade are sent away to graze until the new year. He says: "The Swaledale lambs are frustrating to finish as they take time, but the benefits of keeping them far outweigh the negatives. This part of the world truly is Swale country and they survive on it in a way other breeds just couldn't – and we need to breed them for replacements."

Once all the male lambs are sold, the focus is on selecting homebred females for replacements in the purebred flock. Any excess are sold on as shearlings, along with ram lambs suitable for breeding, into Lazonby and Wigton markets.

In recent years, Thomas has been focusing more resources and interest into breeding traits in order to see market improvement for his ewes. He says: "To get on in the stratification business, especially with recent declines, you need to give buyers confidence in the system and in the stock you're selling. I know I'm turning out good ewes as we're getting repeat buyers, and this tells me my ewes

are performing well and living up to expectations."

Thomas is now weight recording all of his Leicester tup lambs and would like to start ultra-sounding. He adds: "This is easier said than done as, particularly in this part of the world, this isn't very often done. The vast majority of progeny testing is done on cross breeds. Also, because I'm only wanting to performance test a small number is very hard to keep track – particularly as I'm then crossing the tups with Swaledales. It's not an easy task I'm setting myself."

The Carrick family also run a number of cows to help manage the tougher grazing on the hills. Thomas explains: "The sheep are brilliant at what they do, but with some of the harder grazing they can be picky. We keep 60 suckler cows that are run to complement the sheep." They also produce their own silage and hay on farm. However, this has to be carefully balanced with the farm's stewardship schemes.

Stewardship

With so much of the farm in less favourable areas, Thomas says they are very engaged with stewardship schemes in order to help support their income. He comments: "It used to be a taboo subject, being part of stewardship schemes, but I think they're becoming more accepted. We do have to make adjustments to fit in with the schemes, but upland businesses viabilities are somewhat reliant on them. But one of our challenges is working around the stipulations set by Natural England."

Thomas has to reduce his stocking rates on

"The diversity a crossbred brings in terms of genetic health will help the Mule endure in the long term."

Thomas Carrick

"Lambing outdoors helps with labour as indoors is too intense. Outdoors we can just let the ewes get on with it."

Thomas Carrick

The farm is 2,500ft above sea level at its highest point.



the hill over winter, however, the in-lamb ewes that remain on the hills are fed. Thomas says: "This is something I frequently discuss with my local Natural England representative. We feed the ewes in troughs on the hills which they say can disrupt ground nesting birds but, ironically, the hay meadow set aside right next to the area we feed has one of the best ground nesting rates of any local reserves. The birds and the sheep happily live alongside each other and, if anything, the sheep help the birds by encouraging insects to the top of the soil."

As Brexit looms closer, the Government is increasingly looking at future farming support, something which Thomas believes could bring a real benefit to farmers – provided they are done correctly. He comments: "Countryside stewardship schemes aren't new, and many farmers have been dealing with them for more than 30 years. Neither is this shift to environmental focus a surprise. However, it is important for the Government to take stock and think about what it can learn from the past 30 years, about what actually is good for the land. And, importantly, how to work with, not against, farmers. One key point I think they should remember is that we'll all get along much better, and more progressively, if they work with farmers and don't dictate to us."

Another focus for Thomas's business is the continuing viability of working within the stratification system. He says: "It's a little worrying that young people are perhaps less interested in keeping Mules, instead taking an interest in

breeding their own. However, I believe the value of maintaining the diversity that a crossbreed brings in terms of genetic health, will help the Mule endure in the long term. There may be issues with some breeding Mules for purely cosmetic purposes, but most still stick to the basic rules of breeding good quality sheep – something that has been lost by some performance recorded breeds."

Thomas says the system is still profitable for him. He comments: "It is a concern because this system works well ensuring sheep of different breeds and types can prosper all over the country. This only works so well as we can make investments in the quality of our stock but without intense labour. But as soon as its stops being profitable, we will have to think about changing our system."

Accreditation

He believes there is a place for health accreditation in upland farms in order to help reassure those buying the stock that the animals won't be bringing iceberg diseases into their system. However, Thomas adds, success would require a strong uptake.

He says: "It would require a commitment to vaccinate, but more than that it would require upland farmers to commit to testing and culling in order to receive a health certificate. But unless it's recognised and respected further on in the system, people will be concerned it will cost them more than they stand to benefit from it. It's a double-edged sword and we have to be careful how we approach it."

The Swaledales are crossed to produce Mule lambs to be sold for breeding.

Farm facts

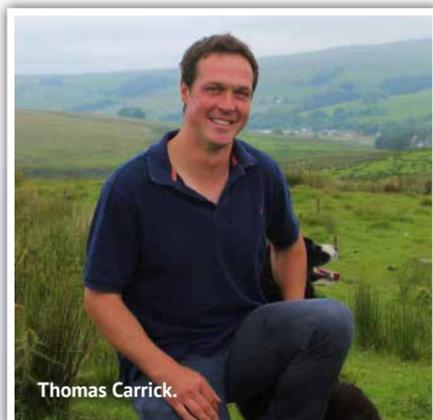
- Upland farm at 365-765m (1,200-2,500ft).
- 1,821ha (4,500 acre) farm.
- 60 suckler cows.
- 2,000 breeding ewes.
- Primary aim to produce breeding gimmer mules to sell.
- Excess lambs sold direct for slaughter.
- Breeds own replacements.



Thomas runs 2,000 breeding Swaledales.

Thomas joined NSA after being invited to an NSA Northern Region meeting by a fellow farmer and from there joined the NSA Next Generation Ambassador scheme. Thomas says: "Being a part of NSA has sort of spinballed for me. I joined the ambassador programme and as I tackled and learned about more and more challenges, I got further and further involved. It's a remarkable organisation to be a part of."

Thomas became NSA Northern Region Chairman in early 2019, and also sits on NSA English Committee, helping to direct NSA work across regions in England.



Thomas Carrick.

Thomas employs a thorough vaccination programme.

NSA visits Bulgaria to share Next Generation success

As the last edition of Sheep Farmer went to press, NSA Communications Officer Katie James was travelling to the International Sheep Breeders Festival and roundtable in Bulgaria.

Joining sheep farmers and industry representatives at this annual event, NSA was invited to speak at the roundtable meeting about the success of its Next Generation programme as, for many of the nations present, one of the biggest challenges they face is the lack of young people interested in sheep farming, favouring work with technology in bigger towns and cities instead. Delegates from far reaching countries including France, Denmark,

Kazakhstan and Russia were interested to hear of NSA's programme, expressing enthusiasm for trying to replicate this in their nations.

As well as taking part in meetings, delegates visited one of Bulgaria's most innovative sheep dairy farms. Katie comments: "Although standards are not comparable to the UK, it was evident from viewing the dairy farm that this unit was making efforts to move forward its level of production using technology wherever possible. This may move away from the idyllic, small scale and traditional methods of sheep farming for countries such as Bulgaria but, when looking to increase interest from the younger generation, perhaps it is such modernisation and use of technology that will be key to the future success of sheep production in all nations."



As well as the conference there was an opportunity to learn about Bulgarian sheep breeds.

All set for NSA Next Generation summer sessions

Bookings are still open for four of the five two-day residential NSA Next Generation workshops being held this July, August and September.

The workshops will allow attendees to hear from industry experts, tour selected sheep farms and network with likeminded young sheep enthusiasts, taking home ideas and inspiration to implement in their own business.

Helping to co-ordinate the programme of workshops, NSA Communications Officer Katie James, explains: "For the past five years NSA Next Generation has successfully offered career and personal development to an annual group of NSA

Next Generation Ambassadors. We are now keen to provide the opportunity of a similarly valuable experience to an increased number of young farmers.

"The four two-day workshops will include talks and advice from some key names in the industry, including leading sheep vets, consultants, researchers and supply chain companies. Each workshop includes an overnight stay, providing a great opportunity for socialising with fellow young shepherds, as well as some excellent farm visits.

NSA is subsidising the events from £93 per person including VAT. Book online at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk.

The events

Flock health

Tuesday 6th to Wednesday 7th August
Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester,
Gloucestershire

The sheep meat supply chain

Monday 19th to Tuesday 20th August
Swansea University, South Wales

Getting started in the sheep industry

Tuesday 17th to Wednesday 18th September
Lee Wood Hotel, Buxton, Derbyshire

Effective lamb production

Thursday 26th to Friday 27th September
Barony Castle Hotel, Peebles, Scottish Borders

Next generation shepherds across the UK are invited to take part in the events.



Exploiting the benefits of sheep in arable rotations across the generations



Sheep in arable rotations is by no means a new concept but one finding its way back into arable farms following a hiatus, due to the benefits it delivers to the land. It can also create opportunities for young sheep farmers.

Michael Rich, 28, Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire, is one such example. In 2015, the opportunity came for the family farm to expand and, having seen how well sheep were benefiting a neighbouring farm, Michael took on the challenge of introducing sheep into the rotation.

He explains: "I was made a partner in the business alongside my father and grandfather. I'd been at a planning for profit day at a neighbouring farm and was very impressed with the financial figures of his sheep flock.

"This gave me the idea to start up my own breeding flock within the family farming enterprise that would not only boost the business financially but also give me my own part of the business to manage and take full responsibility for."

Michael has rapidly built up from the small number of in-lamb ewes he initially bought, introducing them to the 525ha (1,300-acre) farm, of which 325ha (800 acres) is in arable, 20ha (50 acres) in forage crops and the rest in grass.

Soil fertility

He comments: "We lambed 800 Logie hybrid ewes and hogs this year and we're aiming for 1,000 plus next year. Everything lambed outside in May, rotationally grazed throughout the year before being strip grazed on swedes/fodder beet from late January to early April. We also purchase a further 1,000 store lambs to finish each winter."

Michael says they have seen a benefit for the soil. He adds: "The biggest benefit is bringing fertility back into the soil. Between grass and forage crops we have a good rotation which gives fields a break from constant

cropping and allows the fertility to build back up. Without the sheep and cattle putting fertility back into the soil we wouldn't achieve anything like the yield we do."

Michael says the biggest challenge is achieving the correct balance of each enterprise to get the greatest potential from the farm.

He adds: "Maintaining quality while pushing up numbers is also a challenge. If I started again, I would buy much better sheep instead of buying below average sheep and breeding them up. I would concentrate more on keeping quality rather than pushing for scale and I would be much more ruthless with underperforming ewes."

Michael introduced sheep onto his family farm in 2015.



“My biggest challenge is achieving the correct balance of each enterprise to get the greatest potential from the farm.”

Michael Rich

Across the country in Elveden, Norfolk, Andrew Foulds runs sheep across a number of arable farms in East Anglia.

He says: "At any one time we could have sheep on 20 different arable farms across East Anglia. There are great opportunities for the next generation to get involved in this sort of enterprise, but it's not easy and requires a great deal of dedication."

Andrew began running sheep in arable rotations in his 20s, where he found the biggest difficulty was finding the capital to get started. He adds: "The vast amount of capital demanded by the requirements of sheep farming is the biggest issue holding young people back. I was able to get a loan from the bank and the backing of a local businessman. It was a big leap of faith for him and made all the difference for me - but it's not always so easy."

Andrew says a crucial aspect of running sheep

this way, across other people's land, is reputation. "Working with the arable farmer you have to get yourself a good reputation. You have to pay your bill on time and remember you're nothing more than a guest on their farm. What you are paying them isn't a significant chunk of their farm budgets but it's everything in your business.

Responsibility

"You have to think about those sheep 24/7, particularly when they're on someone else's farm, because you'll be the one getting the call on a Sunday night to say they're walking down the road - and find yourself a husband/wife/partner who

understands that," says Andrew.

Despite its challenges, Andrew says running a profitable business is possible. He comments: "The way livestock is going there are more and more bigger processors looking to lock into supply chains. By locking in substantial numbers you're more likely to do a better deal. But capital is a big issue in any method of livestock farming so manage your budgets carefully."

At any one time, Andrew can have sheep on up to 20 arable farms.



“The vast amount of capital demanded by the requirements of sheep farming is the biggest issue holding young people back.”

Andrew Foulds



Marie shearing during the world championships.



Charlie will be setting off in January 2020.

Bursary winners develop travel plans to explore the global sheep industry



As readers will be aware from the last edition of Sheep Farmer, winners have been chosen for the NSA Samuel Wharry Memorial Award, each receiving a generous travel bursary.

The two successful applicants, Marie Prebble and Charlie Beaty, have been busy planning their trips, supported by NSA and the Company of Merchants of the Staple of England.

Marie and Charlie have attended a planning session at NSA Head Office, Malvern, where they both had the opportunity to pick the brains of NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker and NSA Operations Director Joanne Briggs for ideas and contacts for their trips.

Joanne comments: "Both of these trips are very different and we're really excited to see the research

that Charlie and Marie do whilst out on their respective trips."

Marie's trip is focusing on practical considerations for best practice during shearing and has seen her attend the world shearing championships in France in early July. Marie comments: "I have just got back from a week at the World Sheep Shearing Championships in France, which was amazing. The whole event was an impressive showcase of the shearing and wool industry, with a huge purpose-built marquee hosting the stage and seating area for the shearing and wool handling competitions, and outside lots of artisanal craft stalls selling everything made from wool."

Networking

"It was a great networking opportunity and I met up with several key contacts who will be able to inform my project. It was an exciting way to start my travels

and has given me plenty of ideas to take forward when I go to Norway and Iceland.

Charlie's trip will take her to New Zealand, and she plans to travel in early 2020. She says: "In 2017 permanent pasture accounted for 41% of utilised agricultural area in the UK, and while many farmers are already taking steps to improve their grassland, there is always room for improvement."

I fly out to New Zealand for six weeks in January 2020 and will be visiting numerous farms to look at the way they manage and improve this permanent pasture, utilising the cheapest feed available to them."

Both Marie and Charlie will be completing blogs about their plans and trips which will be available on the NSA website and here, in Sheep Farmer magazine.

More at www.nsanextgeneration.org.uk.

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Advertising starts from £30 for NSA members. Speak to Helen Roberts. See page 2 for contact details.

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Flock health clubs provide a new format for farmers and vets to engage

By NSA Contributors

Flock Health Clubs have been appearing across the country in recent years - and so NSA has taken the opportunity to assess their potential.

The idea was developed by sheep vet Dr Fiona Lovatt and is based on sharing the cost of veterinary flock health advice between participating farmers. One example is the Larkmead Veterinary Group club, run by vet JP Crilly in South East England.

Dr Crilly comments: "The way our flock health club at Larkmead works is that members pay a monthly fee (divided into three bands depending on flock size) and in exchange they get three free visits a year with no vet fees and a 10% discount on all flock health related services such as worm egg counts, ram breeding soundness exams, blood sampling, written health plans and many more."

In addition there are three discussion group meetings a year, held on a member's farm, which are pre-lambing, post-lambing and pre-tupping. Dr Crilly adds: "We actually hold these meetings twice as we have members lambing from December through to the end of May, in order that at least one of the two is reasonably correctly timed for people's flocks. We also give members a 50% discount on any other sheep talks or workshops we run within the practice."

Proactive

Dr Crilly set up the club following a meeting run by Dr Lovatt about flock health clubs and was keen to get involved with the sheep clients when he started at Larkmead.

He says: "The practice is generally very



Mr Machen and his neighbour have invested in home FEC equipment.

proactive with regards to flock and herd health in all the species it deals with, so they were very keen on the idea of our own flock health club. We currently have 28 members with flocks from six to 2,500 breeding ewes."

Farmer involvement

Farmer Ben Machen, is the manager at Upper Horns Farm, a sheep and arable enterprise near Shalbourne on the edge of Wiltshire, and is one of the members of the Larkmead Flock Health Club. Mr Machen is the principle shepherd of the 340 ewe flock, which is Lley, put to Lley and Blue Texel tups to produce prime lambs off grass and cover crops.

He comments: "For me, the advantages of the flock health club are twofold. Firstly, there is the knowledge transfer from Dr Crilly and from the other members. The most recent discussion group meeting (which I hosted) was a great example of how it works. Members talk about what they are doing. For example: whether they

are shearing pre-lambing versus after lambing; not tail-docking or castrating lambs versus using the rubber rings; timings of flystrike pour-on application; and use of fly traps. Each person will provide the anecdotal evidence of how it works for them and then Dr Crilly provides any scientific background or technical information which is required to make an informed choice.

"Then there is the social aspect of it, which I can't really emphasise enough how important it is. This isn't a sheep-dense area and it can be quite an isolating job, so meeting other sheep farmers is good emotional support. The contacts you make are useful too; I have just recruited a new member of staff through it."

The discussion group meetings provide members the opportunity to get veterinary advice at a fraction of the cost of a one-to-one visit and allow members to get first-hand experiences and advice from other local sheep farmers.

However, flock health clubs don't have to

Mr Machen discussing his flock at the latest club meeting

stop there, and Dr Crilly says he is looking to create new services to offer his club.

He says: "I am always trying to expand the services offered to members, for example I have just set up an anonymous online benchmarking system for members, so they can compare their flock performance to others in the club."

Dr Crilly also says the flock health club has helped the practice and local farmers become more involved. He comments: "There is greater client involvement, especially with some that we perhaps weren't as involved with before."

Many new clients that have joined the practice have signed up to the club right away, where the greater level of communication and interaction they then have with the practice is hopefully beneficial in establishing the vet-

client bond."

Mr Machen agrees with this and says being a member has so far helped him make three progressive changes to his business.

He comments: "I have changed the timing of clostridial and pasteurella vaccines to minimise any 'immunity gap', I have started using FAMACHA scoring to control haemonchosis in the ewes and, together with a neighbour (who is also a club member), we have bought the equipment to do on-farm worm egg counts. There are definitely other changes I am thinking of making in the future too."

All regions have different challenges, and every farm has its own challenges within that, but Dr Crilly believes different members will value different aspects of the group. He

says: "Some of ours come to virtually every discussion group meeting, whereas others value the discounted post-mortems and worm egg counts. We also have clients who don't want to join the club, and we still provide newsletters and information to those, just in a different way."

As a result of their experience, Dr Crilly and Mr Machen encourage other vets and farmers to create and get involved in flock health clubs. Mr Machen says: "I would recommend to anyone to join a club, if they have one in their area. It's definitely very good value for money here."

Not got a flock health club in your area? Contact your vet and encourage them to find out more at www.flockhealth.co.uk/flockhealthclubs.

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1. The production costs of anthelmintic resistance in sheep managed within a monthly preventive drench program I.A. Sutherland, J. Shaw, R.J. Shaw Veterinary Parasitology 171 (2010) 300–304.

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Ensuring your business is compliant with making tax digital

By Stacey Morrison, Old Mill **OLD MILL**

Making Tax Digital (MTD) for VAT took effect on 1st April 2019, which means if your business turnover is above the current £85,000 VAT threshold, you need to ensure your VAT return records are maintained and filed digitally with HMRC.

If you still need to take action to meet this requirement, the first step is to check you are using compliant software that enables you to submit VAT returns electronically and is compatible with MTD for VAT. If you're not sure, contact your existing provider, as they should be able to give you full support. As an example, at Old Mill we use Xero Cloud Accounting.

Once you are confident of your software you can sign up at www.tax.service.gov.uk/vat-through-software/sign-up. You will need to log on with your normal Government Gateway details, but the process should be straightforward. Once you've signed up, you'll

receive a confirmation email from HMRC within 72 hours.

It's important to note the timing restrictions on signing up. If your VAT payments or repayments are made by direct debit, you cannot sign up for MTD for five working days after the submission due date for your last 'non-MTD' return. You must also sign up at least seven working days before your first MTD return is due.

Sign-up

This means, if you file VAT monthly, there is a relatively short window to sign up. HMRC recommended you signed up between 15th-28th May 2019 so, if you didn't do that need help, please contact a qualified accountant.

For businesses filing quarterly, HMRC recommend you sign/signed up on a series of dates through the year – see panel. As most of these dates have now passed, we recommend you contact a qualified accountant if you have not yet signed up.

Rural businesses are going through very exciting times with the introduction of the

MTD recommended sign-up dates

April-June returns

Sign up between Wednesday 15th May and Sunday 23rd June 2019.

May-July returns

Sign up between Monday 17th June and Tuesday 23rd July 2019.

June-August returns

Sign up between Monday 15th July and Friday 23rd August 2019.

latest technology. While new regulations will mean significant changes for businesses, they also represent great opportunities to evolve with the emerging technological landscape.

There are a variety of ways that digital technology can help you and your business. The move to MTD for VAT is another step towards getting ahead of the curve, thinking innovatively about your service or products, and becoming a leader in your field.

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British Wool continues to support producers across the UK

By Andrew Hogley, British Wool



Having joined British Wool as its Director of Wool Sales and Producer Services in 2017, I quickly became familiar with British Wool's purpose to achieve the best value for each producer's wool clip. That is why we exist.

British Wool receive and sort wool from 37,000 UK producers with the typical producer delivering approximately 750kg of wool. Every fleece is sorted by type and grade and these are then amalgamated into commercial weights. We produce six main types and over 100 individual grades of wool.

The merchants buying from British Wool know how each grade of wool will perform when it is processed. Quality control is therefore vital, and we grade each fleece based on its characteristics rather than by the breed of sheep.

British Wool also differentiates itself by offering a nationwide service. We will sell wool on behalf of any producer no matter how small or where they are located in the UK. As a not-for-profit organisation British Wool take a commercial approach to maximise the wool value and have consistently paid producers more than the competition year after year.

Wool buyers

There are a number of independently-owned UK wool buyers whose main aim is to secure their wool as cheaply as possible. This is something I believe undermines the collective selling strength of British Wool.

Over the last 18 months British Wool has consistently achieved prices that have been in-line with or better than New Zealand wool – a step in the right direction as historically British wool was trading at a discount of around 20% to New Zealand. We are not content with this. Our aim is to continue to stimulate demand for this 100% natural, British product.

We sell all of our producer's wool through the British Wool auctions which are held 20 times a year. Before each auction we work hard to supply

a good, balanced offering. It is crucial the merchants have trust in the auction process, so transparency and integrity of the sale is very important, and we publish market data on our website after every sale.

With most of the UK wool clip purchased by three merchants, which also own the only three commercial scouring plants in Europe, we have introduced an 'agency buying service' at the auction last summer, to help lower the barrier for smaller processors. The agent bids on behalf of smaller users of British Wool acting on their bidding instructions without them having to be present in the sale room. In helping these businesses to grow, we are further raising the profile of British Wool and helping to increase demand.

Global trading

There is limited processing capacity in Europe with 70% of the world's wool, and 30% to 40% of British wool, processed in China. In terms of global wool trading China is increasingly important.

While China represents an attractive long-term opportunity for British Wool it is not without its challenges. The current trade war between the US and China has been unhelpful to say the least and tariffs on Chinese textile exports to the USA have weighed on global wool process over the last six months.

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Average Clip Value (£/kg)
(After all costs and excluding VAT)

Breed	Current Clip Value*	Competitor Offer**	British Wool Premium
Suffolk	£0.60	£0.60	0%
Romney	£0.75	£0.70	7%
Texel/Lleyn	£0.66	£0.60	10%
Mule	£0.67	£0.60	12%
Cheviot	£0.92	£0.70	31%
Radnor	£0.60	£0.60	0%
Welsh	£0.30	£0.25	20%
Swaledale	£0.30	£0.25	20%
Blackface	£0.45	£0.35	29%

*British Wool average auction prices – Summer 2019.

**As advertising in Ashbourne June 2019.

To find out more call us on **01274 688666** or visit our website at britishwool.org.uk

Together we're growing something special.



Ahead of auction, British Wool sorts and packs fleeces into categories according to their value.

Driving grass productivity for better finishing returns

Regular grass growth monitoring has been identified as a key mechanism to facilitate improvements in grass utilisation, which in turn carries a financial benefit for farmers.

GrassCheck, originally established in 1999 in Northern Ireland, aims to provide high quality, up-to-date grass information to assist farmers with grassland management decisions and support improvements in grass utilisation on Northern Ireland livestock farms.

Operated by AgriSearch and AFBI, the project monitors weekly grass growth and quality and provides seven and 14-day grass growth rate forecasts to support farmers in managing pasture surpluses and deficits throughout the growing season.

Management

Data is generated from four sets of monitored plots, managed under a simulated grazing

regime, located at AFBI, Hillsborough, and CAFRE, Greenmount. Management notes are also provided to advise farmers on best practice to utilise forecasted grass growth.

In 2017, the project expanded to monitor grass growth and quality data on 48 commercial dairy, beef and sheep farms across Northern Ireland. Each of the farmer co-researchers have been equipped with a rising plate-meter to measure grass covers.

In addition, 48 weather stations have been deployed on each of the 48 pilot farms to record a wide range of meteorological data from across Northern Ireland. This cutting-edge technology is being used to provide farmers with up-to-date information on grass growing conditions and grass quality in their local area and help them make the most of grass.

Roger and Hilary Bell, Kells, Ballymena, are one of the six sheep farms taking part in the GrassCheck NI 'Lamb from Grass' project. The Bells farm 550 Texel Mule ewes in a mid-season lambing flock on 75ha (184 acres) of grassland. Their philosophy is that grassland

management and data recording are essential to driving production and efficiency on farm.

Since joining the project, the Bells believe their farm has greatly benefited from the weekly grass measuring process, increasing its grass production and grass quality.

The farm has implemented an intensive rotational grazing system, trialling four and eight paddock systems as part of the project. They have also invested significantly in the grazing infrastructure over the past 10-15 years, putting in roadways, fences and water troughs that ensures one person can move sheep in a safe and easy manner around the grazing platform.

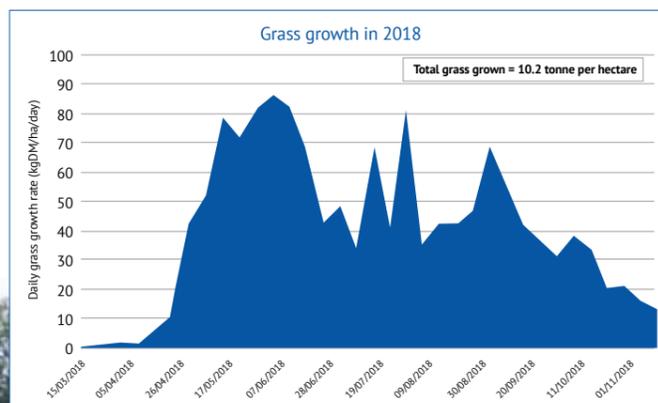
Infrastructure

The farm has also erected a purpose-built lambing shed that enables sheep handling in the winter and a separate outdoor handling system for working with sheep in the summer. This facility has the capacity to weigh and record up to 1,000 lambs an hour and is designed so one person can manage most tasks on their own safely and efficiently.

By Elizabeth Earle, AgriSearch 



Investing in infrastructure alongside rotational grazing makes for more productive work.



Good grass management can lead to better lamb growth rates.



AgriSearch has provided 48 farmers with rising plate meters to measure grass growth.

Roger and Hilary aim to turn sheep into pre-2,500-2,700kgDM/ha and grazed grass covers down to residuals of 1,600-1,800kgDM/ha, weather dependent. In a challenging 2018 grazing season, the farm grew 10.2t/ha during the year, as seen in the graph.

The Bells manage two large mobs of 250 ewes and their lambs, measuring the grazing area weekly and recording the grass data on AgriNet, a computer software programme to

aid with grazing decisions. They say measuring weekly grass growth and analysing the data is a valuable use of time and investment for their business and measuring is key to getting maximum value from the grass they grow.

In 2018, lambs achieved average daily liveweight gain of 317g/day from birth to eight weeks of age and had an average weaning weight of 33.7kg from grass. Post-weaning lamb are given priority and graze the

best quality pastures on the farm.

The Bells believe keeping quality grass in front of lambs all year helped achieve their performance and plan to continue grass measuring to build upon their improvements in grass production, as it helps them run a low-cost efficient lamb production system.

For more information visit www.agrisearch.org.

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Friday 23rd August	Special Sale of BREEDING SHEEP inc EWES & RAMS
Saturday 31st August	Show and sale of 300 PEDIGREE BELTEX SHEEP
Tuesday 10th September	Show & sale of 7,500 NORTH OF ENGLAND MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Tuesday 17th September	2nd Show & Sale of SHEARLING GIMMERS & Sale of all classes of BREEDING SHEEP 26th Show & Sale of 80 PEDIGREE CHAROLLAIS SHEEP
Thursday 19th & Friday 20th September	38th Annual Show & Sale of 600 PEDIGREE TEXEL RAMS & FEMALES
Tuesday 24th September	2nd Show & Sale of 10,000 MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Tuesday 1st October	Sale of all classes of BREEDING SHEEP & RAMS. Evening Show & Sale of BLUE FACED LEICESTER SHEEP
Thursday 3rd October	Show & Sale of REGISTERED LLEYN BREEDING SHEEP
Friday 4th October	Annual MULTI BREED SHOW & SALE of 1500 RAMS & FEMALES
Saturday 5th October	Annual Show & Sale of 4,500 SWALEDALE EWES & SHEARLINGS
Monday 7th October	Special Evening sale of 120 SWALEDALE RAMS
Tuesday 8th October	Show & Sale of SWALEDALE GIMMER LAMBS. CONTINENTAL & OTHER GIMMER LAMBS
Prize Show & Sale of MASHAM GIMMER LAMBS. Open Prize Show & Sale of MULE GIMMER LAMBS	
Saturday 12th October	Pedigree CHAROLLAIS IN-LAMB FEMALES
Tuesday 22nd October	19th Annual Show & Sale of 100 DALESBRED RAMS & FEMALES. Sale of HILL RAMS inc 2nd Sale of BFL Rams

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Prioritising grass quality will help prevent limiting lamb growth

Pasture at a height of 10cm for more than 25 days is reducing profit in lamb production because it can lower quality by as much as 70%, according to New Zealand consultant Murray Rohloff, who has recently been delivering advice to farmers on behalf of HCC.

Mr Rohloff comments: "Nutritive value declines with leaf age. For most grasses, leaf older than 25 days of age plummets in digestibility and summer pastures have higher stem content which further reduces digestibility."

Dead matter

Dead matter is responsible for 70% of the variation in pasture quality and, because it slows up movement of food through the rumen, it can be very limiting to lamb growth.

He adds: "In the first few weeks of life lambs will be growing at 350g/day when quality is good but, on farms where grass growth is not managed well, that gain will drop to 100g/day at weaning, even 50g post-weaning. Farmers will blame it on stress, but it is more likely to be the result of stemmy pastures arising from insufficient grazing pressure."

Grazing pressure prevents dead matter

build-up and encourages legume content. Late flowering grasses and high sugar ryegrasses offer a longer season of higher digestibility, advises Mr Rohloff. He advocates rotational grazing because it will allow a farm to grow 30% more grass compared to set stocking. "That is no different to being given a third more of your acreage for nothing," he adds.

"I'm not saying everyone must farm like a Kiwi but you should know how much dry matter you are growing and utilising. If you take control of your pasture you can manage its quality and quantity at any given time. Don't think lamb prices, think how much profit you are extracting from your grass."

By coupling rotational grazing with feed budgeting, farmers can be proactive instead of reactive to seasonal variations, Mr Rohloff claims, encouraging producers to accurately measure pasture between seasons. He says 5cm is the equivalent of around 1,500kgDM/ha in winter and spring pasture or 2,000kg in summer and autumn; but up to 25% may be stem or dead matter.

Genetics

Equal in importance to grass utilisation on low-cost sheep systems is good genetics, which can not only increase productivity but slash costs. Mr Rohloff comments: "If you go to the right ram breeders you will get ewes that will lamb

themselves outdoors without supplementary feed or footrot."

Before subsidies were removed in New Zealand there were 4,000 pedigree ram breeders but now there are less than 600, with less than 100 of these supplying 80% of the market. "He who delivers the goods sells the rams," Mr Rohloff suggests. "These breeders are supplying genetics for sheep that are easy to lamb, have good rearing ability and enable production gains."

Utilisation

Mr Rohloff puts a higher value on maternal genetics. "Maternal indexes are worth seven times the value of terminal indexes because the animal hangs around the farm for several years doing the job."

Elan Davies, Farming Connect Red Meat Technical Officer, says the overarching message to sheep farmers is that a focus on forage utilisation could allow them to operate from a low-cost base. She says: "Efficiency improvements and possible changes to production systems should be a priority going forward."



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Henry Riley, self employed flock manager.

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Summer pastures with a high stem content have reduced digestibility.



Preparing your flock for tupping – hints and tips for a good outcome

By Phillipa Page and Fiona Lovatt, Flock Health 

We all need to be wiser with how we spend money on our ewes and be aware of how our decisions affect overall flock performance and profitability – and be smarter in making beneficial tweaks to usual routines.

We must improve flock resilience and with it increase our confidence in understanding the economic benefits of our flock inputs and the potential flock outputs. This will enable better decision-making for the benefit of both flock health and profits.

The ways in which you manage your ewes in the period from weaning to tupping can hugely influence these figures. If you had losses in these areas, make sure you have discussed appropriate actions with your vet to make changes in time for tupping this year.

Body conditions

The number and quality of eggs that are ovulated from the ovary is determined nutritionally by the body condition score of the ewe throughout the year as well as the quality of diet and energy levels during tupping. The



Separating ewes by body condition score can ensure optimum management.

maturation and development of the follicles in the ovary takes place in developmental waves over four to five months so the ewe diet and body condition are crucial throughout the summer.

Weaning is a crucial time to assess the flock and split it into groups in three categories: ewes that are thin and need to gain condition; those that can go onto hard grazing to lose a bit; and fit ewes that simply need to maintain their condition.

Getting the whole flock to the target of 3.5 body condition score (BCS) for lowland and 2.5-3 for hill/upland ewes will make nutritional management much easier at tupping. One BCS is approximately 10-12% of bodyweight, so a 70kg ewe needs to gain about 7kg to put on one BCS.

The perfect time to reassess your lameness control plan is between weaning and tupping. Ensure that the flock are sound and, if necessary, vaccinated before the start of tupping. To maximise pregnancy rates the advice is to minimise stress and handling during tupping and for the following four weeks.

You really don't want lameness to jeopardise this so have a lameness plan ready before tupping. Unless your flock lameness is consistently running at less than 2%, we would advise you consult your vet or advisor to reassess what you are doing.

Ewes that are in good body condition, not lame and have access to good quality nutrition up to and during mating are primed to provide large numbers of potential lambs.

There is skill, effort and cost involved with

getting the ewes ready for tupping and so it is disappointing when at scanning time barren rates are higher than expected (over 3%) or at lambing time when there are high numbers of stillborn lambs or abortion.

Abortion

Enzootic abortion (EAE) is generally the most commonly diagnosed cause of abortion in the UK. If you buy in replacement ewes, every year your flock is at risk of EAE being introduced. It is a bacterial cause of abortion, spread via infected ewes whose vaginal secretions can spread the bacteria to uninfected, unvaccinated ewes and cause them to abort the following year.

Routinely using an antibiotic to control enzootic abortion is neither responsible nor cost effective, as it will not provide future protection for subsequent pregnancies. The use of antibiotic in late pregnancy cannot be justified by the prescribing vet, unless there has been a confirmed laboratory diagnosis of EAE in the

Reflections

It is worth reflecting on your last lambing season and a good place to start is with the following questions:

1. What was the potential number of lambs expected (scanning percentage)?
2. How many lambs did you turn out?
3. How many ewes were empty at scanning?
4. How many ewes aborted or lost lambs before turnout?



Ewe lambs should be managed separately from more mature ewes due to different nutritional needs.

Enzootic abortion of ewes - the most common sheep abortion in UK

Caused by *Chlamydia abortus*

35% of all ovine abortions 2012-2018; GB Sheep Disease Surveillance

Plan

- ✓ Source replacements from accredited flocks if available
- ✓ Source from as few flocks as possible
- ✓ Do not mix pregnant ewes
- ✓ Keep purchased ewes separate from home flock until after first lambing



Do NOT plan to use antibiotics

– this is only acceptable in the face of an outbreak or following a confirmed laboratory EAE diagnosis in the immediately preceding year.



#everylambcounts

#planpreventprotect

#EAE

#responsibleuse #vaccineswork

Prevent

- ✓ Isolate all aborting ewes
- ✓ Remove all aborted material and send samples for laboratory diagnosis
- ✓ Confirm diagnosis by blood-sampling aborted or empty ewes post lambing
- ✓ Clean, disinfect, remove and destroy abortion-contaminated bedding
- ✓ Do not foster ewe lambs onto ewes that aborted or had dead lambs
- ✓ Do not allow pregnant women access to the lambing shed



Protect

Vaccination

- ✓ Recommended for all flocks that purchase replacements or have sheep neighbours
- ✓ Give by four weeks before tupping
- ✓ Most ewes only need single dose to last their time in the flock
- ✓ Keep cool and use as directed

Remember that once EAE has been introduced to a flock, there are ewes that are programmed to abort. Subsequent vaccination will not immediately prevent every abortion. However, even if started after an outbreak, vaccination is still the most cost effective EAE control measure

© Flock Health Ltd 2019

immediately preceding year.

Every injection of antibiotics in this context is like a sticky plaster that has short-lasting effectiveness in terms of disease control but long-lasting damage in terms of building levels of resistance in the flock.

The second most common cause of abortion is toxoplasmosis, which is spread via infected

cat faeces and usually will be seen in a flock as a high barren rate or as mummified foetuses at lambing time. Both of these diseases are frustratingly common considering there are easily available and cost-effective vaccinations.

The vaccines will generally protect the ewe for her life in the flock and are most usefully administered to replacement ewes.

In summary, take good flock decisions taken now in time for tupping to ensure maximum flock performance and profitability at lambing 2020 – that is plan ahead, prevent unwanted disease spread and protect the flock with vaccination where appropriate.

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Preventative measures to minimise losses in store lambs

In the current market, making significant profit on store lambs can be difficult. Maximising efficiency by reducing lamb mortality due to common diseases will help productivity.

Incoming lambs pose a biosecurity risk to existing stock on the farm. Regardless of source always assume lambs are 'dirty'. Though awareness is improving, many people may not know they have issues such as anthelmintic resistance which, if introduced to your pasture, could cause big issues in the future.

On arrival, lambs should be inspected for signs of disease such as external parasites, orf, footrot and contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD), and treated appropriately. As part of a gold standard quarantine regime, they should also receive a 4-AD drench (orange) and 5-SI drench (purple) to clear out any resistant worms present and injected with moxidectin or OP dipped to kill any sheep scab mites - but the SCOPS website has more information on different quarantine options.

Fluke

Dependent on the time of year and the source farm, you may also need to consider a liver fluke treatment. Do this in cattle pens if possible, to prevent sheep pens being contaminated. Lambs should be housed or yarded off pasture for 48 hours in order to pass any viable eggs onto hard standing, and then turned out onto 'dirty' pasture for a few days. This means that if any resistant

worms have survived treatment, they will be diluted by normal susceptible worms from the dirty pasture.

Clostridial diseases, such as pulpy kidney, are some of the most common causes of sudden death in lambs. The bacteria that cause these diseases are present in healthy sheep and soils but can proliferate when the immune system is compromised.

Disease can occur sporadically, usually following stress events such as a change in weather, diet or handling. Though some lambs will have received antibodies to these diseases in colostrum from their dam (passive immunity), protection gradually decreases with time.

Passive immunity only lasts up to four weeks for pasteurella and up to 12 weeks for clostridial diseases. After this, lambs are susceptible to disease unless they are vaccinated. High parasite burdens or cobalt deficiency can also weaken the immune system and predispose to these conditions.

As death often occurs before signs are seen, prevention is the best course of action. Combined vaccines for clostridial disease and pasteurella are available and are cost effective. Medium and long keep lambs that have not previously been vaccinated for clostridial diseases and pasteurella earlier in the season should receive a full primary course of two injections. Timing of these will depend on which vaccine is used.

Where pasteurella risk is high, even lambs vaccinated earlier in the year can be boosted in late summer/early autumn to give better protection.

A strategy needs to be in place for grazing store lambs to minimise worm exposure and

By Lauren Porteus, Scott Mitchell Associates



identify when treatment is needed.

Consider first how to limit exposure to worms; where possible use low risk pasture (pasture that has been grazed by cattle, cut for silage or hay in the first half of the grazing season, grown forage crops or arable by-products) and aim to avoid that which has been stocked with ewes and lambs all season.

If this is not possible, consider using mature ewes in good body condition with good immunity to worms to 'mop up' contaminated pastures after weaning, thereby reducing risk to lambs; cattle can be used in a similar way. Grazing very short sward heights should also be avoided as this can increase risk to lambs as most larvae are concentrated at the bottom of the grass.

Worm burdens

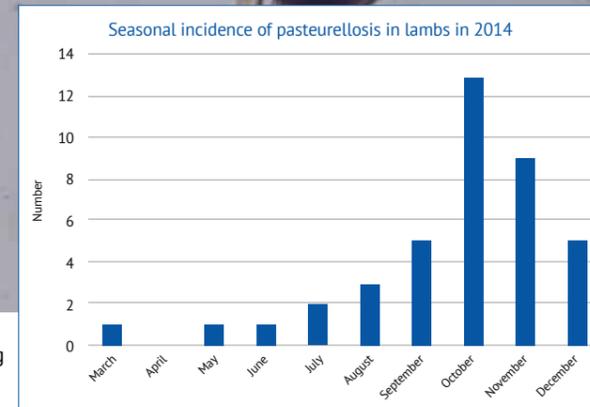
Faecal egg counts (FEC) can help to reduce losses as they monitor rising worm burdens in lambs and indicate the need for treatment often before clinical signs and growth checks can be seen. This not only saves time and money spent on worming treatments that may be unnecessary, but also reduces selection for anthelmintic resistance.

As the worm burden varies between individual animals, faeces should be collected from 10 lambs per batch every three to four weeks. FEC are made more accurate by grouping lambs in tight age groups. Treatments can then be decided accordingly.

Lameness in store lambs will reduce growth rates and hinder getting finished lambs away to slaughter when ready. Lambs can be affected by scald, footrot and CODD. Correct diagnosis is important to ensure appropriate treatment.



Worm eggs seen in under the microscope in a faecal egg count.



Footbathing can be used to keep on top of mild lesions and help to reduce spread of infectious agents.

When thinking about medicine applications, it goes without saying that the end product sent to slaughter needs to be safe for the consumer and out of withdrawal periods, but we should also aim to maximise profits from carcasses.

Take care when administering medicines. Injections should only be performed through clean

dry fleeces with clean, sharp needles to reduce trauma to the skin and/or muscle. Ideally the neck should be used so, if tissue reaction or abscessation occurs, less valuable cuts of meat will be affected.

We should also take care with bolusing and drenching guns as injuries from these can lead to septicaemia and death and milder cases may lead to condemnation of bruised and damaged tissue.

A good scanning result is dependent upon good nutrition at tugging time.

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Pasteurellosis lesions found at post mortem in a store lamb.

Antimicrobial use and resistance: A UK sheep industry perspective

By Nuno Silva and colleagues, Moredun  Moredun

Monitoring antimicrobial usage in livestock is widely acknowledged as critical, because of increasing concern surrounding antimicrobial resistance.

The latest UK Veterinary Antimicrobial Resistance and Sales Surveillance Report conveyed that a total quantity of 282 tonnes of active ingredients of antimicrobials were sold within the UK for the entire food-producing animal species, representing a total 37mg/PCU - see panel.

The UK sheep industry is the largest in the EU and is also the largest single sector of UK livestock agriculture, representing 39.8% as calculated by PCU. However, the level of antimicrobials used in the sheep industry is believed to be low, at less than 1% of all antimicrobial sales to food-producing animal species.

Prevalence

Consequently, the margin for reduction is limited. Despite the fall in antimicrobial sales between 2012 and 2017, of 192 tonnes (48.5%) in the total antimicrobial sales indicated for food-producing animal species only, no significant variation in antimicrobials sold in the sheep industry was observed in the UK.

These figures need to be interpreted with caution. It is not possible to distinguish usage between sheep and beef cattle from practice management data. The sheep and beef industries are often interlinked but work is currently ongoing

by the UK Government through the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to try separating out which 'multi-species' antimicrobials are being used in beef and which are being used in sheep.

A study conducted across 207 sheep-only farms in the UK has indicated that average antimicrobial levels are relatively low in comparison with the whole-country antimicrobial usage, but results did show a wide variation between farms.

This study included farms across Scotland, England and Wales, with a mixture of flock types: 18 hill flocks, 25 upland and 164 lowland, of which 11 farms were organic and 196 non-organic conventional systems.

The results showed:

- 80% of all antimicrobial usage occurred in 39% of flocks.
- Lowland flocks were prescribed significantly more antimicrobials than hill flocks.
- Injectable antimicrobials represented 82% of the total active ingredient.
- Lameness was responsible for 65% of antimicrobials prescribed.
- Oral antimicrobials were prescribed to 49% of the flocks.
- Analysis of the disease for which each antimicrobial agent was prescribed was only possible for 24 flocks from one veterinary practice.
- Xytetracycline was the most commonly prescribed antimicrobial agent accounting for 63.5% of the total, followed by penicillin-type (26.8% of the total).

- Treatments associated with lambing events (including dystocia and prolapse) was reported as the second reason for prescribing antimicrobials.

Antimicrobial resistance is considered to be one of the greatest threats to human health of our time, and antimicrobial use in food-producing animals is known to contribute to the global burden.

Targets

Taken overall and considering those pathogens of particular importance and interest in human medicine, lower levels of resistance to several antimicrobials were generally observed in sheep than in other food-producing animals. For example,

What is PCU?

Antimicrobial usage is normally expressed using the European methodology by the metric of total mass of antimicrobial active ingredients per population correction unit (mg/PCU).

Population correction unit (PCU) considers the animal population as well as the estimated standardised weight of each particular animal at the time of treatment with antimicrobials.

The term antimicrobials refers to a wide group of products, of which antibiotics are one type. But in terms of animal and human health, antibiotics are of most concern regarding resistance issues.



Blanket antibiotics are contributing to ARM, target your use to tackle the issue.

studies conducted by Moredun Research Institute and Scotland's Rural College have detected, in general, low to very low levels of antimicrobial resistance in Scottish sheep farms.

Despite the current evidence of low use of antimicrobials in the UK sheep industry, the sheep industry must take this issue seriously and good practice guidelines have been published by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance and the Sheep Veterinary Society. These documents contain important messages for the responsible use of antimicrobials by sheep farmers and veterinary surgeons in an easy-to-read format and include practical flock management principles that will be useful to sheep vets and producers.

Going forward, a coordinated surveillance programme is needed to monitor antimicrobial sales for the sheep sector to tackle the emergence and spread of AMR. Disease prevention is at the forefront of tackling these issues and the industry must work together with a concentrated campaign to reduce endemic disease requiring antimicrobial usage. Suggested areas to target would be low ground flocks and flock health planning to concentrate on areas of concern, including lameness and diseases associated with lambing and young lambs.

A programme for the surveillance of antimicrobial use is continuing to be developed in the UK.

NSA perspective

The position shared within this article by Moredun, that we need to measure and monitor antibiotic usage in the UK, is one that NSA encounters on a regular basis when ensuring sheep farmers have a voice in various forums discussing on-farm medicine use.

Several projects are underway across the UK to capture data for different farm species and, as much as possible, NSA believes this should be done at bulk sales and/or vet practice level, rather than further adding to the burden of on-farm record keeping. There is a fine line between capturing essential information and what can realistically be achieved by individual farmers.



Sheep are generally lower users of antibiotics, however there is always room for improvement.

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More farmers must harness the uses of the two newer wormer groups

TECHNICAL

Two years ago the group 4 (4-AD orange) wormer became available through SQPs at merchants, rather than only via vets, followed later by the group 5 (5-SI purple) wormer.

At the time, these two wormers accounted for less than 1% of the total doses used in the UK. SCOPS was urging sheep farmers to carefully increase this by using them once a year on their farms, so they could have an impact on resistance. The balance between using them and protecting them for the future is quite complex.

Lesley Stubbings, of SCOPS, says: "The great news is that in the last two years we have more than doubled the number of doses used in UK flocks. This means that many more flocks are harnessing the potential these products have to slow the development of resistance and improve late season lamb growth rates.

It also means fears they would be used too widely were unfounded and, in fact, we still have some way to go before most flocks use them as a one-off annual dose and part of their quarantine treatments."

Worming

Integrating these two newer groups into your worming strategy will help to slow resistance to the older groups, keeping them working on your farm for longer. In the long term this means cheaper, effective worm control compared with the awful prospect of having to rely on the

newer groups completely. Not only would that be very expensive, but we would rapidly run into resistance to the newer groups if they become the only treatment options.

Ms Stubbings adds: "If you have used a persistent wormer (a moxidectin product from the 3-ML (clear) group) on your lambs, then this is even more important. You may have heard this referred to as an 'exit drench', meaning you remove worms that have survived the prolonged exposure to the wormer."

Mid-season dose

To get the most out of this one-off annual drench it is important to use it in the latter part of the grazing season. The objective is to remove worms that have survived previous treatments with one or more of the older groups (1-BZ white, 2-LV yellow and 3-ML clear). This helps slow the development of resistance to these three groups and killing this build of survivors in the lambs will boost performance.

Ms Stubbings comments: "This treatment may be around the time of weaning, but it does depend on what grazing lambs are going onto and whether they will need subsequent treatments. Remember the aim is to remove the build-up of worms, so leaving this until a bit later in the summer might be the best option to reap the biggest benefits."

You need to drench all your lambs when you do the annual dose with one of the newer groups. This is different to the normal SCOPS advice which encourages you to leave the bigger, fittest

ones untreated when using the older groups of wormers.

"Remember, the job this dose is doing is not just about the lambs, but the overall resistance status of your farm," Ms Stubbings clarifies.

For many flocks, this drench will coincide with you moving weaned lambs to new grazing which, as most people now appreciate, can be a danger in terms of resistance. Ms Stubbings adds: "You need to be careful you don't move drenched lambs onto grazing with little or no worm burden straight away because this threatens resistance developing to these new wormer groups.

"Drench them a few days before you move them and return to the same pasture to make sure they pick up a few untreated worms to take with them."

Over-use

It is important not to over-use these newest groups. The only other time SCOPS recommends that these wormers are used is as one of the treatments while sheep are in quarantine. The reason for this is that you can avoid bringing in worms resistant to the groups 1,2 or 3 from other farms. "Never use either of these wormers in ewes or at other times without detailed advice from your vet," adds Ms Stubbings.

Your vet, SQP or pharmacist can prescribe the Group 4. Currently the Group 5 is only available via your vet, due to supply issues."

For more information go to www.scops.org.uk.



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Following the flock

In this 'Following the Flock', we're back with Bryan Griffiths in Devon, as well as sneaking a peak at Antony Spencer's Warwickshire flock and Eddie Eastham's set-up in Cumbria. Find more at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/about.

Antony Spencer

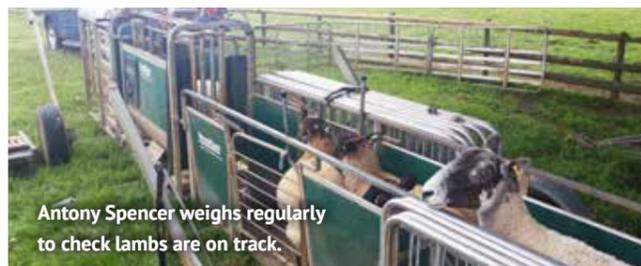
NSA Marches Region Chairman, Warwickshire

We lambed around 380 North Country Mule ewes from mid-March, followed by 200 ewe lambs that were brought last autumn from Kirkby Stephen and Cockermouth.

Our lambing percentage was well down in the ewes due to last year's drought taking its toll on their body condition, but the ewe lambs more than made up for it with very few not rearing a lamb. Every cloud has a silver lining though, with many of the single reared lambs benefiting from the fantastic spring and subsequent grass growth, finding their way to the abattoir a lot quicker than normal.

We do not creep feed any lambs but everything receives a double dose of a vaccine for pasteurella and clostridial diseases, and is regularly weighed to monitor growth rates. We are on our second year of only worming lambs not meeting their expected weight gain, the theory being to cut costs as well as slowing wormer resistance.

The ewe lambs were weaned at 12 weeks with a few of their lambs being finished and it won't be long until our attention will turn to preparing around 120 of them for local breeding sales.



Antony Spencer weighs regularly to check lambs are on track.

Eddie Eastham

NSA UK Policy & Technical Chairman, Cumbria

An exceptional grass growing season has seen us close some grazing paddocks and making surplus hay and silage.

Plentiful grass in early spring also helped with over-wintered hoggets, which mostly went away without any concentrate feeding. Early-born lambs have also grown well and sold on a good trade, along with some cast ewes. However, finished lamb prices have now dropped to a more realistic level and future values will be determined by, as yet, unknown trading arrangements with Europe. With young breeding sheep to sell in the next few months, these trading uncertainties naturally create a level of apprehension. Seasons do not recognise political decisions so, for now, we will just have to concentrate on what is within our control, by attending to routine husbandry tasks and maintaining a productive healthy flock.



Eddie Eastham is pleased with grass growth this year.



Bryan Griffiths says the good weather has meant lambs have finished faster.

Bryan Griffiths

NSA Chairman, Devon

For much of the spring and summer it has been green underfoot and dry overhead.

The sheep have loved it and we've seen lower worm burdens, less dirty tails, less lameness and happier shepherds. The February-born lambs are mostly gone, several weeks ahead of last year. The average price is around £10 down on 2018 but the faster, easier finishing will have helped.

A catchy couple of weeks in early June made harvesting a tale of two halves, with some quality sheep silage baled in May and plenty of coarse cattle feed made in late June.

Black udder continues to cause a few problems in the late lambed flock. Their lambs will be weaned mid-July and split into three flocks according to size and weight.

We have vaccinated 200 long stayers against pneumonia, not an easy decision given the cost of the vaccine (£1//head) but, historically, losses have been in the smaller lambs.



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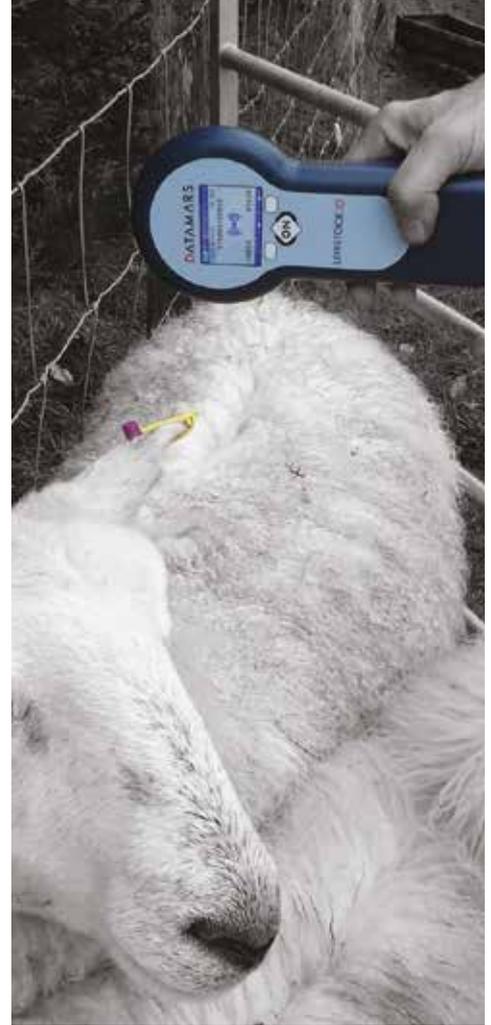
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