



## **Sheep sector roles requiring clarification on workability**

NSA is seeking clarity from Defra on whether the following roles are deemed essential and, therefore, whether these workers are able to get out to complete their work. This list is not exhaustive and is based on the issues NSA members have raised to us at this time. NSA will raise more roles with Defra as and when it becomes apparent there is an issue. NSA is currently working on the assumption that as these roles are essential to allow food production to continue, those performing them can continue provided they follow Government rules and guidelines on social distancing.

### **We are seeking confirmation that:**

- The Government recognises these jobs as essential roles
- The Government guidelines for when contractors and farm hauliers enter farms are the best and correct guidelines to follow.

### **The roles**

#### **1. Shearers / wool handlers**

- NSA would deem this role necessary as removing the sheep's fleece is essential for its welfare as the weather warms up. Not removing the sheep's fleece can lead to fly strike, a horrible condition whereby flies lay eggs in a sheep's wool, which hatch into maggots which will eat the sheep alive. This can be easily prevented by shearing the wool off of sheep. This also relieves them from the weight and heat of a fleece in the warmer weather.

#### **2. Dipping contractors**

- NSA deems this role necessary as dipping sheep is an important tool in preventing the spread of sheep scab. Sheep scab is a skin condition in sheep which causes severe discomfort leading to scratching, loss of wool, bleeding wounds and loss of condition. This is easily treated by dipping and many farmers rely on a mobile dipping contractor to come onto their farm with the necessary equipment and run the sheep through.

#### **3. AI & ET technicians**

- While most UK farmers use a tup to get their ewes in lamb, some rely on AI & ET technicians to come onto farm and inseminate the sheep. While these are in the minority of UK sheep breeding, the flocks that do so need to be able to continue to allow genetic diversity and variety to continue. Many farms using this

technology will also find their business unable to function in 2021, if ewes cannot be impregnated this year.

#### **4. Livestock vets**

- UK farmers must be able to call upon their vet and be able to access veterinary medicines where prescribed. This is vital as disease and other conditions must be addressed for animal welfare reasons (and to allow animals to move forward in the food chain).

#### **5. Livestock and livestock related hauliers**

- In order to transport animals to the abattoirs, livestock hauliers must be able to visit farms to collect stock. Similarly, other livestock related hauliers such as livestock feed, hay and straw, and handling equipment must be able to be delivered where necessary.

#### **6. Shepherds and lambing students**

- At this time of year, many farms rely on external labour in the form of students or contract shepherds. These people are not full-time employees but offer labour during lambing time to fill the additional capacity needed. Students from vet schools or agricultural colleges usually fill some roles and other contract shepherds go farm to farm filling different lambing roles and others.

#### **7. Fencers**

- While people should not be travelling to erect fences for the sake of erecting fences, NSA does believe vital repairs on fences and walls used to house sheep and stop them roaming is essential and farmers should be able to access them where necessary.

#### **8. Scanners**

- While we're not currently at the time of year where most farms are dependent on scanners to come and check their ewes, some breeds do lamb in the autumn so will be, and depending on how long the coronavirus lockdown effect is with us, later in the year this will require more thought. Scanners are essential as they allow farmers to make the correct management decisions for their stock depending on how many lambs they are carrying. For example, the feed given to a ewe carrying triplets needs to be more substantial than a ewe carrying a single. Getting the feed concentration just right is essential for the ewe and her lambs health.