

Activities report to NSA Board 29th April

This report refers to main activities since November 2019. Activities are presented under a set of common headings.

NSA policy, technical and research work

This report covers the period of November 2019 to April 2020. It is understating the truth to say that a lot has happened and changed in that time. We avoided no deal EU departure at the end of October, went into a General Election in December, and eventually officially left the EU at the end of January 2020 with the remainder of the year in which to agree a trade deal. At this point, and with a huge Parliamentary majority the Government changed tack from one of austerity to one of massive investment in UK infrastructure projects, an investment in the economy in part to prepare the UK for a positive future as an independent nation. With activities about to ramp up regarding the Agriculture Bill and a host of related policy areas the UK was hit by Covid-19, a coronavirus that by the end of February had turned into a global pandemic. The UK Government response initially appeared to be towards 'herd immunity' (although this would not be admitted), but quickly changed in mid-March to strict lockdown procedures to reduce viral spread in order to protect the NHS and save lives. Following a long period of austerity, and then just at a point of infrastructure investment, where almost all policy drivers were economically focused, the nation's priorities were forced towards being socially driven with the economy coming second. This signified a recognition of a number of 'essential industries' that needed to be kept going, all connected to the basics of life – health; food and nutrition, a roof over heads and the basic services of water, electricity, dealing with waste. Education and public transport are still closely in the mix although both have been directly affected by the lockdowns. For the NSA, one of the most significant outcomes is a greater recognition of the value of farming, food production and food security – at a point when future agricultural environmental and food policy is still not finalised. Whether a long, or even medium term political and social change of direction will be seen is not certain, however the possibility presents a huge opportunity, at the most opportune of times, to influence policy outcomes in our direction. That is not to say food production at any costs, and we can be sure that the environment and social drivers will remain as priorities. Indeed, it's important to note that reports of air quality and nature/wildlife improvements during this lockdown period are being seen and welcomed – and what has changed in that time? There has been no change in ruminant livestock but significant change in human behaviour, particularly air and road transport. However this situation allows us to make use of the message we have been offering for many years, that sheep farming is a semi natural form of food and fibre production, that utilises mainly grass, a crop that humans can't digest and also a crop that provides many environmental and social benefits. Sheep farming in the uplands and lowlands, in permanent grass situations and rotation cropping situations contributes to being within the most environmentally and socially sustainable forms of land management and farming on earth and we need to take any opportunity for policy and markets to recognise this.

The lockdown relating to Covid-19 has affected many of NSAs activities and it will affect our financial situation too. With Sheep 2020 postponed until potentially October, the cancellation of the Royal Welsh Show, and the delivery of Scotsheep uncertain, it will affect our income. However it is creating saving opportunities too with expenses and regional activities much reduced. We have replaced our Spring roadshow with a number of webinars, and we have taken the decision to furlough 2 members of staff due to activities being prevented and in order to save costs. A revised budget was presented to FGP in April helping us assess the impact of the lockdowns.

Brexit: Deal / no deal

Since the last Board meeting, the UK left the EU at the end of January 2020 with the Prime Minister's 'deal', which realistically is more of an extension period to negotiate a further relationship with the European Union. This will end on the 31st December 2020 at 11pm. NSA is working on encouraging the Government to not to risk a 'no-deal' scenario again. This is a message that will be particularly relevant given the coronavirus situation and the impacts seen on the lamb market (and many other food sectors). The

lockdown situation relating to the closure of restaurants, hotels, and other food outlets suddenly exposed that around 15% of domestically consumed lamb is being eaten outside of the home, and this market consumes a disproportionately high volume of high value cuts – loins and racks in particular. With the EU being similarly affected UK lamb exports took a dive for around 2 weeks although this is recovering now. Over-all the market fell seriously in early April although has recovered. It should be remembered that new season lambs are only starting to come through and the situation may build if lockdown continues for some time. The industry has been calling on Government to appeal to the EU for financial support. Work is going into assessing how best to approach this situation, but the focus is hard on preventing a no-deal and ensuring the market recovers as much as possible.

Brexit: Future farm support

In the first quarter of 2020, the ELM team at Defra were beginning to approach farming organisations in order to open more dialogue with farmers themselves. A discussion document was launched, and NSA produced some explanatory slides to make available to members to help them understand the Defra Document. A call for views was due to close on 5th May and NSA has been working on a response. However, due to covid-19 the ELMS work has been put on hold and the consultation has been paused and will be picked up again once the ELM team can get back to it. Regular stakeholder meetings are continuing via web based conference means.

The Defra Pathway programme is now under development, looking at schemes to encourage higher health management, and in addition Defra are working on a small grants scheme to support welfare improvements.

Sheep in arable rotations

The iSAGE funded NSA research into the ‘benefit of sheep in arable rotations’ was a featured case study at the iSAGE Training held in Yorkshire, 3rd and 4th December. The NSA have accepted an invitation to a Sheep on Arable leys (on-line) workshop organised by the SARIC project team in early June.

Sheep health and welfare (including NSA involvement in SHAWG, RUMA, SAAG and SCOPS)

Wendy has taken on the work for SCOPS previously undertaken by Jo before she went on Maternity Leave. Phil attended the SCOPS Steering Group meeting on 6th Feb with Wendy dialling in to help familiarise her with SCOPS and its operation.

The 2020 SCOPS Nematodirus Forecast was launched on March 2nd and announced via a press release issued by NSA to industry representatives. Reminders have been included in the NSA Weekly email updates.

Wendy and Lesley Stubbings continue to have monthly telephone calls to monitor activity and progress, although are in touch more frequently to discuss ongoing work. Lesley is currently working on the web-based Technical Manual. Graphics have been updated and are in the process of update

Sheep in upland areas (including sheep stratification)

There has been ongoing discussion on how the upland areas will be impacted by the change to farm support, and whether the new system will recognise the differences between upland and lowland support particularly recognising LFA payments. This has been discussed at both English Committee and UKP&T and considerations are being made on the best way to address this going forwards. NSA continues to remind Defra of the stark differences between different farming set ups.

Sheep in arable rotations

Work is beginning on setting up a system similar to the Lambing List to help arable farmers and sheep farmers connect – the aim is for this work to be done in collaboration with an arable organisation to allow it to better reach arable farmers. This work was somewhat side lined by a need to work on a shearing system in the covid-19 crisis and the aim is a shearing list will be available for the beginning of May.

Integrating trees into sheep farming systems

This area of work hasn't seen much progress in recent months, although tree planting targets remain and there is much discussion over agro-forestry approaches. The report is still available to members to access online.

Rewilding

NSA occupies a seat on the monitoring and steering groups of the sea eagle release in the Isle of Wight. Over the winter months there has been little action although more birds are due to be released in the summer. It is unknown thus far whether this will be impacted by the ongoing crisis. NSA continues to keep its ear to the ground regarding the lynx release but thus far there is little additional information.

On-going research proposals and projects

The NSA has provided letters of support to accompany bids for funding for

- CEH (Centre of Ecology and Hydrology) – 'Consuming less but better meat and milk', a Research Council bid under the Global Food Security programme.
- SRUC - Sm@RT (Sm@ll Ruminant Technology), Precision Livestock Technology for Small Ruminants, application for Horizon 2020 funding.

The CEH bid application has been successful in getting through the first round of bid appraisals. CEH are leading on developing the full proposal with contributions from the NSA. If successful the NSA will look to provide in-kind support through contributing to workshops and meetings, with expenses provided.

The NSA has supported a resubmitted bid to the Erasmus+ funding stream. The bid for online organic education modules is in partnership with ORC, HUMUS and other European partners. If the bid is successful, the NSA would be a collaborator within the project renamed as 'e-organic'. Deadlines for submission have been extended by a month because of Coronavirus until 23 April 2020.

Wendy attended a SEEGSLIP stakeholder meeting on January 16, 2020 via Skype. Work on the project is on-going, the role that NSA can play in dissemination of outputs and findings was highlighted. (SEEGSLIP - 'Sustainable economic and environmental grazing systems: learning from innovative practitioners')

ELMS proposal – The NSA has received notification that its proposal for a more holistic farm assessment, submitted to the ELMs team at Defra, will not continue to the next stage of assessments.

Genetic Knowledge and Transfer

At its first annual Conference the SMARTER (Small Ruminants breeding for Efficiency and Resilience) Project held a meeting for its partners and stakeholders on 26 and 27 November 2019. The NSA attended Partner technical sessions by means of a Zoom teleconference. During the Stakeholder sessions the NSA provided a short presentation on the NSA, its aims as well as outlining the NSA's expectations from the project. The project is not expected to deliver outcomes from its research until 2021.

SCOPS and sheep health activities

Having planned to run a Spring roadshow in partnership with Moredun on Iceberg diseases and the Premium Sheep and Goat Health Scheme we are now delivering 3 webinars in late April and May. Bookings look encouraging with well over 100 booked for the first one. The Defra Pathway programme is under development and NSA is closely involved in this. Phil is due to be on the interview panel for the Chair of the new Ruminant Health and Welfare Group (RHWG) along with Scotland and England/UK CVO. This is to ensure some sheep industry input due to concerns highlighted within the consultation process. These interviews were arranged for late March but have been postponed due to the lockdown situation.

Currently SHAWG is due to continue until the November conference when it will transfer into RHWG.

The Sheep Antibiotics Guardian Group continues and one of the main areas of development will be the availability of a new e medicine book for voluntarily recording usage. Phil is now a Director of RUMA.

Sheep identification and movement recording and reporting.

There have been no significant developments apart from the LIP continuing to be developed. Tests and trials are being done and considerable consultation with industry is ongoing. Livestock Information Ltd is now up and running and one of the next areas of work will be looking at added value (non-mandatory) services. TDUG continues to meet regularly and with John Cross now becoming Chair of LI Ltd, TDUG are in the process of appointing a new Chair. Plans are still in place for the sheep core movements service to be introduced by March 2021.

Technology Transfer

The UK iSAGE Training was attended by Wendy, who along with Phil also attended the UK iSAGE Workshop. Both delivered presentations to the delegates who represented agricultural colleges, veterinary colleges, Industry bodies, NGOs and Defra. NSA members and regions were represented amongst the delegates. Phil summarised 'Challenges facing UK Sheep Farming' whilst Wendy reported on Case Studies and Innovation Strategies. Both were proactive during the hands-on sessions of new online tools including the Public Goods Tool, Sageguard.

Louise Hart and Kevin Harrison attended the final iSAGE Workshop in Brussels on 26th February on behalf of NSA. The iSAGE Case Studies were reported in the Feb/March Sheep Farmer, a second article in the April/May edition will report on lamb marketing and sustainability research. It is hoped that more results from the project can be shared with members once published by the iSAGE project team.

The NSA worked with the AHDB to provide baseline data for the iSAGE decision support system, a web-based tool for to help farmers test future financial and production management decisions regarding sustainable lamb production.

Delivery on the iSAGE project ended on February 29, 2020. Final claims have been submitted and paid, all reporting to be completed by the end of April 2020.

As Technical Officer, Wendy had continued to handle a steady stream of sheep related technical queries regarding regulation, production, statistics and sources of advice via the enquiries inbox.

The NSA has worked with Liverpool University to proactively promote some of its sheep and livestock research amongst members who have voluntarily helped with the completion of questions. This has provided a wealth of information, supporting the need for further research as well as providing data for analysis.

NSA Education.

Following significant numbers of requests from under-graduate students to publicise links to surveys and questionnaires in previous years, the NSA took the decision to levy a small fee (£35 + VAT) for the publication of such requests in the NSA weekly email update. Payment is made in advance of publication, with requests and associated surveys being subjected to quality checks before being circulated.

TSE controls

Following an arduous process between industry, Defra, and FSA where several meetings were held to agree protocols the entire process seemed to grind to a halt in March. This partly aligned with Covid-19 but was more about the FSA and the processors not being able to agree, and then Defra decided this was being discussed for this season only due to the Brexit and trade negotiation situation. This entire process has been one of the most frustrating experiences working with Defra.

Supply chain concerns (including price reporting, classification and NSA involvement in Hallmark scrutiny committee)

Mandatory price reporting and carcass classification is all on hold, presumably until the Agriculture Bill has made more progress. We expect this to be picked up again as it is part of the move towards fair trading practices identified within the Ag Bill. The Carcass Classification Scrutiny Committee that oversees classification services, currently only participated in by Hallmark Veterinary Services and still very much the same structure and staff of MLCSL, is working well, with good feedback and good engagement from Hallmark personnel.

Farm assurance

Work has begun to produce a comparison report between the farm assurance standards in England, Wales, N.I. and Scotland. The aim is to identify the similarities and differences between the standards and spot any disparities. The intention will be to eventually hold a meeting between assurance bodies to draw out some discussion on this and look at finding more parity between the regions.

Engagement with AHDB

NSA continues to engage with AHDB across several levels and is closely observing how Nicholas Saphir moves the organisation in his new role as Chairman. NSA also engages with AHDB at a market development level, data analysis and market intelligence, technical, and campaigns.

Rural crime (including sheep worrying by dogs)

Work is ongoing in this area with NSA continuing to engage with community groups to ensure it is supporting as many areas as possible. There is increased interest from members in sheep thefts and NSA engages regularly with various police forces to tackle as many different aspects of rural crime in as targeted a way as we can. The 2020 dog worrying campaign was due to launch in the first week of March however, due to the ongoing crisis, NSA has postponed this until the lockdown is lifted as an increased influx to the countryside could be reasonably anticipated. NSA has also produced a letter for its members as key-workers, which is available online and on the flysheet of NSA Sheep Farmer magazine, additionally a print-at-home sign was produced for members to print and display on the farm to ask passers-by to respect social distancing and not touch anything while passing.

Farm Safety:

Unfortunately, Katie James was unable to attend the first Farm Safety Partnership meeting of 2020 as it coincided with the first NSA Next Generation delivery session of the year, but she remains up to date with the key message for the year ahead.

The key themes for 2020 remain the same as in previous years:

- Child safety on farm
- Working at heights
- Risks of working with livestock
- Risks of working with machinery / transport

With the Coronavirus lock down restrictions introduced at the end of the first quarter of 2020 child safety has become the focus of the campaign at the moment as more children are around farms as they are not at school and the partnership alongside the HSE has released updated guidelines to consider as a result of this. NSA has shared these resources to members via the WEU.

Genetics

NSA has partnered in a research bid led by Cardiff University. If successful, the work will look at the real genetic diversity within and across our sheep breeds.

Trade and marketing (including NSA projects around mutton, heritage breeds etc, and NSA involvement in work addressing red meat consumption concerns e.g. Veganuary etc)

The NSA's Heritage Breeds market report was launched in late November at Malvern. The launch event went well, was well attended with good tastings of mutton. The next steps are to set a company up and we have had a tele conference with the Unions and Levy bodies. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has slowed progress down.

NSA Policy Officer Ellie Phipps joined a small delegation on a visit to Australia to explore the Australian FTA. This visit, hosted by the High Commission in Australia, included meetings with Australian officials to discuss aspects of Australian trade into the UK. The visit highlighted Australia's enthusiasm but also its insistence it did not pose any serious risks the UK due to its relatively shrunken flock size post drought. It also highlighted its concern about the TRQ which it felt was unfairly divided between the UK and EU. Ellie is working with the group to provide a full report on this – contact Ellie for summary notes of the trip.

Wool

Work has picked up between British Wool and NSA in recent months, with NSA Policy Officer Ellie Phipps now holding a weekly policy discussion with Gareth Jones, Head of Producer Marketing, and Laura Johnson, Producer Marketing Supervisor, as British Wool is keen to keep up with NSA's work to help offer further support to its farmers and inform them of our work to support them during this crisis and beyond. NSA has also worked very closely with NAAC and British Wool to provide a shearing database to help contractors sign up UK shearers, and shearing guidelines. NSA is also working on its own shearer database to connect shearers with farmers directly.

NSA communications and knowledge exchange work

Press work:

The first quarter of 2020 has seen an increased effort in press work with a total of 28 press releases issued during January, February and March. This is another significant increase in press activity demonstrating the overall increased workload of NSA and the communications team.

Press work has included a wide range of topics including responses to Government appointments, legislative work, Next Generation activity and towards the end of the quarter the effect of Covid19 on NSA and the wider industry.

The table at the end of the report shows the press releases put out in the past quarter per week – the columns show press releases from either NSA Communications officer, Katie James or NSA Policy Officer Ellie Phipps and their different focuses as well as the social media reach for posts that have been placed on social media relating to the press releases.

Sheep Farmer magazine – see recent editions

Media pick up

NSA had a strong media pick up, and a positive addition of journalists approaching us (stories written by Journalists who approached us are marked in red, this is a small crop of news stories NSA has been mentioned in). Regular contacts nationally include Bloomberg, Financial Times, The Times and The Mail on Sunday and Daily Mail. We also have strong regional pickup with a variety of regional newspapers running NSA press releases and seeking out comments from NSA Regional Representatives. This is particularly strong with Northern Region and South West Region who contact NSA frequently for information to share. NSA continues to have a very strong pick up in Agricultural press, with frequent pickups in Farmers Guardian and Farmers Weekly. In recent months, NSA is also receiving more pickup in regional farming press including, Northern Farmer, Scottish Farmer, Northern Scot, Press and Journal and Agriland.



Lockdown takes a cut out of the Easter lamb market ←
 Financial Times - 12 Apr 2020
 Instead, as the UK went into coronavirus lockdown, lamb prices suffered an ... Ellie Phipps, policy officer at the **National Sheep Association**, said the industry and ...



NSA offers online meetings on sheep diseases as events ...
 Darlington and Stockton Times - 11 Apr 2020
 THE **National Sheep Association** (NSA) is running a series of online meetings to replace those cancelled by the coronavirus epidemic. A series of events was ...



Coronavirus: Suffolk farmer urges walkers to act responsibly
 FarmersWeekly - 10 Apr 2020
 Mrs Cross's comments echo those of Phil Stocker, chief executive of the **National Sheep Association**, who called on the public to observe the government's ...

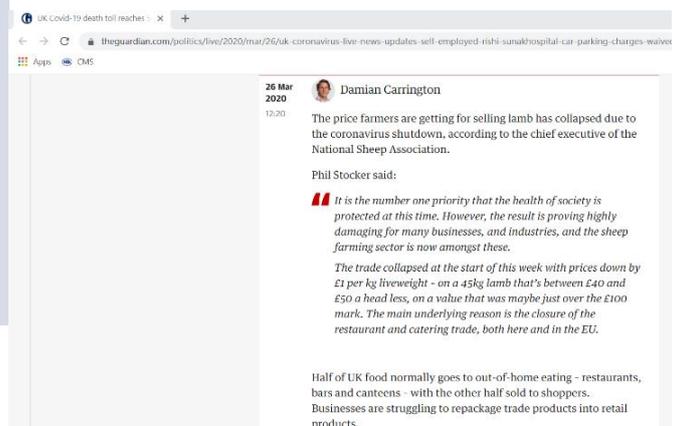


Down the drain: Dairy farmers share stories of their 'utter ... ←
 Daily Mail - 9 Apr 2020
 Beef farmers are getting less for carcasses and the **National Sheep Association** said lamb was down by £50 a head. Vegetable, fresh produce and fruit growers ...

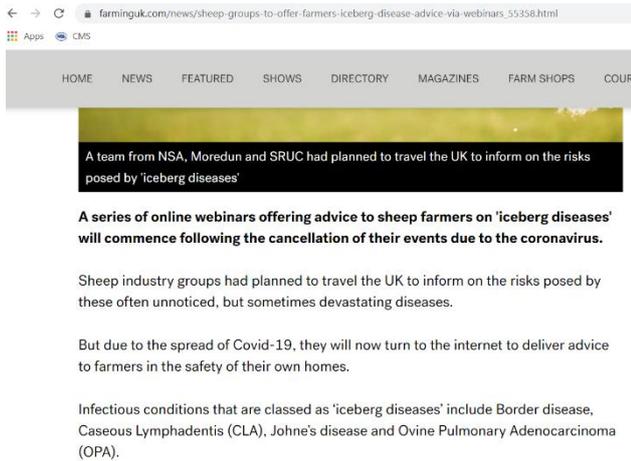


Example of a South West news story.

Ensuring public facing press releases get pick up can be very difficult, however, Covid-19 content has broken several barriers which NSA can exploit with other topics going forward. This includes market interests with several national papers, including the Financial Times and Guardian, and a lot of pick up regionally for NSA's appeal for the public to respect farmers during lockdown (pictured). With ongoing events a lot of Journalists are running 'live updates' of the most recent covid-19 news picking up a lot of incoming stories to keep information flowing. The two stories pictured show examples of that.



Besides the coronavirus pickups, NSA's iceberg meetings have been really well received by farming press with both the original announcement of events and the change to an online forum being significant



Prior to the Covid-19, NSA press work was largely focused on topics such as Brexit and other policy areas such as George Eustice's promotion to Defra Secretary. There was also some press response to the call of three crop rule derogation following the flooding earlier in the year.

Weekly email update:

The update has been sent to approximately 4000 people each Friday during the last quarter, this includes NSA members for whom we have email addresses, breed society representatives and a complimentary list which includes Defra and devolved Government representatives. The number of emails has slightly increased, this is likely due to NSA gaining more members' email addresses than before. The email has an open rate of approximately 30% which is very good compared to the industry average open rate of 19%. Demand for advertising space in the weekly email update continues to be high with most available spaces already booked for 2020. Demand remains high for online advertising as it offers comparatively good click rates for adverts compared to other advertising methods.

Website:

Visits to the NSA website fell during the first quarter of 2020 compared to at other times of the year. This could be due to sheep farming viewers beginning to get busy lambing with less time available for browsing websites. As the quarter progressed the number of visitors accessing the website from a mobile device began to increase once again which also fits with the move of sheep farmers away from their farm offices into the lambing shed.

Some of the most popular pages of the website continue to be those for students and others looking for work and lambing experience, especially at this time of year.

Most visitors to the NSA website usually arrive at the site via a search engine such as google and although this was still the case for the first quarter of 2020, the end of the period saw a notable increase in traffic arriving from another website. This may well be directions to the website for information on Coronavirus from our own social media posts that also saw a larger than average reach at the same time.

Social Media:

As has been the case for each month since NSA began to use social media platforms Facebook and Twitter the online following continues to increase, with no reduction in the speed of growth despite both sites having been active for several years.

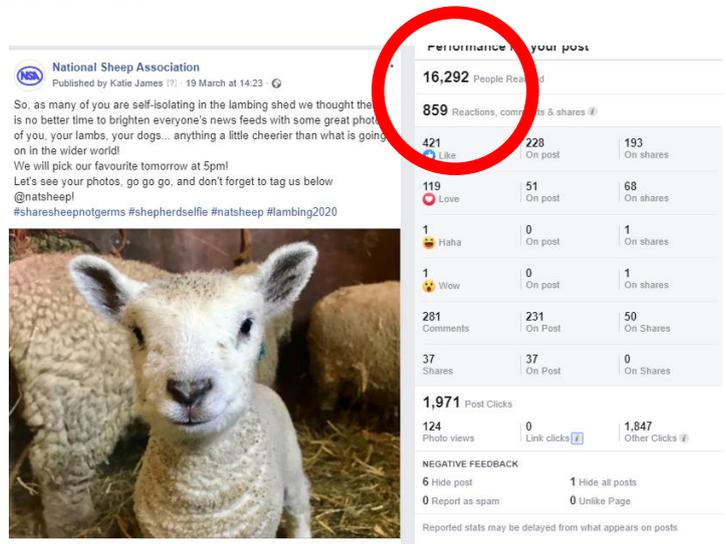
At the end of the first quarter of 2020 the NSA Facebook page had 12,920 'likes' with Twitter having 11,931, this is a growth of 535 on Facebook and 145 on Twitter. This growth is slightly slower than in some recent quarterly periods, but it is hoped with increased focus on social media for NSA Sheep Event 2020 the speed of this growth will pick up once again.

Total Facebook reach for the first quarter shows that during this time more than 250,000 people have viewed NSA Facebook posts. A total reach of almost 131,000 has been recorded for Twitter at this time. Top performing posts continue to be those with a more light-hearted message, inviting followers to contribute with their own photos or those highlighting emotive matters for the industry such as the continuing accusation of farming's role in climate change.

Messages shared at the end of the quarter relating to the coronavirus outbreak have been particularly successful.

The top three performing Facebook posts for the quarter were:

- 1. 'Share your images whilst self-isolating in the lambing shed'.
 - a. 16, 298 reached
 - b. 859 people interacted with the post



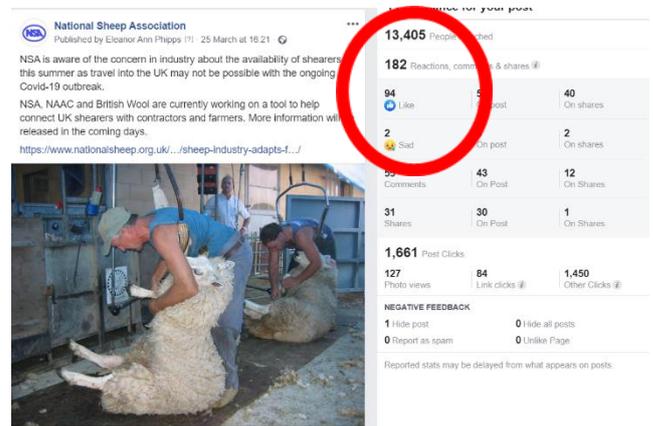
- 2. NSA first update on NSA Sheep following Covid lockdown
 - a. 15,757 reached
 - b. 247 people interacted with the post



Event
with the

3. NSA updates on shearing availability due to Covid19

- a. 13,405 reached
- b. 182 people interacted with post
- c. 1661 clicks on link to website



The top three performing Twitter posts were:

1.

National Sheep Assoc @natsheep
 Always keen to try any new lamb products the team at NSA head office have been treated to some 'lamb bacon' this lunchtime thanks to the Welsh homestead smokery Hands up who's mouth is watering 🤤👍 #Welshlamb #lovelamb #bacon pic.twitter.com/s71gRLEXic

Reach a bigger audience
 Get more engagements by promoting this Tweet!

Impressions	11,942
Media views	2,357
Total engagements	189
Likes	82
Media engagements	61
Profile clicks	15
Retweets	14

2.

National Sheep Assoc @natsheep
 Our 2020 group of #NextGen ambassadors have had a great day on flock health with sheep vet @PhillipaFarmVet and NSA English Committee Chairman @FarmerKev100 . More to come tomorrow 🙌 pic.twitter.com/cLIXHIWbSU

Reach a bigger audience

Impressions	4,564
Total engagements	548
Media engagements	425
Likes	43
Profile clicks	37
Detail expands	29
Retweets	8

3.

National Sheep Assoc @natsheep
 As Brexit arrives, NSA is calling on Government to keep sheep farmers needs at the front of minds as negotiations and the agriculture bill progress, ahead of more resolute changes due in December.
 Read more here:
[https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/news/28838/as-brexit-dawns-nsa-reminds-government-of-the-needs-of-uk-sheep-farmers/ ...](https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/news/28838/as-brexit-dawns-nsa-reminds-government-of-the-needs-of-uk-sheep-farmers/)

Impressions	4,562
Total engagements	51
Link clicks	13
Media engagements	11
Detail expands	11
Likes	10
Retweets	4

Katie has obtained small giveaway prizes for competitions on social media from Tractor Ted and Herdy.

Farmer-facing meetings and activities organised / attended

The hugely successful Setting the Record Straight meetings finished in early January with over 500 sheep farmers attending across the series. The meetings provided good discussion for all in attendance and ensured our continuing partnership agreement was met with AHDB and British Wool, as well as providing an opportunity to capture data of non-members and sign up new members at each session. The next run of regional meetings on Iceberg Diseases was due to take place this Spring however due to Covid-19 the decision was made to move them to three webinars. These are following a similar plan as the roadshow with presentations from NSA, Moredun and SRUC. Pre-registration numbers are excellent and we hope that these will convert to participants on the day. This is the first time NSA has carried out a webinar and we are excited to see the results and whether this may add another string to our bow in terms of dissemination of information.

Due to Covid-19 all face to face meetings are now on hold and with no date yet of restrictions being lifted it is difficult to plan. We hope that in the Autumn we can resume and organise another series of roadshows.

Chris has also been driving membership recruitment through Mailchimp campaigns, for example a copy of the Weekly Email Update was sent to the Scottish quad bike raffle entrants giving them an insight into the NSA and demonstrating some of the value a membership has.

Other areas of NSA activity

NSA Next Generation activity:

The year started with a new activity for NSA Next Generation, a visit of young sheep farmers with a particular interest in agricultural policy to Westminster to meet with MPs and Defra officials. The visit included a dinner at the Farmers Club the evening before a tour of the House of Commons and the House of Lords and a meeting with several MPs that had previously showed an interest in agriculture. The visit ended with a trip to the London Headquarters of Red Tractor where the group took part in an engaging round table meeting with the organisation's new head of Beef and Lamb. It is hoped this visit can now be a regular addition to the Next Generation programme of activity.

2020 sees the return of the NSA Next Generation Ambassador programme after a year's break last year. The programme received a record number of applications with 18 potential ambassadors interviewed by Katie James, NSA English Committee rep Martyn Fletcher, NSA Scottish Region Chair Jen Craig, NSA Northern Ireland Development Officer Edward Adamson and NSA Welsh Region rep and Next Generation Ambassador Jacob Anthony at the beginning of the year. Following the interviews 12 Ambassadors were selected, however due to personal circumstances one participant sadly had to withdraw from the programme before it began.

The first Next Generation delivery session took place in February with all young shepherds impressing NSA staff and industry speakers that joined us with their already impressive enthusiasm for the programme and the sheep industry in general. The group visited three farms during the session and completed training in flock health with Phillipa Page from Flock Health Ltd as well as training from NSA staff on the organisation's work and what we ask of them during their time as NSA Ambassadors. The ambassadors have already started contributing to Sheep Farmer magazine and did several successful social media posts at the end of the first quarter.

The two recipients of the Samuel Wharry travel bursary Marie Prebble and Charlie Beaty both completed their travels in the first quarter of 2020 and submitted the first drafts of their reports at the end of March; Charlie's on grassland management using her travels in New Zealand as a base of her research and Marie's on shearing welfare in the Northern hemisphere following her travels to Norway and Iceland. Final reports are due in the second quarter however due to Covid-19 restrictions affecting many of the events both for

NSA and the Merchant of the Staple of England where Charlie and Marie were due to attend to present their findings it may now mean that the timescale for final completion of the bursary programme is to be extended.

Public facing activity:

The first quarter began again with 'Veganuary' with concerted efforts by pro vegan and anti-farming groups to once again highlight their campaign. NSA was again active in promoting the positive role sheep farming has on the environment and rural communities as well as the nutritional benefits of eating red meat but made efforts not to enter into arguments discrediting the campaign too much as this has previously shown only to increase the audience size for vegan movement. This year, the month-long campaign appeared to have less coverage than in previous years but several television programmes negatively portraying agriculture did air to which NSA responded immediately with factual arguments highlighting inaccuracies in these programmes' messages.

Engagement with NSA-affiliated breed societies

Engagement with the breed societies has been very positive since the last report, Chris has had a new NSA advert designed that can be personalised for each breed with a photo of their choice and logo. Thus far 40% of the affiliated breeds have taken him up on this for either their year books or flock books. This is free of charge for the NSA.

Chris is continuing to establish a strong rapport with each society. It is a shame that at the time of this report being written it is unlikely the Breed Society Forum Chris had organised to take place on the 7th May will go ahead due to Covid-19. If this is the case it will be replaced with a webinar similar to the planned day, and a face to face meeting in the Autumn.

Chris has also been sending an NSA article to a small amount of breed societies for them to use in their newsletters and is looking to increase this. Some breed societies have also allowed membership forms to be included in their mailing to their membership. Chris is keeping a log of the work he has been carrying out with each society and is hoping to come up with some new and exciting ways to maintain and build the relationships with the societies.

George Hedley Memorial Award

Arrangements for the presentation of the 2019 award are currently on hold pending the finalising of arrangements for the Sheep Event. The invitations to submit nominations for the 2020 award will be sent out in May.

NSA internal work / operations

Sheep Farmer

The April/May edition saw advertising more difficult to secure as companies had still not finalised their budgets for the year.

NSA Data Protection:

Katie James is currently looking after all data protection issues at NSA head office, this is whilst Nicola Noble is off on maternity leave. As a lot of time was put into this area for the changes to GDPR in May 2018 very little ongoing work is required but all new members of staff are informed of NSA's policy on Data Protection at induction. In the last quarter Katie has been through the GDPR regulations with Louise Hart, NSA Operations Director (Maternity cover) and new NSA Central Region Secretary Rose Smyth.

Governance

The Trustees' Annual Report is being drafted. The F&GP committee have met once and two audit companies have been interviewed to take on the audit services starting in 2021.

A new staff policy has been issued regarding dealing with coronavirus in the workplace.

Accounts and audit

The remaining regions who were still using Sage for their bookkeeping last year joined Xero on 1st January 2020. The whole organisation is now using the same accounting system and the same Chart of Accounts, so that for the first time we can produce reports by region, by event and for the group as a whole, which should enable the organisation to make more informed financial decisions going forward.

Some regions have found the transition easier than others, but with telephone support from Head Office everyone has all their information in the system ready for the first VAT return to make us compliant with Making Tax Digital legislation.

Preparations are now well underway for the annual audit which, despite Covid-19, is still scheduled to follow the original timetable agreed last December, with all information due to be submitted to Old Mill on 5th May 2020.

Sheep Centre site

While staff are working from home some savings have been made by suspending services where possible.

Regional activities

Cymru Wales Region Report to cover from Nov 2019 until now – report by Helen Roberts

It has been all change at the top with Kate Hovers taking over as Chairperson and nominated as NSA trustee and Caryl Hughes has become Vice Chair of NSA Cymru. This comes after Tim Ward stepped down as Chair and Paul Wozencraft has served his six years as NSA trustee. We thank them both for all their input and hard work and wish the new team well. The Annual Meeting heard talks from Welsh Homestead Smokery on how lamb bacon can be produced, Nicola Drew, a past NSA Ambassador, talked about how she has used new technology to improve the health of her flock and finally Laura Johnson of British Wool, Owen Roberts of HCC and Phil Stocker gave presentations on setting the record straight and putting the industry argument over in a very concise and constructive way.

Both Kate and Caryl have hit the ground running with Caryl becoming the star of the HCC's new nationwide campaign promoting Welsh lamb and beef and Kate attended the launch of the new Aberystwyth School of Veterinary Science. The new department will see the first veterinary students commencing their studies in September 2021 with the five-year degree students spending two years at Aberystwyth University followed by three years study at the Royal Veterinary College's (RVC) Hawkshead Campus in Hertfordshire. The programme will provide opportunities for students to study specific areas of veterinary science through the medium of Welsh while at Aberystwyth.

NSA WELSH SHEEP VENUE ANNOUNCED: Plans are now commencing for NSA Welsh Sheep 2021 as the organising committee has announced the host farm for next year's popular event. NSA Welsh Sheep will be held on Tuesday 18th May at Red House Farm, Aberhafesp, Newtown, Powys by kind permission of the Owen family. At Red House the Owen family own a total of 550 acres running 1200 Texel cross ewes together with a few Welsh Mules and a flock of pedigree Beltex sheep. They also have 120 Limousin suckler cows. Further details on the event will be announced over the coming months.

Welsh Government is working with industry to develop a Sustainable Brand Values framework for the food/drink supply chain in Wales. Their vision is for a thriving, resilient and responsible agri-food industry, which is environmentally better, economically stronger and socially more just. As a part of this work, HCC has been asked to lead discussions on SBVs in the red meat sector, and to this end we are establishing a Red Meat Working Group of which NSA Cymru will be part of and feedback information following the April meeting.

We are still working with the industry group regarding Sheep Scab, which is in the process of submitting an application with Gelli Aur for the 5 million fund which was announced last year.

NSA Cymru sent a team to the European Young Shepherd competition in February and they did us proud both Tomos Glyn Davies and Daniel Llyr Williams had qualified via the competition at Glynlliffon last year and finished in the top ten. Rhodri Manod Owen acted as the chaperone and we are most grateful to him and J G Animal Health and AHDB were sponsors.

Welsh Government - co-design exercise to help develop some of their proposals for a future Sustainable Farming Scheme has now gone live on the Menter a Busnes website.

This is an opportunity to explore the more practical implications of the proposed Farm Sustainability Review, as well as the four main actions that will potentially make up the core of a future scheme; soil husbandry, animal health and welfare, habitat management and opportunities for farm development. Then Covid 19 hit and it has seen us in lock down with panic buying and the agricultural industry being appreciated, although the processors and supermarkets still want to import produce. I do hope the general public will continue to buy British after all of this. NSA Cymru will attempt to use Zoom for its next meeting planned on the 5th May.

NSA Cymru has been in contact with Welsh Govt during this lock down period discussing industry issues and how they will affect us now and going forward such as a possible on farm burial, rights of way through farm yards, 2m distance rule, essential workers and maintaining the live auction mart system.

Northern Ireland Region Activity Report

25-11-19 Agrisearch Meeting to consider new research proposals

28-11-19" Setting the Sheep Record Straight" Meeting

6-2-20 ARMM where we had Welsh Young Farmer Rhys Edwards as guest speaker

3-20 I am part of a group which has applied for funding from The European Innovation Partnership Scheme is being administered /delivered by CAFRE to investigate the proposal to reduce or eradicate Scab in N. Ireland.

At the beginning of 2020 I was dealing with queries and giving explanations about Brexit but that suddenly changed to answering questions on Covid-19

NSA Scotland Activity Report

Thursday 9th January – NSA Scotsheep 2020 Subcommittee seminar teleconference attended by Euan Emslie, John Fyall and Grace Reid

Monday 13th January – NSA Scotsheep 2020 Committee meeting (Forfar)

Tuesday 14th January – QMS Parliamentary meeting, (Holyrood) attended by Grace Reid

Wednesday 15th January – Regional Managers meeting (Malvern) attended by Euan Emslie and Grace Reid

Friday 17th January – NSA Scotland ARRM (Stirling Agricultural Centre) and Burns Supper (Dunblane)

Monday 20th January – NSA Board Meeting attended by Aileen McFadzean and Peter Myles

Wednesday 22nd January – Scottish Land and Estates Meeting (Musselburgh) attended by Jen Craig, Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid

Friday 31st January – Ageing of Sheep at Slaughter Teleconference attended by Jen Craig and Grace Reid

Wednesday 5th February – Harbro Lambing Discussion group (St Boswells) attended by John Fyall (speaker)

Thursday 6th and Friday 7th February – NFUS AGM and conference (Glasgow) attended by Jen Craig

Monday 10th February – NSA Scotland Highlandsheep 2019 committee washup meeting and dinner (Thurso) attended by Maimie Paterson, John Fyall, Euan Emslie and Grace Reid

Wednesday 13th February – Farming Scotland Conference (Carnoustie) attended by Grace Reid

Friday 14th February – The Scottish Farmer Burns Supper (Glasgow) attended by Euan Emslie

Monday 17th February – Scottish Craft Butchers meeting (Perth) attended by Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid

Tuesday 18th February – Meeting with Sir Edward Mountain MP (Holyrood), convenor of the Rural Economy and Connectivity board. Attended by Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid

Friday 21st February – Meeting with QMS officials (Over Finlarg) re support of NSA Scotsheep 2020 attended by Euan Emslie

Tuesday 25th February – QMS Meat the Market Conference (Glasgow) attended by Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid

Tuesday 3rd March – NSA Scotland Executive & Committee meetings (Stirling Agricultural Centre)

Thursday 5th March – QMS Meeting (Ingliston) attended by Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid

Monday 9th March – Neil Wilson (IAAS) meeting attended by Jen Craig, Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid

Wednesday 11th March – UK P&T video conference attended by John Fyall and Grace Reid; Fergus Ewing Food Sector Resilience Group teleconference attended by Maimie Paterson

Friday 13th March – Scottish Craft Butcher awards judging (Stirling) attended by Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid

Monday 16th March - NSA Events teleconference attended by Euan Emslie and Grace Reid

Thursday 19th March – NSA Scotsheep 2020 teleconference regarding Corona virus attended by executive committee

Monday 23rd March - NSA Events teleconference attended by Euan Emslie and Grace Reid

Monday 30th March – Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholder Group teleconference (Scot Gov) attended by Grace Reid; Emergency NSA Scotsheep 2020 teleconference re Corona virus attended by various NSA Scotland executive committee members

Tuesday 31st March - Farming round table teleconference with organisations from across the sector attended by Jen Craig

Fortnightly Government agriculture communication corona virus group teleconference attended by Jen Craig

Wednesday 1st April – FAS Stakeholder teleconference attended by Grace Reid

Thursday 2nd April - Farming round table teleconference with organisations from across the sector attended by Jen Craig

Wednesday 8th April - Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholder Group teleconference (Scot Gov) attended by Grace Reid

Thursday 9th April - Farming round table teleconference with organisations from across the sector attended by Jen Craig

Wednesday 15th April – NSA F&GP teleconference attended by Jen Craig

Thursday 16th April – Farming round table teleconference with organisations from across the sector attended by Jen Craig

Future meetings:

Monday 20th April - Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholder Group teleconference (Scot Gov) to be attended by Grace Reid

Fortnightly Government agriculture communication corona virus group teleconference attended by Jen Craig

Thursday 23rd April – Farming round table teleconference with organisations from across the sector attended by Jen Craig

Thursday 30th April - Farming round table teleconference with organisations from across the sector attended by Jen Craig

Scottish Region Press Releases

Week commencing	Press release(s) issued	Facebook reach
20/01/2020	Meet new Scottish region co-ordinator	4.1k
29/01/2020	Clydesdale bank confirmed as major sponsor for NSA Scotsheep 2020	3k
31/01/2020	Scottish Farmer media sponsor for NSA Scotsheep 2020	1.1k
04/03/2020	Nominations sought for Silver Salver award	4.7k
20/03/2020	NSA Update on NSA Scotsheep 2020	17.7k

Other significant external meetings – attended by Phil unless otherwise stated

Other meetings attended by Katie during the first quarter:

Pinstone – Katie attended a planning meeting with Pinstone PR to discuss plans for this year’s Sheep Event

NI ARMM – Katie travelled to Northern Ireland to represent NSA Head Office at the region’s ARMM. Katie updated attendees on head office activity as well as more specifically on her work with NSA Next Generation.

18th Nov 2019 Welsh Commons Forum

21st Nov Spoke at AWSELVA (animal welfare, science, ethics and law) winter conference

25th and 26th Nov Welsh Winter Fair

27th Nov CCSC (carcass classification)

28th Nov Sustainable Development Awards (ref BMLUP) Cardiff

29th Nov Heritage Breeds report launch

2nd Dec BMLUP and project Board meeting

4th Dec UK P&T committee

5th Dec RUMA Alliance and Board meeting

6th Dec iSAGE workshop Harrogate

9th Dec White Tailed Eagle steering group meeting

10th Dec AHDB beef and lamb strategy industry meeting

11th Dec CLA Stocktake meeting

17th Dec Sheep ageing/carcass splitting meeting Defra

18th Dec Defra Christmas reception

9th Jan 2020 Defra Pathway development meeting, then SE region meeting

13th Jan TDUG

14th Jan Sheep ageing carcass splitting meeting Defra the BMLUP

15th Jan Regional Managers meeting
16th Jan Meeting with QMS
17th Jan Scots region ARMM
20th Jan Sheep Antibiotic Guardian Group
21st Jan Discussion with Old Mill VAT specialist
22nd Jan Board meeting
24th Defra Productivity Working Group
27th Jan Speak at Sheep and Goat Dairy conference
28th Jan Meeting with Dunbia and Llanybydder
29th Jan Met with David Ashford Welsh Govt
30th Jan Sheep scab workshop
31st Jan UKLIBG meeting
4th Feb GB Livestock core group meeting
5th Feb NSA English committee and then take part in debate on the value of trees - Birmingham
6th Feb SCOPS and SE region ARMM
11th Feb Welsh Commons Forum Builth Wells
12th Feb Skin on Sheep working group Cardiff
13th Feb Red Tractor TAC
14th Feb TDUG conf call
18th Feb Brexit Farming Roundtable, then PSGHS call
21st Feb TDUG conf call
24th Feb SHAWG
25th and 26th Feb NFU conference
27th Feb ELMS Test and Trial workshop
28th Feb Eastern region winter fair
2nd March BMLUP Board meeting
3rd March RTA B&L Board meeting
4th March RUMA Alliance and Board meeting
6th March CCSC meeting
12th March Tele call with Crawford Falconer - US Trade Ambassador
16th March TDUG
17th March Sheep welfare grants meeting Defra
19th March ELMS engagement meeting
23rd March Uplands Alliance steering group meeting
24th Meeting with Matt Blythe re Agri web
25th March ELMS engagement meeting
27th March UKLIBG then Farming Roundtable meeting
2nd April Defra Pathway meeting
3rd UK Farming Roundtable meeting
7th April PSGHS advisory group call
9th April Livestock Chain Advisory Group meeting – then UK Farming Roundtable meeting
15th April NSA FGP meeting
16th April UK Farming Roundtable meeting
20th April TDUG meeting
21st April Sheep antibiotics guardian group
22nd April Sheep event 2020 steering group
23rd April ELMS and then NSA ram sales call to discuss 2020 sales
24th April Livestock Chain Advisory Group meeting

Appendix – Press releases issued and their social media reach

Week commencing	Press releases in 2020 - Ellie	Press releases in 2020 - Katie	Social media reach on press release links - Facebook
6/1/20	1. Apocalypse cow reaction		1. 4.2k
13/1/20	1. Agriculture bill	2. Grace Reid new Scottish coordinator	1. 1.9k 2. 2.2k
20/1/20		1. NSA launches wool ties	1. 7.2k
27/1/20	1. Industry joint letter to PM 2. Brexit day	3. NSA and Ritchie giveaway 4. SCOPS moxidectin advice	1. – 2. 1.8k 3. 5.2k 4. 2.9k
3/2/20		1. John Geldard GHMA	1. 10.7k
10/2/20	1. Welcome new Livestock Information chair 2. NSA welcomes new countryside stewardship 3. George Eustice appointment 4. Dog worrying survey launch	5. Euro Young Shepherds	1. 2k 2. 2.4k 3. 2.6k 4. 5.2k 5. 2k
17/2/20			
24/2/20	1. Response to BVA statement on tailing and castration		1. 3.1k
2/3/20		1. SCOPS nematodirus launch 2. NSA responds to Tim Leunig 3. Industry call for improved global warming measurements	1. 1.6k 2. 5.8k 3. 2.1k
9/3/20		1. NSA welcomes new AHDB Chair 2. NSA response to budget	1. – 2. 3.2k
16/3/20		1. Update on NSA Sheep Events in response to Covid. 2. Update on ScotSheep	1. 15.8k 2. 2.5k
23/3/20	1. NSA urges Tim Leunig to think again 2. Covid19 market disruption 3. Shearing industry adapts		1. – 2. 5.9k 3. 13.4k
30/3/20	1. Shearing list	2. Update on NSA Sheep Events 3. NSA and Moredun webinars	1. 6.4k 2. 32.3k