

Sheep Farmer

A NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2018



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The summer of going somewhere and nowhere

By Phil Stocker, NSA

This is an immensely frustrating and worrying time, but we can also be justifiably proud of what sheep farming is doing for itself.

Frustration comes in the form of Brexit as we still have no idea where we are heading – even though tariff and non-tariff barriers into the EU would create serious disruption to our industry with some figures suggesting the wrong deal and worst case scenario could result in a 30% fall in UK sheep numbers.

The worry comes from a severe lack of forage and grazing, little hope of autumn fodder crops getting established, and winter tack grazing being in question. It's often said nature tends to balance itself out, but it's going to have its work cut out this year. There will still be non-believers regarding the impact of greenhouse gases on climate change but surely few will disagree we are experiencing changes and extremes in weather conditions, and it's not difficult to see this could seriously challenge our current farming model and the world's ability to feed itself.

Sheep 2018

Pride in what we do can be seen in many quarters, and there is no better example than NSA Sheep 2018 – *more on pages 8-12*. The event was supported by more than 100 NSA members who volunteered over a number of days, including NSA Next Generation Ambassadors. We could not run any event successfully without the effort of these people who give their time freely, who are actively investing in your future, and whose input makes the day so much more than just another corporate function.

The success is also down to the many sheep related businesses and organisations who took sponsorship opportunities, as well as the many thousands of attendees and hundreds of trade stands that also gave the industry much to be proud about, impressing Government officials with the level of engagement and messages of best practice.

Anyone attending NSA Sheep 2018 will have come away knowing our industry has some serious challenges ahead but is also, in the main, highly committed and ready to adapt and survive whatever is thrown at us. The future may well be different, but we must work hard to maintain the capacity, infrastructure and essence of our



industry – because once it's gone it's hard to get back.

In England, the first draft of the Agriculture Bill will come after the summer Parliamentary recess. In the meantime, Scotland and Wales have launched their consultations, both of which can be interpreted as being well-aligned with many NSA positions, but the devil will be in the detail and we will need to focus on two key things (in addition to ensuring budgetary capacity). These are recognition and reward for the many public goods and a move away from the income foregone principle of calculation that does nothing for the bottom line – *more on page 22-23*. Northern Ireland is still in political turmoil with little progress being made, yet pivotal in our withdrawal from the EU.

Wildfires

Our sympathy goes to anyone affected by the many wildfires that have been burning over the last month or so, and it's important to recognise that globally lives have been lost in wildfires. I don't feel comfortable jumping on bandwagons for individual gain, and NSA definitely stirred some emotion when we reminded the press that properly managed and grazed hills and uplands provide some security against wildfires.

But it is true – a mosaic of habitats including areas of short, grazed and (hopefully) green vegetation do reduce the risk of fires getting out of control and is good for wildlife too. Good heather and peatland management also help, whereas the alternative of rewilding presents huge risks to people, animals, the environment and our already pressed public services.

Sheep Farmer
August/September 2018 edition
Vol. 37, No 4 ISSN 0141-2434
A National Sheep Association publication.

Contents

- 2** News round-up
- 4** NSA reports: devolved nations
- 6** NSA reports: English regions
- 8** NSA Sheep 2018 report
- 14** NSA at the Royal Highland and Royal Welsh shows
- 16** NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale report, and sale previews
- 18** NSA South Sheep 2018 preview
- 20** Winner of NSA 2018 prize draw
- 22** Latest NSA policy activity
- 24** **SPECIAL FEATURE:** NSA and European sheep research
- 26** **FARM FEATURE:** Tim Ward, NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chairman
- 28** Advice on getting your tax right
- 30** **SPECIAL FEATURE:** Where are we going with lamb exports?
- 32** Gearing up for Love Lamb Week
- 34** Don't ignore wormer resistance
- 36** Tips on rotational grazing
- 38** Regular checks to keep lambs growing
- 40** **TUPPING PREP:** Getting your ewes ready
- 42** **TUPPING PREP:** Ram MOTs
- 44** Product news
- 46** Disease latest
- 48** Industry updates from LAA and British Wool
- 50** **NEXT GENERATION:** All the news from the NSA Ambassadors

The front page picture of Kerry Hill sheep was taken by photographer Stephanie Burton on the farm of Tim Ward, the current NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chairman and an NSA Trustee. Tim runs pedigree flocks of Kerry Hill and Dorset Down sheep in Powys, and you can read about his farm on pages 26-27.

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

Ladies in Print

Email: ladiesinprint@outlook.com
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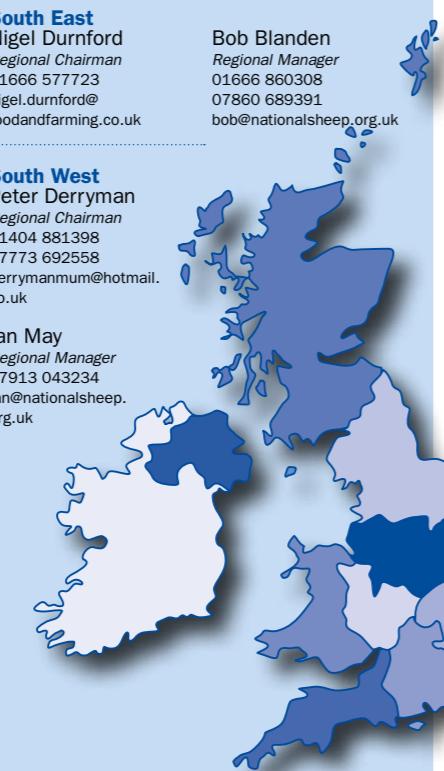
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NSA AGM takes place
As this edition of Sheep Farmer is going to print in early August, the NSA AGM is taking place at NSA Head Office, Malvern, Worcestershire. Attendees were to receive the trustee's report and statement of accounts, and elect/reappoint the president, honorary treasurer and auditors.

Unsung hero recognised

There is a special award within NSA that, rather than be presented annually, is only given when an exceptional NSA staff member or office holder is identified as being worthy of particular recognition.



Such an individual was recognised at the Sheep Event Industry Dinner in mid-July when the NSA Bob Payne Memorial Award for Unsung Hero was given to NSA Association Secretary Julie Jennings (pictured with NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker).

Julie has worked for NSA since December 2002, serving under three different chief executives and seeing the organisation and the sheep sector through many changes and developments.

New name for Nicola

NSA Head Office heard the sound of wedding bells recently, as NSA Livestock Researcher Nicola Smith tied the knot. Nicola's name has changed from Miss Smith to Mrs Noble, however her NSA contact details remain otherwise unchanged.

Supporting shepherds

With the NSA Next Generation programme going from strength to strength and NSA Sheep 2018 being hosted by the Three Counties Agricultural Society, there was a natural link-up to sponsor the young handlers competition at this year's Royal Three Counties Agricultural Show in June. Katie James, NSA Communications Officer, joined judge Carol Watson to present the prizes (pictured).



Shearing at 60 in charity fundraiser

Former NSA South West Region Chairman Alan Derryman has celebrated his 60th birthday with a shearing charity fundraiser. Alan set himself the challenge of shearing 400 ewes in nine hours at his farm at Sidbury, Devon, in early August (pictured). Sheep number 400 was shorn at 4.45pm and, just to

be sure, by 5pm Alan had shorn a total of 413.

Alan's chosen charity was Exeter Leukaemia Fund and, with an additional raffle and auction conducted by Russel Steer, sponsorship and cash donations, the total is looking to be well in excess of £10,000.



New travel bursary

NSA has proudly launched a new biennial award – the NSA Samuel Wharry Memorial Award for the Next Generation. It will come in the form of a £1,000 travel bursary to support a young person (under 35 years old) in a study trip to explore the application of science in sheep production.

Applications will be invited this autumn for the first time, in memory of Samuel Wharry of Carnlough, County Antrim, who was NSA Chairman and Trustee when he died suddenly in May 2017, aged just 56.

The new award was announced at the Sheep Event Industry Dinner in mid-July, with Mr Wharry's dedication to NSA and the wider sheep sector was publicly

recognised with his sisters Mary and Nancy (pictured with NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker) receiving the NSA George Hedley Memorial Award for Outstanding Contribution.

This long-established NSA award was presented posthumously to Mr Wharry for his involvement in and promotion of worthy sheep industry initiatives, including the Blackface Performance Recorded Sire Reference Group, Agrisearch Sheep Advisory Board, several Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute breeding trials and, since its inception in 2012, the NSA Next Generation project.

Award information to follow this autumn.



NSA reports – devolved nations

NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Davies, Development Officer



The long awaited consultation from the Welsh Government has now been published, outlining proposals on what agriculture in Wales might look like post-Brexit.

The paper puts forward proposals for a planned, multi-year transition and seeks views on a new land management programme to replace the Basic Payment Scheme, Glastir and other parts of RDP. The new programme will consist of an economic resilience scheme (investment for economic activities including food production) and a public goods scheme (direct support for public goods delivery, in particular for the environment).

The NSA position on future farm support after we depart the European Union is not too far away from the proposed proposed Welsh Government scheme, although it's too soon to really tell. NSA Cymru/Wales Region is prioritising a robust consultation response to submit, and there will be a discussion on this at our regional meeting in late August. I encourage all members to get in touch with their views.

Engagement

In the meantime, NSA Cymru/Wales Region has been engaging with Welsh Government on promoting benchmarking activities within the sheep sector, and on a way forward regarding sheep scab. Natural Resources Wales has confirmed the cost increase for dip disposal licences does not yet apply in Wales as it does in England; NSA remains hopeful Wales will escape the unjustified increase.

May I remind sheep keepers in Wales that, as of 1st September 2018, sheep with full EID moving between separate CPHs will need to be individually recorded; lambs with a single electronic slaughter tag can continue to move on the flock number. To assist keepers, a 'return move' button will be available on EID Cymru for when animals return from tack. The new 10-mile rule for all livestock species, replacing the five-mile rule for sheep and goat holdings, is a step closer and sheep keepers are now able to register all their land within 10 miles under a single CPH number if they wish. Details on these changes are at www.eidcymru.org and www.gov.wales/cphproject respectively.

NSA Cymru/Wales Region congratulates the Welsh Hill Speckled Face Sheep Society on its successful 50th anniversary celebrations, which included sheep judging and a display by the Welsh Sheepdog Society, and also the Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders Association on appointing a new field officer in the form of Joe Hamer of Pontesford, Shropshire.



Some 300 people celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Welsh Hill Speckled Face Sheep Society at an open day.

NSA Northern Ireland Region

By Edward Adamson, Development Officer



In Northern Ireland, it depends on your location as to whether you have found the summer too dry or not, but to say the pleasant dry and sunny weather has been challenging would be an understatement.

In my last regional report I said conserving forage for winter was a priority, and that has not changed. We need to look at stock numbers, calculate the forage required and maybe adjust numbers to allow us to get through next winter.

Future of agriculture

When it comes to Brexit, I confess I am bewildered as to what is ahead of us. It seemed like the 'Chequers agreement' would allow us to trade in a normal fashion, but as time gets ever closer to the EU Summit in October a 'no deal' option and WTO default rules are looming larger. Playing 'hardball' could lead to our sheep industry being a casualty so let's hope all involved realise the seriousness of the situation and find a workable compromise that provides free and frictionless trade.

Away from Brexit, ammonia emission in NI are the highest in the UK and more drastic measures than farmers would wish may be needed to rectify the situation. The sheep sector contribution is only 4%, compared to cattle at 70%, but NSA Northern Ireland Region is staying involved in the consultations as many non-farming bodies are lobbying against livestock.

Antibiotic reduction

We are also a stakeholder in a new 'STAMP' project (Strategic antimicrobial use in dairy, beef and lamb production), a DAERA/Agrisearch co-funded research project involving Agrisearch, AFBI, LMC, VetImpress and AHWNI. With many reports into agricultural antibiotic use highlighting the challenges of capturing national usage data, the aim is to review animal medicine usage benchmarking systems in different countries and develop a simple traffic light system for NI farm businesses.

Within the summer show season in full swing, and having been to NSA Scot Sheep and NSA Sheep 2018, I can proudly say NSA can really pull together and put on a specialised event with all those involved deserving a big pat on the back. But looking at the general summer shows, as a Clun Forest breeder myself, I cannot resist sharing this picture of the Royal Welsh Show interbreed champion – an image that will long be remembered by Clun breeders around the world.



A Club winning at the Royal Welsh has resulted in celebrations over in NI.

NSA Scottish Region

By George Milne, Development Officer



Since my return to work after a period of illness, NSA Scottish Region has been working on two large consultations.

The first was a National Council of Rural Advisers' document looking at people, infrastructure and a vision for a potential new rural economic strategy. Within our reply we focused on the social, economic and environmental benefits delivered by sheep farming.

The second is work still underway and is the hugely important Scottish Government 'Stability and simplicity' consultation inviting comments on support options for land managers, individuals and organisations across Scotland in the period immediately after the UK leaves the EU, ensuring we maintain our environmental standards and meet climate change targets.

'Stability and simplicity' was launched at the Royal Highland Show, where NSA Scottish Region once again provided an important hub in our impressive marquee – *full report on page 14*. Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing had direct discussions with John Fyall, NSA Scottish Region Chairman, about his support proposals prior to this, and visited our marquee at the show to discuss, in particular, the less favoured areas support scheme (LFASS) and other issues relevant to the sheep sector.

Important questions

Also during the Royal Highland, an All Party Parliamentary Group from Westminster met to discuss the future of Scottish farming, where NSA Scottish Region asked for some certainty on how money would be allocated to devolved nations in terms of direct support, rural development, Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb PGIs, labour and freedom to devise Scottish policy.

Other work by the NSA Scottish Region Committee in recent weeks include John attending a Scottish Brexit Roundtable to discuss current political issues and, on the same day, meeting with QMS to discuss further funding and its new lamb campaign. A letter was sent to Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister, and relevant ministers suggesting carbon emissions targets for agriculture are unrealistic and inhibitive. And Kathy Peebles, NSA Scottish Region Vice Chairman, attended separate meetings on OPA in sheep, hosted by Moredun, and dog worrying, hosted by Emma Harper MSP in the Scottish Parliament.

Looking forward, NSA Highland Sheep will be held on Wednesday 12th June 2019, kindly hosted by the Sutherland family at Sibmister, Caithness, overlooking the north coast of mainland Scotland four miles east of Thurso.



Next Generation lamb trimming was one element of NSA's Royal Highland Show presence – report on page 14.



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NSA reports – English regions

Central

By Anne Payne, Manager
There is only one topic of conversation for



farmers across the region at present – the long-term consequences of the lengthy drought – and a subsidiary topic for those in the Peak District is the very high risk of fire on the moors. We are all desperately awaiting the forecasted rain, when I shall go out and stand in it to celebrate, along with all the other rain-dancers!

A more positive happening to relate is a joint AHDB Beef & Lamb and NSA Central Region event on 'Minimising carcase losses', which was held at Bakewell Market, Derbyshire, in early August. The 50+ attendees were divided into three workshop groups (after they'd availed themselves of the lunch provided by Bagshaws) and moved between sessions on pasteurella management, abattoir condemnations and carcase classification. A good deal of detail was shared and audience participation and discussion encouraged. The carcase classification session was run with the assistance of six butchers' lambs, and we all competed for the prize of a bottle of Bagshaws Malt at the end of the afternoon.

Coming next is the Eccleshall Speed Shear Competition on 18th August, followed by Hope Show on Bank Holiday Monday, both of which NSA Central Region is sponsoring. We are also hoping to hold an autumn event again and, alongside all of these, are making plans for the NSA Central Region Early Gathering to be held at Bakewell Market in January 2019. Details will be shared in due course.

Tips on selecting prime lambs



The NSA Central Region and AHDB Beef & Lamb event at Bakewell Market in early August included an interactive session on selecting prime lambs.

Learning about maximising lambs sales



NSA Eastern Region and AHDB Beef & Lamb teamed up for a joint event, held at Rutland Stud, Newmarket, Suffolk, to provide tips on minimising carcase losses. Other NSA regions are holding or have held similar events.

Eastern

By Jonathan Barber, Manager



In mid-July we joined forces with AHDB Beef & Lamb for a thoroughly enjoyable and instructive afternoon at Rutland Stud, Newmarket, by kind permission of the Godolphin Management Company.

The subject was 'Minimising carcase losses in the lamb supply chain' and visitors were able to circulate around four stations with different information and messages. Katie Waine of Nottingham University talked about pasteurella, a disease for which we have an effective vaccine, and so her message was to cover your animals by injecting the right number of times with the correct dosage. She alerted

everyone to the failure of only giving new animals one dose and therefore not achieving full protection.

Nerys Wright from AHDB talked through the main reasons for carcase condemnation and how to avoid penalties. She had some very graphic illustrations of the damage caused by liver fluke, injection abscesses, bruising, *Cysticercus tenuicollis* and *Cysticercus ovis*. The latter two can be spread by dogs so the importance of worming your own dogs and keeping untreated dogs and cats away from your pasture was highlighted.

For the other two stations, Ritchie UK demonstrated its combi clamp and Tim Bastable of AHDB, with the aid of a pen of prime lambs, went through how to select lambs for slaughter and what different buyers are seeking. After all this brain testing we enjoyed a BBQ featuring delicious lamb chops – proof that lamb is the perfect summer meat; tender, full of flavour and quick to prepare.

Northern

By Heather Stoney-Grayson, Manager



An NSA Northern Region committee meeting in June was a varied session that included discussion about data protection, livestock identification, farm assurance and how the region had been hit by the harsh spring. At that stage there was no idea of the very dry and similarly damaging summer we were yet to experience.

The region secured its usual position

for NSA at the Great Yorkshire Show. Thank you to Abi Swaffield, NSA Membership Recruitment Officer, and her team for their efforts, well rewarded with 12 new members gathered throughout the three days.

We have another regional committee meeting in early August so please contact myself or another committee member if you have any points you would like the committee to look at. We're full steam ahead with preparations for NSA North Sheep. The venue has now been officially announced as New Hall Farm, Rathmell, Settle, kindly hosted by the Frankland Family, on Wednesday 5th June 2019. Stand bookings will be taken online shortly and any sponsorship enquires can be made to myself.

Marches

By Antony Spencer, Chairman



A huge thank you to all those who gave their time to help with NSA Sheep 2018 at Malvern

Worcestershire. It takes a lot of time and effort to set it up to run as smoothly as it did and, without such a willing band of helpers, it wouldn't have been the success it was.

The day itself was entertaining and informative (see report on pages 8-12) and even the most experienced sheep farmers should have come away learning something new; I certainly did.

We have recently appointed Lorna Davies as NSA Marches Region Secretary. I welcome her to NSA and look forward to new input and ideas for our future events and meetings. On this note, we are having a farm visit to Sam Jones at Brook House Farm, Ham Green, Redditch, B97 5PR, 6pm on Tuesday 4th September. Sam is an AHDB Beef & Lamb Challenge Sheep participant, has done trial work for 3in1 feeders and is a former Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmer of

the Year finalist – so this should make for a very interesting evening. To help with catering, please contact Lorna if you wish to attend (contact details on page 2), and come along at 5pm for a short committee meeting if you'd like to meet her.

As with everywhere else in the country, we have been very dry and worried about store lamb sales and putting in winter fodder crops. Farmers at our first local breeding sale were understandably cautious with their bidding, but whether this was down to lack of grass or lack of confidence in the future is anyone's guess. As always, time will tell.

South East

By Bob Blanden, Manager



The dry conditions we were experiencing when we had our NSA South East Region grassland farm walk in late June have not improved more than a month later.

This timely farm walk was by kind permission of Ben Robinson and family. We are grateful to them and to Farm & Country Supplies in conjunction with DLF Seeds, whose Technical Director David Rhodes gave an enlightening presentation about its involvement in the grass seed market.

This followed the NSA South East Region Next Generation Event in early June, which was also a great success for those who attended. As well as seminars and a brilliant workshop on media skills, the winner and runner up of the Next Generation Shepherds' Competition, Sam Jones from Edenbridge, Kent, and Emily Killick from Telscombe, East Sussex, qualified for and competed in the national final at NSA Sheep 2018. The region is very grateful to NSA Next Generation Ambassadors James

Inspiring media-savvy young shepherds



Part of the NSA South East Region Next Generation Event was a session giving young people the skills to use social media and other communication routes to positively promote the UK sheep sector.

Hamilton and Marie Prebble for hosting and organising. Find the full report at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events.

Page 18 of this magazine has a detailed look at what is happening at NSA South Sheep on Saturday 8th September and all efforts are being made to deliver another successful event. Please make every effort to come and gain from all the knowledge freely available to members, and consider entering some of the competitions.

We are having another on-farm event on Wednesday 26th September, 4pm-7pm. In conjunction with AHDB Beef & Lamb and looking at 'Minimising carcase losses in the lamb supply chain', it will be held at Springfield Farm, Anasdore, Waltham, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 5QB, by kind permission of the Lockwood family. The event will finish with a supper so please register your free place with the AHDB Events Hub on 01904 771212 or ke.events@ahdb.org.uk.

South West

By Ian May, Manager
I hope those of you who managed to attend NSA Sheep



2018 had an enjoyable day. In NSA South West Region we are very proud that our two competitors, James Westcott and Sam Edwards, gained second and third place in the national final of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd Competition.

By the time this magazine reaches you in early August, we will have just held an NSA South West Region farm walk on the Rampisham Estate, Dorset, with farm manager Gareth Beynon. Many thanks to Gareth for hosting such an interesting and entertaining event, to Emily Gascoigne for helping to arrange it and to Synergy Farm Health for sponsoring the food and drinks. Likewise, the NSA South West Ram Sale will have gone ahead at Exeter Livestock Centre, Devon. Special thanks to the ram sale committee and Kivells for all their efforts in making this a success.

This autumn sees several dates being added to the diary in addition to our usual committee meetings. We are planning two evening sessions in conjunction with AHDB Beef & Lamb. The first, looking at how to minimise carcase losses, will be held on Exmoor on Monday 24th September – see www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events for details.

For the second meeting we have arranged for Awal Fuseini, AHDB Halal Sector Manager, to join us at the Waie Inn, Zeal Monachorum, Devon, EX17 6DF, at 7.30pm on Monday 19th November for a discussion on his role and this key sector for the sheep industry.

Positivity at NSA Sheep 2018 despite uncertainties of future

Tremendous crowds lent a positive atmosphere to NSA Sheep 2018, the organisation's flagship biennial event held in mid-July.

There were few more answers about Brexit than at the show held two years' ago, just after the EU referendum was held, but with a theme of 'Thriving in an uncertain future', the one-day business-to-business event provided attendees with information, advice and ideas to safeguard themselves and their flocks whatever happens politically over the coming months and years.

Opening

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, opened the event by saying the worse-case scenario for the UK sheep sector, a 'no deal' on Brexit, was a possibility the sheep sector needed to prepare itself for.

He said: "Given that the vast majority of the 35% of UK lamb exported goes into the EU, we absolutely do not want a no deal on Brexit. However, it would be irresponsible not to be ready and prepare for this possibility. That means stepping up efforts to open up new export markets outside of the EU, doing much more to boost domestic demand for sheepmeat, and protecting ourselves from imports. These are all things that will make sense for the sector even if we



Above: Indoor and outdoor exhibitors reported a busy day of trading.

Left: Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, opened the event by warning of the possibility of a 'no deal' Brexit.

do get a deal, so it's a win-win to do put the work in now.

Negotiations could still go very badly wrong and

there is a risk we could crash out, fall back to WTO rules and face huge trade disruption – so we need to be ready and that is why it's important to prepare for a no deal."

With the future of trade very much in the hands of the politicians, Mr Stocker went on to speak about areas



The top price sheepdog was Don, a two-year-old dog, sold for 3,400gns.

where NSA is working with partner organisations to resolve problems the sheep sector has been facing for some time, including increasing domestic and international consumption of sheepmeat, traceability and sheep movement reporting, carcase splitting, price reporting and carcase classification, and sheep farming living alongside the natural environment.

Brexit

Mr Stocker said: "Using Brexit and the taking back control of some our regulatory functions, and a growing change of attitude within Government departments to want to support industry rather than constantly being fearful



Event Organiser Helen Davies (left) with the winning fencing team from M.J. Fencing.



The title of NSA Next Generation Shepherd was hotly contested – report on page 50. of compliance with EU regulations, there are real opportunities to make progress."

The sensitivity of the ongoing Brexit negotiations was highlighted by the fact Farming Minister George Eustice did not attend in person but sent a pre-prepared



As well as welcoming visitors throughout the day, the NSA stand hosted a lunchtime reception for international guests.



The seminar tent drew crowds throughout the day.

Event fact file

Event: NSA Sheep 2018.

Venue: Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire.

Date: Wednesday 18th July.

Competition winners:-

NSA Next Generation Shepherd:

Rob Walker, Clitheroe (NSA Northern Region). **Best under 21:** Dafydd Davies, Bala, (NSA Cymru/Wales Region). **Best shearer:** James Westacott, Cullompton (NSA South West Region).

Tornado Wire Fencing: M.J. Evans Fencing, Herefordshire.

Fleeces: D. Stanhope, Shropshire (Lustre).

Trade stands: Outdoor: Stow Agricultural. **Indoor:** MSD Animal Health.

Breed society: Texel Sheep Society.

Pen of sheep on a breed society stand: Welsh Mule Sheep Breeders' Association.

Full results at www.sheepevent.org.uk.



Lord Inglewood, NSA President, officially opened NSA Sheep 2018.

considerable scrutiny'. However, he warned, while there was acceptance public money should be used to pay for public goods, there was not going to be an abundance of public money to do that going forward.

Opportunity

Maintaining the industry with that shrinking pot of money was a topic that flowed through the four seminars at the event led by NSA officeholders and featuring industry leaders and experts. Considering subjects such as stimulating demand for sheepmeat both domestically and internationally, public goods delivered by the sheep sector, and utilising technology within the sector to help businesses thrive, the seminars provided opportunity for all to

More on page 10

► contemplate a future positively – more on page 12.

Mr Stocker said: "It was pleasing to witness the seminar tent so full with attendees clearly interested and enthused. The discussion generated in each of the seminars I consider to be evidence of the desire of our sheep farmers to position themselves in the best possible way despite the uncertainties immediately ahead of us."

Workshops

In addition to the seminars, double the number of workshops were delivered at NSA Sheep 2018 compared to previous years allowing visitors to focus on specific topics in more detail, including foot health, nutrition, responsible antibiotic use and sustainable parasite control. The workshop area also saw NSA Next Generation Ambassadors lead two sessions on the future of employed shepherds in the UK, and NSA and Woodland Trust jointly launch a new booklet offering practical advice on integrating trees onto sheep farms.

Elsewhere on the showground, a record number of international visitors were recorded through the gates, a number of awards and prizes were



A sheep industry dinner, held the night before, attracted around 450 people.



All dogs entered into the sheepdog sale were put through their paces before being auctioned.



The event attracted a high level of attendance, including a record number of international guests.

awarded, various demonstrations ran, and the ever-popular sheepdog sale took place. The top priced sale lot was Don, a two-year-old dog offered for sale by Mr D.K. Evans of Penclyn Farm, Brecon, Powys, and sold for 3,400gns to Mr P. Langdown.

Competitions

Teams of fencing specialists competed in the popular Tornado Wire fencing competition, requiring a section of stock fencing to be erected to a professional standard in just three hours. The winning team was from M.J. Fencing of Leominster, Herefordshire, a company that fielded a winning team back in 2014 also.

The fleece competition, which featured a good number of entries in all classes, saw the champion fleece title go to Davina Stanhope of Shropshire



The fleece competition was a qualifier for the national Golden Fleece final.

with a fleece entered in the lustre class. Ms Stanhope's fleece now qualifies for the British Wool Golden Fleece Competition.

Helen Davies, Event Organiser, concluded: "The work involved in holding an event such as this is considerable, but completely worthwhile when we all can enjoy such a busy and successful day. We thank all who sponsored, exhibited or visited the event and look forward to welcoming them to further NSA events in the future."

More reports through the magazine, plus pictures and video clips at www.sheepevent.org.uk.

Thank you

NSA is indebted to all sponsors of the biennial event, plus the many volunteers and helpers who did so much. In addition to the Major Sponsors here, all supporters can be found at www.sheepevent.org.uk. The event will be held again in 2020.



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Sales of sheepmeat at home and abroad discussed at Sheep 2018

With the possibility of a 'no deal' Brexit being the hot topic at NSA Sheep 2018, the debates initiated by the seminar programme could not have been more timely. Two of the four seminars looked at sheepmeat sales, one focusing on domestic consumption and another on export opportunities.

In the international sheepmeat trade session, all panel members agreed on the urgent need to have agreements on trade sealed as soon as possible, with policies, rules and schedules outlined from the offset. Comments were made highlighting the opportunities for international trade that could be created as a result of Brexit, with much discussion on how UK sheep farmers were well placed to provide the quality, traceable, high welfare product in demand from an increasingly wealthy worldwide population.

Market growth

With so much uncertainty about such international deals, the importance of growth in the UK domestic market was investigated in the final seminar of the day. The panel explained the size of the current domestic market, with key areas for growth identified, such as the demand for halal products from a younger, more demanding Muslim



Seminars at NSA Sheep 2018 followed the theme of 'Thriving in an uncertain future'.

population seeking higher quality meats.

Suggestions to move the domestic market forward included the need for a single recognisable food standards scheme to remove confusion amongst customers, and improved marketing of products to target the key areas of the population who currently might not be attracted by sheepmeat products while shopping or eating out.

This seminar concluded with agreement from many that businesses who react promptly will survive any uncertainty currently felt in the domestic

market. It was felt that producers needed to focus on quality and reduce costs for a sustainable market.

Backing British

Convincing current consumers to back the UK sheep industry and support British farming could be done regardless of the impending future, but simplifying recipes and driving realisation of the many benefits of the product would go some way to secure the industry so the British public could continue to love lamb in the years to come.

Seminar key points

Thriving in an uncertain future for the international sheepmeat trade

Chaired by John Fyall (NSA Scottish Region Chairman and Aberdeenshire sheep farmer) with panel members Robin Manning (Defra), Phil Bicknell (AHDB Market Intelligence) and Mike Gooding (Farmers Fresh).

- Future international trade agreement needed urgently.
- Demographics of worldwide market changing and, therefore, increased demand being seen for higher quality produce.
- UK best placed to meet new demands of high welfare standards, traceability, food safety and quality produce.
- Brexit must be considered an opportunity not a threat to international sheepmeat trade.

Recognition of public goods to ensure a thriving future

Chaired by Bryan Griffiths (NSA Chairman and Devon sheep farmer) with panel members Phil Stocker (NSA), Jeremy Moody (CAAV) and Christine Middlemiss (Chief Veterinary Officer).

- Future of farm support unclear due to phasing out of BPS.
- Consumers do not understand support payments.
- Proposed scheme will reward farming recognising public benefits, such as improved soil quality and water management, animal health and welfare and food safety.
- Recognised within government that sheep farming benefits the environment and, therefore, the public too.

Making the most of technology to drive farm businesses

Chaired by Kevin Harrison (NSA English Committee Chairman and Gloucestershire sheep farmer) with panel members Simon Hall (Defra), Rob Hodgkins (Hertfordshire sheep breeder), Fiona Lovatt (Flock Health) and Elizabeth Stockdale (NIAB).

- Opportunities to share useful production data through large bodies such as the Food Standards Agency, Rural Payments Agency and Natural England.
- New livestock traceability service will aim to simplify existing systems and improve ease of use.
- Technology in today's world should help your farm business and not hinder.
- Worthwhile for breeders to collect a wealth of data to help improve profitability.

Domestic market opportunities for a thriving future

Chaired by Eddie Eastham (NSA UK Policy & Technical Committee Chairman and Cumbrian sheep farmer) with panel members Rizwan Khalid (Euro Quality Lamb), Will Atkinson (Randall Parker) and Richard Baldwyn (Lower Clopton Farm Shop).

- £559m spent on lamb in the UK in 2017.
- Producers and retailers must listen to customers to ensure future success for lamb sales.
- Demand for halal sheepmeat continues to grow.
- Improved marketing is key for sales of sheepmeat.



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NSA welcomes members, public and politicians at Royal Highland

By John Fyall, NSA Scottish Region

The NSA Scottish Region stand at the Royal Highland Show was once again a great success, being a major attraction for show-goers.

Space within our now famous marquee is in much demand and gives a great opportunity to showcase breeds and products, as well as provide a platform for NSA Scottish Region. From large horned rams to small fluffy lambs, the public enjoy seeing the sheep and speaking to the farmers. It is amazing how many visitors don't go down to the sheep lines, so the stand provides a needed interface.

It was good to see some of the products on offer too, not just meat and a great wool display, but showing off our 'green' credentials too with several stands showing what sheep and farmers do for the environment.

Our cookery demonstration was again a huge draw, with hard working chef Christopher Trotter from Fife renewing a great partnership with Stewart McClymont, the QMS 'Lambassador' butcher who leaves us now for Bahrain; we wish him well and hope he continues to promote lamb there. Singer and actress Barbara Dickson took part in the cooking too, and particularly delighted Fergus Ewing, our Cabinet Secretary and apparently a long-time fan!

Discussions

Mr Ewing remained to discuss issues with members, and many more visitors from across the political spectrum and both houses came, as well as many NSA members who made more use than



The cookery demonstration was a huge success for promoting lamb.



Above: The NSA stand was busy all day welcoming old and new members alike.



Left: John Fyall, NSA Scottish Region Chairman (left), with Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing and Joyce Campbell, Women in Agriculture Taskforce Co-Chairman.

ever before of the members' area we provide for refreshments and meetings. Those members spoke to NSA Scottish Region officeholders about many issues, including the ewe hogg scheme, the LFA Support Scheme, predation and lamb marketing.

Positive outcomes

We particularly enjoyed welcoming Emma Harper MSP, who does great work on dog worrying and campaigns for ATV users to wear helmets. In good Highland Show spirit, she shared a taxi in with 'rival' Conservative MSP Rachel Hamilton, who was one of several politicians to hear our concerns at a reception with Michael Gove and David Mundell.

On Sunday, the final day of the show, we again staged the Michael Dun lamb dressing competition to encourage skills in young shepherds – and it was good to see Michael's nephew Angus Dun from Gilston, Scottish Borders, win the trophy.

NSA Scottish Region punches above its weight at the Royal Highland, and our annual events programme in general, given the membership base and resources. A tremendous amount of work goes into these things for the benefit of the whole industry. The preparation before and after, as well as manning the stand, takes organisers and volunteer time and some have put



Angus Dun won the trophy for the lamb dressing competition.

in tireless work. I thank all those who contributed.

Future plans

NSA Scottish Region will be looking at the format for next year's Royal Highland Show, but need committed membership and volunteers to drive it forward. Please get in touch with ideas or to volunteer – NSA is your organisation and the more we put in the more the industry gets back.

Prime Minister one of many guests to NSA stand at Royal Welsh Show

With a visit from Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Agriculture, on the Tuesday, and Theresa May, Prime Minister, on Thursday, the NSA Sheep Centre at this year's Royal Welsh Show was spoilt for high profile visitors over the four days.

Helen Davies, NSA Cymru/Wales Regional Development Officer, used her short amount of time with the Prime Minister to stress the importance of the sheep industry within the agricultural sector. She reports: "Mrs May took on board the message from the sheep industry and said the Government was still negotiating with the EU to ensure the best deal for agriculture as a whole, but that she recognised the importance of the sheep sector within that."

Interbreed pairs

Mrs May's visit to the sheep section coincided with the interbreed pairs final, sponsored by NSA Cymru/Wales Region. The Prime Minister joined NSA representatives to present the top award to the winning duo, a senior ram from Welsh breeders Tim Prichard and Emrys Hughes, and a homebred ewe from Scottish exhibitors Gregor and Bruce Ingram.

As always, the NSA stand was at the head of the NSA building, which was packed with sheep breeds, ram breeders and various sheep-related trades. Visitors poured onto the stand and through the NSA building throughout, keeping staff and office holders busy with discussions and enquiries.



NSA stand was packed with visitors at the reception on the Monday.



NSA Cymru/Wales Region sponsored the interbreed pairs final, with office holders Helen Davies and Tim Ward joined by Prime Minister Theresa May for the presentation.



Defra secretary Michael Gove also visited the stand.

the integration of trees into the farmed environment as an alternative to turning farmland over to forestry."

Other points in the week saw NSA representatives have an in-depth meeting and discussion with Hannah Blythyn AM and Welsh Government Environment Minister, and various meetings with Meat and Livestock Australia, FUW, TFA, HCC and more.

Winners

NSA supported the British Wool fleece competition at the show, won for the third year running by Caroline Lewis, but with wool from a different breed of sheep each time. This year's winner was a Welsh Mule, while 2017 and 2016 were Lincoln Longwool and Blue Faced Leicester respectively. It was also good to see NSA members Michael and Elle James win the Sir Bryner Jones Memorial Award for the most effective and efficient sheep farming enterprise in Wales.

Good trade at first NSA ram sale

High prices were achieved for top rams at the NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale, held at the Royal Welsh Showground in early August. Averages were also up in the Texel, Charollais and Suffolk rings, but fodder worries meant a disappointing number of rams sold.

The headline price was 2,800gns for a Corriecravie Texel shearling. The price was up on last year's 1,750gns top price, with an average of £637.29 for Texel shearling rams also up on last year. The top Charollais price was up at 1,900 guineas for a ram lamb, with the average for Charollais ram lambs reaching an increased £552.75.

Seasonal difficulties

Richard Gwilliam, NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Chairman, reported: "I think the sale reflected the season. There have been people whose stock have been eating this year's winter fodder through the summer and they are waiting as long as possible to buy anything in."

Executive Director Jane Smith added: "Once again we have seen that top quality rams are achieving good prices, but others were harder to cash."

The Corriecravie shearling sold to a consortium comprising Danny Creer, Ballygloney, Robert Laird, Skirling Biggar, and Ed Samuel, Hendre. A Charollais top of 1,900gns was a breed champion ram lamb bred by Tim Prichard, Castellau, sold to Gethin and Eleri Gibbin.

A Suffolk ram lamb bred by John Sinnett, retiring NSA Wales & Border Ram Sale committee member, sold for the breed



The headline price was 2,800gns from Paul Johnson for a Corriecravie Texel.

highest price of 1,050gns, paid by 10-year-old Oliver Sparks of Miskin, Rhondda. A three-year-old ram topped the Beltex breed at 800gns and was sold by John Corbett back to his original breeder, Gary Williams of Gwynfe, Carmarthenshire, and his 12-year-old daughter Seren.

A Beltex cross sold for 820gns, while the top Blue Texel price was 300gns. A Charollais cross ram sold for 640gns, a Texel cross for 800gns and Charmoise Hill for 300gns.

More NSA ram sales to come

With the NSA Wales & Border Early Sale under our belts (see above) and the NSA South West Ram Sale to be concluded by the time you read this magazine (report in the next edition), there are still three sales to look forward to.

These will include two events organised by NSA Eastern Region (see panel) and the NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale, which will be held a week earlier than usual, Monday 17th September, at the Royal Welsh Showground. The event, celebrating its 40th anniversary, is known as Europe's largest sale with thousands of rams sold through 21 rings.

Sale Executive Director Jane Smith says: "The reason for changing to an earlier date is in direct response to vendors' comments that the Monday after would be too late. Traditionally the sale had always been between the 18th and 25th, so we are only one day early and it is hoped we will now go forward with the earlier date."

NSA Eastern Region sales

If you are looking to buy rams this year, NSA Eastern Region Manager Jonathan Barber recommends coming along to either of the region's ram sales to source good quality, commercial rams that have been inspected by the NSA team.

He says: "The first of our sales will be at Rugby Farmers Mart on Friday 31st August. Later in the year will be the sale at Melton Mowbray on Friday 21st September. Both sales will have entries from the major terminal sire breeds, plenty of choice and one venue to select from the different breeds. We will have many vendors with performance recorded stock at both sales."

Catalogues from NSA Eastern Region on 01953 607860 or carroll@ceressolutions.co.uk.



Last year's main sale was topped by a Bluefaced Leicester ram lamb (pictured) sold for 9,500gns. Total turnover was nearly £2.2m with 87% sold and averages up on the previous year. Mrs Smith predicts even better quality this year: "Ram lamb entries were down for our early sale, which makes me think the bottom end has already gone for meat. This means there are fewer ram lambs about and the quality should be even better than usual. It has potential to be a year to remember."

Gwynne Davies, former NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Chairman, says he is confident of a good sale in the 40th anniversary year, despite difficult grazing conditions as, although the heatwave has tempered the high lamb prices, underlying confidence is good.

An NSA Wales & Borders 40th anniversary booklet is included with this magazine. More information at www.nsaramsales.co.uk.

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Preparations well underway for a busy day at South Sheep 2018

With a theme of 'Investing in a sustainable future', NSA South Sheep on Saturday 8th September promises to be a busy day with seminars, discussion workshops and plenty of other attractions.

The event theme isn't just about buying new kit, say organisers, but spending time to look at ways of adapting to be more efficient. The seminars and discussion workshops will explore this, as well as demonstrations throughout the day.

As well as a full array of trade and breed stands, there will be a fencing demonstration of a new type of permanent fencing, as well as an exhibition area for showing sheep handling equipment in action. There will also be butchery demonstrations, crook and stick making and, within the Celebration of Wool area, spinning and felting on show.



The event has a busy schedule around the theme 'Investing in a sustainable future'.

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Sheep systems fit for post-Brexit England, with Bob Abband, reproductive management and nutrition consultant
- 2. 11.30am - 12.15pm**
Practical steps for managing lameness, with Karen Ingleby, vet with MSD Animal Health
- 3. 1.30pm - 2.15pm**
Promoting positive landlord and tenant relationships in the post-Brexit era, with George Dunn, Tennant Farmers Association
- 4. 2.30pm - 3.15pm**
Optimising lamb sales at the farmgate, with Wyn Williams, Dunbia

Discussion workshops

- 1. 10.45am - 11.30am**
Benefits of utilising sheep within the arable rotation, with Hertfordshire sheep breeder Rob Hodgkins, Dr Liz Genever of AHDB Beef & Lamb and Richard Harding of Procam
- 2. 11.45am - 12.30pm & (repeated at) 3.15pm - 4pm**
Homeopathy at wellie level, with Chris Lees and Jackie Pearce-Dickens of HAWL
- 3. 1.15pm - 2pm**
Practical steps for managing lameness, with Karen Ingleby, vet with MSD Animal Health
- 4. 2.15pm - 3pm**
Recent progress in addressing sheep worrying, with Sargent Tom Carter of Sussex Police

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New sheep business to benefit from NSA-Tornado draw prize

In the second of four prize draws to take place this year, NSA has found another winner for a set of Tornado wire and fittings.

Clare Day of Tonbridge, Kent, is the lucky recipient, having become eligible when she joined NSA a few months ago. All new members of NSA are automatically entered into the draw, plus existing members who recommend a friend or neighbour to join the organisation.

First flock

Clare established her first flock earlier this year and says the new fencing materials will be hugely beneficial for her business and will allow her sheep to

Be a winner too

NSA is giving away four sets of Tornado wire and fittings this year, each worth more than £450, to new members who sign up and current members who recommend someone else to join.

If you are already a member, simply write your membership number on the form on the facing page and pass it to a friend or neighbour to fill in and join up.

You both get one entry into the prize draw per new sign-up, and there is no limit to how many times you can enter the draw via the same route – so start recommending NSA today for your chance to win.

Full terms and conditions at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw.



Clare Day will use her prize to fence off new areas for her newly established Portland flock, which will help keep business cost down.

graze safely and happily in a new field. While her family produces predominately apples and arable crops, Clare became interested in sheep after helping her friend on her farm and, as a result, set about establishing her own flock of Portland sheep.

That same friend introduced Clare to NSA by passing her old copies of Sheep Farmer. She read the magazines 'cover to cover' to find out as much as she could about keeping sheep and efficiently managing a flock before she set out to start her own business. Having achieved her aim of establishing a flock of Portlands, Clare decided to take out NSA membership herself.

Despite the early success of getting a

flock up and running, Clare says she is still young and keen to explore options for herself in the future. She says: "I am hoping to study agriculture at university, so I can further my knowledge in sheep and sheep keeping, as well developing my understanding of other aspects of farming.

Early days

"Being a young farmer just starting out and having only established my first flock this year, winning the Tornado wire will help reduce costs for fencing materials, which I am very grateful for. I had a missed call from NSA – what a lovely surprise when I phoned back! I was truly delighted!"

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SF Has an existing NSA member recommended you to join? If so fill in their details below and they too can be entered into NSA's prize draws,

or are you already an NSA member? To be entered into the prize draw, fill in your details above and pass this leaflet onto a friend to sign up

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NSA policy work dominated by hot dry weather and Brexit confusion

By Phil Stocker, NSA

While we are playing a bit of a waiting game in England, now the 'Health and Harmony' consultation is closed and the first draft of Agriculture Bill is yet to be published, work is ongoing by NSA Scottish Region and NSA Cymru/Wales Region to respond to the equivalent consultations in those nations.

Opting for similarly snappy names, Scottish Government has gone for 'Stability and simplicity' and Welsh Assembly for 'Brexit and our land' – but irrespective of the names, and indeed our thoughts on the lack of reference to food production within the papers, it is vital we submit meaningful responses.

Consultations

NSA members can feed into this via the NSA committee in their nation (contact details on page 2) and I encourage you to do so. You can also submit individual responses with your personal views, which is a hugely positive thing to do if you can, as numerous anti-farming lobbyists will no doubt be putting their thoughts forward.

As if we don't have enough to worry about with the confusion around Brexit, the weather is causing problems far beyond what we could ever have imagined when the winter months were spent in snow drift and/or water-logged fields. Most farms' forage stocks were



Wildfires are just one undesirable consequence of the recent drought.

completely used up at that time, but instead of being able to rebuild stores, this prolonged dry weather means many of you are already using winter feeds to sustain flocks due to a lack of grass. The risk of feed and bedding shortages is fast approaching and costs are rocketing, yet potential feed stock, cereals, maize and grass, as well as straw for biomass, is dedicated to energy production. That is why NSA is calling for a rethink around incentives for anaerobic digestion plants and large-scale biomass burners. We have long had a position on the negative impact energy grant structures are having on the countryside, but the weather has pushed the matter higher up the agenda and provided a platform for us to ask for a solution to be found post-Brexit.

Energy crops being eligible for the

Lynx release, a year on

Marking the anniversary of the application by Lynx UK Trust to release Eurasian lynx (pictured) into the countryside around Kielder Forest in Northumberland, NSA has reemphasised the dangers the introduction of the wild cat would bring.

NSA takes it as a positive sign that the licence application has not progressed and we will continue to oppose any calls for the lynx's reintroduction to the UK. As this magazine was going to print, Lynx UK Trust issued a statement claiming 100% of the landowners it had approached in the Kielder area had given their go-ahead and that any 'perceived threat' is the result of 'baseless National Sheep Association scaremongering'.

As always, NSA has responded in the press quickly and robustly, questioning the evidence of the trust's claims and stating the NSA position is based on the experiences of sheep farmers in other European countries.



reducing flood risks and taking boggy fluke-infested areas out of production. It will also be a vital tool for NSA to use at a policy level, as it quickly and clearly outlines to Government officials and non-Government bodies that trees within farmland provide public goods and should be encouraged within future agricultural support schemes, rather than the current contradictions around trees between the Basic Payment Scheme and agri-environment.

Download the booklet at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/policy-work or request a copy from NSA Head Office.

Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, NSA would like to see a review of support for crop-based renewable energy

production with a focus on ensuring land is focused on food production and that grants and incentives do not distort land and rental values.

Wildfires

Anyone affected by the recent wildfires, on Saddleworth Moor and other locations, has the sympathy of everyone at NSA. We have not been aiming to win political gain from the distress and damage of these fires, but it has been important for to provide a voice for the sheep sector within the media coverage, pointing out that moves to rewild many of our upland areas would put far more and far larger areas at risk.

The increase in wildfires is due, in part, to a loss of grazing animals and an increase in high volumes of dry vegetation. The result is causing immense environmental damage, including the loss of peat and release of carbon into the atmosphere, the destruction of mammals and young birds, the potential loss of domesticated livestock and, of course, a risk to human safety and life. μ

Uplands

The grazed nature of most of our uplands has, in the past, protected us from out of control fires, meaning that when fires occur, as they inevitably will, they are short lived and relatively easy to get under control. This is a practical example of how sheep farming has an integral relationship with our planet and connects our landscape, our people and our wildlife and environment through natural and traditional land management whilst also producing food and fibre from plants and regions that would not otherwise feed and clothe us.

More on recent NSA press work can be found at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/news.

Guidance for members on raven cull

In response to the news that Scottish Natural Heritage and Natural England have both issued a small number of licence for farmers to cull ravens, NSA has pulled together a guide for members wanting to know more about their options.

We have also been busy in the press, congratulating the Government agencies for granting licences and highlighting the damage ravens can do to livestock (pictured). NSA has explained the industry is not calling for an open cull on the birds, but that it is important for farmers who have respected the raven protection order to be able to apply for licences where the situation is so extreme it cannot be controlled in any other way.

Information for members (NSA guidance for the deterrence of ravens and applying for cull licences) can be found in the technical information section of the members-only area of the website, or directly from NSA Head Office.



NSA, still taking the lead

NSA has continued its work on sheep worrying by dogs in the last few months.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker and NSA Communications Officer Eleanor Phipps attended a SheepWatch UK conference in mid-June to share experiences of sheep farmers with a wide variety of organisations from the police to dog owners' organisations. The event also continued ongoing activity around bringing about legislative change.

Staff members further attended the National Police Chiefs' Council rural crime summit, allowing the opportunity to speak directly to police officers about their experiences. NSA is continuing to encourage any members affected by dog worrying to always report the incident to the police, no matter how small, and to request a rural crime officer when reporting the crime.

NSA also attended Countryfile Live in early August (pictured) to take the opportunity to speak directly with members of the public about responsible dog ownership.



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Integrating trees into farmland

NSA has released an updated version of its 'Sheep & Trees' booklet (pictured), in association with the Woodland Trust.

The booklet, which was launched at NSA Sheep 2018 event, contains in-depth information about the benefits of integrating trees into farming systems, rather than turning agricultural land over to forestry, as well as practical tips on how to do this.

The booklet contains case studies from England, Northern Island, Scotland and Wales, and demonstrates the benefits trees can have in different environments, such as providing shelter at lambing time,



Sheep sustainability research findings beginning to emerge

By Nicola Noble, NSA

We are now into the third year of the iSAGE project, the first funded role NSA has ever had in terms of livestock research.

NSA has regularly provided advice, support and guidance for research by universities, technology companies, students, levy bodies and others but, as an iSAGE industry partner, we have been directly involved in the planning and implementation of applied-research.

NSA's role

Our role has been to bring extensive knowledge of the sheep sector to advise and direct the project to ensure it is useful for our members. We were able to identify suitable farmers for all aspects of the project and many of our members are directly involved, particularly in work



In looking for ways to make sheep enterprises sustainable, resilient and efficient, the iSAGE project is developing sustainability assessments and assessing innovations.

around sustainability assessments.

A sustainability assessment identifies which parts of a farm business are sustainable and which areas can be improved. Farmers are asked to identify sustainability indicators within their farm from 13 specific sustainability indicators (see panel) to be assessed using the 'Public Goods Tool' developed by ORC. This tool includes many of the indicators recognised by the FAO's sustainability assessment of food and agriculture systems' guidelines.

the outcome (see panel on participants thoughts).

My colleagues within NSA have also found the assessments of value, as they provide a visual way to communicate to non-farmers (such as Government officials and people further up the supply chain) the range of outputs from sheep farms other than meat. If we take the average scores for UK extensive sheep farms as an example (see diagram) animal welfare and animal health perform very well, despite outdoor, pasture-fed systems being exposed to varying weather, harsh environments and predation.

Environmental factors such as soil, landscape and water are also in the 'green', suggesting positive environmental benefits for extensive systems. Areas which could be improved upon are energy efficiency, diversity on farm and social capita. However, in some of these farms, farm ownership played a huge role in the ability to invest in expensive systems such as energy efficiency and farm diversity. For example, graziers or tenant farmers would be less likely to invest in some of the areas highlighted as potentially vulnerable in their assessment.

Innovation

Once all the information has been entered, the results are immediate and the farmer can visualise what they are doing sustainably on the farm and what they may wish to improve. In addition, the performance of farms can be compared with other farms of the same type across Europe. We have also found that farmers value the actual process of completing the assessment, as well as

What is iSAGE?



The Innovation for Sustainable Sheep and Goat Production in Europe (iSAGE) project aims to make the sheep and goat sectors more sustainable, resilient and efficient. It includes many aspects of production, the supply chain and a strong focus on knowledge exchange. The five main objectives are:

- What makes farms sustainable and how innovation can be utilised.
- What farmers believe are the priorities for the industry and how to make their life easier.
- How sheep and goats can be bred to make farms more sustainable.
- Identify potential ways retailers and processors can contribute to more consumption
- Understand better how consumers perceive sheep and goat products.

The project includes 34 research bodies and industry partners from around Europe. From the UK, the Organic Research Centre (ORC) and Scottish Rural College (SRUC) are leading research, with NSA and AHDB as their industry partners respectively.

iSAGE has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement 679302). More at www.isage.eu.

Participants thoughts

Comments from farmers in the UK on completion of the on-farm assessment.

- "An assessment can really help you focus on what you need to look at next or where there's potential for doing something new."
- "It has been a really useful exercise and I would encourage others to take advantage of it."
- "Useful to see that we are doing things well."
- "The most interesting part was looking through the whole farm data. It's good to go through it all, as it gets you thinking."

by being more profitable, more environmentally friendly, or by making the farmer or animals' life easier.

Future use

In addition to looking at individual examples of innovation (see table), the project also aims to highlight any barriers towards uptake, including farmer opinion on the innovations investigated. At the end of the project, advice about which innovations are most suitable for specific farming systems and relevance to each country will be provided. Helpful tips to encourage adoption and overcome some of the hurdles experienced by farmers working together with the iSAGE project team will also be identified.

There is still a lot of work to be done to complete these projects. Within the sustainability assessments, further

Assessment of innovations

Innovation	Description	Results
NSA Next Generation Ambassador Programme (UK)	Investigation of NSA-led programme to support and encourage young people in the sector.	Ongoing
Natural resistance to gastrointestinal parasites of sheep breeds in low input systems (UK)	Evaluating the health of UK native and newly introduced sheep breeds developed for good health status under extensive systems (e.g. New Zealand Romney, Easy Care and Lleyn).	Ongoing
Mobile flock management for intensive goat farms (Spain)	Timely management and breeding decisions based on individual, electronically-collected and automatically processed data.	Farmers that collect and use individual records have more production, less unproductive periods and consistent annual production.
New sheep and goat AI speculum (Spain and France)	Newly designed speculum better suited to specific breeds.	Easier AI with less help required and, in some cases, improved success rates.
Controlled weaning in organic goat rearing (Italy and Greece)	Allowing kids to spend night-times with their mothers rather than being 100% artificially reared.	1.5 months less labour required during milking.
Better utilisation of farm forage (France)	Comparing utilisation of farm forage across different farms.	Reduced reliance on imported concentrates and forages was found to be possible.
Sharing technical information via social media (Turkey)	New ways for reproduction researchers and consultants to reach farmer clients.	Successful use of YouTube (>270,000 views) and interactive messaging between farmers and consultants.

in-depth analysis is needed to identify areas in which to focus future work. Ideally, we aim to analyse trends within the data produced, as well as identify areas of specific interest to UK sheep farmers.

Innovations are well underway with more results expected at the end of this year and into early 2019. Officially,

the project ends in February 2020, when a final report should be available. However, due to the size of the data set, it should continue to be useful for future NSA policy work, research projects and initiatives.

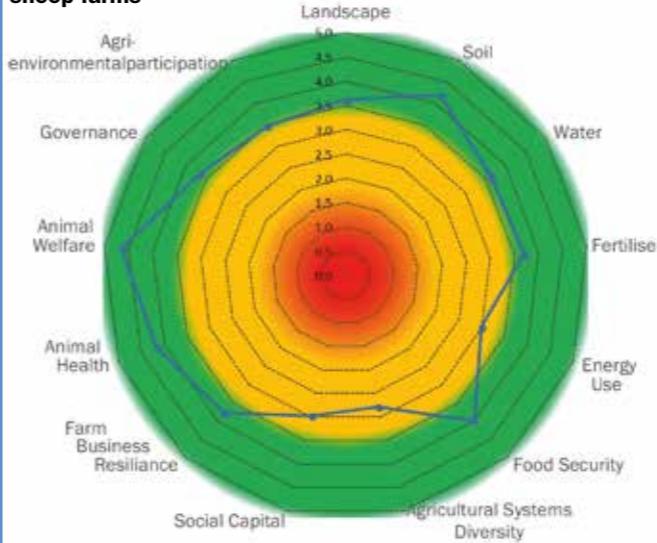
Learn more about the ORC Public Goods Tool at <https://tinyurl.com/PG-Tool-ORC>.

Sustainability indicators

Social

- **Landscape and heritage:** Contribution of a farm to preservation of the countryside and its heritage.
- **Social capital:** Community engagement and associated benefits to the local community (e.g. public access, training).

Average sustainability assessment scores for UK extensive sheep farms



- **Animal health:** Management of livestock to ensure good health (e.g. staff resources, health plan, biosecurity).
- **Animal welfare:** Management of livestock to ensure welfare (ability to perform natural behaviours, housing, feeding).

Environment

- **Soil management:** Soil organic matter / nutrient levels and soil damage through chosen management practices.
- **Agri-environment management:** Stewardship involvement and encouragement of native wildlife.
- **Water management:** Efforts to reduce pollution, sources of water being used and (if used) efficiency of irrigation.
- **Fertiliser management and nutrients:** 'Farm gate' NPK balance and on-farm nutrient, manure, fertiliser and waste management.
- **Energy and carbon:** Fuel, electricity and energy use, and attitude of usage on farm.
- **Agricultural system diversity:** Range of crop varieties and animal species on-farm, plus marketing/processing availability.

Economic

- **Food security:** Contribution of farm towards food quality and availability of food in the local area.
- **Farm business resilience:** Financial resilience of the business and its long-term prospects.

Governance: Effect of farming practices off the farm (e.g. ethical decisions, legal compliance, accountability and holistic management).

Combining a passion for native breeds, ag shows and rural organisations

Tim Ward has a national reputation as the go-to 'any other breed' judge. If your show or event has a class of mixed British sheep breeds to sort into prize-winning order, he is your man.

He is an accredited judge for a number of native sheep breeds and the Rare Breed Survival Trust (RBST). But this deep-rooted appreciation does not stop at showing sheep – Tim is also committed to seeing home-grown agricultural shows and rural organisations thrive.

Busy schedule

Having been on the NSA Cymru/Wales Regional Committee for 14 years, Tim took on the role of regional chairman in February and returned to the NSA Management Board as a Trustee for another term. He first joined the NSA committee as a rep for the Dorset Down Sheep Breeders' Association, a role he still holds today, as well as sitting on the Dorset Down Council. He also stewards at the Royal Welsh Show, Winter Fair and Spring Festival, and is the rare breeds steward at the Royal Three Counties Show. He recently retired as Shropshire Show chief sheep steward and stepped down as the local parish clerk, but continues as local hunt secretary and works with the RBST support group in his area to organise an annual rare breeds sale.

That is not to mention the four events he exhibits sheep at annually, the nine or so shows he is asked to judge on average each year, his full-time employment or his two small sheep flocks. So what is it that drives Tim to have his fingers in so many pies?

"I love genetics and I love the pedigree side of things," he says. "People say this country has too many sheep breeds but I don't agree. Each breed has its niche and we've developed so many in the UK because they suit



Tim Ward runs his smallholding alongside full-time employment.

different areas and systems and, therefore, each has its place in our industry. I believe it is very important we keep a wide and varied range of genetics available to us, because you never know where and when we will need to make use of them."

Kerry Hills

With the family's large sheep farming enterprise sold off in the 1980s, Tim classes himself as a smallholder. The house at Churchstoke, Powys, some farm buildings and 3ha (eight acres) were kept back from the sale, allowing Tim to run 22 Dorset Down ewes and 11 Kerry Hills alongside two jobs. He works three days a week in an administrative role for Shropshire County Council and two days a week running the Kerry Hill Flock Book Society. Tim had hungered for a breed society role so was particularly thrilled to secure one for a breed he and

his family have a long history with. "My family first registered Kerry Hill stock in 1905 so I'm a fifth generation Kerry Hill breeder and will always have some Kerrys about," says Tim. "Going on the RBST Watchlist did Kerrys the world of good, as it attracted the interest of people with a bit of money who wanted a 'pretty' sheep. Numbers were boosted and, four years since coming off the list, we've retained those hobby breeders and attracted the commercially-minded producers back as well."

Dorset Downs

Tim has a history with his Dorset Downs too: "In the early 1970s we were putting a Suffolk on the Kerrys but, having trouble finishing the lambs, were looking for something different. We picked up a couple of Dorset Down rams at one of the very early NSA Wales & Borders Ram Sales and were very pleased with the crossbred lambs born the following February on the hill farm. My father then started breeding our own rams so we could put a Dorset over the bottom of the Kerry ewes that we didn't want to keep pure."

"Dorsets have an unfair reputation for throwing fat lambs. You do have to handle crossbred lambs regularly, to find them fit not fat, but last year I sold tups to a farm that used to buy from us more than 25 years ago. They've been through all the continentals and come back to something that will finish off grass."

With the small numbers he's now running, Tim keeps everything pure and



The Kerry Hill flock is self-replacing, with males mainly sold for meat.

focuses on producing quality females. He sells Dorset Down ewe lambs and some older ewes privately each year, while Kerry Hill females are retained within the self-replacing flock. Males from both breeds are sold through Shrewsbury Market, mostly as prime lambs but some Kerry wether stores depending on the year. Occasionally a 'very special' male from either breed will be sold for breeding.

The Dorset ewes go to the tup in the second week of July and the Kerrys in September. Everything is housed in early December, just as the Dorsets start lambing. This allows the grass to build up in time for the Kerrys to be turned out once they lamb in February, and by this stage the Dorset lambs are being weaned and the males not far off going to market and hitting strong prices for new season lambs.



Dorset ewe lambs are sold privately for breeding, to new and repeat customers.

"It works very well because I lamb the Dorset Downs very early and get anything I'm selling away in the early market, which leaves me with enough room for the Kerrys later on," Tim says, explaining his land is limited to just two large fields and five smaller patches.

Ewes are offered energy buckets during tupping, then bought-in hay, straw and protein nuts once housed. The Dorset lambs are creep fed while in the shed and also at turnout depending on grass availability, but Tim says the Kerrys ignore any feed other than grass.

Minimal input

Tim describes the flock as minimal input. He knows he has a selenium problem so gives the ewes a mineral bolus a month before tupping and the lambs a bolus or a drench at weaning depending on their size. He vaccinates for pasteurella and clostridial diseases, and uses a white drench early in the season to hit nematodirus, but anything else is only if needed. Tim's culling policy is tough, which he says is essential given that his



Tim is a fan of Dorset rams as a pure and a crossing sire.

two jobs don't allow him to be with the sheep all the time.

Tim shows his Dorsets at the Royal Welsh, Monmouth and Royal Three Counties shows each year, plus the Royal Welsh Spring Festival. This is usually in the any other breed class.

"I enjoy doing any other breed classes as a judge and a competitor," Tim says. "To me, showing is getting the breed and your name out there so why wouldn't you go in the any other breed? It's a bit of a lottery sometimes but I love my sheep and find it very satisfying to go on to sell them and see them doing well for other people."

Events

So be it showing sheep, judging them or stewarding, Tim sees agricultural events as the lifeblood of preserving genetics in the UK.

"There are plenty of people showing Kerrys now, but the Dorsets are category five on the RBST list (minority breed) so it's about getting them out there and getting me out there," he says, adding modestly. "But I don't do as many shows as I did, because I seem to be judging everything."

Tim shares his views

- **On the role of NSA:** "A love of sheep runs through every part of NSA and we support all people who keep sheep, from the smallholder to the very large flock. Although the scale of the problem might be different, we all have the same problems. Some people still think we're there for the pedigree breeder, but we're doing as much for the commercial man nowadays and have the depth of knowledge to do it well."

- **On being an NSA Regional Chairman:** "I want to help guide the farmers of Wales going forward and support them to get the best out of what is to come in these times of uncertainty."

- **On NSA Welsh Sheep 2019:** "I'm looking forward to Welsh Sheep. Hopefully we'll know more of where we're going by then and the event will assist farms in making decisions going forward. It's going to make the most of being at an agricultural college this time." *More at www.welshsheep.org.uk.*



Tim is a fifth generation Kerry Hill breeder, following family tradition.



The Dorset Down ewes went to the tup in mid-July.

Changes ahead as VAT-registered farm businesses must 'go digital'

By Natalie Hallett, Old Mill

'Making Tax Digital' is a Government initiative that aims to make it easier for individuals and businesses to get their tax right and keep on top of their affairs.

The first phase is being introduced from April 2019 for VAT registered entities. Requirements for taxes other than VAT will come into effect from April 2020 at the earliest.

Businesses with turnover above the VAT threshold (currently £85,000) will be required to maintain digital records and submit their VAT information to HMRC using Making Tax Digital compatible third-party software. Most businesses have submitted their VAT return electronically for several years, but once Making Tax Digital is introduced, the records for the underlying transactions will also need to be maintained electronically, which will require a change in process for many.

Who's affected?

The change applies to sole traders, partnerships, companies, limited liability partnerships and charities. VAT-registered businesses with a turnover below the registration threshold can opt in and file their VAT information via Making Tax Digital if they wish.

If you currently prepare your VAT returns by hand or on computer spreadsheet, you will need to make changes. This could be considered an administrative burden. However, complying with Making Tax Digital requirements could bring some broader benefits for many businesses. Once the software system is up and running it can provide real-time information, reduce errors and save you time, which ultimately helps you to run a more efficient business.

Support with changes

Here at Old Mill, we know our clients require different levels of service and involvement from us – and so we are providing three levels of support for Making Tax Digital:

1. You or your bookkeeper use Making Tax Digital compliant software to record your transactions and you self-manage your Making Tax Digital requirements.
2. Old Mill provide training on our recommended software to help you get up and running to self-manage your Making Tax Digital requirements.



New 'Making Tax Digital' rules come into effect in April 2019.

3. Old Mill carry out your bookkeeping and fulfil your Making Tax Digital requirements.

Software available

In addition, even if you currently maintain your records in software, you may have to make some changes, depending on the software you use as some older software will not be compliant with Making Tax Digital requirements. You may need to contact your software provider to ensure you are up to date. Newer software might not be compatible with older computer systems, so this is another area you may need to consider.

Old Mill will be running Making Tax Digital clinics. Find information on these events www.oldmillgroup.co.uk/making-tax-digital.

Making Tax Digital

Start Date: April 2019

Exceptions: The exemptions that currently apply for electronic VAT filing will also apply to Making Tax Digital. There is an automatic exemption for VAT-registered businesses with turnover below the registration threshold.

Free software: None expected from HMRC.

Digital record-keeping requirements: HMRC has confirmed the requirement to keep digital records does not mean businesses will have to make and store underlying invoices and receipts digitally. The information that must be reported includes, business name; location of business and VAT registration number, information about supplies made and received. Records, digital and paper, must be kept for six years.

Flat VAT scheme: Businesses will still be able to use the flat rate scheme.

Monthly returns: Businesses will still be able to submit monthly, rather than quarterly, returns under Making Tax Digital.

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Europe may want our lamb, but will we be able to export it post-Brexit?

By Colin Ley, contributor

What will happen if we lose tariff-free access into the EU for sheepmeat and fifth quarter exports? It's the big question we've all been asking since the EU referendum was declared and the first 'new opportunities' promises started to be made.

Finding a sane and accurate answer on which to base breeding and production plans isn't easy, especially with pro and anti Brexit views on either side of the debate.

In an attempt to reach a balanced view on where we stand at present, and where we could be heading in less than eight months' time, this article seeks the views of industry leaders, meat business executives and sheep sector advisers to find out what they think and why.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker kicks things off: "The first point to make is that we're beginning with a strong base and a diverse market – and we should aim to keep it that way.

"Our domestic market is shared between supermarkets, halal markets, independent butchers, catering and direct sales, while exports consist of carcase and individual cuts, lower value cuts and fifth quarter products that trade globally.

High quality

"We also have a smaller volume of high quality branded products for specialist outlets that sell across the EU and wider global markets, plus a number of live lamb sales going mainly into the Republic of Ireland and a few northern EU states. It's a great diversity that we need to maintain beyond Brexit, as over-reliance on any one market is like putting all your eggs in one basket."

Currently around 35% of UK sheepmeat goes for export with virtually all of this (96%) ending up in the EU. With sheepmeat imports running at a similar level, however, we could be more or less self-sufficient post-Brexit, at least in theory.

"In practice, of course, it doesn't work that way," says Mr Stocker. "We use exports and imports to balance supply seasonality and to match different parts of the carcase and fifth quarter to consumer demands at home and abroad. We are also part of a trading world that thrives on competition, knowing that even if it made sense for



Europe will not stop wanting our lamb in March 2019, but it remains unclear if it will be possible and/or affordable to meet that export demand.

us to stop trading, others most definitely wouldn't follow suit."

The UK's post-Brexit challenge therefore is to keep as much of what we already have while seeking to add new outlets around the world. According to one leading meat trade executive, however, we're not doing very well in terms of getting ready for March 2019, let-alone the months and years that will follow.

"The biggest issue for those actually working in the business is that there is no plan for the way ahead," says an unnamed meat company executive. "The UK Government certainly doesn't have one and, as such, we're getting absolutely no direction from them."

Uncertainty

"If you're a sheepmeat buyer in France, for example, where the bulk of our exported lambs end up, and you want to source British supplies in May, June and July 2019, what's the plan? Will there be tariffs, won't there be tariffs? What restrictions will be in place? What extra legislative requirements might there be? Will the UK Government come up with some form of incentive to keep exports moving? Frankly, the questions are endless.

"The only point we're sure of, in fact, is that we'll have more or less the same number of lambs to export in 2019 as we've had this year. Just about everything else is unknown."

Lamb exports have traditionally worked on a high contact / low contract basis. Although letters of intent may

be exchanged at certain points in the year, the business is largely relationship driven, based on agreements reached at trade shows such as Sial and Anuga and carried through in the face of the usual ups and downs of international trade.

This is the structure exporters fear may be swept away in March next year.

International trade

"We're big sheepmeat traders alongside New Zealand and Australia, being net exporters from June to Christmas each year and net importers from Christmas to the end of May," says Dr Phil Hadley, AHDB International Market Development Director. "Our import demand is about 100,000 tonnes with an export out-turn of about 80,000-plus tonnes.

"It doesn't work to stop trading, however, as we saw during the last foot-and-mouth outbreak when we lost our export market. This caused a glut on the home market and the price duly tanked."

While France remains the volume taker of British sheepmeat, we are experiencing growing EU diversity with more product now going into northern Europe. Although this is broadening the UK's export base beyond France, it's still picking off European markets.

"We have had some recent sheepmeat export successes to markets like Hong Kong and Saudi," adds Dr Hadley. "This is positive, of course, but the reality is that such sales account for a relatively small proportion of our export trade. Without a doubt, therefore, the European market is critical to the UK sheepmeat sector and the future

stability of our trade during whatever comes next."

And if we lost tariff-free access into the EU, what then? "That would be potentially very disruptive to the sheepmeat sector," he says, adding that hitting such a point at the end of March next year would also coincide with a time when the UK industry is approaching its peak annual production period.

Dr Hadley's colleague, AHDB Market Intelligent Director Phil Bicknell, is similarly nervous about the impact of a no-deal Brexit on the sheep sector. "If we don't get a deal with the EU, trading on World Trade Organisation terms would mean our exports into Europe would face a tariff, which would be a big challenge," he says. That challenge would come in addition to the added problems caused by non-tariff trade barriers.

Mr Bicknell adds: "What the Government has said over the last 12 months, including in the Chequers deal agreed in early July, hasn't varied concerning their intended 'landing zone' of looking for trade with the EU that is frictionless and avoids tariffs and any disruption to the current flow of goods. How attractive that is to Europe, remains to be seen."

EU trade

The other big hope for UK producers is that current export sales into the EU will, in time, be replaced by expanding trade links around the globe. But how long would such a transition take?

"That's really a 'how long is a piece of string' question," says Mr Bicknell. "Are we talking about getting into new markets and overcoming access issues, such as already exist in relation to North

America, or will it be a case of trying to expand other opportunities?

"Break down our current 80,000-100,000 tonnes of exported sheepmeat, the majority of which goes into France, and it feels like it would take quite a long time to replace that."

"The other bit we shouldn't ignore is that we'll face competition in all new target markets, basically from Southern Hemisphere producers, some of whom already have a head start through the trading partnerships and agreements that are in place."

Asking all our interviewees if they believe UK Government officials and politicians understand the position in which the sheep sector finds itself, the response from each was that the industry message is getting through. That is a view shared by NSA, which has put a huge amount of effort into regularly emphasising the point at all levels.

At the same time, however, there's a realisation that the final Brexit deal will be settled through a negotiation process. The big fear for farmers, as one interviewee put it, is whether or not access to the UK's agricultural markets will be viewed as

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a potential 'make-weight' in that same process.

"It would be a massive blow to end up with disruption to our EU trade as there isn't anywhere else we could sell the volume of lambs currently going into Europe," says Nick Allen, British Meat Processors Association Chief Executive.

"I am an eternal optimist, however, and don't believe the politicians will be so stupid as to end up with tariffs going backward and forward between us and Europe. That's optimism, of course, in the face of everything that's going on at present."

While the competing negotiators in Brussels and London continue to point-score at each other's expense, there's still a job to be done here and now on behalf of British sheep farmers, a point made forcefully by Jean-Pierre Garnier of Randall Parker Foods.

"The good news is that there is still a great appetite for UK lamb in Europe and beyond," he says, adding that exports started 'like a train' in the first quarter of this year, due to strong demand. "Unfortunately, the British lamb train derailed in the second quarter. It is now time to put it back on the rails."

Export funding

Calling for qualified exporters to take a more active role in decision making in the UK's levy boards, for export funding for the British sheepmeat sector to be ring-fenced, and for the UK to learn from how other nations operate, especially Ireland, Mr Garnier remains convinced the foundations of the industry are as solid as ever.

"With recorded exports of 26,232 tonnes in the first four months of this year (and official statistics tend to under-report real export levels), we still have a strong export base," he says. "The fundamental strengths of the British sheepmeat sector, which produces a great product competitively, remain our best guarantee for the future."

Mike Gooding, director of Farmers Fresh, takes a similar line in his approach to the EU marketplace in 2019 and beyond. He says: "Having spent 20 years trading across Europe we know that whatever the final post-Brexit agreements, legislation and rules of engagement are, it all really comes down to relationship with customers and meeting their expectations.

"The beauty of the European market is that there is huge variety in both expectations and specifications, and the good news is that if you stand in a meat store in Europe today you will find British lamb, whereas 10-15 years ago you would have found an awful lot of produce from other parts of the world."

"Irrespective of the uncertainties of the future trading arrangements, therefore, demand in Europe for lamb remains strong and we're well placed to meet it."

All set for Love Lamb Week 2018

The UK sheep industry will celebrate all that is great about lamb as it takes part in Love Lamb Week 2018, running from Saturday 1st to Friday 7th September.

The LoveLamb campaign, now in its fourth year, will target consumer perception of when to eat lamb, emphasising that the highest volume of lamb is available during the last six months of the year despite most people typically choosing to eat lamb around Easter.

NSA will be one of several industry bodies working with UK levy bodies to on the campaign and urges NSA members to promote themselves and their produce during the week. Love Lamb Week has previously received good backing across the country, catching the attention of national press and broadcast media as well as interest and support from top chefs.



NSA Next Generation Ambassadors will be throwing their weight behind Love Lamb Week 2018.

Lending support to the campaign once again this year are the NSA Next Generation Ambassadors. Kirree Kermode, an NSA Ambassador from the Isle of Man, explains: "When people pick up a lamb steak in a supermarket, rugged coastlines and heather covered moorlands won't be springing to mind – but there's a good chance that's where the lamb has been produced. Shoppers should be aware when they are buying lamb they are supporting some of our country's most beautiful areas."

The message of the sustainable nature of lamb production will be spread far and wide as sheep farmers are encouraged to share images and messages of support for Love Lamb Week through social media.

Support #LoveLambWeek

- Follow @natsheep on Facebook and Twitter and share #LoveLambWeek images featuring your sheep farm, Love Lamb events and/or delicious home cooked lamb dishes.
- Visit your local pub, farm shop or butcher and encourage them to get involved.
- Speak to your NSA regional committee about getting involved.
- Use the industry recognised hashtags of #LoveLambWeek and #LoveLamb to increase the reach of the campaign.
- If you don't use social media, email your pictures with permission to use to enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk.
- Download promotional resources from all levy boards, including recipes and video clips, at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lovelamb.

Judging mutton, hogget and lamb

By Bob Kennard, NSA Heritage Breeds Project Manager

Is the vast majority of the public missing out on a variety of great eating experiences by only being offered lamb by the market?

This may be the case according to work done by NSA on sheepmeat eating quality, including a blind tasting of lamb, hogget and mutton at NSA Sheep 2018 – see panel.

Nobody is suggesting we should stop promoting lamb, but we need to make the public aware there is a diversity beyond lamb that can offer a different yet equally excellent eating experience. The NSA Heritage Breeds Project has demonstrated this in both the age of the animal and, in older animals, the breed. Both these variables have shown major differences in flavour and texture, while remaining a comparable eating experience to quality lamb.

The project proposes we start celebrating these eating differences in meat of different ages, breeds and



People were asked to try a sample of each meat and rate it.

landscapes, by treating sheep meat as we do whisky. We could increase consumer choice by offering a standard product (standard lamb or blended grain whisky) together with a range of specialist varieties. With whisky this is individual malts, and in sheep meats it can be breed, age and the landscape which created it.

Blind taste test

Visitors were asked to score three samples from 1 (extremely poor) to 7 (extremely good) for tenderness, juiciness, sweetness, strong 'sheepy' flavor, and fattiness/greasiness.

Samples

- Lamb (an animal under a year old), hogget (one to two years old) and mutton (more than two years old).
- All the same breed of sheep (Shropshire) reared on one farm.
- All matured on the bone for one to three weeks and cooked by the same chef in the same way.
- All samples served cold.

Results

- Preference was joint for lamb and hogget (43% each) and 14% for mutton.
- Hogget scored highest in tenderness, juiciness and sweetness.
- Lamb scored highest for lack of a strong 'sheepy' flavour and minimal greasiness.

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Let's get serious on resistance: Are you an ostrich or an owl?

By Lesley Stubbings,
SCOPS



In early 2018, the first instances of sheep scab mite resistance to the injectables (moxidectin) were confirmed in four UK sheep flocks. In June, another paper was published outlining the first case of worm resistance to monepantel in the UK.

SCOPS is urging producers to use these reports as incentive to take positive action to safeguard the future of their parasite control – and yet a common reaction to recent reports is a shrug of the shoulders, effectively a burying of heads in the sand. This problem won't go away and, as there are no new products in the pipeline, we have to work carefully to retain what we have.

Correct dosing

Moving away from the routine and well-established drenching programmes that have been used for many years is not easy. It can be hard to make changes if a farmer thinks his anthelmintics are still effective. It's human nature to think 'if it ain't broke, why fix it?' but with resistance you have to start the fix long before it breaks, using tactics that slow it down before it takes hold. If we take the ostrich stance, we will get caught out and there is no road back.

Adapting your farming practices to move towards being an 'owl' is relatively simple and taking three easy steps will slow the development of resistance in worms and scab mites on a farm.



Be an owl, not an ostrich that buries its head in the sand.



Ensure your equipment is working and calibrated to help prevent resistance

A significant proportion of sheep are under-dosed and this can significantly increase the rate resistance builds up on a farm. You should also weigh before dosing, not guess. When people are asked to judge weight by eye, more than 70% will underestimate. Dose to the heaviest and, if the range is wide, split into two groups.

A further way to ensure you are dosing correctly is to calibrate your drench gun and check it every time it is used, as well as during use if you are treating a large number of sheep. Keep guns well serviced and/or change the more disposable ones regularly. Correct administration over the back of the tongue is the only way to ensure your sheep are properly treated.

Drench test

Check your wormers are working. Knowing where you are in terms of resistance is central to how you control worms in the future. Reap the performance benefits of good worm control. You can ask your vet or adviser how you can get faecal egg counts (FECs) done and simply take a sample as you drench a group, then re-sample seven or 14 days later.

You should repeat testing at different times and get into the habit of doing so.

On-farm experiences

- Ben Anthony, Carmarthenshire:** "I thought we were very careful about getting the dosing right but I was shocked how far out I was when I decided to check the calibration of my guns. We've also started splitting groups into two weight ranges to increase accuracy. It stops us over-dosing the smaller ones too, which reduces the cost."

- Matt Blyth, Sussex:** "We've known for some years that white wormers (1-BZ) are only effective against nematodirus, and we suspected the others were not fully effective either. We have now confirmed resistance to group 2-LV (yellow) and 3-ML (clear) wormers, but because we keep a careful check we have found that we can still use them at certain times of year. I routinely run drench tests after drenching and then use a group 4-AD (orange) or 5-SI (purple) for lambs in the late summer."

- Will Rawling, Cumbria:** "I have long championed the need for a quick, efficient and accurate method of diagnosis of sheep scab to help reduce unnecessary treatment and was pleased to use the ELISA test last year. It is impossible to be certain if a sheep has scab without a diagnosis, yet thousands of sheep are treated every year on the basis of 'prevention is better than cure'."

You can further talk to your vet or adviser about using a group 4-AD (orange) or 5-SI (purple) later in the season as a one-off dose for all remaining lambs.

Unnecessary use

Avoid unnecessary use of wormers and/or injectable scab treatments. Some of these products are simply used as routine but we can reduce their use without any detrimental effect on performance. For example, you don't need to worm adult ewes pre-tupping unless they are in poor condition or being tupped for the first time. This saves time, money and helps reduce the pressure on the wormer products.

If you normally routinely inject for scab, stop and ask whether you really need to. You can now use an ELISA test (a blood test to detect infestations) rather than treating 'just in case'. More at www.scops.org.uk.

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Ballymena – Sat 8 th Sept	Carlisle – Thurs 27 th Sept
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at Ruswarp, North Yorkshire	at Hawes
EWES AND SHEARLINGS	EWES AND SHEARLINGS
28 TH SEPTEMBER	9 TH OCTOBER
at NWA, Junction 36, Cumbria	at Cockermouth, Cumbria
EWES AND SHEARLINGS	EWES AND EWE LAMBS
28 TH SEPTEMBER	11 TH OCTOBER
at Clitheroe, Lancashire	at Penrith, Cumbria
EWES & SHEARLINGS	EWES AND SHEARLINGS
29 TH SEPTEMBER	13 TH OCTOBER
at St John's Chapel	at Lazonby, Cumbria
EWES, SHEARLINGS AND EWE LAMBS	EWES, SHEARLINGS & EWE LAMBS
1 ST OCTOBER	13 TH OCTOBER
at Middleton in Teesdale	at Hexham, Northumberland
EWES AND SHEARLINGS	(HEXHAM, BELLINGHAM & TOW LAW SALE) EWES
2 ND OCTOBER	16 TH OCTOBER
at Bentham, Lancs	at Hawes
EWES, SHEARLINGS AND EWE LAMBS	EWES
4 TH OCTOBER	27 TH OCTOBER
at Hexham, Northumberland	at Kirby Stephen
EWES AND SHEARLINGS	ALL CLASSES OF BREEDING SHEEP
5 TH OCTOBER	
at Kirby Stephen	
EWES AND SHEARLINGS	
6 TH OCTOBER	
at Kirby Stephen	
EWE LAMBS	

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Project work in NI to assess role of rotational grazing for sheep

By Elizabeth Earle, AgriSearch NI



In Northern Ireland grazed or ensiled grass remains the dominant forage source, occupying an estimated 93% of the total farmed area. With a natural climatic advantage for grass production it is important we maximise the use of high quality pasture in our sheep production systems.

However, the current performance of managed grasslands remains sub-optimal with an estimated 4.1 tonnes DM/ha utilised on beef and sheep farms, significantly behind achievable levels. A recent study carried out by the Agri-Food and Bioscience Institute (AFBI) demonstrated that improving grassland utilisation by 1t/ha on beef farms is worth an additional £204/ha/year.

The 'Lamb from Grass' project aims to identify grazing strategies that can maximise the use of grazed grass in lowland lamb production systems. A series of in-depth grazing experiments will be undertaken by PhD student Tara Meeke at the sustainable sheep systems unit at AFBI during 2018 and 2019.

Rotational grazing

Alongside these studies, a number of commercial lowland sheep farms are testing four versus eight paddock rotational grazing systems on-farm across Northern Ireland. This work will provide valuable information on the effect these two systems have on grass and animal performance and overall lamb output.

Given that different breeds will perform and respond differently depending on genetics and management systems, 'Lamb from Grass' will investigate three terminal sire breeds (Meatlinc, New Zealand Suffolk and Aberfield) within the project, allowing for accurate commercial information to be captured on how different breeds/genotypes respond.

These co-research farms are running multiple tests, including grass measurements. This includes monitoring grass production and utilisation weekly by using a rising plate meter and recording animal entry and exit dates and covers (kgDM/ha) from paddocks, with data recorded within AgriNet, a computer software programme to aid with grazing decisions. Grass quality will also be sampled fortnightly, measuring dry matter, metabolisable energy, crude protein and sugars.

Animal measures

Additionally, animal measures are being taken to monitor ewe performance (weight and body condition score) and lamb growth from birth to slaughter, plus carcass characteristics and production output per hectare.

'Lamb from Grass' also feeds into a large network of 48 commercial GrassCheck farms monitoring grass growth, quality and weather conditions across Northern Ireland. These farms consist of a range of dairy, beef and sheep systems, land type, growth potential and management intensity. Weekly information on these farms in terms of grass growth, soil temperature, rainfall, and grass quality is available online.

Autumn is one of the best times of year to consider setting up your farm for rotational grazing. It allows you the opportunity to set your farm appropriately for grazing the following spring.



Sward height

Sward height targets for rotation grazing

Before weaning	
Pre-graze sward height	8-10cm
Post-graze sward height	4cm
After weaning	
Pre-graze sward height	8-10cm
Post-graze sward height	5-7cm (lambs) 4cm (ewes)

The 'Lamb from grass' project is testing four versus eight paddock rotational grazing systems on-farm across Northern Ireland.

in accordance with your projected feed demand at turn out.

There are multiple things to consider when setting up a rotational paddock grazing system. Soil fertility is a critical factor influencing grass production on-farm. The target soil pH should be greater than 6.0, and it's important to check soil fertility and test every two to three years. You can then apply fertiliser according to soil status report.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure can be assessed by marking out the number and size of paddocks available for grazing and then deciding the number of paddocks required for each group of stock, considering any permanent or temporary fences that may be required. You will also need to identify appropriate central drinking points for stock in each paddock, and think about the fact multiple points within paddock provides the opportunity to change paddock size and grass allocation through the grazing season. Access points and road ways are also crucial to ease of access and management.

Grazing management

A final consideration is how you will manage grazing. AgriSearch recommend grazing all swards to 3.5 to 4 cm in the autumn. You should also close up targeted paddocks to graze first in the spring with ewes and lambs. These fields should ideally be sheltered sheltered paddocks as these will be valuable asset for young lambs in the spring. You should then measure grass weekly, using the cut-and-weigh, plate meter or sward stick techniques, and keep a record of dates and covers when paddocks are grazed, fertilised, topped and cut for silage. Software packages such as AgriNet can be used to record and monitor grass production and flock demand on farm and create grass wedges, and you can use this information to aid grazing decisions.

Find grazing information at www.agrisearch.org/grasscheck.

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Target lamb weights reached via frequent weighing and mob FEC

By Debbie James, Farming Connect

Weighing lambs at regular intervals in combination with frequent faecal egg counting (FEC) can increase numbers hitting target weight and reduce worming treatments as it allows flock managers to intervene on grazing management and health issues, a Farming Connect project has shown.

Results from the project at Innovis, a Farming Connect Innovation site in Ceredigion, showed most ewe lambs achieved growth rates in line with their target tupping weights or above in July and October, and were within 50g/day of their targets in August and September.

Weighing

The project involved weighing up to 1,000 lambs at the Innovis Myndy Gorddu site at Bontgoch. The lambs, aged between two and nine months, were weighed at regular intervals in combination with foot bathing throughout the summer; growth rates and target weights had been set for each breed.

Following management interventions, lambs weighed on 24th July 2017 and found to be more than 50g/day below target weight were achieving 294g/day two weeks later.

Lambs achieving poor growth were shed into separate groups and grazed at lower stocking density than the main mob, allowing them to achieve a higher growth rate to catch up



Ewe lambs were frequently weighed as part of the Farming Connect project.

with the rest of the flock. In some cases, underperformance was due to lameness, so these lambs were treated accordingly.

Decisions to worm animals were based on both lamb growth rate and FEC, so worm treatment was only given if growth rates were below target and mob FEC was above 500 eggs per gram.

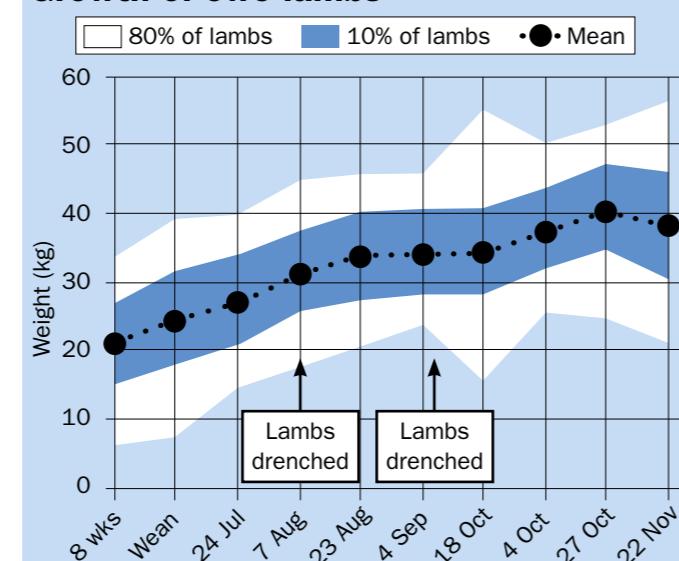
Monitoring

Trace element monitoring indicated that no further supplementation with selenium or vitamin B12 was needed, resulting in a cost saving because lambs would normally have been bolused at 12-16 weeks of age.

There was good growth in ewe lamb replacements from July to October, growth rates fell short of the target of 250g/day in November, but the growth rates achieved in October meant 60% of ewe lambs still achieved the target of 60% of mature weight at tupping.

The project had positive outcomes for performance and lessons have been learned to improve performance further in future years. Grazing pressure for underperforming lambs will be reduced by segregating them into separate groups to graze ahead of the main mob and further improvements will be made to the management of ewe lambs.

Growth of ewe lambs



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Tuesday 21 st August	Annual Show & Sale of 6,500 SHEARLING GIMMERS, MULE, MASHAM & CONTINENTAL
Friday 24 th August	Special Sale of BREEDING SHEEP inc EWES & RAMS
Saturday 1 st September	Show and sale of 300 PEDIGREE BELTEX SHEEP
Tuesday 11 th September	Show & sale of 7,500 NORTH OF ENGLAND MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Tuesday 18 th September	2 nd Show & Sale of SHEARLING GIMMERS & Sale of all classes of BREEDING SHEEP 25 th Show & Sale of 80 PEDIGREE CHAROLLAIS SHEEP
Thursday 20 th & Friday 21 st September	37 th Annual Show & Sale of 600 PEDIGREE TEXEL RAMS & FEMALES
Tuesday 25 th September	2 nd Show & Sale of 10,000 MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Tuesday 2 nd October	Sale of all classes of BREEDING SHEEP & RAMS
Thursday 4 th October	Show & Sale of REGISTERED LLEYN BREEDING SHEEP
Friday 5 th October	Annual MULTI BREED SHOW & SALE of 1500 RAMS & FEMALES
Saturday 6 th October	Annual Show & Sale of 4,500 SWaledale EWES & SHEARLINGS
Monday 8 th October	Special Evening sale of 120 SWaledale RAMS
Tuesday 9 th October	Show & Sale of SWaledale GIMMER LAMBS CONTINENTAL & OTHER GIMMER LAMBS Prize Show & Sale of MASHAM GIMER LAMBS Open Prize Show & Sale of MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Saturday 13 th October	Pedigree CHAROLLAIS IN-LAMB FEMALES
Tuesday 23 rd October	18 th Annual Show & Sale of 100 DALESBRED RAMS & FEMALES

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SALE DATES 2018

EWE LAMBS

August
24 Stirling (Cal)
30 Ayr
31 Newton Stewart

September
1 Stirling (UA)
3 Castle Douglas
5 Lanark
7 Hexham
15 Dumfries
18 Stirling (UA)
20 Huntly
21 Hexham

October
2 Kingussie
3 Longtown
5 Dingwall
11 Hexham
17 Longtown

November
1 Lanark
2 Fort William

GIMMERS AND EWES

September
13 Ayr
14 Newton Stewart
19 Castle Douglas
20 Huntly
21 Dalmally
21 Newcastle
22 Forfar
25 Oban
25 Lanark - uncrossed
26 Lanark - crossed
26 Stirling (Cal)
27 St Boswells

October
2 Kingussie
3 Longtown
4 Hexham
4 Fort William
5 Dingwall
10 Lanark
12 Dumfries
17 Longtown

November
12 Lanark
23 Longtown

WETHER LAMBS

September
29 Dumfries
29 Stirling (UA)
29 Loughash Farm Sale

October
3 Stirling (UA) Show
4 Oban Show
7 Dumfries Show
8 Dalmally Show
10 Stirling (Cal) Show
14 Dingwall Show
21 Fort William
22 Forfar Show
27 St Boswells Show

August
Weekly sales of store lambs held at all auctions

September
28 Lanark show
28 Hexham Show

October
12 Lanark
23 Longtown Show

RAMS

October
1 Ballymena
4 Newton Stewart
5 Dingwall
10 Oban
13 Stirling (UA)
15 Hexham
15 Castle Douglas
15 Portree
18 Lanark - Shearlings
19 Lanark - Lambs
20 Dalmally

November
1 Lanark
2 Fort William



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NSA Welsh Sheep – Tuesday 21st May – Gwynedd – www.welshsheep.org.uk
NSA North Sheep – Wednesday 5th June – North Yorkshire – www.northsheep.org.uk
NSA Highland Sheep – Wednesday 12th June – Caithness – www.nsascotland.org
NSA Sheep South West – Tuesday 18th June – Devon – www.sheepsouthwest.org.uk
NSA Sheep Northern Ireland – Monday 1st July – County Antrim – www.nationalsheep.org.uk/sheepni

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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.

Make investments pay and take care of rams

By Dr Jenny Hull,
Black Sheep
Farm Health,
Northumberland



A ram is an expensive investment. To minimise cost and maximise production and profit, their health, longevity and performance needs to be optimised.

Buying 'fit for purpose' rams that are not overfed and able to serve 80 ewes and survive four years without being culled plays a role in this.

Newly purchased rams should be quarantined for four weeks. They should receive a quarantine anthelmintic dose of either monepantel (orange 4-AD) or derquantel and abamectin (purple 5-SI) and then be held off-pasture for 48 hours.

During the quarantine period, rams should also receive treatment for the prevention of sheep scab and a liver fluke. During quarantine, rams should be carefully checked for signs of disease and should also have their feet examined and, if necessary, treated.



Sourcing and managing tups well will help them pay back on their cost.

There have been concerns for many years that breeding rams are overfed and that this may limit their performance. Overfed rams have a shorter life span, reduced bone density, increased joint deformities, increased risk of acidosis and urolithiasis (bladder stones) and increased scrotal fat leading to reduced fertility. Purchasing rams

The cost of a ram

- The average ram price in 2017 was £709.
- Depending on the working lifespan of up to four years, the average ram will depreciate by between £180 and £500 per year.
- There is also the cost of a year's keep, feed costs, vaccinations, parasite treatments and losses.
- A ram that is mated with 40 ewes and culled after one year will cost £11.42 per lamb sold – see table.

Ram MOTs

At the very least, a general check of each ram should be carried out concentrating on the three Ts.

- Teeth.** Do the incisors meet the dental pad or is the ram undershot or overshot, and are any incisors missing?
- Testicles.** Are they smooth, firm, of equal size and, when palpated, move freely in the scrotum? Are they big enough? – see graph.
- Toes.** Rams need to be turned over to properly examine all four feet for signs of interdigital granulomas, toe granulomas, footrot, CODD and scald. This is also a good time to check for brisket sores.

based on estimated breeding values (EBVs) rather than purchasing the biggest and fattest will help address this issue going forwards, as will buying males with a known health status from flocks that do not prioritise this.

Vaccinations should be started during the quarantine period in line with the flocks' vaccination programme. There have been several instances where rams have died from pasteurella septicaemia shortly after being purchased and it is advised that all purchased rams receive a primary vaccination course of clostridial and pasteurella vaccinations.

Ideally, rams should be purchased from accredited free flocks, or testing carried out on arrival.

Body condition

Rams should be body condition score (BCS) 3.5 at tupping. It takes three and a half weeks of supplementary feeding to increase BCS by 0.5 units. Therefore, rams should be condition scored 10 weeks before tupping and feeding adjusted accordingly. Rams in the correct condition should continue to be fed good quality grass, while under-condition animals should receive supplementary

Cost per lamb sold of a ram bought for £709.54.

Ram lifespan (years)	Number of ewes served (selling at 150%)			
	40	60	80	100
1	£11.82	£7.88	£5.91	£4.73
2	£5.91	£3.94	£2.96	£2.37
3	£3.90	£2.63	£1.97	£1.58
4	£2.96	£1.48	£1.48	£1.18

Source: Adapted from information from AHDB Beef & Lamb

feeding, such as 0.5kg of 16%CP concentrate daily, introduced slowly.

Attention to feet should be the first part of ram preparation and should begin early. Any lame rams and any cases of footrot, CODD, toe abscesses or toe granulomas should be treated, but, routine foot trimming should be avoided. The use of footrot vaccination, even in just the rams, should be considered and carried out six weeks pre-tupping.

The polygamy of the ram means his requirements for semen production will be relatively high over a short breeding season. Selenium, iodine and zinc are all important for sperm production. Blood sampling six ewes at weaning for copper, cobalt, selenium and iodine status will determine the flock status, meaning rams and ewes can be supplemented if necessary. Newly purchased rams may have received a high quantity of copper if fed a large amount of concentrates pre-sale. This is especially important to be aware of in copper susceptible breeds such as Texels.



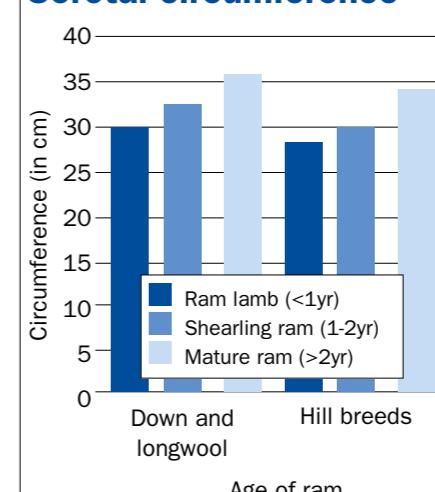
Checking scrotal circumference is an important part of a ram MOT.

Flystrike prevention is very important. Rams often spend summer in the same areas, such as under trees, and therefore fleeces can be soiled with faeces. As the breeding season approaches, rams begin fighting and often have head wounds. Head fly irritation can be prevented with appropriate products too.

Anthelmintic treatments will depend on the individual farm. Rams are often kept on the same pasture at high stocking densities for most of the year and, therefore, may be at a greater risk of a heavier worm burden, particularly young rams and rams in poor condition. Worm egg counts should be performed and treatments tailored accordingly, depending on the individual farm history and anthelmintic group rotation.

Certain sheep breeds are now

Scrotal circumference



Source: SVS Ram fertility Workshop, Edinburgh, June 2014

selectively breeding for worm resilience and there is an EBV available. This resilience selection only affects animals once they are more than four or five months' old, therefore selecting for resistance genes is more important in maternal lines than terminal sires.

Where liver fluke is present on farm, rams should be treated with a triclabendazole-based drench in the autumn.

Rams should not be forgotten in vaccination schedules.

Semen test

Recent work involving the pre-breeding examination by vets of 280 rams found that 16% of rams examined were considered unsuitable for breeding. A pre-breeding soundness exam including semen collection carried out by your vet is a worthwhile investment, ultimately improving production efficiency and reducing costs by only keeping and using rams that are fertile and fit for purpose.

Ideally rams should be examined at least two-months pre-tupping. This allows time to correct any body condition issues, lameness issues and retest any failures, allowing for the eight weeks taken for sperm production. It also allows time to source any replacement rams, should they be needed.

Rams can often be in poor condition (less than BCS 2) post tupping, especially newly purchased rams that were over-fed before sale. Rams should be body condition score 2.5-3 outside the breeding season. Therefore, rams in poor condition should receive supplementary feeding to help them through the rest of the winter and restore body condition.



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Use the time before tupping to get your ewes in tip-top shape

Now is the time to start thinking about the upcoming breeding season and making sure your ewes are fit and healthy for tupping, according to AHDB Senior Scientist Liz Genever.



“Assessing body condition at weaning and then in the run up to tupping is essential to make sure ewes are in the right condition to start the next production year,” she says. “Between weaning and tupping, ewes should be managed to reach a target body condition score (BCS) of 3-3.5 for upland and lowland ewes to ensure optimum fertility.”

This should be done by separating ewes into thin (2 or below), fit (2.5-3.5) or fat (more than 3.5) management groups soon after weaning and allocating grazing appropriately. It can take six to eight weeks on good-quality grazing (4cm or higher of green leafy grass) to put on one body condition score. This year, the dry summer has probably meant thin ewes will have needed extra feed because of the lack of good-quality grass. Thin ewes that are being fed appropriately but aren’t gaining condition should be investigated to check there are no issues that could affect the rest of the flock, says Dr Genever.

“It could be related to teeth or fluke, but it is also worth speaking to your vet to do a ‘thin ewe’ screen of around 10 ewes for Johne’s disease and maedi visna,” she says. “It is also worth investigating options for post mortems on any dead ewes because it is a good way to rule out problems, including Johne’s and ovine pulmonary adenomatosis (OPA).”

These are known as iceberg diseases because the animals showing clinical signs of disease are usually only a small part of the problem. It is important to find out whether these diseases are present on farm because many more animals may be affected without showing any clinical signs, but their production may be impacted and they could also be spreading the disease.

Replacement stock

Buying in replacement ewes or rams poses the risk of introducing disease to the farm. “It is important to have a quarantine protocol in place for new and returning stock to keep them separate from the rest of the flock for a minimum of 21 days,” advises Dr Genever. “This means they can be monitored for signs of disease and allows investigations to take place to make sure disease isn’t brought on to the farm and spread to the whole flock.”

Ensure the quarantine area has a separate air space, feeding and drinking facilities from existing stock and that there is no direct ‘over fence’ contact. Always work with quarantined animals after all other stock, wear different protective clothing and disinfect before and after entering and leaving the quarantine area.

Enzootic abortion of ewes (EAE), caused by *Chlamydia abortus* bacteria, is the most commonly diagnosed cause of abortion in sheep, responsible for around 50% of cases in the UK. Bacteria is transmitted sheep to sheep, as pasture or bedding is contaminated by aborted or infected lambs. Due to its persistence in carrier sheep, once a flock has the disease it will not disappear and, if left untreated, infected ewes are more than likely to abort in the next pregnancy.

Dr Genever says: “There are vaccines that will limit the impact of EAE on a flock. Ewes need to be vaccinated at least four weeks before they go to the ram. They will only need



Both rams and ewes need to be at the correct BCS before tupping begins.

to be vaccinated once, so the cost can be spread over their productive lifetime.”

She says to work with your vet to put a vaccination programme in place as part of your health and treatment plan, adding that it is also important to provide a booster to replacement ewes and rams for clostridial diseases and pasteurella to ensure their immunity is maintained.

“Clostridial bacteria and spores are everywhere in the environment, most often soil,” says Dr Genever. “They can survive for many years and this, along with the speed in which animals succumb to infection, means vaccination is the most effective way to control disease.”

Vaccines

Despite cheap and effective vaccines being available, deaths due to clostridial diseases remain high, resulting in significant losses to the sheep industry, particularly in lambs in the autumn when the immunity to previous vaccines is waning. The vaccines licensed for sheep in the UK are multivalent, which means they protect against several types of clostridial disease. However, the vaccines do vary in the diseases they cover and the choice of vaccine should be discussed with your vet as part of your flock health plan.

“Discuss with your vet which vaccines are most appropriate for your farm and system,” Dr Genever says. “The use of vaccines along with good animal husbandry can improve flock health and reduce the need for antibiotics.”

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Alan Petch, Angrove Country Park

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NFU Mutual
FARM INSURANCE

Product news: FEC tool assessed

An assessment of the effectiveness of Fecpak⁶², the image-based faecal egg count (FEC) technology, has found using the tool to regularly conduct counts on farm can significantly improve daily livestock gains in lambs and reduce wormer use by up to 50%.

The project conducted by Sainsbury's and Techion found that 84% of farmers assessed, all of them Sainsbury's lamb producers, were using ineffective wormers, resulting in estimated losses of £12 per lamb (equivalent to £12,000 per year).

Key research findings

- Wormer resistance was greater than anticipated – 84% of UK farmers using ineffective wormers.
- Wormer resistance costs individual Sainsbury's farmers up to £12,000 per year.
- It is possible to reduce drench use by 30-50% without compromising animal performance.
- Appropriate drench timing can improve sheep performance and health, while saving money.



Research has shown FECs can reduce wormer use without impacting DLWG.

Farmers involved in the project used Fecpak⁶² to conduct regular FEC testing to allow accurate treatment of the right animals, with the right wormer, at the right time.

Eurion Thomas of Techion UK says: "This diagnostics platform means FEC testing can be carried out virtually anywhere by anyone, including on-farm by the farmer. This encourages more frequent testing and better decision making."

Speaking more generally about

Sainsbury's interest in research and development, John Brocklehurst, Sainsbury's Agricultural Manager for Lamb, says: "The use of innovative technology offers increased lamb output and improved animal health and welfare alongside cost savings and is a win-win for producers and consumers alike. Technology that also offers a positive food story on wormer use reduction, akin to the work the industry has done in reducing antibiotic use, is what our customers want to hear."

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MADE IN NEW ZEALAND BY
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Product News

Flock recording app

Allflex, in partnership with Duradiamond, has launched an updated and more user-friendly version of its 'iLivestock' flock and herd management app. The app enables users to order ear tags, record animal movements and capture performance data on smart phones and tablets.

More at ilivestock.co.uk, or download the app via the Apple store.



Fencing tools

Olympia Tools has extended its range of fencing products

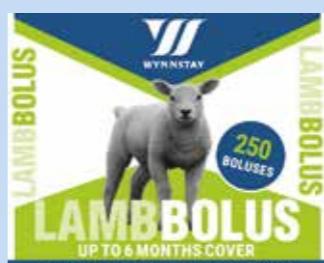
to include a new fencing maul. The Roughneck Gorilla fencing maul has a 4.5kg head and is cast from alloy steel. Olympia says it carries a new shape that will strengthen its proficiency. More at www.olympia-tools.co.uk.

Real time accountancy

A new accounting and farm management software platform has been released in the UK. 'Figured' real time accountancy software is claimed to help users increase profitability by allowing them to act on real time data and trends. More information at figured.com.

New bolus

Wynnstay has released a range of new boluses, saying the small, high density capsules are quick and easy to administer. The range carries three different types, all offering six months cover.



LambBolus and EweBolus both contain cobalt, selenium, iodine and zinc, while EweBolus with copper has a fifth ingredient. The ewe boluses are cased in gelatine, which Wynnstay says reduces the chance of regurgitation during application.

More at www.wynnstay.co.uk.

New grassland management book

A new grassland and pasture management book has been produced by publishers Burleigh Dodds.

'Improving grassland and pasture management in temperate agriculture' summarises the latest research and is written by Professor Athoe Marshall and Dr Rosemary Collins of the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS).

Copies cost £210 from Burleigh Dodds Science Publishing at www.bdspublishing.com.



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Dedicated centre of expertise for disease in extensive sheep systems

By Amanda Carson,
APHA
**The APHA
Carmarthen
Veterinary
Investigation Centre
(VIC) is being
developed as a centre of expertise for
surveillance in extensively managed
livestock.**

While based in Wales, the centre is a UK wide resource. The Carmarthen VIC is also APHA's parasitology testing laboratory, developed based on feedback it received from farmer and veterinarians that parasitic diseases are a particular concern for extensively managed livestock.

The centre will focus on extensively managed cattle and sheep and has been set up with three main objectives:-

- To develop efficient ways of sourcing relevant animal health data and information on extensively managed livestock for scanning surveillance.
- To investigate and develop how data can be translated into information and shared with extensively managed livestock keepers and vets.
- To develop a virtual hub of expertise in scanning surveillance of extensively managed livestock to complement the APHA Species Expert Groups.

Development

The development of this centre will progress over a number of years and is one of a number of projects underway to develop disease scanning surveillance further. Work started back in July 2016 when stakeholders from the Government, livestock industry, veterinary practices, retail and academic sectors were consulted. Further consultation in November 2017 identified diseases of priority concern for extensively managed sheep and cattle (see panel), and also relevant channels and means of communication and engagement with their keepers.

Extensively managed livestock are sheep and cattle kept on common land, uplands, mountains and moors where they are not easily, regularly and closely inspected for signs of ill health or significantly altered production. APHA understands farming extensively managed livestock dispersed in remote



Animal &

Plant Health

Agency



Disease priorities

Top three priority diseases in extensively managed livestock

- Liver fluke
- Sheep scab
- Tick borne diseases

Farming extensively managed livestock dispersed in remote areas comes with specific challenges.

areas comes with specific challenges, and these animals can be affected with different health and welfare problems to other livestock.

can be used to evaluate the efficacy of triclabendazole (the active ingredient in flukicides) on sheep farms where resistance is suspected. Diagnostic submissions to APHA have also enabled collaboration with Bristol University to identify, for the first time, sheep scab mites that are resistant to macrocyclic lactones (more on page 32). APHA also identified new cases of *Dicrocoelium dendriticum* (aka the 'lancet fluke' or 'small liver fluke') in sheep.

Vet Gateway

APHA has raised awareness of disease threats through information notes on the APHA Vet Gateway, including a recent information note on health-related problems that might be encountered due to the hot weather. The Vet Gateway also includes pages specifically about small ruminants (sheep and goats) and provides links to free sources of information, including quarterly disease threat reports.

APHA has made information about the diseases it has diagnosed freely available online in interactive disease surveillance dashboards, all of which can be located on its website. Farmers can use the dashboards to explore what diseases have been diagnosed in sheep and cattle, by county over a time period. The dashboard will also enable farmers to explore the diseases that are common at different times of the year.

This working partnership yields real results. For example, with help from farmers, APHA has developed a protocol faecal egg count reduction test that

Access the APHA Vet Gateway at <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/vet-gateway>.

Ultrasound scanning could provide step forward for OPA identification

Dr Chris Cousins,
Moredun



Ovine pulmonary adenocarcinoma (OPA) is an infectious lung cancer specific to sheep and caused by a virus known as jaagsiekte sheep retrovirus.

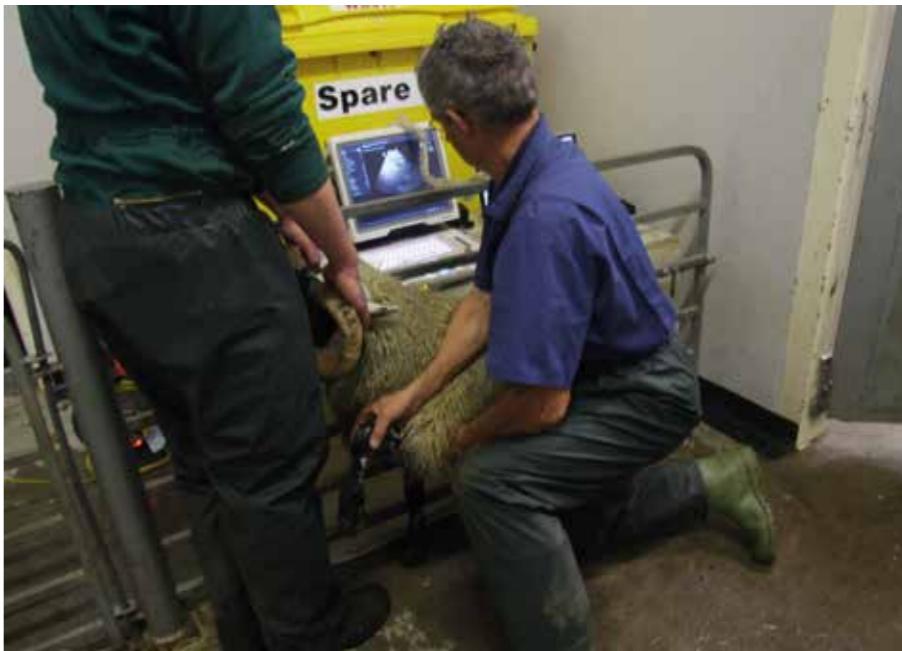
A typical sign in an affected animal is difficulty in breathing often with marked weight loss, although clinical signs may not show for several years. OPA is recognised as an important problem in most countries where sheep are farmed, including the UK. Notable exceptions are Australia and New Zealand, which appear to be free of OPA, and Iceland, where the disease has been eradicated.

Unknown prevalence

OPA is not a notifiable disease and so its true impact is unknown. Estimates of prevalence are based on case reports but the disease is almost certainly underreported. One reason for this is that OPA renders sheep more susceptible to pneumonic pasteurellosis and this is frequently recorded as the immediate cause of death. Losses due to OPA may generally be around 1-3%

OPA management tools

- Regularly inspect adult sheep and remove/cull affected animals as soon as clinical signs are suspected.
- Remove the lambs of any affected ewes.
- Minimise bringing sheep into close contact on affected farms, such as indoor housing, trough and ring feeding and transporting, as this is likely to increase transmission of the virus.
- Maintain closed flocks and/or source replacements carefully; in the absence of a diagnostic test, confirmation of disease-free status is not possible.
- Ideally, quarantine new stock for several months and monitor for signs of respiratory disease before mixing with existing stock.
- Minimise movement of sheep, including rams, between farms.
- In cases of confirmed OPA, disinfect contaminated areas and equipment where infected sheep have been held or, if this is not possible, leave without sheep for at least two months.



Moredun has effectively trialled transthoracic ultrasound scanning to identify OPA.

per year in affected flocks, but can be as high as 10% in some instances. Therefore, the disease can result in significant economic losses, particularly if high value breeding animals are affected.

OPA is commonly introduced to flocks through the purchase of apparently healthy animals carrying the virus and spreading it to other animals within the flock. The virus is spread through the air by inhalation of infectious virus present in respiratory secretions or by direct contact with infected respiratory secretions. While these are the major routes of infection, research has shown the virus can be detected in colostrum and milk, but more studies are needed to determine whether infection through this route can result in lung disease.

Susceptibility

It should be noted that OPA is a disease specific to sheep and very occasionally goats, but the disease does not affect humans, cattle or other animals, and there is no evidence other animals act as carriers for the virus. All breeds of sheep can be affected and currently there is no evidence to suggest any specific breed is more or less susceptible than others.

Unfortunately, there is currently no reliable test for detection of individual infected animals prior to the growth of OPA tumours. Tests for animal virus infections are usually based on the

detection of antibodies to the virus in blood. Unfortunately, in the case of OPA, this method cannot be used as the sheep immune system does not appear to recognise the virus and therefore antibodies to the virus are not present.

Scanning

Recently Moredun has been investigating the application of transthoracic ultrasound scanning for the detection of OPA. This technique is able to identify tumours greater than 1-2cm in size. Importantly, this is before clinical signs of OPA become apparent and so provides a means for detecting the disease much earlier than previous methods.

Removal of these animals from flocks has immediate economic and welfare benefits, as the sheep may be sold for slaughter while still in good condition, instead of progressing to clinical disease and death and thereby incurring fallen stock costs. Removing OPA-affected sheep as soon as possible should also reduce the risk of the virus spreading in the flock.

The results to date on scanning whole flocks and culling sheep with identifiable tumours indicate a year-on-year reduction in the number of OPA-positive sheep found at each scanning, but it is too early to say if it will be possible to eventually eradicate OPA from a flock using this test-and-cull regime.

More from Moredun at www.moredun.org.uk.

LAA says 'tremendous' old season lamb trade could boost store sales

A tremendous hogget season, with old season lambs way ahead of expectations, has carried through until July, and store lamb trade could follow suit, say livestock auctioneers around the country.

Lower numbers of hoggets coming forward during the early months of the year reflected the terrible winter experienced by many, but increases were seen in May, June and even into July. Prices have remained buoyant for a prolonged period, as demand has continued to outweigh the supply coming forward nationally.

"We have seen a very good trade right through," comments Shaun Barron of Bletsoes. "At Thrapston we have seen values of 200-210p/kg rising up to 230p and even 270p. Weather has played its part, but this is up 40-60p/kg on the year."

Harvey Pile of Stags at South Molton Market notes: "Many finishers struggled to manage their hoggs, and in turn the overall quality presented at market earlier in the year was of lesser quality, leaner to touch and lighter in weight than normal."

Conditions

Stags saw lower numbers of hoggets coming forward during the months of February, March and April, yet increased numbers during May and June suggest the challenging conditions had indeed increased the time needed to fully finish them.

Mr Pile adds: "Many producers across the country sold lambs that would have normally been kept for breeding. Week in, week out, pens of Suffolk Mule and Texel Mule ewe hoggs could be seen being sold in South Molton Market as producers capitalised on the excellent prices being achieved."

Ted Ogden of CCM Auctions witnessed similar patterns at Skipton Auction Mart. "It has been a tremendous hogget season, and that carried on into the spring lamb season, tied to the tighter numbers."

"It has been a bad winter and poor spring and we also saw the struggles of the after-effects of heavy fluke over the winter. With the tighter numbers, we have been some 30-40p/kg in front of last year, although into July we are closer to parity."

Elsewhere, Welshpool Livestock Sales saw not only significant rises in value, but also numbers increased and have stayed strong. Nick Hyne of Morris Marshall & Poole comments: "It has been a phenomenal trade. We have seen a £30 a head average increase, but are 30% up in numbers."



Old season lambs came forward later than usual and in bigger numbers in some areas, but prices were unusually high.

"It hasn't just been export lamb," he continues. "It has been strong across the whole spectrum. In June we were seeing sales of 1,200 and 1,700 hoggets."

The increase in numbers is in part a result of the introduction of a Wednesday afternoon sale, from March through to the middle of May, to supplement the usual Monday sale.

Currencies

Certainly, a notable lack of imports from overseas was refreshing news to the industry and helped sustain and support the buoyant trade. The strength of the New Zealand dollar and the overall lower production seen in New Zealand helped domestically reared lamb to remain competitive on price.

Not only did the value of currencies across the world stem the supply of imported lamb, but a weak pound made British produced lamb affordable to other countries, and aided those processors who exported their lambs, adding to the already increased demand.

Mr Pile comments: "While buoyant prices are of course great for the industry, when

prices are so volatile and fluctuate greatly it is always a concern that wholesalers, butchers and abattoirs will struggle to make large enough margins on the product being traded."

"If high prices are passed onto the consumer, it can lead end-customers to cheaper alternatives such as chicken, pork or beef. It is important the product remains widely affordable to those who want it. Although high farm gate prices are brilliant for the producer, it adds huge pressure to the onward chain of processors and retailers."

Mr Pile feels store lambs should meet a buoyant trade this autumn, with many finishers last year experiencing one of their most profitable years on record.

New season

"However, I'm sure some buyers will approach the new season with caution, with the knowledge that very rarely is there ever two years the same." Mr Pile concludes. "Although overall it is likely store lambs will be dearer across the country, early store lambs could well be hindered by the prolonged dry summer we are currently experiencing, especially if it continues."

Historic '20% discount' comes to an end, despite subdued market

Just over two years into his role as British Wool Chief Executive, Joe Farren says his decision to join the company has allowed him to combine his experience in big businesses with his interest in sheep and the wool sector.

"I already had a strong connection with farming, but also saw this role as an opportunity to transform a long-neglected business and ultimately improve financial returns for, and service to, producers," he says.

Positive changes have already been seen, Mr Farren claims, as this year prices for British wool were on a par with New Zealand for the first time, as the historical 20% discount for British product disappeared despite the global wool market being subdued.

British marketing

Mr Farren says: "I think one fact that helped support British Wool prices, relative to New Zealand, was the new tactical selling approach we adopted at our auctions from the start of last season. We market British wool as a distinct quality fibre, stimulating downstream demand for British Wool. Since March 2018 our auction prices have risen 8% on the back of a modest improvement in demand from China."

"British wool consistently returns a higher price than the competition. On average last year, our producers received 25%

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Together we're growing something special.



Average clip value (£kg)

After all costs and excluding VAT

Breed	Current 2018	Competitor	BW Premium
Suffolk	£0.70	£0.60	17%
Romney	£0.88	£0.70	27%
Texel	£0.77	£0.60	28%
Mule	£0.75	£0.60	25%
Cheviot	£1.01	£0.60	68%
Radnor	£0.75	£0.60	25%
Welsh	£0.32	£0.30	7%
Swaledale	£0.35	£0.35	0%
Blackface	£0.59	£0.40	48%

to 30% more than the competition paid. This price premium is continuing into this season, as you will see in our prices. Our long-term aim is to double or even triple the price paid to producers, as the benefits of our new marketing strategy feed through into higher producer prices."

Mr Farren is similarly buoyant about British Wool's new entrant system where producers who have had sheep for fewer than five years and never been registered as a producer with British Wool get paid 100% of their clip value up front for the first two years. They will then transition onto the standard payment scheme over the next three years by way of adjusted balancing payments so, over the life of the five-year scheme, new entrants receive the same cash as they would have done had they been on the standard payment scheme.

"As well as helping with cash flow, the scheme will provide a priority intake and grading service, allowing young businesses with limited storage the opportunity to get wool off the farm as quickly as possible and be paid quickly," he adds. Looking ahead to the uncertainties surrounding Brexit, Mr Farren says: "The biggest concern for the wool industry is obviously how Brexit will effect sheep numbers, because if sheep numbers fall so will wool production. With so many unknowns, and to ensure that we are fully aware of issues and can respond appropriately, British Wool, like NSA, is part of the UK Brexit Livestock Group and we keep in regular contact with our industry partners."

Wool exports

Unlike with sheepmeat, the bulk of wool exported from the UK is into non-EU countries, something that British Wool has been cultivating. Currently, China takes about 25% and Europe 15% of British Wool exports. Mr Farren explains: "China is already a strong market for British wool and one we are actively seeking to grow with the opening of a new dedicated office in Shanghai this autumn. This means that regardless of the outcome with Brexit negotiations, we will continue to export British Wool."

Back at home, British Wool has a new, specialist marketing team focusing on social media, exhibitions and a new website, all showcasing the quality of British wool. There have also been substantial structural changes.

Mr Farren concludes: "We are continually trying to improve the business, which during the last two years has included a substantial depot improvement programme. We reduced our depot annual cost base by £600,000. This saving is a recurring one and will be returned to producer's year after year."

Next Generation at Sheep Event

There was considerable activity at the NSA Sheep Event in mid-July for younger people in the sheep sector, including two workshops focused on **shepherding as a career**.

The interactive sessions asked if the industry is facing a skills crisis in terms of shepherds and, if so, what needs to be done.

Joanne Briggs of NSA explains: "The NSA Next Generation programme is all about supporting the future of the sheep sector through young people, yet through our many activities and events we find starting small flocks on bits of rented land and trying for share farming agreements and tenancies is perceived as 'more glamorous'. That is despite the fact employed shepherding offers job security and opportunities to work with large and progressive flocks."

Workshops

The workshops brought together employers, established shepherds and less experienced young shepherds, providing a platform for them to share experiences (good and bad) and discuss tips for employers and employees.

Mrs Briggs continues: "There were some useful things for NSA to action to help our members in this area, and some useful practical tips around job adverts and job descriptions. There is a very fine balance



Frank Lloyd (centre in blue singlet) was one of the farm hosts for the NSA Ambassadors at their third delivery session of the year.

line between shepherds building up experience and gaining respect, and employers giving responsibility to ensure job satisfaction."

With NSA now in the fifth year of its Next Generation Ambassador programme, NSA Sheep 2018 also provided an ideal opportunity for Ambassadors from across the years' intakes to get together, spend time catching up and supporting the event.

The 12 Ambassadors involved in this year's programme spent a total of three days together. They started on the Monday with a personal development training session and then visited two inspiring local sheep farmers (Frank Lloyd at Abbey Dore, Herefordshire, and Mark Steele at Pershore, Worcestershire) before taking part in

practical workshops with Shearwell Data and Barclays, attending the Sheep Event Industry Dinner on the Tuesday evening, and enjoying NSA Sheep 2018 on the Wednesday.

Ambassadors

Mrs Briggs says: "This was the third of five sessions for the Ambassadors this year and another really positive few days. It was also a real pleasure to welcome Ambassadors from across the programme to the Sheep Event and see so many of them active on the day with NSA or other organisations and companies. It is very positive for the future of our sector to be retaining enthusiastic young people."

More from the Ambassadors can be found on page 52.

National titles goes to Lancashire

The culmination of 10 regional heats throughout the UK saw 15 competitors put through their paces at NSA Sheep 2018 for the grand final of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year competition.

Scoring the most points in six shepherding challenges and taking the prestigious title plus £1,000 prize money was 24-year-old Rob Walker of Brennand Farm, Clitheroe, Lancashire (pictured). Rob is a partner in the family business running 1,300 Swaledale ewes, having previously studied at Newton Rigg College and worked as a self-employed shepherd.

Rob says: "I am really pleased to win this prize against very strong



competition. The whole event was very well organised and enjoyable to attend. It's my second time competing at Malvern, so to take the top prize this time was a real honour".

Second prize, and winner of a new award from British Wool for the competitor with the highest score in the shearing element of the competition, was James Westacott, 25, of Cullompton, Devon.

Also recognised for demonstration of excellent shepherding skills was Dafydd Davies, 18, from Bala, Gwynedd, awarded the title of best shepherd aged 21 and under. Dafydd was also fourth in the overall competition.

More at www.sheepevent.org.uk.



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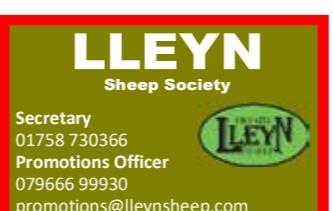
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NSA Next Generation Ambassadors discuss Brexit, and their sheepdogs

Every month, our Next Generation Ambassadors are taking time out of their busy schedules to answer a couple of questions and share their thoughts on topical issues. Read a few answers here and check the NSA Next Generation website for more.

Q. Are you optimistic we'll get a Brexit deal before we leave the EU, and do you think it will be a good deal for UK agriculture?

Catherine Sanderson, North Yorkshire. I'm not optimistic we will get a deal before the deadline, as the Government seems to be crumbling under the pressure. If they do achieve a deal we'll have to wait and see if it's good for us – as we learnt at the last NSA Ambassador session, don't fret about things you can't change, just focus on making your business as resilient as possible. Good or bad deal, we will all be in it together.

Bleddyn Davies, Ceredigion. I am optimistic some sort of a deal will be struck before we leave, but I think it will be done at the very last second. In terms of agriculture, I unfortunately do not think it will be overly positive. I believe our ability to export products to the EU will be limited and the intake of cheaper, lower standard food will create problems for British farmers.

Zoey Symington, Shetland. I am not optimistic we will get a Brexit deal before our official departure date from the EU, not in Scotland anyway. I am forever hopeful our Government is going to come forwards with a good deal for UK agriculture, but I am also forever doubtful. They rarely produce agriculture systems on time and I don't think Brexit will be any different.



Ambassador Sion Morgan with first prize winning dog Tess.



Skye, Lyn, Peggy and Sweep enjoying a hard-earned rest after a busy day with Ambassador Lauren Bird.



Tom Chapman's sheepdog Quill.

Kirree Kermode, Isle of Man. I have five bitches, all with different skill. Nelly is our pup and is as mad as a box of frogs, but has real potential if we can get her steadied up. I don't know how farmers manage without working dogs; I wouldn't enjoy farming as much without them.

Catherine. My sheepdog is called Tess. She's my first dog and I trained her myself so a bit of a learning curve! She does all I need her to do with the sheep (she runs in the direction I point because I got confused with away and come bye) and is also very good at catching rats which is ideal!



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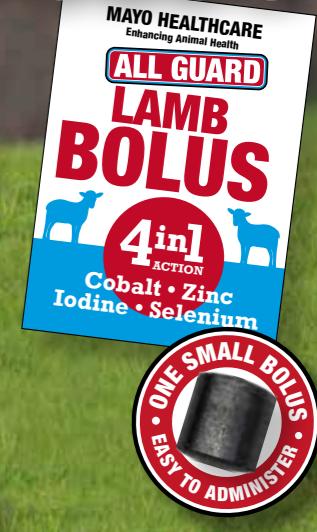
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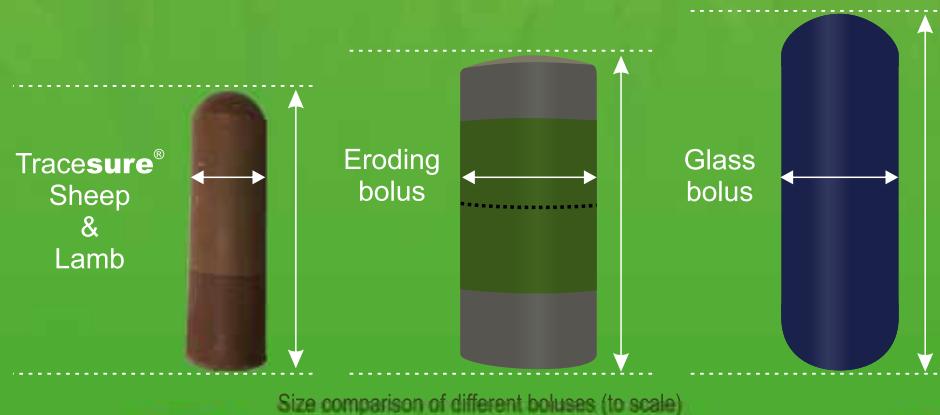
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