

# SHEEPFARMER

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## NSA SHEEP EVENT SUCCESS

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## FREE DELIVERY OF TOP QUALITY RAMS THROUGHOUT THE UK

## Seeking sanity in a world of constant change

By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive



What brings you most success, yourself and those around you, or the government and its departments, and which brings you most happiness?

I can imagine the answer from most readers, and that begs another question – why do we spend so much time and energy talking politics and policy?

Maybe I should ask myself that question. While I already know the answer I also know why I, and NSA generally, spend so much time on policy and I don't think I have to explain that to anyone reading this. I hope as an association we hit a reasonable balance, talking about real things, practical things, people, and of course sheep, as well as the bigger and longer-term issues that set the framework affecting so much of our lives. Politics and policy do matter even if we do not relate it to success and happiness.

But we are embarking on what could be quite a different era with a change in government. Labour had exactly the same challenges on the 5th July as the Conservatives had on the 4th, the main one being the economy and affording to put the country right. But we have to consider how we can thrive under the new government, with a significant majority, a likely weak main opposition party in disarray, and a handful of very upbeat Liberal Democrat MPs and then a wider array of others.

### Politics

The Minister of Agriculture, Daniel Zeichner, seems a good man and all my dealings with him to date have felt constructive. But he is still in listening mode and the time for action will soon arrive. Will the Prime Minister's statement of intent 'country first, party second' and his intent to heal the rifts between Westminster and the devolved nations result in more collaboration, a willingness to listen and act, and take the best of the thinking?

That sounds like utopia, but we can live in hope. The challenge here is one of the fundamental philosophies that lies behind competing political ideologies, and whether the centre ground simply alienates what could be an increasing number of

people who sit on the outside of the centre.

We are likely to see quick moves aiming to resolve the junior doctors dispute; return the NHS to good health; establish Great British energy; reform planning processes and build more houses; and to overcome the threats of major redundancy and investment needs in the steel industry. Underpinning all this is an interest in the environment, sustainability and the green economy, but time will tell just how influential this is. My interpretation is all these things, and more, relate to improving public services and levelling out society – two key parts of Labour's philosophy.

### Opportunities

So where does that leave agriculture and sheep farming in particular? We stand a reasonable chance if we continue to do what all at NSA have been doing for the last decade and more, to keep making the case sheep farming is good and in line with many of society's interests, and is open to ways to be even better.

Lots of independent family farms, driving local rural economies and jobs out in the regions, good for the environment and animal health and welfare, good for the people who value the countryside for their physical health and mental wellbeing – all these things fit well if we can frame them right and deliver.

Our new report launched at NSA Sheep 2024 'UK sheep farming and the sustainability agenda' – produced in partnership with Harper Adams University – aims to do just this, while also providing some direction for our industry going forward.

Taken together, food and farming is the UK's largest manufacturing industry and Labour is traditionally a party that likes to support industry. Labour is standing resolute in its ambition to grow industry and the economy in order to raise the money to pay for improved public services.

So, we can moan and decry that other parties didn't gain more power, and we can say the voting system is not fair, but the result is the result and – apart from continuing to gain as much success and happiness from our own individual actions – all we can do is seek and work with the opportunities.



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# Make it lamb this Love Lamb Week

Levy boards, industry representatives and sheep farmers themselves will collaborate again this September to celebrate Love Lamb Week.

Taking place from Sunday 1st to Saturday 7th September, the annual week of enhanced promotion of UK-produced lamb will include special packaging in retailers, influencer campaigns and advertising of lamb in regional and national press.

This year, in addition to the recognisable Love Lamb logo, the campaign will urge consumers to 'Make it lamb' with an additional logo to feature on retail packs. The additional logo is also on resources available for sheep farmers to use in their own promotions if they wish.

NSA Love Lamb Ambassador Rosie Bloor will be sharing news of the campaign on the @LoveLambWeek social accounts – be sure to follow the pages on Facebook and Instagram. *Request Love Lamb Week resources directly from your levy body.*



## Next Generation to join global meeting

**As Sheep Farmer goes to print, two young UK sheep farmers will be joining a global gathering in Australia thanks to support from NSA Next Generation and the Global Sheep Producers Forum.**

Selected from an exceptionally high calibre of applicants, Ed Brant from Lincolnshire and Katie Evans from Norfolk are travelling to Adelaide this month to join fellow young sheep farmers from Canada, New Zealand, the USA and Australia.

The forum will allow the group to address global challenges to the sector and identify some collaborative solutions to ensure a sustainable and successful future for the sheep industry in all nations. More news from their trip will be shared in the next edition of the magazine.



Ed and Katie will represent young UK sheep farmers.

## Ram sale season kicks off at new location

**As you read this edition of Sheep Farmer, new purchases secured at the NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale and the NSA South West Ram Sale will be settling in at their new farms.**

For the first time the NSA Wales & Border Early Sale was held successfully at its new home of Brecon Livestock Market. This and the sale held in Exeter in NSA South West Region offered quality stock for those seeking to lamb earlier than the traditional spring months. *NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale report on page 12, with other sale reports in the October/November edition. See page 21 for the remaining NSA Ram Sale dates.*

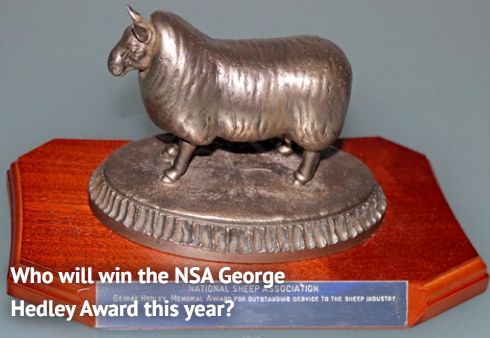
## Sheep Breeders Round Table bookings open

**The biennial Sheep Breeders Round Table (SBRT) conference will return again this year.**

The conference will take place from Friday 15th to Sunday 17th November near East Midlands Airport, Leicestershire, and welcome leading names from the UK sheep sector to share the latest research findings on pedigree breeding. *Book tickets at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events/sbirt/2024-sbirt](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events/sbirt/2024-sbirt).*



NSA is supporting the organisation of this year's Sheep Breeders' Round Table.



Who will win the NSA George Hedley Award this year?

## Make your nominations for NSA awards

Nominations are open for the prestigious NSA George Hedley Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to the UK sheep industry. Details of how individual members can make a nomination are on the NSA website.

The Bob Payne Memorial Award for NSA Unsung Hero is also open for nominations from NSA regional and ram sale committees – speak to your regional representative if you have someone in mind. The nominations deadline for both awards is Monday 30th September. *More at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/about](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/about) or contact NSA Head Office.*

## Catch-up on webinar from NSA and Moredun

NSA recently joined Moredun for an educational webinar ahead of the breeding season to gain further information on diseases with the potential to cause significant losses to your flock during pregnancy.

An experienced panel of speakers shared their knowledge on reproductive diseases causing abortion in ewes, concentrating on enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis, with advice given on vaccinations and flock health plans. *Watch back at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/webinars](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/webinars).*

## Northern Ireland Region to host NSA AGM

As Sheep Farmer went to press, NSA was preparing for its 131st Annual General Meeting.

In conjunction with NSA Northern Ireland Region, Roger and Hilary Bell had agreed to generously host the meeting on their farm near Ballymena, County Antrim, providing a farm walk after the official business. John Gililand (farmer, climate change strategist and policy expert) was also joining proceedings.

Find the NSA Trustees Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2023 at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/about/nsa-governance](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/about/nsa-governance).

# A sheep farming voice

Get the headlines here on current NSA policy activities.

## UK bluetongue risk update

**Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) surveillance data suggests the overall risk of airborne introduction of infectious midges to the UK has been low – but we are not out of the woods.**

Temperatures in the high-risk areas – Hampshire, Isle of Wight, East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk – have been suitable for midges to carry and spread bluetongue and the disease is currently circulating on the continent, increasing the risk.

NSA continues to direct all members to the AHDB and Ruminant Health & Welfare Group websites to access up-to-date information and a catalogue of webinars. Don't forget, due to the bluetongue outbreak last year, exports to Northern Ireland are at a standstill.



Bluetongue is still a risk in certain parts of the UK.

## Schmallenberg virus remains a concern

**NSA reminds members to be vigilant for Schmallenberg virus this coming season. Many flocks across the country were severely impacted by Schmallenberg with more than 20% lamb mortality on farms with confirmed cases.**

Data suggests flocks with earlier mating and lambing dates are at a higher risk from Schmallenberg-related lamb losses. Hill flocks are less likely to experience problems, due to mating dates and the temperature impacting the number of midges circulating.

NSA stresses the time when infection can have a negative impact is in the first third of pregnancy, when infection can damage the unborn lamb. Infection at other times of the year is assumed to build a level of natural immunity. If in doubt, speak to your vet. *More on Schmallenberg on page 42.*

## Updated Livestock Information Service in testing

**England's updated Livestock Information Service (LIS) technology, with the ability to trace multiple species through one system, will be ready for sheep farmers to start user testing in autumn.**

The aim is to roll out the enhanced service to cattle keepers in 2025 allowing faster, better-informed decision making to control disease outbreaks, improve animal health and welfare, give further assurances on food safety, and boost productivity and trade. Existing livestock traceability systems will remain in place until the multispecies services across the devolved administrations are fully operational.

NSA has been part of the integral development of the LIS and encourages members to explore the service and take advantage of what it can provide for your business.



Multispecies testing for livestock movement service begins.



Further funding for investigating endemic diseases announced.

## Pathway endemics programme now open

**Members in England are reminded they can now access an animal health focused funding stream to target endemic diseases in individual flocks.**

Following the introduction of Defra's Animal Health & Welfare Pathway in 2023 (which provided a funded vet visit on farm to address key health issues and discuss actions to improve productivity and efficiency) plans had already been signed off before the General Election for the next step in the pathway programme, which is endemic disease testing.

The review is a fully funded annual vet visit to access bespoke health and welfare advice and test for endemic diseases and other conditions using a vet of your choice. The current offer is £436 for a sheep review and Defra is now offering an additional £639 to tackle sheep-related diseases.

Producers can choose from a range of health improvement packages in consultation with a vet to target the syndrome that is most prevalent or that treatment would most benefit. *Look out for an NSA webinar on the endemics programme this autumn.*

## New farming scheme options in England

**Over the summer there will be 50 new actions available in the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offer, including a closer integration of Countryside Stewardship+ options.**

A key development is that producers who did not benefit from the Basic Payment Scheme will now be eligible to apply. Tenant farmers are also eligible if they have management control of land entered for the three-year duration.

NSA is working to maintain continuity in this area following the election of a new government, arguing SFI has made significant developments and continues to be a vehicle to enhance the farmed environment and improve productivity and efficiency. Although the Labour Party has previously stated it would not be straying too far from the SFI path, the industry is waiting with bated breath for any meaningful commitments from the party. *See page 15 for an update on the new government.*



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For NSA Eastern Region (Rugby/Melton) and NSA South East Region (Thame) ram sales enquiries, please contact NSA Head Office using the details on page 1.

## NSA regional reports

## NSA Marches Region

By Katie James, Manager

More than 60 NSA members, friends and neighbours joined an NSA Marches Region farm walk in early July, kindly hosted by Thomas Garlick and his family at their farm near Pontrilas, Hereford.

Tom, who competed in the national final of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition at NSA Sheep 2024, gave visitors an insight into the farming operation that includes a 1,600 ewe flock of predominantly Texel cross Mule ewes and also finishes up to 3,000 store lambs each year.

Attendees were also joined by Nick Gibbon of Belmont Farm & Equine Vets. The evening was finished off with a delicious BBQ kindly cooked by members of the Dunn and Vines families. Thanks go to them, the Garlick family for their welcome and Belmont Vets for supporting the event. *Find out how Tom did in the national final on pages 8/9.*



Thomas opened his farm to the region before heading off to NSA Sheep 2024.

## NSA Central Region

by Lizzy Wells, Manager

NSA Central Region held a successful farm walk with NSA Next Generation Ambassador and regional committee member Ed Brant in June.

Our thanks to Ed and his family for hosting and all those who attended. Ed showed us around his outdoor lambing, performance recorded Lleyn flock and gave an insightful presentation about the farm and his future plans.

Lincoln University will be hosting an NSA Central Region Field Day in October, focusing on its modern day sheep flock and featuring workshops on preventative health, the ease of recording data, herbal leys and other topics. Further details to be shared soon.

## NSA South East Region

Sarah Blake, Manager

There was an excellent turnout in June for the first regional farm walk of 2024 at Mays Farm, Oxfordshire, by kind invitation of David Passmore of Passmore Brothers.

Mays Farm is an SFI pilot farm of around 300ha in the Chiltern Hills area of outstanding natural beauty. It carries 200 Texel cross ewes and a small flock of pedigree Southdowns, together with 60 pedigree Limousin cows that are outwintered. All lambs are finished on the farm with any replacements sourced from within a closed system with two other farms.

Following the success of the NSA South East Region Field Days in 2022, two similar events will be held this year in September and November. *More details on page 12.*



Farm walk attendees were treated to a farm tour at Mays Farm.

## NSA Northern Region

By Chris Adamson, Manager

NSA Northern Region had a great week at the Great Yorkshire Show, thanks to members and sheep exhibitors supporting the NSA restaurant and bar.

It was great to have a presence at the show again and see such high quality exhibits in the sheep rings.

The region is planning a farm walk in Northumberland in September, kindly hosted by Richard Oglesby from the 2024 cohort of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors, and also a post mortem evening in West Yorkshire in conjunction with AHDB in October. Details to be shared soon.

## NSA Scottish Region

By Grace Reid, Regional Coordinator

NSA Scottish Region was honoured to award the 2024 NSA Scotland Silver Salver for outstanding contribution to the Scottish sheep industry.

Presenting the award at the Royal Highland Show, NSA Scottish Region Chair Peter Myles recognised George Purves, United Auctions Managing Director, for his unsurpassed knowledge of the sheep industry and unrivalled work ethic.

Peter and the NSA marquee featured on USA news and, to top the day, we won the top prize in the inaugural Royal Highland Show trade stand awards. The event also saw a fantastic turnout of Next Generation sheep farmers who displayed their fleece dressing skills on lambs kindly supplied by Mary and Andrew Dunlop.

Away from the show, the region has announced Wednesday 11th June 2025 as the date for NSA Highland Sheep, by kind permission of the Brooke family at Midfearn Farm, Ardgay, Sutherland.



Presentation of the Silver Salver award.

## NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Roberts, Development Officer

The region held a successful evening meeting in late June at Glascoed, Powys, in conjunction with Farming Connect.



NSA and Farming Connect team up for evening meetings.

Another joint NSA and Farming Connect meeting will be held on Tuesday 24th September at Cilthrew, Powys, with presentations from MSD Animal Health and independent sheep consultant Kate Phillips.

The Royal Welsh Show was a busy one with several receptions held on the NSA stand. Many thanks to committee members who helped and who also then helped at NSA Sheep 2024 the following week.

Plans for NSA Welsh Sheep are now starting with trade stand bookings opening in the early autumn. *More at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events).*

## NSA Northern Ireland Region

Edward Adamson, Development Officer

If all goes as planned, this will be my last Sheep Farmer regional report as I will be retiring.

But that does not mean an end to my involvement with NSA, as I will still be part of the Regional Committee. I have enjoyed the role, met many lifelong friends and had the opportunity to be closely involved in the sector of farming I enjoy. As I look back over the years to my first involvement with NSA, little did I think it was the start of such a fascinating journey.

The regional looks forward to introducing my replacement soon. I wish her good luck and hope she has as much fun and satisfaction in the position as I have.



The first regional farm walk was a popular event.

## NSA Eastern Region

By Nerys Wright, Manager

Thank you to NSA and its members for making me feel welcome in my new role as Regional Manager.

Only weeks into holding the position, NSA Eastern Region held its first farm walk of the year in June. Thanks to David Cross of Glovers Farm, Norfolk, for hosting.

Our second farm walk of the year will be held on Thursday 3rd October at 2pm, courtesy of Tim Pratt from Wantisden Farm, Woodbridge, Suffolk. Watch out for more details, as places will be limited for the tractor and trailer ride.

The region is proud of Katie Evans, representing NSA Next Generation in Australia. *More on the Australia trip on page 2.*

## NSA South West Region

By Ian May, Manager

At time of writing, NSA South West Region is in the run up to the NSA Sheep Event in Malvern and the annual NSA South West Ram Sale in Exeter.

Both events take a great deal of organisation and many thanks to everyone involved in bringing together these important events for our industry.

Many thanks also to Animax, Torch Vets and the Sheep Group for helping organise our recent pre-tupping events in Umberleigh, North Devon, and to all who attended.

Watch this space for our next event on sheep health and how best to make use of the Defra Animal Health & Welfare Pathway funding this autumn.

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# Members and non-members flock to the popular NSA Scot Sheep

Scottish sheep farmers were attracted by key seminars, a quality show of stock, and a record number of breed, technical and industry trade stands to this year's NSA Scot Sheep.

In the beautiful setting of Aikengall Farm near Dunbar, East Lothian, the biennial event was kindly hosted by the Hamilton family. It boasted a record attendance showing the appeal of the event as an ideal day out for sheep producers from Scotland and further afield.

With news of a forthcoming general election announced shortly before the event, the day's seminars provided the perfect platform for speakers to raise issues and call out the current Scottish Government on its lack of support for agriculture, stimulating much debate.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker comments: "I would like to thank the organisers for a fantastic event and also the Hamilton family for opening their impressive farm to us and being so welcoming. It was great to have the opportunity to spend time talking to Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity in the Scottish Government, and Christine Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) along with Shiela Voass, CVO for Scotland."



The farm tour.

## Farming community

The future of Scottish agriculture and value of farmer wellbeing was a theme running through the event, with many speaking in the

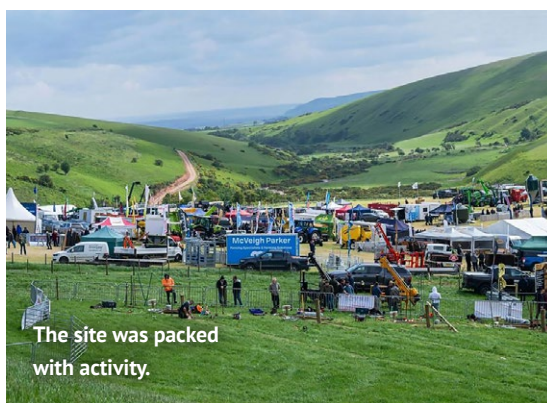
opening ceremony, seminars and workshops of the importance of the farming community coming together at events such as NSA Scot Sheep to support each other, especially after such a challenging winter for sheep farmers.

The future of farming was showcased in the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition. Enthusiastic young farmers travelled from across Scotland to take part in the series of shepherding tasks including lamb selection, shearing and ATV handling. Taking first place was Ian Armstrong from Inverurie who qualified to compete at the national final at NSA Sheep 2024 alongside Harry Gemmill from Campbeltown, who was placed joint second place with Tyler MacKinlay from Biggar.

As is tradition, the event was drawn to a close with the ever-popular sale of the pairs of ewe hogs. Despite the onset of torrential downpours, visitors filled the seminar and sale area leaving standing room only. Taking the top price was Mr A. Macgregor from Allanfauld, Glasgow, with his pair of Texel ewe hogs. Selling for £650 each the pair had also taken the champion rosette in the show of the pairs earlier.



Sale of ewe  
hogg pairs.



The site was packed  
with activity.

## NSA Scot Sheep

Wednesday 5th June 2024 at Aikengall Farm, Innerwick, Dunbar, East Lothian, by kind permission of the Hamilton family and sponsored by Virgin Money and Community Windpower.

## Competition results

### NSA Next Generation Shepherd Competition

Ian Armstrong, Inverurie (open), Tyler McKinlay, Biggar (student).

**Trade stands** M. & A. Fencing (fencing), Agrii (indoor), ATV Services Scotland (outdoor), Blackface Sheep Breeders Association (breed society).

**Sheepdog trial** John Allan (open).

**Speed shear** Jacob Taylor (senior), Simon Bedwell & Adam Berry (team), Simon Bedwell (open)

### Show and Sale of ewe hogg pairs

Texel ewe hogs from A. MacGregor, Allanfauld, sold for £650 per life to Messrs Bryson, Laigh Logan.

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# NSA Sheep 2024 delights visitors with attractions, competitions and more

## MAJOR EVENT SPONSORS



NSA Sheep 2024 drew crowds from across the UK to enjoy a fantastic day out at the Three Counties Showground, Worcestershire, at the end of July.

Focusing on a sustainable future for the sector, the event attracted prominent names from industry to lead seminar discussions including new Farming Minister Daniel Zeichner. He joined NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker for the NSA Breakfast Club Live.

Another notable name opening proceedings at the event was Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss. She used the occasion to highlight how crucial the UK's disease status was to the success of UK livestock production. Hazel Wright of the Wales Veterinary Science Centre joined her to thank NSA Cymru/Wales Region for its financial support in launching a new iceberg disease screening test.

The event also saw the launch of a new

exciting NSA report, 'UK sheep farming and the sustainability agenda.' The report was welcomed by another packed seminar tent with a buzz around the showground of what the report highlights for a positive farming future.

Workshops providing practical advice on issues from parasite prevention to grassland management, while talks and demonstrations including a popular agri-influencer forum and a cookery theatre were well attended features at the showcase event.

## Centrepiece

As crowds enjoyed the opportunity to speak with more than 250 agricultural trade stands to learn about the latest products and innovations to benefit their sheep farming businesses, many competitions took place around the showground, the centrepiece being the final of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition.

Having qualified at NSA regional heats, 18 competitors were put through their paces in six shepherding challenges in the contest



CVO Christine Middlemiss (centre) joined the opening ceremony.

NSA Sheep Event was a huge success, with many visitors flocking through the gates.



By Katie James, NSA

sponsored by the Texel Sheep Society. Scoring the most points across the board and taking the prestigious title plus £1,000 prize money was 22-year-old Thomas Garlick from NSA Marches Region. He comments: "I am really pleased to take the top prize. The competition included some very skilled young farmers who I was honoured to compete alongside."

Close behind on the scoresheet was 24-year-old Michael Hogg from NSA Northern Region in second place and 25-year-old James White from NSA Central Region in third place. Taking first prize for the highest placed under 21 competitor was 20-year-old Ben Edwards from NSA Marches Region.

Another hard-fought contest took place at NSA Sheep event as teams of fencing specialists competed in the well-known Tornado Wire fencing competition, requiring a section of stock fencing to be erected to a professional standard in just three hours. The winner this year was James John Agri Fencing from Llanelli, Carmarthenshire.

## Sustainability

A new competition at the event rewarded three young farmers who demonstrated business planning skills for the future. Dafydd Owen from Abergele, Conwy, took first place winning £400 in the NSA Next Generation Future Farming Competition kindly sponsored by Kepak.

Top price in the sheepdog sale was for Meg, a 2020-born red and white bitch sold by Roy Price of Buih Wells, Powys, to Mr Leach of Banbury, Oxfordshire, for 1,500gns.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker says: "What a fantastic day. Thanks go to all involved who help make the event an essential date in the diary."

More on the launch of the NSA Sustainability Report on page 11.



## Competition results

- **Best stands**  
IAE (outdoor), Oliver Seeds (indoor), Dorset Horn & Poll Dorset Sheep Breeders' Association (breed society) and Hole Farm Rams (best pen of sheep on a stand).
- **NSA Next Generation Shepherd**  
Sponsored by Texel Sheep Society  
Thomas Garlick, NSA Marches Region (overall) and Ben Edwards, NSA Marches Region (under 21).
- **NSA Next Generation Future Farming Competition**  
Sponsored by Kepak  
Dafydd Owen, Conwy.
- **Tornado Wire Fencing** Sponsored by Tornado  
James John Agri Fencing, Carmarthenshire.
- **NFYFC Team Shearing**  
Ben Edwards and Thomas Garlick, Herefordshire YFC.
- **Fleeces, judged by British Wool**  
Y. Hoskins, Gloucestershire, Merino cross (champion) and DJ. Parker, Buckinghamshire, a Wensleydale (reserve).

NSA thanks all event sponsors and stewards including those for the competitions.

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Daniel Zeichner was in conversation with Phil Stocker at NSA Sheep 2024.

## New Farming Minister gets an insight into sheep sector sustainability

By Katie James, NSA

The pressures facing UK sheep farmers appear to have been recognised by new Farming Minister Daniel Zeichner at NSA Sheep 2024, with reassurance given of his ambition to create a better future for the industry.

With the event attracting a full line up of influential and prominent names from industry to lead seminar discussions, NSA was pleased to welcome Mr Zeichner for a conversation with NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker at the NSA Breakfast Club Live.

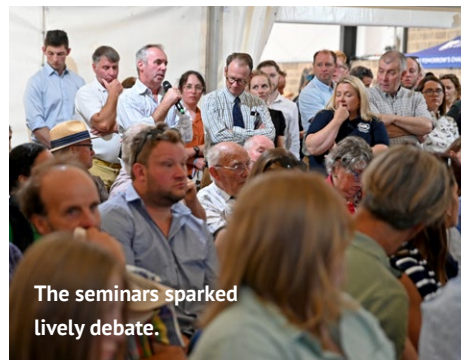
The Minister took questions in the session stating he welcomed the opportunity to listen and learn from an event full of farmers, more knowledgeable than he felt about the sheep sector. With concerns raised of the future of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), food security, sheep health and the rewilding agenda, the seminar provided plenty for both the audience and the Minister himself to take away for further thought.

### Valuable

Mr Stocker comments: "I have been impressed by the level of interest Mr Zeichner has shown in his time as Shadow Minister and since his confirmation in post following the general election. The opportunity to speak with him to highlight the serious issues facing the sector was incredibly valuable and it was encouraging to hear reassurances given that seem to place

him on the same page as NSA concerning several issues. NSA thanks Mr Zeichner for joining us and is looking forward to working with him to ensure the voice of the UK sheep industry continues to be heard loud and clear."

A main topic of discussion was SFI where Mr Zeichner asserted the Labour government would not overturn progress made via the new scheme by the previous government but he recognised there were issues with it that needed to be rectified, in particular to those farming in upland areas. The need to ensure future support is tailored to individual farmers' circumstances was also emphasised.



With many farming enterprises facing some level of change, discussion in the seminar tent continued with a session chaired by Caryl Hughes, NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chair, considering how to manage business reform with positive solutions.

Neil Adams of Promar identified that just by visiting events such as NSA Sheep Event farmers were taking positive steps forward. Mr Adams has recently overseen the production of the Farm Business Survey for Promar International. He left

the audience with three key beneficial pieces of advice – to pursue productivity, to optimise support and to plan success.

Mark Suthern, Chair of the Farming Community Network (FCN) as well as many other industry accolades, was well placed to speak on coping with change assuring the crowd to give change a chance and not to be bogged down by things out of their control.

### Change

The session was brought to a close by North Devon sheep farmer Liz Griffiths encouraging others to find their 'sweet spot' by considering their own circumstances when deciding on their business and personal aims. Having been part of the SFI pilot alongside husband Bryan, Liz shared their experience facing the changes this has brought about.

Varied market opportunities and methods to drive these forward were the topic of discussion for the final seminar of the day. Chaired by Kevin Harrison, NSA Policy & Technical Committee Chair, and featuring Awal Fuseini, AHDB, Phil Hambling, ABP, and Emyr Owen, Rhug Estate, the seminar gave attendees advice on how to develop successful markets themselves as well as offering information on current work being undertaken to overcome challenges and create further opportunities by the wider industry and trade organisations. The session brought the seminar tent to a close with an animated Q&A on future trade and its impact on the UK sector.

A recording of the NSA Breakfast Club Live seminar, sponsored by Roythornes Solicitors, is available at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/webinars](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/webinars).

## NSA report highlights sustainable future for the UK sheep industry

A new report has brought together evidence to demonstrate the UK sheep industry's positive role in sustainable agriculture and identified what more can be done to progress the sector and further improve its credentials.

Published by NSA and produced in association with the Harper Adams University School of Sustainable Food and Farming, 'UK sheep farming and the sustainability agenda: A review of the evidence and ways to deliver more' was launched at the NSA Sheep Event to a packed seminar tent.

With sheep farmers, industry experts and policymakers in attendance, the event was the ideal opportunity to release the report and its intention to influence, both now and in the future, areas of policy support, market development and practical applications at farm level.

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker says: "Sheep farming has previously been criticised for being non progressive but this fully evidenced report shows the incredible contribution the sector makes to successfully managing land for food production, environmental outcomes, biodiversity and more. The report explores sustainability in all these guises and considers the trade-offs when required to meet multiple goals.

"The UK approach to farming sheep aligns with sustainable, regenerative interests in both uplands and lowlands. Our livestock are free to enjoy a life close to nature while farmers are increasingly focused on reducing inputs, striving towards responsible medicine use and management practices that can sequester carbon and deliver for a healthy, biodiverse environment.

"There is more we need to do, and the report outlines what can be done by sheep farmers but also the support mechanisms required to best ensure this can be achieved."

### Key pillars

The report highlights sustainability as four key pillars – environment, economics, health and society – and emphasises that all must be considered together rather than in isolation. A 28-page summary of the full evidence review was disseminated at NSA Sheep 2024, packed full of key messages and farmer case studies. A longer, fully referenced research review with additional resources sits behind this summary on the NSA website.

Professor Jude Capper, of the Harper Adams School of Sustainable Food and Farming says: "Sheep production is an incredibly important component of UK agriculture and has shaped most of the landscapes in which we live and work. At a time when the sector is beset by economic, environmental and social challenges, there's a real need to recognise and celebrate the myriad of benefits sheep production provides. It's been a pleasure to work with NSA in detailing the immense value of our UK sheep production systems."

Cumbrian sheep farmer Will Rawling contributed to the report and says: "The new report highlights the importance of sensible and sympathetic land management, and that is part and parcel of what we do. On our farm we have moved away from the systems promoted by post war, cheap and plentiful food policies, while remaining productive and hopefully efficient in every respect. We now also know the carbon storage and sequestration capabilities

of these diverse habitats are an important feature helping to promote a healthy future environment."

### Farm productively

Powys sheep farmer John Yeomans also provided a case study for the report and adds: "To coin another's phrase – live as if you'll die tomorrow, but farm as if you'll live forever. To that end we farm productively in a way that goes hand in hand with improving the environmental footprint of our business.

Planting more than 40,000 hedge and tree plants, a small wildflower meadow and several ponds, much completed without grant aid, has all been part of this. It has been said by many but stands repeating, grazed livestock is a major part of the solution to our planet's challenges, and not the problem."

Mr Stocker concludes: "This report shows that UK sheep farming has a sound base to remain sustainable for the future – producing fantastic nutritious food and renewable fibre, leaving in its wake an attractive environment enjoyed by all."

Find the report summary and full evidence review at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/policy](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/policy). Or request a hard copy from NSA Head Office.



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ROSS ON WYE THURSDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER
BALLYMENA (NI) SATURDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER
STIRLING (UA) SATURDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER
WELSHPOOL SATURDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER
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# Record clearance at the NSA Wales & Border Early Sale

A historic day with good prices for quality rams and a smooth transition to a new venue distinguished the NSA Wales & Borders Early Sale.

The Early Sale is traditionally a trailblazer for the season and it lived up to its reputation. Two Texel rams each achieved the top price of the day at 2,000gns, but the solid stream of high prices and individual consigner averages underlined the success of the sale. Averages were up by almost £200 and an 83% clearance was the highest ever. The first 2,000gns sale went to one of 15 Texel shearlings from Chave and Son's Peacehay Flock. It sold to J. & R.M. Lucas & Son and was sired by Strathbogie Epic, bought by the Chave family at Carlisle for 4,000gns. The other 2,000gn ram was another Texel shearling, the show champion. It was consigned by Gethin Hatcher, a new breeder from Gorsgoch in Ceredigion and sold to Huw Davies of Beulah, Powys.

The crossbred trade was topped by Adrian Davies, whose Charollais cross shearling sold for 1,650gns. His 10 shearling crossbred rams averaged 1,450gns and he praised the trade and excellent venue. The highest priced Beltex cross was a shearling from Paul Curran of Talgarth, Powys.

## High standards

NSA Wales & Border Ram Sales Chair Geoff Probert said the day had been a huge success: "It was a smooth transition from Bult to the new Brecon Market venue. We were a bit nervous in the run up, but the trade has been tremendous. It's been a very good show of high standard tups and the quality was reflected in the trade." Executive Director Jane Smith was delighted: "Thanks to McCartneys for hosting the sale today – and making history. It was the highest percentage clearance ever for the Early Sale. The entry was slightly smaller but the quality was certainly there." *All remaining NSA Ram Sale dates on page 21.*



The new venue attracted a good crowd.



Peacehay Gladiator sold for 2,000gns.



Penllain Great matched the top price of 2,000gns.

# Visit an NSA South East Region Field Day this autumn



Members and other interested parties can join two interactive and insightful days this autumn, organised by NSA South East Region.

Following the success of the region's inaugural Field Days in 2022, this autumn's events will focus on the use of forage/cover crops with information delivered through a series of presentations and small group demonstrations.

## Event format

Join morning presentations on 'The role of the bank as a contributor to the farm team (Virgin Money), 'Optimising the benefits of cover/forage crops for both the arable and the grazing enterprise' (Agricultural Seed Merchant) and 'Forage/cover crop grazing management' (AHDB), followed by afternoon breakout sessions. Each breakout group will benefit from demonstrations looking at a range of topics

including efficient handling of stock and data recording, vaccination programme planning, and strategic control of parasites, among a variety of other topics.

## Great success

Coordinating the Field Days, NSA South East Region committee member Yann Le Du says: "The first regional Field Days were a great success. We are now building on this to offer sheep farmers from across South East England the opportunity to gain useful information on the use of forage and cover crops. We do hope many members will be able to join us. "We encourage everyone to question and interact directly with the presenters, allowing them to take home at least one piece of knowledge to act upon to improve the margins within their sheep enterprise."

The region thanks Bimeda, British Wool, Elanco, MSD Animal Health, Rappa and Virgin Money for supporting the events.



NSA South East Region Field Days provide top quality information.

## Field Day dates

- **Wednesday 18th September**  
Blacketts Farm, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 9AU, by kind permission of G.H. Dean & Co. Ltd.
- **Thursday 7th November**  
Hyde Farm, Marlow Rd, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 6PQ, by kind permission of Randall Farms Ltd.

Find out more at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/events) and register to attend to claim a free lunch and post-event BBQ. Alternatively register with NSA South East Region Manger Sarah Blake. Contact details on page 4.



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**References:** 1. The production costs of anthelmintic resistance in sheep managed within a monthly preventive drench program I.A. Sutherland, J. Shaw, R.J. Shaw Veterinary Parasitology 171 (2010) 300–304.  
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# Meeting NSA committees from across the regions to understand their value

By Katie James, NSA

As highlighted in the last editions of *Sheep Farmer*, NSA's regional network is the foundation of the organisation, offering members the opportunity to engage with like-minded folk at regional meetings and attend the varied enjoyable events.

As a grassroots organisation, its regional committee meetings provide the basis of NSA's work, where issues of concern can be highlighted to officeholders for discussion and actioned in other parts of the NSA network.

In this edition we delve into NSA Scottish Region, meeting some of the individuals driving crucial NSA activity in the devolved nation.

## NSA in Scotland

NSA Scottish Region currently operates via three committees, comprised of office bearers, active sheep keepers, breed society and sheep industry representatives and co-opted individuals who all have specific interests in the Scottish sheep industry and give their time voluntarily.

The NSA Policy & Technical Committee is a crucial group that the NSA Scottish Regional committees feed into. Efforts have been made to ensure the valued younger generation has the opportunity to join the region and have their contributions heard. With a tight knit collective membership, each committee operates holistically to ensure a sustainable and prosperous sheep industry can be developed, achieved and celebrated.

Boasting the region with the largest landmass in the NSA network, Scotland hosts the popular NSA Scot Sheep and NSA Highland Sheep events on alternating years, as well as many other initiatives.

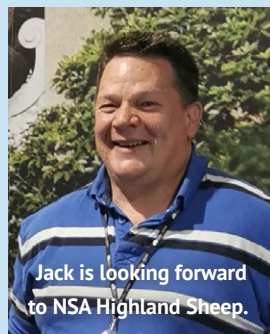
Contact your region using the details on pages 4/5.

### Jack Cuthbert Committee member

I am a Trustee of the Hebridean Sheep Society and breed society representative on various NSA Scottish Region committees.

We are currently in process of moving farm from the Fife and Kinross area and taking over my father's 240 acre (97ha) farm at Bunchrew, Inverness. We lambed 500 ewes this spring - a mixture of pure Hebrideans that we sell direct to customers, restaurants and wholesalers - pedigree Blue Texels for breeding, and others including Hebridean Mules with Blue Texel and Aberfield cross lambs destined for the store/finished lamb rings at Dingwall.

I'm excited to be helping NSA and a local subcommittee for NSA Highland Sheep 2025. NSA committees are a great place to meet fellow minded folk from up and down the country, to learn and keep in front of things and also to give a little back to the sheep industry.



Jack is looking forward to NSA Highland Sheep.

### Fact file

- Trustee of the Hebridean Sheep Society.
- Aims to make NSA Highland Sheep an educational, fun experience.

### Peter Myles NSA Scottish Regional Chair

I like to think NSA Scottish Region is a tremendous force made up of three elements.

A force for good, where we can organise events highlighting the very best in sheep breeding and husbandry, support the best in health, welfare and scientific research, and the best opportunity for sheep farmers to meet.

A force of nature, highlighting all the benefits, sheep farming and grazing sheep can do for the environment making the iconic Scottish landscape what it is today.

A force to be reckoned with, working with policymakers, influencers, and advocates within the industry for the very best outcomes when it comes to the Scottish Government plans for future agricultural support.

### Fact file

- Hill farmer from Glenesk, Angus.
- Sees NSA Scottish Region as a powerful industry force.



Peter enjoys representing Scottish sheep farmers.

### Alec Telfer Committee member

I have farmed sheep all my life, originally in Lanarkshire and now at Broadmeadows in the Scottish Borders near Selkirk.

After a health scare in 2017 I radically altered my workload and farming policy, diversifying into forestry on all the rough grazing and hill ground, while retaining all the improved pasture on the lower ground for livestock farming. This is successfully utilised by my young enthusiastic farming neighbours.

Lifestyle changes have freed up time to further my interests, which include attempting to improve the future for enthusiastic and aspiring young sheep farmers.

I feel NSA plays a vital role as the voice for the entire sheep industry, and, as an area division, NSA Scottish Region is able to deal with issues relevant to Scotland, meeting other industry organisations and encouraging the Scottish Government on pertinent matters.

### Fact file

- Blackface Sheep Breeders Association council member for six years, three of them as President.
- Now sits on the regional committee via individual NSA membership.



Alec is a big supporter of the next generation.

# NSA outlines sheep sector priorities as Labour comes into power

By Emma Bradbury, NSA

Over the past 12 months we've reported on changes of prime minister(s), new secretaries of state, different farming ministers and many a new policy.

But now I write with probably one of the biggest political turnarounds of the last decade, a new Labour government. Following 14 years under Conservative leadership, the UK is now adjusting to the policy approach of a Labour government, but what will it mean for agriculture.

The Labour manifesto was short on farming detail and depth, and when questioned on future agriculture budgets responded with 'we need more understanding of the value and benefits of investments to date.' NSA agrees – it has long called for an impact assessment of the changes seen. But there is also a responsibility to ensure public money is actually delivering as well as encouraging a more complete recognition of public goods delivery, which includes food production as a public good.

## Policy

It is imperative there is not another U-turn in agricultural policy but to build on the existing policy and address the fundamental issues raised.

NSA has outlined its own priorities for this new government:

1. Accept the need for an impact assessment and monitoring to evidence effectiveness of spend. It's expected there will be an increase in the agricultural budget across the nation. Increased investment is needed for productivity and on-farm climate actions alongside nature recovery, water, air and soil health, and social wellbeing. There must be a cohesive approach across all nations and a ring-fenced budget must be concentrated on agriculture and its wider deliverables.
2. Recognition of food production as a public good. The competition between environmental land management and food production needs to cease and be replaced by more equitable measures aiming to ensure sustainable food production and national food security alongside good environmental outcomes. This also needs to recognise the additional economic value of artisan foods, local supply chains and food tourism through investment in domestic supply chains and infrastructure, and give clear priorities for self-sufficiency and trade development. A clear strategic direction for land use and food production is needed with recognition of the various outputs from multifunctional land use.
3. Appreciation of the value of grazed livestock as a multi-functional activity, accepting grazed livestock farming produces food at the same time as providing an attractive landscape and biodiversity, and carbon storage. Increased investment into agricultural climate solutions, environmental footprinting, and the adoption of a harmonised set of metrics is needed to demonstrate this.
4. Increased investment into livestock health to boost efficiency and productivity and reduce environmental footprints. A strategy for vaccine innovation and reliability of supply with stronger recognition of the global One Health commitment is critical.
5. Investment into innovation and product development of wool as a sustainable and renewable alternative to synthetic fibres.
6. A new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU to ease trade barriers now and ensure alignment into the future while rebuilding the UK/EU relationship and investing in trade opportunities. In addition, there is an urgent need to revise Britain's border controls to protect ourselves from illegal and unmonitored imports that risk disease outbreak.
7. Clear strategic policy to ensure agriculture is a viable, stable industry, while giving new entrants access to interest free loans. Improved capital grant intervention rates, tax incentives, access to finance, and an annual review of the financial viability of the industry are all key to support this and future farming generations.
8. Commitment to reviewing carbon offsetting, biodiversity net gain and nutrient neutrality policies that are already squeezing tenant farmers off the land.

The new Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Ministerial team are yet to outline specific priorities for farming although Labour has outlined there will be no significant change from



Daniel Zeichner, pictured with Phil Stocker, gave an update at NSA Sheep 2024.

current future farming policies. The manifesto says it 'recognises food security is a national security. That is why we will champion British farming while protecting the environment.' NSA interprets this as the Sustainable Farming Incentive is set to continue, which will provide some much-needed continuity.

There are ambitions to introduce a land use framework, which is something the previous government promised but has been repeatedly delayed. There are also ambitions to ensure half of all food purchased by the public sector should be locally produced or certified to higher environmental standards.

## Plans

Labour has said it has no plans to change Agricultural Property Relief, which allows farmland to be transferred between generations without incurring inheritance tax. There are also ambitions to improve responsible access to nature by creating nine new national river walks, one in each region of England, and establishing three new national forests in England.

NSA has always maintained the fundamentals must be right before delving into new priorities and policies, as with improved access there must be sufficient protection for livestock and protection from livestock worrying.

Now is the time for Labour to put in the work and secure confidence in our rural communities. NSA enjoyed engaging with the current Secretary of State, Daniel Zeichner, highlighting his own priorities at NSA Sheep Event last month.

See page 10 for more.



# NSA fights to ensure new policies do not threaten traditional upland farming

By Emma Bradbury, NSA

NSA is working closely with upland farming groups, including most recently in Cumbria, to rally industry support to raise the profile and value of traditional farming.

Sheep farming businesses in upland and hill areas are a key part of the UK sheep industry, and in addition provide a wide range of public goods and services. As the UK population continues to grow and move towards greater urbanisation, the pressure on these precious resources will increase, accentuated by the impact of climate change.

Many NSA members will be familiar with the recommendations from the Dartmoor Inquiry and the ongoing, controversial actions by Natural England.

The Lake District National Park is another area where the landscape reflects a long history of settlement, agriculture and industry. In fact, this area was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Site status in part due to the generations of traditional fell farming and grazing. Farmers there provide many crucial services for the local communities, businesses and visitors alike and, in addition, provide food and water, carbon storage, clean air, flood regulation, aesthetic value, heritage and recreational opportunities. The very aspects of the UNESCO status outline vital attributes are enjoyed by all.

NSA highlights some increase in recognition of these benefits in recent years, but feels there is still a long way to go. Critical steps must be taken to ensure the irreplaceable activity of sheep farming in these areas is preserved and enhanced.

## Member concerns

Will Rawling, an NSA member who farms traditionally in Cumbria, shares his concerns. "While hill farming has a massive role to play in the climate change agenda, we can only do that if we are still living in the upland communities. I'm concerned Natural England, NGOs and sluggish Defra policy design have brought the traditional Lake District farming systems to the point of collapse."

"The hefting system evolved over millennia underpins the management of the fells, but has been slowly fragmented by the unforeseen consequences of schemes that replaced the old headage payments."

"We all understand headage payments risked incentivising overgrazing and was a legacy of a hungry population, which had run its course."

Unfortunately, it also kept food prices artificially low and therefore created a farming business model reliant on public support.

"We make no apology for accepting these payments in return for delivering public goods, and in my opinion food is a public good. Access,

Policy puts upland farmers in a vulnerable position.



habitat management, carbon capture, clean air and water can all be produced alongside productive farming. But in order to qualify for the public good payment, stewardship conditions require significant change, leaving us with a dilemma – production or system degradation."

Mr Rawling is concerned this isn't a choice at all and is driving system degradation, as the only alternative to replace support payments by diversifying into something other

than farming. In the Lakes, a lot of hill farms are already involved in tourism provision, so options are limited.

## Unacceptable

He continues: "Schemes not fit for purpose are accepted before true value is assessed. Utilities companies and other large landowners are not renewing tenancies. Family farms are disappearing fast, and there is declining opportunity for new entrants or even succession."

"Ancient pastoral systems are being destroyed, communities are falling apart, the heavy carbon footprint of tourism blankets the Lakes, and second homes stand empty while locals are forced to move away."

"The Lake District and other farming areas should be managed by a skilled, dedicated and experienced workforce with a vested interest in getting it right. We need to hit the sweet spot – retain and build on the oldest pastoral management system in the country and adapt it to deliver for the future in every respect. We can only do that if we are still here."

Find out more in the new NSA Sustainability Report. Details on page 11.



NSA support highlights the risk of single focus policies.

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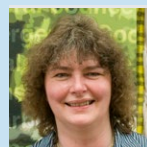
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# Providing a platform for strong NSA foundations and responsible dog ownership

By Helen Roberts, Regional Development Officer



The Royal Welsh Show was an extremely busy event for NSA Cymru/Wales Region officials.

The NSA stand hosted the announcement by Rob Taylor, Wales Rural & Wildlife Police Crime Coordinator, of a one-year pilot scheme for owners of dogs that attack sheep being required to complete an online educational course about responsible dog ownership as part of their reprimand.

Myself, NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker and Welsh Chief Veterinary Officer Richard Irvine also met with Huw Irranca-Davies, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

## Opportunity

The meeting on the NSA stand was an important opportunity to put sheep farming and the NSA firmly on the priority list. It was a constructive discussion that laid foundations for

us to work closely with the Welsh Government and built on our already well established relationship with the CVO.



The NSA stand was a hive of activity at the Royal Welsh.

The initial impression of NSA Cymru/Wales Region is that it's good for Mr Irranca-Davies to maintain his brief for climate change and rural

affairs alongside being Deputy First Minister, as it can only help to have a hard hitting politician high up in government.

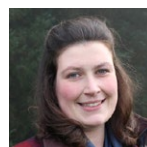
## Response

Having finally seen the publication of the government's response to the Sustainable Farming Scheme consultation, it appears Welsh Government has heard and understood the concerns raised by NSA alongside others and now realise clear changes are needed before the scheme can be established – hence a new timeframe for its introduction.

To emphasise this, fellow farmer Gary Orrells and I held a constructive meeting with Welsh Government in June about cross border farms and the Sustainable Farming Scheme, in particular the proposed enforcement of planting 10% of farmland with trees and habitat, and animal welfare universal actions.

# New government made aware of Scottish priorities and funding requirements

By Grace Reid, Regional Coordinator



The Food & Agriculture Stakeholder Taskforce (FAST), of which NSA Scottish Region is a member, was quick out of the blocks following the general election.

We wrote to Ian Murray, the newly appointed Secretary of State for Scotland, to introduce the collective and impress the importance of agriculture to the rural economy. Despite many calls for clarity on future funding, there has been no guarantee from south of the border to deliver confidence and enable long term investment on-farm and throughout the agri-business supply chain in Scotland.

## Lifeblood

Being the lifeblood of the rural economy in Scotland, annual output from agriculture has exceeded £3bn while employing more than 67,000 people directly on farm, never mind the employment opportunities in key allied industries.

Mr Murray has been invited to a future FAST meeting to discuss the need for a multi-annual funding settlement for agricultural support to be agreed and to champion a fair deal for Scottish agriculture.

## Support

Undoubtedly, all NSA members who have submitted a Single Application Form in 2024 will have received communications regarding changes to agricultural support in 2025 following recent route map updates. I urge every member to visit the Rural Payments website and speak to their local Rural Payments & Inspections Division area office to prepare for upcoming change.

Significant changes include the introduction of Whole Farm Plans, new cross compliance conditions for protecting peatland and wetlands and the new 410-day calving interval for the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme.

NSA Scottish Region remains actively engaged in ongoing discussions regarding a lynx reintroduction in Scotland. This has included

engagement with 'Scotland: The Big Picture' and many other stakeholders including participation in a recent Nuffield Scholarship research paper carried out by Jonny Hanson titled 'Large carnivore reintroductions to Britain and Ireland: farmers' perspectives and management options'. Should any further details arise on this topic, members will be made fully aware.



Agricultural support is changing in Scotland.

# NSA watching Labour government's position on NI-GB-EU relations with interest

By Edward Adamson, Regional Development Officer



We now have a new Labour government in power and, no doubt, a new thinking around agriculture.

Agriculture was low on the agenda when the political parties were canvassing pre-election so it will be interesting to see where things go from here.

In Northern Ireland, while we depend on Westminster for the major guidance and funding, our own devolved region has had some upheavals within our political representatives.

## Relationships

NSA and NSA Northern Ireland Region is building new relationships before trying to influence those who might be able to help make a difference. We do depend on Westminster to negotiate with EU and there may be some new ideas in relation to the NI-GB-EU situation.

The Animal Health & Welfare Group in Northern Ireland is now looking seriously at the

new EU animal health laws, which are going to bring a raft of complicated rules and regulations with the idea that NI must comply even though Great Britain is now a third country and no longer obliged to adhere. It certainly will require some head scratching to find a positive solution.

## Registration

Don't forget there isn't long for North Tyrone and County Derry/Londonderry farmers to register for zone three of the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS). Registration opened in late June and closes on Saturday 31st August. If your farm business is in zone three, the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute will write to you inviting you to register.

To date more than 6,000 farmers in zone one and another 6,000 farmers in zone two have received

soil analysis results for their farms. Participation in the SNHS will be a requirement to receive payments under future farm support schemes. This conditionality requires participation in the SNHS and completion of the College of Agriculture Food & Rural Enterprise SNHS training when it is offered.



Soil Nutrient Health Scheme is still open.

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# Skills strengthened and memories made for young shepherds in France

By Katie James, NSA



NSA Next Generation enabled four young shepherds from each of the UK nations to travel to France in June to take part in the World Young Shepherds Competition.

Competing against others from Africa, Australia and beyond, Liam Doyle (Northern Ireland), Matthew Fearon (England), Caryl Davies (Wales) and Lana Bell (Scotland) displayed their shepherding skills.

Caryl comments on her experience: "Having competed at the NSA Next Generation Shepherd Competition at NSA Welsh Sheep in 2023 I was fortunate to be chosen to represent Wales in the UK team at the Ovinpiades Mondiales, or Sheep Olympics.

"Hosted by French shepherds, the event had not taken place for 10 years and so there was much excitement about the competition. I was hesitant about the trip, not having met any of my fellow UK teammates let alone the rest of the competitors, but at the end of May I flew to Paris to meet Matthew, Liam and Lana.

"The weeklong competition consisted of six different challenges including shearing, lamb and ewe selection, handling and health assessment (body condition scoring), electric fencing and foot care.

"Despite being brought up on a sheep farm, shearing sheep myself is not a task I get involved with, leaving our experienced shearers to it instead! Nevertheless, I had to give this competition element a go and was pleasantly surprised by how well it went."

## Challenges

"The next day of challenges included the assessment of finished lambs and ewes using an electronic reader and race. I felt more comfortable with this task as it is something we do regularly at home before sending lambs to market.

"The day was hosted at Fedates, a station used for testing five lactating sheep breeds – Blanche du Massif Central, Île de France, Berrichon du Cher, Suffolk and Rouge de l'Ouest. After our tests we were fortunate enough to have a tour of the facilities where various experimental protocols are implemented and evaluated.

"On the final competing day handling and assessing the health and body condition came under scrutiny, as well as our ability to erect a netted fence.

"Between competing days we visited several well-known French regions in the South, including Roquefort to sample the famous sheep's milk cheese and other sheep dairies – a contrast to sheep farms at home in Pembrokeshire.

"At the end of the week it was time for awards where the well-deserved French and Australian candidates dominated the top placings. Pleasingly the UK followed closely behind with Matthew and Liam being placed in the top 10. I achieved 8th in the shepherdess section.

## Memories

"But the trip was more than a competition for us, as the contacts and memories we have been so fortunate to make are priceless. There were several challenges, most notably the language barrier, but this was overcome by our excellent translator Remi.

"Without a doubt this experience has been unforgettable. The week provided ample opportunity to socialise with other competitors as well as develop some team building skills – I hope to stay in contact with my fellow teammates in the future."

*The trip was made possible by NSA Next Generation funding and sponsorship from MSD Animal Health.*



Caryl put in a solid performance shearing.



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The UK team (L-R) of Liam, Matthew, Lana and Caryl.

# Buy and sell the best at an NSA Ram Sale



WHY PICK AN NSA RAM SALE?

**Every animal is inspected for testicles, teeth and general health by NSA-approved inspectors with the final decision made by a vet.**

Sheep with performance recording records are available and clearly marked in the catalogue.

**All stock is sold under auctioneers' conditions of sale, with additional assurance from NSA Ram Sales if something goes wrong and the buyer needs to contact the vendor.**

Different breeds and vendors are brought together in one place, offering sheep from all UK environments to suit various markets.

**Some stock is sold as part of official breed society sales, with additional catalogue information available.**

More than 7,000 head are offered at NSA sales collectively.

## NSA Ram Sales 2024

**NSA Eastern Region Rugby Ram Sale\***

Friday 30th August – Rugby Farmers Mart

**Thame Farmers Market breeding ewe sale incorporating the NSA South East Region Ram Sale\***

Friday 6th September – Thame Farmers Market

**Melton Midlands Sheep Fair incorporating the NSA Eastern Region Ram Sale\***  
Friday 20th September – Melton Mowbray Market

**NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale**  
Monday 23rd September – Royal Welsh Showground

**\*MV-accredited rams only; MV and non-MV sold at other NSA sales**  
See page 4 of this magazine for contact details of our Ram Sales Organisers.





# NSA Next Generation Ambassadors come together for third session



The 2024 cohort of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors came together again at the end of July to enjoy an interesting delivery session before and after NSA Sheep 2024.

The session kicked off with a motivating presentation from Wyn Owen, organisational development consultant. Coming from a farming background in Wales, Wyn relates his own experiences to help others develop their skills in time management, conflict resolution, delegation and negotiation, and passed on valuable tips to the group.

Having enjoyed attending the pre-event

industry dinner and NSA Sheep Event, the group ended the delivery session with a visit to Bradley Farm near Mitcheldean on the Gloucestershire, Herefordshire border to view the Whitehouse family's impressive mixed enterprise including sheep, beef, dairy goats and arable. The group were also joined by Laura Eyles from Signet who spoke about performance recording.

## Inspiration

Fiona Parker, NSA Support & Activities Officer, says: "The group has definitely enjoyed a busy few days engaging with plenty of discussion, hopefully taking away some ideas and inspiration



to implement at home. Thank you to all who have supported the group this week, especially the Whitehouse family for their kind and generous hospitality."

## Ambassador updates

It's been a few months since the 2024 cohort of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors were together. Here's what some of the group have been up to during that time.

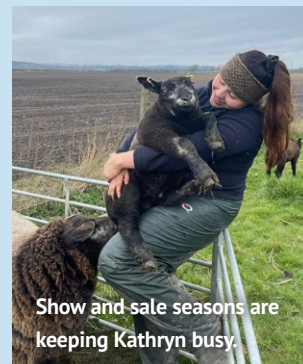
### Kathryn Dick Stirlingshire

Following our second NSA Next Generation Ambassador workshop back in May, it was straight home for weaning of our January and February-born pedigree lambs.

At this point, we faecal egg count tested the group in batches and only wormed as required, with the addition of a mineral drench just to see them through until the back end. Lambs were also crutched and given fly protection to cover them throughout the warmer weather and moved to fresh pasture for them to grow on naturally.

With a busy show season upon us, everything needed shearing before mid-June, while also trying to stay ahead of trimming our show stock.

After sorting through our breeding stock and culling any problematic ewes, the focus now shifts to the fast-approaching breeding season. We have prepared the stock for the August sales and managed to get a select few ewes through embryo transfer and artificial insemination, despite being up and down the country working at shows – it never stops!



### Sean Jeffreys Carmarthenshire

We were lucky to get silage done in the first week of June. Better winter management and targeted fertiliser applications allowed us to get the first cut in around six weeks earlier than usual. Yield was good at 10 bales per acre on reseeded and hopefully quality will be improved.

The hill sheep are down for shearing. Last year we had big issues with ticks so they have all been treated at ear marking. Everything that comes off the hill will be dipped regardless of if they look to be scratching or not.

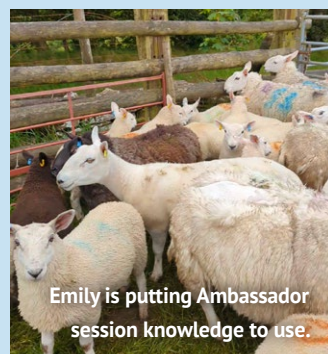
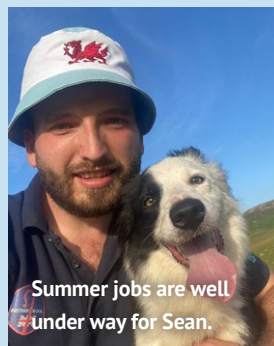
At weaning the ewe lambs went back on the hill with their mothers until mid-August, with the heavier ground lambs sorted and onto aftermath grazing and a clear out of heavy crossbreds pre-Royal Welsh. Hill lambs will either get sold around Christmas time finished or marketed as stores, dependant on cash flow and value.

### Emily Jones Ceredigion

Life has been pretty hectic, especially after implementing new ideas I learnt from the last two NSA Next Generation Ambassador sessions.

During lambing this year, I decided to record every lamb born as I learnt how important it was to record stock to ensure the system is working to its full potential. The family has got stuck in weighing all our lambs at eight weeks. Previously we only weighed our pedigree animals so this was a big step up but I've found the whole process incredibly interesting with the addition of being able to compare breeds and cross breeds. I also found out which terminal sires were producing better lambs.

Since learning about grassland management at the last Ambassador session, we are combining the eight-week data with type of forage grazed, seeing which grasslands and/or herbal leys have had an effect on lamb performance.



## BLACKFACE SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION



**Sale Dates, Sale Reports & News Updates**  
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## BLACKFACE SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION SALE DATES 2024

### EWES LAMBS

**September**  
2 Castle Douglas  
5 Hexham  
5 Ayr  
7 Stirling (Ua)  
11 Lanark  
14 Dumfries  
17 Oban  
20 Huntly  
24 Lanark  
26 St Boswells  
27 Dalmally

### October

2 Longtown  
3 Hexham  
4 Dingwall  
11 Lanark

### GIMMERS AND EWES

**September**  
13 Stirling (Cal)  
17 Oban  
18 Castle Douglas  
19 Ayr  
20 Newton Stewart

### GIMMERS & EWES

**September cont.**  
20 Huntly  
24 Lanark  
26 St Boswells  
26 Ayr  
27 Dalmally  
27 Dumfries  
28 Loughash Farm Sale  
28 Stirling (Ua)

### October

2 Longtown  
3 Hexham  
4 Dingwall  
11 Lanark

### RAMS

**October**  
4 Dingwall  
5 Ayr  
7 Ballymena  
12 Stirling (Ua)  
12 Perth Ram Society  
14 Hexham

### RAMS

**October cont.**  
15 Oban  
17 Lanark Shearlings  
18 Lanark Lambs  
19 Dalmally  
31 Lanark

**November**  
1 Fort William

**WETHER LAMBS**  
Weekly sales of store lambs held at all auctions

### September

2 Stirling (Ua) Show  
3 Oban Show  
11 Stirling (Cal) Show  
13 Dingwall Show  
14 Dalmally Show  
20 Lanark Show  
26 St Boswells Show

### October

15 Longtown Show  
27 Hexham Show

**PLEASE CONTACT THE AUCTION MARTS DIRECTLY FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**  
DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE  
Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association Woodhead of Mailer,  
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## SKIPTON AUCTION MART - NORTH YORKSHIRE

AUTUMN STORE & BREEDING SHEEP CALENDAR 2024

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Store Lamb sales commence Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July – fortnightly thereafter  
For catalogues and more information please call 01756 792375 or visit our website [www.ccm-auctions.com](http://www.ccm-auctions.com)

Date	Sale Description
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> August	LINGFIELDS SUMMER SHEEP FAIR Special prize sale of Suffolk x Continental x Mule & Masham Breeding Ewes + Suffolk, Texel & Continental Rams
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> August	Annual Sale of 6,500 SHEARLING GIMMERS, MULE, MASHAM & CONTINENTAL Special Sale of BREEDING SHEEP inc EWES & RAMS
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> August	Sale of PEDIGREE KERRY HILL SHEEP
Saturday 31 <sup>st</sup> August	Sale of JACOB SHEEP, WENSLEYDALE SHEEP & RARE BREED SHEEP
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> September	Sale of PEDIGREE BELTEX SHEEP, PEDIGREE BLUE TEXEL SHEEP & BADGER FACE TEXEL SHEEP
Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> September	Sale of 7,500 NORTH OF ENGLAND MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> September	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sale of SHEARLING GIMMERS & Sale of all classes of BREEDING SHEEP
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> & Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> September	43 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Sale of 600 PEDIGREE TEXEL RAMS & FEMALES
Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup> September	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sale of 10,000 MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> October	Sale of all classes of BREEDING SHEEP & RAMS Evening Show & Sale of BLUE FACED LEICESTER SHEEP
Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Sale of REGISTERED LLEYN BREEDING SHEEP
Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> October	1200 TERMINAL & NON TERMINAL SIRES (MVA & NON MVA) INC TEXEL, BELTEX, SUFFOLK, CHAROLLAIS, BLUE TEXEL, ZWARTBLE, CHEVIOT & OTHER PURE BREEDS
Saturday 5 <sup>th</sup> October	Annual Sale of 4,500 SWALEDALE EWES & SHEARLINGS
Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> October	Special Evening sale of 120 SWALEDALE RAMS
Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup> October	Sale of SWALEDALE GIMMER LAMBS, CONTINENTAL & OTHER GIMMER LAMBS Sale of MASHAM GIMER LAMBS Open Prize Sale of MULE GIMMER LAMBS
Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> October	Pedigree CHAROLLAIS IN-LAMB FEMALES
Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	24 <sup>th</sup> Annual Sale of 100 DALESBRED RAMS & FEMALES Sale of HILL RAMS inc 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sale of BFL Rams





Geoff uses NSA Ram Sales to promote the value of his stock.

# Quality pedigree sheep create potential for variety of commercial flocks

By Katie James, NSA

Few could be better suited to the role of NSA Wales & Border Ram Sale Chair than Worcestershire sheep farmer Geoff Probert.

With the Probert family having been vendors at the sale for 40 years, and buyers before that, he has seen both the early and main sales (held at Builth Wells every August and September) adapt and evolve. Now, having taken on the role as Chair of the sale committee, Geoff is optimistic the ram sales continue to be important dates in the diary for commercial and pedigree producers.

Geoff says: "NSA ram sales have been our shop window for many years, as they have for many others too."

## Highly regarded

Alongside wife Bridget, Geoff has farmed at Northingtoun Farm near Worcester for the past 24 years. A move from the Probert home farm, Covenhope, across the county border near Leominster, Herefordshire, where Geoff's brother

John still farms, has allowed the family business to progress to one that is highly regarded both locally and further afield.

The family's farming model is a mix of commercial and pedigree sheep production, a year round turkey enterprise, and beef from the dairy herd. The sheep system is managed solely by Geoff and Bridget with support during busy times from sons William, a first year agriculture student at Harper Adams University, and Alex, who has recently completed his GCSEs and is a talented rugby player.

"The focus of the business is the sheep", explains Geoff. "Our main aim to produce a good number of quality yearling Charollais, Texel and crossbred rams for sale under the Mortimer prefix from the farm or through the NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale."

To achieve this the farm runs 350 Charollais and Texel homebred ewes that are lambed from late February at John's farm, to maintain the flock's maedi visna status away from Geoff and Bridget's additional 1,100 commercial, mostly Texel cross ewes. The commercial flock is lambed



Geoff Probert.

in batches at Northingtoun from January to March, as well as Texel cross ewe lambs lambed in April.

The pedigree lambs return shortly after lambing and are given every opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

Geoff says: "Everything the pedigree rams eat is the best we can offer. Firstly the best grass seeds, then they are placed on roots throughout the winter. This could be turnips, kale or fodder beet. They then come back on to the best seeds we have on the farm and, during the summer ahead of sale season, they come in during the day and out onto strip grazed kale through the night."

## Final goal

A little home blended concentrate feed is offered but, with the final goal of always producing tups that are fit for purpose and not overfat, this is kept to a minimum.

Commercial lambs are creep fed from birth with the target of 1,000 finished lambs to be sold before the Royal Welsh Show in July. "The farm can dry up and the grass burn off quickly so we need lambs to be away as early as possible," says Geoff.

The remainder of lambs are finished on tack at local dairy and beef farmers with whom the

family has built good relationships. Nearly 30 years of selling finished and breeding stock locally through McCartneys auctioneers at Worcester and Ludlow has helped the family create good connections and a trusted customer base for the sale of their yearling tups.

"The Charollais in particular remains popular in our area so we are able to sell stock well from home with many repeat customers, as well as sending a good number to Builth," says Geoff.

Selling from home has evolved over the past 20 years, he explains: "We wouldn't have sold anything from home before then but it has become an increasing part of the business as people can come at a convenient time for them, while others simply prefer to buy direct from farm.

"But pedigree sales, particularly the NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale, remain crucial. We enjoy doing them, they allow us to do a bit of showing to see how our stock compares, you can view how other sires are performing in different businesses, and they offer the additional important benefit of social interaction.

"There is little doubt we would not have grown our customer base without the Builth sale."

## Quality tups

The family is pleased with the quantity of good tups produced for sale this year. Geoff says: "Our aim is always to produce a good number of quality tups, rather than chasing the very top price single animals. For me, the sheep industry is a triangle. Cull ewes are its base, the next level is finished lambs and, as you move up to the point of the triangle, you find the top pedigree animals. I am happy to sit in a reliable position where I can sell more for a good average price, rather than chasing the one top animal."

Good average prices have certainly been achieved in recent years with an average of £961 overall last year from all sales, and an average price of £1,139 for Mortimer tups sold at the main Builth sale.

"And we sold out!" Geoff adds. "We could have sold at least another 20 to 30 and so we have kept some extra tups this year, especially the crossbreds. We're pleased with how they are looking."

Geoff partly credits the good run at Builth in recent years to the successful purchase of stock tups for the flock, with new bloodlines acquired generally from either Builth, the Worcester Premier Charollais sale, Carlisle or Kelso.



Geoff encourages the Next Generation to become more involved in ram sales.

Geoff will go by his one main principle when selecting future breeding animals again this year. He says: "A good pedigree sheep should be an outstanding commercial sheep. I look for volume of meat in the choice cuts as the most important thing, with some pedigree breed traits alongside."

This proven understanding of both commercial and pedigree animals sets Geoff in good stead to lead the NSA Wales & Border Ram Sale Committee for his next three year term as Chair. Despite a long standing connection with the sales, Geoff's recent position came about quite quickly after joining the committee. He explains: "I went to five meetings and in that time ended up elected as Vice Chair, now three years on I am proud to take on the position of Chair."

This is a time of change for the sales, with the NSA Early Sale having recently taken place at Brecon Livestock Market for the first time instead of its previous home at Builth Wells.

Geoff comments: "The NSA Wales & Border

Early Ram Sale has been under some pressure with costs having to be addressed, but the first sale has gone well and it will now be interesting to see how this sale can evolve.

"Some are moving away from earlier lambing due to increased costs and, knowing ourselves the effect Schmallenberg can have, now also perhaps because of increased disease risk. This means numbers at the Early sale may reduce and there might be future changes – but you have to be open to change to make things work."

## Steady numbers

Numbers at the Main Builth sale have been steady over recent years, in the region of 3,000 forward each year with turnover continuing to increase, and Geoff believes the standard of sheep sold does too.

He says: "Vendors have to send their best stock to Builth now, to get the very best prices. It's needed to account for the cost of getting the sheep there, preparing them, commission and society fees. It's one of the best shop windows and it keeps your name in conversations. Whether people are buying at Builth or elsewhere, they will still look to see what the trade is there."

With the future for the sale remaining bright Geoff is hopeful more younger producers can be attracted onto the ram sale committee.

He concludes: "Of course, it's an issue facing the whole farming sector but more young people are needed in all areas to embrace the modern ideas and technology. It could certainly help secure the future of pedigree sales and complement the colossal effort that takes place each year, as it will again in the coming weeks to put on a sale for everyone to enjoy and benefit from."

## Farm facts

- 545 acre (220ha) farm running sheep, dairy beef and poultry enterprises.
- Wheat and barley grown on farm to feed stock.
- Focus on production and sale of pedigree Charollais, Texel and crossbred rams.
- Geoff elected NSA Wales & Border Ram Sale Chair in 2024.

“

Our aim is always to produce a good number of quality tups, rather than chasing the very top price single animals.

Geoff Probert

”



Geoff has farmed at Northingtoun Farm near Worcester for 24 years.



Selling stock direct from farm has become the norm for Geoff's business.



# NSA Next Generation travel bursary enables young farmers to jet set

By Andrea Calvesbert, NSA



Lucy Griffiths and Perry Parkinson have spent the last 18 months making the most of being the latest recipients of the NSA Samuel Wharry Memorial Award for the Next Generation.

The award, in the form of a travel bursary, is presented by NSA every two years in conjunction with the Company of Merchants of the Staple of England in memory of Samuel Wharry, who was NSA Chair at the time of his unexpected death, aged only 56. Samuel's passions included encouraging and supporting the next generation of sheep farmers and also applying science and innovation.

"The aim of this award is twofold," says Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive. "It allows us to do even more to build on NSA Next Generation activity supporting young and enthusiastic sheep farmers, and it also allows us to do it in the name of Sam, giving what I feel is entirely appropriate recognition of all he gave to NSA."

## Planning ahead

Lucy works alongside her family on a mixed farm in Presteigne, Powys, lambing around 650 Mules and homebred Texel cross ewes. Her aim is to create a sheep flock with a focus on sustainable production linked to alternative winter grazing methods. For her research project, she chose to investigate more sustainable grazing practices with a focus on outwintering, assessing the costs, infrastructure, technologies and equipment.

"I worked in New Zealand alongside farmers



Lucy May Griffiths.

in return for an insight into their businesses' breeding, genetic and grazing strategies," explains Lucy. "At Waihora Farm in Taupo the focus was on milk sheep and beef finished in both a technologically advanced profitable system with sympathy for the environmental constraints of the Lake Taupo catchment. On South Island, I saw how developing to scale takes patience, focus and the ability to manage aims with family and practicality."

She then spent three summer months in Australia where farms varied from stud flocks such as New Armatree Border Leicesters, which used technology, genetics and wider industry involvement to advocate for agriculture, to flocks of thousands where management in a harsh climate adds risk to business plans and profitability. She took time to analyse all elements of the businesses that affect productivity, profitability and sustainability, including genetics,



Perry Parkinson.

grazing strategies, off-farm activities, monitoring and recording.

"My key findings were that the success of all the businesses were pinned on the farmers' ability to monitor changes and make actions based on this data. The use of genetic technology in Australia highlighted the opportunities to expand this element of UK sheep farming," says Lucy.

"The New Zealand businesses were all avid record keepers to see the true cost of production and would alter how they sold animals or feeding management to ensure, despite weather or market fluctuations, they were still able to be profitable. It showed how altering your focus could improve business and increase production even where legislation, markets and global influences could affect the marketability of lamb.

"For me, the overriding message is collaborating and sharing information, technology and supporting other farmers helps resilience in a changing market, climate and industry. Ensuring farming has a voice at national level is also important."

## Parasite control

Anthelmintic resistance was the focus for Perry's trip to New Zealand where he spent a month with farmers and industry experiencing the effects of resistance on a much larger scale than here.

Perry is a first-generation farmer managing his own flock of commercial ewes on arable and grassland in Stirlingshire. He is particularly interested in anthelmintic resistance and, through breeding, improved animal health plans and regular faecal egg monitoring, his future aims are to lower and potentially remove the need for anthelmintic use and be more sustainable in his flock management.

His research assessed the current UK methods of sustainable parasite control and investigated innovative methods in New Zealand, such as breeding strategies, testing regimes, treatment choices and alternatives to anthelmintic use such as grazing strategies.

"Seeing real life resistance issues coming into the diagnostics lab really put into perspective how big the problem is over there," says Perry. "With a lot of samples showing egg counts in the thousands, it was definitely a reality check."

## Awareness

He visited farmers already using faecal egg counts along with grazing rotations, cropping choices, genetics and hard culling regimes to combat issues with anthelmintic resistance and other parasite challenges, but was sad to learn this level of awareness wasn't always the case.

"Farmers are generally very negative and see taking faecal egg counts as a chore," says Perry. "They would rather gather their stock every three weeks to worm just to be sure. But this attitude doesn't look to the future when it comes to resistance and refuses to see the overall benefit of monitoring."

He would encourage farmers to adopt faecal egg count principles so they become the norm. Another surprise during his New Zealand trip



Perry focused his study trip on parasite resistance.

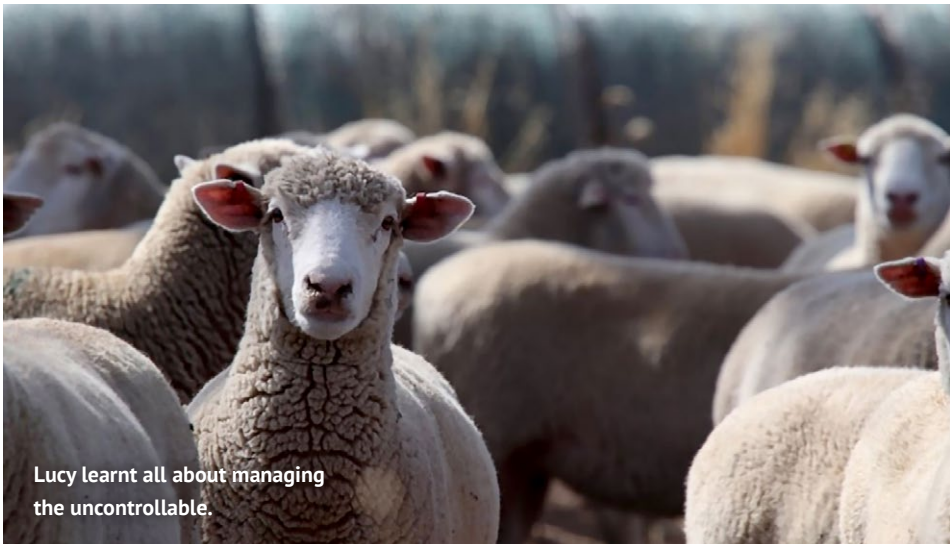
was the advice given from vets, which he says is contributing to a rise in resistance.

"Because vets sell anthelmintic drenches to farmers, there is a monetary gain from their perspective so large quantities are sold alongside hampers at Christmas and Easter. Vet advice in New Zealand is to triple drench then repeat 24 hours later. I find this shocking when the level of anthelmintic resistance facing New Zealand farmers is so high. Triple drenches are effective in New Zealand but it's a vicious circle as overusing them without rotation will reduce their efficacy."

He explains newer wormers such as orange (group 4-AD) and purple (group 5-SI) are helping reduce worm burdens in New Zealand, but there are concerns their effectiveness will start to fall if not used correctly.

He concludes: "My take home message is to do a faecal egg count, see how simple it is and how much beneficial data it can provide you. What have you got to lose?"

[Read Lucy and Perry's full reports on the NSA website.](#)  
[Application details for future travel bursaries to be released this autumn.](#)



Lucy learnt all about managing the uncontrollable.



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# Don't listen to those who doubt your goals – rise above them

**Dear Helen...** When growing up life will throw a whole host of challenges your way – some you will embrace and some you will not succeed at – it is all part of life.

I remember the school reports saying you must try harder or could do better, well there are some subjects no matter how hard you try they are just not for you, so pursue the ones you are good at.

I always told myself education is something you can go back to and learning life skills never stops. Leaving school, not going to university and not having letters after my name until later in life has not stopped me from achieving and being part of an industry I love.

Things happen for a reason. As life goes on there will be those who doubt your ability, knock you, and will even be jealous of your achievements. You will have days when you wonder if it's all worth it. But you pull yourself together and rise

## Letter to my younger self



NSA Next Generation thrives because of the enthusiasm of older NSA officeholders to share their time, expertise and advice.

Many have enthusiastically embraced this *Sheep Farmer* feature to pen a letter to their younger selves, sharing what they wish they'd known when they were starting out. The latest contributor is Helen Roberts, long-standing NSA staff member and recipient of the NSA George Hedley Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to the sheep sector.

By Helen Roberts, NSA



Helen receiving the George Hedley Memorial Award.

above those doubters, because if you put your mind to it you will succeed.

## Advice

Never be afraid to step out of your comfort zone, accept advice where needed, listen to those close to you, and cherish the time you have with family, especially parents as they are not around forever.

When you find the right partner enjoy your time together, work and party together. I have always told myself I have my mother's patience and dad's temper, not a bad combination as counting to ten and thinking of a compromise to a problem has worked well – you can always shout later at the one you love, they will understand.

My decision to stick with agriculture and sheep in particular means I have met people from all levels of society and have embraced their knowledge and skillsets, used wisely as time has gone on.

My one regret is not taking the opportunity to travel to New Zealand in my early twenties. Back then we lived in different uncertain times. Should the opportunity present itself, now older and with some savings, perhaps that trip may happen.

Saving for a rainy day and buying something when you can afford it may have seemed old fashioned advice, but I am glad I heeded that sound advice, as I feel there is a time of uncertainty and change ahead. Live every day to the full and appreciate the freedom we have within our countryside as it may not be there for ever.

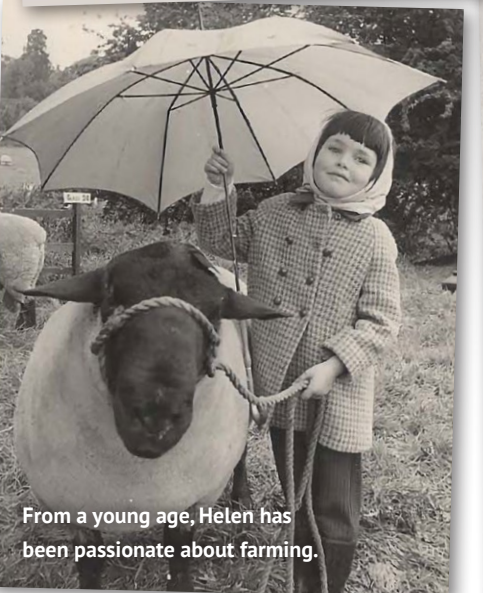
## NSA family

Being part of the NSA family will help you speak out and build your confidence. Looking back now, would I change my career path? Probably not. Working in the event industry, organising NSA Sheep Event and NSA Welsh Sheep, showing sheep, lambing, sitting on local show committees, even entering cookery and flower arranging classes are all things I never thought I had the confidence to do.

NSA together with growing up with Suffolk sheep (they had to get a mention somewhere) has helped me to pursue and achieve some of the things listed above and things I never dreamt I would achieve – Helen Roberts Associate of the Royal Agricultural Societies, first female winner of John Gittins award and NSA George Hedley Memorial Award recipient. Believe in yourself and the sky really is the limit.



Mr. J. Price, of Canterbury House, Horton, Wern, with his three-year-old daughter Helen holding the Reece cup for best ram in the show. More pictures in Monday social supplement.



From a young age, Helen has been passionate about farming.



Something to smile about is this Suffolk ram lamb, which won the breed championship. It was his second showing – and second success. At the Royal Welsh last week, he also captured the breed championship. Proudly holding the double champ is daughter of the owner, 16-year-old Helen Pryce from Little Hurdley, Churchstoke, Powys.

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# Make the most of your bank to help finance a sustainable transition

The demand for sustainable farming offers sheep farmers new opportunities to strengthen their business resilience, but what role can banks play to support the sector and ensure environmental and financial sustainability work hand in hand?

Lewis Carruthers, Agricultural Relationship Manager from Bank of Scotland and National Finance Chair for the Scottish Young Farmers' Association, provides valuable insights on navigating the transition to more environmentally friendly and profitable sheep farming.

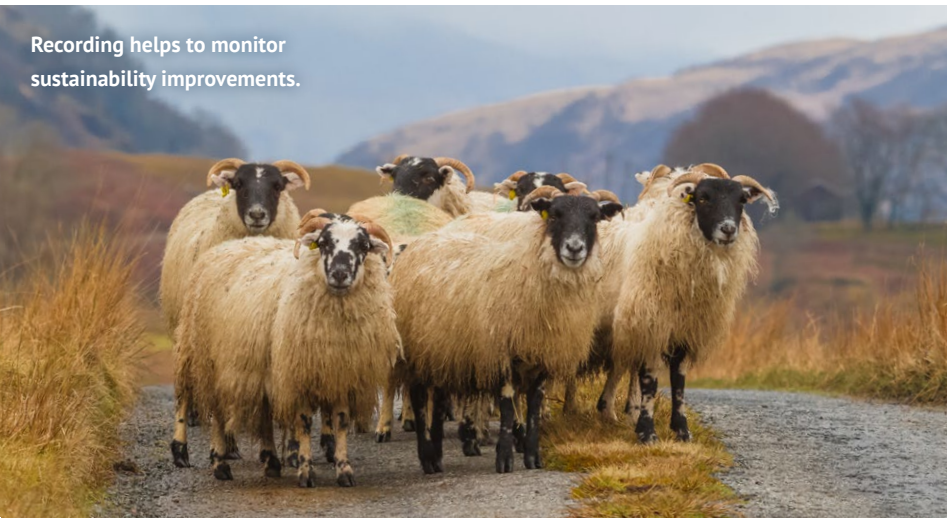
Mr Carruthers notes opportunities through government and consumer demand for sustainable farming, with funding available for projects like agroforestry, peatland restoration and biodiversity initiatives. These can improve soil health, reduce inputs, create new income streams and boost productivity," he says.

## Tailored support

He emphasises the importance of tailored support for sheep farmers due to the industry's unique position. "Sheep farming is unlike other farming systems. It's less intensive, so is uniquely placed to benefit from environmental sustainability improvements, but also tends to be less technology-driven," he explains.

"Most farmers I speak to are keen to introduce more sustainable practices and investments but are deterred by upfront costs or a lack of clear information. Successes aren't widely communicated, leaving some unsure where to begin."

Mr Carruthers describes grants as a no-brainer.



But he acknowledges accessing government subsidies and financing can be challenging due to information gaps, lengthy decision-making processes, or uncertainty about what qualifies farmers for future payments.

He advises producers to work with their bank and farm consultants to access suitable grant support. "Leveraging multiple funding sources can reduce the financial burden of implementing sustainable practices. For example, in Scotland, farmers are encouraged to explore various grants, such as the Preparing for Sustainable Farming programme and the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

"Additionally, the upland sheep support scheme provides support for farmers raising sheep in rough grazing areas," he says. "Subsidies can be used alongside bank loans to support projects improving sustainability, diversification and renewable energy use, often with discounted lending."

## Precision farming

Given the focus on carbon footprinting, Mr Carruthers recommends practical measures for reducing emissions, including optimising grassland management to minimise the need for purchased feeds and focusing on soil health.

Quality data and technology play a crucial role in building business resilience. Mr Carruthers encourages farmers to adopt precision farming techniques, such as soil sampling and electronic weighing, to evaluate and manage resources. "It's important to get a baseline of your environmental performance. Not all approaches work everywhere, so figuring out what's suitable for your farming system is vital," he explains.

Farms in unfavourable conditions require specific strategies to enhance resilience. Mr Carruthers advises farmers to leverage grants for

### Tips for resilience

- Leverage funding.** Work with advisers to access grants for sustainable projects.
- Use data.** Track inputs versus outputs to establish your farms environmental baseline to make informed decisions.
- Share successes.** Engage in sustainability discussions and share your successes to encourage others.
- Embrace change.** Reflect on your goals to identify areas for improvement and diversification.

projects that bolster the landscape and improve efficiency. This might include planting shelter belts, herbal leys or hedgerows to protect against extreme weather, improving biodiversity, soil and water management practices.

Castle Sinniness is a 594 acre (240ha) grassland farm on Scotland's south west coast managed by Robert Fleming. With a flock of 760 sheep and a herd of 100 beef suckler cows, Mr Fleming aims to boost profitability while enhancing environmental sustainability.

To address this, he sought a comprehensive evaluation of his existing farming practices through a holistic assessment tool, supported by Bank of Scotland. "I wanted a broad-spectrum view of the farm to learn, adapt, and ensure the business is well-positioned for the next generation," he explains.

## Goals

A key goal for Mr Fleming is to reduce the farm's carbon footprint. The assessment covered six areas: soil health, water quality, biodiversity, carbon emissions, animal welfare and social impact. This holistic approach provided him with a clear understanding of the farm's environmental footprint. One major outcome has been to alter livestock ratios. "After the assessment, we plan to change our ratio of cattle to sheep from 80:20 to 20:80. Beef will remain, but for grassland management primarily," he says.

In addition to adjusting stocking ratios, agroforestry practices have been adopted, integrating trees into grazing land via silvopasture. "This approach enhances carbon sequestration, boosts biodiversity and provides essential shelter for sheep," says Mr Fleming.

# Leveraging forage nutrition availability for flock sustainability and resilience

Adopting a forensic approach to flock nutrition will make your business more resilient, both financially and environmentally, says Geraint May of Promar.

"Understanding the nutritional value of your forage is central to optimising your animals' nourishment, for their health and your returns. Fundamental to this is the importance of forage testing your fresh grass," says Mr May.

Testing enables you to assess the protein intake from concentrate feeds your sheep require. It enables you to supplement any deficiencies, provide your animals with precise and balanced nutrition, and optimise feed costs. "You'll know exactly when to cut the use of expensive concentrates, saving you money in the long run," he adds.

"Furthermore, this will help your animals to achieve better health and performance. They'll develop better muscles, stronger immunity and good overall vitality." It's also important as it helps avoid overfeeding with protein, which can cause potential health issues, such as kidney damage.

He continues: "By reducing nitrogen excretion, you won't have to develop more costly mitigation strategies to reduce the environmental impact of your system. You'll be using better long-term management practices, measuring, observing, analysing and refining your grazing strategy, using forage improvement in a pinpoint way to enhance your farm's efficiency, productivity and profitability. Ultimately, it will make your life less stressful too."

## Management plan

Although nutrient management plans are mandatory, getting them just right for your farm and flock can be tricky and time-consuming to create. Mr May suggests enlisting some outside help, to gain a clear understanding of your specific crop nutrient requirements and the best way to improve them.

"A good nutrient management plan will show you how much, when and where to apply fertiliser. It will prevent over-application and reduce unnecessary costs. Following a map of high-risk areas will help you too. Additionally, this will reduce run-off and leaching, which will minimise (or eliminate) water pollution. Thus, your farm's environmental sustainability will improve," says Mr May.

"Creating a good nutrient management plan requires accurate soil tests, understanding of your crop nutrient requirements and rigorous interpretation of your findings. It will reward you with improved yields, higher quality, plus greater environmental and economic resilience."

Reseeding your farm fields annually keeps the leys fresh and productive, but to make the most of it you need to consider climate, soil conditions and management practices. To re-seed a field with grass and clover, Mr May promotes following these tips: "Test the pH levels of your fields' soils. If they are not optimal and you need to apply lime, choose it carefully to ensure it will not impact other nutrients. For example, if you have high magnesium indices, avoid magnesium lime.

"Creating the optimal seed bed will depend on your soil type and the stoniness of your land. Seeding may be possible by direct drilling, but other methods may be better for your land. Remember, if you spray your field with glyphosate, the top layer of mat can become acidic as it decays, so you'll



need to test and apply the right type and amount of lime to balance it."

### Establishment

Mr May suggests if conditions allow to sow grass in the autumn. "Then let the grass establish for 18 months so you can control broad-leaved weeds that could establish after reseeding. After a year-and-a-half has passed, in the spring, introduce clover to increase the forage protein levels and fix nitrogen in the soil. There should be at least 30% clover cover for optimal utilisation."

Careful management of grass leys is crucial, particularly when you reseed. Rotational grazing is a good tool to apply to allow fields to rest and recover. This will promote further tillering and nitrogen fixing, and it will increase the overall quality and yields.

Mr May concludes: "As with any complicated farming endeavour, wise words are easier than putting them into practice. It's worth getting expert, third-party help to sample your soils, survey your land, interpret results and fit them together into whole farm strategies."



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# Focus on targets pays off for Scottish monitor farm flock productivity

Setting targets for flock productivity and regularly revisiting them, coupled with assessing upcoming risks, is paying off for Aberdeenshire sheep farmer Bruce Irvine.

He runs 460 mainly Highlander ewes, suckler cows and grows arable crops on his 650-acre (265ha) unit at Sauchentree, near Fraserburgh on the north east coast.

He has taken a new approach to managing his flock after becoming one of nine monitor farms in Scotland. The programme is farmer-led and farmer-driven, with support from specialists to assess farm performance, explore opportunities and develop solutions to challenges.

For Mr Irvine, the benefits of focusing on performance are clear this summer, with the first batch of lambs weighed gaining 327g per day; much better than the 100g per day achieved two years ago on the farm's drought-prone land.

## Positive approach

Lamb performance is a focus from the start, with Mr Irvine working closely with his farm vet, Alison Taylor from Buchan Vets, and with consultant vet Tim Geraghty. Mr Geraghty believes being proactive, setting targets and looking for what he terms banana skins – what might be coming up that has the potential to go wrong – are key for better performance.

For the 2023/24 flock year, Mr Irvine set a target fertility rate of 195% for his main flock and 130% for ewe lambs and put 600 ewes to the tup. But, a good autumn and tupping period led to ewes scanning at 207% and ewe lambs 160% –

much higher than the target and putting pressure on lambing.

The proactive approach to lambing saw Mr Geraghty spending a morning on-farm with everyone involved to make sure the whole flock would benefit from high standards of technical skills, biosecurity and stock health and nutrition. Any sick ewes or lambs were immediately moved to a hospital shed, reducing the risk of spreading infection to others.



Scottish monitor farms are aiding progress for farmer-led solutions.

Mr Geraghty says spending time with your vet on this proactive approach – rather than dealing with problems once they've occurred – can help focus on what can be done to improve things. "There is a risk if you always review last year and have limited time with your vet you might miss changeable things. Last year can't be influenced, but we can look at what will be immediately in our control in the next few weeks or months," he says.

He advocates splitting the year into blocks, looking ahead at the next three to four months

of potential banana skin risks. For lambs over summer, this means issues such as nematodirus when temperatures consistently exceed 10°C for 10 days, and vaccinating for clostridial disease as lamb immunity from the ewe reduces and the stress of weaning approaches. Considering the risk posed by grazing lambs on fields recently populated by ewes is also important.

## Strategic grazing

Over summer, managing worms – and ensuring minimal risk of resistance developing – means a planned approach is vital, he says.

"We need to avoid over-using wormer, and it is important to keep some worms on-farm, in refugia, so your lambs are developing immunity to them. A proportion of your lambs – those with the highest growth rate and no scour – will not need wormer. I would usually leave about 10% of lambs untreated but always speak to your vet."

Mr Irvine is also planning a grazing strategy for lambs at weaning, with the poorest lambs going onto the cleanest grass, so following cattle, silage, or onto a reseed. The targets for growth are 300g/day from birth to eight weeks, 250g/day from eight weeks to weaning and 200g/day post-weaning, aiming to achieve 1.6 lambs/ewe finished by October.

Now in the second year of this proactive, target-driven approach, Mr Irvine says it is having a positive impact. "In the first year, we lost far fewer lambs – only about 10% – they finished earlier, and on far less feed. We only had 30 left at the end of January this year compared with about 200 at the same point the previous year, and we are aiming to do better this year."

More at [www.monitorfarms.co.uk](http://www.monitorfarms.co.uk).



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# Now is the time to start preparing breeding ewes for tuppung

AHDB

The dry period after weaning is the ideal time to make sure ewes are fit and in the best condition for tuppung, according to Amey Brassington of AHDB.

She says to plan now to prep ewes to regain condition lost during lactation, ready to get in-lamb and have a healthy pregnancy.

"We have previously seen weaning as a time to draw a line under a difficult scanning, lambing or summer and start again. But, data from the AHDB Sheep KPI project has shown the impact of body condition score (BCS) on a production cycle begins sooner than many think and can affect production for the following year," says Ms Brassington.

"The data showed the condition of ewes at weaning can have an impact on scanning percentages, with those with a lower score being more likely to scan with a single lamb the following cycle. It also impacted lambing percentage and lamb weight gain through to weaning.

"This means it's important ewes are at target BCS throughout the production cycle, and it is particularly important they regain enough condition before mating to ensure maximum scanning percentage."

## Condition scoring

A ewe's condition refers to the amount of body fat she has. Other than disease, the most common cause for ewes being in poor condition is a diet that does not meet nutritional requirements.

Regularly assessing BCS will provide useful information on the adequacy of their diet and the health status of your flock. Carrying out scoring at key times such as weaning and mating can help quickly identify thin ewes, enabling management to be adjusted accordingly.

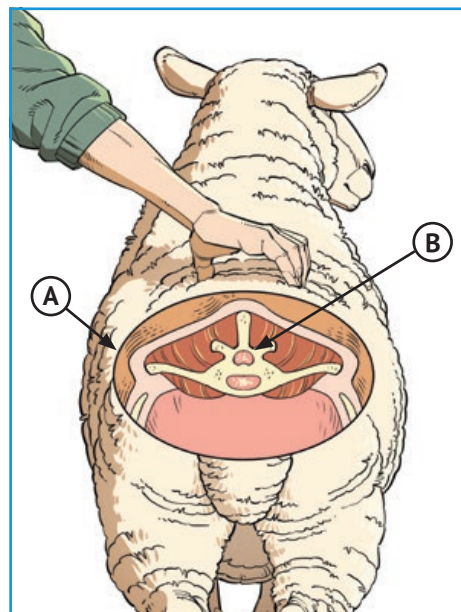
"The target BCS for hill and upland sheep is 3.0 and for lowland it is 3.5," advises Ms Brassington. "Ewes should be at target body condition at mating to optimise performance. If ewes are thin, they will release fewer eggs and so be likely to have fewer lambs at scanning. Lambs above target ovulate more than thinner ewes. However, oestrus activity may be reduced and they may suffer higher embryonic deaths due to circulating fatty acids in the blood."

## Consider culling

Ms Brassington continues: "If ewes are below target, consider culling ewes at 2.5 or less before mating as they may cause problems later on in the year. Otherwise, aim for a mild increase in plane of nutrition throughout mating and for three to four weeks after."

Ensuring ewe lambs and shearlings achieve target weight at mating is important for their production and lifetime performance. A ewe lamb should be at least 60% mature weight and shearlings should be at least 80% at tuppung.

She continues: "Measuring weight, as well as BCS, is crucial in young sheep until they approach their mature size. Mature body weight is defined as the weight of a ewe around BCS 3.0 at three years of age or older. This means neither ewe lambs or shearlings have reached their mature



## Assessing condition of ewes using BCS

- Ewes must be standing on four legs.
- Ewes must not be compressed (in a squeeze crush) at the time of scoring.
- Use the same hand to reduce variability.
- Repeat at regular intervals.

weight at tuppung and will still be growing as well as rearing lambs.

"Ewe lambs will scan and lamb at lower percentages than mature ewes. But, if well-managed, mating from ewe lambs can increase a ewe's lifetime production."

## Recording

To record BCS place one hand on the loin region to assess for the sharpness or roundness of the transverse (A) and spinous processes (B) – see diagram. This will reflect the amount of fat cover and muscle mass.

Ms Brassington explains: "After placing your hand on the ewe and assessing their condition, you can give a score. It might be sufficient to assign a 'thin, fit, fat' score. There is also a validated number scale available from 1 to 5, with 1 being very thin and 5 being very fat. It's important to record the scores so you can track the progress of the ewe and alter management as required."

See the updated *Managing Breeding Ewes* booklet on AHDB website for more.

Tracking BCS is a useful tool for managing breeding ewes.



Blood sampling is a good way to identify nutritional status.

# Making the most out of cull ewes – don't waste an opportunity

vetPartners

Though cull ewes have reached the end of their productive life on farm, they can still provide a handy source of income for farmers and help improve business sustainability.

Given the UK flock as a whole replaces about 20-25% of its breeding ewes each year, cull ewes can represent quite a significant portion of sales, which is why vet Molly Garbutt from Willows Farm Vets, part of the VetPartners group, says it's worth making the most of them.

With lambing finished, farmers are eagerly moving towards weaning, the perfect time to identify cull ewes. "Develop a health plan with your vet to establish which criteria you are going to use for culling, especially for specific health issues like lameness or mastitis, to ensure consistent decision making," explains Dr Garbutt.

## Health checks

Giving the flock regular health checks can be a great way to keep an eye on potential cull ewes.

Examining teeth wear and mouth stability can be an excellent check of the longevity of ewes as ewes more than six years old with broken or badly worn teeth that impair grazing should be culled out.

"Conducting body condition scoring twice yearly, such as at weaning and lambing, will also identify ewes that are too thin, which can be a symptom of underlying problems," says Dr Garbutt.

"Target a body condition score of 3.0 or above at tuppung for lowland ewes, and 2.5 or above for hill ewes; monitor and carefully consider the cost-benefit of keeping ewes who fail to reach these targets, as they will likely have poorer fertility and productivity going forwards."

Although health is important, temperament is a key factor for cull ewe selection. "During handling, keep a note on any negative behavioural traits and cull ewes that are overly aggressive or difficult to handle," she says.

Once the potential cull ewes have been identified, Dr Garbutt recommends splitting them into two groups for ease of management and to increase profitability. By separating them into groups based on age and health, farmers can maximise financial return by sending the younger, fatter ewes to market straight away while older, thinner ewes might need fattening up.

"Younger, healthier ewes can be sold at auction where they will fetch a higher price from farmers looking for breeding stock. Older ewes in poorer condition are best sold to slaughtermen, as they will only get the meat price if sold together in one group with the younger ewes," she adds.

Dr Garbutt is keen to stress it can pay dividends to check the calendar when arranging when to take cull ewes to market. "Cull ewes tend to sell extremely well between March to July, as this lines up with a lot of Muslim religious festivals, like Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha," she says.

"During these festivals, demand for mutton increases very steeply meaning you will get a

much better price for your cull ewes."

Weight management is also a key area of consideration, especially when aiming to sell ewes before winter.

## Monitor weights

"It takes six to eight weeks to increase a body condition score by one as it equates to about 12% liveweight, so monitor their weights monthly to make sure they are gaining around 0.2kg per day on average," she says. "Ask your vet for advice on supplements if your pasture and forage alone is not enough to fatten them up."

Dr Garbutt is keen to stress the importance of maintaining individual ewe records to track origins, treatments, weights, body condition scores and market performance over time.

"I'd recommend recording any health issues, production data, and observations at lambing, weaning and throughout the year so you can take a systematic, long-term approach to recording flock data to have accurate information for culling decisions," suggest Dr Garbutt.

"Tracking individual ewes' productivity over multiple years, complete with statistics like lambing percentages and weaning weights can help identify chronic low performers, which will improve the overall performance of the flock over time.

"Keeping detailed health records can show up ewes with recurring issues like lameness or mastitis that impact their profitability as well as identifying areas for genetic or management improvements."



Using a teaser should condense  
your lambing period.

# Maximising the role of teaser rams at tupping time

Teaser is the colloquial term for a vasectomised ram that can have a variety of applications to improve reproductive performance in your flock.

By virtue of the fact of their vasectomy, teasers are sterile but look, act and smell like entire, fertile rams. Consequently they cause changes in the reproductive cycle of ewes that can be exploited.

When ewes are in the transition period – the period before they start cycling – the introduction of a ram can cause them to start cycling sooner, known as the ram effect. For most lowland breeds the transition period stretches from late July to September. The use of a teaser ram can provoke this earlier cycling, without the risk of ewes becoming pregnant.

The first ovulation usually occurs within three days of exposure to the ram, but this is not accompanied by any oestrus (heat), due to the lack of progesterone priming. Consequently, the first fertile oestrus usually occurs around 20 days after the first exposure to the ram or teaser. In about 40% of ewes, there is second silent ovulation shortly after the first and so the first fertile oestrus occurs later, around 25-28 days after teaser introduction.

## Synchronisation

Due to this effect, teasers can not only be used to move the breeding season earlier, but they do cause a degree of synchronisation too. For example:

- Day one: Teaser introduction.
- Day 14-17: Replace teaser with fertile ram(s).
- Day 18-20: Likely first peak of mating for 60% ewes.
- Day 25-28: Likely first peak of mating for 40% of ewes.

For best effect, it used to be thought the ewes should be out of sight and smell of a ram for two months prior to teaser introduction. Now it is believed the novelty of a new, unfamiliar ram is also an important factor. A teaser can be used at a ratio of 1:100 ewes. Due to the synchronisation caused, it is best to use a higher ram to ewe ratio than normal when introducing the fertile rams.

Only a few days of exposure are necessary for the ram effect to occur, so the same teaser ram can be used sequentially on different groups of

By JP Crilly, ECSRHM



ewes, however the percentage of ewes that cycle is greater if the ram contact is constant, especially with seasonal breeds.

If ewes are already cycling when the teaser is introduced, the degree of synchronisation is not as marked, but many people use teasers even when tupping is planned for October or November.

But teaser rams alone are unlikely to be successful in inducing oestrus in ewes in deep anoestrus – that is far out of the normal breeding season for that breed.

The presence of teasers also improves the response to synchronisation using sponges/CIDRs, the conception rate of artificial insemination, and the success of melatonin in advancing the breeding season. They have also been shown to induce earlier cycling in doelings – young female goats – and may do the same in ewe lambs.

## Ram selection

The best candidates for vasectomy to produce teasers are young, fit, vigorous shearling rams, ideally with sexual experience. But ram lambs and older rams can make adequate teasers too. It is important to avoid animals in poor health, for example ram lambs still left on farm due to poor growth rates or lame old tups. As matings will occur, it is important animals with infections of the genital tract are avoided. If animals are bought-in to serve as teasers, either already vasectomised, or for vasectomy after purchase, it is essential quarantine procedures are applied.

As the teaser ram has the greatest impact if fully sexually active at the time of introduction, choosing a less seasonal breed as the teaser is advisable if using the teaser to advance the breeding season. Alternatively, use of a melatonin implant in the teaser may be considered.

Vasectomy may be performed under local or regional anaesthesia, or under a general anaesthetic, or a combination of these techniques. It is usually performed with the ram held in a seated position. Two small incisions are made on the front of the neck of the scrotum, and a section of the vas deferens on each side is removed. It is common practice for these sections to be preserved in formal saline, in case of later disputes about whether the vasectomised ram is, in fact, fertile.

The teaser should be easily identified – choosing a breed different to the breeding males, or the insertion of a management tag or application of a tattoo should all be considered to avoid mistaken identity.

Teasers can be used two weeks after surgery, but many vets will recommend a minimum gap of six weeks between surgery and use, to ensure there is no chance of surviving spermatozoa in the reproductive tract resulting in pregnancies.

Over time the spermatozoa accumulate in the epididymis and testicles, causing sperm



granulomas. As these reduce the amount of testosterone-producing tissue, the libido and effectiveness of the teaser ram declines, but unfortunately there is no fixed time limit for how long he is likely to be effective for.

## Alternatives

The cost of the procedure and the maintenance cost of the teaser ram when he is to be used in a small flock may be prohibitive. Alternatives include:

- Where secure pens or fences are present, ewes and rams can be housed next to each other, so there is sight and smell contact, but care must be taken the ram does not injure himself trying to get to the ewes.

- If the ram is halter trained, he can be led through the ewes several times a day (at least two, ideally three times is better). There will need to be a period of time with the ram in the field, for the ewes to come into contact with him. This will probably only work if the handler is strong enough to restrain the ram from mating.
- A ram apron is buckled around the middle of the ram, so it hangs just in front of the prepuce (sheath). If the ram mounts, the apron prevents the insertion of the penis. This works well and enables the same ram to be used as teaser and sire, but if the apron becomes displaced then fertile mountings are possible, and it can cause injury if not fitted well.

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# Integration of grass leys and livestock to optimise arable rotations

There has been increased interest in recent years in reintegration of livestock into arable systems, and in particular the potential soil and other environmental benefits of a return to a mixed farming approach.

By taking land out of annual cultivation and increasing the return of organic matter in the form of root and litter turnover as well as via the grazing animal, temporary grass leys have the potential to increase soil organic matter levels, leading to increased moisture retention and nutrient turnover, improved soil structure and reduced erosion risk.

There have been relatively few long-term studies comparing soil organic matter levels within arable and ley/arable rotations under UK agricultural conditions. The most significant study started in 1938 on sandy soil in Bedfordshire. A three-year grazed grass/clover ley in a five-year rotation with arable crops increased soil organic matter in the top 25cm of the soil from 1.69% to 2.12% over 28 years, but with little further increase during the next 40 years when the grass/clover ley was replaced by an all-grass ley given nitrogen fertiliser. By contrast, soil organic matter in the all arable rotation declined from 1.69% to 1.62% over the 70 year period and to 1.41% where root crops were included.

## Multiple benefits

A more recent AHDB funded project quantified the benefits of integrating leys into an arable rotation. In September 2017, six long term (more than 10 years) arable fields were sown to grass/clover or herbal grass/clover leys at Norwood Farm in Somerset.

Norwood Farm is a 130ha mixed farm on mainly medium textured clay loam and silty loam soils with an average annual rainfall of 900mm. In 2016 the farm transitioned to a mixed arable, beef and sheep farm with 2,150 sheep and 570 beef cattle. As part of this, 110ha (270 acres) of long-term arable land was sown to a mix of permanent and temporary grass, which are managed by a combination of cutting and grazing. Arable fields are in a rotation of combinable crops and leys.

Baseline soil assessments were carried out in autumn 2017 prior to the leys being sown, then repeated in autumn 2020, showing a significant improvement in soil quality after three years of a grass ley. Soil organic matter increased from 7.9% to 8.3%, equivalent to an increase of 6t/ha organic matter in the top 15cm of soil. Earthworm numbers increased by 60% and total earthworm biomass increased three-fold. This data provides clear evidence of the soil quality benefits of integrating temporary grass leys into arable rotations.

These soil improvements can also be expected to benefit following arable crops in the rotation. Organic matter holds approximately 10 times its weight in water. Therefore, the 6t/ha increase measured can be expected to increase water holding capacity by approximately 60,000l/ha in the top 15cm, equivalent to 6mm of rainfall. Spring barley yields were increased by

0.7t/ha following the three-year grass and clover ley compared to continuous arable production.

## Profitable gains

The introduction of a ley into an arable rotation also helps with the cultural control of black grass by allowing seed to decline in the weed seedbank, which also reduces the resistance pressure to current herbicides, maintaining their effectiveness for longer. Measurements showed a reduction in the number of blackgrass heads after a three-year grass and clover ley indicating the leys potential to control black grass.

A cost benefit analysis of integrating livestock into arable systems also showed a positive net margin of around £250/ha (before rent and finance). Farmbench results showed while these margins cannot match the returns from a winter wheat crop, they are as good if not better than some of the other common combinable crops, especially a traditional break crop of winter beans. Margins can be improved by entering the land into a subsidy or stewardship agreement, accounting for the increased yields from the following arable crop and depreciating the ley over a longer time period.



Integrating leys into rotations has multiple benefits.



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# Understanding benefits and challenges of different forages for weaned lambs

By Sam Lane, Cotswold Seeds

Planning for optimum performance of lambs post weaning is vital for reducing stress and maximising liveweight gains.

Generally, weaning is carried out between 10-12 weeks of age, but there are important points to consider - from eight weeks of age lambs' efficiency at converting energy from grass is greater than from milk. If forage availability and quality is low, competition will arise between lambs and ewes for forage.

Ewes still require enough forage to maintain body condition for tugging, therefore if dry matter yields are low it would be beneficial to wean lambs earlier. Multispecies leys have shown multiple benefits for weaned lambs, including increased daily liveweight gain, reduced anthelmintic usage and reaching slaughter weight faster.

## Forage options

Nitrogen fixing species such as white clover, in a mix with ryegrass can achieve comparably higher lamb performance. Trials have shown an increase in the rate of daily liveweight gain from weaning to slaughter by 25%, with heavier carcass weights when grazing nitrogen fixing species.

White clover is highly beneficial in mixed leys. It fixes nitrogen, is highly palatable, high in protein and a rich source of minerals. Smaller-leaved varieties of white clover are more suitable under sheep grazing as they have a low creeping growth and withstand hard, continuous grazing.

Alternatively red clover and ryegrass produces multiple high quality, high protein silage cuts through the summer, and is ideal for aftermath

grazing lambs into the autumn, reaching slaughter weight early to achieve favourable market prices.

But grazing management is essential. Red clover grows from a crown so overgrazing risks permanently damaging the ley. Also, it contains phytoestrogens, which may have a negative effect on breeding ewe fertility. Do not graze six weeks either side of tugging.

Lucerne (alfalfa) is a good option for those on lighter, free draining, neutral soils. It has a deep taproot for accessing moisture, while fixing nitrogen. Pair with grass to provide a high yielding silage cut, with aftermath grazing for finishing lambs from late August to mid-winter.



Anthelmintic properties of multispecies swards can assist lamb weight gain.

Due to the peri-parturient relaxation in immunity, ewes shedding worm eggs create a heavily contaminated paddock for the first 8-10 weeks of a lamb's life. Lambs do not reach an adult level of innate antibody response until 7-10 months, therefore are increasingly exposed to harmful worm burdens as grass intake surpasses milk. Including chicory, birdsfoot trefoil or sainfoin in the diet provides natural anthelmintic benefits.

Herbs such as chicory, ribgrass (plantain) and sheeps parsley are highly beneficial in drought

tolerant pastures - their deep roots can access more moisture to provide ample forage throughout the summer, while also mining minerals.

Ribgrass is also high in protein and calcium (more than four times higher than perennial ryegrass), comparable to white clover. It is highly palatable but research has shown livestock will selectively graze it - so strip grazing is best.

## Diversity

Increasing the biodiversity of plant species within a sward increases the overall dry matter yield through differing rooting depths, stem elongation and nutritional requirements. Subsequently, lambs are able graze the multispecies ley at a higher stocking rate. Mob-grazing lambs, where they are moved onto fresh forage everyday (and back fenced), makes best utilisation of multispecies leys and provides clean, worm free pasture. Introduce lambs onto the next break when they are full to avoid overindulgence.

Growth rates following weaning are a direct response to feed intake, quality and the ability of the rumen to process the forage. The transition period onto multispecies leys (especially herbal leys) is critical for reducing weaning stress and bloat from overindulgence of richer forage. It should take approximately three weeks for the rumen to adapt.

Research has shown introducing lambs to multispecies leys while still with their mothers promotes higher voluntary intake once weaned, allows for a period of rumen development prior to weaning, and reduces stress. Ensuring lambs are offered supplementary fibre can help regulate intake of clover-rich pasture and prevent red gut.

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## What's the latest from Moredun?

**New factsheet:** OPA and training in lung scanning.

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**Upcoming Event:** Tackling Johne's Disease. September 9th at Moredun. Discussing new diagnostics and management, including potential field application.

**Contact the organisers via the QR code.**

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# An update on Schmallenberg virus risk based on UK surveillance data

Investigating the trends in APHA surveillance data shows Schmallenberg virus infection in the UK peaks in three to five-year cycles.

The disease is caused by a virus transmitted by biting midges (*Culicoides* spp.), similar to how bluetongue virus is transmitted. But, unlike bluetongue, Schmallenberg is an endemic disease and not notifiable to APHA.

The spread of Schmallenberg is closely linked to the number of midges, which tend to peak in late summer to early autumn with a drop once frosts begin. It can cause disease in sheep, cattle and goats, although antibodies have been detected in other species such as alpacas and deer.

In autumn 2023, APHA received reports in England of sheep showing antibodies to Schmallenberg on blood sample testing and in bulk milk samples from dairy cow herds. The sheep were tested as they were used for artificial insemination and the dairy cow herds were tested as they showed milk-drop.

## Signs

Infection during pregnancy has the most marked impact and this was seen a few months later by lambs being born with congenital deformities typical of Schmallenberg. APHA encouraged submission of suspect cases, with free testing to enable confirmation of the diagnosis and to rule out other potential causes.

Over a four-month period to the end of March this year, 442 submissions of deformed lambs, kids and calves were tested to confirm infection in England, Wales and Scotland. Of these, 233 were confirmed as Schmallenberg with 24 in calves, two in goat kids and the remainder in lambs.

Foetuses affected by infection during pregnancy were aborted, stillborn or born alive but unviable and required euthanasia on welfare grounds. The most consistent lesions associated with Schmallenberg were twisted limbs, contracted tendons (arthrogryposis) and fused joints, usually affecting all four limbs, with variable numbers of animals also exhibiting curvature of the spine, undershot lower jaw and skull deformities.

Some were born with normal shaped bodies, but with a dumb behaviour because of brain damage. The brains range from being grossly normal to having cavities (hydranencephaly and/or porencephaly), and in most there were varying degrees of reduced spinal cord development (micromyelia). These changes were associated with Schmallenberg infection during early pregnancy, which is days 28-60 of gestation in sheep.

The impact of Schmallenberg has been significant on many farms, with reports of increased barren rates in ewes and cows, and the loss of foetuses with congenital disease. Some ewes have given birth to both affected and unaffected lambs in the same pregnancy. More cases were diagnosed by testing in western England and Wales in the first three months of 2024 when compared with the previous two years.

The explanation for this is uncertain, but factors might include uneven virus distribution, waning immunity of animals in some areas, a prolonged mild autumn in 2023, awareness of vets about the free testing offer, or not testing flocks or herds where there is familiarity with the disease from previous diagnoses. It is also possible the disease mostly affected counties in eastern England during 2021-2023 and that the western counties therefore had lower immunity, resulting in the higher number of cases there with the latest outbreak.

## Prevention

Prevention is best achieved by vaccination with a licenced vaccine but at the time of writing no licenced vaccine was available in the UK. There is currently no clear published evidence that insecticides or repellents to kill or repel midges provide any significant protection from the disease.

Where practical, consider mating later in the season to avoid the peak midge season in autumn during pregnancy, and consider not synchronising breeding ewes to avoid ewes becoming infected at the same susceptible stage of pregnancy. Please discuss any prevention measures with your vet and incorporate this into your flock health plan.

Remember, some signs of Schmallenberg are similar to bluetongue – but bluetongue is a notifiable disease – so if bluetongue is suspected by your vet it must be reported.



Undershot lower jaw in a lamb with Schmallenberg.



Curvature of the spine is common in Schmallenberg infected foetuses.

By Rudolf Reichel, Animal and Plant Health Agency



# NEMSA MULE SALE DATES

## Ewe & Shearling Sales

### July / August

Bentham	Saturday 27th July
Carlisle	Friday 2nd August (August Fair)
Hawes	Tuesday 20th August
Skipton	Tuesday 20th August
Lancaster	Wednesday 21st August
Carlisle	Friday 23rd August
Kendal (NWA J36)	Saturday 24th August
Bentham (Ewes)	Friday 30th August
Bentham (Shearlings)	Saturday 31st August

### September

Barnard Castle	Tuesday 3rd September
Longtown	Wednesday 4th September
Leyburn	Friday 6th September
Cockermouth	Friday 6th September
Wigton	Saturday 7th September
Penrith	Tuesday 10th September
Carlisle	Thursday 12th September
Longtown	Tuesday 17th September
Skipton	Tuesday 17th September
Hexham	Wednesday 18th September
Kendal (NWA J36)	Saturday 21st September
Kirkby Stephen	Saturday 21st September
Bentham	Friday 27th September
Leyburn	Friday 27th September

### October / November

Skipton	Tuesday 1st October
Bentham	Saturday 19th October



## Gimmer Lamb Sales

### August/September

*Hexham	Thursday 5th September
Skipton	Tuesday 10th September
Kirkby Stephen	Friday 13th September
Kendal (NWA J36)	Saturday 14th September
Bentham	Saturday 14th September
Hawes	Monday 16th September
Hawes	Tuesday 17th September
Longtown	Tuesday 17th September
Middleton-in-Teesdale	Wednesday 18th September
Lancaster	Wednesday 18th September
Wigton	Wednesday 18th September
Pateley Bridge	Wednesday 18th September
Barnard Castle	Thursday 19th September
Carlisle	Thursday 19th September
*Hexham	Thursday 19th September
Cockermouth	Friday 20th September
Leyburn	Friday 20th September
Penrith	Tuesday 24th September
Skipton	Tuesday 24th September
Lazonby Alston Moor Sale	Wednesday 25th September
Tow Law (at Hexham)	Thursday 26th September
St John's Chapel	Friday 27th September
Bentham	Saturday 28th September
Hawes	Monday 30th September

### October/November

Longtown	Wednesday 2nd October
Leyburn	Friday 4th October
Lancaster	Saturday 5th October
Skipton	Tuesday 8th October
Lazonby	Wednesday 9th October
Kendal (NWA J36)	Thursday 10th October
Hawes	Monday 14th October
Leyburn	Friday 18th October
Bentham	Saturday 19th October
Skipton	Tuesday 22nd October
Lazonby	Wednesday 23rd October
Hawes	Tuesday 29th October
Skipton	Wednesday 13th Nov

**ITEMS IN BOLD ITALICS** - denotes Sales at which: All lambs forward will be the bonafide property of members of the Association and will be subject to the scrutiny of Association Sale Inspectors.  
 \* Denotes the Marts will be selling Mules out of both Northumberland type Blackface and Swaledale dams.  
 † in conjunction with Alston Moor Day Sale.

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# Reaping the benefits of orange (group 4) and purple (group 5) wormers

By Lesley Stubbings, SCOPS



Many still seem reluctant to give lambs a mid/late season dose of an orange (4-AD) or purple (5-SI) wormer but there are ways to get the full benefits of newer wormers, without overusing them.

In the first instance, it's worth exploring why there is a reluctance to use them. The top reason is usually cost, because these two products are a lot more expensive than other wormers. Understandably, you want to know you will get tangible benefits from the extra money invested.

But there is also a feeling among some farmers and their advisers that these products should not be used, keeping them on the shelf until the three older groups are no longer working. The problem is by waiting until that point you would have to rely totally on the orange and purple products, which would accelerate the development of resistance to these two remaining wormers, leaving us no options at all. The key is to use these wormers now, harnessing their full benefits without overusing them.

There are short and long-term benefits, and both are linked to the ability of these products to kill worms resistant to the older three groups. Most sheep farms have a degree of resistance to one or more of the older wormer groups, so as lambs are treated over a season, they gradually build up a population of resistant worms in their gut.

## Benefits

Quite simply, the late season dose kills this accumulated burden, so the first obvious benefit is an improvement in lamb performance. But, there are significant longer term benefits because killing the resistant worms means they do not breed and therefore can't pass on their genetic ability to survive treatment to the next generation of worms. This slows the development of resistance on the farm, extending the useful life of the older groups and, very importantly, helping to protect orange and purple wormers for the future.

To get the best return on this investment each flock must look at when they are likely to get the most benefit. Going too early means the lambs have not had time to accumulate a burden of resistant worms; treatment then is not going to deliver the benefits. There will be an accumulation of resistant worms later in the season, creating a negative result. Leaving it too late means lambs will have reduced growth rates and resistant worms will have had chance to breed. Most spring lambing flocks will be looking at late summer/early autumn, but each year will be different so advice from your vet, SQP or adviser is invaluable. Remember to use faecal egg counts to make sure a treatment is actually needed before drenching.

This annual dose needs to be given to all of the lambs on the farm, which can be a bit confusing when we are trying to encourage you to leave some untreated at other times. The reason is you are aiming to kill as many resistant worms inside the lambs as possible. If lambs are to be moved after drenching, the most practical way of avoiding the dangers of the dose and move strategy is to make sure they are drenched four to five days before the move. Returning them to the same pasture for that short time makes sure

they pick up a few untreated worms to take with them, mitigating any risk a few worms may have survived treatment.

## Worm control

Drench testing is a vital part of worm control on all sheep farms and a post-drench check after using an orange or purple wormer is very important. The sooner you find out if a wormer is losing its effectiveness, the more you can do to protect the others, maintain longer term control and avoid lost growth in lambs. Regular testing will also help to build up a picture of what groups are working on a farm and when. Too many people are just guessing, ignoring the possibility of resistance or even just assuming they have a problem with one or other wormer, which is leading to overuse of other products, including the orange and purple wormers.

Funding is available for testing via the Animal Health & Welfare Pathway in England and the Sustainable Farming Initiative in Scotland.

More information at [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk).



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# British Wool invests in novel tree shelters to propel wool-based tree guards

British Wool is demonstrating its commitment to increasing the demand for British wool by investing in new eco-friendly tree shelters made from British wool.

The investment enables NexGen Tree Shelters to fully produce its environmentally friendly tree guards, which have undergone extensive development and testing since winning the Innovation in Wool award in 2020.

This partnership will allow full production of the biodegradable tree shelters to begin, which should hopefully replace single-use plastics with a knock-on boost in demand for British wool.

## Driving demand

Andrew Hogley of British Wool says: "British Wool is delighted to partner and support the

company in bringing this innovative, new wool-based product to market. The tree shelters aim to take single-use plastic out of the environment and potentially drive significant demand for undervalued types of British wool over the medium to long term."

## New opportunities

Gary Hurlstone of NexGen Tree Shelters adds: "This is an exciting partnership for the company and will allow us to progress to full production. We have so much interest in the product and can't wait to start seeing our British wool tree shelters all over the UK, as well as in international markets."

British Wool says the investment highlights its commitment to sustainability and promises new market opportunities for members' wool.

For more information on the tree guards visit [www.nexgen-ts.com](http://www.nexgen-ts.com).



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# PRODUCT AND BUSINESS NEWS

## New combined analysis service

Two laboratories have come together to provide combined independent macronutrient and mineral analysis. DM Scientific (forage analysis) and NUVetNA (mineral experts) are offering package options as well as the opportunity to request specific analyses. [Contact info@dmscientific.co.uk](mailto:Contact info@dmscientific.co.uk) or [NUVetNA@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:NUVetNA@nottingham.ac.uk) 01159 516447.



## UK Sheep yard equipment addition

Te Pari Products has added Veno Sheep Yard Equipment to its product range, making it the sole UK distributor.

The Veno range includes sheep handling yards, wintering barn hurdles, lambing pens and feeding systems designed to streamline livestock management. Key features include modular design, durable materials, easy assembly, a focus on animal welfare and customisable options.



## Biting into the price of mobile sheep handling

MSD has added an entry-level model to its range of Alligator Pro mobile handling systems.

The new Alligator Pro Starter Kit has been designed as an affordable entry point into mobile sheep handling for shepherds who do not qualify for grant help. The Alligator Pro SK retails at £6,999 and includes a galvanised steel trailer chassis, manual winch, three-way drafting race with two guillotine gates, 15 hurdles and three support posts. This can be upgraded with additional accessories.



## Smart fence offers livestock protection

The UK's first mobile app-operated electric fence energiser has been launched.

Rutland Electric Fencing's ESD 12000 Smart Energiser can be operated from anywhere, enables users to monitor fences in real time and reports drops in power and battery problems. It can run on mains power or a 12V battery, offering the possibility of using solar power.



## New fluke treatment a welcome addition

Univet has introduced a new fluke treatment to the UK market, with rafoxanide as the active ingredient.

Initially available through veterinary practices, Univet says Flukanide has shown notable efficacy against both immature and mature fluke, particularly from six weeks old. Given the current limited range of flukicides available for sheep in the UK, it is a welcome addition to fluke treatment options.



## New tool for navel protection shows good results

In rapid response to concerns over iodine shortages in 2022, a new product has been trialed in the UK and brought to the market by NoBACZ Healthcare.

NoBACZ Navel is a long-acting adhesive solution that replaces the need to use strong iodine on the umbilicus area or eartag sites. It fully dries out the navel while providing antiseptic activity against surface dwelling bacteria. The patented combination of ingredients forms a waterproof, durable and long-lasting barrier, including a bitter agent to deter ewe interference. Pilot studies have shown positive useability and performance results.



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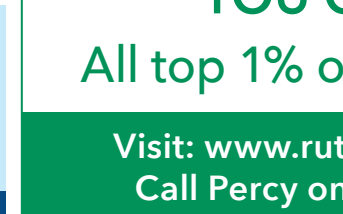
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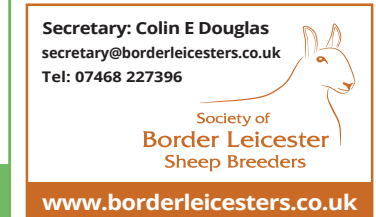
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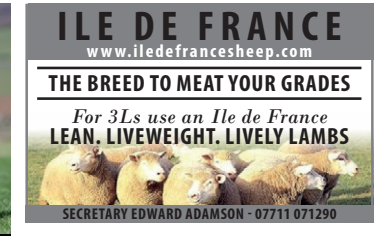
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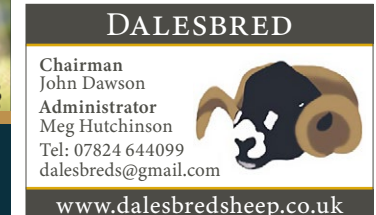
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# Following the flock

We visit County Fermanagh, Herefordshire and Denbighshire to catch up with NSA officeholders.

## Alistair Armstrong

NSA Northern Ireland Chair, County Fermanagh



A difficult and wet 2023 continued into 2024 with ground conditions not improving until late April to get out with slurry and fertiliser.

Alongside lower than average temperatures our grass growth was severely hampered. We are now well into summer yet the woolly hat and waterproofs are still close to hand.

But the ewes and lambs have delt with the wind and rain, performed well off grass and we weaned the lambs once the majority reached 14 weeks. Spring prices for finished lambs and cull ewes helped to encourage optimism within the sheep sector.

Sadly, prices in Northern Ireland dropped back severely to a similar level to 2023 when the bulk of our lambs were ready. As a primary hill producer we will not be reimbursed for the difficult and stressful 12 months we've just endured.

Summer show season is well underway and we plan to do a few of these to help support local shows and promote the breed. This year we hosted a flock open day in July to show off the different types of North Country Cheviot and their crosses.



Alistair is supporting local shows to promote his breed.



Richard is concerned about the damp weather affecting his business.

## Richard Vines

NSA Marches Region Chair, Herefordshire



On reflection, lambing this year was surprisingly painless.

We lamb from mid-March and were fortunate to not experience much in the way of Schmallenberg. Some of the shepherds in the west of the county lambing earlier were less fortunate, so the debate as to how to mitigate the problem in future years begins.

Unusually we did not have any vet involvement during lambing, a great step forward but I think more luck than planning. Trying to replicate a similar outcome in the next year is rarely achieved. Every year there seems to be a different issue arising however conscientious one seems to be.

Early shearing of the rams and replacement ewes is done, but hopefully by the time you read this we'll have had a weather window to shear the ewes. Fly prevention across the flock was completed by the end of May and the colder damp weather means fly strike is not an issue.

We have made some great early haylage and some hay, but things will be challenging ahead with limited dry periods predicted. The variability of forecasting makes planning quite stressful and the continued downpours throughout summer remind me of the abysmal run of weather in 2023.

We all wish for a dry warm summer, but it seems the change in the world's seasonal weather is either wet, or like the east of Europe and America, scorching. Not sure which I prefer, as both have an impact on farming lives. Is it too much to hope for a few weeks of settled weather in the coming weeks?

## Caryl Hughes

NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chair, Llangollen, Denbighshire



We were a bit later than we would have liked in getting everything in post-lambing to mark and drench, but were pretty pleased with how lambs had grown.

As we were late getting to them we were advised to go in with a clear wormer, followed by a multi-vitamin drench. We earmark all our Welsh ewe lambs with our farm mark and put a small notch on all other female lambs for management purposes, making it easier to sort males from females.

One problem that seems to have been an issue since this year is lameness, even in hill ewes, which I cannot recall ever being lame in the past. After a discussion with our vets we've been treating the lame and isolating the treated ones. Anything that doesn't mend after treatment and requires a second treatment will be culled once she is mended.

All the Mule ewes and their Texel lambs have been run through a footbath twice a week since June and we are getting their lambs off to market with good trade received. The Welsh ewes with their lambs and older Welsh ewes with their Mule lambs have been through the footbath when we've got them near the handling pens and during shearing.

With the yearlings gathered from the mountains and sheared, the Texel lambs weaned and the Welsh ewe lambs and their mothers back up on the mountain, the cycle will soon start again.



Caryl's ewe lambs and their mothers are back on the mountain.



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