SHEEPFARMER

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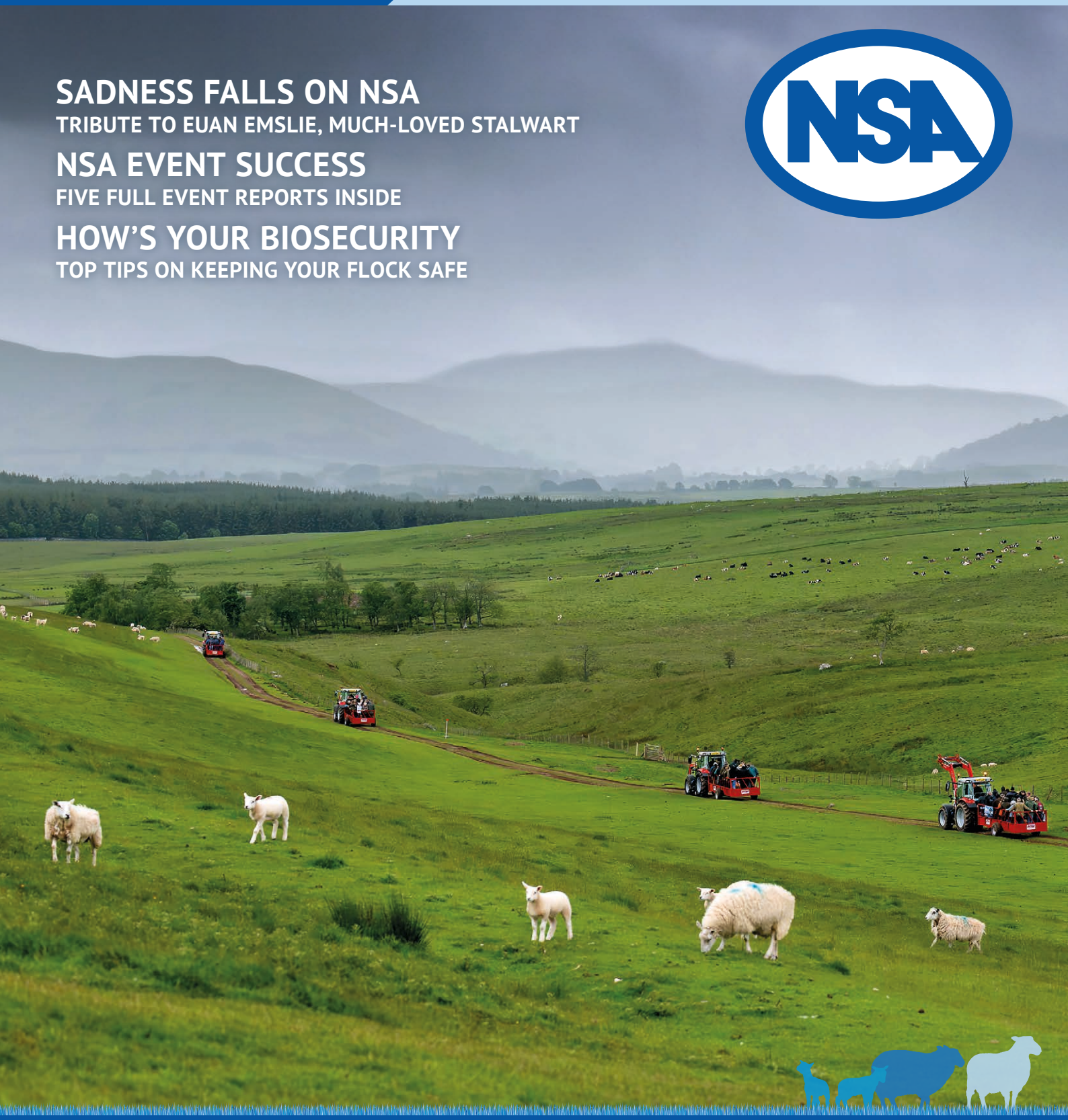
SADNESS FALLS ON NSA
TRIBUTE TO EUAN EMSLIE, MUCH-LOVED STALWART

NSA EVENT SUCCESS
FIVE FULL EVENT REPORTS INSIDE

HOW'S YOUR BIOSECURITY
TOP TIPS ON KEEPING YOUR FLOCK SAFE





Praising summer event achievements



By Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive

As you get older the seasons just fly by, but this feels like it has been a long summer already.

We've held five major NSA sheep events around the UK and attended some of the key agricultural shows, as well as keeping the home fires burning with our policy, development and communications work. We've said goodbye to Joanne Briggs and eased a new Operations Director, Aaron Dhanda, into his role.

But it's not just the amount of work that's made it feel long, it's also the absence of rain and extreme temperatures in parts of the UK giving conditions more reminiscent of southern Europe. Without regularity, the unpredictability and the extremes make planning and business resilience hard.

Record numbers

Over the five major NSA events we have welcomed between 10-15,000 people across the UK. They have all been uplifting experiences with credit going to our regional event organisers and their armies of volunteers. The one ray of sadness over the summer was the loss of Euan Emslie who died not long after putting on the superb NSA Highland Sheep – a great tribute to a man who gave so much to the NSA over many years. *Full homage on page 6.*

The host farms were all fantastic, all very different but glowing with positivity and showing many different approaches to successful sheep farming. The common factors, that didn't go unnoticed, included investment in grassland/forage and grazing management, good quality sheep in terms of genetics, breeding and health management, and a recognition of the importance of the farmed environment in terms of soils, climate change and habitats for nature.

Strong sheep prices always help to lift our mood with most conversations and seminars being positive and solutions focused. This is exactly where NSA should be. There are always challenges and barriers we need to work on and listening to you, we are doing that every day. We are far stronger working in an arena of positive thinking, celebrating all the good things about what we do and how we live our lives, and making sheep farming attractive, welcoming and something to celebrate.

That positive thinking was undoubtedly out in force at Groundswell where NSA played an active role in two seminars exploring modern ways of introducing sheep and forage crops into arable farms. It was great to include Liz Genever, sheep consultant and RoSA ambassador, and Rollo Deutsch, NSA Next Generation Ambassador. Our base at Groundswell was with British Wool and not surprisingly attracted a lot of interest among a crowd eager to learn more about regenerative farming and sustainability.

As I write, we have one more major show ahead, the Royal Welsh, before we then get into the autumn sales, NSA regional events, NSA Next Generation Shepherd competitions, and then the biennial NSA Sheep Farmers' Conference – details on page 8.

The Royal Welsh Show will mark the end of an era with the ground lease of our NSA building being terminated and the building planned to come down in early 2026. NSA's presence at the Royal Welsh Show is likely to be different in the future.

Bluetongue

We expand on this on page 18 but snapping out of the previous restriction zone to include the whole of England from 1st July has marked a very different approach to controls, with Wales and Scotland deciding to remain outside the restriction zone. This is causing serious problems with movements from England into Scotland and Wales while disrupting sales.

The situation could change suddenly if emerging positive bluetongue cases grow in number and range, but the disruption this has caused with pre-movement testing being required at significant cost before animals can move from England is proving difficult. In time it is expected vaccinated sheep might be allowed to move during high-risk midge activity periods but data on the levels of protection against viraemia is still being gathered and unlikely to be our saviour for this year's shows and sales.

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Love Lamb Week returns in September

Industry will come together to promote the nutritional benefits, eating experience and environmental improvement UK sheep farming delivers as Love Lamb Week returns.


Popular campaign returns in September to celebrate eating sheep meat.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the campaign first started by Cumbrian sheep farmer Rachel Lumley. It is now a notable date in the faming calendar attracting attention of mainstream media.

Any NSA members interested in promoting the campaign on their social channels or from their own farms should visit www.nationalsheep.org.uk/lovelamb for links to a downloadable toolkit and resources available to order.

Groundswell starts useful conversations

NSA welcomed visitors to its first ever stand at Groundswell at the start of July.



NSA sessions on sheep, trees and arable were well attended at Groundswell.

Over the past few years NSA has been invited as a speaker to the regenerative agriculture festival attracting thousands of people during the two days. NSA Project Manager Nicola Noble and NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker were joined by NSA members and industry representatives to lead sessions on both days of the event discussing the opportunities and challenges of integrating livestock, in particular sheep, into arable and agroforestry systems.

Thanks go to Groundswell for accepting NSA's application to hold the two seminars and to British Wool for providing space to NSA within its busy Wool Tent.

New faces join NSA

NSA has welcomed several new staff members both at NSA Head Office and in NSA Scottish Region.


Aaron Dhanda.


Julia Bell.


Faye Bryce.

Aaron Dhanda joins as Operations Director, coming from a charity background leading a wide range of operational and commercial projects. He says: "It's been a brilliant few weeks being welcomed by the team. Getting to NSA's summer events really opened my eyes to the breadth of NSA work across policy, projects and communications."

Julia Bell will be working as the NSA Scottish Region Activities Officer continuing her time with NSA having been Assistant to Event Organiser at NSA Highland Sheep this summer. Julia says: "I have always been passionate about supporting our sheep sector and rural communities. With experience organising agricultural events and a love for rural life, I'm excited to help bring NSA members together, welcome new ones and keep everyone connected and informed."

Faye Bryce previously worked in public-facing roles, including the NHS and secondary education, and will be working as NSA Scottish Region Policy Officer. Faye says: "I look forward to supporting the fantastic work and contributing to a strong representative voice for sheep farmers in Scotland."



Want to win a new shearing handpiece?

NSA and Rurtec make more winners

Sheep farmers across the UK are continuing to benefit having become winners with NSA this year thanks to the Rurtec prize giveaway.

The competition running throughout 2025 will see a total of 12 lucky winners receive a Lanati Astron cord-free shearing handpiece worth more than £450. So far NSA members and followers have received their prizes in every corner of the UK from Northern Ireland to southern England.

There are still six chances to win this year. The prize draw is open to any UK sheep farmer aged 16 or over. Entries are limited to one per person per email address. Scan the QR code with your smart phone on page 17 to enter today.

Esteemed NSA awards open for nominations

Nominations are now open for two prestigious NSA awards, the NSA George Hedley Memorial Award recognising outstanding contribution to the UK sheep industry and the NSA Bob Payne Memorial Award for an unsung hero who is part of NSA.

Members can nominate an individual themselves or pass their nomination to their NSA Regional Manager who can forward the nomination. The deadline for both award nominations is Monday 6th October. *More at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/about or contact NSA Head Office.*

It's not too late to attend the NSA AGM

Join NSA on Tuesday 12th August at 2pm in the Hartington Room at Chatsworth Estate Farm, Derbyshire for the NSA 2025 AGM.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held to conduct formal business followed by a farm tour of the well-known estate, where attendees can see the sheep and cattle enterprises covering 5,000 acres (2000ha) of Derbyshire countryside including estate parkland, moorland and improved grassland. *Full farm details on page 9.*

A sheep farming voice

Get the headlines here on current NSA policy activities.


NSA is concerned by upland destocking reports.

Upland distress as flocks disappear

Concerns are mounting as ever restrictive agri-environmental schemes and the ill-advised anti-livestock climate change mitigation strategies of large landowners threaten the sector.

Flocks are either disappearing or downsizing significantly at the behest of public bodies and some estates.

The decade-old issue has gathered pace, driven by biodiversity net gain in England, the carbon market and a view of upland management that seeks to minimise sheep grazing, potentially removing them completely.

Concerningly, NSA has also been told that close to 10,000 ewes have been taken off hills in a tight geographical area of northern Wales.

There is an expectation government policies try to stimulate the integration of livestock with arable, and that, given biodiversity and climate targets, upland farming will contract so the less productive farmland across the UK can deliver ecosystems services, while lowland farming reverts to mixed farming systems.

NSA has stressed its concerns as removing flocks harms rural economies, communities, culture, biodiversity and soil health. It continues to remind policymakers that managing traditional hill flocks is time-consuming and costly needing government support. In addition, sheep farming can enhance sensitive habitats with tailored grazing, requiring more shepherding or technological solutions.

NSA also highlighs livestock cuts for climate goals rely on flawed carbon metrics (GWP100) when better management can lower emissions. Without public support and market innovation hill farming could lose the ability to sustain its public benefits.

NSA expects multiple visits to trigger Pathway uptake

Defra has given permissions for individual farms to have multiple vet visits as part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.


Pathway now open for multispecies applications.

Farms with distinct flocks or mixed species will now be able to have a subsidised vet visit for each flock or species. The long-awaited announcement came into effect on 26th June and is expected to increase enrolment and encourage visits to two or three on some farms.

NSA encourages members to take advantage of this change to improve flock health and implement disease mitigation strategies.


UK sheep flocks not equipped to deal with disease outbreaks.

Report says UK unprepared for major disease outbreak

A damning report has idenitified a lack of strategy and long term resilience planning for any livestock disease outbreaks in the UK.

NSA says the report shows just how complex addressing national biosecurity is. The 50-page report Resilience to Animal Diseases by the National Audit Office listed issues with the UK's current state, including the following criticisms:

- Targets for checks on imported animal products are not being met and the likelihood of illegal imports is growing.
- There is no strategic approach to address animal vaccine supply issues.
- Defra and Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) lack a comprehensive livestock movement tracing system – current platforms are fragmented, although a delayed upgrade in the form of the Livestock Information Programme is eagerly anticipated.
- More work is needed on systems, processes and workforce planning to enable a more efficient and effective response.
- Defra and APHA would struggle to manage a more severe outbreak or concurrent serious outbreaks of exotic disease.

NSA suggests an over-arching review is needed to coordinate so many critical improvements.

NSA opposes Devon sea eagle release

In May, NSA officials met with Natural England, the Roy Dennis Foundation and other bodies to discuss the relocation and monitoring of sea eagles.


Reintroduction proposals still present challenges.

Instead of actively moving eagle chicks, NSA states it would be more natural and effective to see how the current population on the south coast of England spreads. If north Devon was a suitable location the birds would find a home there organically, NSA argues.

NSA suggests more effort must be placed on existing relocation projects around the Isle of White, ensuring monitoring efforts and knowledge gathering is optimised on the birds in these areas.

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HQ

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 Eastern Region

By Nerys Wright, Manager

The NSA Eastern Region team is busy planning the NSA Next Generation Shepherd Day – taking place on Saturday 6th September – designed to inspire and support the future of our industry.



Excitement is building for the NSA Next Generation Shepherd Day in September.

This year, we are excited to announce a new venue, the Writtle Campus of Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford, Essex. With its beautiful setting and excellent facilities, Writtle is the perfect backdrop for this exciting event.

The day will bring together early-career professionals, students and those passionate about the future of the sector packed with engaging talks, practical sessions and valuable networking. Whether you're just starting out or looking to support the next wave of talent, this is an event not to be missed.

NSA Cymru/Wales Region

By Helen Roberts, Development Officer

NSA Cymru/Wales Region recently attended the Royal Welsh Hill Farm Event and sponsored the Eight Hour Two Stand British Ewe Record by Gethin Lewis and Llyr Evans in July.

The Royal Welsh was a busy event, but different with just having Welsh livestock at the show. The Region held a successful reception during the show with the stand manned by regional committee members and NSA HQ staff. Many important policy issues were discussed including bluetongue and the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

The region looks forward to autumn organising the first NSA Welsh Region Next Generation Ambassadors reunion with more details announced shortly.

NSA Central Region

By Andrew McNeil, Manager

NSA Central Region has recently enjoyed two fabulous farm walks, with great thanks to all who joined and supported.



The region enjoyed a farm walk in June.

We had ticket giveaways for county shows and we still have events upcoming. NSA Central Region will have a presence at Ashover Show on Wednesday 13th August courtesy of Bakewell Veterinary Practice. Hope Show is also taking place on Monday 25th August and the Region is pleased to announce it is sponsoring this show – look out for another ticket giveaway!

More farm walks and NSA Regional Field Days are being planned, along with an email newsletter on regional activities. Contact me if you would be interested in getting involved.

NSA Northern Region

By Chris Adamson, Manager

NSA North Sheep was a great success and we are already looking forward to the next one in 2027.

Thanks go to the NSA Northern Region Committee, hosts of the event and sponsors.

The Great Yorkshire Show was another opportunity to see NSA members and to observe the new NSA Northern Region Shepherd of the Future competition get off to a strong start. Taking the title was 15 year old Izzy North from Settle, North Yorkshire. The region is proud to be investing in the next generation and look forward to seeing the contest develop in the coming years.

NSA Scottish Region

By Nicola Noble, Project Manager

The region is pleased to welcome two new officeholders, Faye Bryce and Julia Bell, who began their roles in mid-July.

Both have hit the ground running, meeting most of the NSA Head Office team in Malvern, Worcestershire, and attending a regional committee meeting shortly after – more on page 2.

NSA Highland Sheep was a tremendous success, thanks to the hard work and dedication of NSA officeholders, volunteers, sponsors and all those who attended. Your support helped make the event a true highlight – full write-up on page 13.

I'm sure most will have heard but it is with great sadness that we share the news of Euan Emslie's passing. Euan was a much respected and well-loved figure within NSA, known for his dedication to events across the region and beyond. Many gathered in July to celebrate Euan's life and give him the heartfelt farewell he deserved. A full tribute can be found on page 6.

NSA South West Region

By Ian May, Manager

It was great to see so many members at NSA Sheep South West in June.

After months of preparation, it smoothly came together, with heroic efforts from our hosts – the Stanbury family – along with the dedication of the organising committee and the band of volunteers before, during and after the event. The weather was even kind to us this year.

After a short break, the region is arranging more, so please keep an eye out for further information. With bluetongue firmly in everyone's minds we are aiming to arrange a webinar featuring vets and farmers with bluetongue experience, to help better inform us of the potential impacts and mitigation measures. We are also looking to host a farm walk with a focus on on-farm carbon footprint. More details to follow once a location has been confirmed.

NSA Northern Ireland Region

By Ellen Moorehead, Coordinator

NSA Northern Ireland Region recently celebrated a highlight of the year with the highly anticipated NSA Sheep NI.



NSA Sheep NI was an engaging event.

This was particularly special for me as it was the first NSA Sheep NI I have co-organised since starting my position with NSA. I am incredibly grateful for all the help and support I've received, which was invaluable in bringing this event to fruition.

We were incredibly fortunate to have the fantastic McFarlane family as our hosts and their efforts truly shone through. Attendees were treated to an array of trade stands showcasing the latest innovations and services. The breed stand displays were equally impressive, highlighting the diversity and quality of sheep in our region, drawing considerable interest.

The attendance and enthusiastic interactions from visitors were simply outstanding. It was heartwarming to see passion for sheep farming bring so many together. A sincere and heartfelt thank you to all involved in making NSA Sheep NI a resounding success and an event to remember. *Full event report on page 15.*



NSA Marches Region had a good turn out for the competition and farm walk.

NSA Marches Region

By Katie James, Manager

Skill and enthusiasm for the future of the industry were both in abundance at the region's NSA Next Generation Shepherd day in June.

The event was hosted by regional committee member and NSA Next Generation Ambassador George Ellis and family, in Gloucestershire. The day was a great opportunity to show off shepherding ability as well as to learn and improve. After a close contest, Herefordshire sheep farmer Tom Garlick emerged as the winner for the second consecutive time. Tom took the title of 2024 NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year in the national finals and the region wishes him well as he progresses once again.

Following the competition, attendees were treated to a farm tour including a look at the rotationally grazed system. Thanks go to George and his mum Lyn for being fantastic hosts.

Looking ahead NSA Marches Region looks forward to welcoming members to a late summer social and farm walk – details to be announced soon.

NSA South East Region

By Sarah Blake, Manager

Around 50 individuals joined the well-attended and engaging farm walk held by Frank Langrish at Castle Farm, Sussex, in June.

The group toured the flock and facilities, gaining valuable insights into Frank's innovative approach to low-input sheep farming. The focus was firmly on genetics and wool quality, with special attention given to the results of introducing New Zealand Snowline rams into the Romney flock.

Discussions throughout the day revolved around the outcomes of the NSA Fabulous Fibre project, which aimed to enhance fleece value while preserving meat yield. Farmers were able to see firsthand the practical effects of breeding decisions in his flock.

The region now looks towards the NSA Ram Sale to be held on Friday 5th September at Thame Farmers Market and the Sheep Health, Welfare and Production (SHWAP) conference to be held in mid-October. *See page 8 for more on SHWAP.*

NSA pays tribute to much-loved NSA stalwart

By Maimie Paterson, NSA Scottish Region

It is with deep regret and sympathy that NSA reported the sad death of Euan Emslie in June.

Euan was a shepherd's son who grew up on Auchallater Farm, Aberdeenshire. He started his working life with Aberdeen & Northern Marts, before moving to Grampian Pork. His next career move was to Osmonds in East Yorkshire where over the years he filled his contact book serving him well when he became an events organiser, initially with the National Beef Association.

Euan's first association with NSA was NSA Scotsheep in 2004, where he was co-organiser with Julie Sedgewick, a partnership that lasted until she retired.

Creative side

Euan's name became synonymous with NSA Scotsheep and NSA Highland Sheep, but for several years his input was also integral to the working of the NSA Scottish Region Committee.

He took on the role of secretary and bookkeeper, organising committee meetings and producing minutes, budgets and the accounts. He, with George Milne, organised the annual AGM dinner, an event to which no Holyrood politician or civil servant ever declined an invitation.

Euan had a talent for turning ideas into reality, starting with chair Hamish Waugh's idea for a magazine for Scottish members. Euan chased up sheep farmers, scientists and auctioneers to pen articles. When someone came up with the idea of sheepdog training academies, it was Euan who organised venues, enlisted experts and recruited sponsors to help with the costs.

Euan's next idea was the transformation of the formerly staid NSA marquee at the Royal Highland Show into a fashion salon with a catwalk and glamorous models strutting their stuff among startled farmers and bemused sheep. Euan roped in clothing brand Jigsaw for his first foray into fashion promotion, later offering opportunities to small designer businesses – one of the catwalk creations even made the front page of *The Times*.

The creative ideas spread far and wide from lamb butchery demonstrations with famous chefs and well-known butchers – where Euan had to sooth an agitated health and safety official hyperventilating at the sight of a gas cylinder in a marquee – to bicycle-powered sheep shearing, an irresistible attraction for those who insisted on proving they could pedal hard enough to shear a sheep.

With Euan in charge, the marquee buzzed with activity, becoming a regular pit-stop for politicians and civil servants, raising the profile of NSA.

Then there was another idea – a sheep event for the Highlands? 'Nae bother,' said Euan and from the first NSA Highland Sheep held in Dingwall Mart, the event has grown steadily in stature and popularity, culminating in the huge success of this year's NSA Highland Sheep at Midfearn Farm, Ardgay, in June.

Legacy

NSA Scotsheep is Euan's legacy. Euan put his heart and soul into NSA Scotsheep and made it the Scottish sheep industry's flagship event. He always refused to dwell on past successes, preferring instead to look forward and focus on making the next event an even bigger success.

Event organising can be enormously stressful but Euan seemed to thrive on the constant pressure that would have left most normal people needing intensive therapy.

Euan trusted himself, always kept his cool and treated everyone with kindness, understanding and respect. He delivered first-class events, on time, within budget and at a profit. His will be a very hard act to follow and NSA Scottish Region owes him a huge debt of gratitude.

His family and wide circle of friends will remember a self-effacing man who preferred to stay out of the limelight and never hunted glory despite the high level of success he achieved. We will miss lifting the phone and hearing the Deeside accent he never lost despite nearly 40 years in Yorkshire. We'll miss his wicked sense of humour and his strong sense of the ridiculous, but most of all we'll miss the kind, patient, generous man that was Euan Emslie.



Euan will be missed by all who knew him.

Warm words

NSA Corporate Manager Helen Roberts knew Euan well having worked with him during many NSA events. She comments: "I have many scrunched up pieces of paper as I try to write some words about Euan my loyal friend and colleague. I would not have achieved what I have without his help, he led by example and mentored with patience.

"I first met Euan at NSA Scotsheep in 2004. I arrived with a vision of what he may look like and was met by someone on a quadbike in a brown smock and helmet – all the illusions were shattered!

"He was always on the end of the phone when a crisis happened. We have had many laughs, tears and drinks together over the years. I could have sometimes shouted at him, but it would have made no difference as that cheeky grin appeared and all was good again. We all knew he took things to the wire, but he always got there. Raise a glass and toast a unique, kind hard working person who will be missed but never forgotten."

NSA Chair Pete Delbridge adds: "NSA has lost one of its much-loved characters and huge influences over many NSA events not just in Scotland but at events across the regions. I sat down with Euan at NSA Highland Sheep to discuss his long and illustrious involvement with NSA. This all took place the day before the event during set-up in his normal, unflappable style – a style we'll miss going forward."

NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker concludes: "It's hard to put into words just how helpful, supportive and committed Euan was. Without a doubt, he was the face of Scotland's flagship NSA events and his contribution was invaluable. Our heartfelt sympathies go out to his family and friends. Rest in peace Euan."



Euan was well-known for his unflappable approach to event organisation.

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 identified 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 2025

NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sales
Monday 4th August – Brecon Livestock Market
Tuesday 5th August – Hereford Livestock Market

NSA South West Ram Sale
Wednesday 20th August – Exeter Livestock Centre

Thame Farmers Market Breeding Ewe Sale incorporating the NSA South East Region Ram Sale*
Friday 5th September – Thame Farmers Market

Melton Midlands Sheep Fair incorporating the NSA Eastern Region Ram Sale*
Friday 19th September – Melton Mowbray Market

NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale
Monday 22nd 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.













SHWAP conference returns to screens this October

SHWAP
SHEEP HEALTH, WEALTH AND PRODUCTION CONFERENCE
NSA South East Region



NSA South East Region is holding its seventh biennial Sheep Health, Wealth and Production (SHWAP) Conference over three consecutive evenings this October.

Following the success of the virtual format adopted for the three previous conferences for attracting attendees from not only the home nations but further afield, SHWAP 2025 will be held on the 14th, 15th and 16th October with two presentations in each online evening session.

Line-up

Speakers from both the commercial and research worlds will present their findings on a range of topics including neonatal health, effective techniques for endoparasite management, the use of existing and emerging technologies to help in managing animal welfare and the importance of ewe lifetime performance to flock efficiency and profit.

The full programme for the conference together with information on the speakers and details of how to register for each evening, can be found on the events page of the NSA website.

Sessions sponsored by Bimeda, British Wool, Elanco, MSD, NoBACZ and Rappa. CPD points are available.

NSA Sheep Farmers' Conference to unlock secrets of resilience

NSA SHEEP FARMERS' CONFERENCE 2025



Following the success of the inaugural NSA Sheep Farmers' Conference held in 2023, the one-day event will return in November 2025 with a schedule full of high level presentations, optional workshops and networking opportunities.

This year the conference moves north taking place at the Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The conference will be spread between two rooms – the main conference hall where sessions involving industry-leading speakers and opportunities to interact on key topics will take place, and a break-out room where delegates are encouraged to visit trade stands, participate in informal workshops and network with colleagues and speakers.

Insightful sessions

AHDB will join NSA to present the first seminar of the day giving an insight and delivering the key messages from the roots to resilience programme the levy board has successfully delivered to farmers across England over the past year.

NSA is excited to then welcome a panel of experienced speakers including top performing sheep farmers and industry experts for the headline seminar session: Attitude or action? Which is the secret to sheep farming success?

A full conference preview with speaker information will be available soon on the NSA website and in the next Sheep Farmer magazine.

Chatsworth Estate to host this year's NSA AGM – don't miss it

NSA is excited to welcome members to the prestigious Chatsworth Estate, near Bakewell in Derbyshire, for its 132nd Annual General Meeting.

NSA will join the Chatsworth Farms team on Tuesday 12th August from 2pm for the meeting followed by an enjoyable and insightful farm tour.

Chatsworth Farms encompasses two separate farming units that total 8,000 acres (3,235ha). The tour will take place on the 5,000 acre (2,020ha) grassland unit surrounding Chatsworth House. This consists of 1,000 acres (405ha) of Chatsworth parkland, 2,000 acres (810ha) of moorland and the remainder in low-input grassland, ranging from 400ft to 1,100ft (120m to 335m) above sea level.

The livestock farming team led by David Howlett manage 360 suckler cows plus followers and lamb 2,500 ewes with progeny either retained for breeding or sold once finished. A separate 3,000 acre (1,215ha) arable unit is situated 20 miles away where the sheep spend the winter grazing cover crops.

Environmental responsibility and animal welfare are at the forefront of the farm's management programme and are continuously being improved. Three different environmental farming schemes cover the livestock enterprise with an emphasis on improving pastures by using herbs and legumes, as well as protecting archaeological features and wildlife habitats while maintaining a low-input approach.

The sheep flock is made up of 2,200 mainly Aberfield and Highlander ewes plus followers with 300 Swaledale ewes grazing the moorland. The Aberfield flock is split between an early flock of 300 ewes lambing from 1st February for 17 days with the remainder lambing in April. The overall aim is supplying the Chatsworth Estate farmshop and café, along with Devonshire Hotels on the estate, with year-round lamb.



Chatsworth Estate livestock manager, David Howlett.

Early flock

The early flock is put to a Suffolk terminal sire while the April flock is split 50:50 with Aberfield rams across the best ewes and a Suffolk or Beltex cross Charolais across the rest. This mix of breeds facilitates the constant supply to the various outlets. Any surplus lambs are sold to larger abattoirs. The 300 ewe Swaledale flock are kept pure on the moorland only coming in-bye for lambing and tupping.

Grazing cover crops over winter plays part of a wider regenerative farming approach across the two farming units, while providing important winter fodder. The cover crops also help return organic matter to the soils improving their condition. Much of the grassland at Chatsworth can then be rested throughout the winter months.

Due to the nature of events and public engagement on the wider estate, the farm's shepherds have to be flexible with their grazing platforms. The flock works around events held in the estate's parkland and much of the sheep system is planned around these events. This provides the team with a different challenge to your typical farming enterprise.

The farm team also play an important role in public engagement. They host multiple events and farm tours. In addition, Chatsworth Farms will host vet students for lambing and shearing courses in late May for British Wool.

The farm is run much the same as any other farming enterprise and must prove its viability alongside other businesses within the Devonshire Group, while doing its bit for the landscape.



The well-known Chatsworth Estate.

Grazing support

David says: "The parkland and surrounding landscape would not look as it does without the grazing animals and it's our job to maintain that. Sometimes we have to use the sheep to graze in a way not solely focused on maximising production. That's why we are seeking to breed sheep to survive in our environment and conditions."

Members joining the AGM can view the range of land managed by the farm team. NSA Chief Executive Phil Stocker says: "NSA is very grateful to Chatsworth for hosting us. The estate is one of the most well recognised in England and we are all looking forward to being able to see behind the scenes of its farming enterprise. We do hope many members are able to join us."

Registration to attend the AGM and farm tour must be made before the event. Please visit the NSA website to register or call NSA Head Office – contact details on page 1.

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Visionary hosts draw crowds as NSA Welsh Sheep kicks off summer

NSA WELSHSHEEP 2025

A resounding success and much needed boost for morale summed up NSA Welsh Sheep held on the outskirts of Hay on Wye in May.

The event drew visitors from across the UK as well as several internationals, providing inspiration for all. They learned a little, did business, relished the latest innovations and couldn't fail to be impressed by the business model on display by High Country Romneys during the popular farm tour. It was also an opportunity to get together in the early summer sunshine.

The 5,000 acre (2025ha) estate comprises woodland, moorland and farmland, with a mix of shooting, farming and conservation, as well as holiday accommodation. NSA Cymru/Wales Region Chair Caryl Hughes paid tribute to the vision of landowner Huw Evans-Bevan who is determined to future-proof the Tregoyd Estate.


Evan Turner will represent Wales next year.

Event success

Caryl says: "It's been a successful, informative and all-round fantastic day. We had some great speakers and listening to the hosts discuss their future plans boosts confidence for the future of our industry. It was inspiring to see so many school children, students and NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition entries. Despite a lot of uncertainty in our industry, a day like today demonstrates positivity and an interesting future ahead."

Children from local schools attended in a joint initiative with Powys County Council and Castell Howell Foods. The children praised the event as the best school trip ever enjoying all attractions and took part in a cookery demonstration of delicious Welsh lamb.

Estate owner Huw Evans-Bevan welcomed visitors to the spectacular setting, with the backdrop of Hay Bluff an example of the stunning beauty of rural Wales, sculpted and preserved by the enduring resilience, innovation and excellence of Welsh farmers.


The farm tour was popular all day.

NSA Welsh Sheep 2025

Wednesday 21st May 2025 at Tregoyd Farm, Brecon, by kind permission of Penny Chantler and her sons, Will and Sam Sawday.

Competition results

- **NSA Next Generation Shepherd.** Evan Turner, Powys (open and under 21).
- **Trade stands.** British Wool (indoor), Wynnstay (outdoor), Texel (breed society & wool-on-the-hoof).


Hosts Penny Chantler and sons Will and Sam Sawday.

High praise

Huw praises High Country Romneys: "Penny, Sam and Will have brought vision, energy and fresh thinking to the heart of Tregoyd. Together they have developed an intellectual approach to sheep farming that is sustainable and environmentally respectful, yet practical."

Will Sawday says: "We loved having so many people at the farm. The whole process has also helped to raise the profile of High Country Romneys and has been well worth the time and effort."

A final highlight of the event was the presentation of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition, sponsored by the Texel Sheep Society. Taking first place was Evan Turner who also took the award for the highest placed competitor aged under 21. Evan will now go on alongside second place competitor Mared Edwards to represent Wales in the national final of the competition taking place next summer.

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Record crowds flock to NSA North Sheep to celebrate UK sheep farming

NSA North Sheep

Despite the challenging weather, NSA North Sheep exceeded expectations with an impressive turnout from both local and national attendees.

The event welcomed more than 240 trade stands and attracted visitors from across the UK and overseas, underscoring its significance in the sheep farming calendar.

Diverse enterprises

The Peile family's diverse and sustainable farming operation was a highlight, with farm tours offering insights into their management of dairy herds, beef cattle and flocks of hill and lowland sheep. Visitors praised the breath-taking views over the Eden Valley and the informative commentary during the tractor and trailer tours.

Educational initiatives were at the forefront, with 250 pupils from local schools participating in bespoke cookery and shearing demonstrations, as well as engaging in farm tours. Feedback from both students and teachers was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the event's role in inspiring the next farming generation.


NSA North Sheep attracted many visitors.

Competitions added excitement to the day from the sheepdog trials to the popular and exhilarating speed shear event seeing Welsh shearer Llyr Jones, the 2024 Welsh Champion, claim victory amidst a packed audience.

Industry professionals led a series of insightful seminars throughout the day, covering a wide range of key topics relevant to the sheep sector.

Sessions included building resilience in a post basic payment scheme world, understanding the practical implications of on-farm carbon and biodiversity management, and an engaging discussion on the cultural and environmental value of hefting, highlighting its vital role in sustainable upland farming.

The newly introduced animal health area and cookery theatre also proved popular, with visitors praising the practical demonstrations, expert advice and interactive discussions reflecting the evolving needs of modern sheep farming.

Generous hosts

"It has been a real privilege to host such a successful event here at Greystoke Castle Farm," say John and Liz Peile. "The NSA North Sheep team have been fantastic to work with throughout and we've built some wonderful new friendships along the way. From our very first meeting nearly two years ago to the final day of the event, it's been a rewarding journey. The turnout and enthusiasm have truly highlighted the spirit of the UK farming industry."

Ted Ogden, NSA Northern Region Chair, adds: "We're absolutely delighted with the turnout and atmosphere at NSA North Sheep. The resilience and positivity shown by everyone who attended reflects the strength of our industry. I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Peile family for generously hosting us at Greystoke Castle Farm. Their diverse, forward-thinking and inspiring farming operation offered a powerful example of the innovation and sustainability driving our industry forward.

"The hard work and hospitality of the entire Peile team played a huge role in making the day a success. It was a fantastic showcase of the innovation, community and commitment that define UK sheep farming."


NSA thanks event hosts, the Peile family.

NSA North Sheep

Wednesday 4th June 2025 at Greystoke Castle Farm, Penrith, by kind permission of the Peile family.

Competition results

- **Trade stands.** Datamars (indoor), J.S. Hubbuck (outdoor), Herdwick (breed society), E. and K. Bland (wool-on-the-hoof) and Shitlington Farms (breeders).
- **Sheepdog trial.** Derek Scrimgeour with Braehead Dot.
- **Speed shear.** Llyr Jones, North Wales.

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Louping ill vaccine update
Moredun is seeking donations to scale up the successful research vaccine for louping ill disease and make it available for farmers. More information at www.moredun.org.uk/donate-louping-ill.



All NSA members are also Moredun associate members – make the most of this exclusive agreement by accessing Moredun resources. Find out more at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/nsa-and-moredun.

NSA Highland Sheep 2025 shines at breathtaking Midfearn Farm

NSA Highland Sheep proved a resounding success, attracting visitors from across Scotland and beyond.

With the attraction of a beautiful Highland setting, a line-up of engaging seminars and a farm tour showcasing quality livestock, record breaking crowds arrived to enjoy a packed programme celebrating the strength, innovation and community of Highland sheep farming.

Trailer tours

The farm tour was a major highlight transporting visitors across several fields to experience the Brooke family livestock enterprises, including a selection of their 650 breeding ewes and lambs and 110 breeding cows and calves.

The tour also featured the Watson Seeds grassland plots, where visitors heard about multispecies swards, soil health and the role of grassland in improving livestock performance and farm profitability.

A strong seminar programme delivered thought-provoking discussions. All sessions were well attended offering timely, practical insights into policy, consumer demand and new approaches to business resilience.



The seminars were jam-packed.

Elsewhere, the event site hosted more than 120 trade stands, breed society displays and machinery demonstrations. The butchery and cookery demonstrations were particularly popular, offering practical tips, expert advice and culinary inspiration using Scotch lamb.

NSA Highland Sheep also maintained a strong educational awareness with local pupils engaged in hands-on sessions learning about farming, food production and environmental care.

Host feedback

Reflecting on the event, hosts Tanya and Jock Brooke say: "It's been a privilege to host here at Midfearn. It's been a pleasure to welcome so many people to our part of the Highlands."

Peter Myles, NSA Scottish Region Chair, adds: "We're delighted with the turnout and enthusiasm. Our thanks to the Brooke family and farm manager Neil Shaw. The farm, the programme and the people really showcased Highland sheep farming."

Taking place the day before the busy event was the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition. Keira Smith from Aberdeenshire came first place and top in the under 21-year-old competition.

The invitational sheepdog trial saw Iain MacKay from Culloden take the top prize. Johnny Mackenzie from Dingwall won the open shear competition, James Macleod from Ross and Cromarty was first in the intermediate speed shear and Anna McTaggert from Sutherland won the junior clean shear.


Many attended to learn from the diverse event programme.

NSA Highland Sheep

Wednesday 11th June 2025 at Midfearn Farm, Ross-shire, by kind permission of the Brooke family.

Competition results

- **NSA Next Generation Shepherd.** Keira Smith, Aberdeenshire (open and under 21).
- **Trade stands.** Quality Meat Scotland (indoor), MacGregor Industrial Supplies (outdoor), Essie Suffolk (breed society).
- **Sheepdog trial.** Iain Mackay, Culloden.
- **Speed shear.** Johnny Mackenzie, Highland (open).
- **Show and Sale of ewe hogg pairs.** Ballindalloch Home Farm, Banffshire, Texel cross (overall champion).

In the Show and Sale of pairs of ewe hoggs, sponsored by Galbraith, a pair of Texel crosses shown by David and Susan Johnston took the overall championship.

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Sustainable farming showcased at NSA Sheep South West

Sheep South West 2025

Positivity for the future of the UK sheep sector, its diversity and sustainability could be found among visitors, seminar speakers and industry representatives at NSA Sheep South West at the end of June.

Hosted by the Stanbury Family at their home, Weston Farm, the return of the biennial event to the west country was clearly welcomed with record crowds.

The event began with a packed seminar tent keen to participate in the breakfast session where NSA welcomed Baroness Minette Batters who led discussions on the current government review into farm profitability.

Pressing issues


The Stanbury family.

Minette explained her role leading the review and how it relates to other high level policy such as the Land Use Framework and the farming roadmap. With an aim of identifying blockages to farm profitability she invited thoughts from the audience with concerns raised regarding destocking of upland environments and issues with a fragmented approach to many elements influencing profitability.

Those in attendance were pleased to hear Minette's intention to make British food a priority within the UK, whether that be in retail, in out of home eating experiences or in our public services. She also highlighted farmers' critical role in environmental protection emphasising how work in this area must still be profitable as a whole farm business.

The seminar tent remained busy with interesting sessions on the future of UK wool production and the importance of soil health for climate, biodiversity and farm businesses.


Young shepherds competed for a place in the final next year.

The farm tour offered an insight into the progressive enterprise managed by Rich Stanbury and his family covering 500 acres (200ha), plus rented and common grazing.

Key strategies

The enterprise is home to more than 1,000 ewes plus ewe lambs with breeds including Romney, North Country Mules and Suffolk Mules. More recently the farm has seen an ever-increasing number of wool-shedding ewes. All sheep are finished on grass and herbal leys with most of the sheep (and cattle) overwintered outside with rotational grazing – a key strategy to their success.

Farm host Rich says: "It's been a great day. We all know faming can be an isolating industry and so it's important to have events such as NSA Sheep South West for farmers to meet up with each other while having a chance to look around and see the latest innovations."

Future farmers competed in the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition. Taking the top prize was William Hopper from Cove, Devon. A student competition was also held, won by Jack Jordan from Chagford, Devon.


The event attracted visitors from across the UK and the world.

NSA Sheep South West

Wednesday 25th June 2025 at Weston Farm, Devon, by kind permission of the Stanbury family.

Competition results

- **NSA Next Generation Shepherd.** William Hopper, Devon (open), Jack Jordan, Devon (student).
- **Trade stands.** Shearwell Data (indoor), McVeigh Parker (outdoor), Exlana (breed society), Locks Romneys (breeders).
- **Fleeces.** David Butt (overall champion, hill), David Bawden (overall reserve, cross).


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NSA Sheep Northern Ireland hailed a resounding success

SHEEP NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland sheep farming community converged on Dungiven, County Derry, for the highly anticipated NSA Sheep NI at the start of July.

The event drew significant attendance and fostered vital industry discussions. Hosted by the exceptional Alwyn and Joanne McFarlane, the day was blessed with fantastic weather, creating an ideal backdrop for a vibrant showcase of the sector.

Support schemes

Prior to the official opening of the event, the NSA NI Region Committee played host to a crucial Sheep Taskforce meeting with representatives from Daera, providing a direct platform to discuss the ongoing challenges facing NI sheep farmers, particularly the persistent lack of sheep-specific support schemes.

Throughout the day, attendees benefited from a series of highly informative educational seminars, offering valuable insights into current best practices and future trends.

Philip Skuce from Moredun provided an insightful update on the latest thinking regarding parasite control, a critical topic for flock health and productivity, while Darren Carty, Irish Farmers Journal, offered a comprehensive explanation of funding and incentives available in the Republic of Ireland.

A lively seminar programme concluded with Sinead Mathers, Cafre, delivering an update on the soil nutrients health scheme, emphasising the importance of sustainable land management.

The event proudly featured a highly competitive NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition, kindly sponsored by Texel Sheep Society, showcasing the talent of young sheep farmers. Congratulations to winner Jack Maxwell from Maghera, County Derry, who proceeds to the national finals of the contest in 2026.

A highlight for many was the fantastic sheepdog trial, generously sponsored by ABP. The competition saw an impressive turnout of more than 70 dogs, demonstrating the incredible skill and partnership between shepherds and their working dogs. James P. McGee took first place in the open competition, while Shannon Conn won the intermediate trial.


The McFarlane family farm was the perfect backdrop.

Trade stands

Beyond the seminars and competitions, NSA Sheep NI boasted an impressive array of both indoor and outdoor trade stands, providing attendees with access to the latest products, services and innovations. The breed stands were equally popular, highlighting the diversity and quality of sheep breeds in the region.

"We are absolutely thrilled with the success of NSA Sheep NI," says Edward Adamson, NSA NI Region Chair. "It was truly fantastic to see such strong engagement from the farming community, our sponsors and the public. Events like these are vital for sharing knowledge, fostering connections and ensuring the continued prosperity of Northern Ireland's sheep industry."

The NSA NI Region extends its gratitude to hosts Alwyn and Joanne McFarlane, all mainline sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, competitors and every individual who contributed to making it such a memorable and impactful event.


Jack Maxwell, winner of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition.

NSA Sheep NI

Tuesday 1st July 2025 at the McFarlane Family Farm Dungiven, by kind permission of the McFarlane family.

Competition results

- **Next Generation Shepherd.** Jack Maxwell, County Derry.
- **Trade stands.** Ulster Wool (indoor), Cotter Crate (outdoor), Bluefaced Leicester (breed society).
- **Sheepdog trial.** James P. McGee (open), Shannon Conn (intermediate), John Travers (highest pointed NSA member).

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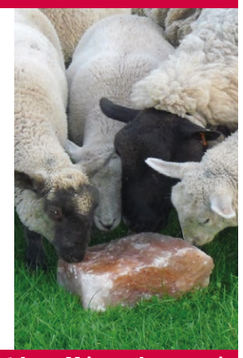


'Hand selected from the Himalayas'

A passionate committee underpins NSA South West Ram Sale success

By Katie James, NSA

As NSA enters the busy ram sale season, its *Sheep Farmer* tour of the NSA regions now turns to the NSA South West Ram Sale Committee.

Traditionally held on the second or third Wednesday of August at Exeter Livestock Centre, Devon, the NSA South West Ram Sale is expertly conducted under the capable hammer of Kivells Auctioneers.

The sale welcomes both maedi visna (MV) and non-MV accredited stock, including breeding ewes and rams across a wide range of breeds. Every animal entered into the sale is rigorously inspected for testicle conformation, dental health and overall condition. This important process is carried out by NSA-approved inspectors, often with veterinary support.

Sale inspections

While the high standard of inspection remains unchanged, the committee has shown a willingness to adapt with the times. In 2015, it introduced crossbred rams to the catalogue in response to evolving market demands – a move that has since proven successful.

The 2025 sale will mark the 37th event held in the region, having been established by the late David Darke with the support of former NSA Chief Executive John Thorley. David served as the committee's first chair and played a pivotal role in the sale's early triumph.

Robert Jordan
Regional Chair


Robert ensures high sale standards.

I farm in partnership with my wife Rebecca, brother David and sister-in-law Hannah. We are the fourth generation of the Jordan family to manage a varied mix of sheep breeds on an upland combination of in-bye farmland and common grazing on Dartmoor, Devon.

We farm a variety of breeds to provide the farm with diversity and our options for selling including a flock of pedigree Texel ewes, run on the in-bye land to produce rams for sale at the NSA South West Ram Sale. We also breed Cheviot Mule ewes for selling.

I have been NSA South West Ram Sale Chair for six years now and I'm pleased to say the ram sale is in a good place. It's financially sound and has been well supported.

The ram sale committee continues to endeavour to provide members with a premier sale in southwest England giving purchasers confidence to buy the best rams.

Fact file

- Robert farms a mix of sheep breeds on common and in-bye land totalling approximately 4,400 acres (1,780ha) at 1,000-1,400ft (300-425m) above sea level.
- The family also own a herd of 30 Dartmoor ponies, the oldest registered herd in the UK.

Sue Martyn
Regional Secretary


Sue has been selling at the ram sale since it's inception.

My involvement with the ram sale began at the very first NSA sale when I sold stock there myself. At the same time, I joined NSA to take advantage of the half price entry fee offered to members at that time.

There are six of the original vendors still selling at the sale of which I'm proud to say I am one.

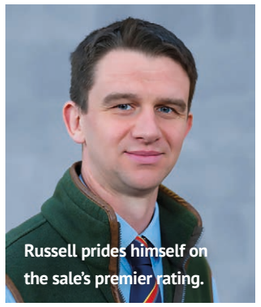
I took on the role of Secretary in 2013. Richard Heard was the first Secretary and is still on the regional committee today.

Right from the start the sale has had extremely high standards and sheep entered must pass a rigorous inspection. Some vendors comment it is the hardest inspection to pass but that's why the same purchasers return year after year confident they can buy sound stock.

Fact file

- Sue is a past NSA South West Regional Manager and the current NSA Sheep South West Event Organiser.
- Farms near Launceston, Cornwall, and sells her Border Leicesters through the sale.

Russell Steer
Kivells Auctioneer


Russell prides himself on the sale's premier rating.

Kivells is delighted to have been appointed sole auctioneers for the NSA South West Ram Sale for the last 12 years.

The sale has cemented itself as the Westcountry's premier ram sale attracting buyers and sellers from across the nation, aided by the recent addition of Marteye online bidding to all MV sale rings.

The sale consists of three, sometimes four sale rings with specialist and experienced livestock auctioneers in charge. The sale also includes many major breed club show and sales attracting commercial and pedigree buyers. Many major sheep farmers from right across southern England attend this sale to buy in bulk on an annual basis as well as sporadic buyers from the eastern and home counties who look to this region for its wide-ranging choice, especially among the terminal sires.

Fact file

- Kivells sell more than 350,000 head of livestock annually across its three centres: Exeter, Holsworthy and Hallworthy Stockyard.
- Has been with Kivells for 13 years and is a Business Director.

All eyes on Defra after FSA supports retaining small abattoir discount

By Michael Priestley, NSA

NSA welcomes the Food Standards Agency (FSA) recommendation to Defra that the small abattoir discount be retained, offering a sigh of relief in the abattoir sector.

The ball is now in Defra's court after the long-running 90% discount on vet charges on abattoir sites was given official support by the FSA in June.

NSA supports the recommendation as without the cost waiver, all National Craft Butchers members and 40% of small and medium-sized abattoirs would close, according to the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS). Such would be the impact of extra cost on an industry already fragile after years of decline and in an inflation and labour crisis.

This is why last year's smaller abattoir fund was so helpful, giving 40% grants ranging from £2,000-£60,000. AIMS indicates 40% of its membership benefited from the grants available. The grants funded projects to improve productivity, enhance animal welfare, add value or support technological innovation.

Losing these businesses has far-reaching consequences on the viability of smaller livestock enterprises looking to add value through direct sales and, in very remote areas, the viability of some farming activities.

Stark truth

NSA wrote to Daniel Zeichner in 2024, shadow minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs at the time, outlining the stark consequences small abattoirs faced if they were exposed to the full cost of regulatory hours of vet and meat hygiene inspectors. A key challenge they face is lower throughputs and therefore being less able to dilute these fixed costs.

Without the discount, a small abattoir processing 1,000 animals a year would see a 408% increase in fees, taking monthly costs from £446 to £2,268.

A report into small red meat abattoirs by the


Small abattoir discounts must be upheld, says NSA.

All Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare in 2020 detailed the critical role in providing private kill services in enabling the evolution of a self-sustainable rural economy. The report also showed the decline to just 250 abattoirs in the UK in 2020, compared to 30,000 in the 1930s. It is estimated that of these remaining abattoirs, about 40 are in receipt of reduced inspector costs.

NSA will be one of several groups watching Defra closely to ensure FSA recommendations are taken on board and the cost waiver continued.





Sales have been disrupted due to the restriction zone change.

All-England restriction zone causing problems across nations

By Michael Priestley, NSA

Bluetongue virus (BTV) legislation hit a major bump in the road when virus control policies diverged either side of the two English land borders this summer.

As expected, Defra opted for an all-England restriction zone from 1st July, meaning no specific licenses or pre-movement tests were required to move sheep within England – the only extra stipulation is that the conditions of general licence EXD612(E) are met.

Extending the border from eastern English counties to Offa's Dyke and Carter Bar meant Wales and Scotland lost their two-county buffer, which was MP Huw Irranca-Davies' reason to prohibit the movement of sheep from England into Wales without a pre-movement test.

Cross-border issues

While the decision created a massive headache for livestock markets in the border regions, the decision is made with good intentions. Mr Irranca-Davies says he cannot 'in all conscience' invite bluetongue into Wales by aligning with the England restriction zone. The aspiration to keep the disease out of Wales is understandable and the approach has been taken with the best animal health insight and advice.

Scotland has taken a similar stance. All devolved administrations are pushing the message of vaccination being important to safeguarding flocks.

But the confusion, frustration and worry this has caused for the 500 or more farms straddling the Welsh border alone and many more operators selling prime stock, market breeding stock and winter sheep by moving them from England to Wales has been palpable.

Many policymakers do not appreciate how porous the UK's land borders are and how much livestock goes back and forth. To a politician it is a very real and important line, but to agriculture and food sector industries the Scottish or Welsh border with England is notional in normal times.

But a bluetongue incursion means these are not normal times.

NSA remains hopeful vaccinated sheep will be able to move freely across internal UK borders without a pre-movement test. This easement of rules has been granted in Scotland for cattle in restriction zones and NSA is confident that in time, as vaccine efficiency data is continuously reviewed, senior vets will have enough confidence in the product to extend the advantage to sheep.



Vaccination can help protect your flock against BTV risks.

At least two Scottish border saleyards in England have been permitted to have specific sale dates at which exclusively Scottish stock come into England for sale. Such flexibility is welcome and the result of regular dialogue between industry and government.

NSA Cymru/Wales Region has liaised with several Senedd members to discuss amelioration to the current situation, including a farm visit to an NSA officeholder. Scottish senior vets and representatives from the vaccine industry also discussed policy direction with NSA online.

A reminder to all members that BTV is a notifiable disease and must be reported through vets if it is suspected. Vaccines are working well so producers should consider using them, dependent on risk level and farming system. Data is building on one vaccine preventing viraemia in sheep, rather than just limiting symptoms, suggesting pre-movement testing could be dropped for vaccinated animals.

Positive news

NSA suggested the use of derogations allowing prime stock to travel to prime stock sales without pre-movement testing. As a result, the decision for bluetongue approved red markets in Wales came into effect on 14th July.

This means animals can be moved from the restricted zone to a bluetongue approved red market in Wales for direct onward movement to a designated slaughterhouse in Wales or one within the restricted zone. Animals brought to these markets do not require vaccination or pre-movement testing.

Vaccinated sheep/lambs being allowed to move without a pre-movement test would be a blessing to the sheep sector, particularly if this could come before the summer sales.

Concerted efforts from governments to communicate the benefits and importance of vaccination to those actively carrying it out – farmers and vets – would be beneficial, as it's one of the few steps people can take against the virus.

Sheep sales have been affected and the impact on the store and breeding sales is a concern as summer wears on. Such disruption is unsettling for breeders, buyers and auctioneers alike.

The seasonal low-vector period – when temperatures are cooler, inhibiting midge activity and virus incubation capability – will depend on how temperatures fare in the autumn.

Major question marks hang over the capacity of the Pirbright Institute and the vaccine performance and verification processes. Hopefully vaccine technology and altitude (two things lacking in the low countries hit hard by bluetongue last year) are key factors that give the UK an advantage.

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References: 1. Leathwick DM., Veterinary Parasitology 2012; 186: 93–100. 2. Little PR, et al., Veterinary Parasitology 2011; 181: 180–93. 3. Miller, CM, et al., Vet Parasitol, 2012.

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Scottish Government rules out introduction of livestock reduction policies



By Michael Priestley, Policy Manager

Scotland's farming leaders categorically denied the existence of any government policy to reduce livestock numbers at summer events.

Cabinet secretary Mairi Gougeon echoed the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity Jim Fairlie's commitment to NSA Highland Sheep attendees by telling the Royal Highland Show audience there was no anti-livestock agenda in the Scottish Government.

While the aims and aspirations of the UK Climate Change Committee are accepted, the means to achieve it are not. NSA is pressing for a plan to stabilise falling livestock numbers and is a signatory of the Meating our Potential QMS campaign.

While the initiative is about beef production, NSA Scottish Region hopes the sheep sector – as an industry interwoven with cattle – benefits from a shoring up of the suckler herd and the associated skills, live markets, butchers and abattoirs upon which both sheep and beef sectors depend.



Enhanced Greening policies have been announced in Scotland.

Enhanced greening

Scotland's transition from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) to a more environmentally focused subsidy scheme took another step forward in early June when the Enhanced Greening was announced for 2026. You should expect more exacting requirements placed upon you to qualify for 30% of your BPS payment, although details for 2027 and thereafter are yet to be decided.

Permanent grassland is included within Enhanced Greening, which is classed as naturally seeded or cultivated grassland outwith the arable rotation for five years or more, including permanent grassland, rough grazing or open woodland (grazed).

Extra demands will be placed on those with permanent grassland to quality for Enhanced Greening to improve farm biodiversity, carbon storage and grassland effectiveness as of January next year.

It is expected more will be required in 2027. Practices such as regenerative grazing, reducing nitrogen application, limiting areas of bare soils and poaching, minimising soil disturbance, wildlife friendly mowing of grassland and summer grazing of hill ground to create a more diverse vegetation could be implemented in preparation.

Available funding

NSA reminds readers the Future Farming Investment Scheme (FFIS) is running until August 22nd, offering up front funding to cover 100% of eligible investments. The scheme aims to improve business efficiency and sustainability; protect, restore or enhance the environment; reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the effect of climate change.

Extension of England's bluetongue restriction zone creates challenges in Wales



By Helen Roberts, Regional Development Officer

NSA along with industry continues to call for Wales to become part of the current bluetongue (BTV) restriction zone to enable free movements across the Welsh/English border.

NSA Cymru/Wales Region is in constant contact with the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer and Welsh Government to seek answers and clarification on the new rules and understand more on how these rules will impact the impending sales of both rams and ewes, cross border farms and livestock markets.

The decision by Welsh Government to not include Wales in the larger restriction zone from 1st July has created disruption for farmers in both England and Wales. The cost of pre or post movement testing is prohibitive to most produces as well as obtaining the necessary paperwork.

At the time of writing, the new restrictions have meant abattoirs in Wales must now be designated abattoirs to take any sheep from England and will also need to reimplement the controls that come with the designation.

NSA reminds members that vaccination is an important tool to help mitigate the spread of BTV and would encourage you to talk to your vet about vaccination and flock protection.

Dip disposal

Dip disposal continues to be a challenge. Since previous reports that Natural Resources Wales are not issuing new licences to allow dip disposal to land, this has progressed meaning there is now nowhere in the UK that will take spent dip from contractors either.

As it stands, unless you have a current permit most producers will not be a position to dip their sheep. This announcement does not help the Gwaredu scab project in Wales, that is looking at alternative means of disposal. If this situation remains, we will be looking at welfare implications across the national flock and serious scab concerns.

NSA has written a letter to the National Trust after receiving contact from the Welsh Mountain Sheep Society, concerned by the proposed National Trust changes that could lead to destocking and again less sheep in the hills. We will keep you informed on progress as communications are received.



BTV restriction zones are affecting cross border farms.

NSA Northern Ireland Region fights for its sheep farmers



By Ellen Moorehead, Regional Coordinator

The past few months have been a period of intense activity and crucial discussions for the NSA NI Region as it continues its commitment to supporting the region's sheep farmers.

A significant part of our ongoing work revolves around our active participation in the Sheep Taskforce – a vital forum addressing the persistent challenges faced by our industry.

Critical issue

The Sheep Taskforce is meeting regularly with a primary focus on the critical issue of the lack of adequate support available for sheep farming in NI. It remains a deeply concerning reality that our sheep farmers are currently losing 17% of their Basic Payment Scheme allocation, with no viable avenues to recoup this significant loss.

This is largely due to the absence of sheep-specific support schemes, a disparity that puts our producers at a distinct disadvantage compared to other agricultural sectors.

The region as part of the taskforce, is proactively engaged in developing and proposing potential funding opportunities for Daera to consider, aiming to bridge this critical funding gap and ensure the long-term viability of sheep enterprises.



There is sustained concern due to a lack of support for NI sheep farmers.

Most recently, we were pleased to host a dedicated Sheep Taskforce meeting with Daera representatives at the highly successful NSA Sheep NI on July 1st. While we extended an invitation to the Minister to attend, unfortunately, he was unable to make it.
But, we were pleased Daera representatives were present and engaged constructively in discussions.

Potential threats

Beyond the immediate concerns of financial support, the region is also focused on emerging threats, particularly the potential impact of bluetongue virus in NI. We are closely monitoring the situation across the rest of the UK, observing how our counterparts are both dealing with and, in many cases, struggling with the challenges posed by the disease.

The NSA NI Region has already engaged in Daera meetings regarding protocol for NI. We understand the complexities involved in managing such a disease and our priority is to ensure any policy implemented is practical, effective and provides the best possible protection for our flocks. We will continue to keep a very close eye on all updated policy developments concerning bluetongue.

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Tuesday 19th August	Annual Sale of **6,500 SHEARLING GIMMERS, MULE, MASHAM & CONTINENTAL**
Monday 26th August	Sale of **PEDIGREE KERRY HILL & CLUNFOREST SHEEP + SALE OF SUFFOLK & CHAROLLAIS RAMS**
Saturday 30th August	Sale of **WENSLEYDALE SHEEP & RARE BREED SHEEP**
Saturday 6th September	Sale of **PEDIGREE BELTEX, BLUE TEXEL & BADGER FACE TEXEL SHEEP + JACOB SHEEP**
Tuesday 9th September	Sale of **7,500 NORTH OF ENGLAND MULE GIMMER LAMBS**
Tuesday 16th September	2nd Sale of **SHEARLING GIMMERS** & Sale of all classes of **BREEDING SHEEP**
Thurs 18th & Fri 19th Sept	44th Annual Sale of **600 PEDIGREE TEXEL RAMS & FEMALES**
Tuesday 23rd September	2nd Sale of **10,000 MULE GIMMER LAMBS**
Tuesday 30th September	Sale of all classes of **BREEDING SHEEP & RAMS +** Evening Show & Sale of **BLUE FACED LEICESTER SHEEP**
Thursday 2nd October	Sale of **REGISTERED LLEYN BREEDING SHEEP**
Friday 3rd October	**1200 TERMINAL & NON TERMINAL SIRES (MVA & NON MVA) INC TEXEL, BELTEX, SUFFOLK, CHAROLLAIS, BLUE TEXEL, ZWARTBLE, CHEVIOT & OTHER PURE BREEDS**
Saturday 4th October	Annual Sale of **4,500 SWALEDALE EWES & SHEARLINGS**
Monday 6th October	Special Evening sale of **120 SWALEDALE RAMS**
Tuesday 7th October	Sale of **SWALEDALE GIMMER LAMBS, CONTINENTAL & OTHER GIMMER LAMBS** Sale **of MASHAM GIMER LAMBS.** Open Prize Sale of **MULE GIMMER LAMBS**
Saturday 11th October	Pedigree **CHAROLLAIS IN-LAMB FEMALES**
Tuesday 21st October	25th Annual Sale of **100 DALESBRED RAMS & FEMALES +** Sale of **HILL RAMS** inc 2nd Sale of **BFL Rams**
Saturday 1st November	Sale of **PEDIGREE SUFFOLK FEMALES**
Saturday 13th December	Winter Sale of **PEDIGREE FEMALES – BELTEX, TEXEL, BLUE TEXEL, BADGER FACE TEXEL SHEEP**


Much of the farm's grazing is unimproved permanent pasture.

Lesson in aiming high drives rewards for NSA Central Region Chair

By Katie James, NSA

From his family's mixed farm, located at the highest point of the Lincolnshire Wolds, new NSA Central Region Manager Ed Brant is taking strides towards an increasingly efficient sheep flock.

As an important part of the 1,500-acre (600ha) farm at Normanby le Wold, the sheep enterprise has undergone significant change from a flock traditionally run alongside the farm's arable and cattle systems.

Ed credits a range of interests, farm visits and experiences for this change and his desire to build an enterprise that is increasingly resilient to future challenges.

"A visit to progressive, extensive sheep farmers the Nelless family in Northumberland during the final year of my degree in Agriculture from Newcastle opened my eyes to how I wanted to be farming in the future," says Ed.

"We had farmed sheep at home until 2009 in what was a typically high input – high output system, but with changes to workforce on the farm the sheep were disbanded. Time spent on sheep farms in New Zealand and Australia, invigorated my interest in sheep and made me realise what I wanted for my farming future."

Flock growth

On returning home Ed set about growing a larger flock of Lleyn ewes to run separately from a terminal sire flock of Hampshire Downs that had been set up in 2010. He also spent two years with Signet as a breeding consultant allowing him to further his interest in sheep genetics.

"We were already performance recording before I worked for Signet and continue to do so now," says Ed. "I believe in constantly making progress and improving performance done by recording and selecting better genetics as this is fundamentally the only way to make substantiable and continuous progress. The aim of our breeding is to produce the highest performing and most resilient sheep for the system we want to farm."

Currently Ed is running 400 Lleyn ewes, 250 Lleyn ewe lambs and 100 Hampshire Down ewes. The livestock enterprise also includes 45 performance recorded Pedigree Herefords. All ewes are shorn and housed pre-lambing with ewes turned out just before lambing in April and May.

The management strategy is to be as minimally involved as possible. Ed comments: "We stopped castration several years ago when we moved to outdoor lambing and haven't regretted it. I do think ringing the ram lambs knocks them. Lleyn and Hampshire lambs still have their tails rung but only if destined for pedigree registration."

Flock health

Breeding stock is vaccinated against toxoplasmosis and to cover clostridial and pasturella disease. Following some issues this year with empty ewes, testing after scanning identified campylobacter. Ed says: "We are now also considering further anti-abortion vaccines. We work closely with our vet and have our Pathway review coming up so it will be something to discuss then."

Maintaining a mostly closed flock Ed considers to be an important tool in biosecurity so anything brought in is strictly quarantined for four weeks.

The farm is producing its own replacements with surplus ewe lambs mated and those not in-lamb are sold after scanning to keep a high selection pressure.


Ed Brant.

Finished lambs are sold deadweight.

As well as using homebred rams, a small number of rams are brought in from known and trusted breeders for both the Lleyn and Hampshire flocks. This has recently included an Exlana ram. Ed comments: "I think wool is a great product and I like to buy woollen garments. But within the UK the quality is so variable, so we have looked to the shedding breeds.

"Winter shearing and housing the ewes keeps them clean and reduces fly risk into lambing, but it's costly to bed and feed them inside. Moving to a shedding breed aims to reduce costs and management input. It may also mean we could stop tailing completely."


Ed (top right) has represented NSA at international events.

Ed is keen to continue both pedigree flocks but is looking to genetic development to further increase the resilience of the sheep enterprise.

"My long term plan is to have a nucleus flock of 200-300 ewes of a maternal, probably a shedding-type. The aim would be a shedding Lleyn and then use those genetics in a truly commercial flock where we can maximise output," Ed explains.

"I'd like to continue breeding our own maternal rams and sell any surplus to help pay for the recording rather than looking to become a known ram breeder. At the same time, I'd like to increase the integration of the sheep with the arable system, as currently there is a lot of unrealised opportunity."

Arable integration

The arable enterprise is currently managed by Ed's father Charles, with support from the rest of the team including Matthew, Daniel and Head of Wellbeing Ed's mum Kate. "We all work together at busy times," adds Ed.

Efforts to begin integrating sheep into the arable system this year were hampered by the early closure for new Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) applications.

Ed explains: "We were hoping to add cover crops to our application this year. We tried growing some last year but didn't want to commit to them if we couldn't manage them as a winter forage source and satisfy the SFI objectives. It was successful, but the scheme closed before we applied." The aim is to still put them in if the new SFI options open for applications in time.

"We will still grow cover crops, but if we don't get the funding for them, they probably won't be as diverse as originally planned," adds Ed.

"We've also planted herbal leys. We've tried grass and no grass lays, including mixes such as clover, vetches and sainfoin."

Ed has been helped in future planning after recently taking part in Lincolnshire based Cultivate Success mentoring scheme. "I was matched with a local mentor. He's not a sheep farmer but an Operations Director at a large multifaceted agricultural business, so his business skills are strong," says Ed. "I've learned a huge amount from him.


The family farm is split over two separate holdings in Lincolnshire.

> The aim of our breeding is to produce the highest performing and most resilient sheep for the system we want to farm.
>
> Ed Brant

"The advice I have been given has helped bring everything together with our sheep system and explore opportunities we didn't realise we had. It's set the wheels in motion for our aims and set five-year plans. Part of the mentoring has been enterprise scoring, involving looking at how different aspects of the business can align together, which has been really useful."

Improve knowledge

Ed's willingness to seek out activities that will allow him to keep learning, developing his own skills and helping to progress the business also saw him become an NSA Next Generation Ambassador in 2022 and more recently take part in the next generation gathering of the Global Sheep Forum in Australia last year.

He says: "I've really enjoyed these experiences and have taken some key advice from them. Something that struck me on the Ambassador programme was the personal development session when we were encouraged to aim higher than we thought was realistically possible – if you aim high then you will likely achieve more than if you set out with average ambition."

Ed identifies the chance to meet like-minded people as the biggest benefit of getting involved with opportunities such as the Global Sheep Forum. He says: "I've met so many interesting people. It has been especially great to make connections with people from different sheep farming nations. Sharing our similarities, challenges and solutions to problems has been incredibly useful."

He is now set to meet more new people as he recently took on the role of NSA Central Region Chair. Ed comments: "I haven't actually been on the regional committee long, so it was a compliment to be asked to take on the position.

"I'm not sure you are ever completely ready to take on a role like Chair, but I do believe you should take these opportunities when they present themselves.

"We have a great new Regional Manager too and are looking forward to bringing more activity to the region. We hope many members will enjoy the activities we hope to offer."

Farm facts

- Sheep flocks run alongside cattle and arable enterprises over two separate farms totalling 1,500 acres (600ha).
- Both sheep flocks performance recorded with the Hampshire Down flock also part of the Ram Compare programme.
- Ed is part of the Performance Recorded Lleyn Group involved in the active Breed for CH4nge project.
- Ed has represented NSA as an NSA Next Generation Ambassador and as part of the Global Sheep Forum in Australia last year.


Visiting several extensive systems inspired a change to outdoor lambing.

Skill of next generation shepherds showcased at summer events

By Katie James, NSA

A total of nine young sheep farmers have already qualified for next year's national final of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition after competing in regional heats over recent months.

Having taken part in a series of tests including ewe and lamb selection, ATV handling and shearing, young shepherds from across the UK have shown impressive knowledge, practical ability and enthusiasm for their future sheep farming careers.

There are still further opportunities for more young sheep farmers to secure a place in the national finals taking place at NSA Sheep 2026 at the Three Counties Showground, Worcestershire.

NSA Eastern Region, NSA Central Region, NSA South East Region and NSA Northern Region will all be holding competition days either this autumn or during the spring of 2026 so look out for details to get involved.

There are also opportunities for young sheep enthusiasts to join NSA at a series of one day workshops later this year, starting with an informative day alongside knowledgeable representatives from the Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) group on Thursday 11th September. As *Sheep Farmer* magazine goes to print the location is still to be confirmed but will likely be in the NSA Central region.

Shearing days

NSA will also team up with British Wool this autumn to repeat its successful introduction to shearing days that previously took place in 2023. These days offer young people a great experience learning basic shearing skills with both a handpiece and blades. They also provide a chance to learn more about wool processing methods and the current market for wool.

For any young, ambitious sheep farmers looking to build their sheep farming knowledge and experience, as well as their own personal development, applications for the 2026 cohort of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors will open in November.



Introduction to shearing days will return again this year.

Look out for further details on the programme and all other NSA Next Generation activity during the rest of the year on the NSA social channels and website.

BLACKFACE SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION

Draft Ewes Give Good Returns

When cash is tight, there is nothing like a draft Blackface ewe to give you a good return on your money. This is what young Mid-Lothian farmer, Ben McSporran discovered.

212 draft blackface ewes were bought in UA Dalmally, Oban & Stirling av £64 and tupped with crossing type Bluefaced Leicesters. They scanned **151%** and marked at **146%**, which he reckons is testament to the Blackie's **mothering ability**.

"The best thing was the 131 singles **received no concentrate**; they only used one 25kg pre-lambing tub on the rough hill which rises to 1350 feet. They **all lambed outside** from 6th April and I only had to assist six of them."



Ewe lambs have been kept for breeding and the first mule wedders to be sold fat off the grass at the end of July averaged **£140 per head**.

— Full article can be viewed on the website



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6 Stirling (UA)
10 Lanark
13 Dumfries
16 Oban
19 Huntly

September cont.
25 St. Boswells
26 Dalmally
30 Lanark

October
1 Longtown
10 Dingwall

RAMS

October
4 Ayr
6 Ballymena
6 Hexham
10 Dingwall
11 Stirling (UA)
11 Perth Ram Society
14 Oban

October cont.
16 Lanark Shearlings
17 Lanark Lambs
18 Dalmally
30 Lanark

November
7 Fort William

GIMMERS AND EWES

September
16 Oban
17 Castle Douglas
18 Ayr
19 Newton Stewart
19 Huntly
19 Stirling (CAL)
25 St. Boswells
25 Ayr
26 Dalmally

September cont.
26 Dumfries
27 Stirling (UA)
29 Hexham
30 Lanark

October
1 Longtown
10 Dingwall
10 Lanark

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October
14 Longtown Show

September
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2 UA Oban Show
10 Stirling (CAL) Show
13 UA Dalmally Show
19 Dingwall Show
19 Lanark Show
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Have courage in your own convictions, you never know where they lead

By Ian Duncan Millar, Contributor

Dear Ian... Drawing from some valuable life experiences, I've put together a few suggestions that might help you approach things a little differently – and perhaps even more effectively in certain areas.

Firstly and most importantly, have courage in your own convictions. Yes, it might lead to more mistakes, but it may lead to more opportunities.

You are feeling constrained in your early years, perhaps shy and seeking reassurance. But later life will lead to more confidence and surprise that sometimes folk will be happy to listen. Perhaps that's an age thing?

Early years

Your early years, characterised by a schooling with few happy memories, will be followed by a university career teaching you the rudiments of farming and drinking. While you will be moderately successful at the latter, you should perhaps engage more with the former. In doing so it might help direct your early farming towards a more profitable route.

A membership with the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs will coincide with a comment from my Dad: "Grab the day." Of course he was right, as many chances will only come along once.

There will be opportunities following young farmers, each challenging in their own different way. There will be a common thread in these and not in an area you might expect.

They all, in one way or another, will expose an area I would encourage you to pay closer attention: computer skills and IT. A basic working knowledge gathered as you went along could have been so much more. I wish you had studied the development of working computers and latterly IT and social media.

Technology will change dramatically and rapidly during your working life, a warning to keep up would be useful. If you don't keep up, it's easy to be left behind.

Agricultural industry

Having said that, the agriculture industry will offer a fantastic series of opportunities. Early on in your practical six months from Aberdeen University you will find yourself on your own in New Zealand having to find your own way. This will be a time of practical enjoyment and learning setting you up for other prospects later, but at the time it will just be fun.

The six months on your own in a strange land, although in a language you can understand (most of the time), will help you to understand a real lesson. Folk are not as judgemental as sometimes we youngsters believe as differing views and opinions are a part of life that makes it interesting allowing us to learn.

The other early advice I'd give you is to work as hard on outside activities as can be expected on the farm. This advice might be self-taught as progress through young farmers will lead to involvement in cooperation around health, marketing and science research, all of which will push you out of your comfort zone. It will make you appreciate financial reward can be less than the satisfaction of being part of making a difference.

As a young person be aware that experience and energy are, or appear to be, on opposite trajectories. As one's know-how increases the energy to enact decreases, so enjoy the time as an energetic loon and use wisely the knowledge gained from experience thereafter.

Letter to my younger self

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

Receiver of the 2022 NSA George Hedley Memorial Award for his service to the UK sheep industry, Scottish Sheep farmer Ian Duncan Millar is well placed to share his advice. Looking back he gives some valuable words to his younger self.



Ian Duncan Millar.



Ian, Phil Stocker and the NSA Scottish Region Committee.



Ian receiving the NSA George Hedley Memorial Award.

A time to celebrate as British Wool reaches milestone anniversary

This year, British Wool celebrates 75 years of the organisation collectively marketing your wool clip being the only organisation to collect, grade, sell and promote fleece wool.

As this milestone is celebrated, the wool price received by members is at its highest since 2018. This price trend has been driven by a significant increase in demand for British wool, with strong bidding from buyers at sales, resulting in an average price increase of 70%.

British Wool is active in the marketplace, working to drive demand with various manufacturers and retailers, promoting the use of British wool in their products and ensuring products contain wool sourced from its members. This has translated into healthy competition in the British Wool auctions.

Jim Robertson, British Wool, says: "We know there is still a lot to be done to deliver sustainable wool prices that add value beyond the cost of shearing, particularly for mountain breeds. But encouragingly, price trends are heading in the right direction."

An online survey was distributed to all British Wool members, which will help shape the organisation's future direction.

Mr Robertson adds: "We value the feedback gathered from members as we look to shape the future strategy of the business. The results from the survey are already helping us identify areas for improvement and guiding service enhancements."



Additional drop-off centres will help to reduce haulage costs.

Convenience

From the survey, it was clear to see how important it is for members to have convenient locations to drop off wool. In response, British Wool plans to open additional collection sites over the next two years.

Mr Robertson adds: "When dropping off wool, please use the QR code displayed, which will notify us your wool has been delivered, so we can then release any payments due on your account.

"Given the strong demand from buyers and improved returns, we want to work with everyone to assist in bringing the wool to market this year. As well as opening new collection centres, if you can work with neighbours to get a full load together, we will arrange for free haulage into the nearest grading depot."







Review your business for economic and environmental benefits.

How adopting low-input, data-driven decisions is key to a successful business

By Robert Barbour, Sustainable Food Trust

It's often easy to feel pessimistic around the future of sheep farming in the UK.

Low profitability and an ageing workforce, uncertainty around government support, criticisms over environmental impact – the list of pressures is long.

Yet sheep farming has always evolved with the times and can do so successfully again if we are willing to challenge the current ways of thinking and win the necessary support from government and the market.

There is a lot the sector can do to improve its environmental and economic sustainability. Shifting towards lower-input grazing systems, which work in harmony with nature to deliver a broad range of public goods, may also be crucial in overcoming the many challenges we face.

Environment

Lower-input approaches to farming have been understudied and undervalued for decades. But we know they can deliver benefits for your business and the environment.

For instance, various projects have shown pastures with a diversity of plant species – in particular legumes – provide similar levels of forage productivity to fields receiving much higher rates of nitrogen. This comes with major environmental benefits for biodiversity but can also improve farm profitability and resilience through better forage quality and livestock performance, greater yield stability in drought conditions and reduced input costs.

Rotational grazing can help increase soil carbon levels and support grassland biodiversity, while also improving the efficiency of forage use and increasing liveweight production per hectare. This is something Rothamsted Research and others have shown in recent studies.

Agroforestry represents another lower-input practice offering both environmental and economic potential. Perhaps the most important benefit is the shade and shelter trees provide and the reduction in animal energy expenditure that come with this – a service that will only become more important as the climate changes.



Incorporating trees into grazing systems can bring shelter and shade.

Sheep reared in low-input systems can even bring benefits for the sustainability of arable farms, through the (re)introduction of grazed leys into crop rotations. This is something NSA has championed for years and which a growing number of crop producers are adopting as they rediscover the value of the golden hoof.

Adopting these kinds of practices is not always straightforward. There are challenges and trade-offs with any farming system. But there are also more deep-seated barriers, which need to be addressed. Some of this is cultural, with perhaps the biggest obstacle here being the belief chasing maximum productivity through an increase in inputs will lead to greater profitability.

Many farm advisory services have found this generally isn't true. Businesses are actually better off making the most of the land's natural capacity with minimal use of costly bought-in feeds and fertilisers.

Even still, the business case for regenerative farming must become stronger. As my colleague Adele Jones wrote in November's edition of *Sheep Farmer*, achieving this will require proper financial reward for farmers who deliver public goods and a raising of the regulatory bar to discourage harmful practices. To do so, we need better data and more collaboration across the supply chain delivered through the use of common metrics.

Looking ahead

A sustainable sheep sector also needs a thriving network of local abattoirs, something the Sustainable Food Trust continues to campaign for alongside many other organisations. Generating more value from animal by-products could make a real difference here, a point also relative to the potential benefits that could be realised by a revival of the domestic wool market.

Realising this more sustainable vision may feel a long way off. But, shifting to a more sustainable approach to farming is only going to become more important for the whole of society. As extreme weather becomes more common storing greater quantities of water in our landscapes, through healthier soils and more farm woodland cover, is going to be key.

And with the growing threat of disruptions to the global agri-food trade, moving towards systems of food production that are much less reliant on bought-in inputs is likely a change we will have to make, whether we wish to or not.

We all have a key part to play in meeting these challenges, but we can't do this on our own.

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Saturday 4th October
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Tuesday 7th October

Middleton in Teesdale
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Kirkby Stephen
Wednesday 15th October
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Shearling Rams

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SEPTEMBER

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25th- Clitheroe
Ewes & shearlings

26th - Leyburn
Ewes & shearlings

26th - Junction 36, Kendal
Ewes, shearlings & hoggs

26th - Ruswarp
Ewes, shearlings & hogg

27th - St Johns Chapel
Ewes, shearlings & hoggs

29th - Middleton in Teesdale
Ewes & shearlings

29th - Hexham
Ewes, shearlings & hoggs

30th - Bentham
Ewes & shearlings

OCTOBER

3rd - Kirkby Stephen
Ewes, shearlings & hoggs

4th - Skipton
Ewes & shearlings

6th - Hawes - Ewes

7th - Cockermouth
Ewes, shearlings & hoggs

7th - Broughton
Ewes & shearlings

9th - Penrith
Ewes, shearlings & hoggs

11th - Hawes
Shearlings & hoggs

14th - Hawes
Ewes & shearlings

25th - Kirkby Stephen
Ewes & shearlings

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How to make your business more resilient in an age of growing risk

By Jeremy Moody, CAAV

While farming is used to managing risks with resilience, we have entered an era where risks are more varied, greater and more pervasive.


Wet fields can be of benefit in times of drought but need careful planning.

An increasingly chaotic international order, unstable markets, more extreme weathers and disease risks come at a time when a stagnant economy weakens what a government can do.

Resilience means different things depending on the challenge, as a business is too diverse for a single answer. It may be the ability to withstand shocks, the ability to recover from shocks or the ability to bounce back better. Planning for business without government support means relying on familiar but essential truths.

Profit

The core is having a profitable business, with income for living and investment. A financially weak business lacks the ability to handle threats and change. Typically for farming, this relies on knowing and controlling costs of production and good timeliness. This has always been true, but we should use and invest in modern technology where it's ready and useful.

Animal health is vital for livestock farming, relying on strong stockmanship and attentive care. Better lambing percentages, fewer losses and good condition provide more sheep to be sold.

Good, resilient pastures support this. Regenerative farming shows mixed species pastures can be more palatable, boost soil health and are more drought resistant – all key in a changing climate.

More extreme weather brings not just storms and sustained wetness like in 2023 and 2024 – highlighting the need for good land drainage – but also droughts like summer 2022 and spring 2025 – with March the driest since 1960 – bringing wildfires across the UK.

This suggests caution when committing wetter fields to environmental schemes if it limits their grazing or conservation when needed. Flood and saturated land still pose a larger risk to sheep. It is essential to make plans to enable the swift removal of animals to drier sheltered land in extreme conditions.

Challenges

Warmer weather brings new pests and diseases highlighting the need for farm biosecurity and forward planning. For example, moving tupping later in the year may reduce the risks of Schmallenberg and bluetongue virus.

Climate change and cuts in the agricultural and business reliefs in last October's budget make this a good time to review the farms long-term future – aiming to look 10-15 years ahead.

Strategic planning now can result in better decisions and smarter spending. Futureproofing includes everything from managing inheritance and succession to practical steps like ensuring buildings can handle extreme weather. It is reviewing and managing the risks that can be controlled, rather than being the passive victim of change.

Inheritance tax risks major capital loss, so it is vital to clarify ownership of assets and liabilities, asses who is involved in the business and decide on future structure – equal division or farm protection. A strategy can then be talked through and developed.

The business may shift to being less capital intensive, like grazing land under tenancy. Good advice is essential, especially around early transfers, what to retain and insuring younger family members. Plans must be tailored and some details will depend on final legislation.

The Defra Secretary of State expects farms to be self-reliant. Building in resilience is how we meet that challenge.

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Speak to Helen Roberts.
See page 2 for contact details.

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NEMSA MULE SALE DATES

Ewe & Shearling Sales

July / August

Bentham	Saturday 26th July
Hawes	Tuesday 19th August
Skipton	Tuesday 19th August
Lancaster	Wednesday 20th August
Carlisle	Friday 22nd August
Kendal (NWA J36)	Saturday 23rd August
Bentham	Friday 29th August
Bentham	Saturday 30th August

September

Barnard Castle	Tuesday 2nd September
Longtown	Wednesday 3rd September
Wigton	Wednesday 3rdSeptember
Leyburn	Friday 5th September
Cockermouth	Friday 5th September
Penrith	Tuesday 9th September
Carlisle	Thursday 11th September
Longtown	Tuesday 16th September
Skipton	Tuesday 16th September
Lancaster	Wednesday 17th September
Hexham	Wednesday 17th September
Kendal (NWA J36)	Saturday 20th September
Kirkby Stephen	Saturday 20th September
Bentham	Friday 26th September
Leyburn	Friday 26th September
Skipton	Tuesday 30th September

October / November

Bentham	Friday 17th October



Gimmer Lamb Sales

August/September

***Hexham**	**Thursday 4th September**
Skipton	**Tuesday 9th September**
Kirkby Stephen	**Friday 12th September**
Kendal (NWA J36)	**Saturday 13th September**
Bentham	Saturday 13th September
Hawes	**Monday 15th September**
Hawes	**Tuesday 16th September**
Longtown	Tuesday 16th September
Middleton-in-Teesdale	**Wednesday 17th September**
Lancaster	Wednesday 17th September
Wigton	Wednesday 17th September
Pateley Bridge	Wednesday 17th September
Barnard Castle	**Thursday 18th September**
Carlisle	Thursday 18th September
***Hexham**	**Thursday 18th September**
Cockermouth	Friday 19th September
Leyburn	**Friday 19th September**
Penrith	Tuesday 23rd September
Skipton	Tuesday 23rd September
Lazonby *Alston Moor Sale*	Wednesday 24th September
Tow Law (at Hexham)	**Thursday 25th September**
St John's Chapel	**Friday 26th September**
Bentham	Saturday 27th September
Hawes	Monday 29th September

October/November

Longtown	Wednesday 1st October
Leyburn	Friday 3rd October
Lancaster	Saturday 4th October
Skipton	Tuesday 7th October
Lazonby	Thursday 9th October
Kendal (NWA J36)	Thursday 9th October
Hawes	Monday 13th October
Leyburn	Friday 17th October
Bentham	Friday 17th October
Skipton	Tuesday 21st October
Lazonby	Thursday 30th October
Hawes	Saturday 1st November
Skipton	Wednesday 12th Nov

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Haemonchus and the importance of diagnosis before treatment

By Nerys Wright, SCOPS

As changing weather patterns and evolving parasites threaten our industry, it is important to remain calm when faced with *Haemonchus contortus* (Barber's Pole worm).

This blood-sucking roundworm – once considered more of a southern UK issue – is now being reported further north, prompting questions about its spread and impact.

While the exact reasons for this apparent shift aren't fully understood, climate change is likely playing a role. Warmer winters may allow the parasite to survive on pasture, while dry, warm springs create ideal conditions for it to establish earlier in the grazing season.

Despite the potential serverity of haemonchus infections, it is important to not panic. Instead, take a test-first approach and make decisions based on accurate diagnosis and sound advice.

Diagnostic approach

While haemonchus can cause serious issues in flocks, it's important not to jump to conclusions or revert to blanket treatments, especially in adult ewes, as this could undermine responsible and sustainable parasite control. The growing interest and investigation into this parasite is a positive step, but evidence-based action is essential for a long-term sustainable approach.

Haemonchus is one of several roundworm species found in UK sheep, but it behaves quite differently from the more familiar gut worms. Unlike many other roundworms, haemonchus does not typically cause diarrhoea. Instead, it feeds on blood in the sheep's stomach, leading to anaemia, lethargy, weight loss and in severe cases sudden death.

It's important to note the presence of haemonchus eggs in a faecal egg count (FEC) does not always mean clinical disease – haemonchosis – is present. That's why testing and interpretation are so important. Have a structured approach to diagnosis, working closely with your vet or animal health adviser.

FEC's are a good starting point. This will give you a strongyle egg count, including haemonchus and other roundworms. A high count (several thousand eggs per gram) may raise suspicion but is not definitive.

A species-specific test is needed to confirm haemonchus. The peanut agglutinin (PNA) staining test, available through the Animal and Plant Health Agency, identifies the proportion of strongyle eggs that are haemonchus. This test must be submitted via your vet and is currently available at a discounted rate of £20 per sample.

A useful on-farm method to support diagnosis and treatment decisions is using FAMACHA scoring. It's a simple tool to help assess anaemia by evaluating the colour of the lower eyelid. A score of one (red) indicates no anaemia, while a score of five (white) suggests severe anaemia.

Investigations

If you lose a sheep unexpectedly, don't waste the opportunity to learn. Post mortems can reveal adult haemonchus worms in the stomach, which are visible to the naked eye. Combined with signs like pale carcases and weight loss, this can confirm haemonchosis.

Treatment decisions should be based on diagnostics and tailored to your farm's history of product use. Haemonchus is not the only parasite to consider. Other roundworms, liver fluke and external parasites may also be present and treatment plans should take the full picture into account.

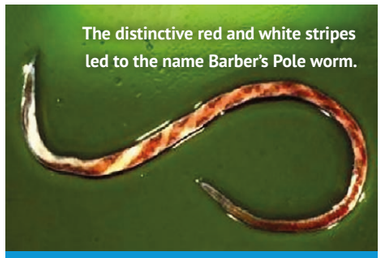
Product choice is also crucial. Resistance data for haemonchus in the UK is limited, but data from other countries show this parasite can quickly develop resistance when inappropriate treatments are used.

Do not assume resistance patterns seen in other roundworms will apply to *Haemonchus contortus*. Its mode of action and resistance mechanisms are different, meaning resistance to white (1-BZ), yellow (2-LV) or clear (3-ML) drenches in other species does not necessarily indicate the same outcome for haemonchus. This reinforces the importance of diagnostics and tailored treatment strategies.

Pasture conditions play a significant role in parasite dynamics. Dry spells can favour haemonchus, while wetter conditions may increase the risk of other parasites. Regular monitoring, strategic treatments and robust quarantine protocols remain essential tools in managing risk. Remember to:

- Monitor FECs regularly throughout the grazing season.
- Use targeted treatments based on test results.
- Avoid blanket treatments, especially in your adult sheep.
- Maintain good pasture hygiene and rotation.
- Quarantine and test incoming stock.

More information at www.scops.org.uk.



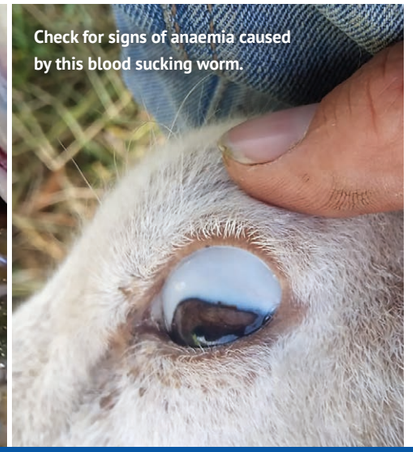
The distinctive red and white stripes led to the name Barber's Pole worm.

Haemonchus signs

- Pale gums and eyelids (anaemia).
- Swelling under the jaw (bottle jaw).
- Lethargy and poor condition.
- Sudden death in advanced cases.



Haemonchus is visable and can be detected by eye on a post mortem.



Check for signs of anaemia caused by this blood sucking worm.



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Speak to your vet about creating a quarantine plan for your farm.

Essential steps to minimise disease risk when buying in new breeding stock

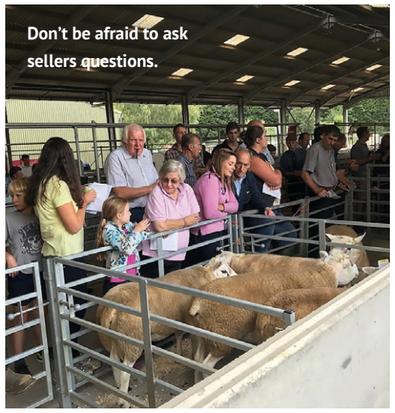
vetPartners

Maintaining flock health and performance is paramount when buying new breeding stock says farm vet Alistair Crozier of Parkside vets, Dundee.

Dr Crozier says prioritising stock from high-health status flocks, asking questions of sellers and a strict quarantine policy will pay dividends.

"The starting point for buying stock for me, is asking what those animals will contribute to my flock and do they have the characteristics I want?" says Dr Crozier, who runs a small flock of pedigree traditional type Bluefaced Leicesters alongside his vet work.

"For example, you might want size in your flock, or you might want to introduce better mothering ability with more milky ewes, so I'd start with that when buying new breeding stock."


Don't be afraid to ask sellers questions.

Health status

He says estimated breeding values are a useful tool but are less common in sheep than in cattle and as such, the accuracy figures for some of the breeds may not necessarily be very high.

"If you're buying new tups, don't be scared of going into the pen and having a feel that he's got two testicles and they both feel turgid and firm," adds Dr Crozier.

"You don't necessarily need to know what's wrong with an animal, you just need to know that something is wrong so you don't buy them."

Once you know what type of breeding stock you want to buy, Dr Crozier recommends paying attention to the health status of flocks you are buying from and, where possible, prioritising high-health flocks over others.

Dr Crozier continues: "The Premium Sheep and Goat Health Scheme offers flocks accreditation for being free of various diseases including Johne's, maedi visna and enzootic abortion."

He says a flock's membership of these schemes will more than likely be listed in sales catalogues, especially at pedigree sales, but if a buyer is unsure they should ask the seller for more information.

"Buying in high-health status breeding stock is one way of managing a problem within your existing flock, as you can keep these animals separately and use them to breed replacements. Understanding a flock's health status is essential for this," adds Dr Crozier.

Beyond understanding overall health status, Dr Crozier recommends finding out what routine treatments and vaccinations have been given to the sheep you have bought.

"Try and speak to the person you've bought from and see what wormer, flukicide and vaccinations the sheep have had," he explains.

"Obviously it would be nicer to know this information before buying, but I know that's not always possible. Ask the buyer once you've bought the animals as it will give you a baseline understanding of the where those sheep are in terms of routine health treatments."

Quarantine

Dr Crozier adds: "There are certain areas of the country with different worms – for example, the haemonchus roundworm is much more prominent in the south of the country than the north. Therefore, it's useful to know if the farm you've bought sheep from has had problems with specific worms and appropriately protected against them."

He says understanding what treatments bought-in sheep have already had should also help prevent unnecessary use of medicines, which is especially important against the backdrop of growing resistance to wormers and flukicides.

"The buyer may have already given the sheep flukicide the week before the sale, so you then know treatment won't be necessary once you bring them home," he comments.

New breeding stock should be kept in isolation for a minimum of three weeks once they are brought home to the farm. In addition, Dr Crozier encourages you to speak to your vet and relay the information given to them about the health status of the flock the animals have come from and any routine treatments they have been given.

"Some of you will already have a quarantine plan in place as part of your flock health plan, but if not, you can get specific advice on how to manage these new sheep from your vet," suggests Dr Crozier.

"Common things to do with new sheep include running them through a footbath because there's some nasty foot bugs that you want to avoid bringing onto your farm then treating with a wormer and flukicide, if necessary."


Bringing in disease can be costly and time consuming.

Treatment

He recommends using one of the newer orange (4-AD) or purple (5-SI) wormers as there is little or no known resistance to these wormers, compared to white (1-BZ), yellow (2-LV) or clear (3-ML) wormers. This should clear out any worms in the new sheep.

Dr Crozier recommends you speak to your vet about whether any vaccinations are required during the isolation period.

"Hopefully the animals have already had clostridial vaccinations, but if they haven't you certainly want to give them because clostridial diseases can cause sudden death," he explains.

"There are several other vaccines also available, such as ones against enzootic abortion and ones for common lameness problems, so vet advice will be useful to find out what is necessary."

Dr Crozier advises all readers consider the importance of vaccination against bluetongue serotype-3 (BTV-3) this year. "The sheep you're buying might have already been vaccinated against this, but you need to speak to the seller to find out. As well as killing sheep, BTV-3 is also causing infertility issues and although the vaccine doesn't stop animals having the virus, it stops them getting severe symptoms," he recommends.

"It takes around three weeks after vaccination for the sheep to have immunity, so you ideally want to buy animals already vaccinated, or in enough time to allow vaccination at home before breeding from them."


Quarantine can help protect your flock against health issues.



Lameness issues must be considered when buying in new sheep

By Jennifer Duncan, ECSRHM

EUROPEAN COLLEGE OF Small Ruminant HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Before mixing new replacement breeding stock with your own flock, it's essential to take precautionary measures to avoid introducing a new disease.

There are many diseases that can be introduced through bought in sheep – such as contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD), sheep scab, liver fluke, drug resistant worms, abortion agents, ovine pulmonary adenocarcinoma (OPA) and maedi visna (MV) – it's easier and cheaper to manage these at quarantine stage than after they have spread through your flock.

The precautionary measures you decide to take will depend on your flock's current health status and priorities. The best action you can take is to ensure you quarantine the sheep for up to 30 days and then follow a quarantine plan specific to your flock, designed in collaboration with your vet.

Widespread

Lameness in sheep is still a major problem for the sector, with CODD an increasingly common and difficult challenge. It's now thought around 60% of UK farms have CODD in their flocks. It is a particularly nasty disease causing damage to the foot. It is painful and will spread. If your sheep do not have CODD, then the goal should be to not bring it in with any bought in sheep.

Sheep lameness impacts sustainability, economics, animal welfare and is the biggest reason for antibiotic use on UK sheep farms. It costs between £4 -£6/ewe per year, due to treatment, culling and loss of production. For a 1,000-ewe flock the cost of lameness can be between £4,000 and £6,000 annually.



CODD is difficult to eliminate and spreads through flocks rapidly.

Fortunately, the UK sheep industry has been working hard on prevention and control of sheep lameness and has agreed that following the five point plan provides a useful framework for you and your vet to work through. It will help you to get – and keep – sheep lameness under control and help avoid bringing in new causes of lameness to your farm.

The number one rule is to quarantine all incoming animals. Try to buy from a source with good lameness control that is CODD free. Separate bought-in stock for four weeks after purchase. Monitor lameness and contact your vet for a treatment plan should cases occur. If the sheep are healthy, then thorough footbathing can help as a general foot disinfection measure.

Prevention

Treat clinical cases early, within three days of any signs of lameness. Create a specific treatment plan for the diseases on your farm with your vet. Separate lame sheep from the rest of the flock to prevent further spread of infection. This also allows for closer monitoring and targeted treatment. Most importantly, keep treating the sheep until the foot has dried up and the sheep is no longer lame.

Culling repeatedly affected animals helps to remove the most susceptible individuals from the breeding flock and reduces the overall disease burden.

Aim to avoid spreading at handling and gathering time, avoid muddy or contaminated areas and consider footbathing after handling to reduce bacteria levels. Vaccination can help prevent diseases like scald, footrot and CODD. Vaccination can be thought of as a longer term but effective solution for your flock.

For more advice on foot health speak to your vet.



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Protecting our flocks by learning from schmallenberg surveillance data

By Rudolf Reichel, APHA

Animal & Plant Health Agency

The impact of schmallenberg virus (SBV) in affected flocks can be huge with significant effects on the livestock keeper having to deal with deformed lambs being born or aborted.



Post mortems are a useful tool to identify any disease in your flock.

These deformities result from the dam becoming infected during pregnancy, causing viral damage to the foetus. Some ewes may be empty or abort, while others carry deformed lambs to term, which may be born alive and require euthanasia.

Unfortunately, many of you will have experienced the effects of SBV first-hand. Enhanced surveillance and subsidised testing over the past few years has identified that not all cases of abortion due to SBV have the typical changes.

Conversely, in some of the foetuses submitted as suspect SBV cases other causes were identified – such as brain damage caused by bluetongue virus infection of the pregnant dam – highlighting the importance of examining all suspect cases.

Historical data

SBV was first identified in 2011 and has spread throughout Europe. It affects ruminants and camelids, spread by the Culicoides species of biting midges. It was detected in the UK for the first time during 2012/13, with many cases diagnosed, followed by a decline, another peak in the 2016/17 lambing season, a small peak in 2021/22, a bigger peak in 2023/24 and a further one during the 2024/25 lambing season.

It is thought these peaks and troughs in incidence are related to waxing and waning of national flock immunity. It therefore came as a surprise to see several peaks close together.

Geographic distribution analysis of recorded cases over the past few years may provide an explanation. It has potentially been under-diagnosed in some years, as vets and keepers may assume gestational SBV infection has occurred if typical foetal deformities are seen. These incidents are not always investigated and are not recorded in surveillance data.

The concurrent bluetongue cases in recent years will have been an incentive to submit suspect cases, with more subsequently being diagnosed.

Nationwide spread

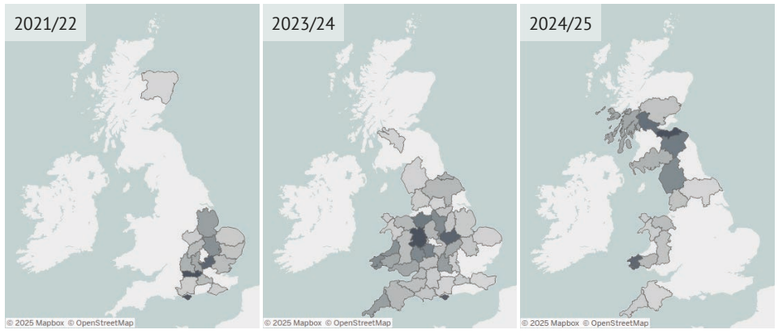
The geographic distribution of the recorded sheep cases in the UK shows they were clustered in the south east of England (apart from a single case in Scotland) for the 2021/22 lambing season. Cases in the 2023/24 lambing season indicate a significant spread to the west and north into Wales and Scotland. A further spread to the west and north was seen for the 2024/25 lambing season.

These changes in the distribution pattern are likely due to the disease spreading into areas where sheep flocks have not had recent exposure to the virus and are therefore susceptible. So, although we had three recent peaks close together in time, it fits with what is understood about the waxing and waning of immunity of this disease, as the peaks occurred in different geographical areas.

SBV natural infection induces protective immunity for four or six years in sheep and cattle, respectively. Therefore, there is hope there will be fewer cases in the 2025/26 lambing season, but as shown by recent surveillance data it is difficult to give accurate predictions.

If you are concerned about SBV or bluetongue, speak to your vet or animal health adviser.

Geographic distribution of bluetongue cases in mainland Britain 2021-2025.





Deformities don't always mean SBV is present.

SBV symptoms

- Born alive or aborted with twisted limbs, contracted tendons (arthrogryposis) and fused joints.
- Born alive or aborted with curvature of the spine, undershot lower jaw and skull deformities.
- Born alive with dumb or dummy behaviour (brain damage).

ADVERTORIAL

Why more farmers are making the switch to Fetra metal fencing

With timber prices rising and the premature failure of traditional timber fencing, more sheep farmers are turning to a longer-term solution.

Manufactured in the UK, Fetra's metal fencing system is fast becoming a favourite among sheep farmers looking for fencing that won't let them down. The intermediate posts are treated with a high performance zinc-aluminium-magnesium coating that protects against rust and corrosion, even on exposed hillsides. It can be finished with a range of powder coated colours to blend neatly into the hedgerow.

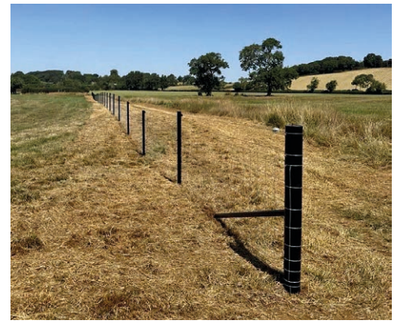
Quick and straightforward

Installation is quick and straightforward, and the posts come in a wide range of sizes with a choice of line spacings to suit most common net types. The patented strainer system is a straightforward 3-part strainer assembly consisting of a Strainer Post, a Strut, and an Anchor Post. It's fast and easy to install and provides a sturdy support for the fence. Each of the components come in a range of sizes that can be used interchangeably to suit the application.

For farmer Cammy Wilson (better known as The Sheep Game), the system was the ideal fix for a failed roadside fence where lambs could have slipped through. "It was unbelievable the speed of putting it up," he says. "You know it's going to be there for years to come, and not fall over like traditional wood."

Fully grant compliant

Fetra is a fully grant compliant fencing system. The unique patented intermediate post design locks firmly into the ground giving you a sturdy fence, and its strainers hold firm under tension. With a 40-year warranty, you can count on this fence staying in place for decades, cutting out costly repairs and repeat installations.



StowAg are the sole UK stockists of Fetra, and our fencing team are always happy to offer advice, whether you're tackling a tricky boundary or planning a full replacement.

Find out more about Fetra
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Peer support boosts confidence to start rotational grazing for sheep

QMS Quality Meat Scotland

Peer to peer learning has aided one South Ayrshire farm eager to get more out of their 320 acres (130ha) of good grassland.

John Andrew explains: "Soon after becoming part of the QMS Monitor Farm programme we realised just how challenging it had become to grow crops in our area. We thought we had a great opportunity to do more with our pasture and, in turn, increase livestock."

Starting something new is not always easy but knowing something needs to change can be the only spark you need and learning how to implement new systems from those who have already done it is a great approach.

Last year's poor lambing weather and dry end to spring hindered the rotational grazing system but offered more time to plan for 2025. John's son David says: "There is a lot of information and views about rotational grazing and it can be a challenge to cut out the noise to find a simple system to work on your own farm."

John Ritchie, an advocate of rotational grazing, supported a plan for the Andrew's sheep. Mr Ritchie's system is now growing 2t/ha more grass – an average of 8.2t/ha dry matter (DM) – compared to when animals were set stocked. The Andrews admired his practical and straightforward approach.

Higher yields

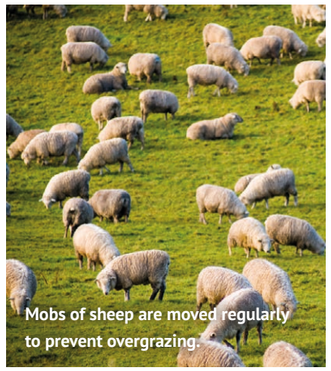
Sheep enter grass covers of 2,800kg DM/ha and will graze down to 2,100kg DM/ha, with cattle following to clean out to 1,700kg DM/ha. Mr Ritchie says this leader-follower system has been a revelation, improving grass utilisation and maintaining livestock growth rates.

Mr Ritchie discussed potential paddock locations, sizes and shifts with the Andrews, settling on a 20-paddock system including a leader-follower of cattle behind ewes and lambs.

On paper it looks easy but implementing it proved challenging. Fencing is a bit of a minefield and due consideration of costs must be made.

David wanted a low-cost, simple system so sought advice on fencing equipment and practical set-up of the paddock electrics. The fences were integrated with the existing hot wire running around the farm perimeter to provide power, saving costs. Water was also made readily available via portable water troughs.

Despite the spring droughts, everything was in place to start the ewes on a two-day shift. The farm's crossbred ewes were gathered into one mob of 220 ewes and around 380 lambs. The rotation started in the last week of May with a small group of 20 yearling heifers following behind.



Mobs of sheep are moved regularly to prevent overgrazing.

Improvements

As a totally new way of managing grazing and stock there is a lot to consider. David adds: "There are a couple of tweaks I would make to the fence lines. We used a map for marking the paddocks but some paddocks have trees or rougher grazing, which means they aren't even in size or quality of grass.

"Weighing lambs and body condition scoring the ewes at weaning and comparing with the previous set stocking system will allow us to assess the impact of the rotational grazing. The stock are settled, with plenty of grass in front of them. We're still learning but we'll definitely be doing the same again next year."



Electric fencing can provide greater flexibility when setting up paddocks.



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SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE



Boosting productivity and climate resilience with multispecies leys

By Katie Evans, AHDB

With warmer drier weather, more extreme rainfall and increased flooding becoming the norm, businesses need to consider changes to make them more resilient.

Multispecies leys can be beneficial in grassland systems. As well as production and productivity benefits, they also provide habitats for pollinators and insects. Varied root structures bring improvements to soil structure, which is not only important in its ability to store water, but also carbon from the atmosphere.

Multispecies leys can include a variety of plants. Grasses provide structural integrity, persistent ground cover and resilience to grazing and trampling. Common varieties include perennial and italian ryegrasses, timothy, cocksfoot, tall fescue and meadow fescue.

Legumes offer high-protein forage and support soil microbial diversity. They improve soil fertility and reduce synthetic fertiliser use. They also improve nitrogen cycling and enhance carbon capture for climate resilience. Common legumes are red, white and alsike clovers, sainfoin, lucerne and birdsfoot trefoil.

Herbs contribute mineral-rich forage, offer medicinal benefits and are deep rooting, which supports soil structure and drought resilience. Including herbs with natural repellent or bioactive properties can deter internal and external parasites, reducing chemical intervention. Chicory, plantain, burnet and yarrow are commonly used.



Advantages

Clovers and multispecies swards offer many advantages over traditional grass. The increase in biodiversity occurs above and below ground improving system resilience to climate and pest pressures, promoting long-term sustainability.

They also contribute to improving the physical properties of soil – structure, porosity and water retention – and increase soil organic matter.

Picking the right varieties for your farm is important but like any grazing system, managing multispecies leys well is key to its success. Practices such as rotational grazing, keeping grass at the right height and resting areas periodically can help optimise the pasture.

By embracing clovers and multispecies swards, you can play a pivotal role in promoting agricultural resilience and ecological balance helping you adapt to climate change and environmental regulation pressures being faced. *For more information visit ahdb.org.uk.*

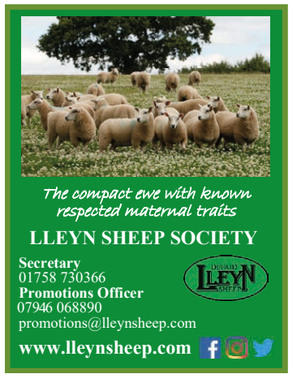
Sheep Farmer magazine Breed Society advertising

Available from as little as £30 per issue. Speak to Helen Roberts – see page 2 for contact details.













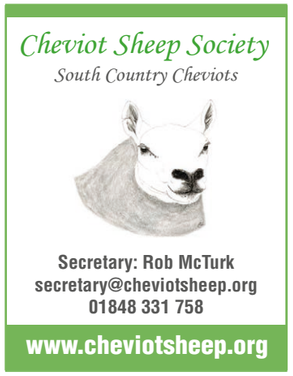


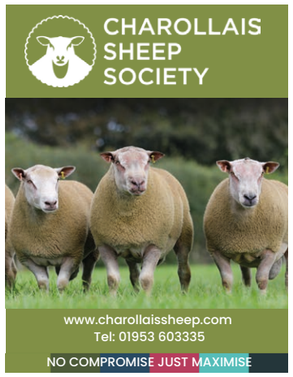
















































Following the flock

We visit Norfolk, Warwickshire and Denbighshire to catch up with NSA officeholders.

Robert Spink



NSA Eastern Region Chair, Norfolk

June brought a slightly calmer feel with most of the team having a well-deserved holiday.

Post lambing our focus has been milk production for the ewes and grazing management, with an eye on pushing the eight-week weights while managing body condition. By the end of June all lambs had been vaccinated against clostridial and pasteurella diseases, tagged and weighed. We were pleased with an average weight of 22.5kg on twins and 29kg on singles, all pure New Zealand Romney lambs with no additional feeding.

With it being so dry and grass barely growing we are now thinking about when to wean. We have a new consultant, which has promoted great conversations and kept us accountable to achieving our aims.

To get a better understanding of our parasite burden, we have used a service processing FEC tests in the field to get real time results, allowing quick action to an issue. This has included carrying out FEC counts on ewes.

To be more open minded this year, we have kept all triplets on ewes and supplemented with creep. Although only small numbers, this seems a great success, so we also offered creep to hogget's lambs. We used a New Zealand Suffolk tup on hoggets and couldn't be more impressed. Lambs had plenty of vigour at birth, with good weight and good confirmation.



Robert is utilising FECs more.



Ant is still looking for the ideal breed as he moves to a closed system.

Ant Spencer



NSA English Committee Chair, Warwickshire

A wise shepherd once told me lambs always do best on concrete and that has certainly been proved on my farm this year.

We have had very little rain and the grass looks non-existent on some fields. But the lambs have some serious growth rates, particularly those on the ewe lambs with the first draw going off at 11 weeks old, averaging 20.5kg just off grass. If only all the lambs could do this, but where would the challenge be in that?

I think a lot of recent success has been down to a lower worm challenge. We purchased a testing system last season and it is a game changer with very fast results, saving time and money while ascertaining what worm resistance we have on patches. It's particularly useful to identify ewes with a bad haemonchus burden post lambing. They have mostly bounced back after treatment but there are some that will need extra care after weaning.

The Romney cross Lleyn ewe lambs that entered the flock this year have performed well and seem good mothers. I am looking forward to seeing how they compare with the Easydam lambs I will retain. We are moving more towards a closed flock. I am still not decided what breeds best suit the system, but we are getting there.

The summer is beginning to see me getting off the farm more, judging shearing at shows and catching up with friends for 'refreshments.'

Caryl Hughes



NSA Cymru / Wales Chair, Denbighshire

After a reasonably successful lambing it has been time to think about the next steps for lambs.

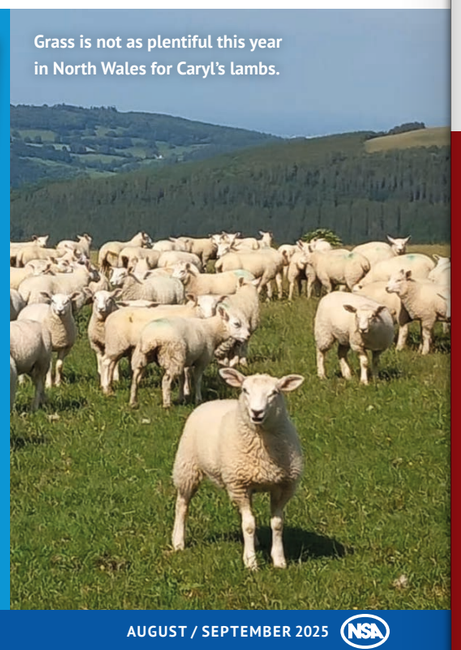
Usually by mid-May our crossbred ewes are doing well off grass and we start to introduce a small amount of creep to the lambs from yearling ewes. But this year we've been feeding all the Mule ewes more and introduced creep to all the Texel lambs.

This has resulted in a small number of the single and older twin lambs from the Mules leaving earlier. Currently, we have sold just under 100 lambs, averaging 34kg, to Oswestry Livestock Auctions.

We earmarked all the pure Welsh lambs in mid-May and being as the farm burns off on a normal year of rainfall, this year we've had to send all the ewes with their ewe lambs at foot onto the mountain as well. Something we don't usually do until the beginning of August, after shearing.

All ewes with their Welsh tup lambs go to the other farm we manage miles away after sorting. Here we lamb all the older ewes that haven't finished their heft on the mountain to a Bluefaced Leicester.

The Welsh tup lambs are having more attention this season as we are doing a project on the effects of a multivitamin bolus supported by Farming Connect. With additional support from our vets, we hope to understand how the lambs perform when bolused on an upland system, which already lacks in certain trace elements.



Grass is not as plentiful this year in North Wales for Caryl's lambs.

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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT JOHNE'S DISEASE

CATCH A KILLER. | TALK TO YOUR VET ABOUT JOHNE'S DISEASE.

*Davies (2018) 'Iceberg' infectious disease of sheep. SHAWG conference, Tamworth.
**Reddacliff, A. (2005) Field evaluation of OJD control using Gudair. Meat and Livestock Australia, Project Number OJD.009, ISBN 1 74036 651 4
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Reference: 1. Clements *et al* (2014). *Veterinary Record* 10.1136/vr 102161.

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