

NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION



# SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR THE SCOTTISH SHEEP INDUSTRY

DECEMBER 2024 EDITION

[www.nsascotland.org](http://www.nsascotland.org)



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## CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

*by Peter Myles, NSA Scotland Chair*

### Wisdom and paws for thought

I had a long chat with my dog the other day, telling him the pressing issues causing concern right now, seeing his innocent face belies the wisdom underneath. Aye, with just a look from 'Shug the Dug' he can suggest solutions to all sorts of problems, and a well-placed paw can make me think again. It's important to get things off your chest with someone you can trust and I know Shug won't go about telling anyone else.

But seriously with details from recent budgets meant to confuse even the most up to date soul, useful and reliable advice from a trusted source can be invaluable. I can testify from my own experience when changing my business circumstances, I couldn't have done it without the advice of a good trusted lawyer and accountant. Now with issues of succession planning, one can't get the ball rolling quickly enough. I know they can be expensive but good trusted advice and someone who has your back will be worth it in the end. But there is a lot of advice from so many other avenues available that need not scare you. NSA membership allows you a free phone call for legal advice, RSAB too are just the best, give them a phone and they will point you in the right direction and a great support to all in the agricultural sector.

In my case, awkward kitchen table discussions were made so much easier with an independent mediator present. They can often coax a splinter out of a wound of conflict and stop a festering sore which may or may not have festered for years becoming an issue that can halt all sensible deliberations.

So, if you want peace of mind just get on with it and get your affairs in order. Then, in the new year when your 'first paw' comes to the door, you can tell your own 'Shug the Dug' things are sorted and scratch his ear with a clear and contented conscience, I know that in my case it was a huge sense of relief once it was all over and done with.

So, with that 'Paws for thought', may I wish you a Happy New Year, and here's to a more settled 2025



your business your future

HAVE A  
**Merry Christmas**  
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

## Our Events

For more information, please [click here](#).  
Visit NSA Scotland at the following events:

**22<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY 2025**

NSA Lynx Meeting

16:00 – 18:00, Tynedale Function Suite, Tyne Green, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3SG

**23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY 2025**

NSA Lynx Meeting

16:00 – 18:00, Salmon Room, Buccleuch Arms, The Green, St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0EW

**19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**

NSA Scotland Annual Regional Members' Meeting (ARMM)

Roslin Institute, Easter Bush Campus, EH25 9RG

**11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

NSA HighlandSheep

By kind permission of the Brooke Family,  
Midfean Farm, Ardgay, IV24 3DL



# NSA Scotland celebrates ‘Lamb for St Andrew’s Day’ in Style

Around 70 sheep farmers and industry members sat down for a traditional Scotch Lamb dinner at Hetland Hall, Carrutherstown to celebrate St Andrew’s Day with NSA Scotland at the end of November.

Following a welcome from NSA Scotland Chairman Peter Myles, guests were treated to the piping in of the centrepiece of Scotch Lamb ably assisted under the steady hand of Aileen McFadzean. The evening then proceeded with a memorable address by none other than Cammy Wilson who expertly conducted a true Burns style ode to the faithful animal around which the evening revolved. Jack Cuthbert kindly said grace before attendees tucked in to the meal, kindly supported by QMS in the form of the lamb and Shearwell Data who sponsored the wine.

Neil Wilson, Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers in Scotland Executive Director, emphasised the wider Lamb for St Andrew’s Day campaign and the value it contributes in terms of engaging the next generation Scotch Lamb and the many businesses and families operating in the supply chain.

Entertainment for the evening came from Ken and Fiona Fletcher (with a little help from Peter Myles) who embarked upon a Room 101 style address debating amongst other topics British Airways, the Blackface sheep breed, fog lights on cars, the City of Dundee and sustainability before audience participation declared the winner and banishing of the preferred topic. The evening concluded with the annual raffle and a vote of thanks from Kevin Harrison, NSA Policy & Technical committee Chair.

All at NSA Scottish Region would like to thank attendees, speakers, QMS and Shearwell Data for their continued support and to all the many organisations who contributed towards the well maintained raffle which raised valuable money for the Lamb for St Andrew’s Day fund.

## Join NSA Scotland for the 2025 Annual Regional Members’ Meeting

Members are encouraged to join the NSA Scotland committee in February for the NSA Scotland Annual Meeting (ARMM) taking place on Wednesday 19th February 2025 at Scotland’s Rural College - Roslin Institute, Easter Bush Campus, EH25 9RG.

The NSA Scottish Region ARMM will take place in conjunction with a tour of SRUC facilities at the Roslin Institute site. Presentations will also be made on the future of sustainable sheep breeding and farming in Scotland with experienced speakers joining the visit and meeting that will begin at 10.30am.

The ARMM will be hybrid with Zoom details being made available on the NSA Scotland website and further information on speakers in the New Year.

### Office Bearers



**Peter Myles**  
(Interim Chair)  
Edzell, Angus



**Grace Reid**  
(Scottish Region Coordinator)  
Clackmannan, Central Belt



**Pamela Nicol**  
(Trustee)  
Glenisla, Blairgowrie



**Debs Colley**  
(Trustee)  
Crawford, Lanarkshire



**Mary Dunlop**  
(Treasurer)  
Broughton, Biggar, Scottish Borders



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## Plans continue for NSA Highland Sheep 2025

### With the arrival of the New Year just around the corner plans will be ramping up for the return of NSA Highland Sheep.

Taking place on Wednesday 11th June 2025 at Midfearn Farm, Ardgay, by kind permission of the Brooke family, the one day event organised by NSA Scotland complements the biennial NSA Scotsheep event that took place successfully this summer.

NSA Highland Sheep is set to welcome visitors from all over Scotland and the wider UK and will include trade and sheep stands, seminars, demonstrations, educational exhibits, competitions and much more.

Neil Shaw, Farm Manager comments: *"The Brooke family, and I are delighted to host NSA Highland Sheep 2025 and welcome you all to Midfearn Farm, Ardgay. Looking ahead and willing to take chances has really helped us put our stamp on Midfearn over the years. As fourth generation farmers we have seen the farming world change greatly in our lifetime, with diversification into renewables being at the forefront. Midfearn was one of the first in the north of Scotland to develop a windfarm and also boasts two hydro schemes. We are looking forward to sharing it all with you in June 2025."*

Midfearn sits on the brow of the Dornoch firth with breathtaking views of the firth and the surrounding hills. The Estate amounts to approximately 13,500 acres in total, with the majority being hill ground leaving around 250 acres in arable/grassland. Working as a purely closed stock producing unit with around 650 head of breeding ewes which are predominantly Cheviots and Suffolks and a small hirsle of Blackfaces remain which have been the backbone of the sheep flock

since Midfearn begun. All lambs are sold as store through Dingwall & Highland Marts Ltd with the best ewe lambs selected to be kept as replacements with only tups being bought in.

In addition, Midfearn originally ran a herd of Simmental cross cows, but over the years it has changed to a closed herd of 110 Aberdeen Angus cross breeding cows. All calves are sold between 12-18 months as store cattle, again through Dingwall & Highland Marts Ltd, with the best heifer calves kept as replacements and breeding bulls bought in.

NSA Scotland Chairman, Peter Myles comments, *"We are very pleased to be working with such a fantastic venue and a true showcase of the Scottish sheep industry. NSA Scotland is particularly keen to continue to raise the profile of the organisation in the area and give Highland sheep farmers and ancillary services a major sheep event without having to travel further south. At a time when there is so much persistent change on a myriad of fronts, we must look at those who have been able to utilise change for the betterment of their farming enterprises whilst using all resources at hand to their fullest potential."*

The event will deliver the usual popular array of attractions including trade and breed society exhibitors, seminar and workshops, demonstrations, competitions and more.

**All enquiries are welcome and should be sent to  
NSA HighlandSheep Event Organiser Euan Emslie,  
[euanemslie053@gmail.com](mailto:euanemslie053@gmail.com), 07902 540985.**

Save the date!

NSA  
highland  
sheep  
NSA SCOTLAND

Midfearn  
Farm,  
Ardgay,  
IV24 3DL

Wednesday 11th June 2025

By kind permission of the Brooke Family

# Last chance to enter the 2024 NSA prize giveaway

There is still time to enter the NSA 2024 prize giveaway for a chance to win an amazing prize to improve stock transportation - a brand new livestock trailer.

The amazing prize of the Nugent L3618H 12ft livestock trailer with sheep decks is worth more than £9,500 and is kindly provided by Nugent Engineering Ltd.

Nugent Engineering Ltd hails from an agricultural family background. Initially designed to withstand the vigour of Ireland's livestock and rugged terrain, the Nugent Livestock range is engineered and hand built to last and, with full type approval (ECWVTA), any sheep farmer will appreciate the attention to detail and be thrilled to win such a fantastic prize.

The prize draw is open to any UK sheep farmer over the age of 16. Both NSA members and non-members can enter, but entries are limited to one per person/email address. The quality product is worth £9,500 plus VAT and will provide one lucky winner with innovative features producing the perfect trailer for the transportation of livestock

Entries have been taken throughout 2024 with a single winner announced early next year. Entries can be made online at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw).

**WIN a 12ft  
Nugent  
Livestock  
trailer.**

Open to any UK sheep farmer, aged 16 or over.

Enter now by visiting [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw) or by scanning the QR code above for your chance to win a 12ft Nugent Livestock trailer worth more than £9,500.

Scan to enter!



Information, full terms and conditions and NSA membership forms can be found at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw).

## NSA SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR YOU, THE SCOTTISH SHEEP FARMER.  
LOBBYING ON KEY ISSUES.

### REPRESENTING ON KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS INCLUDING

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ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE  
LFASS & FUTURE SUPPORT SCHEMES  
CLIMATE CHANGE  
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Consider joining NSA as a member today and help us work for you

For further information please contact  
Grace Reid - Scottish Region Coordinator  
Tel: 07787 142858 Email: [grace@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:grace@nationalsheep.org.uk)



[www.nsascotland.org](http://www.nsascotland.org)

## NSA SCOTLAND NEWSLETTER



Remember to have a look at the previous editions of the NSA Scotland Newsletter on our website.

[Click here](#)





## Coordinator's Comment

*by Grace Reid,  
NSA Scottish Coordinator*

### Scottish Budget

Following the announcement of the Scottish Budget earlier this month by Finance Secretary Shona Robison, Scottish farmers, crofters and communities have yet again fallen short in terms of confidence and reassurance to make long term decisions for their businesses. In real terms, the rural budget in Scotland standing at £660m has been cut by 3.1% which is in stark contrast to all other Scottish Government sectors which has seen an increase particularly when the block grant to Scotland has been increased by 8%. Despite calls for commitments to multi annual funding which is ringfenced and increased, Scotland's farmers and crofters continue to battle the storm when planning for their futures. Under the Common Agricultural Policy, businesses had a minimum seven year time commitment which is a massive contrast to the current scenario of year to year funding announcements. Whilst on a positive note Basic Payment Scheme, Greening, Less Favoured Area Support and Voluntary Coupled Support have all been protected and rolled over, there is very little certainty beyond 2026. When it comes to the missing £46million from the agricultural pot, £20m is set to return in 2025/2026 for capital transformation scheme with the outstanding £20m to follow in 2026/2027. This follows after a hugely damaging budget set by the UK Government which has left many farming and crofting businesses reeling.

### Bluetongue

As the restriction zone remains to spread throughout England, bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV 3) also continues to move quickly across Europe further cementing the risk to farmers and crofters when importing animals from countries close to where disease is present. Permitted use of 3 unauthorised BTV 3 vaccines within the United Kingdom, namely England, subject to licence. Although these vaccines are not authorised, the VMD has assessed them and are considered to be of a consistent quality and safety, and efficacy has been demonstrated. Unlike the authorised vaccines for other BTV serotypes,

the BTV3 vaccines claim to reduce viraemia rather than prevent it. This means they may not prevent your animals from being infected or infectious, but (depending on the vaccine) their claims include reduction or prevention of clinical signs experienced or mortality. For this reason, all movement controls and trade restrictions still apply to vaccinated animals. You should not test vaccinated animals as part of a pre-movement test in bluetongue zones until 7 days after their vaccination. This will prevent interference with BTV3 monitoring. Scottish Government recently held a webinar on the implications of Bluetongue in Scotland, vaccinations and an update on its progress as it spreads across England ([click here to watch](#)).

### Castration and tail docking

NSA Scotland awaits alongside other industry stakeholders the publishing of a UK wide consultation on castration and tail docking however, it would appear that there is no plans in the near future for this to occur. Whilst the UK administrations and assurance schemes are promoting the production of high quality, safe and animal welfare friendly, sustainable protein sources, we continue to see an influx of imported meat through free trade deals which is not produced to the same standards. The over arching looming deadline of 2028 set by the Animal Welfare Council to implement recommendations on this topic grows ever near with little to update members upon at the moment. Despite this, there remains a funding and skills gap when it comes to developing alternatives to rubber rings in the near future and an ever growing unsteady industry with particular regard to communications on the subject.

### Galloway National Park

Scottish Government have made a statutory proposal to establish a new national park in the Galloway area. Whilst there is no decision to establish anything yet, the consultation seeks to gauge levels of support. It will draw to a close on 18th February 2025 and will cover topics such as governance and views of locals and the community. NSA Scotland will be formulating a full response to this consultation ahead of the deadline on behalf of members.



# Delving into Lynx Reintroduction Efforts in Switzerland, Scotland and Northumberland

by Grace Reid, NSA Scottish Coordinator

NSA has been aware of projects over recent years opening the discussion to reintroducing Lynx. Currently the Lynx to Scotland project looking at the Cairngorms area and also the Missing Lynx project which is focussing on Kielder Forest, Northumberland are under operation.

It is vital that members, land owners and managers are supported listened to, reassured and valued. It is for this reason that NSA will be holding two meetings each side of the Scottish/English border to enable a discussion to take place with the opportunity to engage with recently completed Nuffield Scholar Dr Jonny Hanson who focussed on 'Large Carnivore Reintroductions to Britain and Ireland: Farmers' Perspectives and Management Options'. In addition, RABI and Farmstrong Scotland will be in attendance to support those who may need it.

Should you wish to engage further on this topic, please contact

[policy@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:policy@nationalsheep.org.uk)

**22nd January 2025 16:00 – 18:00 -**

Tynedale Function Suite,  
Tyne Green, Hexham, Northumberland,  
NE46 3SG

**23rd January 2025 16:00 – 18:00 -**

Salmon Room, Buccleuch Arms,  
The Green, St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0EW

In late April 2024, NSA Scottish Region Coordinator Grace Reid along with 12 other interested stakeholders with backgrounds in farming, hunting and forestry, together with representatives from the Cairngorms National Park, were escorted by representatives from the Lynx to Scotland project, including SCOTLAND: The Big Picture and Trees for Life, on a study tour to the Jura region of Switzerland. The objective was to learn from experience how Switzerland has managed its Eurasian lynx reintroduction and what implications there could be if lynx were to be reintroduced to Scotland.

The first reintroduction of the Eurasian Lynx to Central and Western Europe occurred in Switzerland in the early 1970's. Over the past 50 years, the Swiss model has demonstrated there should have been a proper public consultation process ahead of releases combined with a recognition of how highly adaptable lynx as a species could grow to become and a public database of livestock losses kept to ensure transparency and trust building.

The lynx is a highly territorial ambush predator which kills small to medium sized ungulates with a throat bite and can carry prey for short distances before guarding and returning to a carcass until it is entirely finished. After Norway, Switzerland has been shown to suffer the highest rates of sheep predation by lynx in Europe. In the late 1990s, there was an increase in lynx density coupled with a decline in roe deer populations and an increase in

attacks on livestock. However, influences such as changing winter weather and pressure from hunters also had a detrimental impact. This increase in livestock attacks led to formalised support for the prevention of losses, compensation for damages and a policy for the removal of problem lynx some 30 years after initial release. Lynx predation on sheep still continues today however is somewhat overshadowed by the return of the wolf to Switzerland.

Swiss policy has been to manage the impact of lynx rather than to try to limit their numbers. Lynx numbers are maintained to above a minimum of 1.5 per 100km<sup>2</sup>. Provisions exist for the removal of problem animals, but for this measure to be adopted, a conflict threshold must be exceeded, and further strict criteria must be met. A lynx can only be removed if at least 15 sheep are confirmed to have been killed by lynx in a 12 month time period within a 5km radius or, if separate sheep predation falls outside of that radius, if at least 15 fatal attacks can be linked to the identity of a specific lynx (i.e. camera trap photographs set up at carcasses). Furthermore, if there have been attacks by lynx the previous year, this threshold is reduced to 12 sheep.

In addition, before a lynx can be removed three key criteria must be met:

1. Authorities must be satisfied that removal is the only option and no other solution exists (i.e. implementation of further mitigation measures).
2. The lynx removal must not threaten the health or viability of the national lynx population.
3. Reasonable attempts must have been made to secure livestock from attack. However, some pastures are classed as unprotectable and are thus exempt from this requirement.

In Switzerland, the most vulnerable livestock are those grazing pastures surrounded by forests and/or scattered with shrubs, in areas where abundant wild prey unavoidably attract lynx. In these hotspots, the removal of individual lynx causing damage is unlikely to be successful due to being replaced by a new individual that repeats predation. In these cases, only flock protection measures offer a long-term solution. Guardian dogs and high electric fences were seen to be the most popular measures used however a suite of options including protective collars, flash lights and alpacas or llamas. In addition, the growing presence of wolves more Swiss farmers are using dogs to protect their livestock.

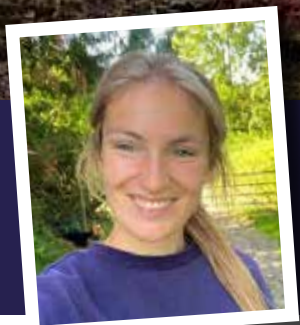


Compensation is only paid in Switzerland when a lynx is confirmed as the responsible predator and a carcass is recovered. Payments are scaled to reflect, the value of livestock lost considering age, sex, breeding potential etc. with some negotiation possible and every case judged independently. Further compensation may be available if livestock must be moved in response to a lynx, and conservation payments are available to help fund preventative measures.

Despite learnings from Europe, there remains a gap in understanding in terms of the practicalities of implementation and uncertainty of scale of impact in Scotland should there ever be an attempt to reintroduce lynx. The Swiss model clearly shows a time lag in the period of learning from the initial release to implementation and adaptation of control methods, mitigation, compensation and legislative framework. Generational attitudes towards lynx are certainly varied. The younger farmers visited have not known a time without lynx and therefore do not know any different whereas the older farmers are conflicted with lynx presence and have had to learn how to live alongside the adaptable predator and manage its impact with considerable effort and losses experienced.

Scotland continues to endure the devastating impacts and failings of a reintroduced species in the White Tailed Eagle namely in the west coast but with a geographical spread which is widening at an ever-increasing rate. The decline of farming and crofting businesses due to compulsion effect is already in sharp focus due to recent policy, weather, workforce and global political changes. Concerns from the Scottish sheep industry have arisen on a number of levels in relation to lynx, not only in terms of predation but also communication, responsibility, agreed outcomes and ulterior motives. It can ill-afford to have another apex predator reintroduced which does not have an exit or management strategy nor fully funded and correctly resourced compensation and mitigation packages and agreements in place before release.





## Agricultural policy update

by Emma Bradbury, NSA Policy Manager

### NSA Chief Executive to lead Dartmoor Land Use Management Group

NSA Chief Executive, Phil Stocker, was recently as the first independent Chair of the new Dartmoor Land Use Management Group (DLMUG), following appointment by Minister Daniel Zeichner.

Mr Stocker, responsible in this role to the Secretary of State, will lead the group, created as a result of the independent inquiry into land management on Dartmoor in South West England, last year. The DLMUG is charged with developing and delivering a land use framework and plan for Dartmoor, recognised as an internationally significant site, whilst also providing oversight and stewarding the delivery of 25 recommendations also put forward in the review.

The role is independent from Mr Stocker's work at NSA although the association believes it aligns with its future vision, as laid out in the recent NSA report 'Sheep farming and the Sustainability Agenda' where the need for greater ownership of the environmental, economic and social challenges faced are discussed and sheep farming models, NSA believes to be a key part of the solution, are outlined.

### Border Control Posts

Progress continues slowly in re-establishing export routes for British breeding animals to the EU, focusing particularly on the development of necessary Border Control Posts (BCPs).

Since Brexit, the lack of approved BCPs at key EU ports has prevented the export of live breeding animals, including sheep, from the UK, a major setback for breeders. Efforts are underway to address this gap: for example, the existing equine BCP at Hook of Holland in the Netherlands is undergoing modifications to gain approval for handling additional livestock species with the aim to resume these exports in 2025.

This shift represents one of the first actionable BCP adjustments for live animal export, but progress remains limited in other critical EU locations, such as Calais, where no suitable BCP currently exists.

### Devolved Budget

The UK's 2024 Budget has significant implications for agriculture, especially for the devolved governments in Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. The overall agricultural funding remains intact, and the Budget has allocated resources for critical areas, including productivity, flood defence, and tax adjustments to support farmers facing high costs and climate-related challenges.

For devolved governments, funding will now be integrated into the general block grants for each region, calculated using the Barnett formula, meaning agriculture now competes with other regional priorities like health and education. This shift raises concerns about reduced stability for agricultural support, as allocations could vary year by year based on competing needs within each nation. For Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, securing adequate funding will require close coordination to maintain support levels needed for both productivity and environmental goals.

Although the Budget reflects a strong commitment to addressing productivity and sustainability, there are concerns about its sufficiency for long-term resilience. Key areas such as flood management and environmentally focused farming received boosts, but overall agricultural funding still falls short of what is considered necessary to fully address food security and climate adaptation across the UK.

### Delinked Payments

The Autumn Budget 2024 introduces a significant acceleration in the reduction of delinked payments for UK agriculture, following a trend towards simplifying subsidy systems and encouraging greater environmental stewardship. The delinked payments, which are designed to provide financial support to farmers irrespective of their specific agricultural production, are being gradually reduced to align more with environmental goals and sustainability. For 2025, the government plans a 76% reduction on the first £30,000 of a payment, while any amount above £30,000 will be cut completely.

# A year in the life of Farmstrong Scotland

## with Alix Ritchie, Programme Director

Wow, what a year it's been! As I look back on my first year as Programme Director at Farmstrong Scotland I am filled with pride and gratitude for the progress we've made as a team. I'm lucky to love what I do and am passionate about the potential Farmstrong has to improve the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of those working and living within the agricultural community of Scotland.



When reflecting on the last twelve months, there have been many highlights, too many for a short blog, so I have focused on just five, using our Five Steps of Wellbeing as a guide – *give, connect, keep learning, be active and take notice*.

### 1. Spreading the Word

One of our main goals when I started, and continues to be, is to make Farmstrong a household name. To do this we wanted to use a variety of different channels to connect with people. Working with the Jane Craigie Marketing team, we have developed our presence on social media and regulated our monthly e-newsletters. We have also invested in our stories – press articles, webinars, podcasts and videos have all helped us to bring real-life farmer and crofter experiences to life, and told in a way that we can all relate to.

I continue to be amazed by the kindness people show, **giving** up their time to speak with us, ensuring that we reach as many people from the industry as possible. My thanks go to each and every person who has got involved so far – your stories are at the heart of Farmstrong.

### 2. Learning from Research

One of the key strengths of Farmstrong is using research to ensure we offer a programme that is not only fit for purpose, but also ensuring our approach will have a lasting legacy. Delving into the results of the baseline research, conducted almost five years ago by *Kate Lammont at SRUC*, has been fascinating and has helped ensure that the programme we are building really is designed with you in mind.

Some of the stats around isolation were interesting with younger people and those in more densely populated areas generally having a worse wellbeing score than those in remote areas and of the older generation. We fully appreciate that lots has changed since this baseline research, so our latest survey, delivered by *Scotinform*, has just closed and I'm looking forward to continuing to build the programme based on the results as we **keep learning** from you.

### 3. Building Partnerships

Collaboration has been key in integrating wellbeing into the broader agricultural conversation. It's been humbling to find that we're pushing on open doors and that Farmstrong has been so warmly welcomed into the industry by our stakeholders. This is something I know has been at the essence of Farmstrong since the steering group first considered bringing it to Scotland. It has been such a joy to work with each and every individual, organisation and supporter – thank you to all of you who have **connected**.

Whether it's our "Walk & Talk" events, a farmer sauna, the Come Ashore Cup, speaking at the Farm Safety Conference (on a great panel with Adam Henson), attending industry events or having our stand at the Royal Highland Show – the events we've had throughout the year have been great craic and an opportunity to get out and speak with farmers and crofters about Farmstrong (and hand out our popular sunglasses!).

To those who have shared our news and tools, invited us to events, asked us to speak and deliver workshops, offered in-kind support, fundraised, and generally just 'got Farmstrong' and the value we can offer....it has been so appreciated.

### 4. Creating a Community

The power of community is one of my biggest learnings since I started with Farmstrong and I feel like I've only just scratched the surface. Whether it's the agricultural community as a whole or sub-sectors within it, more and more research is coming out about the transformative impact a sense of community can have to our health and wellbeing. **Taking time to notice** how others are feeling, sharing support and talking, can make such a difference. This will be at the forefront of our minds as we roll out the community engagement plan next year which includes local community groups.

### 5. Personal Reflections

On a personal note, this role is teaching me about leadership, governance, health and wellbeing and collaboration! I've also investing time to **keep active** using weights (thanks Tracy) and made wild swimming a priority (thanks Hazel), and although I'm still investing time to find that work/life balance, I've developed a better sense of self-awareness about my wellbeing. I feel more prepared to notice the signs when I'm needing to boost my wellbeing bank account more quickly. (If you haven't yet had a look at the wellbeing bank account tool, it is well worth downloading and putting a copy on the fridge.)

### A final thought...

At the Doug Avery tour all those years ago when the Farmstrong Scotland journey started, Doug talked about the lessons we can learn from geese and the importance of finding your flock. He explained that the goose at the front of a "V" changes as they fly, allowing a different bird to take the impact of the lead, allow the others to fly behind in support and have a rest.

My flock are made up from people from work (including Farmstrong in New Zealand), the wider industry and my family and friends – this year my flock have been particularly awesome in giving me support, encouragement and inspiration. So, to all those geese who have flown with me, taken a turn at the front of the 'V' and honked for me – thank you.

Building from a simple conversation in 2018 and some hard work by those involved in bringing Farmstrong to Scotland, it's really rewarding to work with our small team to bring their vision to life. I'm looking forward to continuing working with the voluntary board, partners, wellbeing experts, farmers and crofters and the wider agricultural industry, so that together we can promote the positive steps that can boost wellbeing so we can *all live well to farm and croft well*.



# Next Generation Corner

Meet NSA Next Generation Ambassador Perry Parkinson. Perry joined the NSA programme in 2022 and has subsequently been the recipient of the NSA Samuel Wharry Travel Bursary. This year Perry will be providing readers with a regular update from his farming life.



**With Christmas just around the corner, I think it's fair to say that the last few months have well and truly flown by. Between tupping, early fluke risk and the dreaded inheritance tax debate taking up much of our conversation, is there much more to talk about?**

After chucking teasers out with our pedigree ewes instead of sponging this year, our two stock tups got sent out armed to the teeth with raddle and built-up sexual frustration. Usually an exciting/slightly nerve-racking day, it soon turned into one to forget when upon checking the ewe lambs, my pride and joy (and extremely expensive) ewe lamb was lying there, ears down, snotty nose, and just generally down. A quick probe with the thermometer soon determined the dreaded pneumonia which seems to have been all too common across farms this year. Despite all our best efforts to treat her, they were soon rendered useless when a few hours later she'd gone. Farming is by far one of the most rewarding yet heartbreaking jobs on the planet!

Once I'd got over the frustration of losing such a lovely young animal it was back to check on the ewes to see how many yellow bums were about. It was looking extremely positive with the majority tupped in the first week. Nothing can go wrong

now surely. May I remind you this is farming, and things will most definitely go wrong! Our new stock tup we'd purchased a few weeks prior to tupping had contracted silage eye...still eating and tupping, everything looked good, until yellows became orange and then orange became green. Swiftly swapping him out for another one of our tups, thankfully nothing returned after that and now we've scanned we can thankfully say it's been somewhat of a moderate success with only two empty ewes and a good scanning percentage. I'd love to know if any farmer has had the perfect year with no problems?!

In a few days' time we'll be getting ewes in to vaccinate pre-lambing, ready to start the cycle all over again...where has the time gone honestly?

Wishing everyone a prosperous Christmas and New Year and good luck to anyone still tupping, lambing or just trying to stay afloat!



## Veterinary Corner

**Ed Hill – Thrums Vet Group**

**For many at the time of writing, tups will now have been out for a turn or two (although for oth-ers lambing might not be too far away!). Reports are that ewes seem well tupped and the settled weather is certainly a relief compared to last year.**



This year we fertility tested about 300 tups in the practice and found around 15% to be not fit for purpose. Where any doubt existed retests were advised, but no doubt farmers will see the benefit of weeding out the passengers prior to tupping when scanning time comes around.

Pre-tupping was also a good opportunity to catch up with some health planning – setting targets for the year ahead, risk planning what's going to stop us achieving those targets and reviewing the figures from last year. For some farmers we repeat this process in bitesize chunks every few months, much more frequently than the often prescribed annual health review. I certainly find this approach helps keep it short, sweet and seasonally relevant. It's also been very satisfying to see some excellent performance figures coming in from farms I've been working closely with for a number of years now. Health planning for flock performance is not a quick fix, there will always be setbacks and it will always take years to get to where you want to be, but it is nice when it all starts to tick along in a much more healthy and productive manner.

As predicted by the forecasts we have seen more issues with liver fluke this back-end and would predict to see this continuing to be a risk through the winter. If in any doubt dung samples prior to scanning can be very useful to determine if further treatments are required. Additionally, we have seen issues with what in our part of the world we would consider to be "emerging" parasite issues. Firstly we have identified rumen fluke in a number of cases. Traditionally it was thought that this parasite often doesn't cause clinical disease, but

we've certainly seen it in a number of cases in adult ewes that were poorly thriven, that then subsequently responded to treatment. We've also seen a few cases of haemonchus (barbers-pole worm). Much more common further south, it seems this parasite is making its way up here too. We picked it up in lambs with very, very high worm egg counts, so it's worth considering if you do see unexpectedly high counts.

As we come into the winter months, scab will come further up the risk agenda again. Thankfully last year we saw a good bit less in our area. This was due to a concerted, coordinated effort from neighbouring farmers and vets working together, and making the most of the blood test we have. As a result of this there were much fewer flock treatments required in the winter, which is a win/win – less drugs, less cost, less disease! A collaborative and honest approach really is the only way to tackle scab, so hopefully this winter will see everyone working closely together again with the same result of much less disease.

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas when it comes, and a healthy 2025!





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