

SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR THE SCOTTISH SHEEP INDUSTRY

DECEMBER 2025 EDITION

www.nsascotland.org



CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

by Peter Myles, NSA Scotland Chair

Baby steps, little wins and diplomacy

Your NSA Scotland Vice Chairman Alec Telfer will take over the reins at our Annual Members' Meeting (ARMM) in February and now I reflect on the three and a bit years I have been your chairman. NSA of course is a charity, and we are not allowed to lobby, but our influence increases the more members we have, and membership fees help to fund and justify our work. That work gives us the ability to educate inform and advocate for the greater sheep industry as a whole. We also try to inform farmers of the best health and welfare practices, innovations and initiatives where we can develop as an industry. It is important also to inform the public, politicians and the next generation of the importance sheep are to the environment and the greater good of our Scottish countryside.

This has been done in several ways at the hugely successful Scotsheep or Highland sheep events we have held, or the support we give to others in the greater agricultural industry in Scotland. We have taken baby steps to continue the work of my predecessors and foster closer links with other Scottish bodies and found that this diplomacy helps everyone. NSA Scotland has become the go to place for anything sheep and I'm proud, I think, to have

kept us in that important position.

On the back of NSA's work, there has been some positive progress, of which I would like to acknowledge just some. The First Minister announced at the NFU AGM that there was no plan to introduce lynx or any other predator species into Scotland, he also advised that the Minister was to take a serious look at Sea Eagle predation in the west of the country. At NSA Highland Sheep we highlighted land abandonment and the loss of sheep numbers in the Highlands, and the Minister gave assurances that there was no plan to reduce livestock numbers in Scotland. This is a testament of our work with others and with diplomacy and baby steps there can be little wins for us all.



This edition is sponsored by Shearwell Data

Shearwell Data

Livestock Systems

Our Events

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

- ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW 2026
- KELSO RAM SALE 2026
- AGRISCOT 2026
- AGRILIVE 2026
- NSA SCOTSHEEP 2026
- LAMB FOR ST ANDREW'S DAY DINNER 2026

NSA Next Generation hosts pre-lambing workshop for upland farmers



On Wednesday 10th December, NSA Next Generation held an interactive workshop at SRUC's Auchtertyre Farm in Crianlarich, offering young and progressive sheep farmers valuable insight into the practical realities of upland flock management in Scotland.

The dramatic upland setting provided an ideal backdrop for discussing the unique challenges faced by hill and upland enterprises, particularly through pregnancy and lambing.

Participants explored key aspects of ewe management, including the importance of appropriate nutrition during gestation and how forage analysis can support informed decision-making. The programme also covered the latest approaches to lamb castration, naval hygiene and the role of effective vaccination protocols in safeguarding flock health.

NSA Next Generation Event Organiser Anna Wilson highlighted the value of tailored, practical learning for the next generation of sheep farmers.

"This workshop was a great demonstration of how sheep farming differs in extreme locations like the highlands of Scotland," she said. "Tailoring information to individual enterprises is what NSA does best, ensuring everyone leaves with knowledge they can apply at home rather than listening to a lecture that doesn't fit their system. It is important that sheep farmers come together to discuss challenges and share solutions. There is always someone who has either gone through, or is going through, a similar situation. It is important for UK sheep farmers to collaborate in order to succeed."



NSA Next Generation extends sincere thanks to Ann McLaren (SRUC), Lynn Gibson (SRUC), Lorna Shaw (SAC Consulting) and Bryan Hamilton (NoBac2) for their expertise and support in delivering this valuable workshop.

NSA Scotland Activities

NSA Scotland and local NSA Scotsheep Organising Committee would like to take this opportunity to invite your company to book trade stand space and consider sponsorship at **NSA SCOTSHEEP 2026** which will be held at Wedderlie Farm, Gordon, Berwickshire, TD3 6NW, courtesy of the Tilson family, on Wednesday 10th June.

The closing date for stand and sponsorship applications is **28th February 2026**.

You will be able to book your stand space and/or consider sponsorship by clicking on the Apply Online box below

If you have any questions before booking the stand or sponsorship online, please do not hesitate to contact the organiser.

Julia Bell Email: scotland@nationalsheep.org.uk

[Apply Online](#)



NSA Scotland's Lamb for St Andrew's Day Dinner celebrates Scottish sheep industry and supports Moredun Foundation



On Saturday, 29th November 2025, NSA Scotland hosted its annual Lamb for St Andrew's Day Dinner at the Leonardo Boutique Huntingtower Hotel, Perth, bringing together sheep farmers, industry representatives, and friends of the sector for a night of celebration, networking, and Scottish tradition. The event was proudly sponsored by QMS, supporting the Scottish sheep industry and its community initiatives.

The evening began with a warm welcome from NSA Scotland Chairman Peter Myles, a grace read by NSA Policy Manager Micheal Priestley, and concluded with a heartfelt farewell from NSA Scotland Vice Chairman Alec Tefler. Guests savoured Scotland's finest lamb, expertly prepared to showcase the quality and flavour of Scottish sheep, while enjoying a lively atmosphere and excellent company.

The programme featured fantastic speakers, Martin Kennedy and Finlay McIntyre. A particularly memorable moment came when Finlay McIntyre proposed a toast to the lamb, and Martin Kennedy beautifully embodied the quality and excellence of Scottish lamb in his reply, reflecting the pride and passion of Scotland's sheep industry. Adding a ceremonial touch, Andy McGowan piped the lamb into the dining room and then piped it out again, delighting guests and adding a light-hearted moment to the evening.

A highlight of the night was a successful raffle, raising valuable funds for the Moredun Foundation, supporting their vital work tackling louping-ill, a disease affecting sheep and livestock in Scotland. The contributions will help Moredun continue its research, prevention, and disease-control efforts to safeguard flocks nationwide.

Attendees praised the evening for its great atmosphere, outstanding food, and sense of community, celebrating Scottish heritage while supporting a meaningful cause.

"This year's St Andrew's Day Dinner was a wonderful celebration of the Scottish sheep sector," said Peter Myles, Chairman, NSA Scotland. "From the warm welcome to the inspiring speakers, the toast to the lamb, the ceremonial piping, and the generosity shown for the Moredun Foundation, it was a night that highlighted both our heritage and our commitment to supporting research that protects our flocks. We are especially grateful to QMS for their sponsorship, which helped make the evening possible."

NSA Scotland thanks all guests, speakers, and supporters whose participation made the evening a resounding success.





Being a NSA Trustee

I am Pamela Nicol, a Farm Manager at Eastmill Farm in Glenisla. We farm 500 ewes and 15 pedigree Beef Shorthorns and also run along side them 35 commercial cows. We have 492ha (1215 acres) which is a mixture of hill and in bye.

I have been a trustee of the NSA for three years now and have thoroughly enjoyed my experience. As a trustee you are democratically elected every three years at the Annual Regional Members' Meeting (ARMM) held in February. I can only serve two terms as a Trustee so if re-elected in February this will be my final term. This gives the UK NSA Board a broad spectrum of opinions and prevents the Board from becoming stagnant in their opinions.

Being a trustee gives you a wide range of views from across the whole of the UK. It also gives you a real insight into the finer details of what makes the sheep industry tick. It gives you a real handle on what challenges face the industry when dealing with government departments in all the devolved nations not just Scotland. I feel very passionate about the future of our industry because if we do not speak up decisions that impact every one of us will be made without our input. That is one of the main reasons I joined the NSA and also was fortunate enough to become a trustee

We are currently facing a serious challenge in Scotland about Sea Eagles and the possible reintroduction of Lynx. Both of these topics impact heavily on our industry and the NSA are working extremely hard to get the best outcome for our members. On a day-to-day basis we are involved in many consultations with the Scottish Government which are constantly changing. As a trustee we are also tasked with the governance of the association. This covers our aims, purposes and finances of the association and ensuring that as a charity we are complying with all necessary rules and regulations

The opinions of our members are vital in our response to every consultation so if you have strong feelings about anything please let any member of our committee know or indeed come along and join the committee and give us your input to our industry



Region policy update

by Faye Bryce, NSA Scottish Region Policy Officer

Driving Agricultural Reform

Scottish agriculture is on the cusp of major change. The Scottish Government is moving from the Vision for Agriculture to delivery through a four-tier support framework under the Agriculture and Rural Communities Act. At the heart of this transition are Tier One (Base) and Tier Two (Enhanced), which together form the new Direct Payment mechanism.

Tier One will provide stability and resilience for farming businesses, underpinning food production while requiring compliance with "Essential Standards" such as Whole Farm Plans and Fair Work First principles. Payments will remain area-based initially, but options for capping and convergence are under discussion to reduce disparities between land types. Small producers under 30 ha (74 acres) will have a dedicated support route, recognising their unique role in rural communities.

Tier Two is designed to reward and incentivise sustainable and regenerative practices. Farmers will be able to opt into packages of measures, with additional top-ups for Less Favoured Areas. Organic certification will qualify automatically, and other schemes are being explored. The funding split will start at 70:30 between Tier One and Tier Two, with scope to increase investment in higher tiers over time. Coupled support schemes such as LFASS, SUSSS and SSBSS are under review to ensure alignment with ARC Act outcomes.

Regional Round-Up

October has been a busy month for policy and animal health discussions. Here are the key developments:

Sheep Scab Working Group

A Scottish-specific, industry-led group has been re-established and will meet every six months. Members agreed that the current Sheep Scab Order is reactive and needs a fundamental rethink. Future proposals will focus on prevention, improved tracing, and clearer treatment guidance. Concerns remain over treatment failures, particularly with injectables, due to unclear dosing instructions and inconsistent product information. Calls were made for drug companies to improve guidance and persistence data. Farmer workshops and wider engagement are planned to shape a new vision for control.

Bluetongue Virus (BTV)

With the English restricted zone continuing to sit along the Scottish border, winter surveillance is underway in southern counties. Testing of unvaccinated cattle began in late October and will conclude by December, with early results expected soon. Vaccination supplies remain steady, but uptake is uneven—strong in the Borders, low further north. Reporting gaps and farmer hesitancy around timing and efficacy persist. If BTV is detected this winter, infected animals may be culled with compensation, and wider testing will follow. Non-isolated cases could lead to a 20 km temporary control zone. Looking ahead, control measures are expected to resume from mid-May when midges become active. Industry input is vital to shape Scotland's 2026 BTV control plan.

Traceability Improvements Member input has been invited before proposals are shared with wider stakeholders including NFUS and IAAS. This collaborative approach aims to ensure practical, workable solutions for the sector.

**Win a
Lanati Astron
cord-free
handpiece kit**

**Worth more than
£450!**

**Last chance to
enter**

**Enter via the NSA
website**





Agricultural policy update

by Michael Priestley

Scotland's ewes are taking home the Calcutta Cup

Scottish flocks are beating English ewes on a key productivity metric, meaning the bragging rights are north of the border.

Lambs per ewe in Scotland has risen since over the past 14 years to 1.28, while flocks south of the border produce 1.21 lambs, compared to more than 1.3 in 2011. These figures seem low for an industry average, but are calculated from government census data, so are the best we have and still represent a trend

Those are the bare facts, and what they mean needs to be interpreted and may lead to more questions than answers. Lots is said about declining flock size across the UK, but if productivity increases there is at least a small silver lining.

We are going through changes in UK agriculture. Lessons can be learned from others who have weathered change, such as our New Zealand cousins. Put simply, as many will know, the New Zealanders produced the same number of lambs from half the sheep after adjusting and tweaking their systems and some businesses biting the dust (called "Creative destruction" by economists) following subsidy reform and deregulation in 1985. This was a huge productivity increase.

And for Scotland, while fewer sheep does not mean fewer lambs (though it perhaps implies it), the decline of sheep numbers in the more challenging hill country offers an opportunity for sheep to move down the hill and eastwards to areas less challenged by climate, soil type and topography. If a hill flock of 1,000 ewes used to rear 800 lambs a year, an in by flock could rear 800 lambs from 450-500 ewes on a kinder farm. Productivity could be held.

The figures

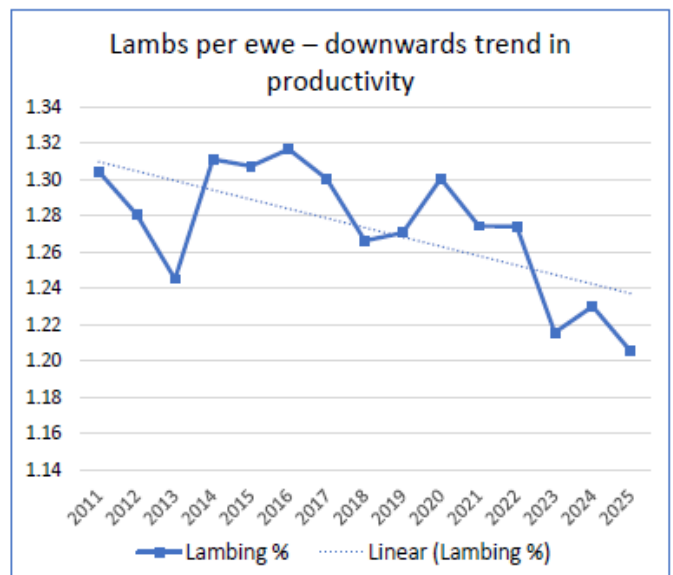
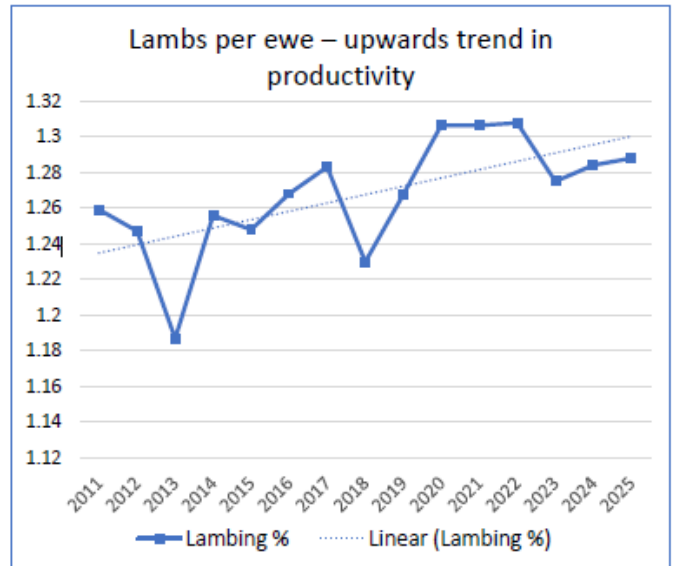
This year's figures were undoubtedly helped by a favourable lambing period and productivity gains in the north and west offsetting a poorer lambing in the south west. Thanks go to Quality Meat Scotland analyst Iain Macdonald for aggregating the figures and providing the analysis. Good spring weather aside, there are policy, demographic, and economic drivers behind the multi-year trend. These will be all too familiar.

The numbers come from the Defra census and two statistics – ewes intended for further breeding and slaughter, and lambs under a year old.

Behind the figures

But which sheep are more profitable? Which sheep are more efficient? Is there a penalty for that production in concentrate input, labour, housing time, vet bills? Is the answer simply that the sheep or perhaps the farmers are better?

Perhaps those last two are jocular questions (perhaps not!), but the bear figures will have a story behind them. Is there a national trend?



Graphs from Quality Meat Scotland and the Defra June census

Climate is different, systems may vary, and the evolution of farm support is changing at a very different pace either side of the border. Scotland's Greening is asking more of farmers to justify a historic basic payment scheme cashflow. England's Sustainable Farming Incentive has been first come, first served, and left some businesses without support at all. A betting fan may wager the trend will be for a widening of the gap in the future, and the ovine Calcutta cup remaining north of the border.

Vision

National funds are tight, and this is, along with taxation proposals, weighing heavy on the minds of many. Confidence is essential for farming businesses to move into a future of less farm support. Changes and adjustments take courage.



One massive issue facing England's industry is the questions facing tenant farmers. Without BPS, they are exposed to rental costs. The scope, purpose and payments in any future schemes will have a huge role in setting rental values and supporting or discontinuing livestock enterprises.

For this reason, NSA advocates for farm support to be targeted in three broad areas:

1. Capital investment – grants, loans and schemes to help young businesses get established and established systems embrace technology and become more profitable and efficient.
2. Public good reward – Managing landscapes for biodiversity, water, countryside access, carbon capture often has no direct market reward. Blended financial schemes using public and private money may be a way to deliver schemes that support the just transition Scottish Government talks about
3. Support industry projects – Veterinary partnerships, research and development, breeding/genomics and growing our understanding of soils and grassland are key areas government can help support innovation through supporting funding bids or strategic investment

There could be many reasons why the Scottish flock is now more productive than the English one, but ultimately, it is because, up until now, Scottish Government has stuck by its industry with tried and tested levels of support.

NSA Scotland will be following this trend to see whether Scottish flock productivity remains stronger than England's. To continue the rugby analogy, Scottish payments remain more of an orderly line out, while in England it has been more of a first-come-first served scrum, with some folk missing out.

NSA scotsheep
NSA SCOTLAND

Wednesday 10th June 2026

Wedderlie Farm, Gordon,
Berwickshire, TD36NW
By kind permission of the Tilson Family

For more information about this event please visit,
www.scotsheep.org.uk

MAJOR SPONSOR
THORBURN GROUP

NSA

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR NSA MEMBERSHIP?

NSA is asking members about their thoughts on the role of NSA and member benefits.

NSA wants your feedback!

Plus get entered to win one of the £50 vouchers up for grabs

WYNNSTAY FaneValleyStores Shearwell Data

Help NSA better understand what matters most to you as a member, improve the services offered and ensure NSA continues to represent the sheep sector effectively.

THANK YOU

NSA SCOTLAND NEWSLETTER

Remember to have a look at the previous editions of the NSA Scotland Newsletter on our website. [Click here](#)

Veterinary Corner

Ed Hill – Thrums Vet Group



November turned a bit wet and wilder but with the odd cold snap, as such we've unfortunately had our fair share of post-mortems to carry out on lambs suffering 'sudden death'. Almost all of these have been diagnosed as a pasteurilla type pneumonia or septicaemia.

Vaccination with a 'P+' type vaccine is essential to prevent these losses, but the duration of immunity may not be as long as many people realise. If lambs had a double shot during the summer, come the winter time, protection might not be quite what it was. Combine that with a stressor such as transport, moving onto winter keep, housing and/or a worm burden and you can get a serious problem. A booster vaccine in late autumn or early winter will help prevent many losses, and remember to keep an eye on worm burdens even into the late season; we still see high counts well into November most years.

For most up here tups are out working or have just finished their services for the year, though I appreciate for some lambing is not far away! The past couple of months have been very busy doing many pre-breeding checks on these boys. Many flocks are now choosing to do this task as routine as it weeds out the sub-fertile ones in advance and ensures the best chance of a decent scan. In the practice we sampled nearly 300 tups and found approximately 75% to be fully fertile with 15% being failures and 10% being inconclusive or borderline. With 1 in 4 potentially not being quite up to the job this definitely underlines

the importance of being proactive about fertility. Even a sub-fertile tup in a multi-sire mating group can do serious damage to the scanning percentage if he's the sexually dominant one.

Come January we'll be getting stuck into a fair bit of OPA scanning. Real progress has been made over the past few years with endemically infected flocks getting the percentages down with the resultant uplift in flock productivity and reduction in mortality. It's not a perfect test but it's doing a good job and helping make a real difference. Diseases such as OPA and Johne's tend to rear their head during the winter months, so just as a wee reminder if you get any unexplained losses, a post mortem is a good idea.

That said, I hope you and the flock have a very happy Christmas and a healthy New Year!



Office Bearers



Peter Myles
Edzell
NSA Scotland Chairman



Alec Telfer
Selkirk
NSA Scotland Vice Chairman



Mary Dunlop
Biggar
NSA Scotland Treasurer



Michael Priestly
NSA UK Policy Manager



Pamela Nicol
Glenisla
NSA Scotland Trustee



Julia Bell
Auchengray
NSA Scotland Activities Officer



Faye Bryce
Stirling
NSA Scotland Policy Officer



Find out more



Your local rep

James (S. Scotland)
07714 744 686

Ellie (N. Scotland)
07788 209 438

**Shearwell
Data**

Livestock Systems

Proud to
Sponsor

**NSA Scotland
Newsletter**

Britain's favourite sheep tag



Supplying ear tags
for **over 30 years**
You can rely on us for



 **Quality
products**

 **Excellent
customer service**

 **Speedy
turnaround**

Contact the team 01643 841611



Visit www.shearwell.co.uk