

# SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR THE SCOTTISH SHEEP INDUSTRY

JULY 2026 EDITION

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



## CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

*The story so far*

*by Alec Telfer, NSA Scotland Chair*

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**It has been a busy and encouraging period for NSA Scotland, with two major events providing plenty to celebrate, reflect on and build from.**

### **NSA Scotsheep 26: A standout success**

NSA Scotsheep 26 proved to be a real success, delivered in partnership with our hosts, the Tilson family of Wedderlie, and supported by an outstanding organising committee.

The feedback from attendees has been extremely positive, with many commenting on both the quality of the event and the strong turnout.

The farm tour was a particular highlight, while the competitions were well supported and fiercely contested across:

- NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year
- Fencing
- Shearing
- Stock judging

Elsewhere across the event, workshops drew strong interest, breed society stands welcomed a steady flow of visitors, and trade stands reported brisk business throughout.

The caterers were kept busy too, adding to the lively atmosphere across the site.

Our sincere thanks go to our hosts, the organising committee, and our events officer, Julia Bell, assisted by Chris Adamson, for all their

hard work in making the event such a success.

We are also grateful to His Grace, The Duke of Roxburghe, for delivering an excellent and insightful opening address.

All in all, NSA Scotsheep 26 was another successful NSA Scotland event and one that was clearly enjoyed by all. Well done to everyone involved.

### **Royal Highland Show: Strong engagement and important conversations**

Hot on the heels of NSA Scotsheep, NSA Scotland was back in front of members, visitors and industry partners with its marquee at the Royal Highland Show.

Thank you to everyone who helped staff the stand, along with the breed societies and ancillary trades who took stands within our tent, including British Wool who ran the popular fleece competition.

The show also gave us an opportunity to reflect on our location at the event, where there remains considerable concern, and to consider how best to raise this with RHASS.

It was particularly encouraging to see the Lamb Dressing competition so eagerly contested by teams across the two age groups, showcasing the enthusiasm and ability of the next generation.

We were pleased to welcome MSP Jim Fairlie, SNP Minister for Rural Affairs, to the stand and to raise several key concerns, including:

- Net zero
- Methane from ruminants
- Predation

We also welcomed a member of the NatureScot licensing office, with constructive discussions taking place on predation and predator control.

Together, these events have once again highlighted the strength, commitment and resilience of Scotland's sheep sector, and we look forward to continuing these important conversations and building on this momentum in the months ahead.

Next on our agenda is our Lamb for St Andrews Day Dinner, plans for which are well under way. Look out for announcements shortly.



# NSA Scotland Activities

Julia Bell, NSA Scotland Activities Officer



## NSA Scotsheep delivers a successful day at Wedderlie Farm

NSA Scotsheep 2026 was held earlier in June (Wednesday 10th June) at Wedderlie Farm, Gordon, Berwickshire, hosted by the Tilson family. The event welcomed strong attendance from across Scotland, Northern England and further afield, confirming its position as a key date in the UK sheep industry calendar.

Visitors arrived in good numbers throughout the day, creating a lively and engaging atmosphere across the site. The event also benefited from favourable weather conditions, which enhanced the experience of all attendees. With more than 200 trade stands in place, the show provided a valuable platform for agricultural businesses, organisations and service providers to connect directly with farmers and industry professionals. Exhibitors reported excellent engagement throughout, with high-quality conversations and strong networking opportunities.



NSA thanks their generous hosts the Tilson Family

The event opened with a formal ceremony attended by vast numbers of visitors, exhibitors and industry representatives. His Grace the Duke of Roxburghe officially welcomed guests to Wedderlie Farm, recognising the importance of the sheep sector to Scotland and the value of NSA Scotsheep event as a major industry gathering. A particularly memorable moment followed when John Tilson marked the anniversary of 50 years of the family farming at Wedderlie. He paid tribute to his wife, Marion, acknowledging her lifelong contribution to the farm and presented her with a commemorative gift. The moment was warmly received, adding a personal and meaningful highlight to the opening proceedings.

A further highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the Silver Salver Award to Carol McLaren, RSABI in recognition of her outstanding contribution to agriculture and service to the wider industry.

Widely regarded as one of the highlights of the day, the farm tours offered visitors an excellent opportunity to see the farming system up-close. Feedback was extremely positive, with praise for the outstanding quality of stock on display. Visitors frequently commented on the strength, consistency and commercial focus of both the sheep enterprise and Aberdeen Angus herd. The willingness of the Tilson family to open their farm gates and engage with visitors added greatly to the experience and was widely appreciated by all attendees.

The trade exhibition featured more than 200 stands representing a broad cross-section of the agricultural industry, including animal health companies, feed suppliers, machinery manufacturers, fencing contractors, financial services, breed societies and rural organisations. The scale and diversity of the trade area created a busy and well-supported hub throughout the day, with exhibitors reporting strong engagement and excellent opportunities for discussion, networking and business development.

NSA Scotsheep 2026 brought together the sheep industry in an engaging one-day event, combining technical learning, practical demonstrations, trade and competition. The strong attendance, extensive trade presence and high-quality livestock displays contributed to a highly successful and well-received day.

The professionalism and hospitality of the Tilson family at Wedderlie Farm were central to the event's success, with the celebration of 50 years of farming at the holding providing a particularly special moment.

NSA extends sincere thanks to all exhibitors, sponsors, competitors, volunteers and visitors who contributed to the success of NSA Scotsheep 2026.

The Wedderlie Aberdeen Angus herd impressed visitors





Several competitions took place throughout the day, showcasing skill and talent across the sheep and agricultural sectors. The full list of winners is as follows:

#### Best Indoor Trade Stand

- 1<sup>st</sup> Innovis
- 2<sup>nd</sup> James Delargy
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Zoetis
- 4<sup>th</sup> Carrs Billington

#### Best Outdoor Trade Stand

- 1<sup>st</sup> Harrison & Hetherington
- 2<sup>nd</sup> McVeigh Parker
- 3<sup>rd</sup> A T Jeffrey
- 4<sup>th</sup> Tarff Valley Ltd

#### Best Breed Society Stand

- 1<sup>st</sup> Beltex Sheep Society
- 2<sup>nd</sup> North Country Cheviot Sheep Society
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Scotch Mule Association
- 4<sup>th</sup> Texel Sheep Society

#### NSA Next Generation Shepherd Competition (Sponsored by Texel Sheep Society, British Wool and the International Sheep Dog Society)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Ben McSparran
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Hayley Ryan
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Tyler McKinnley
- 4<sup>th</sup> Niamh Milton
- 5<sup>th</sup> Angus McGowan
- 6<sup>th</sup> Kiera Smith

#### Under 21 Winner

Tyler McKinnley

#### Sheep Dog Trial

- 1<sup>st</sup> Tyler McKinnley
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Ben McSparran
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Hayley Ryan
- 4<sup>th</sup> Niamh Milton

#### Stock Judging – Junior

- 1<sup>st</sup> Rachel Elliot
- 2<sup>nd</sup> James Cowens
- 3<sup>rd</sup> James Goldie
- 4<sup>th</sup> Thomas Goldie

#### Stock Judging – Open

- 1<sup>st</sup> John Howie
- 2<sup>nd</sup> John Brown
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Joe Gascoigne
- 4<sup>th</sup> Aiden Dunlop

#### Stock Judging – Women

- 1<sup>st</sup> Catherine MacGregor
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Zoe Prentice

#### Fencing Competition

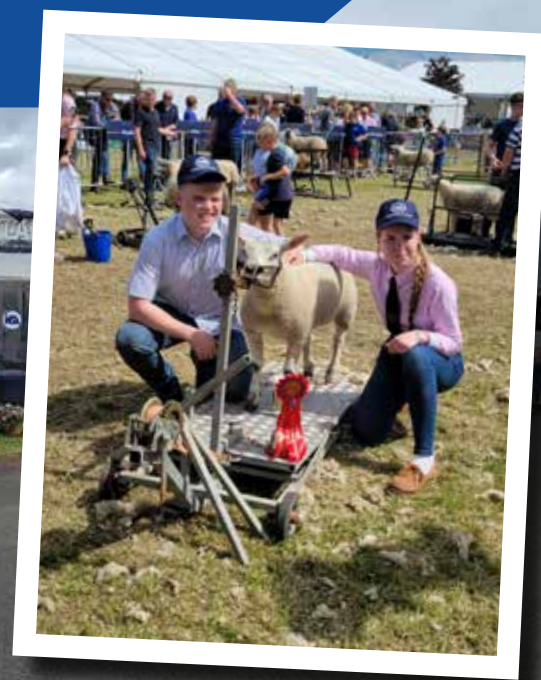
- 1<sup>st</sup> Samson Fencing
- 2<sup>nd</sup> G T Contracting
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Drummond

#### Shearing Competition

- 1<sup>st</sup> Stuart Davidson
- 2<sup>nd</sup> William Ballantyne
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Frazer Caldwell



# NSA Scotland at the Royal Highland Show



**Within NSA Scotland's marquee at this year's Royal Highland Show there was a fantastic buzz throughout the event, with a strong line-up of stands, a spinning demonstration and a dedicated fleece competition area all coming together to create a lively and welcoming space. The marquee was a real hub for visitors across the show days, bringing together organisations and businesses from right across the sheep and wool sector.**

Exhibitors included British Wool, Osmonds, Shearwell, ISDS, NSA Scotland, Eadie Bros, Badger Face Texel Sheep Society, Numnuts/Merlin Vet, Hebridean Sheep Society, Animal Breeds Europe, and the Shetland Flock Book Trust. Each stand added something different, whether it was practical on-farm solutions, breed society updates, animal health innovation, or celebrating the quality and versatility of British wool. Together, they created a well-rounded and engaging space that encouraged conversation, questions, and plenty of catch-ups between members, industry representatives, and visitors.

Alongside the trade and society stands, the activity areas played a big part in drawing people into the marquee and encouraging them to stay and take part. The spinning demonstration was a constant point of interest, with visitors of all ages stopping to watch the process and learn more about how fleece is transformed into usable wool. The fleece competition area also added to this, showcasing the quality and diversity of fleeces on display and highlighting the importance of wool within the wider sheep industry.

The engagement activities proved particularly popular once again this year. The rosette colouring competition was a real highlight, with a fantastic level of participation across all four days. It was brilliant to see so many children getting involved, taking time to design their rosettes and proudly adding their creations to the display. It created a real sense of colour and energy within the marquee and helped make the space feel even more welcoming for families. The sheep dressing competition also returned following its previous success and continued to attract plenty of attention, adding a fun and interactive element that drew in crowds and created a lot of interest and conversation throughout the show.

Overall, the layout of the marquee worked really well, with a natural flow between the stands and the activity areas helping to keep footfall steady throughout the event. There was a constant sense of activity, with visitors moving between exhibitors, watching demonstrations, and getting involved in the hands-on features on offer. It created a friendly and relaxed atmosphere where people felt able to stop, chat, and engage at their own pace.

Overall, NSA Scotland's presence at the Royal Highland Show once again provided a fantastic opportunity to connect with members, welcome new visitors, and showcase the strength and diversity of the sheep sector. The energy within the marquee reflected the wider spirit of the show – busy, positive, and full of enthusiasm – and it was great to see so many people engaging with everything on offer throughout the event.



# Scottish sheep farmers encouraged to make NSA Sheep Event part of their summer plans

NSA Sheep Event returns on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July to Three Counties Showground, Worcestershire, offering Scottish sheep farmers a valuable opportunity to see new ideas, meet suppliers and catch up with others from across the UK sheep sector.

For anyone able to make the journey south, this flagship biennial event brings together practical advice, technical updates, new products and plenty of opportunities to compare notes with fellow sheep farmers. It is a useful day away from the farm to gather ideas that could benefit flocks and businesses back home in Scotland.

With more than 260 exhibitors, plus a packed programme of workshops, seminars and live demonstrations, visitors will have direct access to the latest thinking, technology and services shaping the sheep industry. Practical demonstrations from industry partners including SCOPS and AHDB will run throughout the day, while sheepdog displays, cookery and butchery theatre sessions will add entertainment, insight and inspiration.

The event also offers a chance to celebrate the skills and enthusiasm within the sheep sector, with competitions and hands-on challenges showcasing talent from across the industry.

Highlights include the national final of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year competition and the return of National Young Stars, giving teams of young people aged 12–18 a valuable platform to demonstrate their knowledge, confidence and stockmanship.

Those travelling to the event can make more of the visit by joining pre-event farm tours or attending the NSA Sheep Event Dinner on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July, creating extra time to network, share ideas and enjoy the company of others from across the industry. Non-members can buy tickets online now at the early bird rate, helping them get through the gates quickly and make the most of the day.

Plan your visit and book tickets at  
[www.sheepevent.org.uk](http://www.sheepevent.org.uk)



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## NSA SCOTLAND NEWSLETTER



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

[Click here](#)



## Region policy update

by Faye Bryce, NSA Scottish Region Policy Officer

### First Minister backs livestock at Royal Highland Show

At last year's Royal Highland Show, First Minister John Swinney used his speech at the QMS breakfast to deliver a clear message to farmers: livestock production remains central to Scottish agriculture and will continue to be supported.

For sheep farmers, one of the most important takeaways was the Scottish Government's decision not to reduce livestock numbers as part of climate policy. This had been suggested previously, but ministers have now opted against it, recognising the role livestock plays in rural Scotland, food production and national identity.

That decision brings a degree of certainty at a time when many businesses are facing continued pressure. The First Minister acknowledged the combined impact of rising input costs, energy prices, commodity markets, labour challenges and trade disruption following Brexit, alongside increasingly unpredictable weather.

Despite these pressures, he praised the resilience of the sector, recognising the effort that goes into continuing to produce high-quality, nutritious food for consumers across Scotland and beyond.

#### A strong role for farming in the economy

The speech highlighted agriculture's wider importance to Scotland's economy. The sector underpins a food and drink industry worth around £19 billion and provides jobs and economic activity across rural areas.

Events like the Royal Highland Show also demonstrate the sector's scale and value. With more than 200,000 visitors and an estimated £250 million in business activity, the show is not only a celebration of rural life but a key commercial platform.

The First Minister was clear that farming has a key role to play in future economic growth, but stressed that success will depend on stable policy, investment and close partnership between government and industry.

#### Commitment to support and stability

Looking ahead, the Scottish Government set out its intention to provide continuity through existing support schemes. This includes:

- Continued direct payments
- Ongoing support through the Future Farming Investment Scheme
- Retention of the Small Producer Pilot Fund
- Wider backing for the food and drink sector

There was also an emphasis on avoiding sudden policy changes, with a commitment to phased transitions rather than 'cliff edges'. This is particularly important for sheep

farmers making long-term decisions around breeding, investment and land management.

The First Minister stressed that policy will continue to be shaped through engagement with the industry, highlighting recent changes to schemes made in response to farmer feedback as evidence that collaboration can deliver practical outcomes.

#### Areas to watch

While the overall tone was supportive, there are areas that will require close attention from the sector.

Proposals such as a price cap on essential food items were raised, with ministers recognising the need to ensure affordability for consumers. However, there was also an acknowledgement that this must not come at the expense of farmers and producers. The government has committed to working with industry to design any such measures carefully.

There was also a focus on increasing the use of Scottish produce in public sector procurement, with a new taskforce being set up to identify barriers and opportunities. Done well, this could create more consistent demand for home-grown products.

On trade, the First Minister reiterated concerns about the impact of Brexit and confirmed that the Scottish Government continues to push for improved arrangements with the EU, alongside action on labour shortages.

#### Working together

A clear theme throughout the speech was partnership. The First Minister called on the agriculture sector to work closely with government to shape policy, drive growth and deliver a sustainable future.

For sheep farmers, the message is broadly reassuring. There is recognition at the highest level of the importance of livestock, an understanding of the pressures facing the sector and a commitment to ongoing support.

The challenge now will be ensuring that this positive direction translates into practical, workable policy that supports profitable and sustainable sheep farming businesses across Scotland.





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# British Wool auction prices continue to increase

**Strong demand for British wool over the last 12 months saw another positive result when the last sale of 2025 wool was held recently. This saw prices increase by a further 10% compared to the previous sale, and a virtual full clearance - we look forward to the start of the 2026 selling season in July.**

Global demand for crossbred wool is now back in balance with supply, helping lift the UK wool price to the highest level for a decade. In real terms, wool values are now back to pre-pandemic levels.

Gareth Jones, Head of Member Engagement, says: "British Wool's work to build brand awareness on behalf of our members is also supporting the market for British wool, with consumer research showing that brand awareness is improving. We now have over 180 brands on our licensee scheme, specifying British wool in their products. Sales of traceable wool, which are sold at a premium to the commodity market, have also seen some growth over the last twelve months.

"With the improving market and higher returns this year, I encourage all members to deliver their wool. Handling more wool improves our efficiency and allows British Wool to invest more in driving demand from manufacturers and consumers to support member returns."

## Wool Values - British Wool

**Depots and Collection Centres are open and ready to receive your wool** - Providing a high-level, convenient service to members is key, and British Wool has 35 sites available across Scotland, including the Borders depot in Selkirk and depots in both Evanton and Irvine.

Shearing in some areas has been delayed due to the weather conditions in May and early June. Once shearing is complete, we encourage members to make contact and arrange delivery, as delaying delivery can expose wool to:

- Damp conditions
- Contamination
- Damage during storage

These factors reduce the overall value and quality of your clip.

## Depot Network - British Wool

**Faster Payments with QR Code Check-In** - Following the successful introduction of QR code technology at collection centres, you can now confirm wool drop-offs quickly using your smartphone.

Simply scan the QR code at your collection centre and complete the short form to confirm your delivery. This allows us to process your wool faster and release payment more efficiently.

## Marketing your wool

Engaging with the consumer and working with brands is key to raising awareness of the unique benefits and characteristics of wool. Some of this activity includes:

- At the end of April, British Wool launched the new Scottish Wool branding – a certification that is championing the strong characteristics of the fibre
- Wool Month – a month of promotional activity as part of the Campaign for Wool
- Collaboration with Save the Children and Shaun the Sheep for a Christmas Jumper
- British Wool online shop selling a range of products made from British wool
- Increasing coverage across the press, including the broadcast media
- Ambassadors – working with seven well-known and established profiles within shearing and wool handling to promote British Wool's role and key messages



## Our depot network



- ✓ **14 depots** across the UK.
- ✓ **150+** collection centres.
- ✓ **90% of our collection sites** are within a one hour drive.
- ✓ Providing an **efficient and convenient service** to all.



SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE



# Agricultural policy update

by Michael Priestley

## Reality more important than rhetoric for shrinking sector

Scotland's politicians pushing the message that they have no policy to reduce livestock numbers continues to be a relief but may be something of a distraction from the main event.

The fact of the matter is that the livestock sector has contracted. Regardless of what politicians say, the important bit is the reality on the ground, not the rhetoric from policy makers.

Today Scotland has around 2.4 million breeding ewes, more than 1 million fewer than in the first half of the 20th century, when numbers hovered around 3 million, and got as high at 3.5 million. This contributed to feeding and clothing the 4 million people (or just over) in 1900 and 5.1 million in 1950. Today, the population is just over 5.5 million people, and the flock is contracting.

There are, of course, many differences in the needs and requirements of the sheep industry and the Scottish population. Vertical integration in pig and poultry farming increased pork and chicken consumption, wool was replaced by synthetic oil-based clothing, and the development of farming methods and infrastructure means that rearing rates are higher than in the past. It is possible to produce more lambs from fewer breeding ewes. However, productivity gains in extensive sheep farming are more limited than in dairying, pig or poultry farming.

QMS's economic modelling backs this up. By producing 5% more lamb, we could add £77 million of output in six years' time due to domestic and overseas demand. Furthermore, this value can be captured within Scottish farming with efficient store lamb finishing systems.

So that is positive. And it's positive and reassuring to hear Scotland's first minister John Swinney address the QMS breakfast at the Royal Highland Show and repeat the line that there was no plan to cut livestock numbers as the UK Climate Change Committee had recommended. But are there plans to maintain or build numbers as QMS suggests?

Scotland has instead opted to focus on reducing emissions intensity, improving livestock genetics, low-methane breeding and supporting the sector to enhance productivity.

The NSA is leading work in this area, including the Breed4Change project to find low methane emitting ewes and ensure that by breeding for low methane emissions we do not sacrifice other commercial attributes.

As a sector we must have conviction that farming is doing more good than harm. The investment, long-term decisions, risks, and graft involved in sheep farming and pastoralism means mindset matters.

A farming system is not sustainable if it is not profitable. And with diesel, fertiliser, antibiotics, bought-in feed, and wormers all becoming restricted in use, be it due to economic reasons or reasons of supply, stewardship, or efficacy, surely the more profitable grazing businesses will use inputs efficiently, and be lower emissions because of it.

Reducing days to slaughter and increasing output to reduce emissions intensity can work, but we all need to be mindful that concrete, steel, diesel and cereal will add cost to our systems. They will impact on the environment in ways that carbon methodologies may not fully account for and they could push systems in the wrong direction. In short this means working with the seasons and working with nature, something sheep farmers are well placed to do.

## Perhaps Lamb should be considered essential

Food price limits on groceries are one of the oldest economic policies in history, with debate ignited by John Swinney committing to price caps at this year's Highland Show.

He said prices for certain "essential" food items will be capped, which presumably rules out any market intervention on lamb. Rightly or wrongly, lamb is not seen as a weekly staple.

Farmers may ask "why focus on food?" - inflation is hitting everything. Rising costs run throughout the economy, and farmers are not pocketing more profit because food prices are high. Since 2020, food prices are up 39%, but car insurance is up 50-60% for some, domestic energy is up 50% and vehicle servicing and repairs is up by nearly as much as food. While not everybody has mortgages or cars, everyone buys food.

This is why it's been tried in the past. Notable examples of food price control include:

- AD 301 Diocletian's price edict In Rome
- 14<sup>th</sup> century India, Alauddin Khalji, Delhi
- Late 18<sup>th</sup> century French revolution

Historians tell us the Roman effort to curb inflation failed, and the French effort only worked in the short-term before the policy was abandoned. Meanwhile, the Indian effort was based on a wealthy and authoritarian government behaving in ways a modern, Western state could not.

History shows the consequences of capping food prices are for production to fall with no incentive to farm from either the state or the market. Worse still, black markets emerge, and the enforcement of food retail rules create regulatory costs. Food processors also feel the pinch as margins are squeezed.

NSA's vision is for lamb to be profitable to produce and affordable to buy. While everything found in lamb can be obtained from other foods, the nutrient density is hard to beat - so should it be seen as more "essential" than it is?

Lamb gives us:

**Highly bioavailable heme iron** - The iron in lamb is absorbed more efficiently than the non-heme iron found in plants.

**Vitamin B12** - Lamb is an excellent source of B12, which is naturally found almost exclusively in animal-derived foods.

**Complete protein** - It contains all nine essential amino acids in proportions that are readily used by the body.

**Zinc** - Lamb provides a substantial amount of highly absorbable zinc.

**Creatine** - Present naturally in muscle meat and largely absent from plant foods.

**Carnosine and taurine** - Compounds found primarily in animal tissues, especially red meat.

**Long-chain omega-3 fats** - Grass-fed lamb can contain meaningful amounts of EPA and DHA precursors and related fatty acids, though fatty fish are usually richer sources.



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National Sheep Association  
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## JOIN US TO CELEBRATE OUR **LAMB FOR ST ANDREW'S DAY DINNER**

NSA Scotland invites you to attend our annual dinner on Friday 27th November at 7pm  
 With guest speakers Gordon Newlands and Scott Brown.

The Ednam House Hotel, Bridge Street, Kelso, Scottish Borders, Scotland, TD5 7HT

Contact NSA Scottish Region Activities Officer  
 Julia Bell for more details  
[scotland@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:scotland@nationalsheep.org.uk)

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