

NATIONAL SHEEP ASSOCIATION



SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR THE SCOTTISH SHEEP INDUSTRY

JUNE 2025 EDITION

www.nsascotland.org



CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

by Peter Myles, NSA Scotland Chair

"Don't worry it's not you; it's the position you hold"

I feel immensely privileged to be chairman of the National Sheep Association (NSA) in Scotland, and from when I first took on the position I was struck struck by the degree of professionalism Regional Coordinator Grace Reid gave to her role. This professionalism was recognised by so many like minded bodies and helped NSA Scotland open doors to forge closer and closer links with so many of them.

Now the time has come for Grace to move on and we wish her well in her new endeavours. At the time of writing, I believe we are close to taking on someone new to help us north of the border. However, to keep a sense of continuity we have been well served by our NSA HQ friends to cover Scottish issues and keep these industry links intact.

Where I fit in, is to attend everything, read the stuff, turn my hearing aids to full listening mode and try and comprehend the often-complex issues laid before me, and to give sensible no-nonsense common-sense responses on behalf of sheep farmers in Scotland. Something that doesn't come naturally for a dyslexic teacher from Glenesk, but I know I need to, and will, put in the work to represent our members, to the best of my ability.

One of the joys of my role is being invited to industry events and getting the opportunity to network and mix with some of the most talented and smart people from all sectors, and often being in 'the room where it happens'. Scotland has a wealth of capable and intelligent farming leaders who, will always strive for what is, how they see it, best for the industry and I'm proud to be considered one of them.

However, before pomposity takes hold, as Grace pointed out some time ago, "Don't worry it's not you; it's the position you hold" and that put me in my place right away!



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Our Events

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Visit NSA Scotland at the following events:

11TH JUNE 2025

NSA HighlandSheep

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

19TH - 22ND JUNE 2025

**NSA Sheep Centre at the
Royal Highland Show**

Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh EH28 8NB



Stunning location to welcome visitors to NSA Highland Sheep



NSA Highland Sheep, taking place this coming Wednesday 11th June at Midfearn Farm, Ardgay, offers a full day of activities designed to showcase all aspects of the sheep sector. Hosted by the Brooke family and organised by NSA Scotland, the event is a must for sheep farmers, breeders and anyone with an interest in rural life. Visitors will experience livestock excellence, practical demonstrations and informative sessions throughout the day.

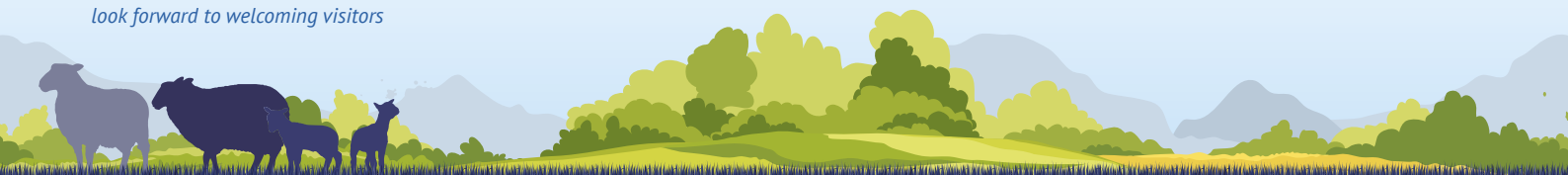


Jock Brooke of Midfearn (left) and Farm Manager Neil Shaw look forward to welcoming visitors

The farm tour, running from 9am to 3pm, will provide visitors with an opportunity to view Mid-fearn's impressive flock of 650 ewes and lambs and 110 suckler cows and calves. The tour will also highlight Watson Seeds' trial plots, which feature a variety of grass sward mixes aimed at improving soil health and livestock performance.

Throughout the event, there will be live demonstrations showcasing practical skills and innovations in sheep farming. Agrimin representatives will demonstrate bolusing techniques and discuss the vital role of trace elements in maintaining flock health. Charlie Macneil, a skilled crook maker from Lairg, will share his expertise, providing a fascinating insight into this traditional craft. Visitors will also have the chance to watch John "Beachy" Barclay and his sons demonstrate how to prepare sheep for show or sale.

The Speed Shear Competition, which will see shearers competing to shear a sheep in the fastest time while maintaining high standards, will be one of the highlights of the event. The Farm-to-fork programme will feature two key demonstrations focused on lamb. Jock Gibson from Macbeth's Butchers and Gordon Newlands from QMS will lead a butchery session, showcasing the versatility of Midfearn's Blackface lamb. Similarly, Simon Rodgers, a chef lecturer at North Highland College, will conduct a cookery demonstration using Midfearn's lamb, offering valuable insights into preparing this high-quality meat.





Another major highlight will be the show and sale of pairs of ewe hoggs, where top-quality sheep will be on display for both judging and sale. Seven breed classes will be available, offering a range of native and continental breeds, and buyers will have the opportunity to purchase livestock from some of the country's best breeders. The NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year competition will also take place, with the winner going on to represent Scotland at the national finals in 2026.

For those interested in sheepdog trials, the event will feature a regional invitational competition with top handlers from across the Highlands. In addition, the SAYFC National Sheepdog Final will see six finalists compete for the top prize, judged by experts in the field. The trials will be an exciting spectacle, with a designated viewing area for spectators.

The seminar programme will cover a variety of topics relevant to the sheep industry, offering an opportunity for farmers and industry experts to discuss key issues. A series of smaller workshops will also take place throughout the day, providing visitors with practical advice on flock management, breeding, and nutrition.

In addition to the farming activities, NSA Highland Sheep will showcase the Midfean Estate's re-newable energy initiatives. The farm has been generating power from its hydro scheme for more than 100 years, and visitors will have the chance to learn about this historic and sustainable energy source.

More than 120 trade stands will be exhibiting, presenting the latest products and services for the sheep industry. These will include companies specialising in sheep health, genetics, machinery, fencing, and more. There will also be a Farmers' Market and craft fair featuring local producers and artisans, offering a wide range of food, crafts, and handmade goods.



Seminar programme

10.45am – 11.45am – 'Inspections and Policy'

Chair Peter Delbridge, NSA National Chairman
Speakers Representatives from Scottish Government, Carol McLaren, RSABI and Charlotte Pumphrey, Whole Farm Plan.

12 noon – 12.25pm – 'Address' by Jim Fairlie MSP

Chair Peter Myles, NSA Scotland Chair

12.50pm – 1.50pm – 'Social media, farm promotion and diversification'

Chair Representative from SAC Consulting
Speakers Cammy Wilson, Sheep Game, Janet McQuisten, Kitchen Coos & Ewes, Tom Robertson, Embleton Mill

2.00pm – 3.00pm – 'Lamb – What the market needs'

Chair Alasdair Macnab, AJM Agri Ltd
Speakers Awal Fuseini, AHDB, Jock Gibson, Macbeth's Butchers, Victoria Ballantyne, Brora Sheep Farmer & Nuffield Scholar.

For more details and updates, visit

www.hIGHLANDSHEEP.org.uk

Don't forget, NSA members will receive half price entry to the event so make sure you bring your current membership card with you!



Tradition and innovation on display at NSA Highland Sheep

Few farms could be a more fitting site for the return of NSA Highland Sheep this summer. Taking place for the first time since 2019, the event will be held at Midfearn farm, Ardgay, hosted by the Brooke family and Farm Manager Neil Shaw.

Set against the stunning backdrop of the spectacular Struie Hill, with breathtaking views stretching along the Dornoch Firth and up to the Kyle of Sutherland, the farm will showcase best practice and quality stock at the event.

The Midfearn Estate amounts to around 13,500 acres (5460ha), with the majority being hill ground leaving around 250 acres (100ha) in arable/grassland. The farm has been home to sheep for the past 100 years, but more recent times have seen a change to the flock as the farm has looked to become more efficient.

Neil explains: *"The farm is home to a historic Scottish Blackface flock that dates back to the early 1900s, but we began a move to a Cheviot flock almost 20 years ago. This began by purchasing our first North Country Cheviot gimmers from Lairg Market. The flock has now grown to 350 Cheviots on the farm with just under 200 Cheviot and Suffolk cross ewes. 150 of the original Blackie flock remain grazing the top of the hills on the farm."*

All Cheviot ewes are kept pure to produce the farm's replacement gimmer lambs with males sold as stores through Dingwall & Highlands Mart straight off their mothers at weaning in the second week of August. "We don't have enough fields to finish lambs," Neil adds.

All ewes are scanned at the end of January to lamb outdoors in April. Neil is pleased with this year's scanning results. *"We scanned at 170% for the Cheviot and Suffolk ewes, and 124% for the pure Scottish Blackface ewes,"* he says. *"Scanning percentages have increased over the years. We have fewer sheep now than we used to but are producing the same number of lambs. The change of breed means they are also of higher value."*

To ensure ewes are in top condition ahead of tupping ewes are bolused in the autumn if needed and offered pre-tupping lick buckets. Ewes are moved on to high energy lick buckets in December through until lambing. Ad lib silage is offered if required and an 18% protein ewe roll will be added into the diet six weeks pre-lambing for all twins and triplets. Singles will be offered concentrates three weeks pre-lambing. Neil adds: *"It is so important to ensure good colostrum quality so adding in the extra nutrition we find makes a difference."*

Neil is supported in his work on the farm by colleague Edgar Wylie with further part time staff supporting the team during lambing. All ewes are lambed outside, apart from triplets that are housed with the single baring ewes grazing close by so as many can be adopted on as possible. Tup lambs are ringed, "Unless there is the odd pure Cheviot that has a bit of character about him, on those occasions we might keep him to grow on and use," Neil adds.

Twin lambs are offered creep feed to help improve their weaning weights with Neil also believing it helps to take the pressure off the ewe. He says: *"It stops the ewes from being constantly drained of milk. It is another expense, but we believe it outweighs the potential difference if they are not fed."*

The flock's health plan is quite simple with only clostridial and Pasteurella vaccines given. Neil explains: *"We are lucky to have not had significant problems with abortion and through selective breeding, including the removal of persistent offenders, lameness has really been reduced. So, we do not feel the need to vaccinate further."*

"We just try and keep everything as healthy and active as we can. We have a good working relationship with our vet, she's always happy to take a phone call and pass on some advice whenever needed. She keeps us right."

All sheep are dipped annually with lambs treated with a spot on treatment for ticks from six weeks of age onwards. *"On some of the higher ground with a lot of heather we can find a lot of ticks but the lower ground has not presented any issues really,"* he adds.

As Neil considers the future for the farm's flock, he will now work with estate owner Jock Brooke following the sad passing of Charlie Brooke who died in 2024.

Jock says: *"Going forward, the main thing for us is to run the farm as best we can with what we have got, and to produce high quality, healthy livestock. When my father took over the estate in the 1980s the farm was not in great shape, with not enough resources put into it. Since then, gradual improvements have been made so there is some pressure to not let that work and effort be in vain."*

Charlie shared Neil's enthusiasm for healthy, productive livestock. *"My father enjoyed seeing healthy livestock in the fields here. He took pride in having a tidy, well-maintained farm. The farm business was not just about crunching numbers for him; the altruistic side of farming was equally as important and the sense of community that it creates. Of course there were challenges, over the 40 years he was in charge but that never deterred his enthusiasm for the farm."* Jock continues.

Whilst the opportunity to view the farm's quality sheep will no doubt be a highlight for Highland Sheep visitors; the event farm tour will also provide an insight to the farm's cattle herd. The operation has grown over the years from 60 Simmental cows to 105 Aberdeen Angus cross breeding cows sired by purebred Aberdeen Angus bulls, producing premium stores. Neil says: *"Most of the stores are sold about 12-13 months old at good weights so future buyers have that weight already on board from which to finish them."*

Visitors will also have the chance to learn more about the farm's history and Charlie Brooke's entrepreneurial diversifications. When Charlie took over the estate his father gave him the copper cable from the old 1921 hydro scheme which had fallen into disrepair. Upon selling the cable he used the funds to start a successful fish farm which was the core operation for 30 years. During that time, he was also an early adopter of renewables, building windfarms first, and then two new hydro schemes. Since then, he came full circle and was able to rebuild the original 1921 hydro and restore it to full working condition, blending century old technology with modern innovation.

Jock says, *"This diversification has been a great help in allowing the farm to improve infrastructure to enhance farm efficiencies, whether that is being able to build a new shed or replace a piece of machinery. Those things are definitely helped by the revenue the renewables bring in."*

Having worked on the farm for the past 37 years, including 19 years as Farm Manager, Neil has been witness to many of the farm's recent innovations, and is clearly proud of what will be on display for visitors at NSA Highland Sheep. He says: *"Midfearn is a true showcase of agricultural diversification at its best. From modern wind/UHG farms and meticulously restored hydro schemes to thriving flocks and herds, the estate beautifully combines tradition and innovation. A visit here is an unforgettable experience, with a perfect blend of history, sustainability, and exceptional livestock on display."*

Jock concludes: *"The sense of community that comes with farming was very important to my father. For this reason also, we are looking forward to welcoming visitors to our home to enjoy all Midfearn has to offer."*



NSA Scotland adds further attraction to the Royal Highland Show this year

The Scottish Region of the NSA returns to the Royal Highland show this month providing a high-light for sheep farming enthusiasts visiting the popular event.

The NSA Sheep Centre at the Royal Highland Show, taking place from Thursday 19th to Sunday 22nd June, will house a variety of sheep breed societies and companies offering products and services to the sheep industry. The marquee will also be home to the Royal Highland Agricultural Society of Scotland (RHASS) Fleece competition where farmers entering a range of fleeces will be rewarded for their flock's fine quality. Wool spinning demonstrations will also take place throughout the day.

Having moved location in 2022, the NSA Centre couldn't be in a better spot for visitors to find it, located next to the busy MacRobert shearing theatre. NSA Scotland Chair Peter Myles is looking forward to the event. He says: "The Royal Highland Show is an annual highlight in the farming calendar and NSA Scotland is delighted to once again welcome visitors to the NSA marquee. There will be lots to see and do with NSA including the popular lamb dressing competition as well as those exhibitors joining us with stands. Do make sure to visit us!"

The NSA stand itself will be a useful source of information for visitors seeking to find out the latest information on the Scottish sheep industry with representatives from NSA Scotland happy to chat with farmers about current sheep farming issues.

Further competitions will also be taking place over the course of the four days including several to entertain younger visitors such as the design a rosette competition, a sheep selfie competition and a guess the location of the breed contest. Visitors to the NSA stand will also have the opportunity to 'spin to win' a selection of NSA prizes, including an on trend shearing hoodie that has been designed in collaboration with farming influencer Cammy Wilson from The Sheep Game. Entries will also be taken for the NSA 2025 prize giveaway giving farmers a chance to win one of 12 sets of Lanati Astron cordless shearing handpieces, kindly provided by Rurtec Ltd.

For further details about activities on the NSA stand at the Royal Highland Show, and details on exhibitors in the NSA marquee please contact NSA Support & Activities Officer Fiona Parker by emailing fiona@nationalsheep.org.uk.

Don't forget to enter the 2025 NSA prize giveaway

Sheep farmers from across the UK are enjoying the benefit of becoming winners thanks to the 2025 prize giveaway.

So far, six lucky winners have received the prize of a Lanati Astron cord-free handpiece kit worth more than £450 kindly provided by Rurtec Ltd, with all finding the convenience of the cordless clippers useful on farm.

Don't forget there are six more chances to win! 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.

Find out more at

www.nationalsheep.org.uk/draw

or scan the QR code on this page

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Agricultural policy update

by Michael Priestley

Greening to become clearer over summer

Greening – the measures farmers must take to secure 30% of their BPS payment – should become clearer as the summer wears on.

Sheepkeepers stand to play a major role in delivering the ‘improved environmental performance of farming’ that greening promises to deliver, says Scottish Government. Permanent grassland and ecological focus areas are covered.

As more detail comes from government, the following farm types should do the following: [Introduction and updates](#)

- **Mixed farms with arable and permanent grassland** Should read sections on permanent grassland and Ecological Focus Areas
- **Permanent grassland only** Familiarise themselves with communication on greening and permanent grassland
- **Arable only** Should read sections on Ecological Focus Areas

Farmers are being advised that greening complements many Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC), but there are differences with greening.

NSA Policy Manager Michael Priestley says: “*The spirit of Greening is good and there are lots of beneficial measures that have the potential to help farmers deliver on biodiversity, animal health and the heart of the land, but more detail is needed to see how it will be worked and policed.*”

SRUC and Scottish industry keen to move past clumsy comments

NSA Scotland representatives and senior SRUC officials attended a (FAST) Food and Agriculture Stakeholder Taskforce meeting at NFUS headquarters in May to develop constructive discourse between industry and the college.

The meeting had been scheduled following a SRUC researcher’s address to the Scottish Parliament on 19th March in which they described reducing livestock numbers was a “win-win situation” in the context of emissions and biodiversity.

The address included homegrown food being dismissed out of hand, by the comment “What really matters is how people can access food, and it does not matter whether it comes from Scotland, England or France”.

FAST Chair Neil Wilson of the Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers in Scotland and other member association representatives invited SRUC back to a future FAST group meeting to discuss how research was progressing and what initiatives could be driven by other organisations.

Bluetongue update: Vaccination

Vaccination availability and efficacy will be critical in how the industry negotiates the movement challenges and restrictions of BTV, says NSA. Encouraging reports on vaccine efficacy and level of viraemia suppression means a big question mark still remains over vaccine supply.

At the time of writing (and guidance us updated on a very regular basis at the moment!) Scottish Government has said animals coming from England’s Restriction Zone into Scotland to live require one licence. This is to be issued by Defra as this is the authority overseeing the current restriction zone.

A balanced approach between the extremes of letting trade go unfettered on the one hand and a fortress Scotland movement ban-type strategy is seen as the way forward. Currently, there are huge question marks over the amount of vaccine that can come into the UK. There is growing demand from sheep keepers, particularly as the cost of pre-movement testing is far more prohibitive for sheep at £70 compared to cattle.

Two stockists were selling BTV vaccine in Scotland at time of writing and wholesalers were reporting storage issues both sides of the border. Vaccines were officially approved for Scotland on 30th April. Costs vary from £2.50-£6 an animal.

Volumes of cattle and sheep that moved across the Scottish border from either side to live totalled 50,135 cattle and 193,696 sheep last year, according to numbers from disease modellers at EPIC.

Veterinary Corner

Ed Hill – Thrums Vet Group

As I write the first rain in well over a month has started falling. It has been an unprecedented spring for lambing and no one can blame the weather when it comes to rounding up the lamb numbers. The hot, dry weather has kept parasites at bay but this recent rain, whilst much needed, will suddenly raise the risk of worms and flies.



Our flock health club met this month for a really interesting discussion about reducing wormer usage. Worms continue to be one of the most expensive diseases to our industry and many of the club were shocked to find out just how far resistance has already spread. By thinking about anthelmintics last rather than first when it comes to worm control, we can start to put in place sustainable measures, reduce drug use and halt this spread of re-sistance, protecting our production, profits and the environment. We discussed worm egg counting, resistance testing, alternative forages, nutrition, genetics and grazing strategies. There is so much information out there on the topic, it can be quite overwhelming, but I think it can be useful to think about finding one thing you can action on your farm now and one thing you can build towards in the coming months and years. We don't need to jump all in on many of these things but slowly building a more resilient approach to worm control, rather than just reaching for the drugs, will make sure we remain healthy and profitable for generations to come.

Towards the end of May we saw a spike in the number of lambs we were post-morteming that had acute pneumonia. With hot days, cold nights and a temperature swing of over 20 degrees, this was hardly surprising, but I think this is one condition that really highlights the benefit of a compact lambing season. Lambs will be born with an innate immunity

for pneumonia (provided they had adequate colostrum!) but this will start to wane off from about three weeks of age. We then boost this immunity by giving two doses of a combined clostridial and pneumonia vaccine. If you're having to wait for your last-born lambs to be old enough to vaccinate, all the while the older lambs are going on longer and longer being unprotected, leading to losses in big strong, older lambs. This is just one illustration of how compact lambing will help reduce disease and losses. Clearly, the only real way to achieve a more compact lambing is to take the tups out earlier, but to do so we need to make sure that the ewes are in good BCS, that tups are fully fertile and diseases such as lameness are under control. Preparation for all that is an ongoing process, but weaning will be not far away for many and this is the perfect opportunity to start actively planning. The first part of that is making an active decision about weaning date based on ewe condition, lamb growth rate and grass availability – not just a date in the calendar!



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