

SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR THE SCOTTISH SHEEP INDUSTRY

April/May 2023 Edition

www.nsascotland.org



CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Peter Myles, NSA Scotland Chair



“I hate pet lambs”

Aye, it's that time of year again when “I hate pet lambs” is heard in farm kitchens around the country. It's not that I personally hate the lambs themselves, it's just the paraphernalia associated with them I hate - the bottles, teats, powdered milk and the lambs that simply refuse to suck! Plus, I have yet to find a way to transport a warm bottle of milk on the bike without spilling or dropping something!

At the start of lambing time the children get excited about the thought of pet lambs. They all get names and some sort of personality, but even the most enthusiastic youngster might renege when it comes to a cold, wet, dreich day, and that's not all. Once the school holidays finish, the lambs still need feeding when the kids are away, and they need feeding for so long too... By the end of June I'm well and truly fed up of mixing milk, but unlike when with their mothers; with me, they need milk, right into July!

I have a friend who reckons pet lambs incur so much cost in time and powdered milk that one would be save money to have a dead lamb and attach a £10 note to it! However, another friend uses their agri-tourism credentials to make money from visitors who pay to feed their pet lambs and he keeps extra just for the privilege.

My need for pet lambs is solely for the fostering supply but the supply and demand rarely balance. Sure as fate I have a dead lamb to skin and no pet lamb available, or worse, I have spare lambs, and no foster ewe to help out!

That's enough of a rant from me - I still have “Baltazar” “Shakira” and “Ian” to feed.

Happy lambing everyone.

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Our Events

For more information, please [click here](#)

5TH APRIL

NSA Scotland - Legalities of Sheep Worrying by Dogs Webinar

19TH APRIL

NSA/Moredun webinar: The future of sheep scab

4TH MAY

NSA Breed Society Forum

16TH MAY

RoSA Webinar: Business Benchmarking

22ND - 25TH JUNE

NSA at the Royal Highland Show





NSA Scotland hosts Cabinet Secretary on farm

On Thursday 26th January 2023, newly elected NSA Scottish Region Chair Peter Myles and Trustee Pamela Nicol along with NSA Scotland Region Coordinator Grace Reid met with Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Mairi Gougeon at Doldy Farms, Glenisla.

Pamela who is Doldy Farms Manager comments: "It was great to welcome the Cabinet Secretary on farm and have the chance to talk through the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform which included a discussion on the future of the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme (LFASS). In addition, it was nice to give her an on-farm insight into the challenges and opportunities our industry faces whilst being able to show her how the landscape surrounding Doldy Farms is changing."

Glenisla was a very apt location for the visit, as an example of the importance of LFA support. It was highlighted how agriculture is so often the core of these rural areas and without this vital foundation, many communities simply wouldn't exist. Despite upcoming planned changes to policy in terms of climate change mitigation, and improving biodiversity, our farmers and crofters are the beating heart of rural areas and cannot be allowed to diminish. Significant emphasis was put on the existing purpose and function of LFA which has been so vital for the farming activity occurring in the disadvantaged areas of Scotland in the past. Not only does this activity relate to food production, but it also holds value in terms of the contribution it makes to the society and environment it surrounds.

Young farmers and new entrants were also discussed in relation to future policy with the reassurance that they would not be left behind and also the looming tree plantation of nearby Glen Prosen was another area of concern.

Mr Myles welcomed the visit saying: "NSA Scottish Region was pleased to host the Cabinet Secretary on farm and would like to make it undoubtedly clear, that it is within this important interim period, before 2025, that many agricultural businesses need clear direction, and support to ensure that they are making the correct management decisions to continue operating in the future."



NSA Scotland ARMM and Farm Walk

Attendees voted the election, re-election and approval of regional committee comprising of Peter Myles as Regional Chair, Mary Dunlop as Regional Treasurer and Peter Myles and Pamela Nicol as Regional Trustees. James Scott was also elected as the Scottish representative for the NSA UK Policy and Technical Committee. The proposal was approved at this ARMM for the region to hold a vacant Vice Chair position for the year 2022/2023.

Prior to the meeting, a farm walk was enjoyed by attendees at the James Hutton Institute's Glensaugh Research Farm where Farm Manager Donald Barrie gave an engaging overview on his management practices over a 20 year period and how he sees the world of agriculture and trees today. Attendees agreed that despite being a chilly day, it was well worth the visit to engage with Donald and explore his undoubted expertise when it comes to land management and making the most of what is at hand.

In addition to the above proceedings Scottish sheep farmer Ian Duncan Millar was presented with the National Sheep Association (NSA) George Hedley Memorial Award for 2022 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the UK sheep industry.

Office Bearers



Peter Myles
(Chair)
Edzell, Angus



Grace Reid
(Scottish Region Coordinator)
Clackmannan, Central Belt



Mary Dunlop
(Treasurer)
Broughton, Biggar, Scottish Borders



Pamela Nichol
(Scottish Region Trustee)



Euan Emslie
(Event Organiser and Secretariat)



Praise for former NSA Scotland Trustee

Speaking at the Scottish Blackface Sheep Breeders Association AGM in mid March, NSA Scotland Chair Peter Myles paid warm tribute to Aileen McFadzean, Blackface Secretary, Treasurer and Breed Promotions Manager, who has just stepped down after her six year stint as Trustee on the NSA Board.

He said: "Aileen's no-nonsense common-sense approach was greatly valued by the Board and she will be a hard act to follow, putting NSA's needs first, from a very strong Scottish viewpoint." Mr Myles then wished NSA Scottish Region's new Trustee, former Blackface Sheep President Pamela Nichol all the best in her new position, saying: "I feel confident Pamela will bring her own special talents and experience to the role whilst being a strong representative for the viewpoints of Scottish members."

NSA Scotland GPPC Update

In March, the NSA Scotland General Purposes and Policy Committee (GPPC) welcomed three speakers to a meeting covering various policy topics. Undoubtedly interests were peaked when Dr Lucy Coyne, Senior Technical Policy Manager, National Office of Animal Health Ltd (NOAH) was able to provide an update on the supply of animal medicines in the UK which included time critical products such as Heptavac P Plus.

Despite continued communication of these difficulties facing farmers and crofters in

terms of supply and costs of this product, farmers still find themselves in the same predicament year after year.

As a direct result of the meeting, NSA will be again highlighting these issues and many other implications on the sheep industry from a four nation approach by writing an open letter to NOAH members.

In addition to this, the committee heard a very interesting presentation from Steven Thomson, Senior Agricultural Economist and Policy Advisor, SRUC who was able to update

on the future of Scottish Agricultural policy in terms of what it may mean for the sheep sector and the challenges ahead in terms of monetary power. NSA Scotland hopes to circulate a survey round members to get some feedback on the proposed measures Scottish Government have published.

Finally the committee were given an update from QMS Chief Executive, Sarah Millar who provided a thorough update on QMS activities and operations scheduled for 2023.



Dr Lucy Coyne



Sarah Millar



Steven Thomson

NSA Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2023 The results are in!

Thank you to all who contributed to the annual NSA sheep worrying survey this year. Yet again the survey has revealed devastating cases of sheep worrying across the UK including Scotland.

Responses from those farming and crofting in Scotland showed that despite the recently tightened legislation, fewer farmers are now reporting incidents of sheep worrying to the police. Disappointingly, there is the feeling that occurrences are becoming the norm with less of the sheep farming population putting their faith in the Police to address matters at hand.

For more results visit the [NSA website here](https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk).



Find out more on the law surrounding sheep worrying by dogs

NSA Scotland was pleased to host a webinar in early April looking at the strengthened laws in Scotland surrounding sheep worrying by dogs.

This was held to complement NSA's national awareness campaign running the same week at the start of April.

Regional Chair Peter Myles was joined by police representatives and legal experts to discuss this serious topic and provide guidance for what sheep farmers and crofters can do when incidents occur.

Watch the webinar back at www.nationalsheep.org.uk/webinars



Coordinator's Comment

by Grace Reid, NSA Scottish Region Coordinator

NSA Scotland has been attending a number of varied policy meetings this year so far. As a member organisation, we have seen real progress over the past few years regarding the collaboration between stakeholders in the industry – perhaps one of the positive outcomes from Covid! As part of the Scottish Red Meat Resilience Group and also being a member of the Food and Agriculture Stakeholders Taskforce (FAST) to name just two examples, NSA Scotland has joined together with other likeminded individuals to discuss movements within the wider agricultural and food industries to ensure key matters are being addressed. Whilst common themes such as new agricultural policy, upcoming trade agreements and their impact on supply and demand, nature restoration and rewilding movements, energy crises and improving animal health and welfare across the country are all key. It has remained clear there are many synergies across the breadth of the groups which can continue to be built upon in the future.

Castration and tail docking

I attended a February meeting of the QMS Cattle and Sheep Standards Setting Committee meeting in which a thorough presentation was given on the 'ClipFitter' device for tailing and castration with the animal welfare and efficiency gains that could be achieved through its use explained. Whilst it is clear this is not the only option available to sheep farmers across the country it is however an alternative to rubber rings and is legal under Scottish Government's requirements up to three months of age. It is worthwhile reminding that rubber rings are only to be used up to seven days of age in Scotland.

Ultimately, farming businesses will need to carefully consider their management practices and evaluate the choices available to make an informed decision on this matter. We await further information from the Animal Welfare Council that was tasked with consulting on the matter of tail docking and castration and eagerly await its report which will be published in the upcoming months.

Health plans

The matter of veterinary signed farm health plan dispensations was also discussed at the QMS meeting and due to incoming changes to European Export Health Certificates (EHC), from the 13th December 2023, there will be the requirement of a veterinary attestation to qualify. With the quality assurance schemes gaining earned recognition, meaning any quality assured livestock automatically meets the new requirements of the export health certificates, QMS is obliged to meet requirements set out under EU EHCs. Thus, it was approved by the QMS Board that the current dispensation will end on the 31st March 2023. QMS is working closely with members, vets and others to ensure this matter can be resolved efficiently. If you feel you are adversely affected, please do not hesitate to let us know and we can work together to overcome issues you may have.

Microbiome driven breeding - the answer to greenhouse gas emissions?

With many eyes focussed on the greenhouse gas emissions of agriculture, interests have led to looking at low methane livestock production in Scotland and how that may be employed going forward via genomic selection. I attended a meeting in early March looking at the genetic correlation to methane emissions and feed efficiency. Research has been carried out using SRUC's Beef and Sheep Research Centre (BSRC) and its respiration chambers to measure methane emissions from cattle and the same in theory can be replicated for sheep. However, these trials have not been carried out as of yet and we are some way off finding an affordable solution which is available to the masses.

Scottish Agricultural Policy – what we now know.

NSA Scotland along with others continue to raise concerns surrounding the Government's stance on co-development and stakeholder engagement with further feedback provided on the nature of the real life scenarios members are facing on a daily basis. It has been highlighted many times that as much notice as possible is necessary to ensure informed decisions are being made now which will serve well in a future agricultural policy setting.

Recent announcements have come in the form of the Agricultural Reform Route Map which sets out early on that at least half of funding for farming and crofting will be targeted outcomes for biodiversity gain and a drive towards low carbon approaches to improve the resilience, efficiency and profitability of the sector. It is worthwhile reminding that farmers and crofters are already operating under conditionality due to cross compliance, greening, implementation of Good Agricultural Environmental Conditions (GAEC) and Statutory Management Requirements (SMR) to name a few. New conditionality is expected to be introduced for the 2025 Single Application Form calendar year to integrate enhanced conditionality on half of all funding by 2025.

In 2026, powers from the new Agriculture Bill will be used to launch the new Enhanced Support which will be directly linked to the contribution farmers and crofters make in delivering for climate and nature. Please note the Scottish Government has clearly stated that those pioneering best practice on these fronts will be recognised and rewarded.

Under the latest Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) programme, a new round of Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF) has been announced as well as support for animal health and welfare with a maximum payment available of £1,250 per keeper over two years. The aim of this newest option is to encourage livestock keepers in Scotland to improve the health and welfare of their sheep and cattle, regardless of the size of their business or current health status.

A total of seven specific interventions for the sheep and cattle sectors will be included, of which five are available to sheep businesses:

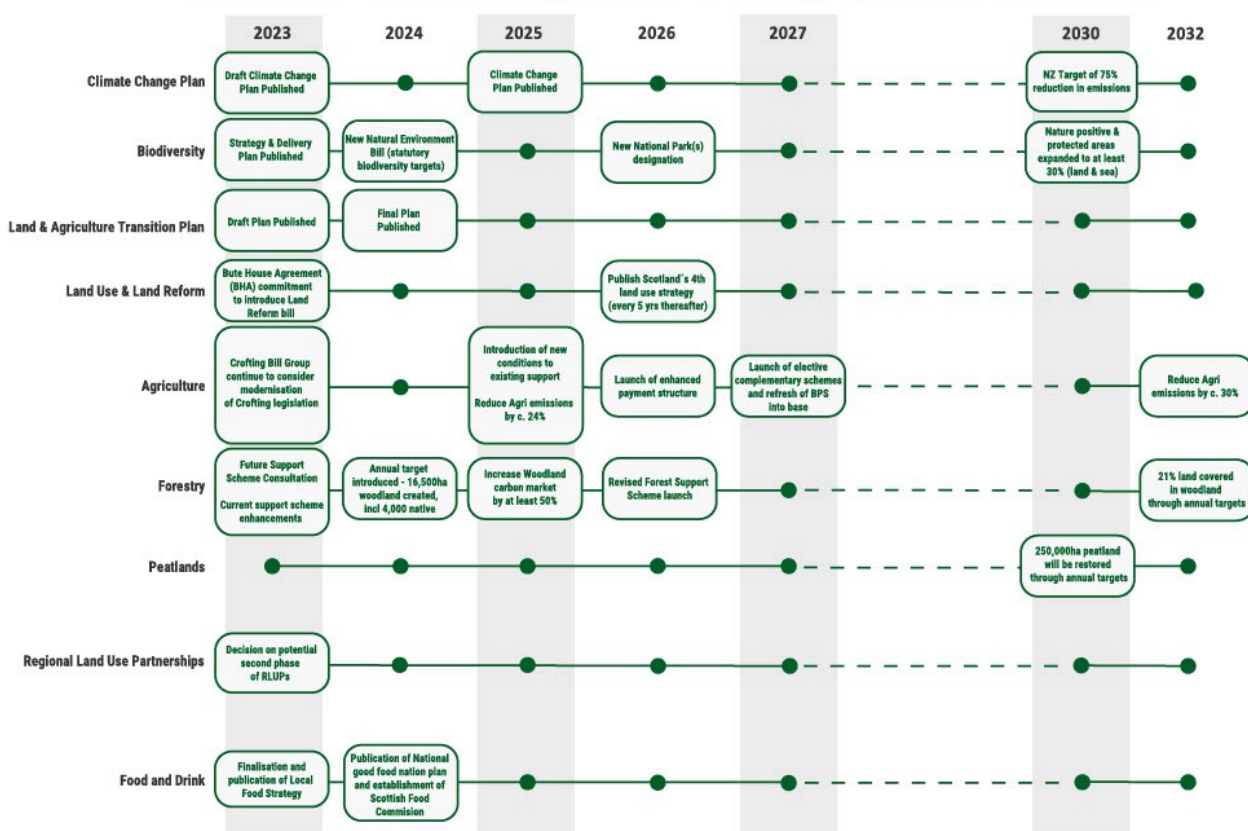
- Screening animals to determine sheep scab status of the whole flock
- Targeted iceberg disease investigation (options: Maedi Visna, Johnes Border Disease, Contagious Lymphadenitis, lung scanning for Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma(OPA))
- Flock lameness assessment by a vet (including Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD))
- Faecal egg counts to identify liver fluke
- Faecal egg counts to identify gastrointestinal parasite worms

Other noteworthy information which has been recently published is the Agriculture Reform List of Measures which details high level outcomes for the sector (livestock) or type of land / habitat (nature and climate) that the enhanced measures are seeking to deliver.

The livestock measures identify areas where good or improving practice are shown to deliver lower emission production. The measures were derived from academic literature and from the farmer-led group work which detailed how emissions could be reduced in cattle herds and sheep flocks. The Scottish Government has stated it will work with industry expertise to further develop detailed actions in each of these areas but it is anticipated the measures will broadly identify nutrition, genetics and health as areas of interest. It is clear further input is needed to ensure appropriate measures are available for sheep producers.

A summary of future anticipated changes is shown below, however, it remains uncertain what budget the Scottish Government will be allocated to carry out the future of agricultural policy and this is causing major concerns amongst stakeholders. Should you need any further information on any of the content above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The wider land and agriculture change plan for Scotland



NSA Scots Sheep 2024
Save the Date!

NSA Scots Sheep will be held on Wednesday

5th June 2024

by kind permission of the Hamilton Family, Aikengall, Dunbar, East Lothian. Make sure to keep an eye out in future editions of this newsletter for more information and insights.



NSA Head Office policy update

by Emma Bradbury (NSA Policy Manager)

Vaccines

NSA will be writing a UK wide letter to ministerial officials to try and find a solution to the nation-wide vaccine shortage. If you would like further detail please email policy@nationalsheep.org.uk. The full letter will be circulated with Regional Managers once available. NSA is continuing to work hard on all fronts to address this shortage and communicate the devastating impacts to the national flock.

Small Abattoirs, crucial to the rural community

NSA has welcomed integral funding for small abattoirs announced by Minister Mark Spencer. The new funding, which will be detailed later this year, will aim to help smaller independent abattoirs in England to add value by supporting local produce availability, providing equipment to support the rearing of rare and native breeds, encouraging rural employment, and safeguarding the food supply chain.

AHDB Market Outlook

AHDB has published the market outlook for sheep meat for the coming year, access the article here - [Lamb market outlook | AHDB](#)

NSA makes case for continuation of Stratified Sheep System

In a recent interview with BBC Radio 4's 'Farming Today' Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive, highlighted the complexities of the upland landscape and how farming in these areas cannot be ignored. During the interview Mr Stocker highlighted the importance of mixed farming systems across the stratified sheep system, utilising lowland and arable ground both to extend the grazing season but also extend the benefits sheep offer in a modern form of transhumance. NSA is working hard to ensure the diverse range of public goods delivered by hill and upland farming is rewarded fairly, ensuring all systems are represented on a level playing field.

NSA Breakfast Club welcomes Defra Director

NSA hosted Defra Director Janet Hughes for the March Breakfast Club, discussing various new schemes and the direction of policy but also accessibility and how these schemes might deliver for food, farming & the environment in the years to come. If you missed it you can visit www.nationalsheep.org.uk/webinars to watch it on demand.



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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](#)



Keep an eye out on the NSA Next Generation website for updates on exciting opportunities for young people in the industry!

[Click here.](#)

Or if you would like to feature yourself in this section, get in touch with grace@nationalsheep.org.uk



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Veterinary Corner

Ed Hill – Thrums Vet Group



As I write this we are on the cusp of lambing really getting going in our area; hopefully by the time this is read in April most Scottish farmers will have broken the back of lambing and it will have been a successful one! The last few weeks we've been busy metabolic profiling – checking the nutritional status of ewes pre-lambing. Results have broadly been good, but we've managed to flag up a few issues and made changes to diets with the hope of avoiding issues with poor colostrum. Ewes generally seem to be half a condition score thinner than this time last year – perhaps the dry summer and limited grass growth at that time is still having an effect.

Vaccine shortages have presented a major challenge for us with footrot, clostridial and orf vaccines all being in short supply recently. We always seem to just about be able to source what we need or a similar alternative, but we've got to be on the ball. Speaking to the pharmaceutical companies there seems to be a number of reasons for shortages but batch failures and Brexit seem to be the leading cause of issues. Looking forward to a summer season of vaccinating lambs for clostridial disease and pneumonia and perhaps lameness in ewes as well, the best policy might be to forward order what is needed where possible and ensure what you need is ready in the fridge.

Future grants can benefit flock health

The recently announced Scottish Government Sustainable Farming grants, making up to £1250 available to sheep and beef farmers over the next two years will be interesting and for sheep farmers, the money can be put towards a variety of uses. This could include the sheep scab blood test to target and rationalise treatment or for screening of cull ewes for diseases like OPA, Johne's and MV – all of which can be a major drag on flock culling rates and mortality – and are much easier dealt with the sooner they are identified in a flock. The grants can also be used towards worm and fluke testing – and critically testing for resistance to anthelmintics. Despite widespread concern about wormer resistance, I find many farms don't know their specific resistance profile, so this should be a great opportunity to find this out and take a more targeted approach.

Be alert to mastitis risk



Late April is often when we will see peak cases of mastitis in ewes, so be alert for this. What has happened over the last couple of years is a cold snap at the end of April or start of May, has for many, coincided with ewes at peak lactation when the demand for milk from the lambs is very high as they're growing fast. Not only does the cold chap and chafe the teats of the ewe, grass growth takes a knock too. This then means the ewes are not producing as much milk, the lambs get hungry and hammer their mums looking for more. This damages the teat ends and infection can then enter the udder, resulting in mastitis. Whilst antibiotic and anti-inflammatory treatment usually prevents the ewe from becoming sick and dying, the damage to the udder is permanent.

In these circumstances, if spring grass is limited, providing a little supplementary forage and concentrate or something like sugarbeet might not be a bad idea, to ensure the nutritional plane of ewes doesn't dip too far, preventing some of these cases. Ultimately if you do have issues, involving your vet should hopefully help prevent a similar thing happening in future years. Investigation may involve taking milk samples, but good recording of cases can be a huge help in deciphering a pattern. Ewe identification, age, breed, date of infection, lambing date and number of lambs would be a great start! These ewes should not be bred from the following year and as such can lead to a very high culling rate within the flock.



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For further information please contact
Grace Reid - Scottish Region Coordinator
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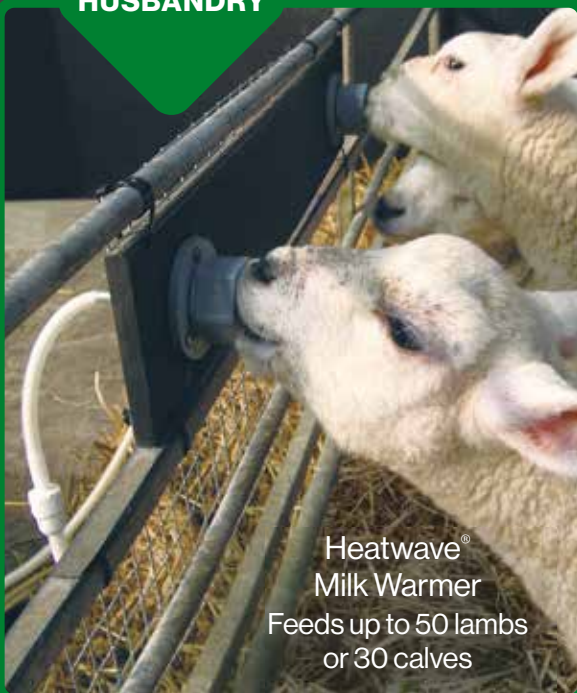
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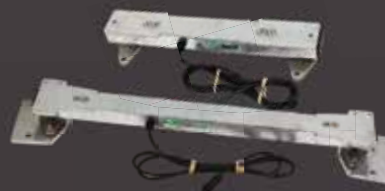
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