

# SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR THE SCOTTISH SHEEP INDUSTRY

OCTOBER 2023 EDITION

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



## CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

by Peter Myles, NSA Scotland Chair

### 'Sit down ya' eejit'

With their glorious purples and greens, the hills are looking magnificent at this time of year. "Sit doon ya' eejit," or other more colourful commands, whistles or phrases, can be heard echoing around the hillsides as the lamb harvest is gathered in.

Over the years, sleepless nights have been had; "Would it be clear from mist? Will we see right up to the tops? Do I have enough helpers? Enough helpers with dogs? Will they behave? Will that thraven ewe and her lambs disappear into the tall bracken like she did the last time? will the sheep run into that awkward bit that's impossible to get them out of?" I think in my time I've had all these scenarios go wrong.

Latterly I would collect as many helpers as I could; neighbours, reluctant offspring, their boyfriends, cousins, visitors from overseas in fact anyone in the days preceding I could cajole into a fine morning's walk in the hills.

Then there was that terrible steep bit, previous boys with real good dogs would tell me:

"I can't come back as my knees won't take that B\*\*\*\* steep bit anymore!" In the end, I had to do that steep bit myself, trouble was, you couldn't see anything either above or below, whereas half a mile away on the neighbouring hillside my next in line is frantically waving to me, giving instructions as they can see the issues perfectly, only for their cries and shouts to be lost to the wind! In these situations, one must trust your dog to have the sense to do the right thing as they have the advantage of smell and hopefully, that should point them in the right direction.

There is something quite satisfying about standing back and admiring how the dogs control things, watching a string of woolly beads being slowly drawn into the field gate by an invisible thread across the hillside. But now with the help of gamekeepers, gathering can be a military type operation, everyone is supplied with radios, in constant contact, and someone in their truck who can see through

powerful binoculars, the whole operation from a distance. He then conducts the proceedings to the finest details, despite the dubious skills of our helpers. However, I do raise an eyebrow when I see a keeper with his firearm on his back, but then, he doesn't have a dog, it's only to fire a shot over the bows to keep the flow of sheep in check.

Despite the advantage of quad bikes, and all the technology we have now, occasionally "Sit doon ya' eejit," can still be heard on the hillsides of my glen today.

### Our Events

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

#### MONDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> – THURSDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

NSA Sheep Health, Wealth and Production online conference

#### WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

NSA Sheep Farmers' Conference, National Conference Centre Birmingham

#### TUESDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER

NSA Scotland Field Day, Fearn Farm, Fearn IV20 1TL, [Register here](#)

#### THURSDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

Lamb for St Andrew's Day Dinner, Carfraemill, Lauder, TD2 6RA [Book your ticket here](#)

## Upcoming Events

# NSA Scotland Field Day set to inspire and inform this Autumn

 **Tuesday 31st October**  
 **10am**  
 **Fearn Farm, IV20 1TL**  
 **By kind permission of the Scott Family**

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Scotland's sheep farmers and crofters are invited to maximise their flock health this Autumn as NSA Scotland, alongside industry experts, welcome all to its first 'NSA Scotland Field Day' on Tuesday 31st October 2023. Taking place at renowned Fearn Farm, on the Easter Ross Peninsula, by kind permission of the Scott Family, the day will allow visitors to view real time demonstrations with the farm's flock of commercial sheep and join numerous industry workshops offering the chance to learn and discuss with fellow sheep producers.

The day, sponsored by Elanco, will address and demonstrate best practice concerning the issue of flock health and welfare from efficient stock handling and data collection to parasite management and disease prevention.

NSA Scotland Chairman Peter Myles comments: "NSA Scotland is very much looking forward to welcoming new and old faces to the region's first Field Day. This will be a fantastic opportunity for sheep producers to gain

*up to date advice from incredibly knowledgeable and experienced sessions in what is a fantastic location with highly respected farm hosts."*

The NSA Scotland Field Day is open to both NSA members and non members and will be free to attend. Those joining the event will have the chance of benefitting from a choice of the following useful and interesting workshops throughout the day:

### "Butchery Demonstration"

led by Gordon Newlands, QMS Brand Development Manager

A live butchery demonstration looking at the differing processing techniques and also a wider discussion on how farming practices influence the end product.

### "Positive Health and Welfare Planning"

led by Lucy Rogers BVMS MRCVS, Foundry Vets.

Discussion of key aspects to consider annually when looking after a flock, resistance to products commonly used, improving the vet and farmer relationship and efficiency vs health and welfare.

### "Maximising Available Resources"

led by Ieuan Davis and Megan Pedley, Agrimin.

Practical demonstration on the importance of minerals and bolusing alongside how to complement grazing with supplements.

### "Best Practice on Farm"

led by Elanco and Techion UK Ltd.

This session will cover the NSA Zolvix Exchange and best practice management of internal parasites. It will also include a live demonstration of the use of diagnostic tools such as FecPak.

### "Genetics and Marketing"

led by Neil and Debbie McGowan, Incheoch Farm.

An interactive session exploring the main aspects of improving your flock through genetic selection and sustainable practices alongside how the differing options of marketing yourself and your flock.

Mr Myles continues: "The varied programme of the day we hope, will appeal to a wide range of sheep producers. And of course, it will be a great opportunity to meet up with farming friends before the winter arrives."

The day will conclude with a live cookery demonstration and lamb BBQ, and a chance to network with fellow attendees.

### "Looking after your business"

led by Virgin Money, Stephen Buchan, Shearwell Data and John Scott, FarmStrong Scotland

- Business planning – things to consider when setting up, financial options, benchmarking
- Sheep identification, and the collection and utilisation of data
- Ensuring YOU are fit to farm

Although the event is free, advance registration is required online or by contacting NSA Scottish Region Coordinator, Grace Reid via email [grace@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:grace@nationalsheep.org.uk) or telephone 07787 142858.

**REGISTER HERE**





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References: 1. The production costs of anthelmintic resistance in sheep managed within a monthly preventive drench program I.A. Sutherland, J. Shaw, R.J. Shaw Veterinary Parasitology 171 (2010) 300–304.

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# Investigating Animal Health and Welfare in Scotland

At the end of August NSA Scotland was pleased to offer an opportunity in conjunction with the University of Glasgow School of Veterinary Medicine to take part in a post mortem and diagnosis workshop.

This was a valuable chance to experience the investigatory process of why an animal may have been ill-thriven before death and what preventative measures should be deployed across the rest of the flock to ensure improved health and productivity.

Throughout the day attendees saw a variety of thought-provoking outcomes with some very unexpected occurrences. NSA Scottish Region Chairman Peter Myles comments: *“It was such a unique opportunity to get an understanding right to the heart of so many illnesses and sheep ailments provided by the talented team at Glasgow Vet School. Many discussions were had throughout the day with clear knowledge transfer to all attendees who agreed they found the day extremely useful and interesting. Having experienced the day for myself, I can appreciate how important it is for this facility to exist and the value it has to those studying and practicing in the future.”*

NSA Scotland would again like to thank all who spoke on the day for their time and valuable expertise.



The Scottish Farmer



## NSA Scotland attends Kelso Ram Sales

NSA members and those with sheep industry interests attending this year's Royal Highland Show (Thursday 22nd - Sunday 25th June 2023) are invited to visit the NSA Scotland marquee situated on Avenue M, stand number 1(B), directly beside the MacRobert Shearing Theatre for a well-earned seat and refreshments (see map below). We can be found directly beside all the action of the Golden Shears World Shearing and Wool Handling competition in the sheep village!

The aim of the NSA Scotland marquee is to cover all aspects of sheep farming, whether it be promotion of our heritage breeds, housing the RHS Fleece competition, a place to seek information on genetic advancements or a place for children and those of all ages to come to learn all about the fantastic range of sheep breeds found in Scotland. Not only is this for the sheep industry itself but also provides a dual purpose to educate the general public on how the sheep industry caters for the needs of wider society, economy and the environment.

A substantial range of trade stands relating to the sheep industry including those showcasing breed societies, feed and mineral companies, breeding companies and those who are innovative with their development of new products and services for the wider sheep industry. Each trade stand is unique in its offering and as such provides great diversity for those entering the NSA marquee.

## NSA Scotland Chairman oversees NSA and Moredun webinar - Tick control and louping ill

Make sure to [rewatch a recent webinar](#) on tick control and latest developments on a louping ill vaccine chaired by NSA Scotland Chairman Peter Myles who was joined by experts Matt Colston (vet), Beth Wells (Moredun) and Simon Thorp (Bracken Control Group). Discussion topics included how to control ticks, their management and treatment options in the flock alongside vaccinations in the future and how bracken control is essential to reduce tick habitats and why emergency authorisation of chemicals is imperative.







# SCOTLAND



# LAMB FOR ST ANDREWS DAY DINNER

## Thursday 30th November 2023

Carfraemill, Lauder, TD2 6RA    Doors open 7pm



## Celebrate Lamb for St Andrews Day with NSA Scotland!

NSA Scotland look forward to welcoming you to the Lamb for St Andrews Day Dinner which will be held on the evening of Thursday 30th November 2023. Following the success of the inaugural dinner held in 2022, we are delighted to again host more than 100 sheep industry members who will join together to celebrate Lamb for St Andrews Day and all it stands for.



Doors will open at 7pm where you will be invited to order your drinks from the bar before promptly sitting down at 7.30pm. The meal will be preceded by a welcome from NSA Scotland Interim Chair, Peter Myles followed by after dinner speakers.

Following the meal, there will be tea, coffee and shortbread whilst the raffle is drawn and you will be then free to network with other guests. To be in with a chance of winning a selection of top prizes on the night,

please do remember to bring along some cash to insert in envelopes which will be provided on the table.

It promises to be a fantastic evening and we look forward to seeing friends old and new. Please note that **tickets will only be available online** and there will be a limited number of ten tables of ten placings. Tickets are priced at £37.50 +VAT.

Should you have any queries, please contact NSA Scottish Region Coordinator Grace Reid who will be able to assist where possible [grace@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:grace@nationalsheep.org.uk) / 07787 142858.

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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](#)



## Coordinator's Comment

by Grace Reid,  
NSA Scottish Region Coordinator

### Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill

Scottish agriculture's wait is over in terms of seeing the first of 'landmark legislation' to introduce a new framework of support to replace the current Common Agricultural Policy. Dubbed to 'support farmers and crofters to produce food more sustainably, work with nature and reduce emissions', Scotland is following in the steps of England, Northern Ireland and Wales to get to grips with new legislation. The **Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill** was published at the end of September and whilst NSA Scotland welcomes the approach to enabling low carbon, efficient, productive, resilient farming businesses, it is imperative that food production remains a priority and there is a recognition that agriculture is not the sole answer to the many climate change and biodiversity plights. Policy makers have a key opportunity to support Scottish farmers and crofters not only in the short term but also further into the future. We need to see a farm approach that recognises that agricultural businesses plan years ahead and need answers now.

Sheep farmers and other land based sectors have the right to know what is coming in the long-term and be fully supported for the critical work they carry out on a daily basis. Businesses have had to operate in the dark for too long whilst we have waited for this Bill and need transparency and a clear sense of direction as to where we proceed

from here. Not only do we have a duty to protect the positive practices in which our flocks already deliver for the wider environment and, therefore, society as a whole, keeping food and farming at the centre of all future policy decisions is imperative, ensuring the environment is prioritised through farming rather than replacing it. Our future generations will look back at this opportunity to change legislation and it is vital we do not compromise their ability to deliver sustainable food production, enhance the resilience of farming practices and meet environmental and climate change goals.

All implemented powers and policies should be fair, simplistic, easy to understand and have a practical approach. NSA Scotland has responded in full to two previous Scottish Government consultations on this topic alongside many discussions with MSP's and other industry stakeholders. We will now begin to look in detail at what is included within this Bill and engage with our sheep farming members on its content. I urge all members to take part in the next phase of public participation, which has promised to provide a way to help design and develop the new framework included within the Agricultural Reform Programme. Topics such as changes to the 2025 Basic Payment Scheme, Whole Farm Plan, regions and measures are to be covered. **[Click here to find out more.](#)**

### AWC Castration and Tail Docking

The long awaited report on castration and tail docking carried out by the UK Animal Welfare Committee has been recently published by Scottish Government. NSA on the whole is encouraged by some of the recommendations made and urge UK governments to now consider what next steps will be made following the report to advance UK sheep health and welfare. Whilst many rumours have been circulating around the place of rubber rings in the future, NSA Scotland have been assured

that there will be no major changes in legislation without industry consultation and input. NSA does still consider it important that the fundamental reasons for tail docking and castration to improve the welfare of stock, including preventing flystrike and unwanted pregnancies must not be ignored in any future recommendations. In addition to this, it is imperative that any future approach is consistent across the four nations and that there are no barriers to trade across the domestic borders or losses in terms of best practice. **[Please click here](#)** if you wish to read the report in full.

### Sea Eagles in Scotland

On the subject of predation, NSA Scotland has recently written alongside the Scottish Blackface Sheep Breeders Association and SAC Consulting Oban to the Scottish Government expressing serious concerns, not only regarding loss of income and future sustainability of some hill farms but also, of the mental health of those trying to make a living from sheep farming in sea eagle predatory areas. The letter, which was sent to the First Minister, Humza Yousaf MSP, Gillian Martin MSP, Minister of Energy and Environment, Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and Francesca Osowska, Chief Executive NatureScot amongst others, seeks guidance and reassurance that farmers and crofters and the threat to their livelihoods from these apex predators will not be forgotten in the new bill. It also states the importance of Scotland as a nation deserving to have the right to see all species of biodiversity, however outlining that it is the national flock and their keepers who maintain the landscape and provide countless benefits to society and without whom, the hills would look very different indeed.

**[Please click on this link](#)** to complete a short survey so we can better understand the impacts on your business and your thoughts about the current Sea Eagle Management Scheme (closing date 11th November 2023). This will then enable us to push for a system that is fit for purpose and better supports you.





## NSA Scotland Predation Survey 2023

Many thanks must go to NSA members and the wider sheep industry for engaging with the NSA Scotland predator surveys in 2023 and also 2020. It is imperative that we have evidence of predator incidents and attacks to ensure that when we are making the case to policy makers and those outside of agriculture, they can see for themselves the devastating daily impacts that are inflicted on our national flock and those who tend to it.



**Summary results** - Over half of the responses in 2023 came from the Highland, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders and Aberdeenshire areas which is consistent to responses seen in 2020.

Similarly, it was found across both surveys that a majority of land owners responded and covered 500+Ha of land with 1000+ breeding ewes. In 2020, 90% of respondents had seen an increase in the number of predator attacks in their area in the past three years and in 2023 this number fell to 85%. Reasons for this have been an increase in the area of forestry surrounding the farm or croft which is not effectively managed or kept; lack of control on certain species and decrease in people to do so which as allowed the population to get out of control; difficulty in being granted a licence; an increase in land abandonment and rewilding projects. Foxes, crows, badgers and ravens were the main offenders when it came to predation with accounts of Sea Eagles, dogs and black backed gulls also preying on the Scottish flock.

Overwhelmingly, the time of year most losses were encountered both in 2020 and 2023 were at lambing time between birth and the first week of lambing with many occurrences into the first three weeks of life. However, many respondents still reported having witnessed incidents taking place throughout the sheep farming year on healthy animals with no pattern to time of day or night on in bye and hill ground.

Multiple accounts to change stockmanship practices to prevent incidents with examples of increased stock checking, moving to

lambing indoors, setting traps and use of noise deterrents, seeking help from local gamekeepers, improving fencing and also use of a livestock guardian dog in one case were also given. In addition to this, many respondents have reported predator attacks to NatureScot, Police Scotland, local gamekeepers and RSPB however there had been very few 'success stories' in resolving the matter at hand with comments such as: 'supportive but no action taken', 'unhelpful', 'not satisfactory', 'slow response' and 'complete denial then ignored' received. In general mixed responses were given when asked if attempts had been made to gain a licence to control predators from NatureScot as many felt that they were put off with the process and length of time to gain a licence coupled with the inability to effectively remove the problem at hand under licence due to the number of predators involved. A small number of responses did confirm that they were able to secure a licence.

We are all aware of the financial implications of losing productive animals in a flock with losses ranging from £0 to thousands. In 2023, the majority of responses identified that they endured losses of £1000+ which was closed followed by those who lost £500 - £999 and £2,000+. Compensation which is reflective of actual losses was identified as a factor which may help moving forward, however species control was the main consistent answer given when asked how sheep farming enterprises could be supported further. Many responses made the point that financial compensation does not replace bloodlines and the emotional toll and stress on the farmer or crofter involved when they are unable to protect their flock from a known danger. In addition to this, local wildlife and biodiversity were identified as priorities suffering at the hands of predation with calls for: more clear and timely guidance on all changes to agricultural support and how to control species which could not be legally destroyed; more trust for what people in the ground are seeing and also better communication with the general public on the consequences of reintroducing apex predators to the Scottish countryside.

Interestingly in 2023, an additional question was included to cover species reintroduction with particular focus on the potential of a Lynx reintroduction due to the attention it had been given by Scottish Government, the media and wider channels in early 2023. When asked how concerned respondents were on a scale of 1 (less than concerned) - 100 (very concerned), the average number in 2023 was 90 which signifies a great level of concern by the Scottish sheep industry members. Predator control is a vital tool when it comes to conservation, wildlife management and also food production. We continue to see renewed efforts in terms of reintroduction of species which are gaining interest at all levels of government and the wider public no matter to the detriment of the Scottish sheep industry. The case was made by many respondents that many of these 'reintroduced species' were made extinct for a reason and that the future of the Scottish flock is sitting very precariously in many areas of Scotland due to predation.



## NSA Scots Sheep 2024

# Save the Date!

## NSA Scots Sheep will be held on WEDNESDAY 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

# Next Generation matters



Lewis Gallier

**Contract shepherding is not an occupation I envisaged for myself when working in engineering after leaving school. Although three years after becoming self-employed, I have started my own flock of ewes and run a contract shepherding agreement alongside providing additional labour for local farming businesses. It certainly has been a fair change of lifestyle.**

I currently farm 40 North Country Park type Cheviot ewes. Half of the flock is put to a pure tup to produce homebred replacements and pedigree tups, with the remaining flock put to a Bluefaced Leicester tup to produce Cheviot Mules for the commercial breeding market.

The stock is kept on a mix of owned and rented ground on seasonal lets. I selected the North Country Cheviot breed for my flock as I strongly believe there is great demand for both the cross bred and pure-bred progeny of it. The breed is hardy and has longevity, producing quality stock to meet market demands.

The contract shepherding agreement allows me to manage 500 organic ewes on a nearby estate. These ewes are bred to produce finished organic lambs for market straight to slaughter.

Since taking on the contract agreement, I now predominantly spend most of my time around sheep. I organise my work weekly and aim to use my time efficiently between meeting the needs of the flocks I manage and that of the local farmers who are seeking a hand. This provides me with a varied work schedule allowing me to learn on the job and implement if I feel something is useful.

Not coming from a farm and having no prior farming experience is one of the biggest challenges I have faced since coming into the industry. But having the determination to learn and succeed has been the driving force on getting me to where I am today. Working as an extra hand on various local farms has enabled me to establish relationships with farmers who have been open to share their knowledge and experience on various aspects of the agricultural industry. They are also willing to give a helping hand to get me going on my own ventures which has been beneficial.

Being young in the industry today is a great opportunity as I believe the future is bright for agriculture. With the average age of those working in the industry increasing, I think there will be more share farming/contract farming agreements available giving young people an opportunity to get their foot into the industry without the large capital investment required to get started on their own. The support schemes and industry talks that are available through different organisations such as NSA are a great way for young people to get involved and learn something new, develop their knowledge and find help from industry professionals.

Having just recently returned from the SAYFC Agri and Rural Affairs Study tour to Canada. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience, learning about various enterprises within Canadian agriculture and comparing them to here in Scotland. All of this shows there are many opportunities available to young people with right determination and willingness will learn.

## Young farmer focus

**Name:** Lewis Gallier

**Age:** 26

**Location:** Inverurie, Aberdeenshire

- New entrant sheep farmer
- Works as a contract shepherd of 500 organic ewes
- Runs his own flock of 40 North Country Park type Cheviots





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# Veterinary Corner

Ed Hill – Thrums Vet Group

As I write I have just returned from a superb couple of days at the annual Sheep Vet Society conference, this year held in Glasgow. It was great to be able to demonstrate to the delegates from across the country and further afield both the unique opportunities and challenges we face as sheep farmers, and their vets, in Scotland.

We were treated to some excellent talks from the cutting edge of science looking at the development of vaccines for scab and worms, through to a very entertaining workshop from The Sheep Game and Farm Vet Films on top tips and pitfalls of using social media to promote our practices and farms. Sheep vets tend to be a quiet, reserved bunch but the after-dinner ceilidh showed a different, unexpected side to many of us! As ever with these events, it's great to catch up with old friends, and I've returned home feeling re-enthused for all things sheep vetting!

Back at the practice we are currently full swing in tup fertility testing, which has now become standard practice on many units who are looking to really push both production and efficiency. So far this year appears to be very similar to previous years with approximately 1 in 8 tups being found to be not up to standard on the day of testing. By testing 4-6 weeks in advance of tups going out this gives us time to source replacements if required and/or re-test.



The other thing I've been getting stuck into over the past month is tweaking my approach to health planning with a few of my farmers. This new approach, now coined "Dynamic Health Planning", breaks down the annual health plan into quarterly, shorter catch ups. Rather than reviewing a whole year's production and health risks in one go we split it down to become seasonally relevant and contemporary. September and October are a great time to start the process, as for many it marks the start of the production cycle and we can set ambitious but realistic targets for the year ahead. We then plan for and mitigate any risks that will stop us hitting our targets for the next three months. We then meet up every three months or so to review how we're getting on with those targets and again plan for the coming few months. These meetings should typically last no longer than 20 minutes or so and can often be fitted in after doing some work on farm or between other visits. So far, my farmers and I have found this a hugely valuable way of breaking down the health planning process into something highly enjoyable and focused with tangible results.

In terms of things to look out for over the coming months, I would be thinking about fluke and worms in store/replacement lambs. If we turn our minds back to this time last year, fluke was predicted, and indeed turned out, to be much less of an issue than in previous years. This was because of the hot, dry summer we had that year. This year the summer was anything but hot and dry, so expect fluke to be much more of a problem and an earlier one too this year. Target treatment by using parasite forecasts or even better, by blood sampling batches of lambs (discuss the specifics of this with your vet). Many of the products that are useful at this time of year carry a reasonable meat withhold, so near-fat lambs should be grazed on low risk pasture (dry, well drained, no natural water margins) where possible. Again, due to the wet summer, gut worms have been more prevalent. We will continue to see worms causing problems into late autumn and early winter in store and replacement lambs. Where possible lambs should be moved onto safer grazing for winter – this may be brassicas or grazing away from home. Lambs should be worm egg sampled prior to moving on and treated if required. If you haven't already used one of the newer classes of wormer then now is the time to do so, to help remove any resistant worms that may have built up in the animals during the grazing season. Remember where possible to always perform a follow up worm egg count to ensure the treatment has worked. And remember that any animals returning from winter grazing should be treated as incoming animals and quarantined and treated to remove any resistant worms and scab that they may have picked up whilst away.

## Office Bearers



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



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



**Euan Emslie**  
(Event Organiser  
and Secretariat)



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



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# Shearwell Data

Livestock Systems

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