SBRT
Sheep Breeders Round Table

Sheep Breeders Round Table 2026

BREEDING SOLUTIONS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Biennial conference
Friday 20–Sunday 22 November 2026

Radisson Blu Hotel East Midlands,
Castle Donington, Derby DE74 2TZ

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Breeding solutions for a changing world

The biannual SBRT conference is a great opportunity for everyone in the industry to come together to discuss the latest developments in sheep genetics and their impacts, the whole way through the lamb supply chain.

We are delighted to introduce our programme of speakers who will share their insight with you over the weekend. We are in no doubt that the weekend will be inspiring, delivering answers to the many questions that surround the lamb industry, such as profitability, sustainability, welfare, environment and carbon reduction.

It is a great privilege to be able to put on a conference at the forefront of the industry, helping to shape its future. We look forward to welcoming you there.



Chair and speaker biographies





George Fell, SBRT Chair and pedigree breeder - Welcome to conference

George Fell is a prominent Yorkshire livestock producer farming with his father, Stephen, on their family farm just south of York. Their operations include: 550 pedigree Meatlinc ewes lambing in April, producing around 120 Meatlinc rams annually. They operate a grass based system with all progeny performance recorded via Signet, aiming to maximise grassland productivity through improved management and genetics suited to the system. 300 dairy cross calves are bought each year, which graze alongside sheep on a mixed grazing platform. They have a 32,000-bird free-range egg unit and a turf business of 800 acres.

Alongside his farming business and following his Grandfather's footsteps, albeit some years later, George became Chair of the Sheep Breeders Round Table in November 2024. Henry Fell, George's Grandfather, chaired the first SBRT conference in late 80's.

George is an elected AHDB Beef & Lamb Council member and is Chair of the Sheep Genetics Advisory Forum, contributing both his practical farming experience and sector wide expertise to act as the voice of levy paying farmers, helping decide on the sector's programme of work, recommended levy rates, and strategies to support competitiveness, sustainability and profitability in beef and lamb production.



Janet Roden, Innovis - Session 1 Chair

Dr Janet Roden has worked in the area of sheep genetics for many years and is part of the genetics team at Innovis. She is passionate about bringing scientific findings to practical sheep breeding and has recently headed up the Breed for CH4nge project that has developed breeding tools to help the UK sheep industry reduce the carbon footprint of lamb.



Nicola Lambe, SRUC

Dr Nicola Lambe works for SRUC and has around 30 years' experience working on sheep research projects, in different sheep systems and breeds. She is based at SRUC's Hill and Mountain Research Centre and manages the SRUC GreenSheep facilities, which are used to quantify a variety of new sustainability traits, such as methane emissions and feed efficiency, for use in research and commercial sheep breeding.



Karolina Kaseja, SRUC

Dr Karolina Kaseja, Research Fellow at Scotland's Rural College specialising in agricultural and animal genetics. Based in the Beef and Sheep Research Centre, her work currently focuses on advancing sustainable livestock practices, such as breeding low-methane sheep to support global food security.



Joana Lima, SRUC

Joana is a Research Associate at SRUC, specialising in animal microbiomes. Her research explores how microbial communities influence livestock health, productivity and environmental sustainability, with a particular focus on the rumen microbiome, feed efficiency and metabolic performance in ruminants, including cattle and sheep.



Emma Dods, Innovis

Working within the genetics teams at Innovis Breeding Sheep whilst completing a PhD, Emma focuses on the application of sheep genetics to improve flock sustainability and efficiency. Her recent work has centred on developing the 'Breed for CH4nge Index' through the Breed for CH4nge project. This new environmental index aims to support UK maternal sheep breeds by improving flock efficiency whilst reducing the carbon footprint of UK sheep production systems.



Karl Behrendt, Harper Adams University

Karl is a Professor of Agricultural Systems Economics and Innovation at Harper Adams University, specialising in farming systems modelling to support evidence-based decision making. His work on the Innovate UK Breed for CH4nge project combines genetic trend analysis, gene-flow modelling and whole-farm simulation to evaluate how breeding decisions influence flock productivity, profitability, resilience and the carbon footprint of sheep production over the long term.



Emma McGowan, QMS and SBRT Committee - Session 2 Chair

Emma is the Genetics Specialist at Quality Meat Scotland, having completed a PhD in Agriculture and Food Security at the University of Edinburgh with a focus on quantitative genetics. Her role covers the support of maternal and terminal trait recording and development for sheep and beef populations. She works with stakeholders to support uptake of genetic technologies across Scotland. In addition she undertakes additional research projects and genetic analyses for the development of the industry.



Samuel Boon, AHDB

Sam is the Manager of AHDB's Signet Breeding Services, delivering the National Sheep Evaluations. In recent decades Sam's team has established multi-breed evaluations, supported the development of enviro-indexes, run a national progeny test for Terminal Sire breeds (RamCompare) and launched the UK's first genomic evaluations.



Richard Rossiter, Pedigree breeder – Huish Flock

Richard is a sixth-generation, full-time farmer and owner of Burton Farm on the South Devon coast, where he farms 1,100 acres. The farm is home to the Huish Flock of Poll Dorsets, Suffolks and Hampshire Downs, alongside breeding for Innovis and a commercial beef herd.



Pourya Davoudi, AHDB

Pourya joined AHDB in 2025 as a Geneticist within the Animal Breeding & Product Quality team, where he works across both beef and sheep sectors.



Melissa Marr, Roslin Institute

Dr Melissa Marr is a research scientist at the Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh, specialising in functional genomics of livestock and wildlife. Her interests lie in the use of genomic data for breed conservation and performance improvement. .



Aisling O' Mahony, Sheep Ireland

Aisling O'Mahony is a Senior Business Analyst with Sheep Ireland and the primary contact for the organization's 18 hosted breed societies. She supports breeders and societies with flockbook and pedigree recording, leads genomic and parentage investigations, and contributes to breeder-facing communications and information resources that support genetic improvement across the Irish sheep sector.

George Fell - SBRT Chair - Welcome to conference



Kim Matthews, AHDB - Session 3 Chair

Kim graduated in Agriculture with Animal Science and pursued a career in meat science, joining the Meat and Livestock Commission in 1992. He now heads the Animal Breeding and Product Quality team at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). He is a past president and Trustee of the British Society of Animal Science, member of the UKGLE Committee and Chair of the ICAR Beef Working Group.



Harriet Bunning, AHDB

Harriet is the Lead Animal Genetics Expert for Beef at AHDB. She studied for her PhD at SRUC and the University of Edinburgh and now she manages the National Beef Evaluations, including developing indexes to select more efficient animals.



Ann McLaren, SRUC

Ann is a researcher based at SRUC's Hill & Mountain Research Centre. Her main areas of interest are sheep genetics and production. She is currently involved in several projects investigating potential new traits for sheep breeding programmes, including those associated with reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the use of different technologies to improve flock efficiency.



Liz Genever, Independent consultant

Liz Genever has a strong technical background and works with beef and sheep farmers across the UK. Her knowledge covers livestock production, grazing systems and sustainable farming techniques. She is a farmer on a mixed farm in south Lincolnshire and has an Australian Cattle Dog called Scout.



Sam Boon, AHDB - Session 4 Chair (see session 2 for further details)



Simon Lillico, Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh

Simon is a researcher within the Roslin Institute of the University of Edinburgh. His research interests focus on gene editing and transgenesis in pigs and sheep, with the aim of creating accurate models for biomedicine or to investigate additional options for agriculture. He will describe their recent research on gene editing sheep to improve resistance to heat stress.



Will Sawday, High Country Romneys

Will farms with his mum, brother and wife. They run 1500 ewes, of which 700 are commercial Romneys and 800 are recorded Romneys, Romtex and Suftex. Using imported genetics from New Zealand, they select for vigour, internal and external parasite resistance and production. Their sheep enterprise is being developed to meet future demand with minimal input. They also rear 1200 calves/year and have 100 store cattle in the Game Changer program.



Tim White, SIG Ltd - Exlana breeder

With over 35 years' experience of breeding and performance recording shedding sheep Tim works for SIG Ltd as part of the Exlana stud breeding program, supplying proven shedding genetics to UK, EU, NZ & the USA.



Hayden Woolley, Low Footprint Lamb

Hayden has 4,000 outdoor lambing ewes including 2,000 ewes recorded for Low Footprint Lamb utilising Zoetis Shepherd ultra DNA parentage service.



Liz Genever, Independent consultant - Session 5 Chair (see session 3 for further details)



Mark Ferguson (Ferg), neXtgen Agri

Ferg is CEO of neXtgen Agri International, a Trans-Tasman livestock genetics consulting business based in Christchurch, New Zealand, specialising in evidence-based breeding strategies for sheep and beef cattle producers. Holding a PhD in genetics and with hands-on breeding experience since he was 14, Ferg leads a team of independent specialists delivering practical genetics consulting across Australia and New Zealand. He drives innovation through leading research, development, and extension projects that translate cutting-edge science into on-farm outcomes, and hosts the Head Shepherd podcast. Outside of work, Ferg is taking on TwentySix2000, a challenge to walk or run 2,000km across 2026 to raise funds for brain cancer research, and enjoys fishing and the outdoors.



Dave Rendle, Woodburn Poll Dorset

Dave is the managing partner of Woodburn Farm Partnership, a family-owned 260 acre, upland farm on the southern edge of Exmoor. The farm's primary focus is breeding performance recorded Poll Dorset sheep with additional income coming from environmental schemes and nature restoration. The Woodburn Flock was founded in 2022 following acquisition of the farm the previous year. Dave achieved his childhood ambition to breed sheep later in life having had to work as an equine vet for 20 years to develop the funds to do so. Both he and his wife have a veterinary background and are motivated by maintaining high standards of health and welfare and primarily base breeding decisions on objective measures of health, performance and efficiency.



Sian & Llion Jones, Moelogan Welsh Mountain

Sian and Llion run an upland family farm in North Wales. Their flock focus is on breeding efficient, resilient maternal sheep that thrive from forage without purchased concentrates. Relatively new in their performance recording journey, breeding decisions are now guided by the use of data and genetics with an aim to establish a flock with ewes consistently rearing quality lambs, using breeding traits that deliver long-term commercial benefit. They are involved in the Welsh Sheep Genetics Programme, alongside research into traits including methane emissions and parasite resistance.



Bryce MacKellar, Lleyn breeder – EMD flock

Bryce is a second generation arable and sheep farmer working in partnership with his wife Kate and parents, James and Isabel. The MacKellar family have farmed on a FBT tenancy at Chartley since 1993. The farm covers 905 acres of lowland land which is home to a flock 700 self-replacing, low maintenance, MV accredited Lleyn ewes and 200 ewe lambs. All lambs are sold deadweight. The business has a diverse mix or cropping milling wheat, milling oats, oilseed rape, spring barley, cover crops, herbal leys, fodder beet and permanent pasture with the sheep having the opportunity to graze all the crops at some point in the year. He aims to run a happy, healthy and profitable family farming business.





Matt Harding, Pedigree breeder and SBRT committee - Session 6 Chair

Matt is a partner in their family farm business at Bentley Suffolks. They breed performance recorded, forage fed Suffolk, Aberblack & Aberfield rams, specifically for the UK lamb industry.
He is the Vice Chairman of the Sheep Breeders Round Table committee.



Laura Eyles, AHDB

Laura graduated from Harper Adams in 2020 and later joined AHDB's Signet Breeding Services team as a Senior Breeding Specialist assisting in the delivery of the national sheep genetic evaluations. This includes leading on much of Signet's genomic work.



Andrew Walton, Pedigree breeder – Rainbow Charollais

With his wife, Jan, Andrew has developed a mixed Cheshire farm specialising in pedigree livestock: performance-recorded Charollais sheep, Duroc pigs, and British White and Bazadaise cattle. He holds a degree in agriculture and postgraduate qualifications in meat science and world-class manufacturing, alongside 30 years in leadership roles across food industries. Their "conception to consumption" consultancy applies his expertise in continuous improvement and financial control to farming and food businesses.



Sean Godfrey, Sheep Ireland

Sean is a Senior Technical Analyst with Sheep Ireland, leading the analysis and validation of data used in the organization's genetic and genomic evaluations. His work ensures accurate breeding values are delivered to farmers and breed societies, helping to transform millions of commercial and pedigree records into practical breeding decisions that drive real genetic progress across the national flock.



Amey Vaughan, AHDB

Amey is Senior Animal Health and Welfare Scientist at AHDB. She has a PhD in Animal Science focussing on nutritional biochemistry in sheep which combined her degree in Biochemistry and sheep farming background. In her role at AHDB, Amey predominantly manages ruminant projects, including the Challenge Sheep project.



Zoe Lloyd, AHDB

Zoe is an Animal Health and Welfare Scientist at AHDB based in the ruminant sectors. She has a degree in Bioveterinary Science, a Master's in Microbiology and comes from a beef and sheep farming background. At AHDB her main areas of work include technical input on the industry wide Battle Bluetongue Campaign and the Challenge Sheep project.



Emily Clark, EMBL's European Bioinformatics Institute and SBRT Committee - Session 7 Chair

Emily leads the Genome Analysis team at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory's European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI), where she coordinates genome resources for agricultural species, including sheep. Previously she was a group leader at the Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh where she led research focused on small ruminant genomics.



Rachael Tarlinton, Nottingham University

Rachael is Professor of Veterinary Virology at the University of Nottingham. She has had a 25 year career as both veterinarian and researcher in Australia, the UK and Germany (and prior to that grew up on a cattle farm in Southern Australia). She is also a European and RCVS specialist in Veterinary Microbiology. She currently leads a large UKRI research grant on genetic resistance to Maedi Visna in Sheep and is also a member of the Ruminant Health and Welfare technical working group on Bluetongue. She is a facilitator for the Innovate UK "Adopt" programme for farmer led research. She also works on viruses in other species ranging from koalas to foxes to cats and teaches veterinary and animal sciences students public health and infectious diseases at Nottingham.



Eric Morgan, Queens University Belfast

Eric is a veterinary parasitologist and Diplomate of the European Veterinary Parasitology College. After qualifying from Cambridge in 1997 and a short stint in mixed practice in Wales he completed a PhD at Warwick and Imperial College London on parasite epidemiology, joining Bristol Veterinary School in 2003. There he further developed teaching and research interests in parasite transmission, moving to Queen's University Belfast in 2017. He is co-author of more than 200 peer-reviewed papers, seeking especially to understand the impact of weather and climate change on parasite infection patterns and how these can be managed in sheep and other species.



Heather Stevenson, SRUC Veterinary Services

After working in veterinary practice in Ayrshire, Cumbria and New Zealand Heather joined what is now SRUC Veterinary Services in 2005 as a Veterinary Investigation Officer. Her role revolves around disease surveillance liaising with veterinary practices in south-west Scotland, reporting laboratory results, carrying out postmortem examinations of livestock and investigating unusual disease outbreaks.



Dave Bartley, Moredun Research Institute

Dave is a Principal Investigator at Moredun Research Institute and has specialised in veterinary parasitology for over 30 years. His current interests are in improving diagnostics and control strategies for roundworm infections of livestock. The participants will get an insight in to the uses of faecal egg counting for livestock roundworm monitoring and anthelmintic efficacy testing and why species identification of the parasites is important and how it can help in decision making.



Agata Delnicka, Moredun Research Institute

Agata is a Postdoctoral Research Scientist at Moredun Research Institute, working on a project called SPARC, which aims to work with relevant stakeholders to carry out research, including applied parasitology, to promote sustainable roundworm control in grazing ruminants. Her main interests lie in disease ecology and parasitology, seeking to use knowledge and skills in these areas to lead to applied, real-world impacts to improve animal and human health. In the past, she worked at the University of Edinburgh researching tick and tick-borne pathogens in wild wood mice and gastrointestinal parasites of Red Deer. She completed a placement at the UK Health Security Agency in the Medical Entomology and Zoonoses Ecology group investigating the distribution of native mosquito species in England and Wales and assisted in surveillance for invasive mosquito species.



Mark Young, Livestock Genetics Consultant - Session 8 Chair

Mark has spent the last 10 years working in the UK agri-tech centres where his special focus has been livestock. Previously he spent 15 years as geneticist for Beef + Lamb New Zealand delivering the NZ sheep genetic improvement system, SIL, to the sheep industry there. Before that he was a scientist with SRUC in Edinburgh using CT scanning to look at the genetics of carcass growth in sheep. For Mark, demystifying technology, paired with understanding farmer needs, is the key to delivering innovations that are relevant, deliver value and will be widely picked up. He has particular interests in estimating genetic merit and devising breeding goals for sheep and beef cattle, underpinned by accessible genetic information that is relevant and easy to use.



David Coen, Sheep Ireland

David Coen works for Sheep Ireland and is a sheep farmer himself in the west of Ireland. He is the main point of contact for hill sheep development within Sheep Ireland, leading work on hill ram and ewe qualification for Department of Agriculture-supported schemes including the Sheep Improvement Scheme (SIS) and OviFlock EIP. He also serves as Sheep Ireland's Lead Data Field Technician, providing on-the-ground support to LambPlus farmers and ensuring flock data is accurately recorded and meets Sheep Ireland standards.



Eleri Thomas, HCC

Eleri is an Industry Efficiency and Sustainability Executive for Hybu Cig Cymru - Meat Promotion Wales, where she has worked for 8 years. She holds a PhD in sheep genetics and meat quality. Her passion is working across the breadth of the red meat sector, driving effective transformation and sustainable food system development for the Welsh red meat supply chain.

Janet Roden, Innovis - see session 1

Samuel Boon, AHDB - see session 2

George Fell, SBRT Chair and pedigree breeder - Closing remarks



SBRT

Sheep Breeders Round Table

The Sheep Breeders Round Table Committee would like to thank the following:

- AHDB, our key sponsor for their assistance and support with this event.
- Our committee which includes levy boards and NSA alongside independent members, for their dedicated commitment throughout the two years to help us deliver this biennial conference.
- All organisations who have sponsored this event - the financial support enables us to deliver a high class, professional event whilst allowing costs to be kept to a minimum, ensuring it is accessible for all to attend.
- Special thanks to our speakers and researchers - for their fantastic contributions including their presentations and posters. Their motivation, enthusiasm and support is vital for the future development of this sector - without them we would not have a conference!
- Finally, to you all for taking the time to join us for this weekend conference.

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