

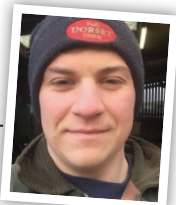
Following the flock

We visit Devon, County Antrim and Gloucestershire to catch up with NSA officeholders.

Rich Rossiter

NSA South West Region Chair, Devon

We started the year lambing the Suffolk cross Aberblacks and remaining Poll Dorsets.



We trialed mob mating the ewes with the early lambing Dorsets, which lambed from mid-September for four weeks. I was happy with the outcome as we had a much tighter lambing period – 300 out of 430 in the first 10 days – higher conception rate and more lambs so a win all round.

In February we completed some more emissions testing using a portable accumulation chamber for the Breed for Change project with the Exlanas and Poll Dorsets. Around 332 ewe lambs passed through the chambers to measure the methane output of each individual sheep.

We had the first Dorset breed sales in March where we selected our best ram lambs. Elsewhere on the farm we held a memorial ball for my Dad, David Rossiter, who sadly passed away in November. It was a great success with more than 300 people attending raising an outstanding £25,111 for Prostate Cancer UK. My wife and I are currently training for the London Marathon, which we will run in April, continuing our fundraising efforts for this charity in Dad's memory.



Rich and wife Alice are fundraising in memory of David Rossiter.

March was our busiest period, lambing 300 ewes over four weeks. While lambing, we have been bluetongue vaccinating and getting the Dorset ewes sorted ready to go back to the ram in April. We are having our second on-farm sale in August and are selecting Dorset shearling ewes to go to some of our best stock rams for our in-lamb ewes at the sale.



Edward has some good lambs on the ground despite Schmallenberg in NI.

Edward Adamson

NSA Northern Ireland Chair, County Antrim

The ewes wintered much better this year despite some periods of extreme weather, a change from the continually wet weather last year.



In farming, we can't take our eyes off the ball. Last autumn I was hoping those pesky little midges wouldn't bring bluetongue virus into Ireland but hadn't considered the threat of Schmallenberg. Pedigree breeders lambing in late December and January had varying degrees of infection – we even had a small number ourselves in late January.

I do not consider myself as a candidate for mental stress but for those with a lot of infected ewes, I now know it does create pressure. The only good to come of it is our pedigrees are almost finished lambing and commercials won't start until April. So we should be okay for the rest of this year and the flock has hopefully built up some immunity for a few years to come. It's a shame a Schmallenberg vaccine isn't commercially viable for manufacturers as the early lambers would welcome the opportunity to vaccinate.

In a similar situation for clostridial vaccine availability. The advice is to use an alternative even though it may not have as good coverage.

Ever the optimist and looking forward to spring, I hope it's not just my imagination and the grass is actually beginning to get greener, rather than the rain washing the mud off it.

Anthony Warmington

NSA Marches Region Chair, Gloucestershire

To those who don't know me my name is Anthony Warmington, although more people know me as 'Boggy' – ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies.

I shepherd 1,400 Lleyn ewes on a private estate in the Cotswolds. The farm ranges from 750ft (229m) to just under 1,000ft (305m) and my soil is about as thick as a cigarette paper. Although this year even that seems to have been wet.

Outside of work I seem to be something of a glutton for sheep. If I'm not on the farm you will find me either at a sheepdog trial or a shearing competition. I guess there's just no helping some people.

I became the NSA Marches Region Chair in January and it seems to have been a constant battle with the weather since then. Scanning was a touch lower than what we would normally expect but this seems to have been the case for most in the locality.

I'm looking forward to the spring and getting out to meet more of the region's members and I hope to create a few new ones. If you see me out don't be afraid to come and say hello.



Anthony shepherds 1,400 Lleyn ewes in the Cotswolds.

