

Following the flock

We visit Norfolk, Warwickshire and Denbighshire to catch up with NSA officeholders.

Robert Spink

NSA Eastern Region Chair, Norfolk

June brought a slightly calmer feel with most of the team having a well-deserved holiday.



Post lambing our focus has been milk production for the ewes and grazing management, with an eye on pushing the eight-week weights while managing body condition. By the end of June all lambs had been vaccinated against clostridial and pasteurilla diseases, tagged and weighed. We were pleased with an average weight of 22.5kg on twins and 29kg on singles, all pure New Zealand Romney lambs with no additional feeding.

With it being so dry and grass barely growing we are now thinking about when to wean. We have a new consultant, which has promoted great conversations and kept us accountable to achieving our aims.

To get a better understanding of our parasite burden, we have used a service processing FEC tests in the field to get real time results, allowing quick action to an issue. This has included carrying out FEC counts on ewes.

To be more open minded this year, we have kept all triplets on ewes and supplemented with creep. Although only small numbers, this seems a great success, so we also offered creep to hogget's lambs. We used a New Zealand Suffolk tup on hoggets and couldn't be more impressed. Lambs had plenty of vigour at birth, with good weight and good confirmation.



Robert is utilising FECs more.



Ant is still looking for the ideal breed as he moves to a closed system.

Ant Spencer

NSA English Committee Chair, Warwickshire



A wise shepherd once told me lambs always do best on concrete and that has certainly been proved on my farm this year.

We have had very little rain and the grass looks non-existent on some fields. But the lambs have some serious growth rates, particularly those on the ewe lambs with the first draw going off at 11 weeks old, averaging 20.5kg just off grass. If only all the lambs could do this, but where would the challenge be in that?

I think a lot of recent success has been down to a lower worm challenge. We purchased a testing system last season and it is a game changer with very fast results, saving time and money while ascertaining what worm resistance we have on patches. It's particularly useful to identify ewes with a bad haemonchus burden post lambing. They have mostly bounced back after treatment but there are some that will need extra care after weaning.

The Romney cross Lleyne ewe lambs that entered the flock this year have performed well and seem good mothers. I am looking forward to seeing how they compare with the Easydam lambs I will retain. We are moving more towards a closed flock. I am still not decided what breeds best suit the system, but we are getting there.

The summer is beginning to see me getting off the farm more, judging shearing at shows and catching up with friends for 'refreshments'.

Caryl Hughes

NSA Cymru / Wales Chair, Denbighshire

After a reasonably successful lambing it has been time to think about the next steps for lambs.

Usually by mid-May our crossbred ewes are doing well off grass and we start to introduce a small amount of creep to the lambs from yearling ewes. But this year we've been feeding all the Mule ewes more and introduced creep to all the Texel lambs.

This has resulted in a small number of the single and older twin lambs from the Mules leaving earlier. Currently, we have sold just under 100 lambs, averaging 34kg, to Oswestry Livestock Auctions.

We earmarked all the pure Welsh lambs in mid-May and being as the farm burns off on a normal year of rainfall, this year we've had to send all the ewes with their ewe lambs at foot onto the mountain as well. Something we don't usually do until the beginning of August, after shearing.

All ewes with their Welsh tup lambs go to the other farm we manage miles away after sorting. Here we lamb all the older ewes that haven't finished their heft on the mountain to a Bluefaced Leicester.

The Welsh tup lambs are having more attention this season as we are doing a project on the effects of a multivitamin bolus supported by Farming Connect. With additional support from our vets, we hope to understand how the lambs perform when bolused on an upland system, which already lacks in certain trace elements.



Grass is not as plentiful this year in North Wales for Caryl's lambs.

