

# Following the flock

We visit Devon, Lincolnshire and Warwickshire to catch up with NSA officeholders.

## Anthony Spencer

NSA English Committee Chair, Warwickshire



I turned the rams out with this year's ewe lambs in early November with the intention of lambing them just before the main flock get going.

The singles from the older flock will be lambed indoors meaning any doubles from the young mothers can be taken off, leaving me with a lot less or often no cades to rear.

Putting the first rams out is one of my favourite moments in the calendar – turning the page on the breeding year and the anticipation of the next.

I am trying some new breeds and bloodlines this season as I move towards a self-replacing outdoor lambing system – but am still running a flying flock of North Country Mules, as it suits my system to have a late summer cash flow from the shearling sales. I don't tend to get many lambs away prime until the winter/spring months.

Demand has been exceptionally strong for the theaves this year. I bought an extra 50 ewe lambs on my annual shopping trip to Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria, so fingers crossed trade and confidence continues.

It's been a strange growing year and I've found some of my sheep haven't done as well, making it harder to get ewes back into tupping condition. Luckily this is the first year I've grown a stand of fodder beet so the ewes should be back in good nick in no time.



Ant is trying new breeds and bloodlines.



Matt's flock will be outwintered on stubble turnips.

## Matt Bagley

NSA Central Region Chair, Lincolnshire



After a tough lambing due to the weather and Schmallenberg, the lambs grew well once they got outside and had the sun on their backs.

For the first time this year we split the flock in half and left the second half of the lambs to grow on grass until mid August – when we had finished all the lambs from the first batch. The majority of the first batch were finished at 11-14 weeks of age with all lambs finished by September.

The focus then turned to preparing for tupping. We kept the tups back a week, so lambing will start around 25th February in the hope we get lambs outside a bit sooner. The flock are all single sired, as they have been for years now, with what is looking like high hold rates to the first service with a quick tupping time.

We used a Logie Durno Suffolk ram on the Mules for the first time to start breeding our own Suffolk Mule replacements. We also purchased two Durno Beltex rams to try on our Texel cross ewes. The rest have gone to Beltex cross Charollais rams. All the lambs from these are produced for meat.

The sheep are now grazing the grass leys and stubble turnips on the arable land before coming inside in early January.

## Peter Delbridge

NSA Chair, Devon



We have been getting on with our late summer and autumn jobs, selecting ewes for breeding, selling any draft ewes and fattening up cull ewes.

We had an issue again this year with lambs getting dirty on the plentiful wet grass. FECs revealed no resistance, but a high count of coccidiosis. I normally combat this with expensive spot treatments and was disappointed to find certain options were no longer available. In need of a solution I resorted to a herbal coccidiosis bucket, which despite my initial reservations seemed to work.

Following a successful hybrid sale of the Sheep Improvement Group, of which we are members, we have fulfilled the free UK mainland delivery of rams bought at the sale and online. It was great meeting customers.

As an Exlana breeder we are part of the Breed for CH<sub>4</sub>nge project, currently in its second year, and recently put an allocated number of lambs through the portable accumulation chambers to measure methane output. Last year we tested 72 twice, but this year the opportunity arose to put through several more, which took far more organisation than expected! Hopefully we will learn more about our sires and prove the methodology is robust so other breeds can adopt it. The data should also help us defend the wider UK sheep industry.

Peter has been emissions testing more of his sheep this year.

