

Following the flock

We visit Angus, North Yorkshire and Devon to catch up with NSA officeholders.

Peter Myles

NSA Scotland Regional Chair, Angus

The gavel, it has three ends – the seller, the buyer and more importantly the auctioneer.

Back in the last century, as a shy twenty-year-old I was handed a gavel and told to sell some hand tools at a farm sale. I had only just started at the market and hadn't had time to properly study the auctioneering art. In the end it was never meant for me.

Now after an autumn of attending ram sales I can't help but admire the skills we take for granted from those in the box. At Kelso Ram Sale, the cacophony of prices and descriptions of rams being sold from every direction takes one's breath away. One auctioneer I know has an almost musical tone, like a finely tuned engine he revs up then slows down, keeping the bidders following his every move.

When buying, one tries to catch their eye with a limit in mind but, good auctioneers can hypnotise you to almost scary levels if you really want that ram for your flock.

When it comes to selling my own rams, I'm always wracked with fear and anxious they make the price I want or even aspire to achieve. What will I tell the man in the box? On a good day the sale is easy but on a sticky day the auctioneer well and truly earns their commission, not necessarily getting the recognition they deserve.



Peter values the ram sales, highlighting the skill of the auctioneers.



Ted merits livestock markets for more than just quality stock.

Ted Ogden

NSA Northern Region, North Yorkshire

The Great British weather never fails to cause challenges to the farmers and growers across our nation.

With the dry summer forcing some sellers and buyers to alter their usual selling pattern – some looked to sell sheep earlier than normal while others were forced to delay buying due to lack of grass and forage.

In the breeding sales, it was pleasing to see buyers arriving early season to purchase shearlings and ewes at the main northern sales for replacement lowland breeding sheep.

The demand for North of England Mule ewe lambs together with Suffolk and Texel Mule ewe lambs also had a lift on the year and the confidence displayed is heartening to observe. Especially with a range of ages in the buyers where we are seeing a number of younger farmers looking to maintain and increase numbers, something that is needed for the long term of the UK sheep industry.

Store lamb sales have seen trade come stronger in response to the drought ending and winter grazing finally coming available. Noticeably more farmers looking for wintering/running lambs than in previous seasons.

The autumn sales are an important time, not only financially or to fulfil the basic need for replacement stock, but the renewal of friendships and the making of new ones is a priceless commodity for farming families and individuals alike. The trip to a mart, farm sale or an agricultural show to meet friends and chat is important, especially in an industry that has many pressures from external sources to the farm.



Peter Delbridge

NSA Chair, Devon

Looking back at the year, it will remain in the memory of many, and for a variety of reasons.

A pretty dry lambing, cold nights that lasted well into May and stunted spring grass growth and a drought summer that affected many areas.

But, from a personal point of view, I will remember 2025 as an NSA regional event year. All the events were well attended, very informative, thought provoking and provided a chance to see old friends. It was great to meet all the hosts, and above all, inspiring to see teams of NSA members in each region rolling up their sleeves and getting behind the event organisers.

All this 'gadding about' would not have been possible without having the bulk of the sheep at home only requiring minimal inputs, especially labour. Although I did treat everything with a long acting fly treatment before we went. This meant the couple who farm sat for us only had to maintain water supplies for the stock.

We don't normally have to worry about water on Exmoor, where generally 70 inches of it falls out of the sky each year. But on our travels to Australia, where certain parts had not seen rain for two years, you quickly realise you can farm with too much water, but you cannot farm without it.



Peter's low input flock has enabled him to attend many NSA events this year.

