

# Following the flock

We visit Angus, Herefordshire and Cumbria to catch up with NSA officeholders.

## Peter Myles

NSA Scottish Region Chair, Angus

I have never thought of myself as a plumber. In fact when it comes to DIY my wife does it all to save on the mistakes of my ham-fisted efforts.

Plumbing and electrical work need to be done by experts. But, after having a polytunnel built for my tup hogs, friends told me there was nothing to putting in a water trough so I set to it. I helped with the groundwork and laid the floor myself, so what was a wee bit of plastic pipe and a few fittings for a man of my calibre?

YouTube was nervously checked repeatedly, it was discussed ad nauseum with family and planned out in detail. While discussing with a friend, he suggested when it came to joints and junction fitting I build a manhole big enough to get into if anything needs fixing.

Standing next to a stack of empty sheep lick buckets he said: "Just bury one of these. We can make holes in the side and they have a fixed lid."

With some smugness this was done. I could get my hands in and tighten the fittings then connected everything. Then came the moment of truth. I turned on the water and, voila, clean water trickled into the trough and my new standpipe flowed to the required standard with no leaks.

The tups are now enjoying their new refreshing environment and I feel I have attained my first ever boy scout plumbing/recycling badge.



A new venture put Peter's plumbing skills to the test.



Richard promotes the benefits of outwintering stock on cover crops.

## Richard Vines

NSA Marches Region Chair, Herefordshire

The late summer and autumn here, like much of the UK, saw continued precipitation becoming monotonous.

Most straw was baled and cleared which is making a valuable contribution to cashflow. Good hay was hard to gather but with plenty of great haylage we should be ok for winter feeding. We have established fresh leys and now it is drier they are benefiting the ram and ewe lambs.

The weather has helped establishment of the cover crops upon which the in-lamb ewes spend the winter and early spring months feeding their developing lambs prior to March lambing. Mixes this year include fodder radish, forage rye, berseem clover and phacelia, with addition of turnips.

Principally used as a cover overwinter and an entry for spring root crops and dwarf beans, they provide a nutritious mixed bite for outwintered ewes and ram lambs. Where required the addition of haylage in ring feeders balances the diet.

With the increase in SFI and encouragement for green cover crop overwinter, I recommend looking at opportunities to utilise arable mixed cropping where available. By grazing extensively you avoid ugly scenes of poaching. In many cases the landlords require a green cover to be left afterwards if grazing in early winter, for scheme compliance.

The reports of bluetongue and Schmallenberg are very worrying and with lambing ahead we hope to not be affected but send our thoughts to anyone dealing with the effects.



## Viv Lewis

NSA Northern Region Chair (outgoing), Cumbria

For the first time we are grazing our sheep on a mixture of kale, rape and stubble turnips and they are doing well.

It took us two days (and lots of expletives) to stop the sheep breaking through the electric fencing but we've finally got them bossed, as they say here. It would have helped if we had checked the solar energizer first. As neither Richard nor I like touching the fence, we didn't find out for a while the internal battery wasn't working. Moral of the story – check your kit before you use it and buy an electric fence tester. Mine's on order!

When you read this I will have stepped down as Chair of NSA Northern Region. I was surprised and overwhelmed to be asked, farming part-time with a small flock, so I guess my knowledge of upland farm policy and desire to influence Defra had something to do with it. That's the beauty and brilliance of NSA – it's a broad church and encompasses a wide variety of sheep farmers.

NSA Northern Region remains strong. We had a fantastic NSA North Sheep last year, have new young members on the committee who bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm, and attendance at meetings has picked up. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and leave the region in the capable hands of our new Chair, Ted Ogden.



Viv has overcome the challenges of sheep behind electric fencing.