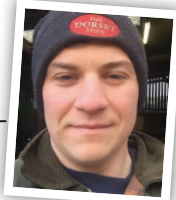


Following the flock

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

Rich Rossiter

NSA South West Chair, Devon



Hay making and harvest has certainly been a challenge this year with the classic Great British summer.

With no long, settled periods of dry weather, when the weather has been right it has been all go. Yields have been down on the winter crops this year, but the spring crops have made up for it.

It's been a busy ram selling period for the three breeds on the farm, starting with the Poll Dorsets with the Centurion sale in April and then the Mayfair sale at Exeter Market. We had a good sale and also managed to buy another stock sire for the future.

Next, we moved on to the Aberblacks bred for Innovis, with our consignments going into two of its company sales. There was a strong trade for these rams with a high level of demand.

Finally, the Exlana. As we are part of the Sheep Improvement Group we have our annual sale at Tiverton, Devon, and received good trade. I was a little concerned going into the sale as there are now a few other businesses doing something similar with different shedding breeds, but we still had a decent trade and clearance for the sale.

With ram sales slowing down and harvest finished we move on to the next busy period of lambing our Dorset flock, which is well underway.



Rich is busy lambing his Poll Dorset flock.



Daniel is dusting off the cobwebs from his scanner.

Daniel Taylforth

NSA Northern Region Committee, Cumbria



It's been a busy few weeks for myself and my wife Jackie on our farm in the Eden Valley, Cumbria.

The corn has been harvested, yielding well although unfortunately slightly light on straw. But with the weather in our area seeming to be relentless rain, at last it is done and we are happy with the results.

We have had several draws from this year's lambs and, with the flying lamb trade continuing, they have sold very well at Hopes Auction. The first of our lambs to go are almost always from our Oxford Down-sired Cheviot Mule ewes. Some are surprised by our choice of the Oxford but we have found they produce an excellent lamb for us, fleshing well on grass with the additional benefit of being easy lambing. We also run Suffolk and Texel tups for use on the Mules, Beltex for use on the ewe lambs, and have a pure Cheviot flock too.

In total we have 500 breeding ewes and have sorted through them ahead of splitting into tupping groups. They have all received a B12 jab, been dipped and are looking good ahead of the tups going in.

Alongside the farm I run a livestock scanning business so have a busy few months ahead covering Cumbria, parts of the North East and Scotland. It's time to pull the crate out of the shed and check everything is functional – and comfortable, as I'll be spending a lot of hours sat in that crate.

Peter Myles

NSA Scottish Region Chair, Angus



This summer NSA Scottish Region has been visiting shows and events getting to meet supporters from around the country.

Whether it be showing, judging or just visiting, agricultural shows are the bedrock of our farming community. It's such a privilege to meet so many who have a passion for their own favoured sheep breed. Watching the judging is so much fun, as one queries the ability for the appointed judge to get it right or possibly wrong.

Going up the sheep lines after, and taking time to listen to the enthusiastic breeders, is a chance for us to get know their challenges and allow us to update them on what NSA is doing. I like to think of NSA as a problem-solving organisation. We speak to so many like-minded people and more importantly listen to so many like-minded people, the issues can often be the same and it gives us a chance to share them.

A highlight for me is the young handlers' section of a show, where doting mums, dads and grandparents coach and cajole their tiny offspring into serious showers of stock, often struggling to hold a monster considerably bigger than themselves. Don't ask me to judge though! But, comparing notes after and the pats on the back for encouragement to the ones who don't win the prizes demonstrate how we are human after all.



Young handlers are the most challenging of all judging tasks.