

Activities report to NSA Board May 2023

Information for Trustees not otherwise made available in Sheep Farmer, Weekly Email Update or website

NSA policy, technical and research work

Castration and Tailing

In the last edition of Sheep Farmer NSA wrote an article on Castration & Tailing including a table of legally permitted practices in each of our nations. This stimulated plenty of healthy conversation and NSA followed up with a few points of clarification. Including, if you are part of farm assurance scheme always adhere to their rules as some may vary or be slightly different. NSA does not advocate tailing using a cold knife (however sharp) with or without anaesthetic. Decisions on castration and tailing should be made within the principles of Reduce; Refine (practices); Replace, and anaesthetic should be used with any tail removal other than rubber rings before 7 days of age.

Carcass Splitting

In 2017 NSA produced a report highlighting that carcass splitting and SRM removal was costing the industry over £24M a year in abattoir time, lost value, and time spent checking for tooth eruption on farm and in markets and abattoirs. At the time the EU regulations allowed member states to implement their own methods of ageing sheep to comply with TSE requirements and prior to our EU departure we had the green light from the Commission and from our own farming Minister and CVO of the day. Here we are in the 'tooth eruption season' of 2023, no further forward and unable to get Defra or FSA to show any interest in our agreed position of a pre agreed date of 30th June in the year following birth. This would give certainty to farmers and reduce industry costs with no increased food safety risks. NSA will continue to push for this to be resolved even though Defra are busy with their own priorities.

Smokies

In May 2010, the FSA wrote to the European Commission seeking a change in EU law to permit production of smokies, after its investigations showed hygienic production of smokies was possible. The Commission asked [EFSA](#) for its scientific opinion on the FSA studies and the EFSA response suggested more evidence of safety was needed. More recently in 2020 the NSA along with other industry bodies shared a proposal with the FSA to consider domestic changes to legislation to allow for the production of skin-on sheep meat in the UK. However during April 2023 we received notification from FSA that industry protocol proposals had been rejected. FSA appear to have fallen back on the EFSA requirements and are asking that industry fund the research and evidence gathering required to prove that products are safe in terms of microbiological and vet medicine residue contamination. A follow up meeting is being arranged with the working group to see where we go from here but at the moment it appears this is at a dead end.

Skins

In the last edition of Sheep Farmer NSA wrote an article on the difficulties facing the sheep skin market, especially concerning processing costs, the development of new technology such as knife shearing skins, NSA is continuing to work alongside industry bodies including British Wool to improve knowledge & identify options for skins and abattoir wool.

Vaccines

NSA will be writing a UK wide letter to ministerial officials to try and find a solution to the nation-wide vaccine shortage. If you would like further detail please email policy@nationalsheep.org.uk The full letter will be circulated with Regional Managers once available. NSA is continuing to work hard on all fronts to address this shortage and communicate the damaging impacts to the national flock and hard-won attitudes to vaccine use.

Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

Look out for the AHWP myth buster in the most recent sheep farmer (April) magazine, answering all your FAQ's. The Pathway is open for applications for sheep farmers and is structured to start with a general health and welfare review, to include a check on wormer treatments, and then to progress over time to more in depth testing and screening for endemic diseases relative to the individual farm. If you would like a PDF version of the myth buster, one will be made available shortly.

AHDB Market Outlook

AHDB have published the market outlook for sheep meat for the coming year, access the article here. [Lamb market outlook | AHDB](#)

Upland sheep numbers and HLS roll overs

In a recent interview with *Farming Today* Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive highlighted the complexities of the upland landscape and how farming in these areas (also of high environmental and access interest) cannot be ignored. During the interview Mr Stocker highlighted the importance of mixed farming systems across the stratified sheep system, utilising lowland and arable ground both to extend the grazing season but also extend the benefits sheep offer in a modern form of transhumance. NSA is working hard to ensure the diverse range of public goods delivered by hill and upland farming is rewarded fairly, ensuring all systems are represented on a level playing field. NSA wrote to all MPs in advance of a debate in the House of Commons on the 18th April on the subject of Farming on Dartmoor, pointing out the importance of sheep farming to landscape, environment, food production, and rural communities and economies. We also held an extraordinary Board and Policy and Tech meeting on the subject of upland sheep farming and will be following this up with focussed work on this topic.

Small Abattoirs

NSA has welcomed integral funding for small abattoirs announced by Minister Mark Spencer, the new funding, which will be detailed later this year, will aim to help smaller independent abattoirs in England to add value by supporting local produce availability, providing equipment to support the rearing of rare and native breeds, encouraging rural employment, and safeguarding the food supply chain.

NSA Breakfast Club

NSA hosted Defra Director Janet Hughes for the March Breakfast Club, discussing various new schemes and the direction of policy but also accessibility and how these schemes might deliver for food, farming & the environment in the years to come. If you missed it you can visit [NSA/Events/Webinars](#) to watch it on demand.

Vet attestations

With the revised implementation date for the requirement for vet attestations for farms being 'free of disease' and to a level of biosecurity required to export products to the EU, of December 2023 NSA is working with Defra and other industry bodies to agree a system for this to work. Defra is speaking at Sheep SW on the 10th May on this subject and another working group meeting is scheduled in advance of this date. An agreed attestation form is available and farmers are encouraged to get vets to go through this process during any routine vet visits that take place now. It will be a requirement for this to be done at least annually. It should also be noted that membership of the main national assurance schemes (Red Tractor, WBLP, QMS) qualify as being compliant without the need for a stand alone vet attestation. Questions remain over the transfer of vet attestations through the supply chain and this should become clearer by Sheep SW.

NSA communications and knowledge exchange work

Press work

A total of 27 press releases were issued during the first three months of the year. No one theme dominated the topics for the press releases issued with news and information shared on a wide range of issues including news from NSA Annual Member's Meetings, responses to Government announcements and updates from groups such as SCOPS.

Open rates for NSA press releases remain well above the industry average demonstrating the value national and agricultural press put on NSA's opinions and information. Social reach for press releases was slightly down on previous quarters, perhaps reflected by the time of year as sheep farmers prepare to enter their busiest season with less time for social media browsing.

One focus towards the end of the quarter was the launch of NSA's annual 'Sheep worrying by dogs campaign'. Although not shown from figures below the campaign this year can be considered extremely successful with more requests for case studies and interviews from NSA staff and members than in previous years. NSA officeholders were featured in the following interviews as well as survey results being quoted across regional, national and farming press and interviews with farmers on BBC Breakfast:

- BBC Radio Five Live
- BBC Radio Four – Farming Today
- ITV Central news
- BBC Radio Ulster
- BBC Radio York

Press and media coverage also resulted in several members approaching NSA to share their own recent experiences with attacks on their flocks. Members have been offered further support as a result of this and the communications team will remain in touch whilst some of these cases are investigated by the authorities further.

The table below shows the press releases put out in the last quarter per week and their different focuses as well as the social media reach for posts that have been placed on social media relating to the press releases.

Week commencing	Press releases issued	Social media reach on press release links - Facebook
02/01/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applications open for NSA Next Gen Westminster visit 2. NSA seeks more detail from SFI 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 786 2. 1.2k
09/01/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Launch of 2023 giveaway with Wise Agri 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 11.4k
16/01/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA Cymru response to dip disposal fees 2. George Hedley award presented 3. Scottish ARMM 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.5k 2. 2.8k 3. 983
23/01/2023	No press release issued	
30/01/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA welcomes further detail on ELMS 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.4k
06/02/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA welcomes launch of Animal Health Pathway 2. SCOPS liver fluke update 3. Launch of 2023 sheep worrying by dogs survey 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.1k 2. 2.4k 3. 1.4k
13/02/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Success of NSA Next Gen Westminster trip 2. SCOPS rumen fluke 3. NSA and Moredun webinar report 4. Response to resignation of Scottish First Minister 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.2k 2. 661 3. 734 4. 942
20/02/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SCOPS Closantel warning 2. NSA condemns negativity towards red meat industry 3. Welsh ARMM report 4. NSA Cymru responds to NVZ licensing regime 5. NSA welcomes support for small abattoirs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3.0k 2. 1.1k 3. No social figures 4. No social figures 5. 2.1k
27/02/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SCOPS worming of ewes 2. Lamb for St David's Day 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 969 2. 2.4k
06/03/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Te Pari winner announced 2. Launch of SCOPS nematodirus forecast 3. NSA welcomes the NI Windsor framework 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 36.6k 2. 3.1k 3. 2.3k
13/03/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA demands better from officials – response to Ben Goldsmith 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3.8k
20/03/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New faces in NSA Central Region 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No social figures
27/03/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Launch of 2023 sheep worrying survey results 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4.9k

Weekly Email Update and other online comms with members

The NSA members' Weekly Email Update has been sent to approximately 4300 people each Friday during the last quarter, this includes mailings to members (for whom we have email addresses), breed society representatives and a complimentary list, which includes Defra and devolved Government representatives. The number of people on the email list is slowly increasing as work continues to acquire members' email addresses that we may have not previously held.

Open rates for the NSA Weekly Update have continued to stay static around the 40% mark. The email average open rate is well above the industry average of 19% indicating its value to recipients.

Website and social media

Visits to the NSA website decreased in the first quarter of 2023, from an average of 51,075 visits per month, to 46,399 visits per month, which is expected due to the lambing period. The main NSA page has been the most visited throughout Q1, closely followed by the lambing list, sheep breed and starting your own flock pages.

The last quarter saw visits to the website from 47,559 users, generating 139,198 page views. Of these users 83.4% came to the site from direct search or a direct link e.g. in the Weekly Email Update or press activity, and 11.5% came from social media.

The past three months have seen the growth of NSA's social media pages.

At the end of the first quarter of 2023 the NSA Facebook page following had increased by 245 to 21,295 people. NSA saw an overall increase in Twitter followers of 84 to a total of 13,506.

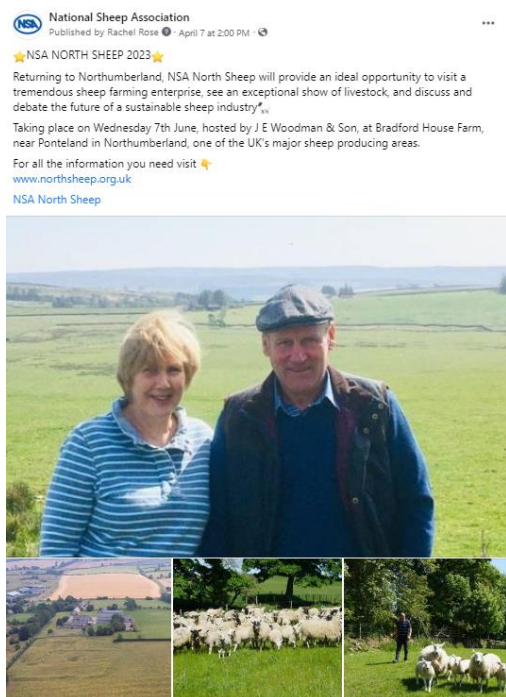
Posts performed well across a range of topics, particularly on SCOPS posts, sheep worrying, NSA Regional events, Fact Fridays, the NSA and TePari prize draw and the NSA and Wise Ag prize draw.

The top three performing Facebook posts for the quarter were:

1. *****SCOPS post***** 49,517 people reached and 614 engagements.



2. **NSA North Sheep 2023.** 41,467 people reached and 342 engagements.



3. NSA is ready to #LeadOn. 31,222 people reached and 892 engagements.



The top three performing Twitter posts were:

1. TONIGHT at 7pm! 🐕🐑 Join the NSA, Fiona Lovatt and various Sheep Vet Society vet practitioners for advise on best practice, as well as discussing what can be done if things aren't going to plan at lambing time. Find out more and register here 🐑 go.nationalsheep.org.uk/5aNxOs pic.twitter.com/SrcTZAubi5
4,642 people reached and 84 engagements with the tweet.
2. #FactFriday Did you know a ewes gestation period is 145 to 155 days depending on different factors such as breed? 🐑 Depending on the type of farm, where it is located and the time of year, lambing can take place either indoors or outdoors. #Lambing pic.twitter.com/jUfclgaSqm
3,278 people reached and 58 engagements with the tweet.
3. The future of sheep scab 🐑 Join the NSA and @MoredunComms for an update on sheep scab across the nation, including findings from research projects aiming to tackle sheep scab collectively!
📅 Wednesday 19th April 🕒 7.30pm Register now 🐑 go.nationalsheep.org.uk/3z5Alg
pic.twitter.com/WlhhN8zGG7
3,078 people reached and 44 engagements with the tweet.

Email Campaigns:

Throughout the last quarter, targeted email campaigns have not been sent to non-members who have previously expressed interest in NSA activity or membership, to encourage them to sign up due to shortage of staff.

Recent/planned events

NSA Next Generation Westminster trip

NSA Next Generation welcomed a brilliant delegation of young farming ambassadors to London in February for an exceptional visit and tour of parliament, following which the group met with Defra leads for a lively discussion on new schemes, future trade and vision for the future of agriculture. Following the visit to Westminster, the group headed across London to be hosted by the Marks and Spencer Agriculture team, hearing its vision for food, demand, marketing and climate change.

This trip was the second time NSA Next Generation has brought together young sheep farmers with an interest in policy. This year's added visit to a leading retailer enhanced the trip and will certainly be repeated again in future years.

NSA Next Generation now plans to repeat a similar visit in the devolved nations making visits to Holyrood, the Senedd and Stormont.

NSA Next Generation winter conferences

Two NSA Next Generation events originally planned for November 2022 took place at the end of January providing young sheep enthusiasts with opportunity to hear from a range of inspiring and experienced speakers. Taking place in Skipton, North Yorkshire, and in Ashford, Kent the two events drew in varied audiences, some completely new to sheep farming, others having grown up on family farms, but all motivated to make a success of their farming careers in the future.

Plans for 2023

As part of the NSA Next Generation two yearly cycle of events plans are now underway to add some new interactive workshops this spring, summer and beyond to fill the gap in this non ambassadorial year. These workshops will be held across the NSA regions and will offer young sheep farmers the chance to learn new skills or and information or opportunity to build on their existing experience.

Project work

Externally funded projects (RDPE sheep scab, Erasmus etc)

Fixed term projects:

Erasmus - NSA deliverable complete. Awaiting final instalment.

MSD vaccine trial (Next Generation): Project finished Dec 2022. Final report due imminently.

UKECP questionnaire – Request to QC new document. Paid for staff time to conduct quality check.

BSAS conference – First time attendance for NSA, sponsored session jointly with MSD. Phil Stocker keynote speaker in 'sheep session'. Promoted NSA's research potential and allowed identification of new research and communications partnerships.

RDPE sheep scab - Project ended 31st March. Final cluster meeting held face-to-face in Feb success. All required forms completed and submitted. Final claim in progress. Good feedback from farmers, coordinators and Moredun so far. Early outcomes demonstrate increased farmer awareness and understanding of the disease, increased farm-vet engagement and better communication of presence of scab. Final report due next quarter.

New research:

Submissions **in discussion** for research funding:

- *Silvasheep (round 2):* Integrating Sheep in agroforestry and production of niche product. NSA part of the consortium. Role to deliver paid KE activities. Submission 19th April, decision May.
- *In-field weighing:* The project will create a commercial automated weigher and will engage with one of the major retailers and potentially one of their processors to identify how the data generated could be better utilised in their supply chain (ability to predict supply on a per-farm basis). NSA to be a subcontractor to deliver paid KE activities. Submission due 1st April, decision 19th May.

- *Defra UK sheep sector efficiency*: Project to evaluate potential impact on ovine genetic gain comparing domestic longer-term breeding strategies and more immediate short-term advancement via imported genetics. NSA to act as stakeholder in this project. Time and expenses covered. Submission 13th April, decision May.

Submitted funding bids:

- *Fabulous Fibre*: Application submitted Feb 2023. Decision due 27th April. External bid writer used to increase chance of successful application. Costs shared between consortium.
- *Hill sheep genomics (via Thomas Carrick)*: Innovate grant applied for on genomic associations with maternal ability and linking on screening for MV resistance alleles.
- *PhD iceberg diseases*: Examining the potential of environmental DNA analysis and enhanced biosecurity for the management of Zoonotic Iceberg Diseases on Sheep Farms. Working with Aberystwyth University to provide industry expertise for project development and facilitate industry engagement via events and networks.

Successful bids:

- *Low methane sheep*: Due to start June 2023. Success under embargo until Defra checks are complete.
- *PhD iceberg diseases*: PhD application live. Commence May 2023.

Moredun - Relationship continuing well. Moredun planning to attend majority of NSA events in 2023 and webinar series planned for 2023. Held first in the series February on 'medicines in the environment' which was well received, with Scab update (April), Vaccines (June) and Reproduction (Oct) topics/speakers confirmed. Stand alone event being held jointly at RHUG 17th May to coincide with Welsh Sheep (as many Moredun and NSA staff will be in the region).

RoSA - Communication between board, steering group and comms teams continuing well but still struggling with lack of communication from some of the BASIS team. Approaching end of second year running (31st May). Targets for 2023 to maintain and increase membership into 23/2024 membership year.

SBRT - Initial planning meeting for SBRT 2024 planned April. Proposed adding more farmer members to committee in initial planning stages to broaden skills/reach on current committee.

Sheep in arable: NSA re-emphasised the role of the 'golden hoof', Nicola Noble Project Manager providing an update on benefits and challenges to overcome integrating sheep into arable (NIAB event 15th Feb). Working closely with NIAB and Genever consulting to build on graziers list, making it more widely available.

British Heritage Sheep

We continue to seek funding for BHS, and think we have a good chance of partial funding from one grant source, which we are pursuing, with the hope that if we demonstrate that we have some funding, other funders may follow. Also we are in discussion with a UK company who may be able to supply a traceability tool to use for spot tests to ensure veracity of claims made by retailers about BHS meat.

Ovine Semen Archive

Following instructions in early January, AB Europe has thrown away the unwanted semen (about 45% of the total) but says it has not yet had time to rationalise the reduced volume of straws/goblets into fewer tanks. This is due to take place over the next few weeks, after which we'll know:-

- If there is fee for the rationalisation process (AB Europe wants the spare tanks once they're empty and, although they are very old, they still have a value that should cover the cost incurred by AB Europe to throw away the unwanted semen).
- What the cost of storage going forward will be (as fewer tanks will mean lower fees).

AB Europe is yet to invoice for the 2022/23 storage fees, but this will be the same as previous years; the cost saving won't be seen until we are invoiced in April 2024 for the 2023/24 storage feeds. The OSA Board will meet again once AB Europe has finished the rationalisation process, to talk about longer-term plans. There is now a single, easy-to-use spreadsheet containing all information held on the rams retained in OSA.

NSA internal work / operations

New activity

A horizon-scanning meeting was held in early January with staff considering the current range of NSA activity. The main outcome was a commitment to run an NSA Sheep Farmers' Conference in October 2023 and, if a success, again every autumn of each non-Sheep Event year. This was identified as an important addition to the biennial NSA calendar and an opportunity to generate a small profit. The event has been organised to fall in the middle of an NSA Sheep Health Week, with social media content planned from Monday 23rd to Friday 27th October and three SHWAP Online webinars (organised by NSA South East Region) on the Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Regular planning meetings are being held, in conjunction with NSA South East Region, and progress has already been made on an agenda, commercial opportunities and a budget.

Sheep Farmer performance / corporate supporters / income from commercial companies

Corporate Support remains stable, and adverts have sold well with very few slots remaining for the end of the year. We have offered to some of Corporate Supporters the opportunity to do a bespoke email to NSA members. This is a good income stream but we are working hard to find the balance between revenue / not bombarding members with too many emails / not looking like NSA endorses any advertising message sent.

There has been little to no negative feedback on the increase to Sheep Farmer advertising rates, corporate support fees or Weekly Email Update advert fees. Bookings have remained stable and first two editions of Sheep Farmer this year have both attracted slightly more advertising than the same editions in 2022. However, the VMD is consulting on a ban on advertising to farmers of POM-V and POM-VPS products (excluding vaccines). If this goes ahead into legislation we would lose adverts for wormers, dips and blowfly treatments in Sheep Farmer and the Weekly Email Update – and due to how companies would be allowed to communicate to farmers, possibly sponsorship of Sheep Events too. This is of grave concern and NSA has submitted a robust consultation response, alongside animal health companies, SCOPS and other agricultural publications.

Governance (inc. Vice Presidents)

Arrangements are in place for the AGM in August. A new Trustee has been nominated for Scottish Region. The Finance Scrutiny Committee has held two meetings.

Accounts and audit

All year end work prior to audit is now complete and auditors are expected to be on site during the week commencing 24/04/23. For the first time there has been no provision for bad debts at 2022 year end, as all invoices across the group for the last financial year have been paid. This has been possible because all debt chasing for regions is now done from Head Office.

Regional activities (to include NSA ram sales)

Cymru Wales Region

The Development Officer has attended many meetings since Jan, most virtually although a few more are starting to take place face to face. Feb saw our Annual Meeting with all officers staying in their roles and John Yeomans was suggested for the Finance Scrutiny Committee.

Plans for NSA Welsh Sheep are complete with a full timetable and some exciting seminars planned for the day. We have a record number of trade stands and sponsorship has been great. The map/flyer given out at the gate will also be available in Welsh. Translation is an additional cost to the Welsh Region but a necessary one. Translation facilities will be available for the seminars.

List of meetings attended -

23rd Jan – Sheep Scab group
23rd Jan WLBP/NSA AMR meeting
25th Jan Agri Food Supply Chain
25th Jan RMDP Steering Group
8th Feb Land Use stakeholder group
10th Feb Sheep scab group
13th Feb Zolvix exchange meeting
13th Feb Ram Sale and health declarations
22nd Feb Agri Industry & Climate change forum
2nd March UKP& T
8th March Rural Farm Crime working group
17th March Agri Food supply chain meeting
28th March Arwain DGC Stakeholder group
31st March Early co-design outputs
17th April Agri Climate group greenhouse gas inventory meeting
21st April ASAO
27th April Rural Crime meeting
28th April SFS Policy Design next steps
Plus, other NSA staff and membership meetings.

NSA Scotland

NSA Scotland Newsletter

The latest edition of the NSA Scotland newsletter can be found here: <https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/nsa-scotland/sheep-farmer/>

MEETINGS ATTENDED

Thursday 12th January

- Scottish Red Meat Resilience meeting attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid.

This meeting took place to discuss movements being made to ensure the resilience of attendee respective industries. Key topics for the sheep sector included new agricultural policy, upcoming trade agreements and their impact on supply and demand, nature restoration and rewinding movements, energy crises and improving animal health and welfare across the country. It was clear that there were many synergies across the breadth of the red meat group which will continue to be built upon in the future.

Monday 16th January

- Industry led sheep scab meeting attended by Phil Stocker and Grace Reid

Tuesday 17th January

- Dynamic Health Planning meeting attended by Grace Reid
- QMS Parliamentary Evening attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid

The reception welcomed 130 attendees from across the red meat supply chain and a number of MSPs from urban and rural constituencies and regions across Scotland. During the event, attendees learned about the work QMS has been doing to promote, protect, support and develop the Scottish red meat supply chain, with

a focus on Scotland's society, economy, environment, food security and public health. Professor Alice Stanton gave an in depth presentation on the value of red meat inclusion to diets.

Thursday 19th January

- NSA Scotland ARMM and Farm Walk (Glensaugh Research Farm)

Tuesday 24th January

- Industry led OPA working group meeting attended by Phil Stocker and Grace Reid

Thursday 26th January

- Mairi Gougeon Cabinet Secretary Visit - Doldy Farms

Glenisla was a very apt location for the Cabinet Secretary to visit, as an example of the importance of LFA support. It was highlighted how agriculture is so often the core of these rural areas and without this vital foundation, many communities simply wouldn't exist. Despite upcoming planned changes to policy in terms of climate change mitigation, and improving biodiversity, our farmers and crofters are the beating heart of rural areas and cannot be allowed to diminish. Significant emphasis was put on the existing purpose and function of LFA which has been so vital for the farming activity occurring in the disadvantaged areas of Scotland in the past. Not only does this activity relate to food production, but it also holds value in terms of the contribution it makes to the society and environment it surrounds. Also high on the agenda was future policy and support, and some detail, in which the Cabinet Secretary confirmed, that further guidance on timescales will be published within 4 weeks. Pamela and Peter were quick to question what this may include, what the timeframe would be for legislation to be put in place, and will it be ready for the current tranche of payments in operation, to come to an end. Young farmers and new entrants were also discussed in relation to future policy with the reassurance that they would not be left behind and also the looming tree plantation of nearby Glen Prosen was another area of concern.

Tuesday 31st January

- British Wool meeting attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid

Plans were discussed for this year's Royal Highland Show presence alongside ideas for collaboration via NSA Scotland's Field Days which are planned for late Summer 2023.

Tuesday 7th February 2023

- RHASS meeting to discuss Royal Highland Show 2023 attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid.

Plans are well underway for NSA's presence at this year's RHS with great anticipation for the Golden Shears competition with many organisations gearing up to celebrate wool production and the sheep behind the fleece.

- QMS Cattle and Sheep Standards Interim Review attended by Grace Reid

A presentation was given to the group by ClipFitter on their castration and tail docking devices alongside a lengthy discussion on health plan dispensations and impacts of EU EHC changes proposed for December 2023.

- Scottish FAST Meeting attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid

High on the policy agenda for the day was sector challenges and also opportunities for collaborative approaches to overcome the difficulties affecting members. It is hoped that further engagement with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands via FAST will take place in March.

- Meeting with RHET representatives attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid
Plans for collaboration were discussed at this year's Royal Highland show.

- **9/10th February** PM attended NFU AGM Glasgow

Tuesday 21st February

- Scottish Government Agriculture Reform Programme Update meeting attended by Grace Reid
This virtual meeting was given to provide an update to stakeholders on future Ag policy in Scotland.

Friday 24th February

- Maternal Sheep Group meeting attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid.
Discussions focussed on genomic selection in breeding.

Thursday 2nd March

- Farmers Weekly Question Time – SRUC Oatridge attended by Grace Reid

Friday 3rd March

- James Hutton Institute Aberdeen meeting attended by Grace Reid.
Stakeholder workshop on the possible future options for knowledge transfer and innovation for agriculture and rural areas.

8th March - PM joined an online SAKIS meeting

PM attended an online meeting re the Forfar mart proposed closure, where several scenario's were discussed and joined the steering group formed to look for solutions

Monday 13th March

- NSA Scotland General Purposes and Policy Committee meeting.
NSA Scotland welcomed three speakers which covered various policy topics. Undoubtedly interests were peaked when Dr Lucy Coyne, Senior Technical Policy Manager, National Office of Animal Health Ltd (NOAH) was able to provide an update on the supply of animal medicines in the UK which included time critical products such as Heptavac P Plus. Despite continued communication of these difficulties facing farmers and crofters in terms of supply and costs of this product, farmers still find themselves in the same predicament year after year. In addition to this, the committee heard a very interesting presentation from Steven Thomson, Senior Agricultural Economist and Policy Advisor, SRUC who was able to update on the future of Scottish Agricultural policy in terms of what it may mean for the sheep sector and the challenges ahead in terms of monetary power. Finally the committee were given an update from QMS Chief Executive, Sarah Millar who provided a thorough update on QMS activities and operations scheduled for 2023.

Tuesday 14th March

- Scottish Government ARD Stakeholders meeting attended by Grace Reid
Scottish Government Agriculture and Rural Development Stakeholders meeting with various other agriculture and environment representatives. This meeting continues on from a workshop held in November which focussed on the Ag Bill consultation which Scottish Government had opened at the time. Stakeholders were given an update on the outlined route map for agricultural reform, wider land use and its transformation, initial plans for a Just Transition and also the ongoing forestry consultation. Agricultural attendees again raised their concerns surrounding the Government's stance on co-development and stakeholder engagement

with further feedback provided on the nature of the real life scenarios members are facing on a daily basis. It was highlighted that as much notice as possible is necessary to ensure informed decisions are being made now which will serve well in a future agricultural policy setting. Reassurances were again given that those who were already embarking on progressive initiatives would not be penalised under a new payments regime.

- Microbiome breeding meeting, Edinburgh attended by Grace Reid

This meeting was convened to explore the opportunity of adopting a microbiome driven breeding which focussed upon low methane livestock production in Scotland. Research has been carried out using SRUC's Beef and Sheep Research Centre (BSRC) and their respiration chambers to measure methane emissions from cattle. The same in theory can be replicated for sheep however these trials have not been carried out as of yet. Positive results have been shown that ruminant methane emissions can be reduced through careful selection of specific microbial genes however, understandably this process is particularly expensive and it is very early days.

- Industry led sheep scab working group meeting attended by Phil Stocker.

Monday 20th March

- ANIHUB meeting attended by Grace Reid

Wednesday 22nd March

- FAST meeting attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid.

The Food and Agriculture Stakeholders Taskforce was joined by Mairi McAllan Minister [for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform](#). The group stated their opinions on the pace of Scottish Agricultural policy and engagement.

Thursday 24th March

- RBST Spring Conference, Bowhouse, St Monans attended by Grace Reid.
- NSA Scotland Membership and Promotions Sub Committee Meeting

Friday 25th March

- Meeting to discuss QMS 5 year strategy attended by Peter Myles and Grace Reid.

This meeting was organised to ensure stakeholder input to the future processes of QMS.

Friday 31st March

- SRUC Livestock Worrying Workshop, Cupar attended by Grace Reid.

Wednesday 5th April

- STV interview and press day with Jim Fairlie MSP raising awareness of sheep worrying by dogs attended by Grace Reid.
- NSA Scotland Legalities of Sheep Worrying by Dogs Webinar.

Discussions were had regarding the recently strengthened laws in Scotland surrounding sheep worrying by dogs and also the recently completed NSA Survey detailing occurrences. NSA Scotland Chairman Peter Myles, Ramsay Hall, Senior Associate, Brodies LLP Solicitors and PC Mike Urquhart, North East Crime Reduction Officer were panel members. Webinar recording can be found here: <https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/webinars/nsa-scotland-legalities-of-sheep-worrying-by-dogs-webinar/>

Wednesday 12th April

- STV interview and local area communication of the impacts of sheep worrying by dogs attended by Grace Reid.

NSA Scotland joined with Police Scotland Officers, Safer Communities personnel from Fife Council, Forestry Commission, PARC, the SSPCA and dog wardens from Perth and Kinross to give out advice to the public at Blairadam Forest near Kelty. Grace was interviewed by STV on the matters at hand and was able to give an insight to NSA's recent work on sheep worrying by dogs.



Wednesday 19th April

- Edward Mountain Roundtable Discussion on Scottish Outdoor Access Code attended by Grace Reid. Many stakeholders representing those who take and give access attended the meeting to give opinions on the need for review of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and to identify issues which have arisen since it was established in the early 2000's.

Thursday 20th April

- NSA Regional Managers Meeting

Upcoming Meetings:

- 27th April - PM to attend RHS AGM.
- Friday 19th May – FAST meeting to be attended by Peter Myles.
- Tuesday 23rd May - Scottish Red Meat Resilience Group Meeting to be attended by Grace Reid.
- Wednesday 31st May – Scottish Government Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholders Group meeting to be attended by Grace Reid. Industry led sheep scab meeting to be attended by Phil Stocker and Grace Reid.
- Thursday 22nd – Sunday 25th June – NSA at the Royal Highland Show.

Other significant external meetings – attended by Phil unless otherwise stated

3 Counties Agricultural Society

Daniel Zeichner MP

George Eustice MP

Gwyn Jones - European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism

OPA Working Group

AHDB

WLBP

Food Standards Agency and Ubloquity re traceability

Farmers Weekly QT

Harper Adams University

RUMA

LCAG

BSAS

DEFRA

Small Abattoirs Working Group (SAWG)