



# NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2025



• Westminster Hall, London

## NSA EVENTS

NSA events are an opportunity to receive a professional update and the latest industry information, all while socialising in idyllic spots across the UK. Find trade stands, breed societies and visit host farms for a tour. These events are often the highlights of farming calendars.

NSA 2025 Events Schedule					
21 MAY	WEDNESDAY	04 JUNE	WEDNESDAY	11 JUNE	WEDNESDAY
Welsh Sheep Tregood Farm, Brecon		North Sheep Greystoke Castle Farm, Penrith, Cumbria		Highland Sheep Midfean Farm, Ardgay	
By kind permission of High Country Romneys		By kind permission of John & Liz Peile and their family		By kind permission of the Brooke Family	
25 JUNE	WEDNESDAY	1 JULY	TUESDAY		
Sheep South West Weston Farm, East Knowstone, Devon		Sheep Northern Ireland Dungiven, County Londonderry			
By kind permission of the Stanbury family		By kind permission of the McFarlane family			

## RAM SALES

Part of the NSAs work involves organising multi-breed ram sales, offering sellers and buyers a platform for independently inspected stock. These happen across the UK and are a great chance to build a flock or get a taste for what ram sales are like.

NSA 2025 Events Schedule					
04 AUG	MONDAY	20 AUG	WEDNESDAY	05 SEPT	FRIDAY
NSA Wales & Border Early Ram Sale		NSA South West Region Ram Sale		Thame Farmers Market Breeding Ewe Sale inc. NSA South East Region Ram Sale	
19 SEPT	FRIDAY	22 SEPT	MONDAY		
Melton Mowbray Sheep Fair inc. NSA Eastern Region Ram Sale		NSA Wales & Border Main Ram Sale			

## THIS ISSUE INCLUDES

- NSA 2025 EVENTS & RAM SALES
- NEXT GENERATION TRIPS
- NSA & RURTEC LTD 2025 GIVEAWAY
- NSA SHEARING LIST
- MEET THE TEAM - ANNA WILSON
- NSA NEXT GENERATION SHEPHERD COMPETITIONS
- CHEWING THE CUD WITH PERRY
- JOBS & WORK EXPERIENCE
- NSA & INDUSTRY NEWS
- LAMB RECIPE
- INDUSTRY EVENTS

Any requests or suggestions for future issues to be sent to [Lydia@nationalsheep.org.uk](mailto:Lydia@nationalsheep.org.uk)

 [facebook.com/natsheep](https://facebook.com/natsheep)

 [@nationalsheep](https://instagram.com/nationalsheep)

 [@nationalsheep](https://tiktok.com/nationalsheep)

SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF THE SHEEP INDUSTRY THROUGH YOUNG PEOPLE

## NSA NEXT GENERATION TRIP TO WESTMINSTER

The unintended consequences of well-meaning legislation was a reoccurring theme throughout a two-day trip to Westminster, undertaken by young sheep farmers in February.

NSA Next Generation selected 10 individuals from around the UK to take to London to find out more about the politics of sheep farming and the impact rules and regulations created in Westminster have, not just on individual farms, but through the whole food chain.

Following a tour of the House of Commons and House of Lords, NSA President Lord Inglewood hosted a roundtable discussion in which the 10 Next Generation representatives were invited to ask questions of Daniel Zeichner (Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs), Alistair Carmichael (Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee) and a trio of civil servants (led by John Powell of Defra).

Joanne Briggs, NSA Operations Director, guided the Next Generation group over

the two days. She says: “Mr Zeichner and Mr Powell were very transparent about the fact that legislation came from a place of good intentions, for example to address climate change concerns, but often had consequences that were unforeseen. Mr Powell said the move towards co-design between government and industry stakeholders – a process NSA has been supportive of and involved in – was a better way to develop legislation. And that feedback from individual farmers was always welcomed and taken on board.”

“Both he and Mr Zeichner thanked the group for their candid contributions and clear passion for the sector, while Mr Carmichael emphasised the need for farming stakeholders to continually challenge the government and ensure the phrase ‘unintended consequences’ wasn’t used disingenuously to hide poor legislative decisions.”

Later on, the group enjoyed British lamb as the centrepiece of a meal at the Farmers Club at Whitehall, where they were joined for the evening by Tim Farron MP. He spoke eloquently about the role of opposition MPs in holding the government to account and why it was

### • Farmers Club at Whitehall





essential to ensure legislation did not force farmers out of business. He similarly encouraged young people to speak out and share their experiences to highlight where legislation helped or hindered their progress in the sector.

A visit to the New Zealand High Commission near Trafalgar Square to speak to government spokespeople and New Zealand Beef & Lamb representatives compared how legislation and free trade agreements are thrashed out on the other side of the world and affect sheep farmers there.

The group were fascinated by the insight into sheep farming as a truly global business, with export markets around the world a key component for both UK and NZ producers.

A session at M&S headquarters at Paddington focused on the domestic trade and how supermarkets use existing legislation around animal welfare and climate change mitigation as the baseline for assurance and accreditation to market food to consumers.

Megan Powell of M&S also talked enthusiastically about how younger consumers were increasingly buying and enjoying British lamb.

- *Roundtable discussion with the group*



The 10 on the trip were Elsa Amiss, Sam Edwards, William Egerton, Emily Elnaugh, Jack Fletcher, Hannah Grindey, Emily Jones, Rachel Raine, Lucy Robbins & Finn Selby-Green.

*"It was a great couple of days. I learnt so much and we were given opportunities we would never be able to get without NSA and others who supported the trip. It was great to meet the other sheep farmers too. We plan to stay in touch with NSA and each other."*

## NSA NEXT GENERATION TRIP WELSH PARLIAMENT

In January, a group joined Caryl Hughes, NSA Wales Region Chair and Helen Roberts, Development Officer, for a trip to meet with representatives from Welsh Government at the Senedd in Cardiff.

The trip followed similar visits to Westminster organised specifically for the next generation of sheep farmers who have an interest in farming policy.

The group enjoyed a tour of the Senedd building before setting up to speak with members of the Senedd.

Taking a stand in the Senedd market place, the group were able to speak about topics including the Sustainable Farming Scheme in Wales and sheep worrying by dogs.



**Win a Lanati Astron cord-free handpiece kit worth more than £450**

**One winner per month throughout 2025**

## **NSA AND RURTEC 2025 PRIZE DRAW - WIN A LANATI ASTRON CORD-FREE SHEARING HANDPIECE KIT, WORTH MORE THAN £450**

NSA often runs prize draws and competitions, details of these can be found in the Members Area of the NSA website, along with reports of previous giveaways.

The current prize draw is open to any UK sheep farmer over the age of 16. Both NSA members and non-members can enter, but entries are limited to one per person/email address. One lucky winner per month will benefit from the prize of a Lanati Astron cord-free handpiece kit, a quality cordless product that will no doubt ease all shearing tasks.

Keep an eye on our giveaway page to see who the winners are, we will contact you should you be one of our lucky winners.



## **NSA SHEARING LIST**

As part of our work to represent the views and interests of sheep farmers, along with supporting best practices, you can also find a shearing list on our website.

The shearing list was designed to list shearers available for work, from all areas of the UK, for farmers to find individuals when help is needed.

The page is described as *"Shearing contractors and shepherds looking & willing to do additional shearing work to that of their own flocks can complete this form to be listed on the new NSA Shearing list."* Though it is important to note that shearers are not required to complete any checks to be listed, and the NSA is not responsible for any shearing completed.

Find more information through the Members Area on our website.





## MEET THE TEAM - ANNA WILSON

Anna works as Technical Communications Officer for the NSA. This involves ensuring members get the best possible information to run their sheep flocks and businesses. She adds to the NSA Weekly Email Update, works with NSA Project Manager, Nicola Noble, to disseminate project information & produce Sheep Farmer magazine.

She also works to deliver the NSA Next Generation programme, and is secretariat for the Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) group. Anna lives on a commercial sheep and arable farm in North Yorkshire with her husband and son. When she's not helping out on the farm, you'll find Anna in the show ring with her pedigree Kerry Hills.

Anna began her role in the beginning of 2025 and has announced her plans to "shake up" Next Generation.

She says, *"Farming is the oldest profession on earth, yet it's one of the hardest to start a business in, especially from scratch."*

*"Young people wanting to get into farming face many obstacles and without the relevant support, many will struggle to see farming and agriculture as a viable career choice. NSA recognises that our next generation of farmers are vital to the continuation of agriculture and hold the key to a successful future for our sector."*

*"The Next Generation programme is focused on providing future farmers with the support, knowledge and contacts they will require for a career in agriculture. No two people are the same and no two farms are the same and the Next Generation programme recognises this. One of the most successful initiatives of the NSA Next Generation programme is the Ambassador scheme. Successful applicants to the ambassador programme will be offered an experience that enables them to engage in all aspects of farming from nutrition to business planning. The programme is also a fantastic opportunity for successful applicants to meet like-minded young farmers from across the UK."*

*"I am really looking forward to delivering the Next Generation programme, meeting and working with our future farmers."*

*My young son is farming mad and wants to take over our family farm. I know that this may change, he is still young, however I want him to see the opportunities open to him and that **the future of farming is still bright.**"*



• Next Generation Ambassadors, 2024



- *Next Generation Shepherd Competition, Worcestershire, NSA Sheep Event 2024*

## NSA SHEPHERD COMPETITIONS

The NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition is a chance for anyone aged 26 and under to show off their sheep farming skills. Each NSA region runs one competition over a two-year period. The top two contestants from each regional round qualify for the national final at NSA Sheep Event at Three Counties Showground, which is held biennially in July.

NSA Next Generation Shepherd competitions are hands-on and practical. Contestants are required to demonstrate skills such as lamb classification, body condition scoring, vaccination and dosing techniques, shearing/clipping and to put an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) through its paces. There is also a multiple-choice questionnaire about the sheep sector.

Qualifying rounds are often held as part of a wider NSA Next Generation day or within a regional sheep event, such as NSA Welsh Sheep or NSA Sheep South West, meaning competitors can gain more from the day than simply attending the competition.

Finalists are also occasionally invited to attend European and World Young Shepherd events, to compete against students and young people from other countries. The four UK nations have an exceptional track record in these competitions.

During 2024, a group of four young farmers from each UK nation were selected to show off their skills during the World Shepherding competition, held in France. These were competing against those from far flung countries, like Australia.

Representing the UK were Liam Doyle from Northern Ireland, Matthew Fearon from England, Caryl Davies from Wales and Lana Bell from Scotland.

View upcoming NSA Shepherd competitions via the NSA website upcoming events page.







## CHEWING THE CUD WITH PERRY

**Meet NSA Next Generation Ambassador, Perry Parkinson. Perry joined the NSA programme in 2022 and has since been the recipient of the NSA Samuel Wharry Travel Bursary. This year Perry will be providing readers with an update on his farming life in Scotland.**

It's mid March and that January slug seems a distant memory. It's amazing how one day of 10°C and a single daffodil can cure that seasonal depression. You'd think it would have been the incredible crop of lambs we've had so far, yet as always, there's the problems that have come along too which put a holt to that.

Ewes blind on one side, one case of joint-ill\* and of course, a ewe who hates her lamb.

This year is the first year we've incorporated AI and embryo transfer and as much as it's been a big financial investment, I'd like to think it's paid off so far with this crop of lambs definitely being the best we've produced to date.

With only the commercials left to lamb

outside, the pedigree lambing has gone almost as well as it could have.

And with the dreaded Schmallenberg\* seemingly surrounding us on neighbouring farms, it reminds you of how susceptible we all are as farmers. The grass is slowly starting to creep through now with the warmer days but that also means the start of the worm season for the lambs so regular FEC\* testing every 2 weeks will be carried out to make sure we stay on top of parasite challenges. Good luck to anyone who's not yet started lambing or whoever's currently in the thick of it...there's light at the end of the tunnel, trust me!

### \*key terms

- Joint-ill - a bacterial joint infection. A common disease in young lambs, particularly in their first four weeks of life. Can lead to lameness, swollen joints and potentially death if left untreated.
- Schmallenberg - virus (SBV). Causes congenital malformations, abortion and stillbirths in cattle and sheep. It also causes fever, diarrhoea, and milk drop in adult cattle.
- FEC - Faecal Egg Counting. A test that measures the number of worm eggs in a dung sample to monitor worm burdens and aid treatment decisions.



• Next Generation Ambassadors, 2022



## JOBS AVAILABLE

The NSA website gives the Next Generation the opportunity to find jobs available through the Lambing List, Shearing List and through the Jobs & Work Experience page. Each Friday, we also include job adverts in the Weekly Email Update. These emails are one of the benefits included with being an NSA member.



## INDUSTRY NEWS

Farmers in England and Wales are being urged to consult their vet about vaccinating their herd or flock against Bluetongue (BTV-3) as part of the new Battle Bluetongue campaign which has been launched across the ruminant industry.

BTV-3 continues to pose a threat to both cattle, sheep, goats and camelids with potential impacts on animal health, productivity and trade.

As there is no treatment for the disease, slowing its spread through vaccination and restricted movements remains the best defence.

Vaccine use must ideally be reported within 48 hours of vaccinating. Vaccines are still under emergency authorisation which brings with it additional controls and requirements to report usage.

BTV3 vaccination numbers are steadily increasing based on farmer reports. Though, vets are also required to report numbers of animals prescribed for.

NSA encourage farmers to carefully consider vaccination and to talk to their vets as well as make use of the vaccination decision tool\*.

A new Battle Bluetongue finance calculator tool\* has been created to help vets and farmers assess the potential economic risk or return for a farm considering vaccinating flocks and herds against BTV-3 this year.

This calculator has been added to the armoury of resources available for vets and farmers to use in the Battle Bluetongue vaccination campaign launched in February 2025.

A webinar to explain the benefits of using the calculator and a live demonstration on how to use it is taking place on Wednesday 26th March 5-6pm.

\*All updates on bluetongue can be found on the NSA website home page.





- NSA Chief Executive, Phil Stocker

## FARMING ROADMAP

Phil Stocker joined a Defra workshop in London, to look at the 25-year Farming Roadmap.

The workshop brought together industry leaders from the farming sector who have already carried out significant work in and around the food and farming system.

The aim was to review the future, explore new ideas and plan how the sector can evolve to support sustainable farming practices, fair returns and effective regulation. The workshop will contribute to shaping future co-creative events and strategies, engaging a broader range of stakeholders in the weeks and months ahead. It will also play a key role in influencing long-term policies and incentives aimed at driving sector-wide change.

## NSA SUSTAINABILITY

NSA Project Manager Nicola Noble, attended the Low Carbon Agriculture event at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, highlighting the role of the UK sheep sector on the livestock panel.

She was joined by experts who engaged in an interactive discussion on how livestock can be part of the solution to achieving net zero agriculture. *“Speaking in the panel provided the ideal opportunity to showcase the UK sheep sector and stress the importance of consumers and policy makers recognising the role sheep farming plays not only in producing*

*nutritious food and a sustainable fibre, but delivering wider benefits socially, economically and environmentally,”* says Nicola.

A range of topics focused on sustainable livestock farming and the role they play in a future low carbon economy, deep-diving into methane reduction strategies – such as feed additives, breeding, productivity and pasture.

Nicola used this opportunity to showcase the NSAs report ‘UK Sheep Farming and the Sustainability Agenda’, available through the NSA website.



- Low Carbon Event & Panel

Nicola also joined a research workshop in Oxford focused on understanding the different views of regenerative agriculture.

As part of a 12-month project to explore the different visions of regenerative agriculture, the workshop brought together stakeholders from across the industry to share their opinions on the opportunities, risk and challenges these different regenerative scenarios would offer.

NSA joined a bracken management workshops being held across the UK commissioned by Welsh Government, Natural England and Nature Scot.

NSA Project Manager Nicola Noble joined a range of stakeholders to share knowledge on current bracken management control, what’s working and what isn’t, the knowledge gaps and what do we need to tackle bracken in the future.



## NSA SHOCKED AND ANGERED BY DEFRA'S REMOVAL OF SFI

The announcement from Defra of its abrupt closure to its environmental support payment, the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), NSA fears will have disastrous consequences.

Defra released the news that no new SFI applications will be accepted, with no prior indication of its plans to do so.

In Defra's words, the government could no longer run an 'uncapped scheme with a finite farming budget'.

NSA is concerned many farming businesses still diligently testing and checking how SFI options would impact or complement their sheep system will now have fallen through a crack in payments between the reduction of the BPS and SFI being stopped.

In response, Phil Stocker says: *"This latest Defra announcement feels disastrous – a word I don't use lightly. I'm seriously concerned many farms will now face 2025 with an accelerated decline of BPS income – and no access to SFI which for most farmers will be the main plank to replace that money."*

NSA states the decision indicates poor scheme design and management. It is in disbelief how Defra has arrived here and not stepped in to manage it earlier.

All NSA news and updates can be found on the NSA website news tab, weekly email update, or through social media.

## The impact of SFI

NSA Policy Manager, Michael has joined several discussions with industry following news on the scrapping of the current SFI offering.

He says: *"NSA has been privy to some discussions that have highlighted the devastating impact this decision from Defra could have. In some cases, possible SFI claims that had yet to be confirmed will leave a gaping hole of up to six figures in business cashflows. Some smaller farms that have spent between £7-£10k on consultancy, soil sampling, and habitat surveys could be forced into hardship within no SFI income, alongside this many land agents have been left with unbillable work."*

Following a Defra Farming Roundtable meeting on March 17th, attended by Phil, NSA has co-signed a letter with other farming unions and organisations to Farming Minister Daniel Zeichner, making a case that farmers falling between a BPS and SFI blackhole cannot be abandoned.

Phil's assistant, Andrea, attended a cross-industry meeting on the impact to upland farmers of the closure of SFI.

There was wide-ranging discussion about whether anything could be done to help bridge the gap between SFI stopping and what people felt could be an 18-month delay before any new scheme was ready to make payments.

The impact on farmers' business and their mental health and wellbeing was at the heart of discussion and the need to help support upland farms to remain in business whilst Defra and the Government discussed a new scheme. A letter is being drafted with potential short-term solutions to go to ministers.





## LABORATORY GROWN MEAT DISMISSES SUSTAINABLE BRITISH AGRICULTURE, SAYS NSA

The NSA is surprised & concerned to learn that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is seeking to speed up the approval process for lab grown foods, including cell grown meat. NSA believes this is a further U-turn from the UK Government on its commitment to British agriculture. It has previously stated the public must connect more closely to natural food, the soil and ecosystems.

## NSA SOUTH EAST REGION ONLINE CONFERENCE TO RETURN THIS AUTUMN

NSA South East Region is pleased to announce the dates for this year's Sheep Health, Wealth and Production (SHWAP) conference. The online event will take place on three consecutive evenings from 14th to 16th October 2025.

The conference will see NSA representatives joined by leading industry names to discuss a range of topics with the aim of arming sheep producers with the tools needed to enhance their sheep farming enterprises to be healthy, productive and profitable.

Further details of event speakers and sponsors to be announced soon.

## NSA NORTHERN REGION WELCOMES OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS POLITICAL MATTERS WITH MP

NSA Northern Region Committee members and local farmers met with Victoria Atkins MP at J36 Rural Auction Centre, Cumbria, during her tour of UK auction markets and shows last week.

NSA Technical Communications Officer Anna Wilson attended and says: *"Ms Atkins held a Q & A session with local farmers where she recognised the emotional toll on the farming industry and the struggles we all face. She stressed to those in attendance how important it was for people to seek professional advice for both financial planning and mental health support."*

Further conversations regarding border control and biosecurity, Ms Atkins said, were also high up the agenda for her party in opposition but it was recognised by those at the meeting that surviving the next four years was going to be extremely tough for many farming businesses.

Ms Atkins closed with the statement *'Underpinning all the projects and work is the word HOPE. This is the backbone of the future and without it, we might as well pack it all in.'*





## AHDB TAKES THE SPOTLIGHT TO HIGHLIGHT BENEFIT OF BRITISH RED MEAT, DAIRY AND CEREALS DURING RAMADAN

AHDB will be showcasing the use of British lamb, beef, dairy and cereals during the festival of Ramadan.

British Muslim TV, in conjunction with Shazan Food Ltd, will release a special 30-day digital series titled “British Ramadan” showing the preparation and tasting of recipes featuring British lamb, beef, dairy and cereals on social media during the Ramadan period from Friday 28th February to Sunday 30th March.

In 2016, Muslims in the UK were estimated to have spent £4.64 billion on halal food and beverages; by 2023, AHDB and NIQ estimate that £823m was spent on halal meat alone.

Lamb and mutton consumption is very important to halal consumers: 80% consume lamb weekly and 64% consume mutton weekly, compared with only 6% of the general UK population eating lamb, making it an important opportunity, particularly for lamb producers, to target.



## LAMB KOFTA RECIPE

A Middle Eastern dish of spiced ground lamb. The meat is formed into balls and cooked, and is often served in wraps or with rice.

- 500g lamb mince
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 2 fat garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tbsp chopped mint
- oil, for brushing

1. Mix together all the ingredients until well blended. Divide into eight balls, then roll each ball on a board with a cupped hand to turn them into ovals. Thread onto four metal skewers and brush with oil.
2. Heat a pan until you can feel a good heat rising and then cook for 3-4 minutes each side. Don't turn until they are well sealed or the meat will stick to the pan.
3. Season to taste, and set aside. Serve the koftas with yogurt and spiced flat breads.





## **THE BIG FARM TEA BREAK - 24TH TO 30TH MARCH**

**No one in the rural community should feel isolated or alone.**

It's amazing how stopping for a conversation puts everything into perspective for you and people around you.

Farmers are being urged to take time out and put their mental health and wellbeing first as part of The Big Farm Tea Break.

Organised by parents Lynda and Andy Eadon, who lost their son Len to suicide in 2022, the event aims to connect everyone working in rural communities.

Len's Light works on shining a light on mental health issues in the rural community and raising funds to support charities tackling these issues. Open honest conversations about positive mental health will help to keep families and communities together.

Please share your photos with #lenslight or #bigfarmteabreak

## **SOIL ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND - PLANNING FOR CHANGE: HOLISTIC BENCHMARKING FOR WHOLE FARM PLANS**

**Thursday 27 March,  
12.30–1.30pm,**

Join for an interactive webinar exploring what Whole Farm Plans are, an outline of the new requirements, and how a whole farm planning approach can boost the resilience of your business.

The main areas to address with a whole farm planning approach are to rebuild soil health and fertility, reduce the carbon footprint, and build resilience to the changing climate, particularly in the context of water management, shelter and habitat. FREE and open to farmers, crofters, growers and land managers. Booking is required online.

## **SOIL ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND - WHOLE FARM PLANS ON ORGANIC FARMS: CROP AND LIVESTOCK FOCUS**

**Wednesday 9 April,  
12.30–1.30pm,**

Join an interactive webinar exploring what Whole Farm Plans are, an outline of the new requirements, and how organic crop and livestock management plans help organic farmers to deliver high animal welfare and embed nature-based solutions over pesticide use.

FREE and open to farmers, crofters, growers and land managers. Booking is required online.

Find more information via Soil Association Scotland events