

# Activities report to NSA Board August 2019

*This report refers to main activities in quarter two of 2019. Activities are presented under a set of common headings.*

## NSA policy, technical and research work

**Brexit: Deal / no deal:** NSA has continued to call for a deal to be agreed due to the ever-present risk of WTO tariffs of 40-50% on sheepmeat. A large portion of NSA work has been focusing on contingency preparations, especially since the announcement of the Conservative Party leadership election and the two final candidates both seemingly content to leave without a deal if nothing can be passed by 31<sup>st</sup> October. A deal being passed is very unlikely owing to the EU's position that the deal isn't open for renegotiation, and that Parliament is still unlikely to pass the present deal. NSA's work in this area has been multi-faceted, continuing to put our press statements, including about the new migration proposals that could have a serious impact on UK abattoirs, writing to policymakers and meeting with policymakers to point out the serious dangers of a no- deal and calling for that option to be taken off the table – and contingency planning. NSA has been in close contact with Defra and Farming Minister Robert Goodwill to provide advice on the most effective approach to contingency and has been clear that finding a way to help exporters pay for tariffs, thus supporting the market, is the best option. The Government's current plan is a ewe headage payment, which NSA has serious reservations about as it will not solve the long term issue of market disruption and neglects some areas such as store lamb values and finishers. NSA is working to convince the Government a short-term project to help offset tariffs is the best way to secure industry and underpin the markets. However, it is further working to help provide a credible format, as explicitly providing money to producers would land the UK Government in hot water with the WTO.

**Brexit: Future farm support:** NSA has submitted a proposal for a more holistic farm assessment to the ELMS team at Defra. There has been no update on whether Defra will trial the proposal but we have been told it will be shared with other Defra departments if deemed appropriate. NSA's submission was focused on integration of environmentally beneficial practices into sheep systems, and vice versa. NSA has also been working to ensure interim support, until the new schemes are launched, isn't detrimental to farmers. NSA has been working with some local farmers in stewardship schemes, where the stocking rate requirements have been changed, something NSA is against and believes should be kept consistent until new schemes are opened for discussion. Separate to this, the Red Meat Benchmarking Project (a Wales only initiative) was completed at the end of last year with around 1,250 farmers successfully completing the benchmarking tool. We await the results with interest as we understand it will help inform future initiatives in Wales.

**Sheep in upland areas (to include sheep stratification):** Hill and upland sheep farming has received growing recognition of importance if the comments made by the Sec of State and Farming Ministers are any measure of results. However to date this is in word only and, on the ground, continuing pressure seems to be being felt in terms of sheep reductions and pressure on the traditional upland systems. The NSA's Heritage Breeds marketing initiative relates to the future success of traditional upland sheep farming as well as ensuring the movement of upland sheep to low ground areas for breeding and further finishing. NSA is continuing work on sheep stratification generally and particularly promoting arable/sheep integrations and health assurance to give low ground sheep farmers confidence of health status. Following the NSA-led meeting in January and the NSA Breed Society Forum in May, plus various discussions about iceberg diseases and post-Brexit exports, Phil has organised an initial discussion in late July to assess the requirement of a national health scheme and greater control of iceberg diseases. This will be between NSA, Liverpool University and SVS.

**Sheep in arable rotations:** This continues as a key part of our strategic work in seeing more sheep in arable areas. It is potentially the key to us maintaining national sheep numbers in future decades as well as moving towards a more carbon neutral sector. We continue to promote this approach and to connect interest parties together where we see opportunities. In addition, research work is active in this area,

particularly the sheep/arable element of the iSAGE project involving NSA, Brown & Co, AHDB and Frontier Agriculture. Livestock and grass sampling is going well so far and the project partners hosted an on-site demo day for local farmers. Nicola spoke on the current project and to promote NSA. Project results will be included in the final iSAGE results. The SARIC project 'Restoring soil quality through re-integration of leys and sheep into arable rotations' mimics the iSAGE trial over three other sites. NSA has provided considerable sheep expertise to this but is currently only being paid for expenses, not staff time. As the only body providing sheep knowledge, we will request remuneration for any further requests for information. Rothamstead is conducting a separate project looking at grazing diverse swards vs basic permanent pasture for liveweight gain, faecal egg counts and days to slaughter, as well as other environmental measurements focused on public goods. NSA is not directly written into the project but has offered support and we hope to become involved towards the end of the project for dissemination. Separate again, Defra has completed a scoping study on the reintegration of livestock into arable farms, which Nicola fed into for NSA. Results are expected towards the end of the year.

**Integrating trees into sheep farming systems:** NSA has had an increasing number of 'tree organisations', such as Woodland Trust, present at its sheep events around the country. These stands have reported a positive interest, demonstrating farmers' increased interest in integrating trees into systems. NSA is also considering producing a condensed version of its Sheep and Trees booklet, as a policy paper that can be used to deliver a more concise position to policymakers. This will be discussed further by the UKP&T committee during Q3. Separate to this, NSA is aware of an Oxford PhD student looking at the role of tree planting on UK farmland and potentially producing a tool to input farm and tree data and give farmers an overall carbon value for their farm. This could be used to offset carbon emissions from others (where the farmer would be paid for their carbon sinks) as well educating and advising farms on environmentally friendly practices. There is also the potential to link this tool into public goods assessments for future ELMS payment schemes and so we have agreed to keep in touch with the student (and potentially sell him NSA research services as part of his work).

**Rewilding:** We continue to keep an eye on the activities of Lynx Trust UK and there is no evidence of any resubmission of their application to release. The political positions on this both sides of the English and Scottish border seem firm even though the general concept of rewilding attracts interest. In some quarters people are talking more about 'making things wilder' rather than 'rewilding' and this has different connotations although we do need to keep an eye on the definitions. The most significant action under this heading is Natural England's approval of the release of up to 30 pairs of White Tailed Sea Eagle on the Isle of Wight. Although we opposed this release it is going ahead this summer with the initial release of 6 young birds relocated from Scotland and due to be released in August. NSA has successfully pushed to be a part of both the advisory group and the steering group overseeing this project and our aim is to find ways to avoid this release becoming problematic for sheep farmers on the Island but also across the South of England where they are bound to spread.

**Sheep health and welfare (to include NSA involvement in SHAWG, RUMA, SAAG, SCOPS):** NSA involvement in all groupings and interest areas relating to sheep health continues. Joanne continues to support SCOPS in communications with Phil also having an input where appropriate; we are actively involved in SHAWG and RUMA (as a Director). We have been part of a working group driven by Gwyn Jones and looking at creating a new Ruminant Health Group that would absorb SHAWG and CHAWG, although it is unlikely that we could support such a move, and we are keeping in close contact with the AHWBE Pathway initiative that is aiming to see a transformational change in approaches to livestock health. The industry sheep scab initiatives in Wales and England are both 'on ice' with Wales having committed £5M but workstreams and tenders yet to be seen, and in England a response to the RDPE application is still awaited. NSA has taken the Sheep Antibiotic Guardian Group under our wing although this group is a sub-group of SHAWG. We now have a set of metrics going through agreement and AHDB is developing an e medicine book that will allow farmers to record and benchmark usage. The group will also be looking at gathering data from the point of prescription

although this will mean the prescription process will likely tighten up in future. Coming from SCOPS and relating to sheep scab, AMTRA has developed an accreditation scheme for mobile dippers which will allow them to legally buy and store dip on behalf of farmers. It is likely this accreditation may also relate to Environment Agency approval for spent dip storage. Discussions about sheep health matters being part of future farm support schemes through efficiency and productivity strands are growing in acceptance. Finally following the NSA's meeting on sheep stratification and the Breed Society Forum interest is growing in the area of risk assessments and measures to reduce the spread of 'iceberg' diseases. This interest has been strengthened by the notification by Defra that when the UK becomes a 3<sup>rd</sup> country we will need nationally recognised schemes to cover 5 key 'iceberg' diseases to continue to export breeding stock to the EU. There will be a discussion on this subject at the NSA AGM in Stirling on August 9<sup>th</sup>. The risk from BTV8 continues even though the absence of clinical symptoms in most cases being found through surveillance on mainland Europe is meaning that farmers are not seeing this as a serious threat, and this is dampening down any significant interest in campaigns to vaccinate.

**Sheep identification and movement recording and reporting:** Work on the LIP continues with much more effort being seen on service design and simplicity of use. We should hear who has won the contract for Phase 1, the purchase of a core IT system to enable the LIP by late July. Defra funding for the provision of the statutory service has been confirmed. There are still questions to be discussed about the service add-ons (non statutory), how these will be funded, and ownership of information. The service will be run by a new company set up as a satellite of AHDB with industry and Government involvement in governance. It appears the future approach, affected by the EU Animal Health Law and heavily influenced by UK industry, will allow the use of the single electronic slaughter tag for lambs destined for slaughter (there was a risk this could have been restricted to lambs going direct, single move, from farm to abattoir). There is likely to be a requirement that the individual chip number will be required to be printed on the tag itself and in policy terms likely that all out of business moves will need to be individually recorded/reported. Defra consultants working on LIP service design have been invited to the next English committee meeting in August. The devolved nations are watching this development but have indicated they will continue with their own systems, that may need further development in future.

**TSE controls:** Following the disappointing decision not to move from tooth eruption to a 30 June cut-off date in 2019 for carcass splitting and SRM removal discussions with industry, Defra, devolved nation administrations, and FSA are continuing with the aim of getting a change secured for the 2020 season. Defra have informed that this needs a legislative change, a set of agreed protocols, and an industry consultation before things progress. They have also warned that if future EU trade options seem difficult as we approach Oct 31<sup>st</sup> and EU departure then there may be further hiccups. A series of meetings in mid July exposed the fact that FSA are not as far forward with understanding and agreeing protocols as was hoped, although the wording for the legislative change and the consultation is said to be complete. Further information and details of proposed protocols are available on request

**Supply chain concerns (to include price reporting, classification and NSA involvement in Hallmark scrutiny committee):** No further progress has been made on price reporting and carcass classification mandatory requirements, this is seemingly being held up by a lack of Parliamentary time and a slowing of the Agriculture Bill. Skin-on Sheep progress is in a similar position although we do now have protocols agreed we need to make the case for a legislative change re carcass inspection with skin on. NSA is part of the new industry carcass grading quality scrutiny committee, with Hallmark being the only participant at present. This committee has met once and due to meet again in late July. The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting received some very useful KPI's from the regional grading teams and Hallmark staff appeared to appreciate the chance to engage with industry.

**Farm assurance:** RTA TAC met in May 2019 for the first time in around 18 months. Phil and Bryan both attended and it felt a far more positive meeting and greater acceptance of industry concerns over scheme attractiveness and acceptability to farmers. The requirement to record antibiotic use and review with vet appears to have been accepted with few criticisms. The push for lifetime assurance is still there although it still seems RTA are going to push forward with beef and are of the opinion that they will catch a lot of sheep farmers in doing so. The link with the LIP is evident, giving greater traceability to allow lifetime assurance to be verified. Adam Watson continues on the RTA B&L Board.

**Engagement with AHDB:** Engagement with AHDB has improved with the levy body appearing to take on board many of the comments NSA made in the Defra review. This review has not yet been analysed but AHDB are aware of most of the responses and are already pushing on with their own strategic review. NSA has met with them on a number of occasions to start to feed into this review, we have also taken part in an industry organisation strategy workshop with the AHDB Beef and Lamb Board. AHDB sector director is attending the next English Committee to discuss next stages of their review. It is also clear that NSA activity in the areas of livestock farming and healthy diets, and climate change has influenced AHDB's work in this area as has our persistence that the environmental aspects of sheep farming, and the genetic diversity of our systems, is something to be valued not disposed of.

**Rural crime (including sheep worrying by dogs):** NSA is continuing to correspond with the National Police Chiefs' Council, which is leading an industry group on dog worrying. The group has not met as most legislative change has been put on hold by Defra, however, Ellie has been in regular contact, responding to requests for information and using the contacts to gather further information for the benefit of NSA members. Information gathered is being used to update the website. Ellie and Phil are also working closely with Ben Lake MP, who is entering a private members bill into Parliament later this year as an attempt to pass a new dog worrying bill. NSA is providing information and has agreed to pull on contacts to try to gather support for the bill. While it is unlikely the bill will pass, it will at least move the issue up the agenda a force the Government to provide a response to the issue. Also highlighting NSA's involvement in this topic, the NSA annual dog worrying online campaign look place in April, coinciding with the clocks changing and Easter. The campaign included a series of videos and graphics with an increased emphasis on the need to be a responsible dog owner, knowing where one's dog is at all times – see the social media section for more.

NSA has further provided information and support to a number of police forces regarding other areas of rural crime, particularly sheep thefts. This support has varied from using NSA communication tools such as the Weekly Email Update to appeal for information, to providing information about ear tagging and its relevance for sheep thefts.

**Farm safety:** Katie continues to represent NSA on the Farm Safety Partnership and has attended two meetings during the last quarter; one general meeting to discuss the key themes of the partnership for 2019 and the other focusing on how to effectively communicate with farmers to deliver the important message of farm safety. The key theme the partnership highlighted throughout the second quarter of 2019 was that of increased safety around livestock. Although sheep present a minimal risk, NSA delivered the message via the Weekly Email Update and in Sheep Farmer magazine reminding members also working with cattle of the need for appropriate care when working with them.

**Policy work in the devolved nations – see section on regional activities**

**Any other livestock research with NSA involvement not already covered:-**

- ***Echinococcus granulosus* (tapeworm) PhD at Liverpool University:** This project, which paid NSA for helping gather data, is complete and results should be available towards the end of the year.
- **GenResBridge project.** NSA invited to take part in a Ljubljana University project to compile a list of stakeholders in plant, forest and animal genetic resource conservation and management as well as

wider agrobiodiversity, to prepare a 'European Integrated Genetic Resources Strategy' in collaboration with various stakeholders from different countries.

- **ISAGE:** All outstanding case study reports need to be completed by the end of August, which is the final stage before the results are processed and then disseminated. All case studies (including the sheep/arable one mentioned above, an assessment of the NSA Next Generation Ambassador project, an assessment of Flock Health Clubs, and a focus on holistic farm management) will result in farmer-focused leaflets for future knowledge transfer. Nicola attended the fourth (and final) general meeting in May, which focused on how the results will be practically utilised to enhance sustainability and improve farm business resilience. Of particular interest are two practical tools to suggest on-farm changes to maximise sustainability while maintaining productivity. In addition, the Spanish partners are aiming to produce a general farm tool looking at how changes on farm will alter greenhouse gas emissions and other factors contributing to climate change. All tools should be available early next year
- **SMARTER project:** NSA confirmed as a stakeholder in this four-year EU-funded project starting in November to look at breeding resilience and efficiency in sheep and goats.
- **UK Sheep Genetic Improvement Scoping study.** Final report still with DEFRA for approval. NSA hopes to source further funding for a further project to trial the scoping study in more detail.
- **Warwick University sheep lameness project:** Warwick Uni paid for NSA's time, expenses and resources in collecting data for this project, for which results are expected at the end of the year.
- **Wellcome Trust project to 'develop new ways of understanding and intervening in livestock disease and welfare':** NSA has not been asked to contribute anything since the kick-off meeting last year but another project meeting for this four-year project is due in early September.

Research projects 'in waiting to confirm funding': ProArctic Sheep - learning from good practice; Liverpool University - preventing lamb mortality due to watery mouth disease'; various other Liverpool University sheep-focused research projects; EuroSheep – ideas to improve lamb growth rates. Unsuccessful project submissions with the aim of re-submissions: GIN modelling (resilience) – a sheep parasites project and the effect of cheek teeth on ewe longevity. Other potential new projects: Phil has been in touch with British Wool about potential research projects promoting wool as a sustainable fibre; and NSA is still waiting a funding decision for the collaboration with the International Agricultural Research Institute and partners, as discussed in the last board report.

**Any other consultations not covered under topics above:** Following a similar process in Wales, NSA has responded to the tenancy reform consultation for England, which sought views on areas such as tenant rights in inheritance and tenant rights to invest in buildings and innovation – [view the response here](#). NSA has also been responding to a number of 'public feedback' requests on several delegated acts within the proposed new EU Animal Health Law. These have been assessing topics such as tagging and disease prevention. NSA further responded to the Government's call for evidence on the general licences for shooting certain birds – see the [NSA response here](#) and the [Government response here](#).

#### **More general topics (to be updated if and when activity occurs)**

- **Genetics:** Over and above the stratified sheep system work discussed above, NSA has been putting breed societies and Defra in touch regarding a meeting Defra is pulling together about rare breeds.
- **Trade and marketing (to include NSA projects around mutton, heritage breeds etc, and NSA involvement in work addressing red meat consumption concerns e.g. Veganuary etc):** We have been highly active in the area of challenging claims that red meat and lamb in particular are damaging to consumers and to the environment. Working with other organisations we have reasonable evidence to counter claims and a robust defence against claims that veganism is a more sustainable way forward. We have heavily influenced the work of AHDB and NFU in this area. NSA continues to support major marketing efforts on a domestic and overseas level. Kevin Harrison has supported the UKTAG in exhibitions in China and has returned to speak at conferences there. We facilitated an industry meeting with UKTAG, aiming to get other sector specific organisations to similarly support UKTAG and following this are planning for Bryan

Griffiths to support a mission in Brazil in late August. The Heritage Breeds work is complete and the end of project report available on request. It has been circulated to a few people in NSA and to NFU, all the levy bodies and other relevant organisations as well as all those who funded the work. The next stage is to confirm/approve delivery and we will be working on this front during the summer/early autumn.

- **Wool:** Following criticism of shearing throughout the last 12 months (mostly from PETA), NSA teamed up with industry organisations including NAAC, British Wool and the farming unions to produce a [comprehensive shearing guideline document](#). This sets out a gold standard for how farmers and shearers should behave and the standard they should treat their sheep to during the process. NSA continues to support the Campaign for Wool through our input, guidance, and making connections. The next Council meeting is on the 25<sup>th</sup> July where the campaign team will be discussing the summer events that include a film premiere, a wool beach event in Cornwall and activities for Wool Week. Most of this work is targeted towards media activity to promote wool generically. The campaign have been grateful for the work of industry in producing a set of guidelines for shearers and farmers preparing sheep for shearing to guard against welfare criticisms. Theoretically there couldn't be a better time for the value of wool to be recognised as a truly sustainable fibre and to gain value against synthetic fibres – in practice we are yet to see any gain from this opportunity but we will continue to influence others and to improve understanding of the benefits of wool. NSA has made an investment into securing 150 ties made exclusively from British wool. These are to be sold with the aim being to recoup costs but we will aim to use this as a means of encouraging other organisations to use wool for garments (e.g. the NT in relation to staff fleeces (poorly named as fleeces are not fleece at all)).

## NSA communications and knowledge exchange work

**Press work:** A summary of press releases issued and their social media reach is provided in an appendix at the end of this document. In terms of press pick up of releases, the greatest engagement has been for Brexit topics, alongside NSA events and climate and environmental (including rewilding). It is worth also noting in this quarter that regions were releasing separate press releases to their local press regarding their sheep events, which generated a very health pick up also. Other press engagement has included:-

- NSA's regular Brexit press releases have been frequently picked up by agricultural and local press and NSA has seen some success in national press – particularly following the conservative leadership race, where some candidates referred to NSA's press releases on Brexit and contingency needs.
- Brexit has resulted in several television and radio interviews. NSA officeholders largely do these, as media outlets want the farmer perspective and these most frequently go to Bryan Griffiths, Kevin Harrison and Eddie Eastham. A number of Scottish press enquiries often come in and, where possible, these are referred to Jen Craig and John Fyall.
- A strong interest in NSA's opposition to the release of sea eagles in the Isle of Wight from national, regional and agricultural press. As NSA has been very vocal in its opposition we were automatically contacted by a variety of outlets, including the Telegraph, BBC and agricultural press, following release of an image of a sea eagle in Scotland carrying a lamb in its talons.
- NSA statements criticising false information regarding sheep and the environment and have received a number of follow up interviews including with the BBC.
- All major agricultural publications have covered NSA's statement on the Government 'U-turn' and subsequent activity around carcase splitting.
- Agricultural press and often local press are consistently picking up NSA Next Generation information.
- Regional press continue to frequently ask for help with stories on dog worrying, sheep thefts, sheep welfare and more – local press in return are usually willing to run relevant NSA press releases. Other press enquiries recently responded to also include flock productivity, sheep sexuality ([yes, really!](#)), general licences, sheep rustling, migration and staff shortages, shearing guidelines and bluetongue.

**Sheep Farmer magazine – see recent editions.**

**Weekly Email Update:** Ellie and Katie continue to share responsibility for this each week, covering the stories most in line with their respective roles. Industry bodies continue to recognise its value with levy bodies and British Wool, among others, frequently contact us with stories and events to be shared with NSA members. The update has been sent to approximately 3500 people each Friday during the last quarter, this includes NSA members for whom we have email addresses, breed society representatives and a complimentary list, which includes Defra and devolved Government representatives. The email has an open rate of approximately 30 % which is actually a good rate when compared to other bulk mailings.

**Website:** The NSA website saw a rise in visitors for the second quarter of 2019. An average of 25,000 users used the site each month over the period, compared to 22,312 for the first quarter. This is likely to be a combination of the regional sheep events happening and several new Next Generation initiatives requiring online submissions, including the Samuel Wharry Memorial award and Next Generation summer two-day residential workshops. A fairly consistent number of people visit the website for the first time each month, approximately 80% of each months' visitors. This is encouraging but also indicates that perhaps existing members are not increasing their use of the website alongside this.

**Social media:** NSA pages on Facebook and Twitter continue to see increased activity with almost 1,000 new followers on Facebook Q2 alone, taking the total number of Facebook likes to 11,643 at the end of the second quarter. Twitter has also seen growth in the number of followers; 11,162 people now follow the NSA account. The main areas of activity resulting in greatest impact on social media have been work on defending the industry's role in climate change, concerns regarding rewilding, warning of increased nematodirus risk and the main dog worrying by dogs in April that, once again, had a significant reach on both Facebook and Twitter with an overall total of more than 173,000 people viewing content from NSA on the sites during the week in mid-April. The campaign included videos and graphics that delivered the key message of being a responsible dog owner and not allowing your dog to stray, a common component of many dog attacks on sheep. The largest reaching post was a video featuring NSA supporters affected by sheep worrying, which was viewed by almost 30,000 people. The graphic shown also had a considerable impact, reaching more than 17,000 people.



**Public-facing activities:-**

- **Love Lamb Week** - Plans have begun during the second quarter of the year for the annual Love Lamb week which takes place during the first week in September. This year focus will be on promoting the fantastic flavour of lamb rather than on specific cuts as it has done in the past few years. Again, the campaign will try and target a lot of activity towards a slightly younger market that has been identified as the group of people eating the least lamb currently. Just a small increase in lamb consumption in this group of the population would result in a much larger home market. NSA have put forward names of Next Generation Ambassadors and Samuel Wharry Memorial Award recipients as potential case studies and 'faces' of the campaign and will continue to encourage members to get involved with the campaign as we move through Q3 towards Love Lamb week itself.
- **Open Farm Sunday** – This annual weekend when many farms across the UK open their gates to the public took place in June. NSA promoted the weekend via its usual communication routes and provided publicity materials such as dog worrying stickers and postcards highlighting the nutritional benefits of

eating sheepmeat and the environmental benefit that grazing sheep can provide to members who requested help with their events.

- **Other public facing activity** – NSA was not approached by organisers of Countryfile Live this year to get involved with the events in August. This event has in previous years been costly in terms of staff resource with little or no benefit to the association, we have therefore not chased the organisers to be involved instead focussing on other public facing activity that can bring some positive promotion to NSA and the industry in general.

**Farmer-facing meetings and events organised / attended:** This has been a quiet area of activity in Q2, due to all the NSA sheep events being held, but Chris will be taking the lead on these going forward and already had big plans for Q3 and Q4. In Q2, Nicola attended the Groundswell farmer event to talk about NSA sheep-and-arable work.

## Other areas of NSA activity

**NSA Next Generation:** Having opened the applications in Q1 for the NSA Samuel Wharry Memorial Award for the Next Generation, Q2 has seen a selection day held in late April and a training day for the two successful candidates in late May. Marie Prebble, an NSA Next Generation Ambassador, will be travelling within the UK and to Norway and Iceland to look at practical considerations for best practice at shearing. And Charlotte Beaty, a completely new face to NSA, will go to New Zealand to look at maximising permanent and semi-permanent grassland. Both Charlie and Marie will be required to feedback on their trips to NSA on various occasions. Separate to this, NSA was invited to attend the International Sheep Breeders Festival and Roundtable in Bulgaria in May to share information on the NSA Next Generation programme. Katie attended and reports that many countries attending the event were interested in replicating the scheme at home. Katie has also been continuing to organise the series of NSA Next Generation two-day summer workshops, which is the bulk of the 2019 activity happening in lieu of the Ambassador programme. Katie and Chris Adamson are working together to contact all Ambassadors from 2014-2018 to check on their sheep farming and NSA involvement; feedback will be given to regions once this has finished. Chris is also starting to plan the Next Generation winter event and has supported regional Next Generation activity at the regional sheep events and standalone Next Generation days.

**Engagement with NSA-affiliated breed societies:** Chris is taking responsibility for this area of work as part of the new Activities & Campaigns Officer role. He has found engagement to have been good so far, particularly with the folks who attended the NSA Breed Society Forum in May. NSA organised this day so the morning had industry updates from NSA, Signet and British Wool, and the afternoon was a workshop session about sheep stratification. Chris has been tasked with encouraging breed societies to spread membership recruitment messages and leads from the forum and North Sheep resulting in membership forms being sent out with some society newsletters and some societies being willing to share data once we get a GDPR-compliant agreement written up. The Breed Society Forum for next year has already been booked, on the first Thursday in May as always, and this year returning to Scotland (near Edinburgh Airport).

**George Hedley Memorial Award:** The deadline for receipt of nominations for the 2019 George Hedley Memorial Award is 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019

## NSA internal work / operations

**Sheep Farmer performance / corporate supporters / income from commercial companies:** Advertising continues to hold up for Sheep Farmer magazine, which is very positive. Sufficient advertising has been secured for the first four editions of 2019 to consistently be 48 pages, compared to 40, 48, 48 and 56 pages in 2018. The move from Ladies in Print to Kinroy Design continues to be paying off financially, with design



fees being consistently lower and print being comparable or lower depending on the number of pages and copies per edition. We have been trying to move from Royal Mail 'publishing mail' to Royal Mail 'subscription mail' since January but a number of administrative challenges (mainly it being a new service that the mailing house hasn't used before) has prevented this so far. We shall keep trying, as it should represent a cost saving. We are also better tracking how many surplus copies of the magazine we don't use (i.e. the extras we print to take to shows and events) as it's a waste to print too many more than we are likely to use. In terms of the move to Kinroy Design and the resulting changes to the layout and appearance of the magazine, feedback has been virtually non-existent; we're working on the assumption that no news is good news! In line with ongoing work to tighten up the terms and conditions for sheep event exhibitors/sponsors, we are looking to put terms and conditions in place for advertising in Sheep Farmer and the Weekly Email Update, as we currently don't have anything at all along these lines. However, to keep an eye on existing commercial companies we work with and new ones that might come along, a small team of staff members are meeting (virtually) once a month to discuss relationships and opportunities (and debtors!) linked to corporate support packages.

**Sheep Event:** Discussions amongst NSA Staff have started to take place regarding the NSA Sheep Event 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020. PR and other items will be finalised in due course and another meeting of the committee is planned for the autumn. The organiser is already in talks with companies about sponsorship.

**Governance:** The Board and their supporting committees are functioning well and terms of reference are being reviewed regularly. We have had one legal claim made against us relating to Sheep 2018 and one trade stand who we had to refuse entry to due to them selling food – as a result we will be tightening up our sheep event trade stand conditions with the aim of using this for other NSA events if necessary. The audit process has gone much more smoothly this year with Karen (bookkeeper), and others, having spent significant time, effort and skill preparing things in advance. The number of points raised in our completion memorandum has dropped from 21 four years ago to less than 8 now which shows great improvement. The level of understanding amongst the Board of regional matters and finances has improved with now fairly established mechanisms for helping regions financially and operationally where needed. Operating guidance is being produced to cater for probably 3 differing levels of regional financial operation in order that clarity is provided and systems properly delivered. Plans for this year's AGM are in place, to be held at Stirling Auction Mart on 9<sup>th</sup> August following a Board meeting the previous day. We are intending there to be an interesting discussion on sheep health, particularly in relation to iceberg diseases following the AGM. NSA President Lord Inglewood will be present and conduct the affairs and this will be an opportunity for Trustees and others to get to know him.

#### **Accounts and audit:**

The audit went well this year, with auditors much happier with the level of information being presented and the steps being taken to address the outstanding issues on the Completion Memorandum.

Work has now begun towards remaining regions joining Xero for the start of the next financial year with templates, coding sheets and a user manual in progress. The aim is to combine a training session for these regions with the Regional Manager's meeting at the end of October.

**Sheep Centre site:** A valuation of the Malvern site has been carried out for insurance re-instatement purposes and the auditors have advised that an up to date market valuation is required for the investment properties on the site. The external decoration of the barn has been completed together with some repair work. A small section of the boundary wall adjoining main gate into the yard requires replacing because it has cracked and is leaning at a dangerous angle, probably caused by tree roots. It will be replaced with a timber fence and some trees will be removed.

## Regional activities (to include NSA ram sales)

- **Wales & Border Ram Sales:** Entries for the Early Sale are down almost 30% which will probably mean the sale will run at a loss. The decision on whether it is viable to continue with the Early Sale will be taken later in the year, after the Main Sale. It may well be due to lambing taking place later, but we shall be monitoring the situation carefully. We are due yet another rent review with RWAS at the end of the year.
- **NSA Scotland:**
  - **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May** – Aileen McFadzean & Peter Myles attended NSA Board meeting Malvern.
  - **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May** – John Fyall & Euan Emslie attended the NSA Highlandsheep 2019 press preview day and organising committee meeting at Sibmister, Thurso.
  - **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May** – Jennifer Craig, Maimie Paterson, Sybil McPherson, local farmer David Rock, livestock haulage contractor Ian Murrie, and farm manager Finlay McIntyre met with Secretary of State for Defra, Michael Gove at UA Stirling, which provided the opportunity to discuss issues impacting on the Scottish hill farming sector and fall within the sphere of the UK National Government, rather than devolved issues. They highlighted the social, economic and environmental benefits provided by hill sheep farming and pointed out the particular challenges of hill farming in Scotland. This focused on two important issues that were on the agenda; Compensation for Brexit-induced buyers' lack of confidence and ageing of hogs.
  - **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May** – Jennifer Craig attended the British Veterinary Association Dinner. Euan Emslie attended NSA Welshsheep 2019, Caernarfon.
  - **Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May** – Jennifer Craig gave an update on NSA Scotland activities to the Blackface Sheep Breeders Association committee at UA, Stirling.
  - **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May** – Jennifer Craig, Maimie Paterson, John Fyall and Euan Emslie manned the NSA Scotland stand at Scotland's Beef Event at North Bethelnie, Oldmeldrum. 247 Honda raffle tickets were sold on the day.
  - **Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May** – John Fyall represented NSA Scotland and gave a speech at the IAAS Annual Conference in Edinburgh.
  - **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June** – Jennifer Craig attending a Parliamentary reception hosted by the Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN) - "Future of Farming: Nature Means Business".
  - **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June** – Maimie Paterson & Euan Emslie attending NSA Northsheep 2019, Settle. The Cheviot Sheep Society & Dutch Spotted Sheep have stands at the event with a HONDA ATV on their stands and will be selling raffle tickets.
  - **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June** - UKP&T meeting – John Fyall joined the committee meeting by teleconference.
  - **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June** – NSA Scotland Committee meeting, UA Stirling.
  - **Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June** – **NSA Highlandsheep 2019** - More than 2,000 sheep enthusiasts from all over Scotland – and further afield – braved a bitterly cold day to attend NSA Highland Sheep event in Scotland's most northerly mainland county, Caithness. They were rewarded with an outstanding display of both sheep and cattle at Sibmister Farm, Murkle, near Thurso, where the Sutherland family run a flock of 1,600 mostly Cheviot Mule ewes, but including pure-bred flocks of 60 Suffolk and 50 Texel, and a suckler herd of 400 Longhorn/Simmental cross cows crossed with Charolais sires. In addition to the farm tour, the busy event included 100 trade, sheep breed and sheep breeders stands, with many reporting excellent business on the day, a comprehensive demonstration area with wool shearing, grading, packing spinning, felt making and veterinary, butchery and cookery demonstrations, NSA Next Generation Shepherd of the Year competition, stockjudging competition, sheep dog trial, workshops, seminars and a farmers' market and craft stalls. Not all invoices are in yet, however it is anticipated that a small profit will be left.
  - **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June** – **The NSA Scotland marquee at the Royal Highland Show** was as busy as ever with thousands of farmers and members of the general public through the marquee over the four days. A record number of 195,400 visitors attended and soaked up the very best of Scottish rural life. NSA Scotland office bearers and committee met lots of politicians and leaders of other agricultural stakeholder organisations within the marquee to get their views across. A new

feature to the marquee this year was a cycle powered sheep shearing machine challenge and timed trials followed by hand sheep clipping, and 'Why sheep need to be shorn' demonstration. This was a great spectacle for visitors and thanks must go to the good sports from within the industry who pedal-powered the shears and to the shearing experts who did a great job. Meet Elfie the Valais Blacknose sheep and Raymond Irving stars of the latest BBC series of "This Farming Life" also proved popular with the general public. Ten junior competitors took part in the NSA Scotland/RHASS Lamb Dressing Competition on Sunday afternoon and the show finished with the NSA Scotland Honda TRX 420FM1 ATV prize raffle draw made by Damien Butterworth from Honda. The winner of the ATV was Gordon Rennie, Newmill, Keith, Morayshire who was near speechless when told that he had won, commenting it is the first time he had won anything in his 59 years of life! 2279 raffle tickets were sold over the four days.

- **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June** – The NSA Scotsheep 2020 Inaugural organising committee meeting was held at Forfar Mart with Euan Emslie, Maimie Paterson, Mary Dunlop, Aileen McFadzean & Peter Myles in attendance. The committee is made up of local young enthusiastic sheep farmers and industry officials. The second committee meeting will be held at Over Finlurg on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August.
- **Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June** – Jennifer Craig attended an Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholder group meeting in Edinburgh.
- **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July** – John Fyall was present at the presentation of the NSA Scotland Honda ATV Raffle prize to the winner at AM Phillip's depot at Huntly.
- **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> July** – Jennifer Craig, Maimie Paterson & John Fyall attended a Red Meat Industry meeting at Inverurie.
- **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> July** - SCOTTISH RED MEAT INDUSTRY UNITES BEHIND NEW MEAT CAMPAIGN: A host of organisations involved in the production of beef, lamb and pork in Scotland are uniting behind a brand new campaign to raise the profile of the industry's environmental and animal welfare credentials. Among the organisations supporting QMS's "Meat With Integrity" campaign are NSA Scotland and NFU Scotland. Featuring as the 'face' of the campaign for the sheep industry is NSA member Joyce Campbell. Filming and interviews have been completed on the farms involved ahead of the campaign launch on Monday 29th July. The campaign will highlight our industry's world-renowned quality assurance schemes which cover the entire production process, including farms, hauliers, feed companies, auction markets and processors. QMS is urging everyone involved in the red meat industry to throw their collective weight behind the campaign in the weeks ahead and in particular to help raising awareness by sharing #meatwithintegrity social media content.
- **Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> July** – Euan Emslie attending Regional Managers & Secretaries meeting at Malvern.
- **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> August** – NSA Scotland Committee Meeting, UA Stirling
- **NSA Cymru Wales:** NSA Welsh Sheep now seems a distant memory but what a successful event it was. It was a part of Wales that NSA Cymru had not been to before and many thanks go to the hosts Glynllifon College for making us so welcome, to all the sponsors, exhibitors, stewards, judges and all who helped to make it a fantastic event, without you all it would not happen. The Region has helped to man the stand at the Royal Welsh with the reception proving popular again. Meetings took place with Welsh BVA, RSPB, TFA and others. The topic of the moment is the new WG consultation following on from Brexit and our land. Next NSA Cymru meeting is August 28<sup>th</sup>. We hope to organise a farm walk in the autumn and details will follow in due course. The Red Meat benchmarking programme data sheets have now been validated and the results released. "The main aim of the project was to increase beef and sheep producers' understanding of their costs of production and business performance. By providing them with accurate, up to date farm data which can be benchmarked against the data of comparable farms, it is hoped that producers can easily identify the strengths and weaknesses of their businesses and feel empowered to make informed changes. As the uncertainty of Brexit continues, it is crucial that our farms are strong and sustainable for future success." A sheep scab project will be included in the next RDP round, but probably won't be up and running until late next year. We will keep you updated on this.

## Other significant external meetings – attended by Phil unless otherwise stated

- 1<sup>st</sup> April RSA Food, Farming & Countryside Commission workshop on EAT Lancet and global sustainability
- 1<sup>st</sup> April Joanne teleconference with Bob Kennard re conclusions of Heritage Breed project
- 1<sup>st</sup> April Joanne teleconference with AIC about Feed Advisors Register
- 2<sup>nd</sup> April Joanne meeting with Will Jackson, AHDB, about NSA-AHDB links
- 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> April Away meetings with Jane King and Will Jackson, AHDB
- 3<sup>rd</sup> April Ellie on teleconference with Defra re China and (sheep) dairy products
- 4<sup>th</sup> April Joanne meeting with Chris Dodds about NSA-LAA links and membership recruitment
- 5<sup>th</sup> April Meeting with Defra re sheep ageing and carcase splitting
- 10<sup>th</sup> April Joanne, Gill and Katie met with Pedigree Farmer (website providers) re online subs
- 17<sup>th</sup> April Teleconference with Defra re Chinese inward mission re (sheep) dairy products (+ Ellie)
- 17<sup>th</sup> April Ellie attended roundtable on achieving UK nett zero emissions in agriculture
- 18<sup>th</sup> April Carcase classification scrutiny committee (+ Ellie)
- 23<sup>rd</sup> April Ruminant health working group meeting
- 23<sup>rd</sup> April Joanne and Ellie at NSA Marches Region committee meeting (Joanne to do minutes)
- 24<sup>th</sup> April Joanne, Helen and Chris met with SAI Global about corp support / mem recruitment
- 24<sup>th</sup> April NSA Sheep Event Steering Group meeting (+ Joanne, Nicola, Katie, Helen and Chris)
- 26<sup>th</sup> April UK Livestock Industry Brexit Group meeting (+ Ellie)
- 29<sup>th</sup> April Joanne running NSA Next Generation travel bursary selection day
- 29<sup>th</sup> April Teleconference with goat and sheep dairy reps on China inward mission (+ Ellie)
- 30<sup>th</sup> April First 1-to-1 meeting with Robert Goodwill, Farming Minister (+ Ellie)
- 1<sup>st</sup> May Katie at Farm Safety Partnership communications event
- 2<sup>nd</sup> May Red Tractor Tech Advisory Committee
- 2<sup>nd</sup> May Joanne, Chris, Ellie and Nicola at NSA Breed Society Forum
- 7<sup>th</sup> May Wales and Border Ram Sale AGM
- 8<sup>th</sup> May Speaking at Cotswold Sheep Group meeting
- 9<sup>th</sup> May Chris meeting with AHDB to discuss joint AHDB-NSA events
- 10<sup>th</sup> May Chris meeting with Hartpury College about new AgriTech unit being built
- 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> May Katie in Bulgaria for Sheep Breeders' Festival
- 13<sup>th</sup> May Welsh Commons Forum
- 13<sup>th</sup> May Joanne and Chris meeting with British Wool to discuss NSA-BW 2019 commitments
- 13<sup>th</sup> May Ellie on teleconference with goat and sheep dairy reps re China inward mission
- 15<sup>th</sup> May Public Health Wales workshop re dealing with Brexit related stress
- 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> May Chris at Royal Ulster Show to support NSA Northern Ireland Region
- 16<sup>th</sup> May Defra teleconference re Chinese inward dairy mission (+ Ellie)
- 20<sup>th</sup> May Welsh Govt land management programme meeting
- 21<sup>st</sup> May NSA Welsh Sheep (+ Joanne, Katie and Chris)
- 23<sup>rd</sup> May GB Livestock diseases core group
- 24<sup>th</sup> May UK Livestock Industry Brexit Group meeting
- 28<sup>th</sup> May Induction day for NSA Next Generation travel bursary participants (+ Joanne)
- 28<sup>th</sup> May Industry wide workshop on defending industry from criticism
- 29<sup>th</sup> May Meeting with Tesco re Costs of production supply group
- 30<sup>th</sup> May Meeting with LIP group with new Defra Permanent Secretary at Harper Adams
- 31<sup>st</sup> May Discussion with RBST over Heritage Breeds Scheme
- 1<sup>st</sup> June Teleconference re AMTRA accreditation for mobile dip contractors
- 3<sup>rd</sup> June Helen met with Ken Nottage, Three Counties Show, about NSA Sheep Event 2020/22
- 4<sup>th</sup> June Premium Sheep and Goat Health Scheme meeting
- 4<sup>th</sup> June Katie attended meeting at Stoneleigh about dealing with Veganuary
- 4<sup>th</sup> June Joanne met Kinroy Design for review of Sheep Farmer contract and design retainer
- 5<sup>th</sup> June NSA North Sheep (+ Joanne, Ellie, Helen, Chris and Nicola)
- 6<sup>th</sup> June UK NSA Policy and Tech meeting (+ Ellie and Nicola)

- 7<sup>th</sup> June Attended NFU Cymru conference on Sustainable Agriculture
- 10<sup>th</sup> June Met with SE region team to discuss finances and future running (+ Joanne)
- 10<sup>th</sup> June Katie attended Farm Safety Partnership meeting
- 12<sup>th</sup> June NSA Highland Sheep (+ Chris and Ellie)
- 17<sup>th</sup> June Presented to US sheep farming delegation at Sedgemoor market
- 18<sup>th</sup> June NSA Sheep SW (+ Chris, Ellie, Helen and Katie)
- 19<sup>th</sup> June AHDB strategy meeting with Beef and Lamb Board
- 20<sup>th</sup> June Met with Ben Lake, MP for Ceredigion (+ Ellie)
- 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Chris and Joanne at Royal Highland Show – one day each to support Scottish Region
- 21<sup>st</sup> June UK Livestock Industry Brexit group meeting with Robert Goodwill
- 21<sup>st</sup> June Meeting with UKTAG and industry bodies re support overseas exhibitions/missions
- 24<sup>th</sup> June Groceries Code Adjudicator conference
- 24<sup>th</sup> June Met with Defra re sheep health schemes in relation to exporting breeding stock
- 25<sup>th</sup> June Conference call with Defra and FSA re sheep ageing protocols re splitting
- 25<sup>th</sup> June Black Mountains Land Use Partnership meeting
- 26<sup>th</sup> June Sheep Health and Welfare Group meeting
- 26<sup>th</sup> June Nicola attended first day of Groundswell (two-day no-till arable event)
- 26<sup>th</sup> June Regional Managers' Meeting at Malvern (to be repeated 31<sup>st</sup> July for folks not able to attend)
- 27<sup>th</sup> June Ellie on teleconference with Defra re China and (sheep) dairy products
- 27<sup>th</sup> June North Wyke filming promotional video
- 28<sup>th</sup> June Meeting with Peter Morris and Robert Lee re LIP and delivery services

## Appendix – Press releases issued and their social media reach

Week commencing	Press release(s) issued	Facebook reach
1 <sup>st</sup> April		
8 <sup>th</sup> April	Sea eagle release – EP Third country status – EP Brexitflexextension – EP	2k 1.5k 5.8k
15 <sup>th</sup> April		
22 <sup>nd</sup> April	Bird licences – EP Shearing – EP First JFC winner - KJ	9.4k 3.2k
29 <sup>th</sup> April	Carcase splitting delay – EP New SCOPS chair – SCOPS Nematodirus forecast update – SCOPS	1.7k 2.7k 4.7k
6 <sup>th</sup> May	Breed society forum report – EP Response to Committee on climate change – EP Next Generation Travel Bursary – KJ	1.3k 33.6k 3.5k
13 <sup>th</sup> May	NSA and Moredun agreement – KJ	
20 <sup>th</sup> May		
27 <sup>th</sup> May	Migration proposals – EP	1.5k
3 <sup>rd</sup> June	British lamb at state banquet – EP Next Generation two-day workshops – KJ	4.2k 6.5k
10 <sup>th</sup> June		
17 <sup>th</sup> June		
24 <sup>th</sup> June	Henry Dimbleby food system review – EP	1.3k