

Activities report to NSA Board August 2021

This report refers to main activities since last report - start of May. Activities are presented under a set of common headings.

NSA policy, technical and research work

Brexit: Deal / no deal

Now, a full 6 months after our leaving the EU, sheep and meat supply chains are still struggling with the outcome of the Brexit deal. This is being compounded by Covid controls, in particular the track and trace system and isolation policy. The initial teething problems of businesses getting used to EHCs and BCP administration are behind us but additional paperwork remains including the high number of EHCs that are needed and vet capacity to sign EHCs. This is bringing additional costs as well as slowing the flow of exports. Volumes exported to the EU since January are reported to be down by some 30% although due to prices the value of exports is less impacted. (See trade and marketing below for continuation of this topic). The NI protocol is creating major disruption to trade and movements between GB and NI, in particular for the sheep industry this is being seen in live breeding animal movements with the challenges of a 6 month residency period before animals coming from NI to sales and shows in GB can return, the requirement for any sheep moved to NI to be either low risk scrapie genotyped, or from Scrapie Monitor Scheme flocks. Retagging requirements are another source of irritation particularly for registered pedigree animals. Despite several meetings with Defra and the Sec of State, Daera and Minister Edwin Poots, Scottish Govt and Cabinet Sec Mairi Goujon, and letters to the EU Commission the problem has not been resolved and is tangled up with political negotiations between the UK Govt and the EU.

The other major unresolved issue is an absence of a BCP with live animal facilities across the short straits – meaning no live breeding animals can travel to the EU. Despite a company, Qualivia, seemingly prepared to set up such a facility it is looking for an investment of 200,000 Euros from British businesses. However, with the absence of a business case no one is seeing this as a realistic proposition.

Brexit: Future farm support

Defra, on behalf of England are progressing as planned with the Agriculture Transition Plan that will see the phasing out of BPS and a transition towards ELMS, Pathway, investment incentives and productivity/efficiency incentives. The Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot is open for applications to farmers who completed an expression of interest, and the wider roll out of a 4 standard SFI, planned to run alongside a simplified CSS is due to be rolled out in 2022. Clarity over scheme detail and payment rates is still incomplete. The first step on the animal health and welfare pathway (a vet led review) will be incorporated into the SFI roll out as well as made available to those in the SFI pilot. Alongside all this work is progressing on Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery and a call has gone out for up to 10 Landscape Recovery projects (of the type that could include rewilding). Defra are consulting on a retirement option with the aim of creating opportunities for new entrants AND releasing land for non agricultural environmental works (Exit and lump sum payments), before the remaining BPS allocations are delinked from 2025. Overall there is a growing realisation amongst farmers that this is happening and some are starting to look at various business options going forward (energy, tourism, env schemes). NSA is pushing to see productivity improved via health and parasite approaches and here the Pathway programme comes in to support/incentivise. Part of the Pathway will be about submission of health and vet data. This will start with collation and submission of annual antibiotic use, and could in due course develop into welfare indicators, bio security assessments, anthelmintic resistance, lameness, and further down the line iceberg diseases. Phil has been asked to chair a sheep Pathway group on behalf of Defra to explore scheme development.

Progress in devolved nations is at least 1 – 2 years behind with Wales looking next in line to finalise their Agriculture Bill in 2022 and start consulting on their scheme design during autumn of 2021. Scotland and NI report little practical progress.

Sheep in upland areas (including sheep stratification)

Reports still come in of sheep numbers being driven down through CSS renewals, and indeed stocking levels looks to be part of unenclosed and moorland SF standards. Pressure in upland areas will come from land being taken out of grazing entirely and farms blending productivity with ELMS type schemes (at numerous levels). Some farms with the freedom to do so will choose to produce and avoid new schemes and current high lamb prices will be encouraging some to take this route. The new AHDB breed trends report is due out in August and this should give an indication of upland and lowland trends and breeding trends in particular, indicating what is happening with sheep genetics in the uplands.

Sheep in arable rotations

No specific activity over last quarter although NSA partnered with British Grassland Society and AHDB to deliver a webinar on managing multi species leys in mid July.

Integrating trees into sheep farming systems

'Silvo pasture' continues to gain favour in policy circles and anecdotally more sheep farmers are showing interest. It is likely that ELMS will pick this up and previous problems with BPS eligibility will dissipate.

Rewilding

Phil Stocker and Dan Phipps met with Alastair Driver, Director of Rewilding Britain. It is clear that they are looking a significant area for rewilding projects and they will tie this in with Govt objectives for 30% of land designated for nature by 2030. Rewilding Britain are reporting high levels of interest from landowners. Wild Ken Hill Estate was granted a licence by Natural England to release a number of White-Tailed Sea Eagles – possibly as early as this year. NSA, along with many other farming organisations objected to this licence and if we achieved anything it was to extend their responsibility for 10 years rather than 5. The Isle of Wight WTSE release is progressing and this will be the third release year. Birds are ranging widely although all returned to the island or close by during the nesting season. It is unlikely birds will breed until maybe next year or more likely the following year. Birds are being closely monitored and no livestock damage has been observed or reported. Diets are based mainly on gulls, rabbits, waterfowl and fish. We ran an article in SF mag in June on the subject and with the interest in nature recover one of the best strategies for us is to encourage more to be done to support nature within sheep farms. There are many ways this can be done although larger scale/more in depth projects will rely on ELMS and similar scheme. It is crucial we encourage this otherwise we will see pressure to take more land out of farming entirely.

Sheep health and welfare (including NSA involvement in SHAWG, RUMA, SAAG and SCOPS)

NSA continues to be very active in this area – and there is a lot going on in this area too. PS has taken part in 2 on-line Elanco events for RAMAs and SQPs on the subject of anthelmintic resistance, and in addition an Elanco led press launch on the subject of the joint industry letter about the value of group 4 and 5 wormers as a mid-summer wormer to break the resistance cycle. NSA was a joint signatory on this letter that received coverage via the main farming press.

We continue to have a central involvement in RUMA (also as a director representing Cat B members), we are on the steering group of the Ruminant Health and Welfare Group (and led one of the welfare sessions at a recent RHWG workshop), and also active on the Industry Liaison Group planning for the launch/widening of the e medicines hub. We are active within SCOPS and also do their admin and press work. Finally, we are also on the steering group of the Premium Sheep and Goat health Scheme running the schemes for the Scrapie Monitoring Scheme, MV, and Johnes.

NSA has been working with Defra on the development of Pathway (launching as being one of the standards available under the new SFI to be available in 2022) and have just been asked to Chair and lead a sheep Pathway future development group. We are using the RHWG to try to stimulate complimentary work in the devolved nations.

NSA is leading the SW region strand of the new RDPE sheep scab initiative (For Flocks Sake Lets Stop Scab) and is working closely with the Exmoor Hill farming Network to recruit and deliver on the ground. We have held a number of on-line meetings and farmer recruitment is underway.

Sheep identification and movement recording and reporting

Our main work in this area currently is via TDUG (Traceability Design Users Group). The new Sheep LIP will be launched in November and NSA has held 2 workshops bringing together LILtd with our English committee. These have been reported as being very helpful. PS has been chairing 2 working groups as offshoots of TDUG – a Data group exploring the creative use of data, and its governance to ensure trust and confidence that data is being used sensitively and for the benefit of providers. The 2nd group has followed on from this to establish Terms of Reference for the creation of a Data Advisory Panel to give recommendations to the 2 ownership groups, Defra and AHDB, in relation to the relevance, safety, and ethics of data requests received by LI Ltd. This panel and its ToR have been approved by Defra and AHDB TSE controls and it is hoped the panel will go a long way to ensuring the responsible use of both statutory and voluntary data.

Farm assurance

The Red Tractor Standards review is complete and new standards will be introduced in November. RTA had the highest level of responses ever seen and had no choice but to delay or abandon plans for a wide range of new standards – in particular environmental standards. While it will be never seen, both Bryan Griffiths and Phil S have worked hard on the TAC successfully arguing for most of the proposed standards to be rejected on the basis that the market isn't paying for higher standards and they are adding to the farmers cost and annoyance. We have largely succeeded in this but RTA is now planning to launch a Sustainable Farming module at some stage in the future. Wales is starting a consultation on its WBLP standards. Both schemes are introducing antibiotic use reporting – Wales via permissions given to the vet to report on the farmers behalf, and in England probably to be introduced from Spring 2022 with options for the vet or the farmer to report.

Phil is temporarily representing NSA on the RTA Beef and Lamb Board (and has just signed up as a Director of FABBL (responsible for a sum of money left over from the closure of that company). We are challenging Red Tractors ToR in relation to nominations to the Board – RTA feel it should be their choice while we feel it should be ours.

Engagement with AHDB

Engagement with AHDB has been high on several levels – from conversations over Governance with AHDB Chair Nicolas Saphir, to active involvement on the reputation group, planning for Love Lamb week, and feeding into the MI team with forecasting and predictions. With a ballot committed to by Spring 2022 we have spoken to AHDB and been quite open about the value of their work, and we have offered to give a platform to help levy payers understand what they do. AHDB have been helpful with data on occasions when we have been giving evidence to APPGs and Select Committees. However, AHDB are going through huge change and losing 6 senior management staff from a total of 20, along with the winding down of teams proportionate to the Horticultural and Potato teams. NSA has written to the Sec of State to urge the ballot not to be a straight yes/no ballot. We need change but we still need a levy body. We are encouraging the change to include systems for levy payers to have a bigger say in decision making and work priorities.

Rural crime (including sheep worrying by dogs)

Whilst the main campaign period is now over, the NSA continues to campaign to support responsible dog ownership.

There are significant and very welcome improvements contained in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill to support the police and rural crime teams, after an offence of livestock worrying has occurred, but very little to prevent the number of incidents in the first instance, that are increasing year-on-year. There is a meeting of the Livestock Worrying Roundtable on the 5th August to discuss the livestock worrying provisions in the Bill in advance of its second reading, with a specific focus on the issue of holding dogs on a lead near livestock – further information to be made available when known.

One of the areas highlighted to us this year, has been the lack of awareness by dog owners, some only recently acquiring a dog, some others that due to increased access to the countryside have perhaps only come into contact with sheep for the first time. We received a number of phone calls from devastated dog owners, whose dogs had chased and/or attacked sheep, saying they had not been informed or made aware of the potential for the dog to chase other animals. Some of these cases have been highlighted across the different media, probably the one with the highest profile being the QC, whose dog attacked Freddie the seal on the Thames embankment. We appreciate that it is not possible to reach all dog owners, but many that have spoken to us, do have their dogs properly vaccinated, microchipped etc – so are in contact with a veterinary practice early in their dog ownership. So we have written to BVA, BSAVA, BVNA & SVS for their help by directing their members to provide simple & straightforward information to dog owners, especially at that very first consult, using some of our material as examples. The responses have been mixed, BVA have agreed to share graphics via their social media, BSAVA have agreed to raise awareness & share some of our materials with their members, however no response from BVNA. We did however receive a very positive response from Amanda Carson (SVS) *“To increase awareness we can put this poster on the SVS website – I have just sent it also via the forum. In addition I will send it via APHA to all Vet practices via our email distribution. I agree that it should be handed out to all dog owners and at the next BVA meeting I will raise this to rattle BSAVA and BVNA.”*

Farm safety

No further meeting of the Farm Safety Partnership has taken place during the second quarter of the year but NSA has been kept up to date on activity through emails leading up to Farm Safety week that takes place in July.

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

Any other livestock research with NSA involvement not already covered

4th May – Involved in a proof of Concept for a student project: Sheep faeces to track sheep theft with Royal Holloway and a Forensics lab (Alecto), hoping to look at the traceability of sheep theft. For example, what can be found in sheep faeces to link to locations, if pollen or spores from a field a sheep was in can be traced in the faeces, is transferred to materials and that this can then be captured by taping they use at crime scenes to pick up environmental evidence. Identified & forwarded a couple of farms to collect sheep poo samples from.

6th July – Webinar to provide an overview of a project, where ADAS is working with the University of Bristol and the Royal Agriculture University to collect farm-level data on the economics and performance benefits as a result of improving certain productivity parameters. The aim of the webinar being to help with recruitment of sheep farmers to provide input. Taking part in this research will be an opportunity to help shape an element of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, which maps out how animal health and welfare can be sustained. There are three main components to the Pathway: health and disease support, capital grants, and a new payment-by-results approach.

Any other consultations not covered under topics above

11th May - Phil provided oral evidence to the EFRA Select Committee on Environmental Land Management and the Agricultural Transition. Members present: Neil Parish (Chair); Geraint Davies; Rosie Duffield; Dr Neil Hudson; Robbie Moore; Julian Sturdy. Alongside Phil, the other witnesses were: Dr Julia Aglionby, Executive President, Foundation for Common Land & Neil Shand, Chief Executive, National Beef Association.

In summary, Neil Parish commented *“What has been talked about in this session and how interlinked the landscape is with food production, how the public want access to it and how it is all interlinked, and if you have an overgrown countryside, you will not get the public there. We need great food, and extensive grazing produces great grass-fed beef, lamb and milk. The evidence given certainly rang very true in my ears and the Committee’s ears. The Government are going largely in the right direction, but they need to make sure that we have practical policies in the end that farmers, landowners and commoners will all embrace, because, in the end, 70% of our countryside is farmed, and you want to bring farmers with you. This is the whole idea of our inquiry.”* The full transcript & written evidence can be seen here [EFRA on ELM 11.05.21 \(parliament.uk\)](#)

1st July - Phil joined other farming stakeholders in a cross-party session of the UK Trade and Business Commission on the Australia Trade Deal. Lead by Caroline Lucas (MP), with economist Sean Rickard and Jilly Greed, a Devon beef farmer and co-founder of Ladies in Beef and David Bowles from the RSPCA, the group described the Australia trade deal as “an absolute betrayal” of the farming sector in their evidence.

Caroline Lucas summarised: *“In their haste to make headlines, the government compromised on our standards, our climate commitments and even the livelihoods of our farmers. We will use today’s evidence to make constructive recommendations on how this can be improved, but we urge the government to show some backbone and stand up for Britain in future talks rather than rolling over to make a quick deal.”*

[An absolute betrayal: Farming experts give evidence on Australia deal to trade commission – UK Trade and Business Commission](#)

Written responses to Consultations

2nd June - Draft Policy Statement on Environmental Principles

12th July - respective FTA negotiations for Canada & Mexico

Open consultations:

DEFRA - Direct Payments to farmers: Lump sum exit scheme and delinked payments in England (opened 18th May, closes 11th August). Input developed in discussion with NSA English Committee on 16th July.

DIT – FTA India (opened 2nd May, closes 31st August)

EUC – Marketing standards for Agricultural products (opened 19th July, closes 12th Sept)

AWC – Castration and Tail Docking of Lambs (opened 21st July, closes 1st Sept)

More general topics (updated if and when activity occurs)

• Genetics

NSA has supported the production of AHDB breed trends report through promotion amongst members and breed societies. The report is due for release in August and its results will be of significant interest. NSA ran one of its Breakfast Clubs on the subject of Gene Editing in sheep, to align with the Govts consultation on this subject. Our consultation response is available via NSA web site. We have worked hard with breed societies over changes in Zootechnics regulations with our departure from the EU and have also recently participated in 2 breed webinars with Paraguay (Texel and Hampshire Down), led by UK TAG. We take every opportunity to talk about native breeds within ELMS developments – though always clarify that all breeds should be forward thinking and aim to advance the traits for which they are known.

We are meeting monthly with the RBST under the guise of the Ovine Semen Archive in order to a) rationalise the semen stored in line with FAO guidelines (75 sample across 25 individuals). Joanne is working closely with RBSTs Tom Blunt in communications with breed societies and any owners. We plan to go through this rationalisation breed by breed before the any disposal or movement of semen takes place but expect to reduce the costs by 50% from 2022. b) Through this process we are discussing, between NSA, RBST, BPA, NBA, a national livestock gene bank as a more representative sample of livestock genetics (and in our case collected on a wider basis than that that resulted from the National Scrapie Plan).

With British Heritage Sheep now in place we are still seeking funding to enable activities.

- **Trade and marketing (including NSA involvement in work addressing red meat consumption concerns e.g. Veganuary etc)**

See 'Brexit' above for NI and live breeding trade disruption. For meat, our pressure (along with that of others) has led to AHDB and other levy bodies creating a 'reputation group' that meets monthly to discuss issues that could enhance, or negatively affect the reputation of our industry. This group has resulted in the production of facts and figures that can be used to defend and promote the British red meat sector and is available on the AHDB, HCC, and QMS web sites. An observation, but it does appear that in some quarters the grass-based sectors are starting to be recognised as being more sustainable and a better use of land than cropping – although we have to recognise there are many different standards of grassland management and this is likely to come under more scrutiny. With the Ag Bill now on the statute books and the Environment Bill in its 3rd reading in Parliament, the last key policy direction strand was a food strategy for Britain and this came in the form of the National Food Plan (part 2) that was launched in late July. Govt has committed to responding to this strategy and its recommendations within 6 months. While there is much to support in this report we also have to recognise that it recommends a 30% reduction in meat consumption and that significant areas of land are transferred from production land to nature land. Trade is currently strong with lamb and cull ewe prices at record highs and we have not seen the fall when new season lambs have come forward in volumes that we normally expect. This is due to many factors (reduced imports, high numbers of lambs killed prior to Brexit, effective marketing and promotional work, and greater commitment to British producers by retailers picking up the volume that the hospitality sector was handling. It became very clear that the public procurement and catering chains were not being transparent in their sourcing.

Exports to the EU are still strong although volumes are down and value is up, exports to non EU countries has expanded slightly, but the big difference is the strength of our domestic market and the fact that imports are less.

UK Ministers have agreed a 'Deal in Principle' with Australia. This still needs the detail ratified via a newly formed Trade and Agriculture Commission and through Parliament. However sheep meat tariffs will be eliminated after 10 years and there will be a duty-free quota of 25k tonnes immediately (15k tonnes currently), rising to 75k tonnes in year 10. For the 5 following years there will be further rises to 125k tonnes. New Zealand immediately stated that it would expect similar treatment.

Overall, the global supply and demand dynamics are positive (although that can never mean we won't see volatility, particularly with the new trade deals being done). With our trade policy and National Food strategy seemingly at odds it is difficult to see what might happen/be expected of us. If we do see more liberalised trade and nations take advantage of this then we will inevitably export more (unless our production is driven down), but we can also expect our producers to guard our domestic market with real vigour, pushing for domestic sourcing loyalty wherever we can.

- **Wool**

We are in close contact with British Wool, being supportive but also challenging where necessary. We have challenged on a lack of innovation and development. BW are responding and we hope it won't be too late. BW made significant cutbacks and savings with 6 depots closing and 30% staff redundant, but these cuts were based on throughput maintenance and if volumes go down BW will be no safer. One thing BW has done to support its licensees and British producers is to launch the e commerce web page, providing an online platform for garment makers, bedding and carpets. However, it's important to remember that the current crisis was a victim of Covid and a closure of a number of high wool user outlets (cruise ships, hotels and casinos – did we really know we were so reliant on these sectors?). The wool market has recovered marginally and from a low of some 35p/kg the auction prices have climbed to 65p. All the backlog has been cleared and BW is now in a position where it can hold wool back if necessary. British Wool is going through a Defra review of its constitution and governance – it is the last of our official Commodity Marketing Boards.

- **RoSA**

RoSA (Register of Sheep Advisers) was launched in early June and the registration of the new company (Ltd by Guarantee) was completed by around the 12th June. This company is jointly owned by NSA and BASIS, each at the moment having 2 Directors (Phil S and Dan P). We are up to nearly 50 members now and have a target of 60 in the first year and a further 60 in the 2nd year. Our efforts need to go into ensuring people join and that when they join that farmers and others are using their services. The other area of focus is the CPD programme and effort is being put into ensuring that others register their events for RoSA CPD points. The company has its Board of Directors and also an industry steering group giving guidance and commentary on how we continue to grow the register.

NSA communications and knowledge exchange work

Press work

Press activity continues at a high level with another high number of press releases issued during the second quarter of the year. A total of 26 press releases were issued during the period, an average of 2 releases each week.

Regular weekly meetings are now held each Monday morning to plan press activity for the week with breaking news stories also responded to as quickly as possible by the Policy and Technical Officer and Communications Officer and this is promoting a good spread of topics for the press releases issued. Main issues dominating press activity in the past quarter have been NSA's successful sheep worrying by dogs campaign #LeadOn that ran for two weeks at the beginning of May. This generated a lot of press interest with media covering the subject including BBC, ITV and several national newspapers. The second half of the quarter included much press work relating to the trade deals agreed between the UK and Australia and the associated impact on UK farmers. This subject also drew a lot of attention from national media with multiple features in press and on local and national radio.

The table at the end of the report shows the press releases put out in the past 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.

Sheep Farmer magazine – see recent editions

Weekly Email Update

The NSA members' Weekly Email Update has been sent to approximately 4000 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 average open rate of the email in the last quarter has fallen slightly on the previous quarter to 28%. Open rates were high during April and the first half of May but typically has dropped away as we move into the summer months. This is consistent with previous years but may also be affected by the easing of lockdown which has meant other activities have been able to be enjoyed and could mean people spending less time online reading content such as the WEU. The open rate remains well above the industry average of 19%.

Website

Visits to the NSA website decreased over the last quarter, from an average of 27,185 visits per month to 20,748 visits per month. With farmers busy in the early summer months and the easing of many Covid19 restrictions across the UK, it is understandable that this quarter saw less visits to the site, particularly during June when many farmers would have been shearing. The Sheep Breeds in the UK is by far the most visited page. Therefore, work this quarter to acquire more breed photographs and get this page looking its best has been worthwhile.

The last quarter saw visits to the website from 53,417 users, generating 116,885 page views. Of these users 72.6% came to the site from direct search or a direct link e.g. in the Weekly Email Update or press activity, and 7.5% came from social media. Work is ongoing to increase traffic to the NSA website from NSA's social media channels.

Social media

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

At the end of the first quarter of 2021 the NSA Facebook page following had increased by 470 to 17,670 people. NSA saw an overall increase in Twitter followers of six to a total of 12,793. Disappointingly, 21 followers were lost during the Sheep Worrying Fortnight in May. This could be due to a variety of reasons, but the overall results of the campaign were extremely positive receiving 200,000 impressions across NSA's Facebook and Twitter channels alone, with many other industry organisations and veterinary practices sharing the campaign content as well. We also received positive feedback from many members surrounding the campaign, so the loss of followers is a minor side effect. Both accounts also continue to receive high levels of engagement on other content shared throughout the quarter.

Posts performed well across a range of topics. Content on Sheep Worrying by dogs performed the best throughout April and May, while comments on UK trade deals and the new #FactFriday initiative were also popular.

The top three performing Facebook posts for the quarter were:

1. A SCOPS announcement on the risk of nematodirus reached 23,282 people generating 1544 engagements.



2. The announcement that Natural England granted a licence for the release of up to 60 White-tailed Sea eagles in Norfolk reached 11,007 people and generated 949 engagements.



The decision by Natural England to grant a licence for the release of up to 60 White-tailed Sea Eagles in Norfolk has come as a no surprise to the National Sheep Association (NSA), despite the concerns raised by farming organisations, local farmers and landowners during the consultation period.

Read more go.nationalsheep.org.uk/newswhitetailedeagle



3. A video from the NSA Marches Region Young Shepherd's day reached 16,000 people with 247 engagements.

The top three performing Twitter posts were:

1. "Statement from the National Sheep Association in response to social media activity this weekend which dismissed the importance of keeping a dog on its lead near livestock. go.nationalsheep.org.uk/leadon #LeadOn #TakeTheLead"
85,084 people reached and 3,292 interactions with the tweet.
2. "Today is the FINAL DAY to complete NSA's sheep worrying by dogs survey! The survey takes just 10 mins and will help us collect vital evidence to push for further legislative changes on the issue. Please retweet [#takethelead](https://twitter.com/takethelead)"
9,436 people reached and 81 interactions with the tweet.
3. "Signs are there for a reason - please don't ignore them. [#LeadOn](https://twitter.com/LeadOn) This sign is available to download from our website at go.nationalsheep.org.uk/dogsigns"
7,286 people reached and 113 interactions with the tweet.

Email Campaigns:

Throughout the last quarter, targeted email campaigns have been sent to non-members who have previously expressed interest in NSA activity or membership, and to members. There were three campaigns this quarter:

1. 'Your chance to receive a foam footbath from JFC Agri' sent to potential NSA members on 10th May 2021 to encourage membership sign-ups as part of the competition running in partnership with JFC Agri. The email had 2,540 recipients and directed 39 people to the NSA website. View the campaign here: <https://mailchi.mp/f4d2f647e929/your-chance-to-receive-a-foam-footbath-from-jfc-agri>
2. 'Brighten up your bank holiday weekend with a chance to WIN!' sent to potential members to encourage membership as part of the JFC Agri competition. Sent to 2,475 recipients and directed 14 people to the NSA website. View the campaign here: <https://mailchi.mp/8ac661095ab4/brighten-up-your-bank-holiday-with-a-chance-to-win>

3. 'Free Farming Equipment? Yes please!' This campaign was sent to a targeted group of people who had attended NSA webinars, to encourage them to join NSA and promote the ongoing Solway Recycling competition. There were 112 recipients and two clicked through to the NSA website. View the campaign here: <https://mailchi.mp/549f91936742/free-farming-equipment-yes-please>
4. 'Last chance to WIN!' This followed on from previous emails within the JFC Agri campaign. Sent to 2,533 recipients and directed 18 people to the NSA website. View the campaign here: <https://mailchi.mp/0958aae3b18a/brighten-up-your-bank-holiday-with-a-chance-to-win-392837>

Public-facing activities

Initial plans for the 2021 Love Lamb campaign began during the second quarter of the year. Levy boards plan to work together once again to share the message of sustainable and environmentally friendly sheep farming in their promotion of lamb during the first week of September.

Farmer-facing meetings and activities organised / attended

Again, we have not had any Farmer facing meetings due to Covid but will be attending the ram sales and are looking at doing some regional meeting activities as and when restrictions allow. The webinars have been continuing with one at the start of each month following a different topic with the uptake still being good. The data from these webinars is still being filtered and recorded and then targeted with campaigns to the non-members.

Other areas of NSA activity

NSA Next Generation

The 2020 cohort of NSA Next Generation Ambassadors have now become the 2021 cohort with plans in place for a long awaited in-person delivery session in July. This session will be based in County Durham with farm visits in Northumberland also. Ahead of this session the group have supplied updates for NSA Sheep farmer magazine and the NSA Next Generation webpage Ambassador blogs.

A new element to the NSA Next Generation programme was planned during the second quarter to launch early July. Having been approached by Rob and Jo Hodgkins to offer up five Romney rams to some deserving young sheep farmers the NSA Next GENE-eration has been developed. Applications will be invited from sheep farmers up to the age of 35 who would like to receive a free Romney ram to fit into their extensive, outdoor lambing systems (or farms that are looking to move to more low input outdoor systems). The selection process will take place in early August with the successful recipients collecting the rams during the first week in September.

The finals of the NSA Next Generation Shepherd competition took place in June with Cheshire young farmer Harry Lyons claiming the victory. Harry took first place after the usual mix of shepherding tasks was moved online. The competition ended with an online knowledge test during a zoom call with competition sponsors the Texel Sheep Society, competition judges and NSA representatives.

Engagement with NSA-affiliated breed societies

The Breed Society Forum ran on the 6th of May via Zoom, attendance was not as good as we hoped but engagement was good from the ones that attended. A survey has been sent out to all the societies asking them what they would like the forums to cover in the future and if they would be happy for them to stay online.

George Hedley Memorial Award

The letters inviting nominations have been sent out. The closing date for nominations is 1st November.

British Heritage Sheep

A bank account has been opened and the annual return has been made to Companies House.

Register of Sheep Advisers (RoSA).

BASIS has received a good number of applications from sheep advisers wishing to join RoSA. Of the 46 applications processed so far, most have become full members with a handful only meeting the criteria for associate membership at this stage. This means we are on track to meet the first target in the business model, which is to have 60 members by the end of year one (end of May 2022). The focus now is on ensuring enough events/activities have CPD points attached so members can collect the required amount of CPD each year.

NSA internal work / operations

Sheep Farmer performance / corporate supporters / income from commercial companies.

Thanks to the inclusion of a Breeding Focus, the June/July edition of Sheep Farmer was the biggest edition we've done since taking the magazine in house. The 72-page edition has received positive feedback from members and advertisers, and possibly on the back of this (or possibly because advertisers know the lamb price continues to be good!) the August/September edition has been strong too. Corporate Support packages continue to be stable – and activity is now beginning to attract interest for NSA Sheep 2022, with the usual sponsorship opportunities.

Sheep Event

Helen Roberts Sheep Event organiser has met with the Three Counties to discuss the 2022 event and see if the existing contract can be extended to 2026. We will have an issue with marking out for the 2022 event as we cannot have access to the site until Sunday evening approx. 6pm, marquees may be able to set up then, but this will be tight for setting up the NSA stand and seminar area. Avon Hall will not be available until 10am Monday morning. NSA will need to meet with TCAS to discuss taking the money at South Gate and the hire of card machines. I envisage an NSA sub committee been set up to deal with TCAS direct and set rotas in place to man the gate. TCAS will provide staff to man the pay booths.

Holding Young Stars within the event was discussed but more work needs to be done to see if this is possible. A shearing competition was also discussed.

John Wilesmith from TCAS will assist the event organiser with the Risk Assessment as this could be more detailed than previous events.

There are no plans for the link building to go ahead on the showground at the moment.

Management and staff (Head Office and regions)

- NSA Head Office is now back open, albeit with sensible guidelines in place for e.g. hand sanitizer points and a visitors log. A flexible working policy has been put in place (to be signed off by the Board at the coming meeting) to clarify the existing situation for staff and, therefore, allow them to seek permission from their line manager if they want additional flexibility. Two staff members have asked for additional flexibility to work from home for additional days per week and Joanne is working with those individuals to agree the best way forward.
- The office has been rejigged, with investment in the barn allowing for hybrid meetings (some people there in person and some people on Zoom) and the meeting room in the main building being replaced with two hot desks. This is to remove overcrowding in some offices in the main building – so each room now has only two desks and there are three hot desks for non-Malvern-based staff to use when they come to Malvern. This has involved a small amount of investment in IT equipment – and we have also just ordered some headphones to allow people sharing offices to attend online meetings with less distraction to colleagues.

- Regional managers etc are continuing to meet regularly via Zoom (led by Dave Gregory) to compare the situation in terms of getting farm walks and smaller events off the ground. A regional focus will appear in the August/September edition of Sheep Farmer magazine to reiterate to members that the regional structure is still vital to NSA, despite the inability to run events since early 2020.
- Although technically falling into Q3 rather than this Q2 report, two very recent staff developments are a request from Julie to slightly reduce her hours for personal reasons, and an opportunity with Reading University for a fully-funded intern to join the NSA team for 140 hours in August and September. The intern – Matthew Blackadder – will be working alongside Sean Riches (NSA Policy & Technical Officer) to hone how existing policy position papers are presented on the NSA website, improve how we track Defra (et al) information sharing on social media, and look at some of our online public-facing information.

Governance

The confirmation statement for NSA has been submitted to Companies House for the year ended 22 June 2021. The new Trustees have been registered with Charity Commission and Companies House. Signatory information has been updated with Rathbones and is to be minuted at the next Board meeting. A risk questionnaire has been completed regarding the investment portfolio and Rathbones are reviewing.

Accounts and audit

The audit process is now complete and has been very positive from the point of view that there were only three issues raised, none of which were considered to have a material impact on the financial statements. Firstly, there were some credit balances on customer accounts; secondly there are a number of honorariums being paid to individuals, without going through the payroll. Bishop Fleming have pointed out that this could lead to potential PAYE and NIC problems. This situation is currently under review to ensure that NSA is complying with HMRC guidelines.

The third issue is that the rental properties at the Head Office site have not been valued in recent times. Given that a full market valuation is quite a costly exercise, NSA has been able to justify not having a valuation done each year. However, Bishop Fleming have said in their report that 'The Board needs to be able to substantiate the carrying value of the property and provide evidence on how they confirm the valuation is at fair value as at each financial year end'.

Debtors for the group currently stand at £5,396.33 of which £600 belongs to Welsh Region, £72 belongs to Eastern Region and £480 to South East Region.

Sheep Centre site

New IT equipment and sound-proofing panels have been installed in the barn to improve the conferencing facilities.

Regional activities (to include NSA ram sales)

Wales and Border Ram Sales – report from Jane Smith

The two ram sales are scheduled to go ahead. The Early sale has attracted an entry over 320 rams and the Main sale entries will close on 4th August. Plans are to keep everything the same as in 2019 as far as where sheep will be housed. Huge changes on the showground will mean a complete change to our usual layout. With rules unknown regarding spacing of trade stands we intend to have the trade stands outside, originally in the Cattle ring but now the RWAS in their wisdom are hosting a large equine event on the same weekend and they will be using the cattle ring until 7.00pm on the Sunday evening. That is causing considerable disruption to our plans. We intend to have the auctioneers paydesks in South Glam as usual. There will be no sit-down catering (due to Track & Trace) and we will just have mobile catering units. We have reduced our advertising expenditure in Farmers Guardian to two adverts prior to the Early Sale and will promote the sale through social media as much as possible.

Cymru Wales Region – report from Helen Roberts

NSA Cymru has its first face to face committee meeting on the 10th Aug.

NSA Cymru will be hosting its Next Generation Shepherd competition at Orseddwen, Selattyn home of the Development Officer on Sunday 15th Aug.

NSA Cymru has run a successful photo competition with our Chair Kate Hovers acting as judge and placing Alex Alton and Elin Orrells as the winners with both signing up as NSA Members and receiving a book of their choice.

NSA Cymru was one of several organisations to sponsor the virtual Royal Welsh which had a jam packed four days of competitions and events. We as an organization are so looking forward to being back at the show next year and meeting up with members face to face.

NSA Cymru is looking forward to organizing a farm walk on Tuesday 14th September at 3pm at Cwm Farm on behalf of Jeff Gwillim and family.

NSA Cymru has held its first meeting with Lesley Griffiths Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd, and Julie James Minister for Climate Change in Mid-July.

NSA Scotland Activity Report for NSA Board Meeting – 11th August 2021

(Topics covered)

Wednesday 5th May

- Scottish Government Animal Health and Welfare General Stakeholders Group Meeting attended by Grace Reid.

[Covid Update \(concerns raised on the cost of Covid compliance for the meat processors compared to English restrictions\)](#). [EU Exit/import controls \(Border Operating Model launched summer 2020 has went through many amendments. Some BCP in Scotland for live animals, mostly airports. Lack of BCP in England\)](#). [EU Animal Health Regulation \(new legislation Feb 2021, Covid SSI, Notifiable diseases list updated\)](#). [TB/BVD/Avian Flu update](#).

Monday 10th May

- QMS Beef and Lamb Marketing Strategy Group meeting attended by Grace Reid.

[Change from EU PGI \(Jan 2024\)](#). [Overview of markets \(decrease in lamb numbers to process, hospitality situation/non-Scotch produce sourcing\)](#). [Local food supply chain](#). [Summer 2021 campaign \(Make It with Cred\)](#).

Monday 24th May

- NSA Scotland/SRUC Collaboration meeting attended by Jen Craig, Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid.

[Best practice guidance to be researched and a collaboration/communications plan to be embarked upon](#). [Tip of the iceberg, more and more cases are occurring on an annual basis i.e. injection site lesions, inhalation of copper, oesophagus lesions](#). [Post-mortem service update](#). [Skills training for shepherds](#). [MV accreditation scheme not very practical for large farmers, new monitoring scheme launched 12-20 animals on a yearly basis](#).

Thursday 3rd June

- NSA UK Policy and Technical meeting attended by Grace Reid.

Wednesday 9th June

- NSA Scotland Executive Committee meeting.

Tuesday 15th June

- NatureScot Meeting with Rae McKenzie (Policy and Operations Manager) and Andrew Kent (Area Officer) attended by Jen Craig and Grace Reid.

Discuss the involvement of NSA Scotland as a stakeholder at National Sea Eagle Stakeholder Panel. Updates on the SEMS, monitor farms, GPS tagging, future support and budgets, research projects, future plans in terms of communications and licensing processes which will be under review were also given.

Wednesday 16th June

- NSA Scotland Committee meeting.

Thursday 17th June

- Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands Meeting attended by Jen Craig, Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid.

LFASS (questions asked on rebasing due to those who have been locked out of the scheme i.e. new entrants. What is after 2024? ANC abandoned several years ago). New Entrants (tree planting and carbon credits will make this even more difficult, includes tenants also. Regional Land Use Partnerships will feature). Trade GB/NI (sheep sector issues raised, trade deal concerns and lack of engagement with devolved nations). Scottish food supply chain (promotion/messaging of Scotch Lamb and procurement). Animal Health and Welfare (scab working groups and welfare of animals in transport consultation). Reintroduction of species which predate sheep (Scot Gov position on this has not changed from previous Cab Sec. Licensing and control). Farmer Led Group reports will feature in new policy.

Wednesday 23rd June

- QMS Cattle and Sheep Standards Setting Horizon Scanning meeting attended by Grace Reid.

Health planning derogation until March 2022 (AHDA has a service to write these). Anthelmintic resistance (5 areas of key focus: 1. Written prescriptions rather than verbal; 2. FEC; 3. Compulsory CPD; 4. Manufacturer pack sizes; 5. Specific and active animal medicine plans i.e. NARDIS online planning. Benchmarking project (global assurance schemes). Ruminant health and welfare (pain management is the quickest route to improving animal welfare).

Thursday 24th June

- QMS catch up meeting with Sarah Millar attended by Jen Craig and Grace Reid.

COP26 (Global exercises/pledge, industry representation, Parliamentary region/production, GWP*). QMS Procurement paper. Trade Deals. Sustainably Scottish. NSA Breakfast Club involvement.

Monday 28th June

- NSA Regional Managers and Secretaries meeting attended by Euan Emslie and Grace Reid.

Tuesday 29th June

- Ruminant Health & Welfare disease workshop attended by Jen Craig.

Thursday 22nd July

- National Sea Eagle Stakeholder Group meeting attended by Grace Reid.

Update on Scheme Monitor Farms and Budget (22 new registered interests. Management Agreement offers going out shortly. Increased budget to £350,000). Licensing and Data (looking into some form of licensing to see if viable and under what circumstances. Needing current and factual data from participants i.e. minimum level of contribution to succeed in allocation of funds. Enhanced Shepherding data is proving useful. Communications plan discussed with stakeholders to make the public and farming industry more aware of the group and management scheme. Tagging update on sick immature bird which has been released following recuperation. Future support of management scheme (funding streams).

Upcoming Meetings:

Thursday 12th August

- Scottish Government ARD Stakeholders meeting to be attended by Grace Reid

Monday 16th August

- Farming Roundtable Meeting to be attended by Grace Reid.

Wednesday 1st September

- NSA UK Policy and Technical Meeting to be attended by Jen Craig and Grace Reid.

Monday 20th September and Tuesday 21st September

- Animal Welfare Committee Working Group – Castration and tail docking of lambs workshop

Monday 27th September

- Scottish Government Animal Health and Welfare General Stakeholders Group Meeting to be attended by Grace Reid.

Tuesday 28th September

- QMS Cattle and Sheep Standards Setting Committee meeting to be attended by Grace Reid.

Thursday 14th October

- Scottish Government ARD Stakeholders meeting to be attended by Grace Reid

Other significant external meetings – attended by Phil unless otherwise stated

Insert list of dates and meetings

May

- 6th ELM Sustainable Farming Incentive
Ruminant Health & Welfare Group
Breed Society Forum
APTF Task Force
- 7th Beef and Lamb NZ
BBC Scotland interview
Red Tractor Medicine Hub
- 10th TDUG
Monthly NSA RBST Ovine Semen Archive
- 11th Sheep Movements with Welsh Gov
bTB in Sheep with NFU
Oral evidence to EFRA committee
RDPE/MRI Scab project
- 12th Mobile dippers
Ruminant Health and Welfare Steering Group
Sustainable Food Trust with British Heritage Sheep
- 13th Red Tractor Beef & Lamb Sector Board
RoSA launch x 2
Charlotte Desborough, Defra
- 14th LCAG
Podcast recording for Barclays Bank
Tom Rockhampton
- 17th UK Farming Organisations Roundtable
Data Advisory Panel
Live Animal BCPs
ELM Commons Options workshop
- 18th Welsh Sheep webinar
NFU update on halal assurance
British Heritage Sheep with AHDB
British Heritage Sheep with Bob Kennard
Defra FFCP
- 19th British Wool
Agri-food Trade Advisory Group
- 20th Livestock worrying roundtable
Sea Eagle interview, Norfolk
BMLUP
Pathway sense-check
Ruminant Health and Welfare stakeholder briefing
Interview FT
Katherine Flynn, Defra
- 24th BMLUP

Minister Poots, DAERA
Recording for Elanco

25th Farming with Nature

28th LCAG

June

1st RoSA technical webinar

2nd Data Advisory Panel
Black Mt Land Use Partnership

7th RDPE Scab Project, Farmer Meeting

8th Data Advisory Panel
Dept of Trade
AHDB Reputation Group
Prince's Countryside Fund
RDPE Scab Project, Farmer Meeting

9th Mobile dippers
LCAG
NI GB Task and Finish group
All Party Parliamentary Group for Farming
Scottish Gov Cabinet Secretary
Black Mt Use Partnership

10th Isle of Wight White Tailed Eagles
RDPE Scab Project, Farmer Meeting
AHDB Medicine Hub

11th Ruminant Health and Welfare Group Welfare Priorities workshop

14th S Hughson, RWAS
TDUG

15th Beef & Lamb New Zealand
NFU Farming Organisations Roundtable
John Wilkes, USA

16th All Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare
Ruminant Health and Welfare Steering Group
Farmers Guardian

17th ELM Engagement Group
Elanco

18th ELM Moorland and Rough Grazing
NI – GB trade issues task and finish group
Lord Inglewood
Katherine Flynn, Defra

24th RUMA

28th Webinar Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in Wales

29th Ruminant Health and Welfare Group – disease priorities workshop
Defra, Future Farming & Countryside Programme environment schemes update

30th British Meat Industry call
Uplands Alliance Steering Group meeting

July

1st UK Trade and Business Commission Extraordinary Meeting: UK-Australia Deal
WCF meeting, Builth Wells

2nd Defra, Sustainable Farming Incentive Pilot
BBC recording
John Wilkes, USA

5th TDUG
Black Mts Land Use Partnership meeting

- 6th Red Tractor Beef & Lamb Board
Defra, Future Farming & Countryside Programme, policy call
- 7th Defra, ELMS
TDUG
- 8th AHDB Agricultural Productivity Task Force
Sustainable Food Trust, Abattoir Sector Group
Elanco Zolvix campaign call
Black Mts Land Use Partnership call
- 9th LCAG
Charlotte Smith, BBC Farming Today
TDUG Data Advisory Panel
- 12th TDUG
NSA RBST Ovine Semen Archive
- 13th ELMS
- 14th BBC, Marcus Wareing programme
ELM Sustainable Farming Incentive
UKTAG Paraguay conference
- 19th RoSA Steering Group
Welsh Gov Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales & Trefnydd
British Wool
All Party Parliamentary Group, Animal Welfare, Sheep Scab
- 20th AHDB
AHDB Reputation Group
- 21st Black Mts National Park Authority
Ruminant Health and Welfare steering group
- 23rd LCAG
Pasture for Life
- 28th Defra re New Entrants programme
Welsh Gov re Sustainable Farming Scheme
Defra re Sheep Working Group
- 29th MSD Core Vaccination Project meeting
- 30th Campaign for Wool Council meeting
Farming Today Interview

Appendix – Press releases issued and their social media reach

Week commencing	Press releases issued	Social media reach on press release links - Facebook
5 th April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Next Gen Shepherd competition recommences 2. NSA responds to new countryside code 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3.5k 2. 2. 2.2k
12 th April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA welcomes joint levy board work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.1k
19 th April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA partner in big farmland bird count 2. NSA preparing to #LeadOn with campaign 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 990 2. 4.1k
26 th April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New sheep worrying poster launch 2. Natural England report on carbon capture of environment 3. Breed society forum coming soon 4. Results of sheep worrying survey 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.3k 2. 1.1k 3. 872 4. 3.5k
3 rd May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lambing list closes 2. NSA welcomes new head of British wool 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.5k 2. 937
10 th May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Success of #LeadOn campaign 2. Response to Queens speech – increase in animal welfare 3. White tailed Sea eagle licence granted in Norfolk 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.2k 2. 1.1k 3. 11k
17 th May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SCOPS nematodirus post 2. Australia trade deal negotiations 3. Joint press release on shearing season 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5.4k 2. 1.1k 3. 2k
24 th May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bryan Griffiths announced as new Vice President 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.2k
31 st may	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Launch of RoSA 2. First winner of Solway giveaway 3. Keep local meat on the menu 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 986 2. 1.4k 3. 1.2k
7 th June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthened legislation on livestock worrying 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.1k
14 th June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Response to Australia trade deal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.8k
21 st June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Results of Next generation shepherds final 2. Further update on Australia deal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10.8k 2. 6.1k
28 th June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Launch of NSA Next GENE-eration giveaway 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4.3k