

Activities report to NSA Board 18.01.2023

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

NSA policy, technical and research work

(blank if all work has been shared in Sheep Farmer/Weekly Email Update)

Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway was set to launch in late autumn, the first stage - which was the review – was piloted during September. At an advanced stage of testing is the wormer resistance and effectiveness which eventually will feed into the general health and welfare review. Plans further down the line are expecting that this year (2023) will be the official launch for further testing and screening for issues identified in the review and pre- Christmas plans were to have a full launch in January.

Northern Ireland Veterinary Medicine

Current post-Brexit arrangements to ensure the continued availability of veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland have been extended, following a 'grace period' that was due to expire in December 2022 – leaving the livestock industry at a cliff edge with no access to vaccines or medicine. Before Christmas the EU's chief Brexit negotiator confirmed the grace period will be extended to 2025. NSA has been working on this issue along with Northern Ireland colleagues to ensure the best outcome for farmers, including writing to the EU Commission. The protocol means Northern Ireland is still inside the EU's pharmaceutical regulatory system, whereas the UK is not.

ELMs and Future Farming Schemes

On the 16th of November headlines hit the press surrounding the 'review' of the Environment Land Management scheme that had been announced after Defra Ministerial changes . Rumours swirled that the scheme would be scrapped but instead Defra went public stating it would be a tweaked at the edges rather than a full-scale review. Defra again are leaving the farming industry in a vat of uncertainty. We then saw Mark Spencer and Janet Hughes give evidence to the EFRA committee to try to tease out some kind of concrete answers for the future, resulting in a beige statement confirming that there is a process ongoing but that they (government) were at the conclusion of that process and ready to get on with the job. Mr Spencer has gone on to confirm that the government was still set to see the ELMs rolled out by 2024, and that the basic payment system - which has seen farmers paid by the state based on the size of land they farm - would still be coming to an end as planned, despite some rumours to the contrary.

Since then, at the Oxford Farming Conference, the Minister announced that the payment rates for both Countryside Stewardship revenue options and capital items will change. The new revenue rates will be introduced for all new and existing Mid Tier and Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship agreements from 1 January 2023. On average, there will be a 10% increase in revenue rates. However, this will differ between agreements and not all revenue rates will increase if the evidence suggests current rates reflect market conditions.

It was also announced that there would be a new Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) Management Payment of £20 per hectare, for up to 50 hectares of land entered in the scheme. This means farmers will receive up to £1,000 per year in addition to their agreement to cover the administrative costs of participation.

NSA is continuing to work hard to ensure that farming is kept at the heart of these new schemes and is continuing to push government to provide detail and transparency for businesses.

Smokies

In short - In 2020 the NSA along with other industry bodies shared a proposal with the FSA to consider domestic changes to legislation to allow for the production of skin-on sheep meat in the UK. At the time the FSA responded by indicating they were unable to progress the proposal immediately as the UK was still in the transition period. However nearly 3 years on and we are looking at a disappointingly similar situation, the FSA have recently released the following statement which would indicate we're in for the long haul – 'In line with the requirements of the Common Framework for Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene, the FSA and FSS are considering the working group's proposal to determine whether sufficient evidence is included to trigger the risk analysis process. The FSA will respond to the skin-on sheep working group once a decision is made.'

Species Reintroductions

NSA has recently submitted a comprehensive response to the EFRA Committee call for evidence on Species Reintroductions, highlighting the complexities of our ecosystems and the equilibrium of natural habitats. NSA has called for a much clearer government position and a clear regulatory position to ensure any reintroductions cannot happen by accident and must be done so with extensive consultation with the wider impacted businesses. For a copy of the full response please contact policy@nationalsheep.org.uk

NSA Regions

NSA HQ is continuing to work collaboratively across our three devolved regions especially Scotland and Wales as a consequence of recent development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (Wales), Agricultural Pollution Regulations (Wales) and the Agriculture Bill (Scotland). NSA is continuing to support a solution between Northern Ireland, UK and the EU and is especially interested in the progress of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill.

Vet attestations

During November decisions from Defra led to a risk that a significant amount of the UK's meat production would become non-compliant for export to the EU. The proposed changes, meant moving from a farmer self-declaration to a veterinary attestation of health status to accompany animals destined for slaughter and this was due to be introduced from 14th December in order to be fully compliant with the EU Animal health Regulation. However, farmers, the supply chain, and veterinary surgeons were not in a place to be able to deliver this with such short notice. NSA worked tirelessly along with other industry bodies to ensure these ambitions were not realised and consequently RCVS agreed that OVs can continue to sign EHCs on the basis of farmer declarations for up to another year. This means that the exporting cliff edge has been avoided. However, it does also mean we do have up to a year to get to the point where the declaration of a vet visit is made by the visiting vet to the OV. NSA is continuing to work hard on this subject and ensure we are not faced with another cliff-edge scenario at the end of this year,

Border Control Posts

A brief overview - Qualivia have pulled out of the deal to invest in a BCP across the channel in Calais and so we are still no further forward in regaining the breeding animal export trade across the short straights. However there does look to be some promising interest and investment on the horizon. Other options are being looked into, with a vast amount of work done on alternative routes and the health and journey time implications for some of these routes. NSA continues to work with industry to try to ensure there is a workable solution in the near future. There have been

consignments of sheep that have taken the long route via Larne, through Northern Ireland into the South and by ferry from Rosslare to Cherbourg and then on through Europe

Skins

Demand for lamb/sheep skins is very low, resulting in stockpiling at many abattoirs and disposal at a cost to plants. This is unwelcome at abattoirs where operational costs are high and they have been paying good prices for lambs – losing skin value, or having to pay for disposal is eroding margins. Further problems are being caused by wool negatively impacting on rendering equipment. NSA has spoken with two mid range abattoirs experiencing problems and is exploring opportunities via the KTN wool circular economies project. One potential long term option is to knife shear skins so that skins can go for rendering and wool be used in some industrial process. NSA is in contact with BMPA over other disposal options being explored with Defra.

NSA Breakfast Clubs

NSA Breakfast Club have raised their profile and recently has hosted sessions with the Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries, Mark Spencer and the Shadow Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries, Daniel Zeichner.

NSA communications and knowledge exchange work

Press work

A total of 30 press releases were issued during the months of October, November and December. This figure goes against trends from recent years when reduced activity in December during the lead up to Christmas can mean less press releases are issued but general increased NSA activity during the year seems to have contributed to continuation of a high level of communications and press activity. The quarter also saw more press releases issued than the previous.

Open rates for NSA press releases remain well above the industry average demonstrating the value national and agricultural press put on NSA's opinions and information. The reach of NSA communications work continues to exceed expectation too. NSA Sheep Event was a notable event of interest to the agricultural sector. The varied press releases issued covering NSA award recipients, seasonal promotional giveaways and NSA's response to TV giant Netflix's film featuring a case of sheep worrying by dogs were those most successful with the largest reach in press and on social media.

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

Week commencing	Press releases issued	Social media reach on press release links - Facebook
3/10/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ambassadors complete programme 2. NSA offers sponsored places at SBRT 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 6.4k 2. 1.9k
10/10/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA welcomes news of exports to US 2. NSA Breakfast Club with new Farming Minister 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3.4k 2. 1.5k
17/10/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel bursary winners announced 2. Resignation of Prime Minister 3. NSA Chief Exec wins at British Farming Awards 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 15.0k 2. 1.8k 3. 4.4k
24/10/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wool Symposium success 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5.6k
31/10/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NSA urges changes to proposals on vet attestations 2. NSA's audience with Minister Mark Spencer 3. Next gen winter conferences 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.9k 2. 990 3. 4.8k
7/11/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. COP – Benefits of grassland 2. Retirement of NSA Eastern region manager 3. AHDB future plans 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.7k 2. 2.0k 3. 1.1k
14/11/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ATV helmet giveaway winners 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.2k
21/11/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Future of Agriculture in Wales 2. Update on vet attestations 3. SCOPS winter worm warning 4. Royal Welsh Winter Fair 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.7k 2. 1.2k 3. 1.9k 4. 1.7k
28/11/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christmas membership promotion 2. NSA responds to Netflix promotion of sheep worrying 3. Lambing list reminder 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.9k 2. 14.1k 3. 9.5k
5/12/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SCOPS live fluke warning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.4k
12/12/22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bob Payne award winner 2. George Hedley award winner 3. NSA and Moredun continued relationship 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.9k 2. 9.2k 3. 1.4k
19/12/22		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.
26/12/22	No press activity – Christmas week	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.

Weekly email update:

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

Open rates for the NSA Weekly Update have continued to stay static around the 40%, mark a sustained increase for the year from 2021 when an average of 28% of emails were opened. The email average open rate is well above the industry average of 19% indicating its value to recipients.

NSA Next Generation activity:

NSA Next Generation sponsorship of young people to attend SBRT

NSA HQ as well as several NSA regions offered sponsorship once again for a young person to attend the Sheep Breeder's Round Table conference in November. This welcomed several good applications with an Ambassador from this year being selected to attend – George Ellis from Gloucestershire.

NSA Next Generation Wool Symposium

The first ever NSA Next Generation and British Wool 'Wool symposium' took place in November. The event allowed 12 young people to attend Bradford for a tour of the British Wool and Haworth Scouring plant facilities before engaging in debate on the future of wool in Britain. The trip attracted an unexpectedly high amount of applications from which the NSA Policy and tech committee selected their chosen group of 12 to attend. This successful trip will likely to be repeated in coming years but the format may change to incorporate regions more fully.

NSA Next Generation Samuel Wharry Travel Bursary

The two recipients of the NSA Samuel Wharry Travel Bursary were announced in October – Lucy May Griffiths, from Powys, Wales, and Perry Parkinson from Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland. Both Lucy and Perry presented plans to travel to New Zealand (and also Australia in the case of Lucy). Lucy is planning on investigating over wintering options in NZ whilst Perry is looking into anthelmintic resistance. Both will travel in 2023 and report back their findings on their return.

NSA Next Generation winter conferences

Two annual winter conferences were planned for the end of the year, taking place at Ashford in SE England and Skipton in North Yorkshire. Unfortunately due to a combination of factors both events were postponed but will now take place in January 2023.

Project work

RDPE sheep scab

Final cluster meeting to be held 2nd Feb. All outstanding forms to be completed here. All claims to be submitted by end March. Project ends 31st March 2023. SW coordinators continuing to work well.

Erasmus

Two face-to-face 'multiplier events' held before Christmas. All deliverables now completed. Final instalment due.

RoSA

Communication between board, steering group and comms teams continuing well. Targets for 2023 to maintain and increase membership through comms activity. No updated stats.

Moredun

Re-launch of partnership, three-year agreement announced December 2022. Joint activities planned for NSA events in 2023 and 2024.

SBRT

Face-to-face held November 2023. A few issues raised as a result of AHDB events management team. May result in potential for NSA to organise SBRT 2024. TBC in planning meeting later in 2023.

New project proposals

Submissions in discussion for research funding:

- *Fabulous Fibre*: Potential funding stream in February 2023.

Submitted funding bids:

- *Low methane sheep*: Successful in 2nd stage of bidding. Interview due imminently.

Unsuccessful funding bids:

- *Precision farming livestock technology*

Ovine Semen Archive

Rationalisation process. The final list of semen to be destroyed was confirmed to AB Europe in the first week of January and work is underway to destroy around 45% of the volume. We will be invoiced in March for the cost of storing semen for the previous 12 months plus the cost of the rationalisation process. AB Europe has offered to 'buy' the tanks we no longer need, to cover (hopefully all) of the cost of disposing of the unwanted semen. So assuming the rationalisation process is cost-neutral, plus the £1k profit made selling semen straws over the summer, our 2023 fees will be slightly lower than predicted. Our bill in March 2024 will be significantly lower, due to the volume of the archive being (finally!) much reduced. The OSA Board will meet again once AB Europe has finished throwing semen away, to talk about longer-term plans.

NSA internal work / operations

Accounts and audit

Debtors currently stand at £12,583.62, most of which has been chased in the last week, however there are still ongoing issues with access to the Scottish Region bank account to be able to see who has paid or not. It has now been decided to open a new Lloyds account that can be seen from Head Office, as Bank of Scotland have been less than helpful – after two years of trying and filling in numerous forms it has still not been possible to change signatories on the Bank of Scotland account.

Sheep Centre site

The fixed electrical wiring tests have been carried out – we are now awaiting the report and quotes for repair work. Renewal of the lease for Bats Loft has been signed by tenants. Several maintenance tasks have been completed on the Barn and Rutherford House. Audit of archived documents and expired IT kit carried out and appropriate disposal ongoing.

Regional activities (to include NSA ram sales)

Cymru Wales Region Region.

NSA Cymru attended the Welsh Winter fair in November. The annual meeting is planned for 16th Feb, and we have asked the OCVO if we will be able to have the new chief vet for Wales to come and speak, the announcement for this post will not be made until the New Year. We are still waiting to see if this will happen.

Other responses have been put in regarding the proposed increases to charges by NRW to dip disposal etc. this consultation is especially worrying when WG have announced a sheep scab eradication programme which has been awarded to Gelli Aur and NSA Cymru will be recognised as stakeholder within this project. Helen Roberts has met with Welsh YFC and has attended their Rural Affairs conference on the 14th Jan held at The Rhug.

Phil Stocker and Helen have met with the new CEO of the Royal Welsh (Aled Jones) to discuss the building at the Royal Welsh and NSA Cymru is delighted that the RWAS will be a mainline sponsor at NSA Welsh Sheep.

Stand bookings are open for NSA Welsh Sheep and plans are underway to make this event a successful one.

NSA Scotland

NSA Scotland Newsletter

The latest edition of the NSA Scotland newsletter can be found on the website.

Monday 5th December

- Scottish Government Animal Health and Welfare General Stakeholders meeting attended by Grace Reid. Welfare during transport on sea voyages – new contract out for tender for research. Andrew Voas leading. Castration and Tail Docking – lots of research being done on two devices and a report will be published shortly. As will the AWC report (early 2023). Avoid where possible but if needed then could possibly use the two new devices Animal welfare labelling – interested to see Defra information with a follow up consultation in 2023. Scotland did not take part this time.
- First ANIHUB (ANimal HUsbandry Biosecurity Living Lab) Meeting attended by Grace Reid Biosecurity was discussed at length including management systems and tools in place to prevent the introduction of diseases into flocks. This also included the voluntary basis and compulsory requirements across the country. The difficulty of getting messages to producers in a timely and efficient way was also covered.

Thursday 8th December

- Royal Highland Show meeting attended by Peter Myles, Maimie Paterson and Grace Reid Discussions were had to discuss the RHS fleece competition held within the NSA marquee in 2023.

Upcoming Meetings:

Thursday 12th January

- Scottish Red Meat Resilience meeting to be attended by Grace Reid

Monday 16th January

- Industry led sheep scab meeting to be attended by Grace Reid

Tuesday 17th January

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

Thursday 19th January

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

Wednesday 25th January

- Scottish FAST Meeting to be attended by Grace Reid

Thursday 26th January

- Mairi Gougeon Cabinet Secretary Visit - Doldy Farms

Tuesday 7th February 2023

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

Other significant external meetings – attended by Phil unless otherwise stated

Food Supply Chain Forum

AHDB – The future of farming

Wool Innovation network

Sheep Scab working group

Livestock Chain Advisory Group

Sheep Breeders Round Table

Pathway Chairs Group

OPA Working Group

Future farming and countryside forum

TDUG

Trinity AgTech

Animal health & welfare grants scoring panel – sheep

PSGHS Advisory Group

Data T&F group – Medicine Hub

RUMA
DEFRA
Cabinet Office Borders Group
Three Counties - Ken Nottage

Attended by Emma Bradbury:
Cop3 Meeting – NFU
Pathway Liaison Group
AHDB Reputation Group
Beef & Lamb Outlook
WTSE Working Group
LCAG
Sheep Antibiotic Guardian Group
SCOPS
RUMA